The Jewish Calendar Controversy of 921/2 CE

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The Jewish Calendar Controversy of 921/2 CE

By

Sacha Stern

With the collaboration of

Marina Rustow
Nadia Vidro
Ronny Vollandt



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Preface

The calendar controversy of 921/2 CE, when the Jewish communities of Palestine and Babylonia ended up observing Passover, the New Year, and all the major festivals on different dates, was long forgotten but then re-discovered in the late nineteenth century, in the documents of the Cairo Genizah. Although very short-lived, this controversy generated a substantial body of polemical literature that was copied and preserved for at least two centuries. The calendar controversy of 921/2 was clearly major event, for the players at the time as well as for the later generations. It was critical to the history of the Jewish calendar and to the development of Jewish political relations in the medieval Near East.

Since its initial, late nineteenth-century discovery, when a scholarly consensus was quickly established, little has been done to re-visit the calendar controversy. Yet much has changed, after more than a hundred years, in the study of Cairo Genizah manuscripts, in time and calendar studies, and more generally, in the theory and practice of social history. A comprehensive reassessment of the evidence, its interpretation, and its broader context, has long been overdue.

The idea of this book, and of the laborious research project that lies behind it, was formed in conversation with Marina Rustow at UCL, in the summer of 2008. We reflected then on the historical importance of this event, on the inadequacy of accepted views about it, and on just how little was known of the primary sources which had served to form the established scholarly consensus. We also raised new questions, which had never been considered before: when were the manuscripts copied, and how and why the texts of the controversy were preserved and transmitted in later centuries. Our initial approach, accordingly, was primarily codicological and focused on the manuscripts; but the project soon expanded to include the discovery of new sources, the reconstruction of the manuscripts, the re-edition, translation, and interpretation of all the texts, and ultimately, a radically new vision and understanding of the controversy, its aftermath, its history.

The book begins, in Part 1, with a series of introductory chapters. Chapter 1 offers a brief taster of the book and a way into it. Chapter 2 presents a historical narrative of the calendar controversy of 921/2, as I have reconstructed it on the basis of my fresh reading of the sources. In Chapter 3, I trace the history of the scholarship, from re-discovery in the late nineteenth century, mainly from Cairo Genizah documents, to the rapid establishment of a scholarly consensus mainly through the works of Bornstein (1904) and Malter (1921), which has never been questioned or re-visited since. Chapter 4 picks up from there with

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an archaeology of the present project: what were our research questions and methodology, how we approached the manuscripts, how we read, edited, and interpreted our texts. This chapter highlights the many new discoveries that our project has contributed to the understanding of the calendar controversy. In Chapter 5, I explain how the Jewish calendar works, and why Palestinians and Babylonians ended up disagreeing with the dates of the festivals during those years.

The rest of the book is dedicated to the text editions (an explanation our editorial policies, and a list of all the manuscripts and sigla, can be found after this Preface). Part 2 contains the most important literary work in our corpus, formerly known as *The Book of the Festivals* (*Sefer ha-Mo'adim*), and now renamed, for reasons that will be explained, *The Book of the Calendar Controversy*. This work was written at the time by the Babylonian leadership, and presents a full narrative of the controversy—albeit polemical and very biased—and a defence of the Babylonian calendar. This part includes an introduction, a critical edition based on five manuscripts, and separate diplomatic editions of each of the reconstructed manuscripts.

Part 3 contains letters and other polemical writings that were written and exchanged during the controversy of 921/2. Among them is the so-called First Letter of ben Meir (the leader of the Palestinians), attested in two manuscripts; a manuscript with letters of Saadya (who, as I will show, only played a marginal role in the controversy); a manuscript with letters on both sides, which I therefore call a 'Miscellany'; and various other manuscripts containing single polemical texts, mostly epistolary, on either the Babylonian or Palestinian sides.

Part 4 turns to later sources, written in the two centuries following the controversy. These sources, completely neglected and unknown until now, shed important light on the long-term impact of the calendar controversy. I present, firstly, a number of short narratives of the calendar controversy, or short references to it, that are found in later literary sources and documents from the Cairo Genizah. The authors of the literary sources are Qaraite (Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ), Rabbanite (Hayye Gaon), and Christian (Elias of Nisibis), and offer very different, retrospective views of the controversy. Secondly, I present a set of Palestinian Calendar Manuals, which demonstrate that the Palestinian calendar calculation that precipitated the controversy of 921/2 was still promoted, in Palestinian circles in Cairo, as late as the early twelfth century. This is sufficient to demonstrate one of our main conclusions, namely that the calendar controversy of 921/2 did not end, as has always been believed, in a Babylonian victory.

In the Conclusion, I sum up the innovative contributions that this project and book have made, and I assess their historical significance. The Glossary

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includes the translation of foreign words, as well as the explanation of words, phrases, and concepts specific to Jewish calendar calculation. The Plates, at the end of this volume, are of images that are not available online (e.g. at the websites of the Friedberg Genizah Project or of the holding libraries), either because they were taken after conservation work was carried out on the fragments (at our request), or because special photograph was used (e.g. ultraviolet exposures), or because they represent joined fragments.

Of the named collaborators to this book, Marina Rustow deserves a special mention. Her expertise in Cairo Genizah studies, and more generally in medieval Near Eastern history—fields in which I was, and still consider myself, quite ignorant—was not only an essential contribution to the project, but indeed at its very core. In the first two years of the project (2011–2012), the collaboration was on an equal footing, and our original plan was to author this book jointly. However professional duties, competing demands on our research time, and transatlantic remoteness made it increasingly impossible to maintain this arrangement. We eventually decided that I would write the book on my own, including the text editions and translations; but I profited from Marina's advice until the very final stages of the project. I have generally written this book in the first person singular, as the writing is mine and I must take responsibility for it; but when the first person plural is used, this always means Marina and me.

The other named collaborators to this book are Nadia Vidro and Ronny Vollandt. Ronny helped us in the first year of the project to source the Genizah fragments—no small feat—and to assemble a bibliography. Nadia was involved at a later stage; she discovered four new fragments, and contributed most of the edition and translation of the Judeo-Arabic sources (her contributions are indicated in the book; all transcriptions, editions, and translations are mine unless otherwise stated). I feel privileged to have worked with such eminent scholarly colleagues; this is my opportunity to thank them, although I look forward to further collaborations with them in years to come.

Critical to the project was also Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, who helped us, with her world-leading palaeographic expertise, to date the manuscripts and analyse, more generally, their features. Much of her own time was generously spent towards this, with memorable, extended meetings in Oxford (2 June 2011) and Paris (16 November 2017). Amir Ashur, a great expert in Cairo Genizah scribal hands, came especially to London on 14 November 2016, to advise me further on the dating and authorship of the manuscripts.

My appreciation extends to colleagues that worked at various times in the calendar research projects at UCL, funded by the AHRC, the Leverhulme Trust, and the ERC: besides Nadia Vidro (above mentioned), these colleagues include

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Justine Isserles, Philipp Nothaft, Israel Sandman, Ilana Wartenberg, and above all François de Blois who advised on all matters Arabic, Syriac, calendrical, and much more. Working in teams has been a uniquely enriching experience, from which this present work has demonstrably benefited.

Many colleagues have contributed academic advice over the years, and I fear not to remember them all. I extend my thanks in particular to Haggai Ben-Shammai, Piero Capelli, Talya Fishman, Arnold Franklin, Geoffrey Herman, Geoffrey Khan, Moshe Lavee, Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, Ben Outhwaite, Devin Stewart, Gregor Schwarb, Roni Shweka, Zvi Stampfer, Marzena Zawanowska. The two anonymous peer reviewers made useful suggestions and saved me from many errors. Smaller contributions are acknowledged, where appropriate, in the body of the book.

The libraries were very helpful in providing us with digitized images of the Cairo Genizah fragments, and sometimes in restoring damaged fragments, without which our research would not have been possible. I wish to thank personally all staff members of the various libraries involved, including librarians, conservators, and imaging services staff, and in particular Ben Outhwaite (yes, again), Melonie Schmierer-Lee, and Maciej Pawlikowski of the Cambridge University Library; César Merchán-Hamann and Rahel Fronda of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; David Kraemer, Amy Gerbracht Armstrong, and Yevgeniya Dizenko of the Jewish Theological Seminar Library, New York; Arthur Kiron and Bruce Nielsen of the Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Philadelphia; and Alex Khamray of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Kyiv. Special thanks are also due to the Friedberg Genizah Project, whose website has revolutionized Cairo Genizah research, and without which this project would have been virtually impossible—I will not be the first to have noted this.

While on the technical side, I am also greatly indebted to Zina Cohen and Ivan Shevchuk for their advice on specialist lighting and photography (mainly for the poorly legible fragment L2Bab); to Jay Birbeck for digitally reconstructing, joining, and creating images of fragments (mainly of LMisc); and to Nachum Dershowitz for writing at my request, together with Ed Reingold, a programme for calculating the date of any inputted *molad* (now in the public domain, http://nachum.org/Molad.xlsx). Typesetters of TAT Zetwerk provided invaluable help, in the early stages of writing, towards the preparation of the manuscript, not least with regard to the vocalization and cantillation (accentuation) of the text editions.

The project was initially triggered, in 2011, by the award of a Small Grant of the British Academy, which enabled us to visit libraries and purchase our initial images. From 2013, we benefited from a substantial grant of the European

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Research Council (Advanced Grant Project 'Calendars', at UCL), for which I am immensely grateful. Much of the Introduction was written while I was Fellow at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Philadelphia, in the autumn of 2017; I am grateful to director Steven Weitzman, associate director Natalie Dohrmann, and all the staff of the Center without exception for their hospitality and for offering such a congenial and unique environment for inspiring research.

Thanks are also due to my academic and administrative colleagues at the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at UCL, and particularly to Lily Kahn, who gracefully (and most competently) stood in as Head of Department during my year of research leave in 2017/18. Georgia Panteli, Casey Mackenzie Johnson, and more from a distance Vanessa Clarke, served as most able administrators of the ERC project—thanks to all of you.

Members of my family, especially my wife Evadne, were most supportive in relieving me from domestic duties and freeing me to pursue my research. Family and friends took a great interest in this project; my children (mainly Esther and Yehuda) helped with manuscript readings and obscure literary allusions. Thank you Evadne and all the children for your love, patience, and for all the good times that family life brings.

In complete contrast to my previous monograph, *Calendars in Antiquity* (2012), which was a broad macro-history of ancient calendars, this present work, in all its length, is confined to a single and minute calendar-related historical event. It lasted not much more than one or two years, and it only affected a minority community, that of Rabbanite Jews, in the medieval Near East. As I hope to show, in the tradition of latter-generation *Annales* historians, the micro-historical focus opens up perspectives on the past that are as important and as significant as the large, macro-historical sweeps.

My approach is strongly empiricist, with a focus on texts and on philology. It breaks, however, with traditional philologically-based history, in its recognition, in line with current thinking, that written sources cannot serve as historical evidence—on whatever level of reliability—except insofar as they are authentic expressions of (individual or collective) *subjective* perspectives, at the time, on the historical environment and events. It does not matter, therefore, that the sources are biased; quite on the contrary, it is precisely the personal bias, the rhetorical agenda, the literary devices that constitute our historical material. They were integral, indeed, to the controversy itself.

Calendar studies are inherently multi-disciplinary, as time reckoning, in medieval Jewish society, was not just a social and economic practice but a religious, liturgical, and halakhic (legal) concern, which also bordered with science, astronomy, and arithmetic. Some readers may appreciate the texts

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for their language, expression, and literary qualities. Different approaches and emphases could have been chosen for this work; my ultimate interest has been, as always, social history.

Sacha Stern
London, November 2018

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Abbreviations

AH	Hijri era (epoch = 622 CE)
b	Babylonian Talmud
b.	*ben* (son of)
CE	Christian (or 'common') era
d	day
fol.	folio
m	Mishnah
ms	manuscript
n	night
p	Palestinian Talmud
R.	Rabbi
SE	Seleucid era (epoch = Tishri 312 BCE)
r	recto
t	Tosefta
v	verso

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Editorial Policies, Manuscripts and Sigla

Manuscript Names, Sigla, and Referencing

The texts edited in this work are nearly all from Cairo Genizah fragments that have been joined and reconstituted, as best as possible, into the larger manuscripts that they originally belonged to. The reconstructed manuscripts needed to be named, not least because the folios that constituted them often had completely different shelf-marks (typically, because of being located in different libraries). The names that I have allocated to the manuscripts reflect, in general, their textual contents. Copies of the same works, e.g. the Book of the Calendar Controversy, have been additionally numbered.

Besides names, the manuscripts have been allocated acronyms or sigla (see Table 3 at the end of this section). The prefix L stands for 'Letter(s)'. A number at the beginning of a siglum designates the work, whereas a number at the end of a siglum designates its copy: thus, 1PalMan2 means First Palestinian Calendar Manual, manuscript 2. Other elements of the sigla are self-explanatory.

Single-folio manuscripts, or manuscripts whose folios bear the same library shelf-mark, could have been simply referred to by their shelf-mark. Nevertheless, I have also given them names and sigla. This is in the hope that further fragments of the same manuscripts may be discovered and joined to them in the future.

If a folio is catalogued as recto but is really verso, the catalogued side is used when citing the shelf-mark, and the true side is used when citing my folio number. In citations of shelf-marks, the sign + is reserved for joins of fragments of the same folio (not for joins of folios within the same manuscript).

Within each manuscript, the folios extant are numbered consecutively, starting from '1', even if it is evident that this folio was not the first in the original manuscript. In most cases, indeed, it would be impossible to assign putative, original numbers to the folios. If in the future any additional folios are to be found, it will be possible to create for them additional numbers (such as '1a').

When referencing a specific passage within a manuscript, I generally use this abbreviated notation, after the manuscript's siglum:

fol. 2r:3–4 = folio 2 recto, lines 3–4

As explained in more detail in Chapter 4, wherever several manuscripts are attested of the same work, I offer both a critical edition based on an eclectic

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text, and diplomatic editions of each individual manuscript. In the diplomatic editions, I preserve the original text alignment; but in the critical editions, I have aligned the text myself as would best suit the meaning. The text of critical editions is also divided into sections, each change of section corresponding to a change in the representative, extant text witnesses. Accordingly, the following distinction needs to be made:

BCC 3 = Book of the Calendar Controversy (critical edition), section 3
BCC3 = Book of the Calendar Controversy, manuscript 3 (diplomatic edition)

Editorial Policies

Within the text editions, I have mostly used the standard papyrological sigla of the Leiden Conventions (see Tables 1 and 2).

Uncertain readings have not been indicated with dots or circles (above or below the uncertain characters), as is conventional in papyrology, because these could be confused with the vocalization and cantillation marks that appear in some of the manuscripts (and that have been transcribed as part of the diplomatic text editions). A turquoise colour has therefore been used, instead, for uncertain readings; and for the sake of consistency, the same has been used for characters that do not appear at all in the manuscript, but are restored or conjectured by the editor.

Words that are stacked at the ends of lines, in many of the manuscripts, are not marked as interlinear insertions, as this is rather a feature of the textual layout.

Difficult readings have sometimes been determined according to context (which calendar texts often permit, being highly formalized, repetitive, and/or predictable), or if more than one manuscript is attested, on the basis of readings in the other text witnesses. Conjectures have been avoided in the diplomatic editions, but have been used more freely in the critical editions, where I have attempted to offer a readable text. For the same reason, editorial markings have been kept to a minimum in the critical editions.

The texts in this corpus, as in all medieval Hebrew writing, make frequent use of biblical *topoi* and quotations. References to the relevant biblical verses have not been systematically supplied; I have only supplied the biblical references, in the notes to the text editions, where the biblical source-texts help to justify my readings, and in the notes to the translations, where they help to explain the meaning of the text and its translation.

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TABLE 1 Sigla in text editions

Siglum	Explanation
[...]	lacuna or gap in the original text (due to missing support or ink), not restored by the editors (extent known, one dot per missing character)
[ ]	lacuna or gap in the original text (due to missing support or ink), not restored by the editors (extent unknown)
[abc]	characters missing from the original text due to lacuna, restored by the editor (textual conjecture)
abc	characters of uncertain reading (e.g. broken, distorted, or partially effaced)
a(bc)	abbreviation in the text, expanded by the editor
⟨ab⟩	characters erroneously omitted by the scribe, restored by the editor
{ab}	characters in the text considered erroneous and/or superfluous by the editor
⟦abc⟧	characters that the scribe has deleted or marked for deletion
`abc´	characters inserted above the line (interlinear) (also used for marginal insertions where explicitly indicated)

TABLE 2 Sigla in translations

Siglum	Explanation
[ ]	lacuna or gap in the original text
[abc]	textual conjecture, translated
(abc)	addition of the translator, to clarify the meaning

Although I refer frequently to the earlier editions (nearly all from the turn of the twentieth century), I do not compare them systematically to my new edition, nor do I bother to list all their errors (especially the minor ones—of which I am aware that I could equally be guilty). Inasmuch as human error is unavoidable, the reader is always advised to check my text editions against the originals, images of which are now available freely online on the website of the Friedberg Genizah Project (see also the plates at the end of this volume).

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Translation Policies

Biblical verses or phrases are translated on the basis of how they are interpreted or used in the context of the passage.

Numbers in words are usually translated in words. Alphabetic numbers are rendered in Arabic numerals, although this sometimes obscures the way Hebrew alphabetic numbers can sometimes be arranged so as to form Hebrew words: most commonly, for example, אמרת (which also means 'you said') has thus been translated simply as 641 (the number of parts that ben Meir added to the midday postponement rule).

The days of the week, which are merely numbered in Hebrew and in Judeo-Arabic, have been translated into their equivalent English names, although sometimes it has been more expedient to represent them with numbers (this is always explained in the footnotes). The seventh day of the week, even when referred to as 'Sabbath' in the original text, is often translated as 'Saturday', because in the context of calendar calculations, the point is usually only to identify it within the seven-day sequence, not to make a statement about its religious quality or significance. Incidentally, I use the term 'weekday' for any day of the seven-day week (equivalent to 'day of the week', as opposed for example to 'day of the month'), and not in the modern, more restricted sense of a 'working day' within the week (weekday as opposed to weekend).

The month of the New Year is always transliterated as 'Tishri' (not Tishrei), in accordance with medieval vocalization. I use the popular spelling Saadya, even though the transliterations Sa'adya or Se'adya are more correct (another common spelling, Saadia, is less in use nowadays). However, I use the more correct Hayye (Gaon) rather than the popular 'Hai'. Following normal convention, I render *Erets Yisrael* ('the land of Israel') as 'Palestine', and *Bavel* as 'Babylonia'. These terms reflect Hebrew usage; I generally prefer them to the Arabic *Sham* (Syria/Levant) and 'Iraq', for the only reason that the majority of my literary corpus is in Hebrew. I generally prefer to translate than to transliterate, e.g. 'academy' rather than *yeshivah*. But in some cases, I have had to be content with transliteration, as a good English equivalent was difficult to achieve—e.g. *molad*. For these and other words and phrases, the reader is referred to the Glossary at the end of the book.

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TABLE 3 The corpus of manuscripts and their sigla

Name of work	Manuscript	Siglum	Fragments (shelf-marks), in approximate order
Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC)	Manuscript 1	BCC1	T-S NS 194.92
			T-S 8K4
	Manuscript 2	BCC2	JTS ENA 2555.1
			T-S 10K3
			T-S NS 175.57
			JTS ENA 2556.1
	Manuscript 3	BCC3	T-S 10K4
	Manuscript 4	BCC4	T-S 8K5
	Manuscript 5	BCC5	T-S NS 219.29
Ben Meir's First Letter (L1BM)	Manuscript 1	L1BM1	Bodl. Heb. f. 26.1–6
			JTS ENA 2556.2
	Manuscript 2	L1BM2	T-S 8K8
			T-S 8K7
			Harkavy/St Petersburg (?) (unidentified)
Saadya's Letters		LSaad	T-S 6Ja1
			Philadelphia (Katz Center) Halper 332
			Bodl. Heb. f. 56.83
			Bodl. Heb. f. 56.82

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TABLE 3 Manuscripts and sigla (*cont.*)

Name of work	**Manuscript**	**Siglum**	**Fragments (shelf-marks), in approximate order**
Letters Miscellany		LMisc	T-S 10J32.1
			Lévi (unidentified) fol. 1 + T-S NS 98.18
			Lévi (unidentified) fol. 2 + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27
			T-S 13K2.3 + Bodl Heb. d. 74.29
			T-S 13K2.1 + Bodl Heb. d. 74.28
			T-S 13K2.2 + T-S NS 309.68b
			T-S 13K2.6
			T-S 13K2.4 + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.31
			T-S 13K2.5 + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.30
Babylonian Letter 1		L1Bab	T-S 8K6
Babylonian Letter 2		L2Bab	T-S AS 83.258
Discourse on the Midday Limit		MidLim	T-S AS 160.96
Palestinian Polemic		PalPol	T-S 12.725
Calendar Manual for Cycle 249		Man249	T-S NS 98.47
Responsum of Hayye Gaon		RHayye	Strasbourg 4038.1–6
Calendar Data		CalData	T-S 12.737 (formerly T-S 10 K 5)
Qaraite Narrative		QarNar	T-S NS 262.17 + T-S AS 155.112
Palestinian Calendar Manual 1 (1PalMan)	Manuscript 1	1PalMan1	T-S Ar. 29.129
	Manuscript 2	1PalMan2	T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 9
Palestinian Calendar Manual 2		2PalMan	T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 13
Palestinian Calendar Manual 3		3PalMan	JTS ENA 3235.1–2

Note: the sources are listed in this table in order of appearance in this book. The texts of Sahl b. Maṣliaḥ and Elias of Nisibis (Chapter 16) are not included, as they are not preserved in Cairo Genizah manuscripts and have not been allocated any siglum.

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PART 1

Introduction



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CHAPTER 1

The Controversy Revisited

In the year 921/2 CE, a controversy erupted between the Jewish communities of Palestine and of Babylonia, regarding the dates of the Jewish festivals. Disagreement about how to calculate the Jewish calendar led to the celebration of Passover, in the spring of 922, and the New Year, in the autumn of 922, on different dates. The Palestinians celebrated Passover on a Sunday and the New Year on a Tuesday, whereas the Babylonians celebrated two days later, with Passover on a Tuesday and the New Year on Thursday.

The disagreement sent shockwaves through the entire Jewish Near East. Although the controversy initiated in Palestine and Babylonia, all Jews within the orbit of Palestinian or Babylonian rabbinic authority had to take up a position, on one side or the other, and decide on which dates they would celebrate the festivals. Allegiances were fluid; whether they considered themselves Palestinian or Babylonian, Jews and Jewish communities could easily change sides.

The confusion that ensued was relatively short lived, as the difference between the Palestinian and the Babylonian calendar calculation only affected two years: by the end of 923, both calendars reverted to the same dates. But through the year 921/2, Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic authorities were engaged in frantic, polemical correspondence with their opponents and with others, in an attempt to justify their position and to sway the Jewish world to their side. The stakes were evidently high; it was, above all, a fight for legitimacy and authority, part of a much broader struggle between Palestine and Babylonian for religious and political hegemony.

Not all Jews were drawn into the confusion. The controversy was confined to the Near East, from Iraq to Egypt, and only concerned the Jewish Rabbanite communities. The Qaraites, whose calendars ran on very different principles, were not implicated in the dispute; they maintained a remarkably low profile as the controversy unfolded. This controversy was strictly intra-Rabbanite; but its significance and reach, in the Near East, were wide.

The calendar controversy of 921/2 was a major historical event, arguably the most important known event of Jewish history in the tenth century. Yet after the twelfth century, the event was forgotten and vanished completely from Jewish historical memory. It was only in the later nineteenth century that knowledge of the controversy began to surface, mainly through the discovery of the Cairo Genizah, where a trove of manuscript copies of the letters and memoranda of the controversy was found.

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The possibility of a calendrical disagreement was met at first with disbelief, but by the end of the nineteenth century, a narrative of the events had become widely accepted. In true Talmudic tradition, the parties of the controversy were soon identified with specific, named rabbinic figures: Saadya (later to be known as 'Saadya Gaon') on the Babylonian side, and a little known ben Meir on the Palestinian. The documents that were known at the time were hastily edited and published, and in 1904, the Jewish calendar polymath Ḥayim Yeḥiel Bornstein brought out in Warsaw a whole monograph in Hebrew on the subject, incorporating all the edited documents to date, under the title (in Hebrew): *The Dispute between Rav Saadya Gaon and ben Meir*. It is under this name that the controversy has been referred to ever since.

The significance of the controversy, for Bornstein, went well beyond a Palestinian-Babylonian rabbinic quarrel of the early tenth century. The Cairo Genizah texts relating to the controversy, which had been composed at the time, in 921/2, mostly in Hebrew with some in Judeo-Arabic, provided the earliest known historical evidence of the fixed rabbinic calendar, i.e. the calendar scheme and calculation that have remained normative among Jews until this day. The fact that rabbis could argue about its fine details in 921/2 suggested, to Bornstein and others, that the calendar had only been recently instituted and was still in the final stages of its formation. Further Cairo Genizah fragments, discovered after 1904, confirmed Bornstein's suspicion that the rabbinic calendar calculation was only devised a few decades earlier, sometime in the ninth century. His monograph of 1904 on the calendar controversy of 921/2 thus lay the grounds for a revised history of the rabbinic calendar, which he was to elaborate upon in later publications. In due course, the consensus became established that the calendar controversy of 921/2 was the last controversy of its kind in rabbinic Judaism, and that the triumph of Saadya and the Babylonians settled the matter once and for all: it marked the finalization of the rabbinic Jewish calendar, the calendar that is still used by all Jews today.

The present book challenges this consensus on almost all points. It is based, first of all, on a complete revision of the corpus of sources, which have been thoroughly re-edited on the basis of the manuscripts and considerably augmented with new discoveries. The first editions of the Cairo Genizah fragments, on which Bornstein relied entirely (as he had no access, in Warsaw, to any of the manuscripts), were rushed and faulty—not untypically for the early history of Genizah research. Texts were poorly read and transcribed, and translations—hence interpretations—were rarely provided. Pages were often pieced together in disorder, leading to erroneous reconstructions of the original works. Unfortunately, very few of these texts were revisited or re-edited after their first editions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Very few scholars

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examined at the time, or have examined since, the original manuscripts; and no one has investigated the history of the transmission of the texts. For more than a century, generations of scholars have been relying on a monograph of 1904, itself based on faulty editions. This is what this present book is intending to correct.

Besides applying a more rigorous philological approach to the textual sources than was deployed by Bornstein and his predecessors, this book approaches the controversy of 921/2 with a different, twenty-first-century perspective on history, a different understanding of what constitutes historical evidence, and a different appreciation of the relationship between narrative, rhetoric, and historical reality. In addition, our focus on manuscripts, i.e. on codicology and material remains, is not only essential for textual edition but also opens up a dimension of the 921/2 controversy which was almost completely ignored by earlier scholars: the memory of the event and its transmission in the following centuries. The study of the textual transmission of our sources, through manuscripts that were copied mostly in the eleventh century, sheds highly significant light on the aftermath of the controversy, the prolonged survival of Palestinian and Babylonian calendrical traditions in the medieval Near East, and the historical impact of the controversy on Near Eastern Jews in later centuries.

An illustration of how the consensus has been shattered, through philological revision, new discoveries, and careful reading of our sources, is the realization that the controversy was not headed by Saadya on the Babylonian side, as was hitherto assumed, but only by the then leaders of the rabbinic academies of Babylonia. Saadya, who was not yet 'Gaon' or head of any Babylonian academy in 921/2, was only involved in a marginal way. For similar reasons, the attribution of many of the relevant texts to Saadya has been erroneous and misleading. For example, it can now be shown that the so-called 'Book of the Festivals' (*Sefer ha-Mo'adim*), the longest text in our corpus and one that has been preserved in the greatest number of manuscripts, was not authored by Saadya, as has been the established assumption. Moreover, its title—still widely accepted, ever since it was coined more than a hundred years ago—is a fiction of modern scholarship, and a misnomer for what the book contains. Contrary to what has always been believed, the purpose of this book was not to present and prescribe the definitive rabbinic Jewish calendar. This book, in fact, is no more than a memorandum of the controversy, with an explicit political agenda; it was authored and issued by the Babylonian exilarch and the leaders of the Babylonian academies. I call it the 'Book of the Calendar Controversy'.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, it has now become evident that the Babylonians did not triumph in the summer of 922, nor was the

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rabbinic calendar finalized at the conclusion of the controversy. This is not only clear from the narrative and polemical texts that were composed at the time of the controversy—which say absolutely nothing about any triumph or victory—but also from the manuscripts that were produced in later centuries. The manuscript evidence shows, indeed, that the Palestinian calendrical traditions that were disputed in 921/2 continued to be treated as normative in some circles until as late as the twelfth century. The conclusion is unescapable, but although revisionist, it should come as no surprise: for in the socio-political context of the time, there were no practical means for a standard and normative calendar to be established, at least in such a wide area as the Near East. The reason why the controversy ended in the summer of 922 was thus not anyone's victory, but simply that both sides gave up on arguing. This puts the controversy of 921/2 in a completely different light.

Why did Palestinians and Babylonians disagree on the dates of festivals in 921/2? The disagreement was about a small detail in the calculation of the calendar, which in most years made no difference, but in 921/2 created a two-day discrepancy between both calendars. Palestinians and Babylonians found themselves arguing about a technical detail which may appear to us abstruse, but which to many of them also would have been a challenge to understand. In fact, it is clear that none of the protagonists, in this controversy, were experts in the science of calendar calculation. This is reflected both in the conduct of the controversy and in the polemical texts that were written, at the time, on both sides (even those written by Saadya). Although these texts contain a fair amount of technical material, with discussions on the calendar calculation which modern scholars like Bornstein took much interest in annotating and explaining, the fact remains that the analysis of the calendar, in all these sources, is relatively simplistic and superficial.

The lack of scientific depth is another aspect of the controversy of 921/2 that was ignored by earlier scholars such as Bornstein, but is actually quite striking. Calendar schemes or rules like the Four Gates and the midday limit (more on these below) are given and described in the sources, but no attempt is ever made to explain their origins, rationale, or justification. Palestinians and Babylonians did not defend their positions on the basis of scientific arguments, such as which of the two calendars served best its purpose, or which calendar was closest to astronomical accuracy. The arguments were mainly about authority and tradition: the Palestinians argued that residence in the land of Israel gave them supreme authority in calendrical decisions, to which the Babylonians retorted that this authority had been devolved, sometime earlier, to them; and each side argued that their calendrical traditions were more authentic, and thus carried more halakhic (rabbinic legal) authority. In other words, although

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the controversy surrounded a scientific issue, no attempt was made to resolve the issue through scientific analysis and reasoning. Instead, the controversy was confined to a dogmatic debate about political authority and received tradition.

This is not to say, however, that the calendar was not at the centre of the discussion. Although the controversy was driven by a number of arguably extraneous, political agenda, the unification and standardization of the calendar was an important halakhic agenda and desideratum throughout the course of the controversy. Both sides were determined to make their calendar universal, and to ensure, true to rabbinic tradition, that the same calendar was observed by all Jews in all places and that the festivals were celebrated by all on the same dates. Although neither Palestinians nor Babylonians were successful in this endeavour, it may be assumed that the controversy made some long-term contribution towards the fulfilment of this ideal. The controversy of 921/2 sheds much light, therefore, on the political and religious—but not necessarily scientific—processes that brought about the standardization and fixation of the Jewish calendar in the medieval world.

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CHAPTER 2

Palestinians and Babylonians in Conflict: A Narrative

In the pages that follow, I shall attempt to present a narrative of the events of the calendar controversy of 921/2. 'Attempt', because this is actually an impossible task. Besides the general, theoretical problems associated with the construction of the past, with notions of 'historical truth' and 'historical reality', and with the use of literary and other sources as historical evidence, the sources at our disposal—Babylonian and Palestinian narratives and perspectives on the controversy—are so polemically charged that they cannot be read as anything but politically-motivated rhetoric. A hybrid combination of these sources, or a happy medium between them, only results in an artificial, arbitrary construct. It may successfully arbitrate between conflicting polemical narratives, but it is bad history.

These texts remain, however, the only and best historical evidence we have at our disposal. These manuscript copies of letters written at the time of the controversy, and the Babylonian memorandum of the controversy, do not tell us what actually happened; but they do represent authentic, first-hand interpretations of what was taking place. In this sense, although completely partisan and subjective, they are genuine and legitimate historical documents. It is from reading these documents that the historian gets the best impression of the events of the time, even if—or rather, precisely because—they are mediated through the subjective perspectives and attitudes of the key players in the controversy.[1]

The intention in this book, therefore, is to allow the manuscripts to speak for themselves and narrate for us—with all their rhetoric and polemical bias—the events of the controversy. Their subjective perspectives are what constitute for us history. Accordingly, most of the book is taken up with the manuscripts and their texts. In this introduction, however, I shall offer a very tentative, synthetic narrative of the historical events. This is not a definitive statement of

1 This perspective is not original or new. Malter (1921: 70) already writes: 'the immoderate charges made against Saadia … are nevertheless of value, inasmuch as they present him to us in the light in which he was seen by some of his contemporaries …'. He spoils this, however, in the continuation of his sentence: '… thus enabling us to make up our account of him after a careful consideration of the facts on both sides'. The possibility of constructing such an account is what I would dispute.

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what actually happened, but only a working model, that should be helpful at least for orientation purposes.

Background: Palestinians and Babylonians

The established custom in Palestine, in the early tenth century, was for the Palestinian rabbinic leader to make a public, annual announcement of the dates of the calendar and festivals for the forthcoming year. This announcement was made by him or his representative on the Mount of Olives, in Jerusalem, during the festival of Tabernacles (shortly after the New Year). The custom was considered to be very ancient, although its historical origins are not really known. It may have been, in fact, a relatively recent institution, because there is no record of it in any earlier source.[2]

This practice was reminiscent of the procedures described in the Mishnah (early third century); but there were significant differences. In the Mishnaic calendar procedure, the announcement of the rabbinic court was not annual but monthly, and based on reports that the new moon crescent had been sighted, which determined the beginning of the month.[3] In the tenth century, the calendar no longer depended on any new moon sightings. Since perhaps the early ninth century, the rabbinic calendar was based on a calculation that could be worked out long in advance, without dependence on any empirical observations.[4] This is what enabled the Palestinian leadership to announce the calendar dates one year in advance.

The custom, however, was not merely ceremonial—although some ceremony appears to have been involved—but served a genuine, practical purpose. Not all Jews, indeed, were versed in the calendar calculation that the Palestinian leadership employed; for probably the majority of Jews, it was necessary for the dates of the calendar to be announced and disseminated. But even those who were able to calculate the dates themselves were expected, at least from a Palestinian perspective, to respect the authority of the Palestinian leader and accept the dates as if they were his own decisions. Even if this annual announcement was primarily designed to convey calendrical information, as is in fact most likely, it was also a symbolic assertion of Palestinian rabbinic authority, supported by a claim that only the rabbis of the land of Israel were empowered to decide the dates of the Jewish calendar.

2 For evidence of its continuation in the eleventh century, see Gil (1992) 562–563.

3 *mRosh ha-Shanah* 1:3–3:1; see Stern (2012*b*).

4 This calculated calendar and its origins are discussed below in Chapter 5.

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Although direct continuity from the third-century Mishnaic procedure to the tenth-century annual announcement is historically unlikely, the association between the two was clearly intended. The Palestinian claim of authority over the calendar, which the Palestinian leadership was forcefully to assert in 921/2, was grounded in early rabbinic sources. The Mishnah and Talmudic literature describe in detail how the rabbinic court in Jerusalem, later re-located elsewhere in Palestine, determined the date of the new month and decided whether the year should be intercalated; how its decisions were disseminated to the communities of the Diaspora; and the sanctions imposed on anyone, in Palestine and the Diaspora, who did not heed its decisions. All this was underpinned by the well-engrained assumption, in rabbinic literature, that all Jews, wherever they were, had to celebrate the festivals on the same dates, and that supremacy over the calendar was in the land of Israel.[5]

Talmudic sources suggest that Babylonia respected in principle the authority of Palestine and Palestinian sages over the calendar, although in practice, much of the calendar reckoning was carried out independently in Babylonia, already in the Talmudic period (third to sixth centuries).[6] Babylonian subservience to Palestinian authorities is still evident in a letter written by the exilarch (Babylonian leader) in 835/6 CE, preserved in a copy in the Cairo Genizah. In this letter, the exilarch asserts the need to comply with Palestinian calendrical decisions; but it is debatable how much should be made of this letter. The exilarch was clearly engaged in a polemic against his Babylonian peers about the calendar dates of that particular year, and he may have found it convenient to invoke the authority of Palestine, if it so happened that the Palestinian decision agreed with his. Nevertheless, we may infer at least that this was an argument that worked, in this period, even within the Babylonian community.[7]

Less than a hundred years later, however, the Babylonians were publicly to reject Palestinian authority, during the calendar controversy of 921/2. This change of stance was significant, but it was not necessarily new. For a long time already, probably even from before the exilarch's letter of 835/6, the Babylonians had been calculating the calendar on their own. We now know from a text written in 921/2 that by this time, the exilarch and the heads of the academies in Baghdad made their own, annual announcement of the calendar dates, just as in Palestine. This announcement took place every year in the month of Elul,

5 Stern (2001) 237–244, (2012*b*).

6 Stern (2001) 244–252, 257–263.

7 For a discussion and edition of the Genizah fragment, T-S 8G7.1, see Stern (2001) 263–264 and and 277–283.

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one month before the Palestinian announcement in Jerusalem at the festival of Tabernacles, at the annual, plenary assembly of the sages and disciples of Babylonia (the *kallah*).[8]

This did not lead, however, to the observance of different calendars. By the ninth and tenth centuries, the calendar calculation was sufficiently standardized to ensure unanimity in Palestine and Babylonia. This point is emphasized in the following passage, part of a letter written by a Babylonian in 921/2, whose purpose was to legitimize Babylonia's calendrical independence from Palestine:

> And to be sure, our rabbis in Babylonia in the earlier
> generations used to send (letters) and seek from our rabbis of the land of Israel the setting of the months of every year,
> because they were not expert in the secret of intercalation like them; therefore, they used to write to them. But already many
> years ago, a few sages from Babylonia went up to the land of Israel, and analysed with the sages of the land of Israel
> the secret of intercalation, and they scrutinized and researched (it) in the Council, (until) they understood it very well. And now already for many years,
> they set the months in Babylonia on their own, and also the sages of the land of Israel calculate and set
> the months on their own, and now, in all these years their calculation has been the same, there has been no difference
> between them, but rather the calculation is firm and correct, and the festivals are sanctified according to one law and one
> teaching, because all the calculations were given together by one shepherd …
> … Behold now,
> there are elders in the academies who have reached the 'age of strength' (eighty years of age), and they are very old, and not one of all them remembers
> that the men of Babylonia ever needed to seek the intercalation of years and the setting of months from the land of Israel.
>
> LMisc Letter 3, 5r:21–5v:12

8 So according to one fragment of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, T-S NS 175.57 (BCC 26: 4–27:5). This is a newly discovered fragment, which is why the *kallah* announcement has been unknown and unmentioned in earlier scholarship.

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This passage fired the imagination of earlier scholars, who treated its story as historical fact and saw it as a major stage in the development of the rabbinic calendar. Bornstein interpreted the meeting of Babylonian and Palestinian sages, described in this passage, as the forum in which the fixed rabbinic calendar was finalized. In his reconstruction of the events, at some point in the mid ninth century, the sages of Palestine recognized that a need had arisen to adjust the calendar on the basis of newly acquired astronomical knowledge—Ptolemy's *Almagest*, which had been recently translated into Arabic.[9] The meeting which they called for this purpose was comprised of Palestinians, because they held authority in calendar decisions, and Babylonians, because they had the astronomical expertise; the meeting took place in Palestine, because this was the seat of calendrical authority. At this meeting, the rabbinic calendar was instituted in its final form.[10]

This extraordinary narrative finds little support in the passage; yet this did not prevent a number of scholars from endorsing it completely.[11] All the passage says, however, is as it was originally interpreted by Epstein and later Mann: that Babylonian scholars once went to Palestine and studied the calendar in depth.[12] This was enough, for the authors of our letter, to justify the Babylonians' practice of setting the calendar dates, henceforth, on their own.[13] It also

9 The first Arabic translation of the *Almagest*, now lost, dates to the late eighth or early ninth century, and a Syriac translation was also in circulation in this period; further translations were made in the course of the ninth century: see Kunitzsch (1974) 15–82; also Saliba (1994) 143–144. It may be assumed that these translations increased the accessibility, but also general awareness, of this work in the Arabic-speaking Near East; the production of these translations is also evidence of a developing interest in this work.

10 Bornstein (1922*a*: 349–350), followed by his colleague Jaffe (1931: 103). Sar-Shalom (1988: 37–38), who accepts this narrative, remarks that Palestinians and Babylonians could obviously not have reached agreement on all points, because if they had, the dispute of 921/2 would never have arisen.

11 E.g. Sar-Shalom (ibid. and 1992/3: 103–104). Much more guarded, however, is Gil (1992: 567). Langermann (1987: 159) judiciously remarks that Bornstein's idea of an international convention or congress to discuss and resolve the problem of calendar calculation reflects the way public issues were dealt with, in eastern European Jewry, in his own time.

12 Epstein (1902: 234–235), Mann (1920–1922: i. 51–54). Bornstein explicitly took issue with Mann, as he saw in the phrase 'they *analysed with* the sages of the land of Israel the secret of intercalation' an indication of parity: the Babylonians had not come to learn from the Palestinians, but rather to discuss the calendar as equals. In my view, this reading is far from compelling; and even if it were, the Babylonian author of this polemical letter could hardly be trusted on this. There is certainly no indication in this passage that decisions were taken to alter the calendar or institute a new calculation, as Bornstein imagined.

13 According to Sar-Shalom (1988: 37–38; 1992/3: 103–104), at this meeting the Babylonians

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supported their claim that the calendar of Palestinians and Babylonians was identical, and that there could not be any disagreement between them.

As part of a polemical letter, the historicity of this narrative cannot be taken at face value. It could equally be read as a piece of fictitious, Babylonian self-legitimization;[14] moreover, we do not know ben Meir's response to this letter, but he is likely to have vehemently rejected its historical claims.[15] Bornstein dated the meeting to no later than the mid ninth century, on the grounds that by 921/2, to paraphrase the text, the elders in the academies who had reached the age of eighty and were very old could not remember the Babylonians ever needing to seek calendrical decisions from the land of Israel[16]—yet a statement such as this is clearly polemical. In truth, the date of this meeting is unimportant, especially as we do not know whether it even happened.

If there is anything that this passage makes clear, it is that by the time of the controversy in 921/2, when this letter was written, the Babylonian leadership considered itself completely independent in matters relating to calendar reckoning. They calculated the calendar themselves, and they made their own, annual announcements of the dates of the forthcoming year. In most cases, this made no practical difference between Palestine and Babylonia, because the Palestinian and Babylonian calendar calculations were effectively the same. But in 921, they differed.

Ben Meir's Announcement

In the late summer of 921, the head of the rabbinic academy in Tiberias, Aharon ben Meir (normally known just by his patronym, 'ben Meir'),[17] instructed his son to travel to Jerusalem, as per the custom, and announce the next year's calendar dates on his behalf. By then, however, rumours were already circulating that the dates to be announced by ben Meir would differ from those that had been calculated by the Babylonians, and that had already been announced at

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were granted formal permission to set the calendar on their own; but there is no indication of this in the passage.

14 So Katz (1979) 45.

15 Stern (2001) 266–268.

16 Bornstein (1904: 30 n. 1, 1922*a*: 349–350) also inferred from the phrase 'many years ago' (מן שנים רבות: LMisc 5v:2–3), not unreasonably, that the event was relatively recent, and thus not much earlier than the ninth century; for such a phrase would not be used for the distant past.

17 On his name, see Chapter 9 pp. 212–214.

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the *kallah* in Baghdad in the preceding month of Elul.[18] Indeed, in two letters that were written later, in the middle of the winter of 921/2, Saadya (later to be known as 'Saadya Gaon', 'Rabbi Saadya',[19] and 'Rav Saadya'[20]) reports that he had become aware of ben Meir's intentions already in the summer, from disciples who had brought him the news from Baal-Gad (probably a place in Lebanon). Saadya was then residing in Aleppo, although he was about to travel on (or return?) to Baghdad.[21]

Why Saadya took the side of the Babylonians is nowhere explained. The question has never been asked, perhaps because it has always been tacitly assumed that the Babylonians were right, and that Saadya would naturally choose the right side—but both assumptions, of course, are unjustified. A native of Dilāṣ in the Fayyum (Egypt), Saadya had spent some time of his life in Palestine, perhaps until as late as 921; but by 922, he appears to have already held the title of *aluf*, suggesting that he had gained some status within the Babylonian academies.[22] It is conceivable that in the summer of 921, he had recently fallen out with the Palestinian rabbinic leaders, which would explain why he was then relocating to Baghdad and shifting his allegiance to the Babylonians, with the acquisition of a Babylonian title; but all this is speculation. In any case, he readily sided with the Babylonians. A later Geonic responsum suggests, furthermore, that at this stage in his career, Saadya was no expert in the calendar;[23] but this did not prevent him from taking up the defence of the Babylonian calendar.

While still in Aleppo, Saadya wrote one or more letters to ben Meir, to voice his disagreement with his intended calendar announcement; but these letters were ignored. By the time Saadya reached Baghdad, and ben Meir's son had finally made the announcement in Jerusalem, the exilarch and heads of the Babylonian academies were taking the lead in the controversy: they were the ones writing letters to the Palestinians, and they were the ones challenging the Palestinians' decision.[24] The Aleppo letters were Saadya's first and last direct involvement in the controversy.

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18 Announcement at the *kallah* of 921: BCC 26:4–27:5 (below, Chapter 7).

19 So in CalData, line 1, which is dated 1100 or early twelfth century (below, Chapter 16.5).

20 RHayye 6v:10 (below, Chapter 16.3).

21 Saadya's Letters, letters 2–3 (below, Chapter 10).

22 Saadya in Palestine: Malter (1921) 54–68, and Brody (2013) 25–26; the evidence derives entirely from Saadya's Letters, in our corpus. Title of *aluf*: LMisc folio x (below, pp. 374–375); see also Bornstein 1904 (71–72).

23 RHayye; see my discussion in Chapter 16.3.

24 Saadya makes this explicit in his own Letters 2–3, but tendentious readings in the early scholarship have consistently obscured this. Harkavy (1899: 90–91) quotes the fragment of

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Ben Meir's son made the announcement in Jerusalem, probably on the Mount of Olives, and probably on the second day of Tabernacles (16 Tishri, Friday 21 September 921).[25] The main body of his announcement is quoted, in several of our sources, as follows: '(the months of) Marḥeshwan and Kislew will be defective, and the first month (Nisan, will begin) on Sunday'. To explain briefly: in the rabbinic calendar, the months of the year have a fixed length of either 29 or 30 days, in alternation; the only exception are the months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew (late autumn), which are variable and can be either defective (both 29 days), orderly (29 and 30 days), or full (both 30 days). The length of these months determines the dates of the rest of the calendar and of the following festivals. According to ben Meir, on whose behalf his son had made the announcement, in year 1233 of the Seleucid Era, i.e. 921/2 CE, the months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew were to be defective. As a result, the biblical 'first month', identified with Nisan and occurring in the spring, was to begin on a Sunday; the first day of Passover, on 15 Nisan, would thus also fall on Sunday. Ben Meir's decision conflicted with the Babylonians, who had declared Marḥeshwan and Kislew to be full, and hence Nisan and Passover on Tuesday (two days later, as two days were added to the foregoing months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew). At this point, the controversy began.

Ben Meir's motivation, in announcing different calendar dates, was interpreted already in early scholarship as a revivalist attempt to re-establish the waning authority of the Palestinian rabbinic leadership.[26] This found support in a passage of the Book of the Calendar Controversy that was discovered and published much later, which depicts ben Meir as an aggressive usurper, intent

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Saadya's letters that had been published by Neubauer (1896), and reads into it that Saadya incited the exilarch and the heads of the Babylonian academies to oppose ben Meir's decision; in this very fragment, however, Saadya makes no mention of any such role on his part. Malter (1921: 82) writes that the first official letter was sent by 'the Exilarch David ben Zakkai, in conjunction with the Geonim of both academies and probably also Saadia'. The key word, which betrays his false inference, is 'probably'; indeed, there is no evidence of this at all that Saadya co-authored these letters; Saadya's letters suggest, on the contrary, that the letters were written and sent by the Babylonian leaders, and only on their own initiative. Malter quotes a passage of these letters, from which he infers, *inter alia*, that '[the Babylonian authorities] invite[d Saadya's] co-operation in signing their official letters' (p. 83). Again, there is no hint of this in Saadya's letters.

25 Rather than on the last day of Tabernacles, *Hoshana Rabba*, as scholars have assumed: see my note on BCC 3:2. The Mount of Olives as location of the announcement is implicit in ben Meir's First Letter (10:2–3), and explicit, repeatedly, in his so-called Second Letter (LMisc, Letter 4, 7v:12).

26 Bornstein (1904: 11): 'to restore the crown to its former state' (a phrase drawn from *bYoma* 69b).

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on building up his position as head of the Council through whatever means—all this, as background to the calendar controversy.[27] Similar ulterior motives could be ascribed to the Babylonians, who used their resistance to ben Meir's decision as a means of exercising their own, independent communal authority. The controversy that unravelled was clearly very political; the stakes were much higher than a difference of two days. But nevertheless, this should not obscure the fact that the disagreement between ben Meir and the Babylonians was primarily about the calendar, and that both sides applied, no doubt in good faith, the principles of calendar calculation that they had received through earlier tradition.[28]

The Controversy Unravels

In the months that followed the Jerusalem announcement, a succession of three letters—so we are told, in the Book of the Calendar Controversy—were sent from the Babylonian leaders, the exilarch and heads of the academies, to ben Meir in Tiberias. The first letter was conciliatory, suggesting that his announcement had probably been made in error, and that it only needed to be corrected and made good. Ben Meir replied that it was not an error, and that his calendar decision conformed to the calendar calculation he had received through his tradition, including the rule of 641–642 (this rule, which was the basis of his decision, will be explained below in Chapter 5); and above all, he argued that the sages of the Land of Israel were the supreme authority over the calendar. In the next letters, the Babylonians retorted that ben Meir's tradition of 641–642 was erroneous and contrived, and that only their tradition—enshrined in an algorithm called the 'Four Gates'—was authentic; support for it was found, allegedly, in a passage of the Babylonian Talmud (which, no doubt, did little to impress the Palestinians, who traditionally relied on their own, Palestinian Talmud). The conversation soured, became abusive, and ended in a standoff.

When the Babylonians realized that they were making no headway with ben Meir, they turned their attention to the Jewish communities 'close and distant', and hurriedly sent letters 'to all corners of the earth' explaining that ben Meir's decision was wrong, and laying out the correct dates of the calendar. These letters received a mixed reception; of the Babylonians' own admis-

27 T-S NS 194.92 (BCC1), discovered and published by Ezra Fleischer in 1984. The Book of the Calendar Controversy is edited, with critical and diplomatic editions, in Part 2.

28 These principles are explained in detail below, in Chapter 5.

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sion (in the Book of the Calendar Controversy), the Jewish communities were plunged into confusion, not knowing whose authority to obey. Our sources suggest, indeed, that allegiances were unclear and did not conform to a neat Palestinian-Babylonian cleavage.[29]

At this point, according to the Book of the Calendar Controversy, ben Meir went one step further and appropriated the Babylonian Four Gates, by emending them and adapting them to his own calendar rules;[30] his version of the Four Gates was then widely disseminated. The circulation of different versions of the Four Gates only added to the general confusion. In appropriating the Four Gates, ben Meir was obviously fighting the Babylonians on their own turf; but from the Babylonian perspective, he had raised the controversy to a higher level. Indeed, the disagreement between them was no longer restricted to the calendar decisions of 921/2, but now extended to the calendar as a whole, and would affect the calendar forever on a permanent basis.

The Palestinian version of the Four Gates appears already in an extant letter of ben Meir that was written in or after the winter month of Tevet and before Passover (922), in response to an already abusive letter from the Babylonians (L1BM). In this letter, ben Meir refers to a visit he once made in Baghdad in connection with some other political matter; he addresses his readers as his allies in Babylonia, in this earlier matter as well as in this present controversy. This claim of friendship may be contrived, as a rhetorical ploy to win over his readers; but it is also possible that ben Meir was attempting to exploit internal divisions within the Babylonian Rabbanite community. For his opponents in Babylonia, who are said to have sent the letters to Palestine, are named in this letter as David ben Zakkai (the exilarch), the 'priest' (presumably Kohen Tsedeq, of the academy of Pumbedita),[31] and Sa'id ben Yosef al-Dilāṣi, i.e. Saadya. These

29 This may be inferred from several sources, reflecting a range of geographical locations. Letter 1 of the Letters Miscellany is a polemic against ben Meir and his calendar, addressed to someone in Palestine; yet its author is Levantine, and possibly even Palestinian himself (Chapter 11). Babylonian Letter 1—which I only call 'Babylonian' because of its allegiance with the Babylonian calendar—appears to be of the same (or similar) author (Chapter 12). The Qaraite Narrative suggests that in Babylonia, the Rabbanites were divided as to which dates to follow, Babylonian or Palestinian (or even Qaraite: Chapter 16.6). In Egypt, and particularly in Fusṭāṭ, the coexistence of Palestinian and Babylonian communities is well known; but Letter 1 of Saadya's Letters informs us that in the New Year of 922, communities that were expected to follow the Babylonian dates ended up opting for the Palestinian ones (Chapter 10). Finally, the short narrative of Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ claims that 'there were some residents of Palestine who followed the Babylonians, and also some residents of Iraq followed the Palestinians' (Chapter 16.1).

30 See further discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 79–80.

31 Brody (2013) 154.

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names are not insignificant. Kohen Tsedeq was then at the centre of a succession crisis in the academy of Pumbedita, the leading academy at the time, which since 917 had been opposing him, the exilarch's favourite, and Mevasser, the favourite of the rank and file of the academy, for the title of 'gaon' or head of the academy.[32] By laying the blame on the exilarch's faction, i.e. the exilarch and the 'priest', ben Meir is implicitly eliciting support from Mevasser's opposing faction.

Saadya and ben Meir

The inclusion, furthermore, of Saadya among the list of his enemies reveals perhaps ben Meir's belief that Saadya was playing a leading role in the calendar controversy. However, this is not reflected in any of the Babylonian sources, nor even in Saadya's own letters (as I explain below). It is possible that ben Meir is only singling him out because of some personal vendetta, going back to when Saadya studied in Palestine (and eventually left). At the end of the letter, ben Meir refers one more time to Saadya together with 'his wicked colleagues, these Egyptian heretics'; shifting the blame unto Saadya and venting anti-Egyptian prejudice is perhaps yet another way, for ben Meir, of attempting to win over his Babylonian addressees. Most of the letter, however, is about the supremacy of the Land of Israel over the calendar; the letter also offers a detailed, technical explanation of ben Meir's calendar decision, involving the Four Gates as well as his own, Palestinian traditional algorithms.

Polemics against Saadya are even more prominent in another extant letter of ben Meir, dating from after Passover 922, when the festival had already been celebrated by Palestinians and Babylonians on different dates. In this letter, ben Meir exhorts the Babylonians to correct their calendar, forget their past error, and observe the forthcoming New Year on the correct (his) dates. He reminds them, again, of his earlier visit to Baghdad and his alliance with them against their common enemy, namely—as is now made explicit—the Ananites. The letter, however, is a bitter and violent invective against the Babylonian Rabbanite leadership, indicative of how far the controversy had progressed since before Passover. At one point, ben Meir suggests something close to a schism ('through us and through you, let there be fulfilled "and Samuel never saw Saul again"—1 Sam. 15:35').[33] The names of the exilarch and 'priest' are again men-

32 So according to the *Epistle* of Sherira Gaon (written in 987), ed. Lewin (1921) 119–120.

33 LMisc, Letter 4, 8r:2–3.

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tioned; yet most of the blame is laid, in this letter pervasively, on Saadya—as if still to exonerate the Babylonians and give them a way out of their entrenched position.

Saadya, however, is not mentioned in any of the Babylonian sources, and above all, not once in the narrative of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. This makes it most unlikely that he played a leading role in Babylonia, if any significant role at all, in the controversy.[34] Saadya did write some letters about the calendar controversy, three of which have been preserved (Saadya's Letters 1–3); these letters, however, make it clear that the heads of the academies, not he, were at the forefront of the controversy.[35] Significantly, his letters are not addressed to ben Meir or the Palestinian leaders, but only to his disciples in Egypt. He also refers in one letter, rather vaguely, to letters he sent to 'the mighty cities'; again, this is not the Palestinian leadership.[36] Unlike the Babylonian exilarch and heads of the academies, Saadya did not polemicize directly with the Palestinian leaders; the purpose of his letters was only to dissuade his Egyptian compatriots from following the Palestinian calendar.[37] In this, he was not unique. Letter 1 of the Letters Miscellany is a similarly private letter from a pro-Babylonian, learned individual (not Saadya) in Palestine, the Levant, or Egypt, to someone else suspected of siding with the Palestinians. This letter is sophisticated and replete with technical arguments about the calendar—in contrast to Saadya's letters, which are remarkably devoid of any technicalities about the calendar, and simply state the Babylonian dates as authoritative.[38] All the above makes it abundantly clear that Saadya's involvement in the controversy was both marginal and limited.

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34 This is contrary to the prevailing scholarly consensus, for example Gil (2004: 218): 'The person who raised the issue and who agitated the Babylonian Jewish public and its leaders was, as is known, Saadia b. Joseph, who would become gaon in Sura. It was he who mobilized the Jewish communities in Babylonia and the other Diaspora countries to oppose the calendar calculation for the year AM 4682 (921–922)'.

35 See above, n. 24.

36 Saadya's Letters 8r:6–8. Malter writes, on the basis of this passage, that 'Saadia issued such letters on his own account to the largest congregations in and outside of Babylon—a proof of the great fame and popularity he must have enjoyed in Jewry in general' (1921: 83). All this—that his addressees were the 'largest' congregations, that he enjoyed 'great fame and popularity'—are gross over-interpretations; moreover, a letter of this kind, designed to impress and persuade its readers, can hardly be used as historical 'proof'.

37 Schechter (1901–1902: 41–42) attributes Letter 3 of the Letters Miscellany, which is addressed to the Palestinian leaders, to Saadya; whilst Mann attributes Letter 1 to Saadya. As explained in my introduction to LMisc, these attributions are problematic and unlikely.

38 As rightly noted by Bornstein (1904) 30–31.

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The emphasis that has been placed in earlier scholarship on Saadya—to the extent of calling this controversy the 'dispute between Saadya and ben Meir'—is partly due to his later fame, and partly to the fact that ben Meir's First Letter, where Saadya is mentioned, was the first Genizah document on the controversy to be published, in 1891. Ben Meir's letters, however, are misleading; he was either mistaken himself about Saadya's position in Babylonia, or more likely, he found it convenient to use Saadya as a scapegoat, in the hope of persuading the Babylonians to relent and move over to his side.[39]

Crisis in Babylonia

To go back to the story. By the summer of 922, the controversy had reached the stage where it would have been impossible for either side to prevail through direct confrontation. Now that written copies of ben Meir's calendar were in circulation around the Near East, the Babylonians were well aware that it could not be called back or eradicated. The sentiment was not victory or triumph, but if anything, defeat.[40]

As we are told in other sources, mainly Sherira Gaon's *Epistle*, this was not the only problem the Rabbanite community of Babylonia was then contending with. For several decades, the once famous academy of Sura had been in severe decline, reaching almost the point of closure;[41] whilst the academy of

39 Ben Meir's letters cannot be treated simply as 'evidence' (*pace* Brody 2013: 154), especially when contrasted with what Saadya writes about himself in his own letters, and with the complete absence of Saadya in the Book of the Calendar Controversy. As a methodological point, I should emphasize that I am not hierarchizing my sources and claiming that some are more reliable than others. All these sources are highly polemical and directed towards specific agendas which we cannot always be certain of. Moreover, historical reliability is not really what we should be looking for, not only because of the nature of these sources, but also because of the problems which the concept of reliability raises in the context of the study of history (see for example Mason 2016: 136–137, on historical reliability with reference to Josephus). All our sources reveal are the attitudes of the various players who authored them, and the argumentation they used against their opponents. The narrative I am extracting from this is tentative; it is plausible to me, but other readers might position themselves differently on this.

40 BCC 10:2–12:6, 30:14–17. The same sentiment may be read in Saadya's letter to Egypt of 3 January 923 CE (Saadya's Letters, Letter 1). Gil (2004: 220) acknowledges this, and argues that 'the year AM 4682 [921/2 CE] was indeed a year of victory for the Palestinian gaon and possibly only in the next year, after vigorous guidance, did the Babylonian personages succeed in enforcing the correct calendrical rules in all the Jewish diasporas'. His latter statement, of Babylonian victory in the next year, is without any foundation.

41 Sherira Gaon, *Epistle* (Lewin 1921: 116–117).

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Pumbedita, as mentioned above, was in a major succession crisis. The internal divisions of the Babylonian leadership could not have been helping them in their struggle against the Palestinian bid for calendar supremacy. It is no coincidence, therefore, that as were are told by Sherira, in the summer month of Elul 1233 SE (= 922 CE)—an unusually precisely dated event in Sherira's *Epistle*—the exilarch David ben Zakkai attempted a reconciliation by conceding to the appointment of Mevasser Gaon as head the Pumbedita academy. In the event, this made no difference, because as Sherira goes on to tell us, the two rival factions continued co-existing with their own leaders.[42] But the fact that the event is recorded by Sherira indicates that it was treated at the time as an important political event, worthy of remembrance. The date of Elul 922 CE is significant, even though its significance is not explained by Sherira. This was precisely the month when the Babylonians went on their final offensive in the calendar controversy.[43]

As noted above, it was clear to the Babylonians that they would not be able to eradicate ben Meir's calendar from all the Near Eastern Jewish communities. They therefore decided, as to the best course of action, to write a memorandum of the controversy—the Book of the Calendar Controversy, which has survived in several copies in the Cairo Genizah—that would narrate the controversy and lay down the correct version of the Four Gates. At best, this book would serve as an antidote to ben Meir's widely circulated calendar.[44] On Monday, 20 Elul (16 September 922), public readings were made of ben Meir's writings, no doubt with a view of exposing his error.[45] But the memorandum of the controversy was not completed until after the festivals of Tishri, on Tuesday, 27 Tishri (22 October 922).[46] On that date, the book was formally written and signed by the exilarch, and then disseminated to all places where Jews were at risk of falling for ben Meir. A complaint may also have been addressed at this time by the Babylonians to an Abbasid governor;[47] but if this is so, their complaint must have fallen on deaf ears, as nothing is heard of it thereafter.

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42 Ibid. 119–120.

43 See Bornstein (1904) 12, (1922*b*) 241, Mann (1934) 155. Sherira's complete silence about the calendar controversy in this year is not suspicious, but simply due to the fact that his main concern, in the *Epistle*, is the Gaonate (leadership of the academies) and the history of its succession.

44 BCC 12:7–11, 13:3–14:6, 30:14–23. The writing of this memorandum is also referred to in Saadya's Letter 1 (LSaad fol. 2v:3–11).

45 BCC 12:12–13:2.

46 This date is a new discovery. It is attested in a passage of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 13:2–3) which earlier editors and scholars ignored, because the only manuscript, BCC1 (fol. 2v, end), was faded, and no one made any serious effort to read it.

47 So BCC 14:6–7, according to my revised reading of the passage; but this reading remains

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Differences Persist

The offensive of the Babylonians came too late to prevent the observance of the festivals of Tishri on divergent dates. Elias of Nisibis (c. 1019) reports in his chronicle that in the year equivalent to 921 CE (*lege* 922), Palestinians and Babylonians celebrated the New Year on different days: Palestinians on a Tuesday, Babylonians on the following Thursday. This finds confirmation in a letter dated Friday 11 Tevet (3 January 923) from Saadya to his disciples in Egypt, in which he rebukes them implicitly for succumbing to ben Meir and for observing his dates in the preceding New Year (autumn 922). As Saadya explains, they had been misled by the appearance of the New Year's new moon crescent as early as Tuesday evening. This early new moon sighting meant that Qaraites and Muslims in Egypt must have counted Wednesday (25 September 922) as the first day of the month; and this misled the Rabbanites to believe that the Babylonian New Year, on Thursday, was too late and erroneous, and thus to prefer the Palestinian New Year on Tuesday. A Qaraite narrative of the controversy confirms that in 922, the Qaraites observed the New Year on Wednesday, whereas Rabbanites on the Babylonian side were divided and in confusion. The same text adds that Palestinians and Babylonians continued observing different dates right until the beginning of 924 CE, when both calendars automatically returned to the same dates.[48]

Although there is thus some evidence, which should not necessarily be treated as biased, that the two-day difference between Palestinians and Babylonians persisted until 924 CE, the controversy seems to have died away much earlier. The Book of the Calendar Controversy suggests that even before the New Year of 922, the Babylonians had given up on swaying the Palestinians to their side.[49] Apart from Saadya's 'Letter 1', the latest of his letters which dates from 3 January 923 CE, no datable correspondence or other polemical literature appears to have survived from after 922; and even Saadya's letter, it should be noted, was not addressed to the Palestinians directly, but rather to his own disciples in Egypt.

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tentative and problematic (see discussion there). According to BCC 12:3, the Babylonians had considered taking such action earlier in the year, but then resolved not to appeal to the authorities. Schechter argued similarly, but on the basis of a completely different text (Letter 4 in LMisc 8v:1–3), that in the course of the calendar dispute 'the aid of the secular arm was invoked' (1901–1902: 41); that text, however, only refers to an intervention by the (Jewish) followers of Anan, prior to the calendar controversy and unrelated to it.

48 Saadya's Letter 1; Qaraite Narrative (the latter, a new discovery, is edited in Chapter 16.5).

49 BCC 10:2–12:6, 30:14–17, referred to above.

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Previous scholars attributed the silence of our sources, and the apparent cessation of all correspondence, to a Babylonian triumph. However, given the background and the events of 921/2, a triumph of this kind is historically most unlikely. Ben Meir and Palestinians had no reason to give in; and there is nothing to suggest that the dissemination of the Babylonian memorandum of the controversy, highly polemical and one-sided as it was, could have made any difference to people's allegiances, and could have swayed Palestinians or even waverers to the Babylonian side. The cessation of polemical correspondence in 923 was not due to anyone's victory, but rather, much more likely, a symptom that both sides had lost interest in pursuing an argument that could not possibly be won.

By the beginning of 924, both calendars converged and returned to the same dates. This natural end to the calendar controversy was probably not permanent, however, since the same disagreement could easily have arisen again in the future. It was only a few years later, in 927, that similar calendrical conditions recurred, with the effect of Passover falling on Tuesday for the Palestinians and on Thursday for the Babylonians, and the New Year on Thursday and Saturday respectively.[50] There is no reason to assume that Palestinians and Babylonians did not diverge in this year, just as they had done five years earlier. A responsum of Hayye Gaon (late tenth century: RHayye) suggests in fact just that: that the same disagreement occurred, again, in 927. Yet, this did not give rise, as far as we know, to any controversy.

The absence of controversy in that year was taken by previous scholars as an indication that the Palestinians complied, at last, with the Babylonian calendar. It is far more likely, however, that Palestinians and Babylonians persisted in their differences, but preferred not to rekindle a controversy that had led, five years earlier, to pointless hatred and to a stalemate. Furthermore, it is possible that the main players of the controversy of 921/2 were no longer around or available for a repeat performance. On the Palestinian side, ben Meir could easily have been no longer in office or alive. On the Babylonian side, one of the heads of the academy of Pumbedita, Mevasser Gaon, had died in 924; whilst the exilarch, David ben Zakkai, was caught up in a new succession crisis regarding the recently revived academy of Sura, surrounding the eventual appointment of Saadya as Gaon in 928, and probably had no time or political interest in crossing swords again with the Palestinian leadership.[51]

50 Bornstein (1904) 159.

51 For a general critique of the notion of Babylonian triumph in the Geonic period, see Rustow (2008) 19–23.

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Aftermath and Decline

After 927, the disagreement between the Palestinian and Babylonian calendar calculations was not to take effect again until 1108.[52] This means that for nearly two centuries, their disagreement became practically irrelevant. Nevertheless, Palestinians and Babylonians maintained their distinct calendar traditions throughout this period. This is evident from a number of recently discovered Cairo Genizah manuscripts of calendar manuals, some dating from as late as the twelfth century, that bring down, often quite prominently, ben Meir's rule of 641–642 (Chapter 17). These calendar manuals, which treat ben Meir's rule as completely normative, must have been written and copied by Palestinians or those identifying with Palestinian tradition. It is perhaps precisely because the difference between their calendars was inconsequential, between 927 and 1108, that Palestinians and Babylonians could afford, through this period, to maintain their distinct calendar traditions, without the risk of igniting controversies as in 921/2.

The continuity of the Palestinian calendrical tradition, well beyond the time of the calendar controversy of 921/2, is also implicit in the *Megillat Evyatar* (Scroll of Abiathar), another text preserved in the Cairo Genizah. It was written in 1094 by Evyatar (Abiathar) ha-Kohen b. Eliyyahu, gaon of the Palestinian academy in Tyre (1083–1112, with an interruption in 1093–1094), as a polemical treatise celebrating his triumph over a Babylonian rival for his office, a scion of the exilarchic line named David b. Daniel.[53] One of the main arguments in defence of his claim to the gaonate is that although, since the days of Rabbi (early third century CE), the secret of the calendar (*sod ha-'ibbur*) has been divulged among all the sages of Israel in the form of the Four Gates, nevertheless, the authority to set the calendar rests entirely on the Palestinian geonim, in direct continuity with the ancient tradition that only the head of the Sanhedrin was entitled to set the calendar.[54] Evyatar's reference to the Four Gates 'from which no one should deviate right or left' (fol. 5r, l. 9) indicates very clearly that the issue, in his day, was not about the dates of the calendar, on which everyone was assumed to agree. The issue was rather one of formal authority;

52 In 1108 CE, Passover and the New Year would have been on Saturday and Monday for the Palestinians, and on Sunday and Tuesday for the Babylonians.

53 T-S 10K7.1 and T-S 12.729, edited by Schechter (1902: 449–476; 1903: 80–106); see also Gil 1979, Rustow (2008) 337–339.

54 Evyatar dwells at great length on the subject of the calendar, from T-S 10K7.1, fol. 2v, l. 19 to fol. 5r, l. 18; but the most significant passage is on fol. 5r, ll. 4–14; see also fol. 2v, ll. 19–20, fol. 3r, l. 22, and *passim*.

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but in this respect, Evyatar echoes very closely the arguments made by ben Meir nearly two hundred years earlier.

To this we may add that the mere fact that the letters and writings of 921/2, from both the Palestinian and the Babylonian sides, were being copied during the following two centuries—as evident from our corpus of manuscripts—is proof of an abiding interest in this controversy, and arguably, of abiding loyalties to the Palestinian and Babylonian positions. In Evyatar's period and even later, copies of the Book of the Calendar Controversy were still being written in Egypt; some are well produced, and served perhaps as official copies from which public readings were still made on an annual basis; others are cheaply produced, and intended no doubt for private reading.[55] The latter, in particular, are evidence of the popularity of the work and of the controversy that it relates, and of its relevance in Jewish Fusṭāṭ still in the early twelfth century.

This said, it is clear that the Palestinian calendrical tradition, and in particular ben Meir's rule of 641–642, was on a trajectory of decline. In the year 1108, when the calendars would again have diverged, no one is known to have observed, in practice, the dissident calendar of ben Meir—even though ben Meir's rule was still being charted in calendar manuals in this period.[56] Evyatar, writing less than fifteen years earlier, does not hint to the possibility of differing from his Babylonian rivals over the calendar in the forthcoming year 1107/8. A controversy of this kind was no longer on the agenda of the Palestinian leadership.

The gradual decline of the Palestinian calendrical tradition, and the eventual ascendency of the Babylonian calendar, was not due specifically to a Babylonian 'triumph'. The emergence of the Babylonian calendar calculation as the sole calendar in the Near East and, from the twelfth century (if not earlier), in the West, was probably a very slow process, that may be regarded as symptomatic of the more general decline of Palestinian traditions in Palestine, Egypt, and Byzantium through the eleventh to thirteenth centuries.

Knowledge of ben Meir's calendar seems never to have reached the West. Only a few years after 1108, in 1123, three monographs were written in

55 Manuscripts BCC2 and BCC3 of the Book of the Calendar Controversy date from Evyatar's period, and exemplify most sharply these two different kinds of manuscripts. See further my introduction to the Book of the Calendar Controversy (Chapter 6), and the diplomatic edition of BCC2 (Chapter 7.2).

56 A divergence of observances is bound to have been been mentioned or recorded in some form; the silence of our sources is therefore significant. I have not found any dated documents from that year; but T-S NS 98.29 (verso left—recto right), a calendar roster that includes the year 1107/8, conforms to the Babylonian reckoning.

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France on the Jewish calendar, by Abraham bar Ḥayya, Jacob bar Samson, and an anonymous author in the earliest extant manuscript of *Maḥzor Vitry*.[57] None of these monographs make any reference to the Palestinian calendar tradition, to the controversy of 921/2, or to the disagreement that might have arisen in 1108. Within no more than one century later, not only in the West but also in the East, the controversy fell into oblivion and vanished entirely from Jewish historical memory.

57 Stern and Isserles (2015); on these works and the relationship between them, see discussion there, pp. 208–212.

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CHAPTER 3

Discovery and Early Scholarship

Early Premonitions

The first indication in Europe—at that time, no more than a premonition—that a major calendar controversy had erupted in the early tenth century appeared in 1860, in Simḥah Pinsker's source-book *Liqqutei Qadmoniot*. Within this publication was a polemical tract by the mid tenth-century Qaraite Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, which refers very briefly to a Rabbanite disagreement in the days of 'the Fayyumite' (Saadya), when the Palestinians celebrated the festivals on one day, and the Babylonians and their followers on another.[1]

Initially, no one paid attention to this short passage, tucked away in Pinsker's voluminous work. It may have gone unnoticed, or it may have been met with such incredulity that it was brushed aside as an absurd polemic. The only scholar who noticed this passage was Pinkus Frankl, in an article published eleven years later. He dismissed the possibility that Rabbanite Jews of the tenth century could have disagreed about calendar dates, and argued instead, quite ingeniously (but wrongly), that Sahl was referring specifically to the New Year, and to the well-documented rabbinic debate regarding whether it should be observed in Palestine on one day only, or as in Babylonia, on one day and on its morrow.[2]

Scholars were not able to remain in denial for too long, however, because further evidence of the controversy emerged in 1884, with the publication of the early eleventh-century chronicle of Elias, bishop of Nisibis, written in Syriac and Arabic. In an entry of his chronicle, Elias not only corroborated Sahl's account of the controversy, but also provided additional information about it. It was thus revealed that the controversy broke out in 921/2, and that the festivals of Palestinians and Babylonians were two days apart (Sahl had been ambiguous on this point): more precisely, to quote, 'the Jews who are in the West made their New Year on Tuesday, and those of the East on Thursday'.[3]

1 Pinsker (1860) ii. 36. Text and discussion below, Chapter 16.1.

2 Frankl (1871) 355–360. Frankl's argument was eventually refuted by Poznański (1897), partly (but not solely) on the basis of later discoveries. That Frankl was the only scholar to address Sahl's passage (at least in this early period) is confirmed by Bornstein (1904: 7 and 1922*b*: 237, each time with the wrong page numbers—a characteristic of Bornstein's references, which I would put down to his notorious, delibitatingly poor eyesight).

3 Baethgen (1884); text and discussion below, Chapter 16.4.

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Perhaps not surprisingly, however, this passage also remained for a long time unnoticed. In 1889, it was translated into English, without comment, by Cyrus Adler in a short note whose stated purpose was to call attention to passages in Elias' chronicle that were of interest for Jewish history but that may have been 'overlooked in the mass of valuable material there given'.[4] But it was not until 1897 that Samuel Poznański drew proper attention to this passage.[5] By then, however, Cairo Genizah manuscripts were flooding the market, and through the publication of some of the relevant fragments, the so-called dispute of Saadya and ben Meir had already become much better known.

The First Cairo Genizah Texts Emerge

The first Cairo Genizah text of relevance to the controversy was discovered and published by the Russian scholar Abraham Harkavy in 1891.[6] The circumstances of this discovery were serendipitous. As Harkavy himself puts it, 'the story was as follows'.[7] One or two years earlier, Harkavy had published various pieces about Saadya's life and works, where he suggested that his place of birth was Dilāṣ, in Egypt. This caught the attention of Adolf Neubauer, in Oxford, who had seen a Genizah manuscript that had recently been acquired by the Bodleian Library where Saadya was referred to as *al-Dilāṣi*, of Dilāṣ.[8] He promptly informed Harkavy, who asked him for a transcription of the full text. Neubauer obliged, and expedited a transcription to Harkavy. On receipt, Harkavy realized that this text was a letter of ben Meir, who was known to him from a manuscript of Saadya's *Sefer ha-Galuy* as one of Saadya's opponents.[9] He also recognized that this Oxford text overlapped with another Genizah manuscript that was with him in St Petersburg, and that contained the end of ben Meir's letter; but because the beginning of the letter was missing in this manuscript, Harkavy had not been able, until then, to identify its author and subject. As the Bodleian manuscript now showed, this letter was written by ben Meir in response to a letter dated 1 Tevet 1233 SE, which Harkavy attributed (wrongly) to Saadya.

4 Adler (1889). The page numbers he refers to suggests that his English translation, a little imprecise, was only based on Baethgen's German translation.

5 Poznański (1897) 153–154.

6 Harkavy (1891) 212–221.

7 ומעשה שהיה כך היה (Harkavy 1891: 212).

8 This manuscript is now known as Bodl. Heb. f. 26 (six folios), in this work part of L1BM1.

9 The relevant passage from *Sefer ha-Galuy* was edited by Harkavy in the same volume, (1891) 150–153; see my introduction to the Book of the Calendar Controversy.

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The identification of ben Meir's correspondent as Saadya was probably inspired by the references to Saadya in ben Meir's response (L1BM 12:7, 25:10–11). Harkavy may also have been influenced by the mention of Saadya in the short narrative of Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, which, as the first piece of information that had been published on the controversy, is likely to have had a formative influence on the interpretations of later scholars.[10] But Harkavy went much further and proposed, without any evidence, that Saadya had been especially called over from Egypt by the Babylonian rabbinic leaders to conduct, from his position of calendrical knowledge, their controversy against ben Meir.[11]

This early attempt to piece together a narrative of the controversy was not adopted whole piece by Harkavy's contemporaries. Samuel Poznański, in an article on the controversy published in 1897, re-told Harkavy's narrative but noted in a footnote that 'there is much [in it] that is uncertain'.[12] Indeed, a second Cairo Genizah text that had just been published in 1896 by Adolf Neubauer contradicted Harkavy's suggestion that Saadya had been especially called from over Egypt by the Babylonian leaders.[13] Nevertheless, the notion

10 See my introduction to the passage of Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, Chapter 16.1. In relation to Harkavy, however, caution must be exercised, as in this article (1891) Harkavy does not mention the text of Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ; it is likely that at the time, he did not yet draw the connection between these sources (at least explicitly).

11 Harkavy (1891) 221. Harkavy's unfounded assumption that Saadya was a noted expert in the calendar was based on Abraham ibn Ezra's cliché of him as 'the first speaker in all places' (*Sefer Moznaim*, prologue), which Harkavy quotes already in the first page of this volume (1891: 1; the volume is dedicated to Saadya), and which he explicitly relies on again here. The later discovered responsum of Hayye Gaon (in our corpus, RHayye) challenges in fact the notion of Saadya's calendar expertise, and hence Harkavy's entire hypothesis.

12 Poznański (1897) 153, n. 1.

13 Neubauer (1896), an Oxford fragment containing one of Saadya's own letters (LSaad), which makes clear that Saadya had long left Egypt at the time when the controversy broke out, and was currently residing in Aleppo; moreover, Saadya says nothing about being called upon by the Babylonian leaders. It should be noted, however, that Neubauer's attribution of this letter to Saadya—correct, as it eventually turned out—was met by scepticism by his contemporaries. Poznański qualified it as a mere suggestion (1987: 152 and 153 n. 1). Lévi (1900*b*: 230–231) refrains from attributing the letter to anyone, and concludes with the statement—which he does not substantiate in any way, however—that there are many indications disproving the attribution to Saadya (although this is slightly ambiguous, Lévi's concluding statement seems clearly to refer to Neubauer's fragment, rather than to his own fragment in the 1900*b* article). The reluctance of Poznański and Lévi to accept Saadya's authorship of this letter was possibly fuelled by Harkavy's contradictory narrative, although Poznański attempted to reconcile them (1987: 153 n. 1). The speculativeness and circularity of these arguments of the 1890s, largely due to the dearth of evidence, is striking.

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that Saadya was especially called over to quash ben Meir was reiterated uncritically by Adler and Broydé in 1900. In the long term, Harkavy's narrative was undoubtedly instrumental in forming the long-standing scholarly consensus that consistently invested Saadya with the leadership of the controversy on the Babylonian side.[14]

Harkavy's publication of 1891 was a hybrid edition of the Oxford and St Petersburg fragments. The St Petersburg fragment is currently lost, which makes it impossible for us to verify the accuracy of his edition. But the transcription that Harkavy used for the Oxford manuscript, which is extant, is considerably flawed. It was clearly executed by Neubauer in some haste, only in response to Harkavy's request, and presumably without any intention of it ever being published. Yet it is this flawed transcription that has formed, until now, the basis of all subsequent editions of this major text. The same applies to the Neubauer's publication of 1896: his edition, sloppy and inaccurate, has determined all subsequent editions.

Publication of the Genizah Fragments

The discoveries of Harkavy and Neubauer were clearly a major breakthrough, but the most significant turning point in the modern rediscovery of the controversy occurred in the early years of the twentieth century, when the following, highly significant Genizah documents were published at a rapid pace (in chronological order):

- an additional fragment of ben Meir's letter from Solomon Schechter's collection in Cambridge, but given over to Israel Lévi, in Paris, who published it in 1900.
- a narrative of the controversy published later in 1900 by the English scholar-collector Elkan Adler and his scholarly assistant Isaac Broydé, with a French translation.[15] Adler and Broydé identified it as belonging to what Harkavy had called Saadya's *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*—a misattribution which has stood fast until today.[16]

14 This view was reiterated by Harkavy (1899: 90–91), and then completely taken for granted, for example, by Epstein (1901) 172.

15 In this publication, Isaac Broydé is designated with the initial J.

16 Adler and Broydé (1900) 224. They seemed to believe, furthermore, that the letter of ben Meir was incorporated into the same work. The attribution of this text to a *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* authored by Saadya was endorsed, uncritically, by Epstein (1901: 191).

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– truncated fragments of a polemical letter, published by Lévi in the same article as Adler and Broydé. These fragments, which Lévi saw in the same year at the great exhibition in Paris of 1900, are now lost.
– another letter of Saadya, distinctively in Judeo-Arabic, published by Hartwig Hirschfeld in January 1904, from another fragment in Cambridge (all the other texts were in Hebrew). An English translation was supplied.

But the most prolific editor of Genizah texts relevant to the controversy, in these critical years, was Solomon Schechter. In a series of three articles in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* entitled 'Genizah Specimens—Saadyana' (1901–1902), he published many new fragments of the Book of the Calendar Controversy and of Saadya's letters, and truncated fragments of polemical letters (which turned out, much later, to be of the same manuscript as Lévi's). These fragments were mostly from his own collection in Cambridge, but some also belonged to the private collections of Elkan Adler (London, later New York) and Mayer Sulzberger (Philadelphia). The materials were all re-published in 1903 in a monograph entitled *Saadyana*, with the addition of one fragment omitted, perhaps in error, in the first edition.[17]

Unfortunately, all these editions were poorly executed, presumably often rushed, and full of misreadings and errors. The attempts of Michael Friedländer (1893: 196–199) and Abraham Epstein (1901, 1902) to correct some of their colleagues' works—without access to the original manuscripts, and with only conjecture as a guide—did not provide much improvement.

The narrative of the controversy expanded somewhat as these fragments were being published, but was especially fleshed out in an article by Abraham Epstein (1901). He was the first, *inter alia*, to analyse and explain in full detail the calendrical content of the dispute. He explained the disagreement about the Four Gates, ben Meir's addition of 642 parts to the limit of midday (or *molad zaqen*, which will be explained below), and why his festivals were set two days earlier than according to the Babylonians (1901: 175–179). He also correctly noted that both parties of the controversy had followers in all places, in Palestine as well as in Babylonia. He added drama, however, to Harkavy's narrative by claiming that a 'schism' could have occurred within Rabbanite Judaism, were it not for the energetic intervention of Saadya and the Babylonian sages, who insured that the division was only short lived.[18] This was to overlook the

17 Schechter's Text IVb (1903: 19), a fragment of the same manuscript as his Texts IV, IVa, V, and Va which were published earlier (1901–1902: 53–59), now all shelved as T-S 13 K2.

18 'Il s' en fallut de peu que les mesures prises par Ben Méïr ne provoquassent, dans le sein du Judaïsme rabbinique, un schisme gros de conséquences. C' est grâce à l' intervention éner-

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fact that the calendar controversy was bound to be short lived, no matter its progress and outcome, since after 923 the calendars of Palestinians and Babylonians naturally converged and returned to the same dates.

Further details were added by others. Schechter commented on the bitterness of the dispute and claimed, without any good evidence, that 'the aid of the secular arm was invoked, so that Ben Meir was submitted to torture'.[19] Adler and Broydé interpreted one word, in their text, as meaning that ben Meir was excommunicated.[20] This notion is historically problematic, because the Babylonian authorities would not have had the power to enforce an excommunication in Palestine, all the more so if this individual was himself a leader. Yet this doubtful interpretation of Adler and Broydé became, from then on, part of the standard narrative. It also contributed towards a portrayal of ben Meir as weak and on the defensive. Similarly, Hirschfeld (1904: 290–291) blamed ben Meir's abusive language for the 'acrimonious character' of the quarrel in its later stages. These comments betray a pro-Saadyan or pro-Babylonian bias, which was to become dominant in later scholarship.

Ḥ.Y. Bornstein, *The Dispute between Rav Saadya Gaon and ben Meir* (1904)

The next stage in the study of the controversy, and arguably its most important phase, was the publication of an entire monograph on the subject, written in a short space of time in Warsaw by H.Y. Bornstein. This work, entitled *The Dispute between Rav Saadya Gaon and ben Meir* (1904, in Hebrew), was a masterpiece of scholarship which became, in no time, the standard textbook on the controversy, as well as a seminal work on the origins and history of the Jewish calendar. For more than a century, this work has dominated the field of Jew-

gique de Saadia et des docteurs babyloniens que la scission ne fut pas de longue durée.' (Epstein 1901: 173).

19 Schechter (1901–1902) 41, concluding with the moralistic comment: 'but this is the fate of all minorities, whether orthodox or heterodox'. The appropriateness of this comment is moot, but of more interest to us is Schechter's assumption that ben Meir was in the minority. There is no evidence that ben Meir was submitted to torture in connection with the calendar controversy; the narrative that Schechter seems to rely on here, LMisc 8v:1–3, refers to incarceration and torture but only in connection with an earlier conflict with the 'sons of Anan' (as noted already by Malter 1921: 86, n. 183). On whether the secular arm was invoked, see above, Chapter 2, n. 47.

20 Adler and Broydé (1900) 224 and 228; this explained, in their opinion, why ben Meir is never mentioned by his first name. See BCC 4:9, and notes on the translation.

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ish calendar studies and determined the interpretation of controversy of 921/2. Much as this present work revises and questions Bornstein's findings, it owes Bornstein a profound debt which needs to be fully acknowledged.

Ḥayyim Yeḥiel Bornstein (1845–1928) was raised in Kozienice (Koznitz), Poland, in a traditional, Hasidic environment. He developed early in life an interest in the sciences, and soon became a breath-taking polymath in mathematics, geometry, physics, and astronomy. He also became an accomplished Hebraist, and gradually mastered a wide range of ancient and modern languages. As a re-invented Maskil (Enlightened), he moved to Warsaw, where he was appointed treasurer (in 1881) and executive secretary (in 1886) of the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie street. Among his literary achievements was the Hebrew translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.[21] He specialized and excelled, however, in the field of Jewish calendar and chronology studies, on which he published a string of influential articles, mainly in the Warsaw-based, Hebrew journal *ha-Tequfah*, from the late 1880s until the end of his life.[22]

In his monograph of 1904, he assembled and studied all the Genizah texts that had been published until then on the calendar controversy.[23] Although Epstein had already attempted this in 1901 (with the added benefit of French translations), many more texts were available by 1904, and the task was therefore considerably more arduous. Bornstein identified the texts, arranged them in a logical order, and re-edited them with detailed annotations. In an extensive introduction, he pieced together the events of the controversy—in far more detail that anyone had achieved before—and situated the controversy within the context of the history of the Jewish calendar. As argued already by Poznański in 1897, in his article 'Ben Meir and the origin of the Jewish calendar', Bornstein saw in the controversy of 921/2 an indication that the fixed rabbinic calendar must have been instituted relatively recently, thus much later than traditionally assumed—a subject on which Bornstein expanded at some length within this monograph. Bornstein explained in detail, and with much verve, the calendrical arguments that permeated the sources, and reflected—

21 See now Dykman (2017).

22 On Bornstein, see Sokoloff (1929); also Akavya (1972: 395–404).

23 Nearly all these texts, in fact, had already been published by 1901 (as can be seen from my list above). Hirschfeld (1904) was not included, as it came out too late, but Schechter (1903) was included. Bornstein's monograph was published twice in 1904: as part of the Nahum Sokoloff volume (thus strictly speaking an 'article' rather than a 'monograph'), and then as a separate book (with some additions at the end). The two versions are identical, except that, confusingly, their pagination is different. I refer consistently to the book pagination; to convert it to the pagination of the Sokoloff volume, 14 must be added.

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again, for the first time—on what might have been the origins and causes of the calendrical dispute.[24] He also considered the broader historical context, suggesting that ben Meir took advantage of the crisis, at the time, within the leadership of the Babylonian academies, to challenge the Babylonians with his alternative calendar and establish his own authority over them (p. 11).

Although an amateur and complete autodidact, Bornstein was remarkable for his scholarly rigour. He may be criticized for assuming, without much discussion, that Saadya had led the Babylonian camp (p. 12), which is prominently reflected in the title of the book (*The Dispute between Rav Saadya Gaon and ben Meir*); but he can hardly be blamed for this, since this had become the scholarly consensus.[25] In other respects, however, he exercised considerable caution and refrained from over-confident conclusions.

On the question of how the controversy ended, in particular, Bornstein maintained a remarkably agnostic position. Although he refers a few times to ben Meir's 'defeat' (pp. 33, 41), he does so in vague and general terms, perhaps only with the historical hindsight that in the long term, the Babylonian calendar was eventually to prevail. He refrains, however, from giving this defeat a precise date, or from stating explicitly that it was the immediate outcome of the controversy. Noting the dearth of evidence, Bornstein refuses to pronounce himself on whether observance of the festivals on different dates continued beyond 922,[26] or whether, by then, the Palestinians had capitulated to the Babylonians; and he is even uncertain as to what happened in 927, when calendrical conditions were such that a similar disagreement could have again arisen (p. 14).

His agnosticism on this point persisted until the end of his life. In an update on the controversy, published in two parts in 1922, Bornstein acknowledges that the circulation of the Babylonian memorandum (or 'Book of the Calendar Controversy') in Elul 922 could not have succeeded in eradicating ben Meir's calendar and position.[27] He suggests that in the West, the Jews of north Africa and Spain are likely to have aligned themselves with the Babylonians,

24 On which see further Chapter 5.

25 Abraham Epstein entitled his review article on Bornstein (1904) 'The dispute between ben Meir and the Babylonian academies' (Epstein 1905); however, his intention thereby was not to differ with Bornstein on Saadya's role in the controversy, as he upholds the same view as Bornstein in the body of his article, in line with what was then the scholarly consensus. He probably just wanted his title to be distinguishable from that of Bornstein's work.

26 In a later article, Bornstein (1922*b*: 241) states more explicitly that they might well ('אשפר מאד') have observed the festivals on different dates through the whole of 923 CE.

27 Bornstein (1922*b*) 240; see also similar comments on Letter 1 of LMisc, ibid. 243–244.

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but those of Italy and France may well have sided with the Palestinians and ben Meir (pp. 245–246). Although this was purely speculative, it reveals how reluctant Bornstein was to assume a universal Babylonian triumph at the conclusion of the controversy. His interest in the tenacity of Palestinian tradition long after the end of the controversy finds further expression, in 1904, in his extensive treatment of the late eleventh-century *Megillat Evyatar*, which had been recently edited by Schechter (1902: 449–474); in this text, as we have seen, the author forcefully re-asserts the age-old Palestinian authority over calendar decisions (Bornstein 1904: 33–38). Bornstein's scholarly caution with regard to the outcome of the controversy was regrettably ignored by later scholars, who simply assumed that it ended with Saadya's victory.[28]

Bornstein did not have access to any of the manuscripts, and carried out his work on the sole basis of the existing, printed editions. This is probably the book's most important flaw. The editions, as noted above, were all inaccurate and plagued with errors. Bornstein was well aware of this, as many of the errors could be detected from the calendrical contents of the texts; but he never knew whether to attribute the errors to the scribes of the manuscripts or to the modern editors.[29] In his edition, Bornstein does his best to correct the errors and improve the text, with much scholarly acumen, moderation, and (one could even say) genius. Although he sometimes errs completely, in very many cases he correctly emends the modern edition and reconstructs, to the letter, the reading that we now know appears in the original manuscript.

But lack of access to the manuscripts had more fundamental consequences to Bornstein's approach, which have not been sufficiently appreciated until now. To a certain extent, for Bornstein, the sources were not Genizah manuscript fragments, but disembodied texts. This led him, at times, to suggesting impossible textual joins, which possibly made sense in terms of the textual contents but were actually precluded by the manuscripts. For example, Bornstein proposes that the text of T-S 8K6 follows on from that of T-S 13K2 fol. 3, and that 'at the place where the first text ends, the second begins' (p. 78)—without realizing that these fragments belonged in fact to different manuscripts, so that it would have been an amazing coincidence for their texts to join up as he suggested.[30] In this case, Bornstein cannot be excused on the grounds of not

28 E.g. Sar-Shalom (1984) 30.

29 See pp. 43–44.

30 These fragments correspond to L1Bab and the upper fragment of LMisc fol. 4 (respectively). See my introduction to LMisc (Chapter 11), where I argue that even on textual grounds this join is unlikely.

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having access to the manuscripts, because the summary descriptions provided by their editor (Schechter 1901–1902: 41 and 44) made it clear that they were of different dimensions, different date, and written in different hands. The point is, however, that Bornstein's lack of engagement with the manuscripts made him insensitive to the evidence that manuscripts could provide.

Another symptom of Bornstein's disconnection from the manuscripts is that he never stops to ask when these manuscripts were written, by whom, and for what reason. None of our manuscripts are the original copies of the letters and documents written at the time of the controversy of 921/2. The copies that have survived in the Cairo Genizah all date from the later tenth to twelfth centuries, and represent an important testimony of the transmission and preservation of these texts long after the end of the controversy. The study of the transmission of the texts was outside Bornstein's horizon, but should have been to him of great historical importance. Indeed, it would have revealed the extent to which these texts were still relevant to the Jews of Egypt in these later centuries, and that the rivalry between the Palestinian and Babylonian calendrical traditions had not died out completely.

Further Fragments

Ten years after the publication of Bornstein's monograph, some additional fragments pertaining to the controversy were brought to light. They added important information, but did not alter much the established consensus.

In 1914, Elkan Adler published in one article the following fragments from his collection:

- fragments of the letter of ben Meir. He did not know that they were from the same manuscript as the Oxford fragments published by Harkavy in 1891.
- a single folio of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, or Book of the Calendar Controversy. This fragment had already been published in 1901 by Schechter, to whom he had lent the fragment, but Adler appears to have forgotten this, as he makes no mention of Schechter's edition in his article. Adler rightly points out that this folio belonged to the same manuscript as the fragment which he published with Broydé in 1900; and in this edition, a French translation is provided.

In 1915, Alfred Guillaume, then in Oxford at the Bodleian Library, discovered the bottom half of the truncated fragments of polemical letters that Schechter had found in Cambridge and published in 1901. His join of the Oxford fragments with the upper, Cambridge fragments was brilliant, but he achieved it solely on the basis of Schechter's edition and without checking the originals in

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Cambridge, which led him to a number of errors. Nevertheless, this discovery brought about a significant addition to the corpus of sources on the controversy.

Bornstein wrote about these further texts, as well as Saadya's Judeo-Arabic letter (Hirschfeld 1904), in a later article (1922*b*: 237–270); but much of this article replicated, in substance, his conclusions of 1904, by simply incorporating the new findings within them. One small but noteworthy change was his opinion on the authorship of the so-called *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*. In 1904, he followed the established consensus and summarily attributed it to Saadya (1904: 58); but in his later article, he stated more guardedly that it was 'written by the Exilarch, or more precisely, by Saadya on his behalf' (1922*b*: 245).[31] This hesitant, nuanced formulation is noteworthy; Bornstein was at least considering the possibility that the work could have been written by the exilarch. He also went at some length, in this article, to portray ben Meir as a highly respectable rabbinic leader (1922*b*: 249–250).[32] His determination to eschew any bias against him was unfortunately brushed aside by later scholars, not least by Fleischer in 1984 on the basis of the new fragment that he published.

Ezra Fleischer's fragment, from the Cambridge University Library, was the first and last to be published after Guillaume's publication of 1915. He identified it correctly as a fragment of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, although he still called it Saadya's *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*,[33] and correctly joined it with one of the fragments published by Schechter in 1901. In this article, he refers to Adler and Broydé's fragment—a different manuscript of the same text—and notes that he was unable to locate it (Fleischer 1984: 377, n. 10). This fragment, as one would expect, is in the JTS library, in New York, with the rest of Elkan Adler's collection (shelf-mark: ENA 2555.1); so it should not have been a problem to find it. Fleischer's note reminds us how difficult it was, before the digital age (and not so long ago!), to search and access Genizah fragments in libraries world-wide.

As Fleischer pointed out, this fragment made several unique contributions to knowledge of the controversy. It clarified that the announcement of ben Meir had been made, in 921 CE, in the seventh month (i.e. Tishri, in the autumn), which made sense as a calendar announcement for the forthcoming year, and not in the fourth month (Tammuz), as per Adler and Broydé's fragment. Fleischer believed that his fragment finally put to rest a problem that had been much debated by earlier scholars.[34] In actual fact, Adler and Broydé's fragment prob-

31 See discussion in my introduction to the Book of the Calendar Controversy.

32 Also Jaffe (1931) 186–187.

33 Fleischer (1984) 375–385.

34 For example, Bornstein (1922*b*) 238 n. 2.

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ably also reads 'seventh' (there is a lacuna in the manuscript, which Adler and Broydé incorrectly restored); but without access to this manuscript, Fleischer could not be aware of this.

More importantly, the fragment begins with a damning account of how ben Meir secured, through irregular means, his position of power in the Palestinian Council. Fleischer is aware that the denigration of ben Meir in this passage is likely to be exaggerated for polemical purposes, but nevertheless, he is inclined to give it historical credence.[35] It is not impossible, of course, that this narrative is historically true, but we are not to know this. Fleischer's reading of this narrative is tainted with pro-Saadyan bias; his use of a polemical text as evidence of factual history is no longer acceptable by today's methodological standards.

Ezra Fleischer's fragment, in 1984, was the only new manuscript on the controversy to be published after a gap of nearly seventy years, and the last to be discovered until our research project began.

Saadya Triumphant: The Birth of a New Theory

As we have seen, Bornstein was reluctant to pronounce himself on the outcome of the controversy, and on how exactly it ended. The evidence, indeed, was lacking. The latest of the sources from the controversy, Saadya's letter in Judeo-Arabic (Hirschfeld 1904), was written on 3 January 923 CE. Nothing was known about the events thereafter, in particular, whether Babylonians and Palestinians continued observing the festivals on different dates through 923 CE. Nothing was known about how, if at all, the controversy was resolved. In 924, the calendars joined up and the dates, Palestinian and Babylonian, became the same; by then, there would have been nothing left for them to argue about.

The lack of contemporary evidence was itself significant, and suggested, at the very least, that Babylonians and Palestinians stopped arguing with each other after January 923. Why the controversy died down in this way is open to interpretation. It is entirely possible, for example, that the parties to the contro-

35 Ibid. 381: מה שמסופר לנו כאן על הנהגתו של ר׳ מאיר גאון בארץ ישראל אפשר שהוא מופלג קמעה משום חריפות הפולמוס, אבל דברי בקורת, גם אם הם מוגזמים, ובפרט שהם נשמעים בימי המבוקר ובמקומו, אי אפשר שהם תלויים על בלימה., which translates as follows: 'what we are told here about ben Meir Gaon's conduct in Palestine might be a little overstated because of the heat of the polemic, but critical words, even if exaggerated, and especially if they are uttered at the time of the criticized person and in his locality, cannot be resting on nothing'. I do not agree that additional credence should be given to a polemic by virtue of it being contemporary to its target (also, incidentally, the Book of the Calendar Controversy was certainly not written in ben Meir's locality).

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versy lost the political will or interest to pursue a dispute that had no chances of getting resolved, and that anyway was due to end in the next year. As I have pointed out above, there is certainly no evidence that the Babylonians, or for that matter the Palestinians, prevailed.

The truth is that Bornstein was not the first to express agnosticism in this regard. None of his predecessors and contemporaries wrote anything about the aftermath of the controversy, or even spoke of Babylonian victory. The first to put forward the theory of a Babylonian triumph was Henry Malter, as late as 1921, in his major monograph on Saadya.

Malter took the bold step of interpreting the lack of evidence after January 923 as indicative of a Babylonian victory.[36] How this logically follows is unclear to me, and not clarified by Malter. Indeed, I would argue, in reverse, that the lack of evidence supports the view that there was no clear victory or outcome. One would expect a victory to be celebrated with written pronouncements, or at the very least, to be recorded in some context in writing; yet there is no mention of any victory, in any Genizah or other source that is extant. With hindsight, and with knowledge that the Jewish calendar in use in the later Middle Ages (and still today) conforms to the Babylonian version, it is natural and reasonable to assume—as Bornstein and everyone else did—that at some stage, the Babylonian calendar prevailed. The only question, however, is how, why, and when.

The notion of that the Babylonian calendar triumphed at the end of the controversy, which later scholars were to embrace, was closely related, in Malter's mind, to the personality of Saadya. He describes the controversy as 'the events … which led to the defeat of Ben Meir and ultimately to the rise of Saadia to the Gaonate' (1921: 80). This defeat of ben Meir, he suggests, was partly the result of the publication of the Babylonian memorandum of the controversy in Elul 922, which Malter believed was authored by Saadya: 'its effect on the communities was very great, apparently putting an end to the agitation … at all events, nothing more is heard of Ben Meir during the following years' (1921: 87). In passing, we note his *argumentum ex silentio*, which could easily be turned on its head: for by the same token, it could be said that nothing more is heard of Saadya and Babylonians, with regard to the calendar controversy.

The role of Saadya, in Malter's theory, finds best expression in the following passage:

36 An argument endorsed by Sar-Shalom (1984: 30), among others; but recently criticized by Rustow (2008: 19–20).

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> We know, however, that Ben Meir and his supporters ultimately met with crushing defeat, and as may be plainly seen from Ben Meir's epistles, he attributed his downfall particularly to the activity of Saadia. Ben Meir's judgment was doubtless right on this point. Neither the Geonim who presided over the two academies, nor any of the scholars among their followers had either the intellectual capacity or the complete command over the people to parry the determined onslaught on Ben Meir, whose influence reached far beyond the boundaries of his own country and whose contention was not without merit. In fact, it was partly because of the weakened standing of the Gaonate that Ben Meir could venture to assert his authority above that of Babylonia. But Saadia's fiery genius, his profound learning, and above all his superior literary skill proved more than a match for his opponent and finally brought about Ben Meir's overthrow.
>
> Malter 1921: 85–86

This quotation could be gone through with a tooth pick. One wonders, for example, where ben Meir refers in his letters to his own 'downfall'. An interesting point, in this whole passage, is Malter's admission that the Babylonian leadership did not have the ability to eradicate ben Meir's calendar—which is explicitly stated, in fact, in the Book of the Calendar Controversy.[37] Malter puts this down, however, to the weakness of the Gaonate in this period, whereas in fact, the eradication of a widely used calendar in the Jewish world would have been at the best of times an impossible mission. Malter's claim that it was Saadya's 'fiery genius, learning, and literary skills' that led to ben Meir's 'overthrow' is stated here, as elsewhere, without any historical evidence or support.

Further fuel to Malter's theory is his consistent bias, throughout the monograph, in favour of Saadya. For example, like Hirschfeld (1904: 290–291; see above), he criticizes ben Meir's abusive language in his letters, whereas in contrast, he exonerates Saadya completely. Of Saadya he writes: 'to his credit it must be remarked that in this letter there is not a single harsh word against Ben Meir, the originator of all the trouble' (1921: 84). This is very much a matter of interpretation.

Malter's theory was not based on a dispassionate reading of the Genizah fragments, which characterized the work of his predecessors, especially Bornstein. His account and interpretation of the controversy were driven by an agenda, in this monograph, of building up Saadya's panegyric. Malter's pur-

37 BCC 12:3–6.

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pose was also, more particularly, to resolve the difficult historical problem of Saadya's early years: why and was that an outsider from Egypt was appointed, for the first time in history, to the leadership of one of the Babylonian academies in the late 920s CE. Malter needed a Babylonian triumph led by Saadya, in the early 920s, to account for Saadya's meteorite rise in Babylonia in the years that followed. This he found in the calendar controversy of 921/2.

The theory of a Babylonian-Saadyan triumph over ben Meir, which Malter was first to put forward, had a particular appeal which led to its general acceptance, in scholarly as well as more popular circles, until this very day.[38] Among the first to follow him, implicitly, was Zvi Hirsh Jaffe, in his monograph on the history of the Jewish calendar. He asserted that ben Meir was defeated because he could not justify his apparently arbitrary calendar rule (Jaffe 1931: 193), and claimed, without a shred of evidence, that wherever the Memorandum of the controversy was received, the followers of ben Meir instantly changed camp and observed the Babylonian dates (ibid. 192). For him, the absence of evidence of any controversy in 927 was proof that the Palestinians had all rallied to the Babylonian side (ibid. 198).

More recently, Malter's theory was reiterated by Raḥamim Sar-Shalom, in his handbook on the Jewish calendar; by Moshe Gil, in his histories of the Geonic period; and by Robert Brody, in his monograph on Saadya Gaon.[39] Brody writes:

> The Babylonians eventually emerged in the protracted struggle that ensued and their halakhic tradition emerged triumphant. Saʿadyah was seen as one of the leading figures of the Babylonian camp and he made full use of his rhetorical skills and wide connections to present the Babylonian point of view … it is largely to his credit that the Babylonian position eventually won out … he took on the role of official spokesman for the Babylonian position on the calendar debate.
>
> Brody 2013: 27

> He played a central role in the failed attempt of the Babylonians to dissuade Ben Me'ir from launching his calendar and in the far more suc-

38 One notable exception is Salo Baron, who wrote in 1937 that the controversy 'ended with apparent victory' of Saadya (Baron 1937: i.332), but then a few years later acknowledged that 'our sources fail to indicate any retreat on the part of Ben Meir' (Baron 1943: 46).

39 Sar-Shalom (1984) 29 (also 1992/3: 123–124); Gil (1992) 565–566, (2004) 218: 'The clash between the two centers ended with Babylonia's clear victory'. See also above, Chapter 2 n. 40.

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> cessful campaign to persuade the Jews of the world to accept Babylonian authority and adopt the Babylonian calendar.
>
> ibid. 154[40]

This paradigm, established nearly a whole century ago, has thus dominated the literature until this very day. Moreover, to make things worse, the textual evidence from the Cairo Genizah that scholars have depended on till this day consists almost entirely of even earlier text editions, which were poorly produced at the time, and which have never been revisited since.

40 For the Hebrew version, of which the English is not a rigorously literal translation, see Brody (2006) 36–38 and 168–170.

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CHAPTER 4

Manuscripts, Texts, History: A New Approach

The first and final words on the calendar controversy of 921/2 were uttered by Harkavy, Schechter, Bornstein, Malter, and their contemporaries in the early twentieth century; surprisingly little progress has been made on the subject since. Yet we find ourselves in a very different world, with different resources and different perspectives. Although modern scholars continue falling back on them, the scholarly conclusions that were reached over a hundred years ago are simply no longer satisfactory. A complete reappraisal of the controversy forces itself upon us, based on modern approaches to manuscripts, modern techniques of text edition, and modern (or 'post-modern') historiographical notions. This is the rationale of the present study.

This book began as a collaborative venture between myself and Marina Rustow, following a two-hour chat at UCL in the summer of 2008. Our initial questions and motivations were very focused. We wanted to know, first and foremost, what was the material evidence that had been used in early scholarship on the controversy: where these manuscripts currently were, by whom and when they had been copied, and what they could teach us, as material artefacts, about the calendar controversy of 921/2. These questions, we knew, had never really been asked before. We wanted to know what role the transmission of these manuscripts may have played in the rabbinic attempt to establish a single, normative calendar for all Jews. We also wondered why knowledge of the event was preserved in Egypt long after 921/2, whereas it was never transmitted, as far as we could tell, to the West—no western manuscript or literary source refers to it.

Above all, we were unconvinced by the reigning narrative of 'Babylonian triumph', which we had already questioned in earlier publications.[1] In 2008, I had just published an astronomical table of Shabbetai Donnolo which indicated that as late as 946, Jews in southern Italy were using a different calendar from the rabbinic calendar in the Near East.[2] Whatever the situation in Palestine at that time, the Babylonian calendar had clearly not yet become universally accepted.

1 Stern (2001) 154, 270, and much more forcibly Rustow (2008) 19–23.

2 Stern and Mancuso (2007).

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Sourcing the Fragments

In November 2010 we got round to applying to a Small Grant from the British Academy, which was to enable us to travel to libraries and purchase high resolution images of the fragments. The project began in March 2011. Our initial goal was to locate the fragments that had been published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; then, to group together the fragments and identify, through handwriting and other physical features, the manuscripts which these fragments belonged to; and finally to date the manuscripts, palaeographically or through whatever other means. Our approach was therefore primarily codicological. The identification of the manuscripts was essential to understand how the various texts had been preserved and transmitted, in what contexts, in how many copies, by whom, and when.

Locating the fragments was not an easy task, as they were known to be scattered in many libraries around the globe, and more importantly, most the fragments that were published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had not been catalogued or allocated shelf-marks. It was reasonable to assume that the fragments published by Neubauer and (later) by Guillaume would still be found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and that those published by Schechter would be found somewhere in the vastness of the Taylor-Schechter collection (T-S) in the Cambridge University Library;[3] similarly, the fragments published by Adler were likely to be found in the Elkan Nathan Adler collection (ENA) in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. But the current location of other fragments, for instance those published by Israel Lévi, was less certain; and within the known libraries, shelf-marks were not easy to find.

It took us nearly one year, on and off, to source all the fragments that were originally published. We were greatly helped by the online resource, the Friedberg Genizah Project (https://fjms.genizah.org/), with its 'search' function and its 'join' function,[4] as well as by Ronny Vollandt, who was associated for a while with the project and also helped us to join the fragments and put together the bibliography.

3 A few fragments published by Schechter were identified by him as belonging to other, private collections, such as Text VII in Schechter (1901–1902: 43, 59–61), from Mayer Sulzberger's collection. This fragment could be expected to have been donated to Dropsie College Library, now at the Herbert Katz Center for Judaic Studies, Philadelphia, where indeed it was located.

4 Few of our joins were actually discovered through FGP's join function, rather than just through searching and browsing; but nevertheless, the join function led us on a number of occasions to the discovery of new, relevant materials.

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By the beginning of 2012, we had located a total of 33 of the originally published fragments. Included in this number were six bi-folios (although we were not aware of this until much later), and five folios made up each of two joined fragments (four of these joins had been made by Guillaume in 1915). The fragments were located, not unpredictably, in the university libraries of Cambridge, Oxford, New York (JTS), and Philadelphia—in decreasing order of number.

At that point, of the originally published corpus, only two sets of two folios were missing: the two St Petersburg folios published by Harkavy in 1891 (containing the First Letter of ben Meir—the first Genizah fragments on the controversy to be published), and two fragments published by Lévi in 1900 (1900*b*), which we have still not been able to locate. Harkavy does not clarify whether his folios were in the St Petersburg's Public Library (as then known) or in his private hands. His private collection is now in the Vernadsky Library in Kyiv, which I visited in person, but I was not able to find these folios there; nor did I find them in the catalogues of St Petersburg's National Library of Russia. Israel Lévi's collection was deposited in Paris in the library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU), but it is unclear whether the fragments in question, which he only declares having 'seen' in Paris at the great exhibition of 1900, were actually purchased by him. In any event, the folios have not been found in the AIU, and they are provisionally assumed, like Harkavy's folios, to be lost.

Nevertheless, we have gained a fair idea, as research progressed, of what these missing folios would have looked like. Harkavy's folios can be tentatively identified as having belonged to a known manuscript, which I call the second manuscript of ben Meir's First Letter (L1BM2). The folios published by Lévi are not only identifiable, but can be reconstructed with a fair level of accuracy, as has been done in Plates 6–9 and as explained in detail in Chapter 11. This is because they were torn in two, and their lower halves, which Lévi did not see, have now been identified as two of the fragments of the manuscript which Guillaume (1915) partially joined, and which I now call the 'Letters Miscellany'.

Our searches for the documents of the original corpus led, in addition, to the discovery of a number of new, unpublished fragments. Four additional fragments of already known manuscripts were discovered between 2012 and 2015, three of which were identified as fragments of Guillaume's manuscript, the Letters Miscellany.[5] But we also discovered fragments of entirely new manuscripts,

5 The first of these to be discovered, in 2012, was T-S 309.68 (Marina Rustow made the join). This fragment is catalogued in Brody (1998*a*) merely as a 'description of a controversy concerning the calendar, mentioning *rosh yeshivah* (Saadia/Ben Meir)' (the entry is attributable, I suspect, to the late Ernest Wiesenberg, a calendar expert and one of the contributors to the

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including additional copies of already known texts (e.g. T-S NS 219.29, a new copy of the Book of the Calendar Controversy now referenced as BCC5—bringing up the number of attested copies of this work to five), as well as entirely new texts that we discovered and identified as pertaining, or closely relevant, to the controversy. Of the latter, most important was the discovery of calendar manuals ranging from the mid tenth to the twelfth centuries, in which the rule of ben Meir is presented, sometimes emphatically, as normative. These texts were all unpublished until now, and were never included in earlier studies of the calendar controversy. Yet their relevance to the controversy, and more particularly to its aftermath, is evident.

The discovery of new fragments has been ongoing until 2017; four of these were discovered by Nadia Vidro, who also assisted me, later in the project, with the edition and translation of the Judeo-Arabic texts. Our corpus, as a whole, now stands at 49 folios, including 10 bi-folios.[6]

Reconstructing the Manuscripts

The next step was to group together the folios into manuscripts; which is to say, to identify and reconstruct the manuscripts (in most cases, codices) to which the loose folios originally belonged. This task also proved to be extremely complex and time-consuming, not least because of the confusion that reigned in earlier publications. Most of the folios had already been joined by earlier scholars, but not always accurately: thus the manuscript of Saadya's Letters, as we later discovered, and some manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, had been joined in complete disorder.

Our initial methodology was strictly codicological, as it seemed to us that the folios would be more reliably joined together on the basis of codicological cri-

catalogue). The join with its upper half, T-S 13K2.2, albeit held in the same library, was never yet made.

6 These figures are somewhat lower than those given in Rustow and Stern (2013: 83), as totalling 'eighty-one fragments'. This is because in the earlier stages of our research, we included a wider number of sources which we thought might be relevant to the controversy, although in the end we decided to exclude them (for example, the join of folios from Baltimore, Cambridge Westminster College, and Oxford, described in Rustow and Stern 2013: 84–85, which turned out to be irrelevant to the calendar controversy). Note also that some of my folios are made up of two fragments. The fragments discovered by Nadia Vidro are: L2Bab, MidLim, Man249, and 2PalMan. The Judeo-Arabic editions and translations that she contributed to are T-S 6Ja1 (LSaad), Man249, QarNar, 1PalMan, 2PalMan, and MidLim (the latter singlehandedly).

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teria than on textual criteria. Textual similarity could be misleading, since the different manuscripts could often contain copies of the same (or closely similar) texts. As we later found out, for example, Bornstein had committed exactly such an error, by joining on textual grounds T-S 8K6 to T-S 13K2 fol. 3, without realizing that these folios blatantly belonged to different manuscripts.[7]

Accordingly, Marina Rustow drew up a spreadsheet of the folios' codicological features, with particular focus on two simple criteria: size of the folio, and number of lines of text. On this basis—with some allowance for minor variations within single manuscripts—we were able to join together the folios that belonged to the same manuscripts, with great ease and accuracy. Our groupings were then confirmed on the basis of other criteria such as handwriting, textual layout, and also, eventually, textual continuity between the fragments.

After the manuscripts were identified, their internal structure needed to be determined. Textual continuity was obviously a basic criterion for correctly ordering the folios within single manuscripts; but the fragmentary state of the folios did not always make this feasible. In many cases, codicological criteria had to be considered. Bi-folios were particularly important for determining the order of the folios as well as the structure of the quires. Unfortunately, the earlier editors concealed the existence of bi-folios by referring to them almost invariably as 'two folios'; and this information was similarly missing in the metadata of library catalogues. The images provided many of the libraries, and available on the website of the Friedberg Genizah Project, frequently present bi-folios as individual folios. The identity of bi-folios was often only discovered after my examination of the original fragments.

In several cases, traces of ink that had rubbed off from the folio's facing page enabled me to identify the latter from among the other extant folios, and hence, the sequence of the folios in the manuscript. In the manuscript of Saadya's Letters (LSaad), this method led me not only to re-order some of the folios, but also to correct the prevailing view about the number and contents of the letters that Saadya had written (more on this below, and in Chapter 10). A similar method was applied to BCC2, the second manuscript of the Book of the Calendar Controversy; this brought me much closer to understanding how the manuscript had been copied, and indeed, how the codex as a whole was originally constructed (see Chapter 8.2). In the case of the Letters Miscellany (LMisc), an entirely different method was employed to attempt the reconstruction of the order of the folios (or more precisely, of the order of the letters within the Miscellany). As mentioned above, nearly all the folios in the manuscript were torn in two

7 See above, Chapter 3, pp. 35–36.

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or three pieces; they were probably all torn in one go, while still together in the codex. On this assumption, I took the shape and direction of the tear of each of the folios as an indication of their original order within the codex.

In some cases, it was possible to extrapolate from the extant folios and reconstruct the manuscript as a whole, through conjecture of the number of missing pages and their positions in the original quires. It is this procedure that led me, for example, to the tentative conclusion that Harkavy's lost folios (of 1891) belong to manuscript L1BM2, whose other folios were published ten years later by Lévi (1900*a*) and Schechter (1901–1902: 42). No one realized, at the time, that this was a possibility.[8]

Out of our 49 folios, we have now reconstructed some 20 manuscripts, of which nine comprise more than one extant folio. The largest extant manuscript, the Letters Miscellany, comprises nine extant folios, most of them consisting of two joined fragments, thus a total of sixteen fragments. In most cases, the folios (or their fragments) that make up any given manuscript are located in different libraries across the world, with very different shelf-marks. Without digital imaging, joining and reconstructing these manuscripts would often have been close to impossible.

Palaeographic and codicological dating of the manuscripts, carried out with the help of Judith Olszowy-Schlanger and Amir Ashur, has revealed that most of them were copied long after the controversy of 921/2, between the mid tenth century and the twelfth. Both Palestinian texts of the controversy (e.g. ben Meir's letters) and Babylonian texts (Saadya's letters, the Book of the Calendar Controversy) were written within this range of dates, as well as the Palestinian calendar manuals with the calendar rules of ben Meir. This demonstrated that interest in the controversy persisted for a long time, and also, that the Palestinian calendar tradition competed with the Babylonian for much longer than has ever been considered.

Very significantly, we found that the manuscripts of Babylonian texts, such as the Book of the Calendar Controversy and the Babylonian Letters, are written in Babylonian writing style, whereas the manuscripts of Palestinian texts, such as ben Meir's First Letter, are written in a Palestinian writing style.[9] This

8 Not untypically, the editors dwelled on textual similarities and complementary, but did not reflect on the codicological implications of their findings. Lévi (1900*a*: 261) merely writes, regarding his fragment: 'il complète le texte édité par M. Harkavy'. Schechter, likewise, says of more than half the lines of his text that they 'probably restore to us a portion of the missing page of Harkavy's edition'.

9 Babylonian texts in Babylonian writing style: BCC4, BCC5, L1Bab, L2Bab, MidLim, Man249. Palestinian texts in Palestinian writing style: LBM1 and LBM2 (the latter less clearly). The manuscript of Saadya's Letters, which represents the Babylonian side of the controversy, is

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would indicate that the scribes of these manuscripts chose to copy texts with which they personally identified, as members of either the Babylonian or the Palestinian communities of Fusṭāṭ. In turn, this suggests that the transmission of these texts was not random but served a cultural, and perhaps even a political, purpose for each of these communities during the tenth to twelfth centuries.

Reconstruction of the manuscripts is still in progress. More work needs to be done, in particular, on the codicological context of the fragments in this corpus. The majority of our folios, if not all, belonged originally to codices (and some to rotuli). In some cases, we can be reasonably certain that the works I am editing were produced as self-standing codices or quires. Thus the earlier manuscript of ben Meir's First Letter (L1BM1) was most probably a self-standing quire of six bi-folios. Similarly, the Book of the Calendar Controversy is likely to have been produced as a self-standing codex, given that the majority of its manuscripts were written, as I would argue, for the purpose of annual public readings.

But as to the other manuscripts in our corpus, we have no idea whether they formed codices on their own, or whether they were included within larger compendia, and if so, what kind of materials were associated with them within the codices. One way of addressing this question is to search for, and identify, Cairo Genizah fragments belonging to the same manuscripts as in our corpus, yet with content unrelated to the calendar controversy. To this date, I have not been able to find any such fragment. The problem is partly technical: the 'joins' function in the Friedberg Genizah Project, in its present stage of development, is not sufficiently powerful and not sufficiently precise to enable the easy identification of fragments from the same manuscripts but within completely different 'domains' (i.e. textual subject matter or genre). The searchability of the Cairo Genizah is bound it improve in time, and with it, my questions should become easier to answer. The codicological context of our sources is important to clarify, because it should shed much light on how and why our sources were preserved and transmitted.

Further questions about the textual transmission arise from my reconstruction of the Saadya's Letters manuscript. My re-ordering of its folios, based on a revision of the joins, results in a total of three letters. The last two, in Hebrew, are very similar in contents, structure, as well as wording, although not close

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also written in Babylonian style, but this manuscript, which is dated to the end of the eleventh century, is perhaps too late for this to be significant (from this period onwards, Babylonian and Palestinian styles generally become mingled, so the distinction between them becomes insignificant). The only clear exception is PalPol, a manuscript dating from around 1000 and containing a Palestinian polemic, yet written in a Babylonian, calligraphic style.

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enough to be treated as the same text. Both letters, however, were ostensibly written by the same person (Saadya), addressed to the same addressees (three brothers, disciples of his in Fusṭāṭ, Egypt), and sent around the same time to Egypt (winter of 921/2). Are they different versions of the same letter? The scribe, who took the trouble of copying both letters, most probably viewed them as distinct compositions; and there were good reasons for viewing them so. The differences between the two letters are too substantial to imagine that they started off as one and the same letter, and then were transformed through some heavy-handed (and quite pointless) editorial tampering.

The close similarity of these two letters raises questions about their redactional origin. It seems unlikely that two almost identical letters were sent by the same author to the same addressees and around the same time. Was the letter repeated close in time, because the author feared that the first letter had not been, or would not be, delivered? Was only one of the letters actually sent, whilst the other was written out by the author, perhaps from memory, as his personal (and not entirely accurate) copy to keep? If the latter, we could then ask how both versions ended up in the possession of the scribe who produced, maybe a century later, the present copy.

These questions remain unresolved, yet they are critical to our understanding of how letters of this kind, which make up the largest proportion of our sources, were written, preserved, transmitted, and copied in the centuries following the calendar controversy.

Reading the Texts

It goes without saying that our work on the manuscripts necessitated a careful reading of the texts. In so doing, it became clear to us, very early on, that the transcriptions of the early editors, especially those of the 1890s and early 1900s, were terribly inaccurate. This was most likely due to the editors' excessive haste to publish their new discoveries, but also, for some of them, to lack of experience in reading Genizah fragments. Some of these early mistakes were corrected over time, especially by Bornstein (based on judicious conjectures) and much later Moshe Gil (one of the very modern scholars who bothered to look again at the manuscripts of the controversy, although only at a small number of them). But the majority of the misreadings, which include sometimes even gross blunders, were never properly corrected. These misreadings have remained in use by scholars until this day.

To mention but a few examples: at the end of T-S 8 K8 (L1BM2 1v:13), Schechter (1901–1902: 42) reads יעץ instead of ינון (in rabbinic tradition, a name of the

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Messiah, who is appropriately referred to in this eschatological ending of ben Meir's elaborate proem, L1BM 8:7). This was a simple misreading, which led to a nonsensical text that no one ever corrected.[10] In his transcription of T-S 13 K2 fol. 2 recto (part of the Letters Miscellany, LMisc fol. 6r:9), Schechter (1901–1902: 55) inserts in line 9 the word אל, which is absent in the manuscript and makes no sense at all. Bornstein (1904: 76 n. 1) found himself forced to seek a far-fetched explanation for it—and the error remained uncorrected to this date. I cannot explain how this foreign body landed in Schechter's edition. Both these errors happen to be Schechter's. I have selected them here because they are easy to quote out of context; but this does not mean that Schechter was worse, in this respect, than his contemporaries.

Besides transcription errors, the early editors also made erroneous conjectures—sometimes even without indicating this—which were treated as straightforward readings in subsequent scholarship. The most important example is Adler and Broydé's (1900) conjectural ביעי[הר] בחדש ('in the fourth month'), at the beginning of ENA 2555.1 (BCC2), as the date when ben Meir's son made his momentous calendar announcement. The square brackets are mine, because the manuscript is torn at this point, but Adler and Broydé presented this conjecture without brackets, as if this were a straightforward reading. This date, the fourth month (i.e. Tammuz, in the mid-summer of 921) seemed too early in the year, and generated a heated debate among subsequent scholars.[11] In 1984, however, it was found by Fleischer to be contradicted by another manuscript, which states explicitly, and far more plausibly, בחדש השביעי, 'in the seventh month'. As I had digital images of all the fragments, I was able to read carefully Adler and Broydé's folio, ENA 2555.1. It emerged, firstly, that Adler and Broydé's reading was actually only a conjecture; and secondly, on careful examination of the traces of ink along the tear, that this fragment too probably read בחדש השביעי. Adler and Broydé's conjecture was therefore completely unwarranted.

Another shortcoming of the early editions is that they often failed to provide readings of parts of the manuscripts that were damaged, faded, or illegible for whatever other reason. It seems that under the pressure of time, the early editors were not able or bothered to invest the necessary effort towards this.[12] A pertinent example is the ending of T-S 8K4, a manuscript of the Book of the

10 See my note on L1BM2 1v:13.

11 Bornstein (1904: 60, n. 2; 1922*b*: 238, n. 2), Epstein (2005: 138–139 and n. 1), with further references in Fleischer (1984: 378), and add to these Malter (1921: 410).

12 Adler and Broydé's hasty conjecture—without due consideration for other, more plausible alternatives—exemplifies this carelessness in another way.

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Calendar Controversy (BCC1 fol. 2v:15–19), which is faded and difficult to read, and to which earlier editors did not give sufficient attention. Schechter (1901–1902: 52) transcribed of these lines only a few, sporadic letters and words. But with careful analysis and a moderate amount of conjecture, it is possible to reconstruct most of line 15, which provides an important piece of historical information: the date of completion of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, on Tuesday, 27 Tishri (22 October 922).[13]

Several other difficulties could also be overcome. In many of the fragments, the text had become marred or illegible because of ink penetration from the other side of the folio; but ink penetration often proved to be an advantage, in that it revealed readings which would otherwise have been lost.

The problems inherent to the joins, readings, and other aspects of the first editions, together with our discovery of new fragments, made it imperative for us to prepare a new edition of all the texts. Without this, it would not have been possible to investigate further the history of the calendar controversy. The project moved up, at this stage, to an entirely new level. I undertook the task of text edition from 2012 to 2017, now with funding from an ERC Advanced Grant; the result is the bulk of this present book.[14]

Critical and Diplomatic Text Editions

The text editions in this book, which include both critical and diplomatic editions, contribute a new dimension to the study of the calendar controversy. Their purpose is not only to correct previous errors, and hence to improve the reading and interpretation of the texts, but also to raise questions about the texts and their transmission that have never been previously considered.

The most innovative contribution, in this book, are probably the critical editions. The earlier editions of the calendar controversy texts were never critical,

13 On the next line, there is also a reference to the exilarch. My editorial work on this passage is not complete: I suspect that with more time and effort, it may be possible in the future to reconstruct nearly the whole text of this manuscript.

14 This ERC research project, which included five research associates working on a variety of calendar-related projects, ran at UCL from 2013 to 2018 on the theme of 'Calendars in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Standardization and Fixation'. The relevance of the calendar controversy of 921/2 to this project was summed up, on the project website, as follows: 'the study of this dispute and its resolution will shed important light, more generally, on the social and cultural processes that brought about the standardization and fixation of the Jewish calendar in the medieval world'.

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in the sense that they did not represent the text witnesses through the medium of a critical apparatus or a synopsis. The editions Harkavy and later Bornstein, although based on several manuscripts, were at best eclectic. They did not clearly distinguish the text of one manuscript from the other—it is difficult to tell, from their editions, where one version ends and the other begins—and the texts of the manuscripts are not systematically compared.

Three of our works have survived in more than one manuscript, and necessitated the preparation of an entirely new, critical edition: the Book of the Calendar Controversy (five copies), the First Letter of ben Meir (two copies), and one of the Palestinian calendar manuals (two copies). None of the manuscripts of these works can be identified as 'better' than the others. Some manuscripts are older than the others, but not significantly enough for this to constitute a criterion of textual reliability. Some of the manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, BCC_1, BCC_3 and BCC_4, appear more 'book-like' than the others, with square writing, vowel and cantillation marks, punctuation and paragraph breaks, wide margins, and a tidy layout. These manuscripts may have served as official copies, to be disseminated and read in public ever year, as per the Babylonian authorities' instructions. In textual terms, however, these manuscripts do not appear to be preferable to the others.

In the absence of 'better' manuscripts, I have compiled for my critical editions a synthetic text, together with critical apparatus. My intention has been primarily to establish a good, error-free text, notwithstanding the many theoretical problems associated with such a goal (what makes a text 'good', can a good text ever be established, does it necessarily correspond to the original version, and does this matter?) and the practical problems in its implementation (in many cases, my choice between textual variants has been arbitrary).

Another intention behind the critical editions has been to investigate the extent of textual variants, and hence the stability of the text in the course of its transmission. Textual variants, and not least textual errors, are useful indicators of the relationship between the manuscripts, and how the texts were copied and transmitted. These questions are relevant and important for the study of the aftermath of the calendar controversy.

The conclusions I have been able to draw from the critical editions regarding textual transmission are limited. The manuscripts of the First Letter of ben Meir show evidence of being copies of a common source, which itself was not the original text but a slightly faulty copy of it. Similar conclusions apply to some of the manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, BCC_1, BCC_2, and BCC_3, of which the least that can be said is that they belong to the same branch of manuscript tradition (even though their codicological features are very different).

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Alongside the critical editions, I have provided diplomatic editions of each of the manuscripts. The diplomatic editions aim at a more comprehensive description of the individual manuscripts. Thus they include, in the case of the Book of the Calendar Controversy manuscripts and Babylonian Letter 2, a transcription of the vocalization and cantillation marks, which are not in the critical editions, and which earlier editors almost completely ignored.[15] Vocalization and cantillation marks are actually highly significant, not only because they often help to clarify the meaning of the text and its reading, but also because they shed much light on how the texts were transmitted and read in the tenth to twelfth centuries. The diplomatic editions also include codicological descriptions of the manuscripts; how the fragments are to be joined; and how each manuscript as a whole can be tentatively reconstructed.

In terms of text edition, diplomatic editions serve the purpose of representing the state of the manuscript and the textual difficulties inherent to it (such as faded ink, lacunas, distorted lettering, etc.), and of justifying my readings. But they also serve the purpose of highlighting the significance of manuscripts as historical documents in their own right. For earlier editors such as Bornstein, the manuscripts only served, through their textual variants, as text witnesses towards the recovery of an authentic text. The manuscripts, however, constitute for us material evidence of the transmission of the texts in the centuries following the controversy, and are therefore historically significant. Whereas my critical editions present a somewhat disembodied and decontextualized synthetic text, the diplomatic editions present the manuscripts as historical artefacts and as our prime source of historical evidence.

For the majority of the texts in our corpus, which are attested in only one manuscript, I can only provide a diplomatic edition, which is in fact all that is needed. Most of the earlier editions were diplomatic, in the sense that they edited single Genizah fragments, but their focus was narrowly textual; even the latest of these, Fleischer (1984), which far surpasses the early twentieth-century editions in terms of philological professionalism, hardly provides any codicological annotations or description. Like his predecessors, Fleischer's chief objective was only to provide a faithful transcription of the text of his fragment. My diplomatic editions, in this book, reflect my interest in the manuscripts themselves.

Besides critical and diplomatic editions, I also provide English translations of all texts (but only of the critical edition, where there are several copies

15 Fleischer (1984) included vocalization (but not cantillation marks) in his edition of the first folio of BCC1; but in fact, he provided his own vocalization rather than a transcription of what was in the manuscript.

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of the same work). Translation means explanation and interpretation, and is thus another important contribution to the study of the calendar controversy. Translations were seldom supplied by the first editors. Neubauer and Schechter eschewed translation altogether. Elkan Adler (with Broydé, 1900; 1914) offered French translations of his fragments, and Hartwig Hirschfeld (1904) an English translation of Saadya's Letter 1. The most active translator, in this period, was Epstein (into French: 1901; 1902: 236), although of fragments that had been edited by others. Not unreasonably, Hebrew writers such as Harkavy and Bornstein considered themselves above the need for translation of the Hebrew texts.[16] The effect, however, was a certain measure of complacency with regard to detailed interpretation. Although Bornstein (1904) annotates his text (as does Fleischer 1984), and addresses some points in detail, his notes remain sparse and selective, and do not address every detail and difficulty within the text.

This shows up the importance of translation. It is only when one is faced with the responsibility of translating the text that it becomes necessary to understand it fully, and to attempt to resolve, as best as possible, every textual difficulty that arises.

A New Perspective on the Calendar Controversy

As a result of sourcing the fragments and discovering new ones, reconstructing the manuscripts, reading the texts, and preparing the text editions and translations, we began to form new ideas about the substance of the calendar controversy, its protagonists, its aftermath, and its long-term historical significance. In an early article, written in 2012, we made a few initial, bold suggestions, from which it may be wise to recant.[17] But although the conclusions I now present are somewhat more moderate and less speculative, they remain nevertheless highly innovative and revisionist. In effect, our research has led to a completely new perspective on the calendar controversy.

This new perspective, which is summed up in more detail in the Conclusion of this book, includes the following key points:

1. The contents and authorship of the so-called *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*—a false title of the work that I now call 'the Book of the Calendar Controversy'—are now much better understood, following the discovery of additional

16 Bornstein (1922*b*: 246–249) did provide, however, a Hebrew translation of Saadya's Judeo-Arabic letter.

17 Rustow and Stern (2014).

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manuscripts and an almost continuous textual reconstruction. This work was not authored by Saadya, but by the exilarch and heads of the Babylonian academies. It is not a manual on the Jewish calendar, but only a polemical narrative of the controversy and a defence of the Babylonian computation. Its preservation in five manuscript copies is historically significant.

2. Saadya's role in the controversy was marginal. His engagement with ben Meir was limited, and he exerted very little influence, if any, over the Babylonian leadership. The calendar controversy of 921/2 was not run by intellectuals such as Saadya, but by religious, communal leaders. Accordingly, arguments on each side were about authority (political, traditional, Talmudic), not about scientific truth or plausibility.
3. The controversy did not end in a Babylonian 'triumph'. It ended in a stalemate, probably already in the winter of 922/3, and most likely because both sides lost interest in pursuing the argument. Each side persisted, however, in reckoning their own calendar. The Palestinian calendar tradition of ben Meir survived for at least two centuries, as it attested in many calendar manuals from the Cairo Genizah.
4. The eventual decline and disappearance of the Palestinian calendar tradition was not due to defeat through controversies or polemics. It was more likely part of the general decline of Palestinian traditions in the Near East in the later medieval period.

More than a century after Bornstein's seminal work of 1904, this research project and the resulting book have changed the face of the calendar controversy of 921/2.

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CHAPTER 5

The Jewish Calendar: The Controversy Explained

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold: first, to explain how the Jewish calendar works, sufficiently for the texts of the calendar controversy to be comprehensible to the general reader; second, to explain the specific algorithms that were used by ben Meir and the Babylonians to calculate the calendar; and third, to explain the origins of, and reasons behind, the disagreement that led to the controversy of 921/2. The chapter begins on the most basic level, and gradually increases in complexity. The tables of the Four Gates, at the end of the chapter, are an important reference point for the rest of the book.

The 'Jewish' calendar that I am describing in this chapter is, more precisely, the rabbinic (or 'Rabbanite', as opposed to Qaraite) calendar that was widely in use in the Near East by the early tenth century; I call it the fixed rabbinic calendar. It is the same as the one that is used by Jews today, but nowadays, different calculation methods tend to be used. For example, the algorithm of the Four Gates, which will be explained at the end of this chapter, is today no longer in use.

At the time of the controversy of 921/2, this calendar had not been instituted for very long, although it was already accepted, indeed completely taken for granted, by all the parties of the controversy, and thus presumably throughout the Near East.[1] The fixed rabbinic calendar is first attested, and almost completely described, in a short treatise written a century earlier by the Muslim mathematician and scholar Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Khuwārizmī, apparently in 823/4 CE.[2] It is unclear, however, whether this calendar was yet widely in use, as a letter of the exilarch dated 835/6 CE, preserved in a copy in the Cairo Genizah, expresses awareness of the *molad*–based, fixed rabbinic calendar, but nevertheless endorses the decision of the Palestinian authorities to celebrate the festivals in that year on dates that differed from those of the fixed rabbinic calendar.[3]

1 The situation in the Maghreb and in southern and western Europe, in this period, is unclear and needs further investigation. See Stern (2001) 154, n. 168, and Stern and Mancuso (2007).

2 A new edition of this remarkable work, together with (for the first time) an English translation, is currently in preparation by my colleague François de Blois, as part of a UCL research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust on 'The Jewish calendar in Islamic sources'. On the manuscript and for a summary of the text, see de Blois (2014). Earlier publications include most importantly Kennedy (1964) and Langermann (1987).

3 T-S 8G7.1; Stern (2001), 184–185, 206, and 277–283.

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Prior to the ninth century, however, the fixed rabbinic calendar was most probably not yet in existence. Rabbinic sources such as the *Baraita de-Shemuel* (ch. 5), dating from 776 CE or not much later,[4] and *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (chs. 6–8), usually dated to the eighth century, assume a very different and far less accurate calculated calendar,[5] and so do recently discovered rabbinic calendar texts that may be ascribed to the same period.[6]

The process through which the fixed rabbinic calendar, as described by al-Khuwārizmī, became accepted and established in the Near East is completely unknown, but it is safe to date it through the entire duration of the ninth century.[7] This calendar, once instituted and disseminated, enabled anyone to calculate the dates of the Jewish calendar for any year, even many years in advance. Although ben Meir, as head of the Palestinian rabbis, claimed to hold a monopoly on calendar decisions, his decisions were based on a calculation that anyone could equally carry out.

Consequently, the effect of the calendar becoming fixed was to undermine the Palestinians' claim of being in control of it.[8] This is what enabled the Babylonians to carry out their own calendar calculations and announcements,[9] and in 921, to differ with the Palestinians about the dates that they had calculated for the forthcoming year. Why they differed, in that year, will be explained below.

An Outline of the Fixed Rabbinic Calendar

In the Middle Ages, all Jewish calendars (Rabbanite as well as Qaraite) shared the following, general features:

– The day (24-hour period) begins in the evening.[10]
– The calendar is lunar; months begin at the new moon.

4 Stern (1996) 117–129.

5 Stern (2001) 185–186, but I adopted there an over-cautious position. These eighth-century texts assume very approximate values for the lengths of the year and of the lunation (lunar month), with the result that the calendar could hardly have functioned or remained in phase with the moon and the seasons.

6 Stern (2016*b*) and (2018). On the earlier, pre-ninth-century history of the rabbinic calendar, which I do not discuss here in detail, and on the reasons why a calculated calendar was eventually adopted by Rabbanite Jews, see in general Stern (2001: 155–264).

7 Stern (2001) 182–210.

8 On the general observation that the fixation of a calendar means abdication of political control over it, see Stern (2012*a*) 120, 164–165.

9 See above, Chapter 2, pp. 10–11.

10 This is typical of lunar calendars (e.g. the Islamic calendar), because the new moon crescent is first visible in the evening.

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– The year has twelve months, but sometimes a thirteenth month is added ('intercalated'), in order to remain in sync with the annual seasons. In this respect, the Jewish calendar differs from the Islamic calendar which has no intercalation and falls behind the seasons. For this reason, the Jewish calendar may be referred to as 'luni-solar', or better, 'luni-seasonal'.[11]
– The months of the year are: Tishri,[12] Marḥeshwan, Kislew, Tevet, Shevat, Adar, Nisan, Iyar, Siwan, Tammuz, Av, Elul. In an intercalated year, the month of Adar is repeated (with a 'second Adar'). Some start counting the months from Nisan (as per the Biblical sequence). Tishri begins, in most years, during the month of September.

The fixed rabbinic calendar, however, was (and still is) determined by the following, specific rules:

– The new moon is defined by the date and time of the *molad*, i.e. the lunar conjunction (i.e. the moment when the moon, along its orbit, passes between the sun and the earth, and is at minimal illumination; or as astronomically defined, when moon and sun are at the same ecliptical longitude).[13] Its calculation is explained below.
– The month begins on the day when the *molad* occurs, but sometimes it is postponed by one or two days, for the reasons that follow.
– The New Year (1 Tishri) may not fall on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday. If the *molad* falls on any of these days, the New Year is postponed to the next day. By the time of the Controversy, this rule was known as *lo ADW Rosh*.[14]
– If the *molad* of Tishri occurs after midday, the New Year is postponed to the next possible day.[15]

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11 The term 'luni-solar' is less accurate, because the sun plays no part in the structure and calculation of the Jewish calendar; the purpose of intercalation is not to remain in line with the course of the sun, but rather to keep up with the seasons. The traditional calculation of equinoxes and solstices, solar phenomena known under the single term of *tequfah*, is separate from and inconsequential to the calculation of the annual calendar. Although the *tequfah* figures prominently in medieval calendar text books, and also appears within our corpus (Palestinian Calendar Manual 3, fol. 2v—although not insignificantly, it is separate from the description of the calendar proper, and seemingly written in a different hand), it is irrelevant to the controversy of 921/2 and therefore not discussed in this chapter or in the whole book.

12 So the medieval vocalization. In early modern Ashkenazi, and in modern Israeli, Hebrew: Tishrei.

13 I define this further in Stern (2001) 100.

14 *ADW* (1,4,6) stands for the three days of the week on which the New Year, *rosh ha-shanah*, cannot fall. On the Talmudic origins and rationale of this rule, see Stern (2001) 166–167, 194–195.

15 This postponement is known in later medieval sources as *molad zaqen*, 'old *molad*'; but

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– The intercalation of a thirteenth month is regulated by a 19-year cycle, in which seven intercalations are made, at two or three-year intervals. The position of the intercalated years within the cycle is fixed. The cycle was originally formulated in terms of the intervals between intercalations, as follows: 3-2-3-3-3-2-3 (sometimes abbreviated as 3-2-9-2-3)—a palindrome.[16] Later, the cycle was expressed in terms of the position of the intercalated years within it.[17] In the tenth century, different epochs (starting points) were used for reckoning the cycle in this way, with the first intercalation in either year 1, year 2, or year 3.[18]
– All the months of the year have a fixed length of 30 or 29 days in alternation, except for two months—Marḥeshwan and Kislew—which are variable and can have either 29 or 30 days. The months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew can thus be 'defective' (both 29 days), 'orderly' (29 and 30), or 'full' (both 30). The first Adar in an intercalated year is extra-sequential and always has 30 days.[19]

The variability of the length of Marḥeshwan and Kislew makes it possible to keep an accurate track of the lunar month, which would not be achieved simply by alternating 30- and 29-day months. This is because the lunar month (the interval from one new moon to the next) is slightly longer than 29.5 days. On average, therefore, some extra 30-day months are needed.

Moreover, the variability of Marḥeshwan and Kislew—including the option of having them sometimes both defective—provides the flexibility required for the observance of the postponements (especially the postponements from Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday) to be possible.

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this term is not used in our sources. The origins and rationale of this postponement are unclear and have generated considerable debate; I hope to address this question in a further publication.

16 It is first attested in *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 8, a work usually dated to the eighth century (the correct text is in the Yemenite recension, e.g. ms New York JTS 3847/8; see in general Treitl 2012). Within our corpus, it is found in LMisc 5r:17–20 and 2PalMan 2r:13–1v:3. Joshua ben Allan (early tenth century?) attributes this formulation of the cycle to the 'early sages' (ms Kiev-Vernadsky OPI no. 286, fol. 18v; Harkavy 1903). See also Stern (2016*b*) 74–75.

17 The earliest attestation is in a liturgical poem of Pinḥas ha-Kohen (late eighth century: Elizur 2004: 725–726).

18 These different schemes are presented and compared, within our corpus, in LMisc 5r:17–20; 1PalMan line 18; and CalData ll. 3–4; also in the treatise of Joshua ben Allan (see above n. 16), who attributes these formulations of the cycle to the 'middle' and 'later' sages. The origins of the 19-year cycle are unclear, but I intend expressing my views on this elsewhere.

19 This fixed scheme may be Talmudic in origin: see Stern (2001) 165–166, 171–172, 192–194. The Hebrew terms for defective, orderly, and full are: חסירים, כסדרם, and either מלאים or שלמים.

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Given that the length of most months is fixed, there is no need to determine each month on the basis of the *molad* and the postponement rules. In practice, therefore, the *molad* and postponement rules are only used for determining the New Year date. The *molad* of Tishri, when viewed over several years, will also indicate whether the months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew in any year need to be defective, orderly, or full. In the Middle Ages, some used the *molad* of Nisan, instead, as the basis of the construction of the annual calendar.

The complete calendar of any given year can be constructed once the following three questions are answered:

– Is the year plain or intercalated?
– Are the months defective, orderly, or full?
– On which day of the week does the New Year (or alternatively, 1 Nisan, or Passover) fall?[20]

The Calculation of the *Molad*

The most sophisticated element of the fixed rabbinic calendar is the *molad*, which determines the day on which the New Year falls. Its calculation is based on precise astronomical values, which appear to have been drawn from Ptolemy's classical work of astronomy, the *Almagest*. This second-century CE Hellenistic work was translated into Arabic at the turn of the ninth century, and is likely to have provided the rabbinic calendar makers with the data required for the *molad* calculation. The scientific precision of the *molad* calculation, unique to the fixed rabbinic calendar, is what makes it probably the most accurate fixed calculated lunar calendar in the world.[21]

The *molad* does not represent the moment of the true lunar conjunction, as defined above. This is because true conjunctions do not succeed each other at regular intervals, and their use in a calendar would have been impractical, as their calculation from month to month would have required excessive astronomical expertise. Instead, the *molad* is a mean conjunction, based on average values of the lunation, which are constant.

The *molad* is calculated on the basis of two values:

– the mean lunation of 29 days, 12 hours, and 793/1080 parts (of the hour).

20 Passover is on 15 Nisan, which is the same day of the week as 1 Nisan.

21 See Stern (2001) 200–210, and above Chapter 2, n. 9. Why the rabbinic calendar makers—whose identity remains unknown—drew on scientific knowledge external to rabbinic tradition is a complex question that cannot be addressed here.

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– the epoch, or reference point, of the *molad* calculation. This could be the date and time of any *molad*, in relation to which all other *moladot* are calculated by adding to it the right number of lunations. In later sources, the epoch that is most commonly used is the *molad* of Tishri year 1 (of the era of creation, i.e. the first Tishri in 'history'), which is given as day 2 (Monday), 5 hours (of the night), and 204 parts, or in its Hebrew acronym: בַּהַרַד (*BaHaRaD*).[22] In the early Babylonian tradition, however, the epoch would have been the *molad* of Tishri of the following year, which is given in later sources as day 6 (Friday), 14 hours (exactly), or in its Hebrew acronym: וְיַד (*WeYaD*). These epochs are not mentioned in any of our sources, but may be deemed implicit.

In the absence of an alternative calendar that could be used to date the *molad*, such as might have been, for example, the Julian calendar,[23] it is necessary to date the *molad* by the day of the week: thus in the example of the epoch of *BaHaRaD*, 'Monday'. This is because the seven-day week is the only system of time reckoning, in rabbinic tradition, that is independent from the lunar calendar, and that can be used as a reference point for it. Dating a *molad* with reference to the day of the week is sufficient for identification purposes. An approximate date of the new moon can easily be established empirically by looking at the shape of the moon, or by assuming about 30 days since the last new moon; the margin of error of one or two days can then be rectified on the basis of the day of the week that the *molad* is given.

The *molad* is therefore expressed with three terms: day of the week, hour of the night or day, and parts of the hour. Days of the week are numbered 1–7. The hours of the night and of the day are reckoned separately: 12 hours from evening to morning, and 12 hours from morning to the next evening.[24] There are 1080 parts in the hour.

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22 The date of this event is 7 October 3761 BCE. This epoch, like the length of the lunation, appears to be based on data from the *Almagest*. See further Stern (2001) 207–210.

23 Thus in the Christian Easter calendar, the lunar dates of Easter are identified with reference to dates in the solar, Julian calendar (or alternatively Coptic, Gregorian, etc.). In rabbinic tradition, such solar calendars are unknown and not available for use.

24 So in most of our corpus. In BCC 23–24, however, as well as in many other sources, the hours of the *molad* are reckoned continuously through the 24-hour period, from evening to evening: for example, in the Four Gates of Yose al-Naharwani, which are usually dated to the early tenth century (Epstein 1901: 204–210). What determines these different usages remains unclear. Epstein believes Yose al-Naharwani to be eastern, because he uses the epoch of *WeYaD*; but he may have been from elsewhere than Baghdad or Iraq, where the majority of our corpus was produced. Elsewhere Epstein argues that 12 and 12 count was a Palestinian tradition, and the 24 count was Babylonian (1902: 232); but this is not

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The *molad* of the first Tishri, *BaHaRaD*, can thus be written: n2-5-204 (night of Monday, five hours, 204 parts). The *molad* of the next Tishri can be rendered as d6–2 (day of Friday, two hours, zero parts).[25] This shorthand will be used in this book.

The difficulty of the *molad* calculation arises from the need to add up many lunations unto the epoch. The complex additions required can be simplified, however, in several ways:

1. Since the *molad* provides a day of the week, all multiples of seven (days) can be cast out of any calculation. Therefore, when adding up large numbers of lunations, there is no need to add up multiples of 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 parts (29-12-793). It is possible to cast out 28 days (4 weeks), and the calculation can then be carried out more simply with 1 day, 12 hours, and 793 parts (1-12-793).
2. Since in practice, as explained above, only one *molad* is needed in any year (usually the *molad* of Tishri) to construct the annual calendar, the lunations do not need to be added month by month. It is enough to know that the interval from one New Year's *molad* to the next is 4-8-876 in a plain year, and 5-21-589 in an intercalated year (these values obtain from adding up 12 or 13 lunations, modulo 7 for the days, and converting every 24 hours into one day, and every 1080 parts into one hour). These simplified values are frequently mentioned and used in our sources.

Algorithms

The first step in the calendar calculation is to establish the year in the cycle—whether it is plain or intercalated—and to calculate the *molad* of Tishri. The next step is to establish, on this basis, the day of the week of the New Year, and whether the months should be defective, orderly, or full. The latter demands one to look ahead at the next year, and sometimes even at the following one—a procedure which can be prone to error.

Several methods have been devised, over the centuries, for this procedure to be safely carried out. In the period of the controversy, Palestinians and Babylonians each had their own, traditional method or algorithm, which are often

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supported by the evidence. In the later medieval West, and so until the modern period, the 24-hour numbering was generally preferred.

25 This particular *molad* is more commonly known, it its Hebrew acronym, as *WeYaD* (6–14), assuming the 24-hour numbering; but although this is how it is referred to in later literature, it is not how our corpus of sources would refer to it.

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referred to in our sources, and which I shall explain here. It is important to emphasize, from the outset, that these are only different algorithms to reach the same result. The difference between the algorithms was not the cause of the disagreement between Palestinians and Babylonians in 921/2, even though, in their letters, they often blame the other's algorithm as having been the cause of error.

The Palestinian algorithm, which is still attested in Palestinian calendar manuals (within our corpus) until the twelfth century, is summed up in the single formula of שוח כהז חדו, which I merely transliterate, in my translations, as ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW. This formula is in three sections. The meaning of the first section is as follows:

ש = שלמים = full
ו = 6 (days)
ח = 8 (days)

Explanation: if the months of the year are full, then the difference between the day of the week of this New Year and of the next New Year is 6 days in a plain year, 8 days in an intercalated year. These days are counted inclusively. For example: in a plain year, if this New Year is on Monday, next New Year will be on Sabbath (6 days later, inclusively counted); in an intercalated year, the next New Year will be on Monday (8 days later, inclusively counted). Likewise, mutatis mutandis:

כ = כסדרם = orderly
ה = 5 (days)
ז = 7 (days)

ח = חסירים = defective
ד = 4 (days)
ו = 6 (days)

In some versions of the algorithm, the days are not counted inclusively, and consequently all the numbers are one unit shorter.[26]

26 So in Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, which may reflect a later usage, as its earliest text witness (1PalMan1) is dated to the end of the eleventh century. Babylonian Letter 1 (L1Bab) exploits the ambiguity of the count (inclusive or non-inclusive) to polemicize against this algorithm.

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The formula ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW is only part of an algorithm, rather than a whole algorithm in itself. It can be seen at work, for example, in the First Letter of ben Meir. The procedure for setting the calendar of any given year with the help of this formula is as follows:[27]

1. Establish whether this year and next year are plain or intercalated.
2. Calculate the *molad* of this New Year (NY_1) and of the next two New Years (NY_2 and NY_3).
3. On the basis of the *molad* and the postponement rules (the rule of Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, and the midday rule), determine the days of the week of NY_1, NY_2 and NY_3.
4. Looking now at ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW, verify whether the interval between NY_2 and NY_3 is permissible, given that the year is plain or intercalated. For example, ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW tells us that if the year is plain, the interval between NY_2 and NY_3 can only be either 4, 5, or 6 days.
5. If the interval between NY_2 and NY_3 is permissible, the New Year dates do not need correcting. The interval between NY_1 and NY_2 indicates whether this year's months will be defective, orderly, or full.
6. If the interval between NY_2 and NY_3 exceeds what is permissible, correct this by postponing NY_2 to the next possible day. The revised interval between NY_1 and the corrected date of NY_2 indicates whether this year's months will be defective, orderly, or full.

This procedure thus enables one, through trial and error, to set the correct dates of the New Year and to establish the length of the variable months. The rest of the annual calendar flows from there.

The Babylonian algorithm, radically different in concept and in design, is the Four Gates. It will be presented and explained at the end of this chapter.

The Midday Postponement and ben Meir's Rule of 641–642

The disagreement between Palestinians and Babylonians in 921/2 was not due to their different algorithms. It was due to a different definition of the midday postponement rule.

The rule that I have stated above is the Babylonian version: to repeat, that if the *molad* of Tishri occurs after midday, the New Year is postponed to the

27 Jaffe (1931) 168–169; Sar-Shalom (1984) 45. A different procedure was proposed earlier by Bornstein (1922*b*: 235–236), but it is complex and ultimately appears to elude the use of the formula ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW; at the very least, Bornstein does not explain how the formula is to be used.

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next possible day. For clarification, 'after midday' means that if the *molad* falls on midday itself, the New Year is not postponed; postponement is only made if the *molad* occurs at least one part later.[28]

The Palestinians, led by ben Meir, added 641 parts (of the hour) to this midday limit. Their postponement rule was therefore the following: if the *molad* of Tishri occurs up to 641 parts after midday (inclusive), the New Year is not postponed; if it occurs at 642 parts after midday (or later), the New Year is postponed to the next possible day. This rule is expressed in Hebrew with the mnemonics אמרת במרת (the first word means 'you said', the second has no meaning), which have the alphanumeric value of 641 and 642.

The difference between the Palestinian and the Babylonian rules is slight, and in the vast majority of cases did not affect the dates of the calendar. It was only when the *molad* of Tishri occurred between midday and 642 parts after midday—an infrequent occurrence—that the Babylonians postponed the New Year, whereas the Palestinians did not.[29]

This was the case in 923 CE, when the *molad* of Tishri was due to fall on d7-6-237 (daytime of Saturday, six hours—i.e. midday—and 237 parts). The Babylonians were to postpone the New Year to Monday (the next possible day), whereas the Palestinians were to retain it on Saturday. This had an impact on the previous year, as can be seen for example by applying the algorithm of ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW (see above). Therefore, starting from Nisan and Passover in 922 CE, the Palestinians were to celebrate the festivals two days earlier. For them, the months of 921/2 had to be defective, whereas for the Babylonians, they had to be full.

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28 This definition, which is implicit throughout our corpus, differs from what is explicitly stated in twelfth-century and later western European works on the calendar, whereby the New Year is postponed even if the *molad* falls at midday exactly: thus the *Sifrei ha-'Ibbur* of Abraham bar Ḥayya (2:7) and Abraham ibn Ezra (p. 2a); Zeraḥia ha-Levi, *Sefer ha-Ma'or* on *bRosh ha-Shanah* 20b; Maimonides, *Laws of Sanctification of the New Moon* (7:2–3); Isaac Israeli, *Yesod Olam* (4:9); etc. This distinction is often overlooked; it is conceptually important, as we shall see in the context of the Four Gates, although in practice it makes no difference, as the *molad* of Tishri has not and will not fall exactly at midday until the year (from the Creation) 75,795.

29 This only applies, furthermore, when the *molad* falls on a day of the week which is permissible, and when the New Year would not be postponed anyway because of the other postponement rules. The probability of the *molad* of Tishri occurring on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday, in the 641-part interval between the Babylonian and Palestinian limits, is about 0.014, or one in seventy years. However, from the list of historical occurrences provided by Bornstein (1904: 158–159), it is evident that these cases tend to occur in clusters: for example, in 922–923 and again in 927 CE.

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This was probably the first time in history that such a calendar disagreement occurred. Prior to 921/2, the last occurrence of such a disagreement would have been in 783 CE, due to the *molad* of Tishri falling on d2-6-521; but in this period, the fixed rabbinic calendar was most likely not yet instituted.[30] After the controversy of 921/2, a similar disagreement could have occurred in 927 CE, with the *molad* of Tishri falling on d5-6-214, and then much later in 1108, with the *molad* of Tishri falling on d2-6-221, and thereafter in 1230, with the *molad* of Tishri falling on d5-6-519.[31]

The Origins of ben Meir's 641–642 Rule

It is clear from the literature and correspondence between them that neither the Babylonians, nor ben Meir himself, had any knowledge or understanding of the origins of the 641–642 rule. Ben Meir was not able to explain for what reason 641 parts needed to be added to the midday limit; all he could invoke was the authority of tradition. The Babylonians, for their part, did not have much better arguments to support their own views. Almost the entire polemic of 921/2 hinged on whose tradition, Palestinian or Babylonian, was more authoritative; it hardly invoked any calendrical argument about the substance and rationale of the midday and the 641–642 rules.

The midday postponement itself is of unclear origin, but it seems at least rational that the limit should be placed exactly at noon, as per the Babylonians, and as in the Jewish calendar in use today. Not so, however, ben Meir's Palestinian limit of 641 parts after noon, which seems like an arbitrary number. Understanding the origins of ben Meir's rule and its rationale presents therefore a challenge.

The first attempt at an explanation was made by Epstein (1902: 233), who simply wrote off ben Meir's rule as a gross error. The midday postponement rule, which governs the month of Tishri, entails that the preceding month of Nisan is postponed if its *molad* occurs after 13 hours (or 1 hour of daytime) and 642 parts. Epstein suggested that ben Meir confused the limits of Tishri

30 See above, p. 58. Note that it is the absence in our sources of any reference to 783 CE or to any similar calendar controversy that might have taken place in that year that initially led Bornstein (1904: 30, n. 1; cf. ibid. 177–179), in the early stages of his research, to form the view that the fixed calendar had not yet been instituted.

31 For a full list, see Bornstein (1904: 158–159). On the probable recurrence of the calendar disagreement in 927 CE, see introduction to RHayye (Chapter 16.3). On 1108, see end of Chapter 2.

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with the limits of Nisan, and thought that 642 parts belonged also to the midday limit of Tishri. This explanation of Epstein was anticipated, in fact, by a late tenth-century responsum of Hayye Gaon, who explained ben Meir's 'error' exactly in this way: 'if (the molad of Nisan) reaches one hour 642 parts, (which means) that the molad of Tishri will reach noon, (the New Month) is postponed from its day; and in this matter Aharon ben Meir erred … [by applying to] Tishri (the limit of) 641–642 … and he did not know how this worked' (RHayye fol. 6v:1–6; the responsum was only published, however, by Mann in 1925). This explanation, however, failed to convince Epstein's contemporaries. A blunder such as this could hardly be imputed to ben Meir, whose sound understanding of calendar calculation is well demonstrated, for example, in his First Letter.[32]

It also seemed wrong to assume that the rule of 641–642 was ben Meir's own invention. Ben Meir claimed it to be an old tradition, and the Babylonians did not deny this. In one of the Babylonian letters, the author responds to ben Meir's claim of 'relying on the words of the sages' as follows: 'this (limit of) 641–642, we have already heard it from the earlier (sages), but … not in the way that the Head of the Academy (ben Meir) has written it'.[33] Thus the rule was acknowledged as an old tradition, even though the Babylonian did not accept it, and argued moreover that the ben Meir has somewhat distorted it (see next section). The rule of 641–642 could therefore not be explained as ben Meir's own, gross error.

In a subsequent article, Epstein (1905: 125–129) suggested that the addition of 642 parts had originally been intended to reduce the frequency of the postponements. This also failed to convince, however, because the addition of only a fraction of the hour to the midday limit would hardly make a difference to the calendar (except on rare occasions, such as in 921/2). Moreover, this explanation did not account for the arbitrary number of 642 parts. To explain it, Epstein was forced to fall back on his original suggestion, that ben Meir borrowed this value from the limits of Nisan. Epstein reiterated this argument, in spite of having to admit the cogency of the objections that Bornstein had made to it one year earlier (ibid. 131–132).[34]

In the meanwhile, a more robust intervention had been made by Bornstein. What he proposed was two distinct explanations, yet he presented them

32 Epstein claims that 'Ben Méïr était un esprit confus', which Bornstein (1904: 38–41, 1922*b*: 249–250) refuted with vigour.

33 LMisc 6r:13–18.

34 See Bornstein (1922*b*: 249–250), Sar-Shalom (1992/3: 116–117).

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together as if they were part of the same argument.[35] Why he did so remains unclear; this caused some confusion in later scholarship.

Bornstein's first explanation was that the addition of 641 parts was intended to account for the geographical longitudinal difference between Palestine and Babylonia. According to this theory, the *molad* calculation had been instituted on the basis of a Babylonian longitude; in other words, the *molad* was given in local Babylonian time.[36] The Palestinians reasoned, however, that the rule of the midday limit should refer to midday in Palestine. Since midday, in Palestine, corresponded to a fraction of the hour after midday in Babylonian time (i.e. *molad* time), it was necessary to add this fraction to the *molad* limit. It seems rather inconsistent, however, that the Palestinians adapted the midday rule to their meridian, but without doing the same to the *molad* calculation—which would have made it unnecessary for the midday limit to be moved. Bornstein remained at pains, moreover, to explain why specifically 641 parts had been added to midday. This fraction of the hour did not represent the time difference between Palestine and Babylonia, neither by modern nor by medieval reckoning.[37]

The correct solution to the problem was, most probably, Bornstein's second theory on the origins of ben Meir's 641–642 rule. Bornstein argued that the difference between Palestinians and Babylonians was more fundamental, and affected originally the whole calculation of the *molad*. I have mentioned above that the epoch (or starting point) of the *molad* calculation is the *molad* of Tishri year 1 (of the era of creation), which is given as day 2 (Monday), 5 hours (of the night), and 204 parts, or in its Hebrew acronym *BaHaRaD*. Originally, however, the *molad* of Tishri of the following year was used as epoch, because in the Babylonian tradition, the era of Creation started one year later.[38] Assuming

35 The two explanations are given separately in Bornstein (1904: 14–15 and 20–21, also 178), and then merged as one in Bornstein (1922*b*: 250–252).

36 Epstein (1905: 119–121) rejects this proposition as unlikely, since traditionally the rabbinic calendar was associated with the land of Israel (see also Sar-Shalom 1992/3: 113–116). However, if as I have argued elsewhere (Stern 2001: 207–210), the *molad* calculation originated in Baghdad—most likely through borrowing from Abbasid translations of the *Almagest*—it is perhaps conceivable that a local, Babylonian longitude was assumed.

37 An attempt was made much later by Lasker and Lasker (1990: 126 and n. 39) to identify at least one medieval source with longitudinal values for Babylonia and Palestine that came close (though still not exactly) to a difference of 642 parts of the hour. Their argument, however, is weak, not least as this medieval source, a table by the Persian astronomer Kūshyār Gīlānī, dates from the early eleventh century, a century later than the calendar controversy. For a full critique of Lasker and Lasker's argument, see Sar-Shalom (1992/3: 119–123) and Stern (2001: 271–272, n. 217).

38 As evident already in the Babylonian Talmud, *bAvodah Zarah* 9a–b; see also Abraham bar

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this year as epoch, the *molad* of the first Tishri was Friday, 2 hours (of the day), and 0 parts; or Friday, 14 hours (of the 24-hour period), as later known in its acronym of *WeYaD*. This round number—with day and hours, but zero parts—is not accidental. However the epoch was determined (most likely, on the basis of lunar data taken from the *Almagest*), it was rounded off to the nearest hour, so as to ease its memorization and use.

Bornstein hypothesized that the Palestinians preferred to take as epoch the *molad* of Nisan, which in Palestinian calendrical tradition was generally taken as beginning of the year. According to the Babylonian *molad* calculation, the *molad* of Nisan year 1 would have been Wednesday, 9 hours (of the night), 642 parts. The Palestinians, however, rounded off this *molad* to Wednesday and 9 hours, and this became their epoch. Thus, as a result of rounding off by both Babylonians and Palestinians, a difference of 642 parts became established between their respective *molad* calculations. At a later stage, the Palestinians decided to adopt the Babylonian *molad* calculation, so that their *molad* would be one and the same. However, because in their reckoning the *molad* really occurred 642 parts earlier, they added 642 parts to the midday limit of the calendar.

Although hypothetical, the second theory of Bornstein is the most plausible explanation of the origins of ben Meir's rule. It accounts best for the specific value of 642 parts, and it has been accepted by most scholars.[39] The assumption that originally the Palestinians reckoned the *molad* from Nisan, upon which this theory depends, is admittedly not certain, but it finds support from several sources within our corpus, including some recently discovered.[40] Thus in a number of our sources, the Palestinian rule of 641–642 is formulated with reference first to Nisan, then to Tishri, even though the rule is only really relevant to Tishri—which suggests that Nisan was treated, at least at one time, as epoch.[41] More importantly, a responsum of Hayye Gaon that was first published by Mann in 1925, subsequently to Bornstein's article, refers explicitly to

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Ḥayya, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* 3:7; Genizah fragment British Library Or. 10588.5; and more detailed discussion in Stern (2001: 272–273).

39 This theory was adopted by Bornstein's colleague Jaffe (1931: 172–176), and endorsed by Sar-Shalom (1992/3: 111–113) and Stern (2001: 270–274). A similar but less plausible argument was proposed by Cassuto (1943; see on this Sar-Shalom ibid. 117–119).

40 Epstein (1905: 124–125) rejected this theory because of the absence of positive evidence that the Palestinians originally used Nisan as epoch for the calculation of the *molad*. Bornstein was not able to prove this, but he did provide several indications in support of this hypothesis: see Bornstein (1922*b*) 233–235; Stern (2001) 272–273.

41 Two of these sources are quoted in the next section (LMisc 6r:14 and 19; 1PalMan 30); in addition, L1Bab recto 5–7, and 3PalMan 11r:12–14 (in the latter, three instances).

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an alternative version of the Four Gates that is based on the month of Nisan (in our corpus: RHayye fol. 6r:10–15); and a Palestinian calendar manual discovered much more recently, in 2014, provides us for the first time with the text of these Four Gates based entirely on Nisan (3PalMan 1v:11–2v:4; the existence of these Four Gates had only been hypothesized by Bornstein).[42] The primacy of Nisan, in these mainly Palestinian sources, helps to vindicate Bornstein's theory.

One more theory has been proposed more recently by Yaaqov Loewinger, who similarly argues that the disagreement between Palestinians and Babylonians was fundamentally about the *molad* calculation itself. Loewinger's theory is predicated on the assumption that the *molad* calculation was intended to reflect precise astronomical values. According to him, the epoch used by the Babylonians, *WeYaD*, corresponds almost exactly to the lunar conjunction times that can be inferred from the *Almagest*, assuming the longitude of Jerusalem, and assuming Ptolemy's values for the equation of time (the equation of time, a correction to account for the variation of the day length through the annual cycle, was overlooked by Bornstein and Jaffe). This, then, was how the *molad* was originally instituted. The addition of 641 parts to the midday limit was a later development; it was intended as a correction to the time of the *molad*, based on the revised values of the moon's mean motion in longitude that were established by the Arab astronomer al-Battānī.[43]

Besides remaining uncertainties as to whether Babylonian and Palestinian *moladot* really match so closely the data of Ptolemy and al-Battānī, the main difficulty with this theory is its ascription of ben Meir's calendar rule to al-Battānī's astronomy. Al-Battani is unlikely to have published his astronomical work (*Zij*) before the end of the ninth century;[44] ben Meir's rule of 641–642,

42 See introduction to 3PalMan, in Chapter 17.3.

43 Although formulated in the 1990s, Loewinger's theory remains to date unpublished. A recording of a lecture given by him (in Hebrew) on 15 December 2015, presenting an updated version of his theory, can be accessed at http://math.biu.ac.il/album/2038 or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDvF6IF002M (accessed 24 November 2017). Loewinger was somewhat anticipated by Jaffe (1931: 177–179), who basically adhered to Bornstein's second explanation, but argued that the values of al-Battānī were found to be much closer to the Palestinian *molad*, which encouraged the Palestinians to maintain their tradition through the addition of 642 parts to the midday limit. Loewinger, however, relies on a more precise assessment of Ptolemy's and al-Battānī's lunar theories, and argues on this basis that the Palestinian tradition of 641–642 was entirely derived from al-Battānī.

44 The extant version of al-Battānī's *Zij* refers to eclipse observations that he and others made from 883 to 901 CE (Stephenson 1997: 488–490); but by 901, an earlier recension of the work must already have been published, as one of its chapters is referred to already by Thābit ibn Qurra, who died in 901 (later sources mention, indeed, the existence of two recensions of the work). The observational record that is extant suggests, however, that

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in contrast, is presented in the sources as an old tradition, which by 921/2 was no longer understood, or could no longer be explained, by ben Meir and his contemporaries (see above). Some of our sources suggest, moreover, that the tradition underwent certain changes before reaching the version that ben Meir used;[45] this implies a longer history than just two or three decades. Al-Battānī is thus too recent, in relation to the controversy of 921/2, to account for the origins of this tradition, its evolution, and its history.[46]

In conclusion, Bornstein's second explanation is the most plausible, although in the absence of evidence, the origins of ben Meir's rule remain a matter of speculation. Our sources do not shed light on this, precisely because ben Meir himself did not know the reason of his rule.

The Earlier Version of ben Meir's Rule

In several passages in our sources, mention is made of an earlier version of ben Meir's rule. According to this version, the limit of 641–642 only applies when the *molad* of Tishri falls on a Monday. In the controversy of 921/2, however, it was a later version of this rule that was used, whereby the limit of 641–642 applied to all possible days of the week: for the contentious *molad* of 923 was due to fall not on a Monday but on a Saturday.

The earlier version, which I call the 'rule of Monday', appears in a passage that has been partially quoted above. It is used by a Babylonian polemicist to undermine ben Meir's position. To quote him now in full:

> this (limit of) 641–642, we have already heard it
> from the earlier (sages), but they said it not in the way that the Head of the Academy (ben Meir) has written it. Rather, this is what they said:
> 'if Nisan is born on Sabbath and Tishri on Monday, one sees: if a quarter of the day (6 hours) minus 641
> parts is left, they do not postpone it from its day, but if it is missing 642, they postpone it forward'. But the Head

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the first version of the *Zij* could not have been written much earlier than 901 (see Hartner 1970–1980).

45 See next section.

46 Loewinger argues that ben Meir may have known that al-Battānī was the source of his rule, but deliberately concealed it, as he preferred a claim of ancient tradition to reliance on the authority of modern science. This seems far-fetched, however, as there is no hint whatsoever in the sources to such a concealed reasoning.

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> of the Academy says that they said (the rule of) 641–642 with regard to all of (the days), Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Sabbath (for Nisan) and Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Sabbath (for Tishri), whereas the earlier (sages)
> only said it regarding Nisan on Sabbath and Tishri on Monday.
>
> LMisc 6r:17–6v:1

The same claim, that the limit of 641–642 was originally confined to when the *molad* of Tishri falls on Monday—which therefore should not have applied in 921/2—is made by another Babylonian polemicist, in Babylonian Letter 1 (L1Bab recto 5–9). He argues there that the Palestinian leader contradicted himself, because at first he said that the limit is midday for all days of the week except for Monday, whose limit is midday and 641 parts; he then changed his mind and said that the limit is midday and 641 parts for all possible days of the week.

Remarkably, the same early version or 'rule of Monday' appears much later in the Palestinian calendar manuals. For example, in Palestinian Calendar Manual 1:

> If Nisan falls on a Sabbath, and Tishri on a Monday, one sees:
> if there remains a quarter of a day less 641 parts, it is not postponed, but if it is less
> 642 parts, it is postponed forward.
>
> 1PalMan 30–31

The same formulation, almost *verbatim*, is in Palestinian Calendar Manual 3 (3PalMan 1r:14–17), as well as in the Babylonian letter from the Letters Miscellany (Letter 3, LMisc 6r), quoted here above. All the more remarkable about Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, however, is that whereas the manual is written in Judeo-Arabic, this particular rule is enounced in its original, Hebrew version. This clearly indicates that the Palestinian calendar rule, in its original wording, was carefully preserved and transmitted over many centuries (the earliest manuscript of Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, which contains this passage dates from the end of the eleventh century). This rule, restricting the limit of 641–642 to Mondays only, was thus not an error or an aberration, but a respected tradition in Palestinian calendrical lore.[47]

47 The same version of the rule is also implicit in another Babylonian letter in the Letters Miscellany (LMisc 4r:7–9). There, the author quotes the Palestinians as saying that if the *molad* of Tishri occurs 'on Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath until six hours, it is not post-

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The Monday version of ben Meir's rule, which our sources (at least, two Babylonian letters) present as the earlier, more original version, is historically important because of its potential to shed light on the origins and development of the 641–642 rule. The rationale of this earlier rule, however, is even more obscure than that of the later one: why should the limit of 641–642 have been confined to Mondays?

Bornstein was initially baffled by this rule, as according to it, ben Meir should not have disagreed with the Babylonians in 921/2, and there should not have been a calendar controversy. Bornstein therefore suppressed it, by making a conjectural emendation to the text of L1Bab, which at the time was the only source attesting to this rule.[48] His emended text was then quoted by Epstein (1905: 125) as a straightforward reading, and Epstein used it to support his theory about the origins of ben Meir's calendar rule (ibid. 125–129).

In the meanwhile, however, Bornstein had already changed his mind and reinstated the original reading, in an appendix that was added to the 1904 book when it was re-printed, in the same year, as a separate monograph. In an attempt to justify this rule, he argued that ben Meir initially formulated the rule only for Mondays—which would not be relevant in 921/2, as the contentious *molad* of 923 was due to fall on a Saturday—in order to try it out and see how people reacted to it; in Bornstein's words, this was a 'ballon d'essai'. No one reacted adversely to this new rule, precisely because it was irrelevant and there was no particular reason for anyone to refute it. Ben Meir misinterpreted this as a positive sign, and proceeded to extend the rule to all possible days of the week—thus initiating the calendar controversy.[49]

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poned, (and if) after six hours, it is postponed'; Monday is omitted, presumably because its limit is six hours and 641 parts. It is also pertinent to note that in some sources, the rule of ben Meir specifically states 'postponed to the next day' or 'to the morrow' (למחר: e.g. ibid. LMisc 4r:6–7; 1PalMan 9). This only works when the *molad* falls on Monday, and the New Year is postponed to Tuesday (in all other days, the New Year needs to be postponed by two days, because of the rule prohibiting the New Year on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday). Ben Meir's use of the word 'the morrow', even though it did not apply in 921/2 (because the New Year of 923 was to be postponed, by the Babylonians, from Saturday to Monday), suggests that this was indeed the original wording of the rule.

48 Bornstein (1904) 81 and n. 1.

49 Bornstein (1904: 177–179), and again (1922*b*: 261–263). To complicate things further, Bornstein suggested that ben Meir's choice of Monday was by reference to the last occurrence of a *molad* of Tishri between midday and 642 parts later, which had been in 783 CE, on a Monday; the first version of his rule was thus intended for that year, in retrospective. In 1922, however, Bornstein had to retract somewhat from this position, as by then it was evident to him that in 783, the *molad* calculation had not yet been instituted, and that ben Meir himself may have been aware of this.

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This explanation was too contrived for Jaffe (1931: 185–186, n. 2), who argued instead that the intention of the first version was to clarify that the rule should apply to all possible days of the week, just like the second version. The reason why it stated only Mondays was to avoid anyone making any exceptions: for if the rule applied to Monday—which prevented a New Year postponement of only one day—all the more so should it apply to Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, preventing for each of these a two-day postponement.[50] Jaffe's *qal wa-ḥomer* (*a minori* argument) smacks of his Talmudic upbringing; but even to a Talmudist like myself, it seems like nothing but inverted logic. It also contradicts the textual evidence: in at least one of the sources, the rule of Monday explicitly excludes all other days of the week from the addition of 641 parts.[51]

I would like to suggest that the rule of Monday has more to do with the history of the midday postponement as a whole, than with the addition of 641 parts. The rule goes back to a period when this postponement only applied to Mondays; on other days of the week, an afternoon *molad* did not lead to any postponement. The reason for this is that it may have appeared excessive to postpone the New Year by two days, when an afternoon *molad* occurred on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday. But a one-day postponement from Monday to Tuesday was considered acceptable. The rule of Monday, in its traditional formulation quoted above, thus did two things: it determined the limit of the postponement as midday and 641 parts, and it restricted the entire postponement (not the addition of 641 parts!) to Mondays. There is some textual support for my thesis: namely, that in nearly all the sources quoted above,[52] the rule of Monday is presented without mention of any postponement on the other days of the week—as if, in fact, the midday postponement did not exist at all on these days.

This thesis needs to be justified further, however, by placing the rule of the midday postponement in a broader historical framework. This investigation is outside the scope of a monograph on the calendar controversy of 921/2; my intention is to return to this elsewhere.

50 Jaffe (1931) 180–186.

51 L1Bab recto 5–7.

52 All the sources but L1Bab.

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641 or 642?

Ben Meir is sometimes said to have added 641 parts to the midday limit, and sometimes, 642 parts. In this section, I wish to clear the confusion that has arisen on this, and also to explain why this difference of one part is actually not trivial.

The modern, scholarly habit of referring to 642 parts as ben Meir's addition to the calendar was established by Epstein, in what was the first substantial study of the calendar controversy.[53] Bornstein (1904: 28, 31, 33) and others thoughtlessly repeated this, including more recently Sar-Shalom (1992/3: 109–110) and myself (Stern 2001: 269–275). This definition of what ben Meir added to the midday limit was critical to Epstein, as it enabled him, in the same first study, to explain ben Meir as mistakenly transposing the 642 parts that characterise the limits of Nisan, and misapplying them to the limits of Tishri. Much later, Lasker and Lasker's (1990) similarly explained that ben Meir chose to add specifically 642 parts because this number was calendrically significant, being prominent in the limits of Nisan.

On closer examination of the sources, however, it is evident that ben Meir did not add 642 parts, but rather 641. The Book of the Calendar Controversy explicitly says that ben Meir 'added to each limit 641 parts', and goes on to show, accordingly, how each limit of the Four Gates was increased by 641 parts (BCC 7:11–8:3; the Four Gates will be presently explained, in the next section). Saadya says the same in one of his letters ('he deceitfully innovated the Four Gates by adding 641 to every value'—LSaad 2v:5–8), and so does the second pro-Babylonian letter in the Letters Miscellany (LMisc 4r:14–16) and the Qaraite Narrative of the controversy (QarNar verso 12). The First Babylonian Letter refers to the Palestinian rule as the 'calculation of 641' (L1Bab recto 4–5, 18), and mentions also the addition of 641 parts (ibid. 14–16).

The contradiction between what the sources actually say (641), and what modern scholars preferred for their own, hermeneutical purposes (642), led to many inconsistencies in the scholarly literature. Thus, although Bornstein (1904) states '642 parts' in his main narrative (see above), he does acknowledge, in a footnote on the passage of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, that the addition really was of 641 parts (1904: 64, n. 4); and in his later work, he quietly corrects himself and refers to ben Meir's addition of 641 parts (1922*b*: 258). Even Epstein occasionally wavers and says '641' (1901: 199; 1902: 233), or '641 or 642' (1902: 230). In one important footnote, where the issue is openly

53 Epstein (1901: 177); this value was reiterated in Epstein (1905) 119, 127.

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discussed, Epstein acknowledges that the sources say '641'; but he still argues, not convincingly, that really 642 parts were added (1901: 206–207, n. 2).

The question of whether 641 or 642 parts were added by ben Meir is not trivial, because it affects many, if not most, of the explanations that have been given for ben Meir's rule. Not only do Epstein (1901) and Lasker and Lasker (1990) depend on the assumption that ben Meir added 642 parts, but so does the preferred explanation of Bornstein and Jaffe. This explanation, presented in detail above, posits that the addition of 642 parts to the midday limit was to compensate for a difference of 642 parts in the Palestinian and Babylonian *molad* calculations, itself the result of a different rounding off of the value of the epochal *molad*. This argument does not work if the addition was only of 641 parts.

Jaffe was aware of this difficulty, recognizing that the sources only refer to an addition of 641 parts. He addressed this by raising another question, concerning the precise definition of the (Babylonian) midday rule: if the *molad* falls at midday exactly, is the New Year postponed, or is it not postponed unless the *molad* falls one part later? This question was also trivial at first sight, and of no practical relevance: for as he and others noted, the first ever occurrence of the *molad* of Tishri at midday exactly (on one of the relevant days of the week) will only be in the year 75,795 (era of Creation). However, this question was highly consequential for the conception of the Four Gates, as we shall see in the next section, and also relevant to the explanation of ben Meir's rule.

Later medieval, European writers on the Jewish calendar unanimously rule that if the *molad* occurs at midday exactly, the New Year is postponed.[54] This can be found in Abraham bar Ḥayya's monograph on the calendar, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* (1123 CE), in Maimonides' Code (late twelfth century), and many other sources.[55] This interpretation of the rule is first attested in the responsum of Hayye Gaon (late tenth century) that is included in my corpus: 'if (the molad of Nisan) reaches one hour 642 parts, (which means) that the molad of Tishri will reach noon, (the New Month) is postponed from its day' (RHayye fol. 6v:1–4).

But the texts contemporary to the calendar controversy, which reflect no doubt how the rule was interpreted in the early tenth century, make it clear that the New Year is only postponed if the *molad* falls *beyond* the limit of midday. This is most explicit in a Babylonian letter from the Letters Miscellany (LMisc 6r:10–11), to quote: 'when the *molad* of Tishri exceeds noon by even one part,

54 As Bornstein (1904: 86, n. 2) already pointed out.

55 Abraham bar Ḥayya, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* 2:7; Abraham ibn Ezra, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur*, p. 2a; Zeraḥia ha-Levi, *Sefer ha-Maʾor* on *bRosh ha-Shanah* 20b; Maimonides, *Laws of Sanctification of the New Moon*, 7:2–3; Isaac Israeli, *Yesod Olam*, 4:9, and all later sources.

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it is not fitting to set it on that day, but only to postpone it forward'—which implies that at noon itself, there is no postponement—and again:

> If Tishri is born up to six hours on Monday day, it is not postponed from its day; and if is born after six hours by one part, it is postponed to Tuesday—which indicates that one does not set it on its day unless it is born until noon only, but after noon by even one part, we do not find that it is ever set on its day
>
> LMisc 6v:8–11

Similarly, in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 28:7–9): '[any *molad*] that enters the seventh hour of the day by even one [part is postponed from] its proper day'.[56]

This explains why ben Meir's rule drew a distinction between 641 and 642 parts, with the Hebrew mnemonic אמרת במרת. The meaning of this mnemonic is that if the molad falls at 641 parts after midday, there is no postponement, but if at 642 parts after midday, the New Year is postponed. This is because, as we have seen, ben Meir added 641 parts to the midday limit. According to the Babylonians, if the *molad* falls at midday, there is no postponement; that is equivalent, for ben Meir, to midday and 641 parts. If the *molad* falls one part after midday, the New Year is postponed; that is equivalent, for ben Meir, to midday and 642 parts.

All the sources I have quoted above as evidence that ben Meir added 641 parts, and that the New Year was only postponed if the *molad* fell *after* midday, happen to be Babylonian. Jaffe (1931: 176, n.) sought to argue, on this basis, that the Palestinians thought differently, and really intended to add 642 parts; however, they misattributed to the Babylonians the rule that New Year is postponed even if it falls at midday exactly, and for that reason, the addition of 642 parts to midday led them to formulate the rule of 641–642. This theory is far-fetched, as there is no evidence in our sources of such a misunderstanding between Palestinians and Babylonians. However, this theory would rescue the various scholarly explanations of the origins of ben Meir's rule (most importantly, that of Bornstein and Jaffe) that depend on the assumption that the Palestinians' addition to the midday limit was of 642 parts. The possibility that a misinterpretation or error of one part of the hour was committed in some way

56 Another letter in the Letters Miscellany, however, is ambiguous: 'until six hours, it is not postponed, after six hours, it is postponed' (LMisc 4r:7–9); and likewise, the last folio of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 29–30).

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by ben Meir or by his predecessors—for example, as suggested here by Jaffe—can certainly not be discarded.

The Four Gates in the Calendar Controversy

Above we have seen that the traditional Palestinian algorithm for the determination of the calendar was ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW. The Babylonians, however, operated a system called the 'Four Gates', which will be presented in full at the end of this chapter. Although both produced the same calendrical results (aside from the disagreement about the midday limit), these two systems were fundamentally different. The Palestinian algorithm was based on a minimal set of data—all that needed memorizing, in fact, was the formula ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW—but involved a complex procedure based on trial and error and self-correction, which could not be carried out without some level of authority and expertise.[57] The Babylonian Four Gates, in contrast, consisted of a large set of data, but was easy for anyone to use and implement without risk of error.[58]

This diametrical opposition between the Palestinian and Babylonian methodologies reflected a deep-seated difference of ethos with regard to calendrical authority. The Palestinian tradition was elitist and protective of its monopoly over calendar decisions, and thus designed in such a way that only experts could implement it; whereas the Babylonian tradition was democratic and promoted free access to the reckoning of a calendar that was, after all, by all means and purposes fixed.

The accessibility, and possibly wide currency, of the Four Gates was quite likely a matter of concern to ben Meir, who legitimately saw them as a threat to his personal authority. It was also an obstacle to the wide implementation of his calendar decisions in 921/2. This is probably one of the reasons why early in the controversy, during the winter of 921/2, ben Meir took the decision of appropriating the Four Gates and adapting them to his own calendar rules. This policy was to help him disseminate his calendar decisions, and also served the polemical purpose of fighting the Babylonians on their own turf. From this point onwards, the Four Gates also became Palestinian.

Ben Meir already uses his adapted Four Gates in his First Letter, but does not admit to having appropriating them from the Babylonians. This is only known

57 Self-correction occurs in step 6 of the procedure (as I have explained it above).

58 This contrast is well elaborated upon by Bornstein (1922*b*: 259), although his understanding of the Palestinian algorithm was more complex than I have explained above (p. 65).

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to us from the Babylonian sources, such as the Book of the Calendar Controversy, that accuse ben Meir of having 'falsified' the Four Gates, by adding 641 parts to each of their limits. But whether or not ben Meir was responsible for the creation of these adapted Four Gates, there can hardly be any doubt that these Four Gates were not a native Palestinian tradition, and that they were only recently adapted to ben Meir's rule. Indeed, the wording of ben Meir's Four Gates, as quoted for example in his First Letter or in the Book of the Calendar Controversy, is almost identical to the wording of the Babylonian Four Gates, the only difference being the value of their limits. This suggests that they were not independent traditions, but rather that one was borrowed from the other.

That the borrowing went from Babylonia to Palestine is evident in several ways. Firstly, the accusation is never reversed: none of the Palestinian authors ever argues that the Four Gates were originally Palestinian, and that it was the Babylonians who appropriated them and distorted them. Secondly, even when ben Meir uses the adapted Four Gates in his First Letter, he insists on justifying each element of the algorithm on the basis of his own tradition of ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW; clearly ben Meir has trouble relying exclusively on the Four Gates—which reflects the fact that this was not his native algorithm. Thirdly, even after the Four Gates were appropriated and adapted, Palestinian polemicists continue criticizing the Four Gates as an inauthentic way of reckoning the calendar.[59]

The Palestinian appropriation of the Four Gates had the effect of raising the controversy to a higher level: henceforth, ben Meir's disagreement with the Babylonians was no longer specifically about the calendar dates of the years 922–923 (CE), but extended to the calendar as a whole, and for all years to come on a permanent basis. The calendar controversy consequently shifted to a more general debate that was largely centred on the Four Gates, and on the question of which of its versions, the Babylonians' or ben Meir's, was considered genuine and legitimate. The Four Gates thus became the central grounds of the calendar controversy, and occupy for this reason a place of considerable importance in our corpus.

59 Letters Miscellany, Letter 3 (LMisc 6r:11–13), Letter 2 (4r:2–3, 16–17), L2Bab (all three are Babylonian responses to a Palestinian polemic against the Four Gates), and the Palestinian polemic (PalPol 17). Although it is not certain that these texts were written after ben Meir appropriated the Four Gates, Letter 2 possibly refers already to this, i.e. to ben Meir's addition of 641 parts to all the limits of the Four Gates (LMisc 4r:15–16; see discussion there).

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Although the Four Gates are described in great detail in both Babylonian and Palestinian sources, neither delve very deeply into their rationale. The Four Gates are meant to be applied mechanically without too much thought, and that is exactly what is reflected in the literature surrounding the controversy. The debate as to which version of the Four Gates was correct did not invoke astronomical, mathematical, or halakhic principles, but only the legitimacy of rabbinic tradition. For both Babylonians and Palestinians, what made their version of the Four Gates legitimate was simply that they conformed to their received calendrical traditions. In those passages where Palestinians polemicize against the use of the Four Gates for setting the calendar, their criticism of the Four Gates is superficial and easily refuted by their Babylonian opponents. The debate between them did not involve much science. It was mainly political, about who was vested with the authority to make calendrical decisions.

The Four Gates: Description and Explanation

The Four Gates enable one to determine the character of any given year solely on the basis of two parameters: the time of the *molad* of Tishri, and the position of the year, whether plain or intercalated, within the 19-year cycle. These two parameters determine the day of the week of the New Year, and whether the months of the year are defective, orderly, or full. On this basis, the rest of the calendar can be constructed for the whole year.

The determination of the year depends on the limits, provided by the Four Gates, within which the *molad* falls. For example, if the *molad* falls between Thursday midday (d5–6) and Friday at eight hours of the day (or 20 hours of the 24-hour period) and 491 parts (d6:8:491), and if the year is intercalated, then the New Year will be on Saturday and the months will be defective. What the Four Gates provide is a set of such limits, ranging continuously through the whole week, for different types of plain and intercalated years (see Table 4).

The algorithm is called 'Four Gates' because it is divided into four parts, corresponding to the four days of the week when the New Year can fall (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday). The term 'gate' may be used in the sense of 'chapter' (a usage attested in Hebrew as well as Aramaic and Arabic), but it may suggest more literally that the *molad* of Tishri is the gateway into the New Year.[60] In most versions, the four gates are numbered (and hence listed)

60 In Stern (2001: 193, n. 152) I favoured the former interpretation; Epstein (1901: 204), following Abraham bar Ḥayya (*Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* 2:9), favours the latter. In his description of the

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in retrograde order: the first gate is Sabbath, the second is Thursday, etc. until Monday.[61] The reason for this retrograde order is unclear to me.

The Four Gates are presented here, for the reader's convenience, in the form of a table. It is important to emphasize, however, that our sources do not present the Four Gates as a table, but rather only as a running text.[62] This text of the Four Gates, even when embellished with a poetic veneer,[63] is largely made up of dry numbers; it is repetitive, cumbersome, and not easy to read. It is far less comprehensible to the modern reader than a neatly laid-out table, where the data can be visually grasped and comprehended in almost a single glance. The apparent avoidance of the use of tables, in our entire corpus, demands to be explained.

It seems to me that the preference for a running text was related to the orality and aurality of rabbinic culture in this period. A table is visual and cannot be transmitted orally, as it is necessarily drawn up and written; whereas a text can be read out, heard, memorized, and transmitted through an act of speech. The Four Gates were viewed as part of Talmudic tradition (as implicit, at least, from the last lines extant of the Book of the Calendar Controversy), which is known to have been largely oral in the Geonic period, in its delivery as well as in its transmission.[64] Although written copies were made

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Jewish calendar and its Four Gates, Elias of Nisibis (c. 1019) uses the term 'gates' (*abwāb*) in his Arabic text, but 'canons' (*qānōnē*) in his Syriac text (ms British Library add. 7197, fol. 83r–v; see de Blois 2014: 74); the latter suggests yet another interpretation, i.e. 'four rules'. I have opted for the most literal translation.

61 This retrograde order is already attested in the treatise on the Jewish calendar by al-Khuwārizmī (c. 823/4 CE; see above, p. 57); it is then used in the Four Gates of Yose al-Naharwani (see above, n. 24), and within our corpus, in ben Meir's First Letter (L1BM 15–19), and in the last folio of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 29–30). However, in BCC 21–24, the gates run forward from Saturday to Thursday. In the twelfth century, the same retrograde order is used in the Four Gates of ms Vat. Ebr. 299 fols. 75r–76r (Italian, c. 1100), and in Jacob bar Samson's calendar treatise of c. 1123 (ch. 37; ms Bodl. Opp. 317, in fols. 98c–99a). Abraham bar Ḥayya, however, orders the Four Gates from Monday to Saturday (*Sefer ha-ʿIbbur*, 2:10; c. 1123).

62 The term 'Four Gates table', which I and others have used (Sar-Shalom 1984: 46; Stern 2001: 193, 266–275), is therefore anachronistic and should be avoided. The earliest attestation of a table is in al-Biruni's *Chronology of the Ancient Nations*, written c. 1000 (Sachau, text p. 156, translation p. 150; ms Istanbul Beyazıt 4667, page 163). This table, however, may be more suitably described as the 'Seven Gates', a slightly different system used in later medieval sources; al-Biruni just calls it a 'Table of Limits'. The earliest attestation of a table of the Four Gates in the strict sense of the term is perhaps in Abraham bar Ḥayya (ibid., e.g. ms. Oxford Bodl. Opp. 183, fol. 23r; ms Vatican Urb. Ebr. 48 fol. 34r).

63 Such as the poetic Four Gates of Yose al-Naharwani (see above, n. 24), and the version of the Four Gates in BCC 21–24.

64 See Brody (1990) 240–241, 279–281, 290–291, and (1998*b*) 156–160; Friedman (1995) 44,

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of the Four Gates at the time of the controversy, by ben Meir and presumably also his opponents,[65] the Four Gates are often referred to as oral,[66] and there may have been a general, cultural preference for their oral reading or recitation from memory. This might explain why in Cairo Genizah manuscripts the Four Gates persisted in being expressed as a text, rather than being presented visually as a table, as became much later the norm in late medieval European manuscripts.

The Four Gates have been referred to in earlier scholarship as a 'work'. Epstein called it an *ouvrage* (the term is used in the title of his article of 1902), and he also refers to it as a written work (*l'écrit*).[67] He was probably following Bacher, who had suggested, on the basis of an entry in a book list from the Cairo Genizah, that the 'Four Gates' was the title of a book authored by Saadya.[68]

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n. 165; Sussmann (2005) 296–299, 322–331. As Sussmann shows, however, the status of written copies of the Talmud began to gain importance in the late Geonic period, from the tenth century (see especially ibid. 299 n. 76). On the importance of orality in rabbinic culture, and its increasingly complex relationship with literacy, reflected very similar patterns in surrounding, Islamic culture, with a similarly complex interplay between memorization, oral recitation, public reading, reading to oneself, and various forms of writing, affording either aural or visual access to written texts. see Hirschler (2012), esp. 11–22.

65 Book of the Calendar Controversy, 30:16–21: 'We will not be able to destroy all the copies (הנסחים) which ben Meir wrote on this (and which he sent) to all the places; and furthermore, it is possible that his letters have been copied (ננסחו) among the people … any document, writing, or copy (כל טופס וכותב ונסח) that are found among the people and in which is written 'one hour and 52 parts' instead of 491 etc.' This passage is referring to written copies of ben Meir's Four Gates. Note also the following reference to the Four Gates, again in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 3:15): 'Behold, this is written in the law of the festivals according to their computation', although this clause is immediately followed with (BCC 3:15–4:1): 'in the way that our fathers passed it down to us in our mouths from days of old'.

66 See end of previous note. Also, in BCC 5:1–2: 'the words of the ancients, who placed in our mouths the [Four] Gates'. Ben Meir, in his First Letter, introduces his quotations from the Four Gates with the phrase 'they said'; whilst the pro-Babylonian Letter 2 in LMisc introduces the Four Gates with 'it is said'.

67 Epstein (1901) 192, n. 2, and 204.

68 Bacher (1899: 205), who did not realize, however, that this work had anything to do with the calendar, and thought it was probably a halakhic treatise. The book list, which Bacher (ibid.) edited, is in a fragment now known as JTS ENA 2687.2; the relevant entry was also quoted by Schechter (1901–1902: 498), seemingly unaware of Bacher's edition. The entry reads: [דיה]ותפסיר אבות מלאכות וארבעה שערים לרבנו סע ('Commentary on the main types of work and the Four Gates, by our rabbi Sa'a[dya]'—verso l. 3). The inference that Saadya had authored a calendar book called the Four Gates was later embraced by Malter (1921: 73–74, n. 151, 168–169, and 352).

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The entry, however, does not clearly indicate that the Four Gates constituted a book;[69] whilst Saadya was certainly not the author of the Four Gates, whether as a book or just a calendar algorithm—even though the Four Gates are attributed to him here and in later medieval sources.[70] By the time of the controversy, indeed, the Four Gates were already a well-established tradition, inherited from previous generations. It is also a little misleading to conceive of this short text as a literary work—whether written or oral—when all it could have consisted of was just one or two pages.

In technical terms, the limits that the Four Gates provide in the majority of our sources (and that I have therefore used in the tables below) are *ante quem*. This means that they represent the latest time the *molad* can occur for any given character of year to apply; in other words, the *molad* can occur before or on these limits. Thus, to use the same example as before, the New Year will be on Saturday and the months will be defective if the *molad* falls *before or on* d6:8:491 (in an intercalated year). Accordingly, the value that I have entered in the table for 'Saturday' and 'defective' in an intercalated year is d6:8:491.[71]

In this respect, the Four Gates in our sources differ completely from those attested in later medieval, European manuscripts, whose limits are usually *post quem*—which means that they represent the *earliest* time the *molad* can occur for any given character of year to apply. Consequently, in our example, the limit of d6:8:491 would be positioned in the next column (Saturday full), meaning that if the *molad* falls *on or after* d6:8:491, the New Year is on Saturday

69 The entry (see previous note) is more likely a description of the contents of a book by Saadya, than its formal title; and it does not suggest that the Four Gates constituted a book on its own.

70 E.g. Jacob bar Samson (c. 1123) in his calendar treatise, ch. 37 (ms Bodl. Opp. 317, in fols. 98c–99a, at the end of the passage); a mid thirteenth-century Ashkenazi calendar treatise, ms Paris BNF Heb. 1408, fol. 51v.; and ms St Petersburg, Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts A221, fols. 45r–47v. However, Saadya may have authored a commentary on the Four Gates, as suggested by another book list (see Chapter 6, p. 97).

71 Thus we find in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 21:5–22:1), for this same example: 'When it (the year) comes round (and falls from) the middle of the day of Thursday (i.e. noon) until 491 (parts) of the ninth (hour) of the day of Friday, they are defective, and (if) until the turn of the day (noon) of Sabbath, they are full'. Likewise (*mutatis mutandis*), ben Meir writes in his First Letter (L1BM 15:9–16:1): 'This is the exposition of the first gate: any Tishri in which there is an intercalation, and that is born on 52 parts of the 10th hour of the day of Friday, take the day of Sabbath (as New Year day) and (the months) are defective'. See however n. 73 below.

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and the months are full.[72] The reason for this different layout is that according to the later medieval scholars, the New Year is postponed if the *molad* falls on the limit itself, e.g. at midday (or in our example, d6:8:491); whereas according to the sources of the calendar controversy, the postponement is only made if the *molad* falls one part after midday. This difference has been discussed above (in the context of whether ben Meir added 641 or 642 parts to the midday limit). Although it is only of one part, this difference is not trivial, as it leads to a completely different conception and layout of the Four Gates table.[73]

The Four Gates of ben Meir are identical to the Babylonian, except that 641 parts are added to all the limits. A glance at the Babylonian Four Gates reveals that although many of the limits are, as expected, midday (and in ben Meir's Four Gates, midday and 641 parts)—which is the fundamental calendar rule—the majority are not. This is to prevent a knock-on effect on other years: if any of these other limits, which are all earlier than midday, are transgressed, this will cause a New Year in another year to go over the limit of midday.

72 E.g. the Four Gates (text and tables) of Abraham bar Ḥayya, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* 2:9–10.

73 The distinction between these two types of Four Gates has not been given sufficient recognition. Bornstein (1904: 24) and Jaffe (1931: 171) both give tables on the later medieval, *post quem* model, when context demanded that they should have adopted the *ante quem* model in use at the time of the calendar controversy. One of our sources, however, is inconsistent in this regard: Letter 3 of the Letters Miscellany assumes *post quem* limits, but then in the same breath emphasizes at length that a postponement is only made if the limit is exceeded, not if the *molad* falls exactly on it:

> the second Gate (is) that every Tishri that has an intercalation and is born in the night of Wednesday from 11 hours 695 parts onwards, hold the New Year on Thursday and (make) the months full … (LMisc 5v:20–22)
>
> every Tishri after an intercalated year that is born on Monday day, 3 hours, 589 parts, set it on its day, and if it is born at three hours 590 parts, postpone it to Tuesday and set the months as orderly. And if there was no intercalation in the previous year, and Tishri is born up to six hours on Monday day, it is not postponed from its day; and if is born after six hours by one part, it is postponed to Tuesday—which indicates that one does not set it on its day unless it is born until noon only, but after noon by even one part, we do not find that it is ever set on its day (LMisc 6v:5–11).

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TABLE 4 The Babylonian Four Gates

	FOURTH GATE		THIRD GATE	SECOND GATE		FIRST GATE	
The New Year falls on ...	**Monday**		**Tuesday**	**Thursday**		**Saturday**	
Marḥeshwan and Kislew are ...	**Defective**	**Full**	**Orderly**	**Defective**	**Full**	**Defective**	**Full**
Intercalated year	d1:8:491	d2:6	d3:6	n4:11:695	d5:6	d6:8:491	d7:6
Plain year after plain[a]	n1:9:204		n3:9:204	**Orderly** n5:9:204		n6:9:204	
Plain year between two intercalated		d2:3:589					
Plain year before plain[b]						n6:0:408	

a And thus always before an intercalated.
b And thus always after an intercalated.

TABLE 5 The Four Gates of ben Meir

	FOURTH GATE		THIRD GATE	SECOND GATE		FIRST GATE	
The New Year falls on ...	**Monday**		**Tuesday**	**Thursday**		**Saturday**	
Marḥeshwan and Kislew are ...	**Defective**	**Full**	**Regular**	**Defective**	**Full**	**Defective**	**Full**
Intercalated year	d1:9:52	d2:6:641	d3:6:641	d4:0:256	d5:6:641	d6:9:52	d7:6:641
Plain year after plain	n1:9:845		n3:9:845	**Regular** n5:9:845		n6:9:845	
Plain year between two intercalated		d2:4:150					
Plain year before plain						n6:0:1049	

Notes on Tables 4–5: The time of the *molad*, which in the Four Gates constitutes a limit, consists of four elements: night (n) or day (d), day of the week (1–7), hours elapsed (1–12), parts (1–1079; not entered if zero).

A blank cell carries the same limit as the cell above it.

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PART 2

The Book of the Calendar Controversy



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CHAPTER 6

The Book of the Calendar Controversy: Introduction

The Book and Its Title

The Book of the Calendar Controversy is by far the longest literary work within our corpus, and the most comprehensive account we have of the calendar controversy of the early 920s. It is written from a Babylonian perspective, as a vehement polemic against the Palestinian leader ben Meir.

Earlier scholars attributed this work to Saadya and called it *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* ('Book of the Festivals'); but this title, and probably also the attribution, are incorrect and must be discarded for several reasons. The main reasons for discarding this title are firstly that the name *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* is not attested in any source, and secondly, that it is misrepresentative of its contents.

As was already noted by Henry Malter, the title *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* is not attested in any source. It was merely a textual conjecture of Abraham Harkavy in his edition of Saadya's *Sefer ha-Galuy*, where Saadya refers to an account he wrote of the calendar controversy.[1] Harkavy's edition of the passage read (with my translation):

> וכמא אלפת ואנא באלעראק כתאבא עבראניא ען ראי מן כאן באלחצ֗ר [ריסא] פימא ורד עלי אלאמה מן כטא בן מאיר [והו אלמסמי בכתאב אל]אעיאד מקטעא פואסיקא מטעמא בטעמין.[2]

> Likewise, when I was in Iraq, I composed a Hebrew book on the authority of the one who was the Head of the Court, concerning what befell the people due to the error of ben Meir. [It is the one called the Book of] Festivals, divided into verses and annotated with cantillation marks.

1 Malter (1913: 490, n. 9); I am grateful to Ronny Vollandt for first pointing this out to me. Malter argues that Harkavy never intended this to be the exact title of the work, but it became accepted as such in modern scholarship. On the *Sefer ha-Galuy*, see Elkin (2010), and specifically on Harkavy's edition, p. 263 and n. 15.

2 Harkavy (1891), p. 151, lines 21–23, p. 153, lines 1–2, an accurate transcription of St Petersburg Evr.-Arab. I 3069, fol. 1r:21–22 and 1v:1–2. The translation is mine, based on the advice of Marina Rustow, François de Blois, Nadia Vidro, and Ilana Wartenberg, neither of whom I have ended up entirely following.

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Thus at the point where the manuscript is damaged, Harkavy inserted a conjectural title of Saadya's book, [*Kitāb al-*]*aʿyād*, which he translated into Hebrew as *Sefer ha-Moʿadim*. He postulated that this Hebrew version may have been the book's original title; and subsequent scholars followed him and widely adopted it.[3] The Judeo-Arabic manuscript, however, was lacunary; and in another manuscript fragment that was subsequently published by Malter, it became evident that Harkavy's conjecture was wrong. Malter's fragment read as follows (again, with my translation):[4]

> וכמא אלפת ואנא בלעראק כתאבא עבראניא ען ראי מן כאן באלחטרה רי״ס פי מא ורד עלי אלאומה מן כטא בן מאיר באלשאם פי תרתיב אלאעיאד מקטעא פואסיקא מטעמא בטעמין

> Likewise, when I was in Iraq, I composed a Hebrew book on the authority of[5] the one who was the Head of the Court,[6] concerning what befell the people due to the error of ben Meir in Syro-Palestine with regards to the ordering of the festivals, (a book) divided into verses[7] and annotated with cantillation marks.

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3 See Chapter 3. Brody (2006: 169) provides a Hebrew translation of this passage in Harkavy's edition (in the English version, Brody 2013: 155), surprisingly ignoring the superior edition of Malter.

4 Malter (1913: 496 text, 490 translation). The manuscript is Halper 443, where the passage appears on folio 1 recto, ll. 5–9. Harkavy's reconstruction had the further disadvantage of being ungrammatical in Arabic: the adjectives *muqaṭṭaʿan* and *muṭaʿʿaman* ('divided' and 'annotated') are indefinite and accusative, like *kitāban* at the beginning of the sentence, which they modify, but unlike Harkavy's *kitāb* in [*Kitāb al-*]*aʿyād*, with which they do not agree (Marina Rustow).

5 Better than Malter's (ibid. 490) 'by the advice of'. The preposition עַן is habitually used in Islamic religious texts (e.g. Hadith) to cite an older authority (François de Blois). The phrase does not mean 'on behalf of', as was interpreted by some scholars such as Malter. Brody (2013: 155) translates: 'with the approval of'.

6 This translation is debatable. The primary meaning of חַצְרָה is 'presence', but here it is probably used in the more narrow sense of 'assembly, (royal) court, entourage' (François de Blois). Perhaps the text is referring to the אַב בֵּית דִּין, lit. 'Head of the Court', which was the title of the second in command in Babylonian and Palestinian Academies (the term appears, for example, in L1BM 9:1); but this remains problematic, since the meaning of 'Court' (בֵּית דִּין) in this context would not be 'royal entourage' but rather 'judicial court'. Malter (ibid.) translates 'the Exilarch', but this is a tendentious interpretation, which is only intended to support his identification of this work with the exilarch's memorandum of 922 CE (see discussion below). Brody (2006: 169; 2013: 155) eludes the difficulty by apparently ignoring the word 'head' and reverting to the primary meaning of חַצְרָה, thus translating as follows: 'with the approval of those who were there'.

7 So Malter; 'verses' as in biblical verses, i.e. sentences, not lines of poetry (the quasi-Arabic

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Thus, no title was supplied, in this passage, for this work. Further in *Sefer ha-Galuy*, Saadya refers to אלכתאב אלדי אלפתה פי אמר אלמועדים ('the book that I have composed on the matter of the festivals').[8] Although the Hebrew word for 'festivals' is used here, still no book title is supplied; and it is not even certain that the work referred to in this last passage is the same as the polemical book against ben Meir referred to earlier in *Sefer ha-Galuy*. In short, there is no evidence of the existence of any book title *Sefer ha-Moʿadim*.

The title *Sefer ha-Moʿadim*, 'Book of the Festivals', is moreover a misnomer for our present work. The work (or at least what has survived of it) is neither about the festivals, nor about the calendar in general, as has often been assumed.[9] It mentions briefly the length and sequence of the months of the year,[10] but it fails to explain or even mention the other fundamental principles of the calculated rabbinic calendar, such as the nineteen-year cycle of intercalations, and how the *molad* is calculated. It does not list either the festivals (or 'appointed times') of the year. Instead, the work is restricted to two calendrical topics: the calendar controversy of 921/2, and the 'Four Gates', an algorithm for calculating and setting the calendar, over which the Palestinians and Babylonians contended (see Chapter 5). This suggests that the work was not intended as a calendar manual, but only served the specific purpose of promoting the Babylonian dates for 921/2–923/4, and refuting ben Meir's dates. This explains why the work appears not to have been transmitted to the West, and why it has not been preserved, to our knowledge, in any European medieval manuscript.[11] It was only relevant in areas of the Near East that had been affected by the controversy.

The work's focus on the controversy is consistent with its plausible identification with a *sefer zikaron*, 'memorandum', which is mentioned four times in the book.[12] This memorandum, we are told in these passages, was composed in Baghdad at the height of the controversy, and widely disseminated; its purpose was solely to narrate the controversy, and to expose the falsehood of the

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פואסיקא, from the Hebrew פסק, alludes to the Hebrew פסוק, the word for 'biblical verse'). The use of this term suggests that the work was written in a biblical style, being also vocalized and cantillated.

8 Evr.-Arab. I 3069, fol. 10v:11–12; Harkavy (1891) 181.

9 E.g. Stern (2001) 265, n. 194. Drory (1988: 164–165) classifies the work as 'halakhic', which is similarly incorrect.

10 BCC 21:1–3.

11 See further below, p. 98.

12 BCC 12:7, 14:1–4, 26:1, 30:18. The term *sefer zikaron* is possibly calqued on the Arabic *tadhkira*, which seems to be a type of administrative account. For the term *tadhkira*, see, e.g. T-S Ar. 42.59 (suggestion of Marina Rustow).

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Palestinian calendar. We now know, more precisely, when this work was written: as my revised reading of one of the manuscripts reveals, it was completed on Tuesday, 27 Tishri (22 October 922).[13]

There are several indications in these passages that their references to the *sefer zikaron* are in fact self-referential; in other words, that the *sefer zikaron* is none other but this work itself. Firstly, the contents of our work match those ascribed to the memorandum: like the memorandum, our work contains a narrative of the controversy, followed by a refutation of the Palestinian calendar and an exposition of the true Four Gates. Secondly, the discovery of no less than five manuscripts of our work in the Cairo Genizah suggests a wide dissemination of it, as was intended for the memorandum. Thirdly, in two of the passages where the memorandum is mentioned, the use of the demonstrative 'this' for the memorandum suggests a self-referential statement, i.e. that our work and the memorandum are one and the same.[14]

It may be appropriate, in this light, to call this work the 'Memorandum' or 'Memorial Book'. However, these terms carry specific connotations in modern English which do not fit well this work. Although some scholars have used such translations of *sefer zikaron*,[15] we prefer to use a more descriptive title. We have therefore chosen to call it the 'Book of the Calendar Controversy'.

Authorship

The traditional attribution of this work to Saadya goes back to Harkavy's edition of *Sefer ha-Galuy* (Harkavy 1891), in which Saadya writes, as we have seen above, that he composed a book in Hebrew on ben Meir's error 'divided into verses and annotated with cantillation marks'. Nearly all the manuscripts of this present work (except BCC2), which is in Hebrew, are divided in verses and annotated with cantillation marks. Mainly on this basis, earlier scholars identified this work as Saadya's.[16]

This argument was first proposed by Harkavy himself, although he had not yet seen any fragment of this work. In his same article of 1891, he included a fragment that was fully vocalized and cantillated, and that appeared to refer to ben Meir; he suggested, accordingly, that 'perhaps' this was part of (what

13 BCC1 fol. 2v:15; below, BCC 13:2–3.

14 BCC 26:1 and 30:18.

15 Malter (1921: 86 n. 184, and 415–417), although against most other scholars, he regarded this 'memorial volume' as a separate work. See further below, n. 48.

16 See in particular Schechter (1901–1902) 40–41; Bornstein (1904) 58.

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he called) Saadya's *Sefer ha-Moʿadim*.[17] In actual fact, this fragment was most probably not part of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. But a decade later, as fragments of this work began to emerge, Harkavy's tentative identification was thoughtlessly repeated and gradually turned into fact. In 1900, Adler and Broydé published the fragment that would later be known as ENA 2555.1 (part of BCC2), which they presented as a 'counterpart'[18] to Harkavy's fragment of *Sefer ha-Moʿadim*—which, implicitly, had to mean Saadya's. In 1901, Epstein republished Adler and Broydé's text and referred to it this time as 'a fragment of the *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* of Saadya'.[19] Still in the same year, Schechter published a number of fragments from Cambridge that, he said, 'undoubtedly represent three MSS of the *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* of Saadya' (p. 40).[20] By then, the consensus had become established. Bornstein never questioned it; his 1904 edition of a number of texts under the heading of Saadya's *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* has been relied upon ever since.[21] The attribution of a *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* to Saadya, and its identification with texts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, has since remained unchallenged, for more than a century.[22]

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17 Harkavy (1891) 212 and 220–221. This fragment is now shelf-marked as Bodleian Heb. c 16.50; Harkavy published a transcription that Neubauer had sent him. I have not included this fragment in my corpus, because of the unlikelihood that it belongs to the Book of the Calendar Controversy, or indeed that it relates at all to the calendar controversy of 921/2. Although very fragmentary, this text is clearly ethical and focused on the theme of wisdom (חכמה, a term that comes back again and again, often in comparison to prophecy), although it also has a polemical streak and criticizes several times its addressees. Harkavy was only guided by the text being pointed, and by its polemical reference to someone who 'comes in darkness and goes in darkness and in darkness …' (ובחשך בא ובחשך ילך ובחשך–verso line 11), which Harkavy appears to have construed as a reference to ben Meir (who is often called המחשיך, 'the benighter', e.g. BCC 7:7, 19:2); but this inference is very far from convincing.

18 *'Contre-part':* Adler and Broydé (1900) 224.

19 Epstein (1901) 174; cf. 191.

20 Schechter (1901–1902) 40. The fragments were Schechter's Text II, later shelf-marked T-S 10K3 (BCC2); Text IIa, T-S 10K4 (BCC3); and Text IIb, T-S 8K4 (BCC1). On p. 41, Schechter writes of a fourth fragment, his Text VIII (T-S 8K6), that its contents suggest that it was also part of the same work, even though its style is 'rather different'. I consider this to be a separate work (Babylonian Letter 1, L1Bab), as did already Bornstein (1904: 80–86).

21 Bornstein (1904: 58–67). The texts are: (1) T-S 10K3 (Schechter 1901–1902, Text II); (2) ENA 2555.1 (Adler and Broydé 1900), T-S 10K4 (Schechter Text IIa), and T-S 8K4 (ibid. Text IIb), all from different manuscripts (BCC2, BCC3, and BCC1, respectively); (3) T-S 8K5 (Schechter 1901–1902, Text III).

22 Thus Brody (2013: 27; in Hebrew, 2006: 37–38) writes:

> Saʿadya was seen as one of the leading figures of the Babylonian camp and he made full use of his rhetorical skills and wide connections to present the Babylonian point of view. Although he, like other Babylonian scholars, failed to convince the sages of

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There are several reasons, however, to reject Saadya's authorship of this work. One significant clue is the switch to the first person plural, towards the end of the work, where the author writes: '*we* commanded the heads, leaders (*alufim*), sages and teachers to assemble etc.' (BCC 30:14). This line suggests that the work was authored by the highest Jewish communal authorities in Babylonia, those who had the power to summon and command the officers and dignitaries of the academies and the exilarchate. In 922, when this work appears to have been composed, Saadya had not yet risen to the gaonate of Sura (this occurred in 928). Even if he had already attained the title of *aluf*,[23] this was not a sufficiently high rank to enable him to command the other *alufim*, heads, and sages to assemble. Saadya could not have authored this; only the exilarch and *geonim* could have done so.[24]

The attribution of this work to the highest level of Babylonian leadership tallies with the authorship of the so-called Memorandum, which we have identified above with the Book of the Calendar Controversy. The Memorandum, indeed, is consistently presented as the collective work of the sages of Babylonia (e.g. BCC 12:7), written in the high court of the exilarch, David ben Zakkai (BCC 26:1), and signed by him (BCC 14:1–4). The identification of our work with the Memorandum is sufficient, in itself, to attribute it to the Babylonian leaders rather than to Saadya.

Some scholars have argued that although the work was authored by the Exilarch, it was nevertheless Saadya who wrote it on his behalf. This claim is groundless, and actually contradicted by the evidence. In the first of his three

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Palestine to adopt the proclamations of the Babylonian authorities, it is largely to his credit that the Babylonian position eventually won out. Among other things, he wrote a book called *Sefer hamo'adim* (The Book of Appointed Times), in which he took on the role of official spokesman for the Babylonian position on the calendar debate. The book circulated widely among the Jewish communities before Rosh Hashanah and seems to have contributed a good deal to the Babylonian victory.

Saadya cannot be said to have taken on 'the role of official spokesman for the Babylonian position on the calendar debate' on the basis of this text; and he certainly does not present himself as such in his own letters. Some of the other claims in this paragraph will be reassessed below.

23 LMisc folio x suggests that he was *aluf* by July 922.

24 *Contra* Bornstein (1904: 99), who summarily attributes this text to Saadya, although he remains unsure whether this text is part of the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*; he does not comment on, or apparently note the significance of, the phrase 'we commanded etc.' (similarly Epstein 1905: 140, n. 2). Jaffe (1931: 191–192, n.) acknowledges the significance of this phrase, but explains it away by suggesting that 'the Exilarch's (name) was signed unto the Memorandum which Rav Saadya wrote on his behalf' (ראש הגולה היה חתום על "ספר הזכרון" אשר חבר רב סעדיה בשבילו). See further below.

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letters, Saadya himself refers explicitly to the Memorandum—in what is perhaps the only external reference we have to this work—and narrates how he waited for the Exilarch to write it before intervening himself in the writing of letters: 'and (I) also (waited) until the Exilarch … wrote a memorandum and a scroll for generations on what the son of the benighter did' (LSaad 2v:3–6). This not only confirms the Exilarch as author of Memorandum, to the exclusion of Saadya, but also indicates that Saadya had no involvement, on any level, in its writing and composition. The modern scholarly contention that the so-called *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* was 'written by the Exilarch, or more precisely, by Saadya on his behalf', is refuted by this passage of Saadya's own letter.[25]

Furthermore, had Saadya composed the Memorandum, even if only on behalf of the Exilarch, one would expect his name to be mentioned at least at some point in the narrative. Significantly, the narrative of our Memorandum or Book of the Calendar Controversy does not mention Saadya's name even once. This contrasts with Saadya's Letters 2 and 3, where he presents himself as playing a prominent role in the early stages of the controversy. In our Memorandum, the Babylonian camp is presented as led exclusively by the Exilarch and (anonymous) heads of the Babylonian academies. The absence of any reference to Saadya confirms his lack of involvement in the redaction of this work. It also raises a more general question about Saadya's role in the controversy (this is discussed in Chapter 2).

All this leads to the conclusion that Saadya is not the author of the Book of the Calendar Controversy; and conversely, that the book that Saadya says he wrote on ben Meir's error (in *Sefer ha-Galuy*) is not the same as the work preserved in our Cairo Genizah fragments. The fact that the manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy are vocalized and cantillated, just as

25 Bornstein (1922*b*: 245), Jaffe (1931: 191–192, n.—see previous note), but before them Malter (1913: 506; 1921: 415–416). Thus, Malter attempts to explain away this passage of LSaad by claiming: 'We may assume … that Saadia wrote the book [the Memorandum] by request of the exilarch and in his name, so as to give it more weight and authority, and, therefore, in referring to it had to designate it as the work of the exilarch'. This is special pleading; there is no evidence in support of this assumption, and on the contrary, the language of LSaad, Letter 1 refutes it. Malter, Bornstein, and Jaffe were probably misled by the passage of *Sefer ha-Galuy* quoted above, whereby Saadya composed a work on the ben Meir controversy 'on the authority of the one who was the Head of the Court'; but this phrase does not mean that Saadya wrote it on his behalf (see above, n. 5). Malter's argument (1913: 505–507, 1921: 415–417) in support of Saadya's authorship of the Memorandum is somewhat circular: he notes the literary similarity of the Memorandum with the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* (which I take, with most scholars, to be one and the same work), assumes that the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* was authored by Saadya (as per the dominant consensus at the time), and concludes therefore that the memorandum was too.

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Saadya describes his own book on ben Meir, does not warrant its identification with it (as scholars at the turn of the twentieth century assumed). Claims have been made in more recent scholarship that the use of vocalization and cantillation for non-biblical texts was an innovation of Saadya and distinctive to him;[26] but this is contradicted by the evidence. In the prologue to *Sefer ha-Galuy*, in an attempt to justify his use of cantillation in this work, Saadya mentions as a precedent not only his earlier book on ben Meir, but also several works by others, including one written in Qairouan about what appears to be a Christian persecutor, which was similarly divided in verses and cantillated.[27] Other literary, non-biblical works are attested in the Cairo Genizah with full vocalization and cantillation, similarly to the manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy; they cannot be attributed to Saadya for that reason, even though this assumption was made, at least tentatively, by earlier scholars.[28] Full vocalization and cantillation in non-biblical works is attested for example in manuscripts of the Scroll of Antiochus and in many manuscripts of Mishnah, Talmud, and other early rabbinic works (many of which are fragments from the Cairo Genizah), even though the cantillation of rabbinic works is selective and follows different principles from what is used in bibles.[29] All this demonstrates that the practice of vocalization and cantillation was not uncommon, and by no means confined to Saadya's literary activities. Vocalization and

26 Drory (1988: 174–177), who is actually following a long tradition of scholarship (e.g. Schechter 1901–1902: 502, 1903: 133); I am grateful to Talya Fishman for the reference. See also, more cautiously, Elkin (2010) 326–327.

27 Harkavy (1891) 150–151, ms St Petersburg Evr.-Arab. I 3069 fol. 1r: 18–21; Malter (1913) 496, ms Halper 443 fol. 1r: 3–5. On this passage see Yeivin (1959–1960: 48–50), although somewhat outdated and without direct access to much of the manuscript evidence.

28 Thus T-S 12.730, a traveller's narrative which Schechter tentatively attributed to Saadya, though with the caution that the evidence for this attribution (the fact that the manuscript was vocalized and cantillated) was 'too slight to be decisive' (Schechter 1901–1902: 502–504, 1903: 133–135). Bornstein (1904: 71), however, threw caution to the wind by taking the attribution to Saadya for granted, and Malter (1921: 59–62, 422–423) consolidated this view by attributing the text 'undoubtedly' to Saadya, and identifying it as his travel diary from Babylonia to Aleppo in 920/1. This attribution, however, was completely groundless. Another example is ms Bodleian Heb. c 16.50, which Harkavy not only attributed to Saadya but even identified as part of the so-called *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, only because of its vocalization and cantillation (Harkavy 1891: 220–221; see above, n. 17). Another composition with full vocalization and cantillation, this one not attributed by anyone to Saadya (as far as I am aware), is T-S H3.59, a poetic list of the Commandments. See further Yeivin (1959–1960) 50–51.

29 Scroll of Antiochus: see for example Hopkins (1978). Rabbinic sources: Yeivin (1959–1960) 47, 51–53, and *passim*. See also Morag (1988), with on p. viii, a list of the Talmud fragments in the volume that are cantillated.

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cantillation cannot be used as criteria for the attribution of a work like the Book of the Calendar Controversy to Saadya.[30]

If the Book of the Calendar Controversy is not Saadya's, his work mentioned in *Sefer ha-Galuy* on the ben Meir controversy must be presumed lost. This is not problematic, as it will not be the first and only work of Saadya on the calendar that has gone missing. Saadya appears to have written many works on the theme of the calendar, few of which have survived. A brief survey of Saadya's calendrical work will help to put in perspective his lost work on ben Meir.

In his biography of Saadya, Henry Malter lists five works on the calendar which he attributes to Saadya: (1) *Sefer Zikkaron* (*sic*); (2) *Four Gates*; (3) *Sefer ha-Moʿadim*; (4) three *Letters*; and (5) *Seder* (or *Sod*?) *ha-ʿIbbur*.[31] This list is not very helpful. Of these five works, the first and third are not titles, they are not two books but one, and this book was probably not authored by Saadya;[32] the second is not a book, and it was not authored by Saadya either.[33] What is left standing are (4) Saadya's three letters relating to the controversy of 921/2 (preserved in the manuscript that I call Saadya's Letters), and (5), a book on the intercalation or calendar, that has not survived.

Saadya's calendrical works, however, appear to amount to much more than just one title. This is suggested, at least, by book lists from the tenth century. A book list composed by Saadya's sons in about 953 includes a work entitled אקאמת אלעיבור ('The Setting of the Calendar').[34] Another book list has the following entry: ותפסיר אבות מלאכות וארבעה שערים לרבנו סע[דיה], 'Commentary on the main types of work and the Four Gates, by our rabbi Saa[dya]'.[35] 'Four Gates' implies that this work had at least some calendrical content, although it may also have dealt with other matters (the laws of forbidden work on Sabbath). The

30 The various possible functions of cantillation in manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy are discussed further below. On Saadya's use of cantillation in another work (the *Egron*), see more recently Hitin-Mashiah (2011) (reference courtesy of Joseph Yahalom).

31 Malter (1921) 168–171, 351–353.

32 As argued above. On Malter's distinction of the two works, see further below, n. 48.

33 On the notion of the Four Gates as a book authored by Saadya, which Malter borrowed from Bacher (1899) and Epstein (1901, 1902), see Chapter 5, nn. 67–68.

34 T-S 10G5.7 verso, last line; edited by Mann (1921) with the erroneous shelf-mark T-S 6 J 9.1, which is repeated in turn by Allony (2006) in his edition of the text, no. 85 (pp. 312–314, with the relevant passage on his line 24). Allony mistranslates אקאמת as 'the proof' (הוכחת). By the tenth century (and probably earlier), the term *ʿibbur* could be used in the wider sense of 'calendar'.

35 JTS ENA 2687.2, verso l. 3; first published by Bacher (1899), and then this passage alone by Schechter (1901–1902: 498), seemingly unaware of Bacher's edition. It is re-edited by Allony (2006) no. 28 (pp. 102–104, with the relevant passage on his line 18).

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Muslim polymath and bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm also lists a number of works by Saadya in the first chapter of his *Fihrist* (completed in 987 CE), including one that he calls *Kitāb al-ʿIbbūr*. He explains *ʿibbūr* as follows: وهو التاريخ, 'and this means chronology'. This seems like a misinterpretation of the Hebrew word.[36]

Although these treatises on the calendar appear not to have been preserved, they seem to have exerted an influence on the diffusion of the fixed rabbinic calendar in the later medieval West, at least in the northern French circle of Rashi (d. 1104). Rashi and his disciple Jacob bar Samson refer on several occasions to Saadya's work on the calendar,[37] and Rashi's grandson, Rabbenu Tam, is quoted as saying of Saadya that 'he transmitted to us the secret of the calendar'.[38]

In addition, a number of polemical works by Saadya on the calendar have survived in Cairo Genizah fragments, especially against the Qaraites (this polemic has no bearing on the intra-Rabbanite calendar controversy of 921/2). These works include a treatise against the Qaraite calendar entitled 'For two months the Sabbath is desecrated', of which several folios have survived;[39] a

36 Sayyid (2014) i:56 (thanks to Ronny Vollandt, François de Blois and especially Devin Stewart for this reference); see Bacher (1904:298), Malter (1921: 352). Based on the title, there is no reason to believe that this book was a chronological treatise or chronicle, rather than a treatise on the calendar. In contrast, the *Kitab al-Ta'rikh* attributed to Saadya (Bacher 1904, Marx 1909) was clearly a chronological work.

37 Rashi (*ad Rosh ha-Shanah* 20b) cites Rav Saadya Gaon and a treatise of his on this subject, and so does Jacob bar Samson in his own calendar treatise (written c. 1123 CE, in chs. 31–38: ms Bodl. Opp. 317, in fols. 93 recto left, 95 recto right, 96 verso left, 97 verso right, and 99 recto right). Jacob bar Samson frequently refers to Saadya's *Midrash* or *Perush* on the calendar, and also quotes his *Miqra*, a fully pointed and cantillated mnemonic poem on the postponements of the New Moon of Tishri (ch. 36, fol. 97 verso right). Similar references to Saadya's calendrical teachings can be found in later sources, e.g. Saadya's values for calculating the *molad* in ms Moscow Guenzburg 365, fol. 168r (a Provençal calendar compendium, of which this section dates from about the fifteenth century).

38 רב סעדיה גאון שמסר לנו סוד העיבור (apud *Shibolei ha-Leqet*, ch. 28). See further Bornstein (1904) 25, (1922*b*) 253, n. 1; Malter (1921) 87. The Four Gates were also commonly attributed to Saadya in later medieval sources: see Chapter 5, n. 70. If Saadya was so influential in spreading the science of the calendar to the West, it remains surprising that none of his calendar works have been preserved in any European manuscript.

39 T-S 10 K2, three folios first published by Schechter (1901–1902: 197–203; reprinted by Lewin 1932: 94–99), to which we may now add the following: T-S Ar. 50.150, T-S Ar. 53.22, T-S NS 91.22, and T-S NS 91.23, a total of sixteen pages, all belonging to the same manuscript and treatise. The title page (T-S 10K2.1, recto) reads: כתאב פיה גדל על שני חדשים מחללין את השבת לרבנו סעדיה גאון פיומי ('The book of debate (entitled) *For two months the Sabbath is desecrated*, by our rabbi Saadya Gaon the Fayyumite'). The manuscript was copied by a certain Avraham ha-Kohen bar ʿAmram, possibly the same Avraham bar ʿAmram who

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treatise against Anan, which includes a very substantial section on the calendar;[40] and perhaps more importantly, a work known in Arabic as *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* and in Hebrew as *Sefer ha-Mivḥan* or *Sefer ha-Havḥanah*, against Qaraite and other calendars. A short passage of *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* is quoted, in Hebrew translation, by Abraham bar Ḥayya (*Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* 3:7; ed. Filipowski 1851, pp. 96–97), who refers to the work as Saadya's *Sefer ha-Hakkarah*; this passage gives its year as (1)238 SE (926/7 CE). Besides this and other secondary attestations in later medieval literature, several fragments of the *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* or *Sefer ha-Havḥanah* have survived in the Cairo Genizah.[41]

Saadya's treatise on ben Meir, mentioned in *Sefer ha-Galuy*, can be added to the list of his many polemical works relating to the calendar, none of which have entirely survived. There is no reason why we should identify this work of Saadya with the memorandum of the controversy or 'Book of the Calendar Controversy', when the evidence suggests that it is a different work.

To sum up, that Saadya was not its author is evident from the author's self-presentation as leader of the Babylonian Rabbanites, which Saadya in this period was not; the work's self-reference as the Exilarch's memorandum; the lack of any reference to Saadya in the Book; and Saadya's acknowledgment, in his own letters, of his non-involvement in writing the memorandum. The Book of the Calendar Controversy, or in Hebrew, the 'Memorandum', was authored by none other than the Babylonian exilarch.

Structure and Contents

In broad terms, the Book of the Calendar Controversy can be divided into three parts of similar length: a *narrative* part, with a highly partial Babylonian account of the controversy; a somewhat shorter *polemical* part, addressed in large part to readers and exhorting them to stop siding with the Palestinians; and finally a technical, *calendrical* part, with a more sober explanation of the Babylonian Four Gates and a detailed refutation of ben Meir's Four Gates, and some reiteration of the narrative. This division into three parts is mine, and not explicit in the text; moreover, the transition from one part to the next is gradual

is the first signatory on T-S 16.124, a testimony from Fusṭāṭ dated 1017: although he does not sign here as ha-Kohen, the hand appears identical (Marina Rustow).

40 Seewald (2016). I am grateful to Marc Herman for the reference.

41 Zucker (1984) 340–342, 436–447.

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and not clear-cut.[42] In this section, I shall present the structure and summarize the contents of the book as I have reconstructed it. In the next section, I shall present the manuscript evidence in support of this reconstruction.

The book is likely to have started with a general introduction, followed by the beginning of the narrative. Both are now lost. The preserved part of the narrative begins by describing how the Palestinian protagonist, whose name is presumably ben Meir, rose to power through irregular means, first securing the backing of the local government, then silencing and removing the members of the rabbinic Council (*ḥavurah*) and replacing them with his own sons and relatives (BCC 1:1–16).[43]

The text then describes how he proceeded to disrupt the calendar and the festivals, like the biblical figure Jeroboam, and planned to turn festival into fast and fast day into festival (BCC 1:17–BCC 2). He sent his son on the seventh month (Tishri, 921 CE) to Jerusalem, from where he announced on the 'day of Assembly' (perhaps the second day of Sukkot; not Hosha'na Rabbah)[44] that in the coming year the months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew were to be defective, and 1 Nisan (922 CE) was to fall on Sunday. No one contested him, but elsewhere the Jews knew and assumed that Marḥeshwan and Kislew were to be full, and 1 Nisan to fall on Tuesday: indeed, the *molad* of Tishri 921 CE was Wednesday 11 hours 932 parts, still within the limit of the second of the Four Gates (BCC 3).

When the Babylonian leaders heard of ben Meir's announcement, the text continues, they sent three letters to him to convince him of his error, but to no avail. They also sent letters to (unspecified) Jewish communities, but some were too afraid to rebel against ben Meir (BCC 4:1–12). The narrative then quotes the Babylonian leaders' (first) letter to ben Meir; in it, they urge ben Meir to acknowledge his son's mistake. The text quotes part of ben Meir's reply, in which he asserts his authority over the Babylonians, and seeks to justify his error on the grounds that the limit of the First Gate is really 641 parts later. To this they replied, in their second and third letters (which are not distinguished

42 The transition from narrative to polemic occurs at about BCC 14:7, although initially the polemic is presented as a speech that is part of the narrative. The transition from polemic to calendar occurs in BCC 20, but it is not clear-cut as the text returns to polemical narrative in 26–27 and again in parts of 30.

43 The list of Palestinian geonim in T-S NS 312.82 recto, as interpreted by Abramson (1965: 26–29), suggests that the individuals who were removed by ben Meir included the *gaon* Ṣemaḥ and his sons, who had ruled as *Nasi* and head of the academy for 31 years (see further Gil 1975: 148–149). This depends, however, on Abramson's identification of ben Meir with R. Aharon b. Moses b. Meir in the fragment (see discussion in the introduction to the First Letter of ben Meir, Chapter 9).

44 See note on BCC 3:2.

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but are quoted in full), with a list of the limits in the Four Gates as traditionally sanctioned, urging him again to recant. They exchanged further letters, but as nothing changed (BCC 4:12–BCC 6), the Babylonians wrote again to the Jewish communities, and this led to considerable confusion among them (BCC 7:1–6).

Despite his refusal to recant, the Babylonians continued to attempt to make peace with ben Meir, but to no avail. Then ben Meir compounded his sin by contriving a new set of Four Gates, in which 641 parts were added to all the limits. He compounded his sin because he was now threatening to disrupt the calendar on a permanent basis. He also accused the Babylonians of boorishness, foolishness and stupidity, and other things over which the narrator passes ('behold, they are written in the book of chronicles of the heads of the academies') (BCC 7:6–9:5).

The Babylonians were dismayed, but decided not to correspond with him any further, nor to involve the government. Instead, they consulted with their experts, who advised them that it would be impossible to eradicate ben Meir's Four Gates, and that instead, they should write a memorandum of the controversy, for the next generations to understand so as not to err in his ways (BCC 9:6–12:11). On Monday, 20 Elul (16 September 922), public readings were made of ben Meir's writings, no doubt with a view of exposing his error (BCC 12:12–13:2). On 27 Tishri, after the end of the festival season, the memorandum—probably the Book of the Calendar Controversy itself—was duly written and certified. It was produced as a legal document, with seals and witnesses' signatures, no doubt to certify the reliability and authenticity of the calendar information that it contained; and it was ordered that the memorandum be widely disseminated (BCC 13:2–14:3).[45]

At this point the narrative gives way to an elaborate polemic against ben Meir, part of which may have been addressed as a complaint to the Abbasid authorities (BCC 14:4–10). This polemic, possibly attributed to poets or 'sayers of parables', is written in a complex, biblicizing Hebrew with many literary similes. It accuses ben Meir of all manner of crimes, including distortion of Scriptures, Mishnah and Talmud, perversion of justice, nepotism (as explained earlier in the narrative), and above all, misleading the Jews on the dates of the festivals (BCC 14:10–BCC 19:1). Interestingly, however, the polemic has certain

45 The wide dissemination of the Book of the Calendar Controversy finds confirmation in Saadya's Letter 1, where he describes how two copies of the work were sent to Fusṭāṭ at some point before January 923 CE (LSaad 2v:3–11). As I have noted in my introduction to LSaad (Chapter 10, p. 285), it is tempting to surmise that these two copies served much later as master copies for the copies of the Book of the Calendar Controversy that have survived for us, from later centuries, in the Cairo Genizah.

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limits: thus ben Meir is never given the formal designation of רשע, 'wicked', even where this would have been expected.[46]

At the end of the polemic, the author calls on all sectors of the population to curse ben Meir and repudiate them. He calls on his readers to desist and withdraw from the Palestinian side of the debate. They should read ben Meir's deeds 'at their proper time in the month of Elul', before the beginning of the festivals, so as not to be deceived (BCC 19:2–BCC 20:1).

The text gradually evolves from this point into its final, calendrical part. It first provides a poetic, mnemonic version of the Four Gates (including a brief explanation of which months of the year are full and defective), which the reader is enjoined to learn and memorize so as not to be misled again (BCC 20:1–BCC 25). In a brief narrative digression, it mentions that the memorandum of the controversy was written in the high court (*beit din ha-gadol*) under the authority of the exilarch, David b. Zakkai. It describes how the (Babylonian) heads of the academies and sages announced their calendar dates at their assembly (the *kallah*) in the month of Elul (this is presented as a routine, annual announcement which had been made in the summer month of Elul 921 CE, before ben Meir's announcement in Tishri and thus before the controversy broke out.) (BCC 26–27:7). A calendrical explanation or justification is then given of the Babylonian dates of 921/2 and following years (BCC 27:7–BCC 28). After a substantial lacuna (where a refutation of the Palestinian dates in these same years may have been presented), detailed comparison is made of the Four Gates of ben Meir and the Babylonians. In this extensive passage, every limit of ben Meir's Four Gates is quoted, followed by the correct (i.e., Babylonian) limit, which is attributed to 'the Sages'. (The text begins from the First Gate, of which only a small section of ben Meir's first limit is missing in our manuscript.) (BCC 29–BCC 30:3). The author then explains that ben Meir made these Gates in order to justify his decision in 921/2–923/4 CE (BCC 30:3–9).

The end of the narrative (above) is then repeated here, in a little more detail. First we are told that ben Meir made his sin much worse, because his Gates would have caused Israel to celebrate the festivals on the wrong days, and hence to desecrate them, on a permanent basis (BCC 30:9–14). Switching to the first person plural—perhaps announcing the end of the book, where the identity of the author is finally revealed through self-reference—the author states that 'we' (the highest rabbinic authorities in Babylonia) assembled the heads, lead-

46 See note on text, BCC 14:7. A certain etiquette may have prohibited the use of this term in polemics between Rabbanite leaders; indeed, I have not found the term רשע anywhere my entire corpus.

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ers, and sages to take counsel. Their advice was that it would be impossible to eradicate (ben) Meir's Four Gates by destroying all the written copies of them wherever they might be; instead, they should write a memorandum of the controversy—again, a reference to the book itself, appropriate, perhaps, for its ending—to help the next generations recognize ben Meir's Gates if ever they encountered them and not rely on them, and to help them recognize the authentic Gates (BCC 30:14–23). The authentic Gates are briefly outlined again, with a list of the correct number of parts that appear for each limit in each gate. These Gates are said to have the authority of rabbinic law, and are claimed to be mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (*bRosh Hashanah* 20b), which is quoted here with a commentary (actually it is only the commentary that mentions the Gates). At this point the text breaks off (BCC 30:24–end).

The Fragments, the *lacunae*, and the Reconstruction of the Text

The reconstruction of the book, which I have summarized in the previous section, is based on a comparison and collation of all the fragments of the five manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy that are extant. The text of these fragments frequently overlap with one another, which enables us to piece together an almost continuous text of the entire work. The continuity of the text thus obtained confirms, in turn, that all our fragments belong to the same literary work, albeit not from the same manuscript.[47] The beginning and end of the work, however, are missing, and there are some textual gaps between some of the fragments. But in spite of these gaps, the order of the text can be reconstructed with virtual certainty. In some cases, moreover, the lacunae and gaps between discontinuous fragments can be approximately measured. As a result, little doubt is left about what the book originally contained, its structure, and its extent as a whole. It is also clear that not much of the text is missing.

The sequence and textual coverage of the fragments is summed up in the synoptic table below. For reasons related to the text edition, I have divided the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC) into thirty sections. It is important to note, however, that these thirty sections are by no means of equal length. The

47 For example, BCC5 T-S NS 219.29, a recently discovered fragment, contains text from both the end of BCC4 T-S 8K5 and from BCC2 T-S 10K3 (all distinct manuscripts). This confirms that BCC4 T-S 8K5 is a copy of the Book of the Calendar Controversy—which Schechter (1901–1902: 41) had suggested but only hesitantly, because BCC4 T-S 8K5 was a separate manuscript (with no other fragment, at the time, to join it to), and the style of its text appeared different, to Schechter, from the other fragments.

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TABLE 6 Synoptic table of the textual coverage of the BCC manuscripts

	Narrative				
BCC 1	**BCC1** T-S NS 194.92				
BCC 2					
BCC 3					
BCC 4		**BCC2** ENA 2555.1			
BCC 5					**BCC5**
BCC 6					
BCC 7					
BCC 8					
BCC 9					
BCC 10	**BCC1** T-S 8K4		**BCC3**		
BCC 11					
BCC 12					
BCC 13					
	Polemic[a]				
BCC 14				**BCC4**	
BCC 15					
BCC 16					**BCC5**
BCC 17					
BCC 18		**BCC2** T-S 10K3			
BCC 19					**BCC5**
	Calendar				
BCC 20					
BCC 21					
BCC 22		**BCC2** T-S 10K3	**BCC3**		
BCC 23					**BCC5**
BCC 24					
BCC 25					
BCC 26		**BCC2** T-S NS 175.57			
BCC 27					**BCC5**
BCC 28					
BCC 29		**BCC2** ENA 2556.1			
BCC 30					

a The transition from Narrative to Polemic occurs gradually within BCC 14.

table below, therefore, cannot be used to infer the relative textual length of each of the manuscripts or fragments. Nevertheless, it is clear that BCC2, made up of its various fragments (not all in the same library), is the longest manuscript extant.

The table also indicates (with accentuated lines) the discontinuities in the preserved text; these correspond to points where textual *lacunae* remain (between BCC 13 and 14, BCC 17 and 18, BCC 25 and 26, and BCC 28 and 29; the latter

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two *lacunae* are within the same manuscript, BCC2). As will be argued below, some of these *lacunae* can be shown to be minimal. The table also indicates which sections are witnessed by more than one manuscript, and hence, for which a critical apparatus has been provided in the textual edition.

The five manuscripts have been numbered in order of their first appearance in this table (and thus in the reconstructed book), ignoring the first appearance of BCC5 (T-S NS 219.29) in section BCC 6, as this is only a short marginal gloss. Although BCC5 appears is several different places in this table, it is actually only one fragment (of a bi-folio); its text, however, is scattered across the table because the paper is torn off in several places, which explains why the text is broken up into several fragments.

The beginning of the narrative has not been preserved, but it need not have been very long. The minimal length of what is missing can be estimated on the assumption that BCC1 is missing one folio, and BCC2 one side of a folio (a folio of BCC2 holds more than three times the amount of text held by a folio of BCC1).

The next textual lacuna is very small. It occurs towards the end of the narrative, between the end of a folio of BCC1 and the beginning of a folio of BCC4 (or between BCC sections 13 and 14), shortly before the transition from the narrative to the polemic. There can be little doubt that the texts of both fragments follow one another closely: BCC1 ends with an account of how the memorandum of the controversy was written, and BCC4 begins with the same book being signed and sealed.

Since the end of BCC1 is faded and poorly legible, Bornstein (1904: 66–67) attempted to reconstruct the text in such a way as to make it completely continuous with the next fragment, BCC4. He did this by conjecturing the word ונחתם, 'and it was sealed', at the very end of BCC1 fol. 2. This textual join, however, is precluded in two ways, firstly, by the traces of ink at the end of BCC1 fol. 2 (see diplomatic edition, Chapter 8.1), which admittedly Bornstein could not have seen, and secondly, by the fact that BCC1 and BCC4 are different manuscripts. Bornstein should have been able to understand that they were two different manuscripts, because Schechter had noted that they had different dimensions and different numbers of lines; he had also correctly characterized BCC4 as written in an 'old square hand' and BCC1 (fol. 2, T-S 8K4) as written in a 'square hand … with a strong turn to cursive' (1901–1902: 40–41). It should have been obvious to Bornstein that the pagination of these two manuscripts was unlikely to be the same, and therefore, that the texts could not be continuous at this point, unless by some extraordinary coincidence. His impossible join reflects his lack of attention to the manuscripts, and his focus on the text in a completely disembodied form.

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The next textual lacuna is likewise minimal. It occurs in the polemical part, between the bottom of BCC5 verso left and the beginning of BCC2 fol. 2 (or between BCC sections 17 and 18). Both these fragments are lacunary: BCC5 is a bi-folio of which the top and sides have been truncated (which means that the continuation of BCC5 verso left, on the top of recto right, is missing), and BCC2 fol. 2 has a large triangular tear at the top. Textual parallels with other manuscripts, further on in BCC5, indicate that the amount of text missing in the top part of BCC5 is equivalent to approximately six lines (see diplomatic edition, Chapter 8.5). These missing six lines, at the top of BCC5 recto right, correspond roughly to the first five lines of BCC2 fol. 2, which are partially preserved. The extent of this textual lacuna is therefore minimal.

The next textual lacuna is likewise minimal. It occurs between BCC2 folio 2, the bottom of which is preserved, and BCC2 folio 3, the top three lines of which are missing (BCC5 verso right does not help us fill the gap because it has a lacuna at the same point in the text, and it is even larger). This short lacuna occurs between BCC sections 25 and 26.

Much more substantial is the textual lacuna within the final, calendrical part of this work. It falls between two folios of the same manuscript, BCC2 folios 3 and 4 (between BCC sections 28 and 29). BCC2 folio 4 is our only text witness of the final part of the work (whereas most of the rest of the work is attested in several witnesses); it is the only fragment that is separated from the rest of the work by a substantial lacuna, creating a substantial discontinuity in the text. This raises the question of whether this folio belongs, in fact, to the same work, the Book of the Calendar Controversy. The early editors were uncertain about this,[48] but I consider this a reasonable assumption, partly because this folio belongs to the same manuscript as the others, BCC2—an argument which Bornstein and other earlier scholars were generally not attentive to—and partly because it refers self-referentially to the memorandum (BCC 30:18) in much the same way as other parts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy do (26:1—see above, p. 92). There is no indication of any fundamental difference between this folio and the others that would justify treating it as part of a different literary work.

48 Bornstein (1904: 99) suggested that it was part of the same work, although he cautiously edited this folio separately. Malter (1913: 505–507; 1921: 86–87 n. 184, 168–169, and 415–417), in contrast, saw this folio as separate from the Book of the Calendar Controversy (which he called *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*), and as a fragment of the so-called 'memorandum' or 'memorial volume' (*Sefer ha-Zikaron*), which he considered to be a separated work (see above, p. 97).

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In the absence of continuity between BCC2 folio 4 and the rest of the work (which is almost completely continuous), this folio could belong in principle either at the beginning of the work or at the end of it. It is most likely, however, to belong at the end of the Book, on several grounds: on codicological grounds, because it is written in the same hand as BCC2 folio 3; and on textual grounds, because its contents are strictly calendrical, which fits well after the end of BCC2 folio 3, where the calendrical decision of the Babylonians is given a detailed justification. Probably no more than one folio of BCC2 is missing between BCC2 folios 3 and 4. This is the only substantial lacuna within the book, apart from its beginning and end.

At the end of the work, it must be assumed that at least one folio of BCC2 (after BCC2 folio 4) is missing, but how much text was written on it is impossible to estimate. It could have been relatively short, as not much more needs to be added after BCC2 folio 3 for the Book to end in a coherent way.

The Manuscripts

The Book of the Calendar Controversy is extant in ten Cairo Genizah folios (one of them, BCC5 T-S NS 219.29, a fragmentary bi-folio), which can be joined or grouped together into five distinct manuscripts. I have numbered these manuscripts in the order of their appearance in the reconstructed book. More detailed descriptions of the manuscripts are provided in the diplomatic editions (Chapter 8).

The five manuscripts can be dated palaeographically to between the early eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Their dating, for which I have depended on the advice of Judith Olszowy-Schlanger and Amir Ashur, places them in the following chronological sequence:

BCC4	Early eleventh century
BCC1 and BCC5	Eleventh century
BCC2	Late eleventh or turn of twelfth centuries
BCC3	Early twelfth century

The survival of five copies of this work from within a relatively short period is historically significant. It indicates not only that the work circulated in Egypt for at least two centuries after the controversy, but also that demand for copies of this work, at least within this period, was relatively high.

The codicological features of the manuscripts tell us further about how this work was copied and used. Manuscripts BCC4, BCC1, and BCC3 are the

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best presented. Their script is uniform, square or only slightly cursive. The texts are divided into verses (most prominently BCC3, with wide spaces in the lines between the verses), almost fully cantillated, and also largely vocalized (although only BCC3 is fully vocalized; BCC4 is selectively vocalized, and BCC1 even more selectively; see further discussion below). The margins, especially of BCC3, are wide; and in all three manuscripts, the numbers of lines per page and characters per line are relatively low. All this suggests a formal approach to manuscript production, of which the best exemplar, in all respects, is the latest of all our manuscripts, BCC3.

Manuscripts BCC5 and BCC2, in contrast, are written more hastily and with less care: their script is more cursive, their layout is untidy, the lines are long and crowded, the margins are narrow or non-existent; in BCC2, there are more than thirty lines per page. The texts of BCC5 and BCC2 are only sporadically vocalized; BCC5 is sporadically cantillated, whereas BCC2 is not cantillated at all. The texts are prone to error and self-corrections. As explained in more detail in the diplomatic edition (Chapter 8.2), BCC2 seems to have been written by a team of scribes who changed over with each other sometimes in the middle of a page (BCC2 fol. 1, ENA 2555.1 verso), and who were evidently not worried about the manuscript's appearance. It seems clear that BCC5, and even more so BCC2, were produced hastily and at low cost. The emerging impression is that whereas BCC1, BCC4 and BCC3 served as formal copies to be read out in public annually, as per the Babylonian authorities' instructions, BCC5 and BCC2 were intended as cheaper copies for personal reading and use.[49]

The existence of cheap copies of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, which could be either read by private individuals, or read out informally to private audiences, confirms the demand for this work and its relative popularity. This, in historical terms, is highly significant. From a modern perspective, we would tend to regard the Book of the Calendar Controversy as a difficult text, particularly its technical sections on the Four Gates and the refutation of ben Meir's calendar. It is quite likely that in medieval Cairo too, few people would have mastered the intricacies of its calendrical sections, even if its narrative sections would have been easily grasped. However, this does not mean

49 I am grateful to Judith Schlanger and Marina Rustow for their suggestions. Moshe Lavee has pointed out to me that a similar contrast can be noted in the manuscripts of the Scroll of Antiochus; for example, T-S A45.10 and 13 appear to be 'cheap' copies, whereas T-S A45.11, 12, 17, and 27 (the last two fully vocalized and cantillated) are formal and well produced, and could have been intended specifically for public readings (all these examples are in Hopkins 1978).

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that members of the public could not enjoy reading the book, or reading it out to others, even without fully understanding the calendrical sections. This was for the only reason that the act of reading this book was socially significant: it was a statement of identification with the Babylonian academies and Babylonian tradition, and as such, reading the book was meaningful (similarly, liturgy can often be recited without being properly understood, on the assumption that its recitation is somehow meaningful and efficacious).

If people were prepared to purchase cheap copies of the book and read it in their own time—as opposed to hearing it being read out once a year in public in a synagogue—this book must have been of far greater interest to medieval Jews than we would be inclined to assume. Thus in a perhaps counter-intuitive way, these cheap copies of the Book of the Calendar Controversy confirm the importance that was given, in medieval society and culture, to the calendar controversy of 921/2—a historical event that had occurred one or two centuries earlier, and whose relevance still resonated, in many ways, in the Jewish communities of Cairo in a much later period.

Textual Variants and Textual Transmission

The textual variants between the manuscripts tell us something about the transmission of the text in the two centuries following the calendar controversy. The earliest manuscript, BCC4, appears in one passage to preserve a *lectio difficilior* (BCC 16:5—see apparatus), in comparison to its only overlapping manuscript, BCC5; the reading of BCC4 seems to be the more authentic. BCC5, in turn, has in several cases a more accurate text than the parallel in BCC2, with which it overlaps in a few places;[50] BCC2 is a somewhat later manuscript, which may account perhaps for a higher incidence of errors (although these errors may be attributed, alternatively, to the hasty production of BCC2). In one case, BCC2 has the same reading as BCC5, הנוספת, which is an unusual term for 'intercalated'; whereas this reading has been trivialized in BCC3, the latest of our manuscripts, through the substitution of the more standard term, המעוברת (BCC 23:5—see apparatus). Trivialization is also apparent elsewhere in BCC3, in comparison to BCC2 (BCC 22:4). To sum up, these few examples suggest that the palaeographic dating of our manuscripts is consistent with the progress-

50 Thus, BCC5 עיניכם better than BCC2 עניכם (BCC 19:5); BCC5 בנינו better than BCC2 בנניו (ibid.); BCC5 השכלנו better than BCC2 הסכלנו (BCC 19:7); BCC5 ולאחד better than BCC2 ולאחר and BCC3 לאחר (BCC 23:7); BCC5 נוספת better than BCC2 תוספת (BCC 24:4); BCC5 ובאים better than BCC2 ובאו (BCC 27:2).

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ive deterioration of the textual transmission. The evidence, however, is limited, and furthermore, it would be simplistic to expect a linear, diachronic corruption of the textual tradition.

Further analysis reveals an apparent textual affinity between BCC1, BCC2, and BCC3, although the relationship between them is complex. The apparatus on section BCC 9 shows that readings can equally be shared between BCC1 and BCC2, between BCC1 and BCC3, and between BCC2 and BCC3. Errors, even gross ones, occur equally in any of these manuscripts, but some errors are shared in common between them. Thus in BCC 8:1, both text witnesses (BCC1 and BCC2) have וקז (‘and 107’) instead of וקנ (‘and 150’)—clearly a scribal error. In BCC 21:4, both text witnesses (here BCC2 and BCC3) read מאה וחמישים וארבעה (‘one hundred fifty-four’) instead of שלש מאות וחמישים וארבעה (‘three hundred fifty-four’). These observations are important but insufficient to construct a stemma; they only lead to the minimal conclusion that BCC1, BCC2, and BCC3 belong loosely to the same manuscript tradition.

This said, textual variation between the manuscripts is moderate, which suggests a fairly stable textual transmission. Textual variants sometimes appear in clusters, and not for any obvious reason; but in some cases, the reason for the clustering is clear. Thus in BCC 24:2, the correct reading שלשת רבעיו initially caused confusion to the scribes, because this phrase (‘its three quarters’) is an unusual way of designating the 18th hour of the day. The scribes of both text witnesses initially made an error, which they corrected thereafter (by writing the correct text between the lines). But whereas the error of BCC2 was simply scribal, the error of BCC5 was more learned: the scribe of BCC5, clearly paying attention to the meaning of his text, substituted at first the more normal phrase ‘eighteen hours’.

Vocalization and Cantillation

The most distinctive feature of the manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy is that they are vocalized and cantillated.

Vocalization in all the manuscripts is Tiberian, except BCC2 which also has Babylonian pointing (in apparently random combination). Many words are vocalized differently from one manuscript to the next, but it is impossible to tell whether this is due to different manuscript traditions, to different scribal (or punctuator’s) established practices, to scribal creativity, to different pronunciations of the Hebrew, or sometimes simply to error. In two cases, different vocalizations yield different verbal forms, although the meaning is not affected: חשבו (BCC 3:7) and יחסרון (BCC 21:2).

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In contrast, the cantillation, consistently Tiberian, is remarkably similar between the manuscripts, at least where textual overlap between the manuscripts enables this to be verified. BCC 16 has identically the same cantillation in BCC_4 and BCC_5, even though these manuscripts are otherwise quite different (as has been noted above); whilst in BCC 23, the cantillation of BCC_3 and BCC_5 is in parts identical or very closely similar.[51] This suggests that unlike perhaps the vocalization, the cantillation of the text was an integral part of its transmission, even if variations could still occur. The only exception is BCC_1, whose cantillation differs completely from the other manuscripts (although the same verse division is maintained); it can also be demonstrated, in this case, that its cantillation was not original to the text, as one line (BCC_1 fol. 1v:4) is cantillated on the assumption of a deficient text (two essential words that have been erroneously omitted).

The relative stability of the cantillation in the manuscript tradition says something about its textual importance within the Book of the Calendar Controversy. When Saadya lists, in his introduction to *Sefer ha-Galuy*, a number of works that were 'divided into verses and annotated with cantillation marks' (passage quoted above), he clearly regards the cantillation as an integral part of these compositions. The same would appear to apply to the Book of the Calendar Controversy. This raises the question of why cantillation was made an integral part of this particular work (no other text in our corpus is cantillated; nor are our other texts vocalized, at least any more than sporadically).

With reference, primarily, to the *Sefer ha-Galuy* passage, Rina Drory has argued that the vocalization and cantillation of non-biblical works could be intended to give them the look of 'historical scrolls', by which she means, quasi-biblical narratives on the model, for example, of the Book or Scroll of Esther, with an account of a single, self-contained historical event that involved conflict, danger, and eventual redemption and victory.[52] The Book of the Calendar Controversy fits well this model, even if it lacks a triumph—Babylonian or other—at the end of the story. Not insignificantly, tropes from the Book of

51 BCC_3 fol. 2v:1–2 has the same cantillation as BCC_5 recto left 3, and a very similar cantillation on the next lines (BCC_3 fol. 2v:3–4, BCC_5 recto left 4). On the following line, however, the similarity breaks down (BCC_3 fol. 2v:6, BCC_5 recto left 5).

52 Drory (1988) 176–177; the term 'historical scroll' was borrowed from Zvi Malachi. Drory's idea is taken up and furthered by Elkin (2010) 326–330 (I am grateful to Talya Fishman and Marina Rustow for the references). Note that Drory and Elkin wrongly assume, following established scholarship, that the Book of the Calendar Controversy is a work of Saadya's, and that the idea of imitating biblical vocalization and cantillation in 'historical scrolls' should be attributed to none other but Saadya himself.

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Esther are frequently used in one part of the Book (BCC 4–10). The stated intention of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, that it be read in public once a year in the month of Elul (BCC 19:8–9), is also a point of similarity with the book of Esther (just as of other, latter-day 'historical scrolls' books that were publicly read on annual, liturgical occasions, such as the Scroll of Antiochus, listed in the *Sefer ha-Galuy* passage as 'Book of the Hasmoneans', and of which cantillated manuscripts have been preserved).[53] Accordingly, Saadya refers to the Book of the Calendar Controversy, in one of his letters, as a 'scroll' (LSaad 2v:3–6). It could thus be argued that the purpose of Scripture-like vocalization and cantillation was to endow the Book of the Calendar Controversy with a quasi-biblical appearance, on the model of the Book or Scroll of Esther. This quasi-biblical look may have had the effect of enhancing the book's authority, its liturgical status, and its credentials to promote the Babylonian calendar over the rival calendar of ben Meir.[54]

However, the use of vocalization and cantillation is also attested in other manuscripts from this period, which do not fit the genre of quasi-biblical text or 'historical scroll'. This usage expands the range of possible functions that the cantillation of the Book of the Calendar Controversy may have served. As noted already above, vocalization and cantillation are not confined to the Bible, but also very common in manuscripts and Cairo Genizah fragments of early rabbinic literature.[55] Although their cantillation is selective and follows different principles from the cantillation of (for example) the Book of the Calendar Controversy (which is based very closely on the Tiberian cantillation of biblical manuscripts), it has been argued that originally the cantillation of rabbinic works must have been similar or identical to that of biblical books—using the older, Palestinian cantillation system—but that they evolved differently in subsequent history.[56]

Some have explained the use of vocalization and cantillation in Talmudic manuscripts as the survival of a transitional process from the oral to the written transmission of the Talmudic text, when it was considered important for certain traditions of oral recitation to be recorded in writing.[57] The assumption that vocalization and cantillation reflect a pre-literate, oral tradition is not unreasonable; but the relevance of orality does not stop at a diachronic

53 Hopkins (1978); also Yeivin (1959–1960) 48–49.

54 A quasi-biblical effect may also be intended in the vocalization and cantillation of other literary works, such as T-S 12.730 and T-S H3.59 (see above, n. 28).

55 See above, n. 29.

56 Yeivin (1959–1960) 229.

57 See Brody (1990): 281, n. 182.

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stage of 'transition'. The vocalization and cantillation of the Hebrew Bible, for example, have remained for very many centuries—and to this very day—at once a feature of written, biblical codices, and the basis of oral, public and liturgical recitations of biblical texts. Likewise, vocalized and cantillated Talmudic manuscripts were produced in a social context where, at least in the Babylonian academies, the text of the Talmud was still memorized, orally studied, and orally recited and transmitted.[58] This suggests that vocalization and cantillation of written works was not merely a transitional phenomenon (reflecting a linear, diachronic progression from orality to literacy), but inherent to an enduring, living culture in which written texts were intimately bound with oral recitation, performance, and simply reading, in public liturgical settings as well as in the context of private reading and study.[59]

This enduring interdependence of orality and literacy, characteristic of medieval society in general, was particularly relevant to the Book of the Calendar Controversy, because this work was designed to be formally read in public, once a year, in what might have been a rather ceremonial occasion. This made its cantillation especially important. Cantillation, as well as vocalization, would have been an inherent part of the work's oral delivery. Its performative character is vividly evoked, for example, through the cantillation of BCC1, which is rhythmic, expressive, and at times quite dramatic (e.g. ben Meir's calendar announcement, on fol. 1v:5). Inasmuch as the cantillation of several of the manuscripts (BCC3, BCC4, BCC5) appears to be identical or near identical, as has been noted above, the cantillation of this text would also have provided its performance with a standard, traditional format; and this, in turn, would have enhanced the formal, ritualized character of its public readings.[60] Standard cantillation is also bound to have assisted the memorization of the text, and in

58 See above, n. 29, and Chapter 5, n. 64.

59 See in general Hirschler (2012) 11–22 and *passim*. It is noteworthy that Saadya himself defends his use of cantillation, in the same passage of *Sefer ha-Galuy*, on the grounds that it 'eases reading and memorization' (mss St Petersburg fol. 2:4–5, Harper 443 fol. 1r:11–12). 'Memorization' implies orality, and 'reading' the existence of a written text—both operating together and in conjunction with one another, in the same cultural milieu.

60 I should point out, however, that evidence of annual, public readings of the Book of the Calendar Controversy is only internal to the work itself. I have not been able to find external evidence, in the Cairo Genizah or in other sources, of such a practice. The extent to which the public recitation of this work was actually implemented, and if so, in which communities and when, remains completely unknown. As argued above, the number and variety of manuscripts of this work that have been preserved in the Cairo Genizah are evidence of its popularity and diffusion in the centuries following the calendar controversy; but this is all we really know.

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particular of the calendrical data, the (correct) Four Gates, that it was intended to disseminate. Many explanations converge, therefore, to explain why vocalization and cantillation were employed specifically for the Book of the Calendar Controversy.

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CHAPTER 7

The Book of the Calendar Controversy: Critical Edition

The only previous attempt to compile a comprehensive edition of this work was made by Bornstein (1904: 58–67), under the title of *Sefer ha-Moʿadim*. He did not have all the fragments that we now have; and perhaps more significantly, he made no recourse at all to the original manuscripts, relying entirely on earlier scholarly editions.

In his edition, Bornstein refrained from integrating the fragments into a single sequence, instead presenting the work in three separate sections. Because he was unaware that ENA 2556.1 belonged to the same manuscript as ENA 2555.1 and T-S 10K3 (manuscript BCC2), he published this fragment separately from the work he called *Sefer ha-Moʿadim* (ibid. 99–102). This present edition is based on a much larger number of text witnesses, and offers a fairly complete text of the work, in sequence.

Wherever the text is attested in more than one manuscript, I offer a composite text with critical apparatus. The composite text is based on readings that are preferable in spelling or grammatical construction, or that appear closer to the original text on the basis of contents or of general principles of text edition. Sometimes I have made my own conjectures, or followed those of earlier editors. I have made minor corrections where I felt that readability required it. I have omitted many of the editorial annotations that appear in the diplomatic transcriptions (e.g. that indicate deletions and interlinear insertions in the manuscripts). Vocalization and cantillation, likewise, are not included in this critical edition; for that, the reader is referred to the diplomatic editions (Chapter 8).

Rather than applying a continuous line numbering to the whole text, I have divided the text into thirty small sections, whose lines I have separately numbered. These small sections, of various length, are based on their attestation in the different manuscripts—which means, very importantly, that in terms of contents, they do not represent logical divisions. The line division in the sections of composite text (i.e. which are represented in more than one manuscript) are mine. In the sections where the text is attested in only one manuscript, the original line division has been maintained. The only exception to this is BCC 27, which is based on fragments of BCC2 and BCC5: because the *lacunae* in both fragments cover similar areas, it made more sense to follow

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roughly the line division of BCC2, with the *lacunae* laid out mostly at the ends of the lines.

The *variae lectiones* and *lacunae* have been listed in two separate apparatus. In the first apparatus, the first variant reading provided is the one that has been preferred and used in my edited text. In the second apparatus, I list the *lacunae* of which the missing text is known from parallel manuscripts. Obviously, this possibility only arises in BCC sections that are attested in more than one manuscript. *Lacunae* are defined here as text or letters that are illegible or missing because of damage or poor preservation of the support or ink (as opposed to letters or words omitted by the scribe). It will be noted that in the latter part of the Book, the manuscript most affected by *lacunae* is BCC5, as it is particularly damaged. The *lacunae* are indicated in the apparatus, as usual, with square brackets and turquoise colour. For further clarification, the reader is referred again to the diplomatic editions.

In the notes on the text, I refer to biblical source passages wherever they are needed to make sense of the Hebrew. Additional references to biblical sources can be found in the diplomatic editions.

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1 [**BCC1** T-S NS 194.92 verso]

השכים השחית כקשת רמייה וסורי באשה[1]
בחזקתו בגבהו בכתבי השליט[2] ונאלם פי
העם ממחות בידו אז הפריח שורש
פורה ראש[3] ויהי חרב בארץ לאכול ענייה[4]
כל עלז ונשוא פנים לכסות בחמה וכל
נבון ואוהב אמת ידמים במלה : ויגזור
על ימין באדמת ישראל ויאכל על שמאל[5]
הוא ובניו במשפח וברכילות ומרוצת עושק :[6]
ועוד מכר את קדשי העם ויתנם להעמיד
בהם את גדולתו ועוד דחה את בני אהרן
מעמיד אתו על כנם : המה בני אבטליון
והזקנים אשר במשפחתם וישב בחבורה
את שני ילדיו במקומותם ויפרוץ גדיריה
ויאסף בה אף את קרוביו : ואין דובר מן
[...] דבר אליו אבל ה[.]מ אנ[.....]
[ ]חמס ע[ ]
וי[....] את אש[ר]
את מועדי יי ויה[פוך]

1 Jer. 2:21 and Job 31:40.

2 Probably calqued from the Arabic بجاهه وكتب السلطان (*bi-jāhihi wa-kutub al-sulṭān*). See further n. 7.

3 Deut. 29:17.

4 Cf. Prov. 30:14.

5 Cf. Is. 9:19.

6 Cf. Jer. 7:17.

7 See above, n. 2. Given the apparent Arabic substratum of this phrase, גבהו, from *jāh*, should mean something like 'his social capital' or 'loftiness'; 'ruler' (*shalit*) should be taken in a collective or impersonal sense, meaning the government, state, or rulers (because in Judeo-Arabic the cognate *sulṭān* is never used to refer to an individual). The implication is that the protagonist, ben Meir, consolidated his position by obtaining the backing of the rulers in the form of official rescripts, decrees, or writs of investiture (suggestion of Marina Rustow).

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1 [**BCC1** T-S NS 194.92 verso]

He arose and wrought destruction like a treacherous bow and foul grapes,
by means of his position, his loftiness, and documents from the ruler.[7] And the people's mouths
were silenced from objecting to him. Then he grew a root
bearing poison weed (Deut. 29:17), and he became a sword in the land to consume its poor (cf. Prov. 30:14),
to cover with anger anyone exultant and haughty, and to silence anyone
wise and truth-loving. And in the land of Israel
he decreed[8] on the right and consumed on the left (cf. Is. 9:19),
he and his sons, with injustice, and slander, and a flow of iniquity.
And furthermore, he betrayed the righteous among the people and exploited them to establish
his grandness. And furthermore, he pushed aside the sons of Aharon
while setting himself up in their position[9]—these are the sons of Abtalion[10]
and the elders of their family—and in their place he installed his two children
in the Council (*ḥavurah*), and he breached its boundaries,
and he even brought his relatives into it. And no one spoke of …
… anything to him, but …
… crime …
and … tha[t …]
the festivals of the Lord, and he t[urned …]

8 Lit. 'cut down', but the double entendre is likely intentional.

9 Following Fleischer's (1984: 379) interpretation.

10 Fleischer (1984: 379, 384) interprets this as an allusion to a story in the Babylonian Talmud, *bYoma* 71b, in which the people deserted the High Priest in favour of the sages Shemayah and Abtalion; here, however, the displaced priests ('sons of Aharon') were also sages, and are thus identified with Abtalion.

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2 [**BCC1** T-S NS 194.92 recto]

ויום טוב לצום ויום צ[ום] לטוב : כאשר עשה
בן צרועה למען היות שמצה ביקומיו[11] וקיקלון
בנספחיו :

3 [**BCC1** T-S NS 194.92 recto, **BCC2** ENA 2555.1 verso]

וישלח את בנו בחודש השביעי[12] לשנת חמשים ושלוש
ויבוא ירושלם ויעבר קול ביום הקהל לאמר
מטעם אלהינו ביד נביאיו וחכמיו אות לברית
מרחשון וכסלו חסירים והחודש הראשון ביום אחד
וידבר סרה על אלהינו
ולא ענו העם אותו דבר
וכפרץ הדבר והנה כל ישראל בכל הארצות לא כן חשבו[13]

3. 1 BCC2 לשנת BCC1 לשנות 2 BCC1 ויבוא BCC2 ויבא

3. 1 BCC2 ביעי[הש] בחדש ‖ BCC2 [משים]ח 3 BCC2 מטע[ם אלהי]נו 4 BCC2 והח[דש] 7 BCC2 [וכפר]ץ הר]אשון

11 Cf. Ex. 32:25.

12 Adler and Broydé's (1900) reading of BCC2, **הרביעי**, was only a conjecture and is incorrect. See diplomatic edition of BCC2 (p. 178), Chapter 3, pp. 37–38, and Chapter 4, p. 51.

13 Pointed *qal* in BCC1 and *pi'el* in BCC2.

14 Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:26), a reference to his calendar reform in 1 Kgs 12:32–33. This biblical theme recurs frequently in this work (see BCC 5:9, 8:7, 12:5).

15 Maybe 'to his supporters'; a distortion of Ex. 32:25, which reads בקמיהם ('to their opponents'). Presumably what is meant here is an unintended, alleged consequence of ben Meir's actions.

16 See above, n. 12.

17 This certainly means year 853 of the era of Destruction; assuming the era began in 69 CE, the date is Tishri 921 CE, whose *molad* is indeed referred to below. Adler and Broydé (1900: 227), followed by Epstein and by Bornstein, thought the passage referred to year 1233 of the Seleucid era, which also comes to Tishri 921 CE; but this was based on an incorrect reading and an impossible conjecture (see diplomatic edition of BCC2, Chapter 8.2). The use of the era of Destruction in this passage is most unusual for a Babylonian text, as the standard method of dating in Babylonia was the Seleucid era (see introduction to Letter 1 of LMisc). This raises the possibility that the Book of the Calendar Controversy is quoting, in this particular passage, a Palestinian source, and more specifically perhaps the official record of ben Meir's calendar announcement.

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2 [**BCC1** T-S NS 194.92 recto]

and festival into fast and fast into festival, just as
the son of Zeruah did,[14] so as to be an ignominy to his people[15]
and a disgrace to his acolytes.

3 [**BCC1** T-S NS 194.92 recto, **BCC2** ENA 2555.1 verso]

And he sent his son in the seventh[16] month of the fifty-third year,[17]
and he came to Jerusalem. And he made an announcement on the Day of Assembly,[18] saying:
'In the name[19] of our God through his prophets and sages, a sign of the covenant:
Marḥeshwan and Kislew will be defective, and the first month (Nisan, will begin) on Sunday'.
And he spoke perversion (Deut. 13:6) against our God,
and the people did not answer him at all.
But as the word spread, behold, all Israel in all the lands did not think this way,

18 My translation 'Assembly' (a noun) is based on the pointing in BCC1, where the *heh* of הקהל is vocalized *qamats*. The phrase 'Day of Assembly' (יום הקהל) is used in *Sifre Deut*. 160 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 211) with reference to the day when the people assembled in the Temple, every seventh year, for the reading of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 31:10–12); according to *mSotah* 7:8, this event took place on the second day of the festival of Tabernacles. Epstein (1905: 136 and 137, n. 1) conjectured that the announcement of ben Meir occurred on the seventh (and last) day of Tabernacles, *Hosha'na Rabbah*, because of evidence that large, festive assemblies took place on the Mount of Olives on this day (see more recently the text published by Hirshman 1986: 119–120, ll. 14 and 20–23, with discussion on pp. 222–224 and further references on p. 221 n. 8—without any of these sources, however, connecting these assemblies to the calendar announcement). This date, *Hosha'na Rabbah*, was subsequently accepted without question by later scholars, including Malter (1921: 81, 410), Bornstein (1922*b*, 238 n. 2; but see also 1904: 162, hinting perhaps already to this effect), and much later Fleischer (1984:378, 380). Yet, the phrase 'Day of Assembly' is nowhere attested with reference to *Hosha'na Rabbah*, but rather only to the second day of Tabernacles—a date which should therefore, perhaps, be preferred (see also Gil 1992: 563; Gil 2004: 219). The event described in this passage is presumably the same as the one referred to by ben Meir in his First Letter, which dates it only to 'the festival of Tabernacles' (L1BM 10:3).

19 Possibly 'by order of our God'.

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כי שמו את החדשים שלמים
על כן ניסן בשלישי בא
ובמשפט ובחוקה שתום כן כל בני ישראל
אשר במזרח ואשר במערב ואשר בצפון ובאיי הים[20]
כי עד שש מאות ותשעים וחמשה חלקי שעה אחרונה בלילה הרביעי יהיו חסרים
ומשם והלאה יהיו מלאים
ובשנה ההיא תשע מאות ושלשים ושנים
הנה כתובה בחקת המועדים לתבונותיהם[21] ע(ל) ד(רך) אשר

4 [**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 verso]

הורישונו אבותינו בפינו מאז : ויהי כאשר שמע
נשיאינו וראשי הישיבות והאלופים וכל הברורים וכל מבין עם תלמיד
היושבים בבבל את הרעה הזאת אשר עשה ויחרדו חרדה גדולה ויחר
להם כי לא נהיתה כן ולא נראתה מיום עלות בני ישראל מארץ מצרים
למדי היותם באדמת הקדש ואחרי פוצם לא נשתנו זמניהם : ויועצו
החכמים לכתב אגרות ונשלח ספרים[22] אליו הלא[23] להודיעו את דרך החוק
כי אמרו אולי משגה הוא : ויעשו כן וישלחו אליו ספרים שניים ולא אבה

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3. 9 BCC1 ניסן BCC2 לניסן 10 BCC1 ובמשפט ובחוקה BCC2 וכמשפט וכחקה 12 BCC2 יהיו BCC1 ובשנה והד ההיא BCC2 ובשנה ההיא 13 BCC2 מלאים BCC1 מלאין 14 BCC1 חוקה lacuna 15 BCC2 ע(ל) ד(רך) BCC1 omittit
4. 3 BCC2 בבבל ה בבל

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3. 8 BCC2 [ים]דשים שלמ א[ת הח 12 BCC1 [חסרים] 14 BCC1 [תש]ע מאות [ו]שלשים 15 BCC1 [כתובה בחקת המועד]ים

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20 Esther 10:1; the first allusion to the book of Esther.

21 Earlier editions: לתכונותיהם

22 Esther 3:13. Phrases from the book of Esther become common from this point (see references below), although perhaps not sufficiently to suggest deliberate imitation.

23 Perhaps an error for הלאה.

24 i.e. Marḥeshwan and Kislew. Since both months were to be full, with 30 days (as opposed to defective, i.e. with 29 days, as announced by ben Meir), the subsequent Nisan would begin two days later, on Tuesday rather than Sunday. See presentation of the Four Gates, end of Chapter 5.

25 i.e. the months.

26 i.e. if the molad of Tishri does not exceed this limit, the months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew of the coming year will be defective.

27 i.e. the parts of the hour: indeed, the molad of Tishri in 921 CE—which no one appears to have disputed—was Wednesday 11 hours 932 parts. The limit of 695 parts was thus exceeded, and the months therefore had to be full.

28 Epstein (1901: 192, n. 2) assumes this 'law of the festivals' to be a written work; he

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for they made the months[24] full,
and thus Nisan would fall on Tuesday.
And in accordance with the law and the statute, the whole of Israel declared them[25] so,
in the east, west, north, and the islands of the sea;
for up to six hundred and ninety-five parts of the last hour of the night of Wednesday,[26] they are defective,
and beyond that point they are full;
and in this year, it was nine hundred and thirty-two.[27]
Behold, this is written in the law of the festivals according to their computation,[28] in the way that

4 [**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 verso]

our fathers passed it down to us in our mouths from days of old. And it so happened that when our exilarch,[29]
the heads of the academies, the leaders (*alufim*), all the selectmen and all the learned and disciples
who dwell in Babylonia heard of this evil that he had done, they trembled exceedingly[30] and were
angry, for this had never happened or been seen from the day when the Israelites came up from Egypt[31]
to when they were in the Holy Land and after their dispersion, their calendar[32] had not changed. And the sages
recommended to write letters and send missives yonder[33] to him, to inform him of the way of the law;
because, they said, perhaps it was a mistake. And so they did. And they sent him letters a second time, and he refused

identifies it with the Four Gates, which he treats as a literary work. See discussion in Chapter 5, p. 83.

29 Designated by the Talmudic title *Nasi*.

30 Gen. 27:33.

31 A paraphrase of Jud. 19:30, with reference to the infamous murder and dismembering of the concubine in Gibeah.

32 Lit. 'times', but correctly translated 'calendrier' by Adler and Broydé (in this period, there was no specific Hebrew word for 'calendar' such as in later Hebrew לוח, although the term עיבור, lit. 'intercalation', could already be used in this broader sense—see Chapter 6, n. 34). The author's claim that the Jewish calendar had not changed since the Israelites left Egypt is, of course, a gross polemical exaggeration.

33 Following my conjecture (see note 23 on text).

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לשמע ויוסיפו עוד וישלחו ספרים שלישים ולא אבה לשמוע ובכל זאת
השב ישיבם נמרצות : על כן הצמיתו אתו באולת חטאת על לכתו
שובב משובת נצח[34] ויחזיק בתרמיתו וימאן לשוב : אך אל יתר העם שלחו
אגרות להזהירם למען לא יתעו בדברי הממאיר הירא את לשונו לא מרהו
ואשר אין עליו על סבלו ויבן ויצלח : וזה פתשגן הכתב[35] אשר שלחו החכמים
אליו ממקום הועדם בבבל שלום לראש החבורה ולבניך לאחיך ולכל נלוך : לא
האמננו לשמע הבא אלינו כי בנך שם חג שלא כדת וסמוך לבינו[36] כי אם נעשה
הדבר בשגגה הוא : והדבר נכון מאוד ולא נפלא הוא מן התלמידים כי עבר
העת את הגבול בשבעה חלקים ושלשים ומאתים : וגם לתשובת השנה
כן יעבר את המועד ממאתים וארבעה מן העשירית בלילה השלישית:

34 Cf. Prov. 24:9, Is. 57:17 and Jer. 8:5.

35 Esther 3:14, 8:13.

36 Cf. Ps. 112:8.

37 Brody (2013: 155), or his translator, suggests 'vehemently'.

38 This translation, albeit vague, approximates the primary meaning of the verb צמת (in the *hiph'il* form), which is 'to destroy'. In this context, it might mean more precisely something like 'they shunned him', i.e. they rejected him and cut him out from further discussion. Adler and Broydé, as well as Bornstein (1904: 61 n. 5), followed in turn by Mann (1934: 155) and Baron (1943: 44), interpreted this phrase as 'they excommunicated him'; and this was assumed again, more recently, by Brody (2013: 155; but in the Hebrew version, 2006: 170, with a question mark). This interpretation, historically significant, is unwarranted because it is too technical and too specific. The verb צמת is nowhere attested in the Hebrew language in the sense of 'to excommunicate', whereas several rabbinic Hebrew terms for excommunication are available and should have been used instead. Moreover, aside from this passage there is no evidence within the corpus of texts written in 921/2 that any excommunication was ever carried out. Excommunication was only mentioned one generation later by Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, in the context of the calendar controversy—ונדו אלו לאלו, 'and they excommunicated one another' (see Chapter 16.1)—but this is likely a Qaraite, polemical exaggeration (which may have influenced, in fact, Adler and Broydé's interpretation). Epstein's (1901: 192, n. 6) very different interpretation, which Bornstein rejected, is closer to mine. He understood the phrase as 'they ceased communicating with him' (*ils cessèrent de correspondre avec lui*; in his translation on p. 195, he renders it as *ils rompirent avec lui*, 'they broke off with him'). However, whereas my translation is simply an approximate rendering of the primary meaning of the verb ('to destroy'), Epstein bases his interpretation, much less plausibly, on the cognate Arabic verb whose meaning is 'to be silent' (Epstein 1901: 192, n. 6). This interpretation does not fit well the transitive, causative *hiph'il* form of הצמיתו, according to which Epstein's translation should rather have been as 'they silenced him' or 'they reduced him to silence'—which in context would be unlikely, as the Babylonians had no means of silencing ben Meir, and indeed, the next line tells us that 'he held on to his deceit'. What is meant exactly by הצמיתו, literally 'they destroyed', remains somewhat unclear, but this is perhaps deliberately intended by the author; I therefore render it, equally vaguely, 'they condemned' (I am

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to listen; and again they sent letters a third time, and he refused to listen, and throughout
he steadfastly[37] retorted. So they condemned[38] him in his sinful folly, in his
10 waywardness and endless backsliding; but he held on to his deceit and refused to repent. But to the rest of the people they sent
letters to warn them lest they stray after the words of the destroyer.[39] Whoever feared his tongue did not rebel against him,
but whoever was free from the yoke of his burden (Is. 9:3) understood and succeeded. And this is the text of the letter that the sages sent
him from the place of their meeting in Babylonia: 'Peace upon (you), head of the Council, your sons, your brothers, and all your retinue. We did not
believe the announcement that came to us that your son set the festival not in accordance with the law, and we assumed in our heart that if this indeed
15 was done, it was by mistake. For the matter is very clear, and not abstruse (even) to disciples, that the time (of the *molad*)
has exceeded the limit by two hundred and thirty-seven parts; and likewise next year,
it (the *molad*) will exceed the set time of two hundred and four (parts) of the tenth (hour) of Tuesday night;

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grateful to Marina Rustow, Zvi Stampfer, Nadia Vidro, and François de Blois, for their advice and discussion).

39 The meaning of the Hebrew ממאיר (*mam'ir*) is ambiguous and debatable, although it is obviously a pun on the name ben Meir, as pointed out by Bornstein (1904: 62 n. 1); as a pejorative designation of ben Meir, it appears again in this work in BCC 7:4, BCC 13:6. The term ממאיר is attested in Ezek. 28:24 as an adjective to the noun סלון, and commonly translated as 'thorny brier'; Bornstein (ibid.) refers to this verse, and thus implicitly interprets this designation of ben Meir as 'thorny' or 'prickly'. This is, indeed, how ben Meir himself may have understood it, as in his First Letter he retorts, probably in response to this, that his opponents are truly the briers (L1BM 25:8). Another possibility, however, would be to interpret this term as 'destructive' or 'destroyer', based on another biblical occurrence of the term (in the feminine, however), in Lev. 13:51 and 14:44, where ממארת appears as adjective to צרעת, a form of leprosy affecting clothing and buildings (respectively); in his Judeo-Arabic translation (*Tafsir*) of these verses, Saadya renders this adjective as מאחק, i.e. 'erasing' or 'destructive'. In context, I prefer the latter interpretation, even if ben Meir himself apparently interpreted this pejorative of himself as 'thorny'. Yet another translation of this term is offered by Gil (1992: 566) and Brody (or his translator: 2013: 155), who translate it as 'malignant'; this may be based on another interpretation of ממארת (different from Saadya's), but it is undoubtedly influenced by modern Hebrew usage, where the term is used (for example) for 'malignant' cancers.

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וכן לשנה השלישית יעבר את המועד כי פנה יומם מחצי השבת:
אל ירע בעינך לאמר טעיתי ואף כי תאמר שגה בנך שא עיניך למרום
אל קדשנו וחוס על סביביך לבל יהיו קרחה מקרב כל ישראל : וישיבם
האמת אתי וכדת הכרזתי לא לכם המרות את פי ולסור מדברי ימין
ושמאל : ויחפש עלילות לחפות על טעותו לאמר כי הגבול בשבת
עד שש מאות וארבעים ואחד מן השביעית ביום ופחתת הזאת ארבע
מאות וארבעה

[**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto]

ויכתבו אליו בספר השיני וג[ם בשלי]שי נבחרה לנו משפט ישת ידו עלינו דברי
הקדמנים אשר שמו בפינו [ארבעה] שערים לא יוסיף כל חק[40] על מחצית
היום : חמש אתות כתובת ה[ ]נה למלאות כל אות שעה תמימה
וזה מספרם רֹדּ וּתֹחּ וּתֹצֹאֹ תֹרֹצֹהֹ וּתֹקֹפֹטֹ : אל תלך לנוע על העצים
אשר לא יועילו רבו לבית ישראל משך הגלות ארוך השבי וידל כבודם
ויתמורטון : כי מי זה דמה לחש[41] חק בעולו תוחלתו נכזבה[42] או מי נלחם

40 Bornstein suggests this is an error for חלק.

41 Adler and Broydé read incorrectly לחוק, but perhaps this was intended as a conjectural correction.

42 Job 41:1.

43 I.e. this year's *molad* occurred 404 parts before ben Meir's limit.

44 Cf. Job 9:33; i.e. a judgment or verdict that will settle the dispute between us. This verdict is the authority of the ancients.

45 This is not entirely correct, as some of the limits are actually much later than midday (see Four Gates table). A better translation, therefore, might be: 'the Four Gates (which) do not add any measure to midday' (i.e. which have no limit of midday + a fraction of an hour). According to Bornstein's conjecture, the translation would be: 'the Four Gates (which) do not add any part (of the hour) to midday'—which makes even better sense, although this reading is conjectural.

46 Following Bornstein's interpretation (1904: 63 n. 3); this seems to have also been Epstein's interpretation, who translated 'chacun d'eux exprime les parties d'une heure entière' (but Bornstein misunderstood this to mean: 'each sign is additional to a full hour'—which is plainly wrong). As Bornstein explains, each of these five values add up to a full hour, when added to the difference in parts between two New Years in plain and intercalated years (thus 204 + 876 for a plain year = 1080, i.e. a full hour; 408 + 876 + 876 for two consecutive plain years = a full hour; 491 + 589 for an intercalated year = 1080; 695 + intercalated + plain = 1080; full hour + 589 for the following intercalated year = 589). The implicit argument is that these limits only add up to full hours, not to full hours + 641 parts.

47 These numbers are listed (here and again below) in increasing order, except that 695 comes before 589. This is probably because the author is enumerating the limits in the order of the Gates: the first gate has 204, 408, and 491; the second gate has, in addition, 695; and the fourth, in addition, 589 (see table of the Four Gates).

48 Cf. Jud. 9:9–13. Bornstein interprets this as a reference to the Qaraites, who frequently

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and so in the third year, it will exceed the set time, for midday of Sabbath will have passed.
Let it not be wrong in your eye to say "I have made a mistake", or even to say your son made a mistake. Raise your eyes upwards
to our Holy One, and have mercy on those around you, lest they become a bald patch among the whole of Israel.' And he replied to them:
'The truth is with me, and in accordance with the law I have made my announcement. It is not for you to rebel against my mouth or to deviate from my words right
or left'. And he looked for excuses to cover up his error, by saying that the limit on Sabbath
was until six hundred and forty-one (parts) of the seventh (hour) of the day, and the shortfall of this (year) was four
hundred and four (parts).[43]

5 [**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto]

And they wrote to him in the second letter [and the thir]d: 'Let us choose for ourselves a judgment that will cast its hand upon us:[44] the words of
the ancients, who placed in our mouths the [Four] Gates (according to which) no limit[45]
exceeds midday, (and where) five signs are written [...] each sign adding up to a full hour,[46]
and this is their number: 204, and 408, and 491, 6[95], and 589.[47] Do not go and drift among the trees[48]
that are pointless, that[49] have multiplied in the house of Israel during the exile, through the length of captivity; their glory has waned
and they have been uprooted. For who has ever thought of making a law out of his iniquity[50]—his hope has been deceived—or who has waged war

---

polemicized against the Rabbanites about the calendar; the author would be accusing ben Meir of lending support to the Qaraites by generating an intra-Rabbanite controversy. However, there is no evidence that the Qaraites were involved in any way in the controversy. The context of Jud 9:9–13, where this phrase is taken from, suggests rather that this phrase is a call on ben Meir not to engage in a pointless bid for political power.

49 So according to Bornstein; but Adler and Broydé (followed by Epstein) interpret this clause as a new sentence, which could be translated thus: 'Great is the duration of the house of Israel's exile and the length of their captivity; their (i.e. Israel's) glory has waned and they have been uprooted'. Neither are entirely satisfactory.

50 I am following Adler and Broydé's conjecture, without which the text cannot be made sense of.

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את ייי מורא ישראל ופחד אבתינו וינצחהו : פנה אל אחריתיך ואל
אל יומיך אם עתה יבוש ולא תכלם עד עולמים : ויהי כי ארכו הימים
בלכת ובא הספרים אל המחטיא והוא ידבק[51]

6 [**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left, in right margin]

דברי רוח בלי דעת ויגנב מדבריהם ויסבם אליו:

7 [**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto]

ויפנו המבינים אשר בישיבות אל קהילות
ישראל הקרבים אליהם והרחקים[52] ויזהירו אתהם את החקים
ואת התורת ויאמצו את ידם במועדי אל : כי יגורו פן ישמעו
שמע הממאיר ויתעו בו על כן זרו כתביהם בכל פאתי הארץ:
ותהי מבוכה וחרדה על כל אלה בעיר ועיר ומדינה[53] אשר
השיג שמעו : ויתנו את ידם עוד לשלום בינימו לבלתי נדח[54] נדח
אין פרץ ויצאת ויאספו ויעשו כן : אחר הדבר הזה לא שב המחשיך
מדרכו הרעה וישב ויחבר דברים לא כן באחרית אגרותיו הקל
עונו הראשון והאחרון הכביד לו :[55] ויעש ארבעה שערים אשר לא
היו בין ישראל לא צום אלהינו ולא דברום נביאיו ולא עלו על לב

6. 1 **BCC5** מ֯דבריהם **BCC2** מדברהם

6. 1 **BCC5** יגנב]ת ו[דע

51 Pointed as a *pi'el*.
52 Cf. Esther 9:20.
53 Cf. Esther 8:11, 8:17.
54 Perhaps an error for ידח (cf. 2 Sam. 14:14). See diplomatic edition (Chapter 8.2).
55 Cf. Is. 8:23.
56 Presumably an error, or perhaps a euphemism, for 'you'.
57 Another allusion to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:16 etc.; see above, n. 14).
58 See above, n. 39.
59 i.e. between the Babylonians and the Palestinians. Mann (1934: 155) interprets this as a reference to the peace that was made between the two factions of the Pumbedita academy in Elul of 922 (see Chapter 2, pp. 20–21; 'between them' thus means between themselves). However, this is chronologically out of sequence, because at this stage in the narrative ben Meir has not yet devised his Four Gates, yet the latter are already mentioned in ben Meir's First Letter, which was written much earlier on in 922.

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against the Lord, the awe of Israel, the fear of our fathers, and vanquished Him? Look at your future, and not
at your (present) days, for (even) if now he[56] will be embarrassed, [and] you will not be ashamed forever more.' And as the days went by,
with the going and coming of letters to he who caused to sin,[57] he patched together

6 [**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left, in right margin]

empty, mindless words, and he stole some of their words and turned them for himself (to his own advantage).

7 [**BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto]

So the experts in the Academies turned to the communities
of Israel, both close and distant to them, and warned them about the laws
and the teachings, and they strengthened their hands regarding the festivals of God. For they feared that they (the communities) would hear
the announcement of the destroyer,[58] and be deceived by him; therefore, they spread their letters to all the corners of the earth.
5 And there was confusion and fear on everyone in all the cities and provinces which
his announcement reached. And they (those of the Academies) still gave out a hand to (make) peace between them,[59] lest the outcast be cast out (2 Sam. 14:14),
(so that there be) no breach (and no) going forth (Ps. 144:14); and they gathered together, and so they did. (But) after this, the benighter[60] did not repent
from his evil way, and again wrote things that were not true; in his last letters, his first
sin was made (to look) light and last one severe. For he made Four Gates that did not
10 exist among Israel, our God did not command, and His prophets did not speak, and his sages

60 i.e. ben Meir; see below, BCC 19:2 and note.

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חכמיו : החליף את רֹד תֹּתְמֹה
וישם את תֹּחֹ מֹטֹרֹף[61] וימר את תֹּצֹאֹ שעה ונֹבֹ
ותחת

8 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 recto, **BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto]

תֹּרֹצֹה שעה ורֹנֹוֹ גם שעה וקֹז[62] תחת תֹּקֹפֹּט
לבעבור סבב את פני הדבר
להוסיף על כל גבול אֹמֹרֹת חלקים
לאמר לא עברו שלש אלה גבולותיהן
לא ירא אלהים לדבר על נביאיו שקר וכזב
ולא חמל על צעירי הצאן
פן ישגו בשעריו אשר בדאם לו
ולא פנה בלתי אל העמיד עצתו ומזמתו
להחטיא עם ולהכשיל רבים
ולפרץ גדרות ולהסיע את אבנים ולבקע את עציו
ויחרף עוד את

9 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 recto, **BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 recto]

הברורים בתהפוכותיו
וישימם בוערים[63] כדרך כל אויל ואמר לכל סכל הוא
ויתר דברי ספריו וכל אשר עשה
ודברי המליצים המדברים אליו להשיבו מדעתו

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8. 5 **BCC2** לדבר **BCC1** לדבי 8 **BCC1** omittit העמיד ‖ **BCC1** ומזמתו **BCC2** ומומתו
9. 1 **BCC1, BCC3** בתהפוכותיו **BCC2** בתהיפוכותיו 2 **BCC2, BCC3** כדרך **BCC1** בדרך ‖ **BCC1, BCC3** ודברי **BCC3** ודברי המליצים המדברים אליו להשיבו מדעתו 4 **BCC1** אביר **BCC2** אויל בדברי הל המליצים המדברים אליו להשיבם **BCC2** המליצים ⟦אשר יעצוהו⟧ המדברים אליו להשיבו אל רעתו

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8. 1 **BCC1** [שעה ורֹנֹוֹ גם] צֹה[רֹ]תֹּ ‖ **BCC1** קֹפֹּט[תֹּ] 2 **BCC1** ני[את פ] 3 **BCC1** חלק[ים] 5 **BCC1** ב[ז]כו 6 **BCC1** א[ול] 7 **BCC1** ו[.....] (**BCC2** בשעריו) 10 **BCC1** [א]בנים

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61 See diplomatic edition (ibid.).

62 An error for קֹנֹ, in both manuscripts.

63 Ps. 94:8.

64 In ben Meir's Four Gates, 641 parts were added to all the limits (as he goes on to explain), so that the limit of 204 parts became 845 parts.

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did not conceive. He changed 204 into 845,[64]
and he made 408 into 1049,[65] and he converted 491 into one hour and 52,[66]
and instead of

8 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 recto, **BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto]

695, one hour and 256, also one hour and 107[67] instead of 589,
so as to change the face of the matter (2 Sam. 14:20),[68]
to add to each limit 641 parts,
(and) to say: 'these three (years) have not exceeded their limits'.
He did not fear God (Deut. 25:18) to speak lie and deceit against His prophets,
nor he did care for the young of the flock (Jer. 49:20)
lest they err in the Gates that he contrived for himself,[69]
nor did he mind but to uphold his counsel and scheme
so as to cause the people to sin and the multitude to stumble
and to breach fences and remove (their) stones and split their timber (cf. Eccl. 10:9).
And he insulted further

9 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 recto, **BCC2** ENA 2555.1 recto, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 recto]

the selectmen through his intrigues,
and he treated them as boors, as is the way of all fools,[70] and of everyone he said 'he is stupid'.
And the rest of the words of his writings,[71] and everything that he did,
and the words of the advisors who spoke to him to sway him from his opinion,

---

65 '1049' is written מטרף, i.e. 'confused' (see notes on diplomatic edition of BCC2, Chapter 8.2, p. 182 n. 138).

66 491 + 641 parts = 1 hour (1080 parts) + 52 parts.

67 An error for 150.

68 Possibly implying that ben Meir's revised Four Gates were only a pretence to justify his calendrical decision for the three years (921/2–923/4).

69 A further allusion to Jeroboam and his calendar reform in 1 Kgs 12:32–33 (see above, n. 14). The point here is that ben Meir did not care about the long-term damage that his Gates, contrived just for the purpose of justifying his three years' decision (see previous note), might have led to in the future if heeded.

70 I.e. it is the way of all fools to make of their enemies boors.

71 Probably a reference to his letters, rather than to 'books'.

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הנם כתובים על ספר דברי הימים לראשי הישיבות[72]
ואף ביד

10 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 recto, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 recto]

כל חרד מן העדה נמצאים
ויהי כקרא חכמי דת את איגרותיו
ויקרעו את בגדיהם[73]
וירזחו במספד על עניי הצאן
אשר ביד אכזרי נפלו למו

11 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 verso, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 recto]

ודמעות לרוב ניגרה עינם[74] על קדש מחולל:
ויחדלו עוד מענות אותו

12 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 verso, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 verso]

כי הבינו להם כי בזדון ובעקבה כל מעשיו
ויניחו אותו ליום נקם ועברה השמור לכל מדיח
ולא התעשתו לקחת איגרות מאת המלך להסירו
אך העמידו דבר להועץ עם המבינים
מה לעשות לארבעה שעריו אשר בדא מלבו
ויאמרו לא נוכל לבער את כל כתביו מן החוץ והחדר
אבל נכתוב ספר זכרון לדורותינו אחרינו
בל יקומו מקצותם ויהבלו בדבריו

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9. 5 **BCC1, BCC2** הישיבות **BCC3** ישיבות 6 **BCC2** ואף ביד **BCC1** ואף **BCC3** וגם ביד
10. 1 **BCC2, BCC3** נמצאים **BCC1** הם נמצאים 2 **BCC1** את **BCC3** omittit 3 **BCC1** את **BCC3** omittit
12. 1 **BCC1** להם **BCC3** omittit ‖ **BCC1** בזדון ובעקבה **BCC3** בזדון היה הדבר ובעקבה 2 **BCC3** אך העמידו דבר להועץ 3 **BCC3** המלך להסירו **BCC1** המלך הארץ להסירו 4 **BCC1** מרזח מדיח 5 **BCC1** לארבעת שעריו **BCC3** כך ⟦יעצו⟧ העמידו דבר להועץ עם **BCC3** אך דבר להועץ על עם **BCC1** והלאה **BCC3** בדה **BCC1** בדא ‖ **BCC3** לארבעה שערים

10. 1 **BCC1** עדה[ה] [מ]ן 2 **BCC1** הי[וי]
11. 1 **BCC1** דש[עינם על ק] 2 **BCC1** א[ותו]
12. 1 **BCC1** י[כ] 2 **BCC1** שיו[מע]

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72 Cf. Esther 10:2, although the phrase is also pervasive in the book of Kings.
73 Cf. Esther 4:1, but again, this biblical phrase is not unique to the book of Esther.
74 Cf. Lam. 3:49.

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behold, they are written in the book of chronicles of the heads of the academies;
and they[75] are also in the hands of every

10 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 recto, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 recto]

fearing one within the community.
And it happened that when the wise men of the law read his letters,
they tore their clothes
and cried out in lament over the poor of the flock (Zac. 11:7,11)
who had fallen in the hands of one who was cruel to them,

11 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 verso, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 recto]

and their eyes poured out many tears over the profanation of the holy.
But they refrained from answering him further,

12 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 verso, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 2 verso]

as they understood for themselves that all his actions were wanton and devious;
and they left him alone for the day of vengeance and anger that awaits every inciter.
And they did not resolve[76] to get letters from the king to remove him,
but they decided to consult with the experts
regarding to what do about his Four Gates, which he contrived in his heart.[77]
And they said: 'we will not be able to destroy all his writings from outside and inside,[78]
but let us write a memorandum for the generations after us,
lest some among them arise that will be misled by his words

75 Presumably, the chronicles.
76 Brody (2013: 156) 'deign', but this is perhaps an over-interpretation.
77 A further allusion to Jeroboam, in 1Kgs 12:32–33 (see above, n. 14).
78 i.e. from all public and private places.

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ובל יתעו בנתיבותיו עם נברא
בהבינם למה זה ועל מה זה עשה כן
ויעשו כזאת כי טוב נועצו
בעשרים באלול נקראו ספריו הוא

13 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 verso]

יום שינ[י] לימי
המע[ש]ה וב[חדש] השביעי בע[שרים וש]בע ושלש[י]
נכתב [.....]דנו הנשיא ויכתבו את
[ ] לדורו[ ]
[ ]ו אל כל המקומות אשר [....]שאי
שערי הממאיר אשר בדאם

14 [**BCC4** T-S 8K5 recto]

Not continuous with previous folio.

הספר בטבעת הנשיא והעד עליו עדים מן
האדירים גלוי לכל העם להפיץ בכל הארצות
את משנה הספר להרים מכשול מדרך העם:
ויהי כי נכון הספר אשר הוחק למזכיר
עון ותהי בלב כל משכיל איבתו כי יראת ייי
לשנוא רע וגם באו המושלים על אודותיו: וידברו

12. 9 **BCC3** יתעו **BCC1** יתע

79 An allusion to Ps. 102:19: 'Let this be written for the last generation, and let the creation nation praise the Lord'.

80 Cf. below, BCC 19:7–8: 'Every man … should read his (ben Meir's) deeds at their proper time in Elul, this is the sixth month, before the coming of the festivals'. The pointing of the Hebrew, in BCC3 (fol. 1v:15; see diplomatic edition, Chapter 8.3) suggests a definite article: i.e. the known, or above-mentioned, month of Elul.

81 According to the Babylonian calendar, 20 Elul in 922 CE was indeed a Monday, and the following 27 Tishri was Tuesday.

82 i.e., presumably, the memorandum. The text is too fragmentary from this point for the reading and translation to be precise.

83 This book was produced as a legal document, with seals and witnesses' signatures, in order to certify the reliability and authenticity of the calendar information that it contained. The somewhat dramatic cantillation of these two lines, in the manuscript, is perhaps intended to emphasize this (see diplomatic edition, Chapter 8.4).

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and lest they—the created nation—[79]stray in his ways,
as they will understand for what and why he did this'.
And so they did, as they were well advised.
His writings were read out on the twentieth of Elul,[80] which was

13 [**BCC1** T-S 8K4 verso]

the second day of the days of
the we[e]k; and in the seventh m[onth], on the twenty-se[venth], a Tuesday,[81]
it was written.[82] […] the Exilarch, and they wrote […]
[…] for generati[ons] […]
[…] to all the places that […]
the Gates of the destroyer which he contrived

14 [**BCC4** T-S 8K5 recto]

(Not continuous with previous folio)

The book (was signed) with the seal of the Exilarch, and witnesses from among the mighty
attested to it;[83] it was proclaimed to everyone that this second book[84]
be disseminated in all lands, so as to remove the stumbling block from the path of the people.
And so it was, when the book that had been engraved as a memorandum of the
transgression[85] was ready,[86] hatred of him went into the hearts of all the wise, for fear of the Lord is
to hate evil; and also the authorities[87] became involved in his case. And they spoke

84 Cf. Deut. 17:18. The reason for calling it 'second' is unclear.
85 Ezek. 21:28.
86 Alternatively, 'established', perhaps in the sense of completed and published.
87 An alternative and equally plausible interpretation of המושלים is: the sayers of parables (cf. Num. 21:27). According to the latter interpretation, orators or poets became involved in this case and started composing parables about ben Meir, which are then quoted in lines 8–15 (and probably also beyond). See however below, n. 95.

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לאמ[י]ר[88] ארץ נתנה ביד סכל[89] הוי על יושביה: מים
גבים ישקה אותם בין פרחח וחרול ירעה עדרם
ישעינם חורב בצל עב וציון יוכילם[90] אף יתיצב
על דרך לא טוב: אתיו חרשים חצבו קרש
למכתב מחלמיש צור נסכו קשת נחושה עט
שמיר קצובו לכתב בם כחקה את רעותיו:
איך נכתוב את כולם ורבו מני חול וממצעדי
רגל הנוהגי[91] ישורון באורח פתלתול: אוד
חרוך הוא ושני זנבותיו ריק מכל טוב מלא
כל רע מקראם רכילות משנתם בצעם תלמודם

15 [**BCC4** T-S 8K5 verso]

קשי עורף מוסרם קחת שחד והטות משפט:
אליך יי אדמתי[92] תזעק כי חניה[93] תחתיו
בשחיתותיו ומתים[94] ינאקון מלשונו הרע כי האכיל

88 Previous editions all have לאמר, 'saying', but there is space for a *yod* between the *mem* and the *resh*, and the *mem* is pointed with *ḥiriq*, which justifies the insertion of a *yod* after it. This reading, however, remains problematic; see in detail my note on the diplomatic edition (Chapter 8.4, pp. 196–197 n. 230).

89 Job 9:24, but the term רשע ('wicked') in the verse has been replaced with סכל, 'fool'. It seems that for all their polemics and rhetoric, the authors are reluctant to give ben Meir the title of 'wicked'.

90 Probably an error for either יובילם or יוליכם, with much the same meaning.

91 Obscure; see note on diplomatic edition (ibid.).

92 Job 31:38; better than Schechter, אדמתו.

93 Schechter suggests that this is an error for חנפה (as in Is. 24:5).

94 Job 24:12; the manuscript reads וחתים, an error.

95 This translation, based on my reading of the manuscript, suggests that a complaint was addressed to an *Amīr* (an Abbasid governor), presumably in Palestine—which, in historical terms, would be quite significant. This reading, however, is problematic in several ways, especially as this *Amīr* has not been mentioned or announced before in the narrative, nor is he ever mentioned again. Earlier editors read and understood this phrase differently, as meaning: 'And they spoke, saying'; but this reading is precluded by the vocalization (see note on the diplomatic edition). The reference to an *Amīr* supports the interpretation of the previous line as referring to 'the authorities', although it does not preclude the alternative interpretation of 'the sayers of parables' (see above, n. 87).

96 Perhaps this water is considered less fresh than from streams.

97 See Bornstein (1904) 66 n. 2.

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to the Amīr:[95] The land has been delivered into the hands of a fool, woe unto its inhabitants! He is giving them
water to drink from cisterns,[96] he is tending their flock between thorns[97] and nettles,
he is making them rest (in) the heat, in the shadow of a cloud[98] and an arid place, he is leading(?) them and also setting himself up
on a road that is not good.[99] Come over, craftsmen, hew out a board
from a solid rock, (on which to write) the letter,[100] fashion a bronze bow, cut out
a flint pen, with which to write down his evils duly.
How could we write them all? They are more numerous than sand and than the
footsteps of those that lead Yeshurun on a tangled path(?).[101] He is a singed
firebrand, he and his two tails,[102] devoid of all good, full
of all evil. Their Bible is gossip, their Mishnah is greed, their Talmud[103]

15 [**BCC4** T-S 8K5 verso]

is obstinacy, their morals are bribe taking and perversion of justice.
To You, Lord,[104] my land cries out, for it has been defiled under him[105]
by his wrongdoings, and people are groaning from his bad tongue, for he fed

98 The inclusion of this clause ('in the shadow of a cloud') seems inappropriate here, because in the source text (Isaiah 25:5), and as might be expected, heat in the shadow of a cloud is good, in contrast with heat in an arid place which is bad. Both 'in the shadow of a cloud' and 'arid place' seem to be used here in a negative sense.

99 Ps. 36:5.

100 Text and meaning a little unclear. In this suggested translation, the board is to serve as a table on which the writing material (e.g. paper) will be placed; or alternatively, the board itself will serve as the writing material. The evils of ben Meir are so great that extraordinary efforts are required to write them down.

101 The meaning of this line is obscure, but the choice of 'Yeshurun', an unusual name of Israel, is clearly intended for contrastive effect, as Yeshurun implies the notion of straightness (*yashar*).

102 Cf. Is. 7:4. Schechter and Bornstein speculate as to whom these 'two tails' may refer to. It may be ben Meir's two sons, referred to below (BCC 15:5, see below and note 112).

103 Possibly, but not necessarily, a reference to the Palestinian Talmud. 'Mishnah' and 'Talmud' can be interpreted alternatively as conceptual terms, 'teaching' and 'learning'.

104 Now the addressee is God. The invective appears to be transitioning from one addressee to the next in a rather loose way.

105 Following Schechter's conjecture; the phrase is taken from Is. 24:5.

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את חילם למלכיות: הזקינים אשר הפריד חמסם
עליו כי לשני עגליו נתן את חלקם יתר החכמים
ינודו לו חרפה כי נקרא כאחד מהם: משפטי
ייי עליו יצעקון כי הטם ויניעם ויעולם מועדיו
המקודשים יארבו לו כי חרצוב כל קיטרם[106]

16 [**BCC4** T-S 8K5 verso, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 verso left]

ויפתחם:
והקרוב אליו מהעם יאמר לו ישפוט ייי בינם וביניו
כי בעצתו יכרת[107] זה את זה בחג מצה וכיפורים
בקראתם על ספר יאמר לו כל מבין
הריקותה יגיענו[108] כל א⟨ון⟩ינו[109] אבד בך
לכן לבהלה תהיה פעלתך
ירב בו כל טף הלחמתנו אסור מבלי דעתינו

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16. 3 **BCC4** וכיפורים **BCC5** וכפורים 5 כוחנו אבד[[תה]] **BCC5** כל אינ׳ו אבד **BCC4** א⟨ון⟩ינו

16. 1 **BCC5** ם[ויפתח] 2–3 **BCC5** [יאמר לו ישפוט ייי בינם ובינו כי בעצתו] 4 **BCC5** לב[הלה תהיה פעלתך ירב בו כל טף] 6–7 **BCC5** ב[קראתם על ספר יאמר לו כל מבין]

106 Bornstein suggests this might be a scribal error for קשרם.

107 Not pointed in BCC5, but in BCC4 pointed as a *nif'al*. Bornstein (p. 67, n. 6) suggests that this might be a mistake, and that it should be pointed as an active verb.

108 Cf. Is. 49:4.

109 See diplomatic edition of BCC4 (Chapter 8.4); this reading, as corrected by Schechter, is to be favoured as the *lectio difficilior*.

110 This appears to mean that ben Meir informed on them to the authorities, causing them to lose their wealth. But the rather vague plural ('kingdoms'), and the absence of a definite article (at least according to the vocalization, which is not necessarily integral to the text), suggests that this is a rhetorical invective rather than a factual accusation.

111 Cf. Gen. 16:5.

112 Cf. 1 Kgs 12:28, 2 Kgs 17:16, where the phrase refers to idols; but in this context, the phrase refers most likely to the two sons of ben Meir, whom he installed after removing the elders from their position, as explained at the beginning of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 1:10–14). Bornstein (1904: 67, n. 2) already sensed this, even though he did not know the text of BCC 1 (which comes from BCC1 T-S NS 194.92, first published by Fleischer in 1984).

113 This may mean that ben Meir bears the same titles as the other sages, which to them is an embarrassment.

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their wealth unto kingdoms.[110] The elders whom he cast aside, their wrong
5 is upon him,[111] for he gave their share to his two calves.[112] Let the rest of the sages
bemoan him: what an embarrassment that he is called like one of them![113] Let the laws
of the Lord cry out against him, for he has tilted them, disturbed them, and perverted them.[114] Let his hallowed festivals lay in wait for him,[115] for a chain is all their bonds,

16 [**BCC4** T-S 8K5 verso, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 verso left]

yet he untied them.[116]
Let those of the people who are close to him tell him: the Lord will judge between them and him,[117]
because through his counsel, one person after the next will be cut off at the festival of Unleavened Bread and the Atonement.[118]
When they read (this) book,[119] let all understanding people tell him:
5 you have wasted our efforts; all our vigour has been lost in you;
therefore, may your own work go to ruin.
Let every child argue with him: you have fed us forbidden bread[120] without our knowledge;

114 Cf. Is. 26:10 (so Bornstein).

115 Obscure, but this is perhaps an ingenious double entendre. The term מועד normally means 'festival', and is used in this sense with the epithet מקודש (hallowed) in Ezra 3:5; but it also has, in the plural, the rare meaning of military troops or ranks (Is. 14:31). Ben Meir's festivals, set on the wrong dates, are like hostile armies that lay in wait for him and will cause his downfall.

116 Following Bornstein's textual conjecture, and interpreted as meaning that the dates of the festivals (and the limits of the Four Gates) should have remained firm and fast, yet ben Meir tampered with them. The translation, however, is approximate, and the meaning remains unclear.

117 Who this refers to is a little unclear.

118 'Cut off' refers to the biblical punishment that applies to whoever eats leaven on Passover or any food on the day of Atonement, the consequence of observing these festivals on the wrong date. Bornstein (1904: 67, n. 6) suggests that the pointing of word might be faulty, and that the meaning is 'one person will cut off the other', i.e. each of the two parties will accuse the other of being guilty of this punishment.

119 The syntax is problematic.

120 Following Bornstein, based on Prov. 23:6.

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תבואתך שואה לא תדע שחרה:
יאמרו לו הפתאים השגיתה אותנו כעור בדרך
יהדפוך מלאכי רום

17 [**BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 verso left]

[לא] תמצא יד בעת הצר לך אף מי[ ]
על פיו עמיתך זה היום אשר קוינו ר[ ]
וטפילת שקר כי כבדה יורד נא אלהי [ ]
בעצת ילד חבלתה ארחותיך שחת[ה]
מעונותיך כי השגיתה ישרים בדרך רע: [ ]
באין תבונה יעצת בשת לרוחך נקב[ ]
.. האמים ומאחריו אשר ידעת הק[ ]
..קה קפצת לגדולתם שחתך מ[ ]

18 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3]

Not continuous with previous folio.

[נושא]ו[121] אפוד : למרחוק
בא[ ]ץ ולעם ולדת בל יכליון:
ש[ ]ת נ[ ]לחבר לו מלים כי לולי המה
נשבר מטהו ואת[ ] או ידענו יי כי פוצינו
בגלות גולל את כל א[ ]שתנו וקרא קץ

16. 8–9 **BCC5** [שואה לא תדע שחרה: יאמרו לו] 9 **BCC5** א[ות]נו 10 **BCC5** [יהדפוך מלאכי רום]

121 My conjecture, very tentative.

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may destruction come upon you, of which you do not know the end.[122]
Let the fools say to him: you have deceived us like a blind man on the road
may the angels up above thrust you away

17 [**BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 verso left][123]

you will (not) find help at a time when you are in trouble. Even (…)
for the misfortune of your fellow. This is the day that we have been hoping for (…)
and the futility of a lie, for it is severe (?). May my God be brought down (…)
through childish counsel, you have damaged your ways, (you have) ruined (…)
from your sins, for you have misled the upright into a path of evil. (…)
Without understanding, you have given shameful advice to your own soul, (…)
(…) the nations after him which you know (…)
(…) you have jumped to their greatness, your destruction (…)

18 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3]

(Not continuous with previous folio)

[ ] *ephod*.[124] From a distance
he came [ ] and for the people and the law, let they not be destroyed.
[ ] to join words for himself; because without them
his staff would be broken and [ ] or we know, Lord, that we have been dispersed
in an exile that rolls all [ ] and call out the time

122 Cf. Ps. 35:8 and Is. 47:11. 'The end': lit. 'its dawn'.

123 The text at this point becomes fragmentary.

124 According to my conjecture, '[bearers of] the *ephod*', a reference to priests or high priests (cf. 1Sam. 14:3, 22:18), in the context of what appears to be a passage about the threat of ben Meir to the people of Israel.

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19 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto right]

לשובבינו בישע לקדמתינו:
תכת[בו[125] ר]עות המחשיך שהיה[126] אהרן ואל ינקשו בפחזותיו:
סורו מעל אהלי שחד נוסו נודו מדעת חנף נודו נועו מיקידת יה
נועו סוגו מבוץ היון מן שך יקוש[127] ומן רשת מזורה[128] פן תספו בם:
פקחו נא עיניכם בנינו וצאצאינו אחרינו והביטו בכל אלה
ואל יהיו דבריו למוקש לכם
הנה השכלנו ונורה אתכם זה דרך לצדקה בה:
וכל איש אשר ידבנו לבו[129] יקרא את מעשיו בקצם באלול הוא החדש הששי
לפני בוא החגים בכל ש[ערי]ך[130]
ויוסרו כל הפתאים ולא יזידון[131] עוד ככל אשר עשה
כי מי לא[132] פן תקלל חלקתו בכל דור ודור:
ומי לא יחפץ להטיב לו שם כי צדקתו עומדת לעד יתברכו בו שבטי

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19. 2 **BCC2** אהרן **BCC5** [מ]אהרן ‖ נוגו נוסו **BCC2** 4 **BCC5** נועו סוגו (correction of **BCC5**) בנניו וצאצאנו **BCC2** בנ[י]נ[ו] וצאצאינו **BCC5** ‖ עניכם **BCC2** עיניכם **BCC5** 5 סורו **BCC2** (סורו **BCC5**) יזידון **BCC2** 10 בא **BCC5** בוא **BCC2** 9 ב[ז]ה הסכלנו **BCC2** ה[נ]ה השכלנו **BCC5** 7 ומי זה **BCC5** ומי **BCC2** יזידו 12

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19. 2–3 **BCC5** ורו[ינקשו בפחזותיו : ס] 3 **BCC2** [מעל אהלי] ‖ **BCC5** [מדעת חנף נודו נועו ומן רשת מזורה פן תספו בם : פק]חו 4–5 **BCC5** [מ]ן **BBC5** ‖ [מ]בוץ **BCC5** 4 [מיקידת 8 **BCC5** [ונורה אתכם זה דרך לצ]דקה **BCC5** 7 [אחרינו והביטו בכל אלה ואל 5–6 **BCC5** [יקרא את מעשיו בקצם באלול ים **BCC5** 9 [בכל ש[ערי]ך ויוסרו כל הפתא 10–11 **BCC5** [לא יחפץ להטיב לו שם כי צ]דקתו **BCC5** 12 [עשה כי מי לא פן תק]ל

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125 Pointed in BCC2 as a *nif'al* (see diplomatic edition, Chapter 8.2; this passage is missing in BCC5).

126 This past tense verb is problematic (as noted by Bornstein 1904: 58, n. 2, and 1922*b*: 237, n. 1, with different suggested emendations), but attested in both manuscripts, which makes a scribal error less likely.

127 Cf. Jer. 5:26.

128 Prov. 1:17.

129 Ex. 25:2.

130 My conjecture (cf. Deut. 16:18). Bornstein suggests בכל עיר ופלך, but there is no space for this.

131 The reading of BCC5 is favoured here but only because it conforms to the Masoretic text of Deut. 17:13.

132 Bornstein suggests that the verb יראו ('fear') has been omitted in BCC2; this passage is missing altogether in BCC5.

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19 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto right]

to return us through redemption to our original state.
Let they be writ[ten[133] down … the e]vils of the benighter[134] whose (name) was Aharon, and let no one be ensnared by his wantonness.
Turn away from the tents of bribery,[135] flee, wander away from the mind of the impious, wander away, move away from the furnace of the Lord,
move away, withdraw from the miry clay,[136] from the fowler lying in wait and the spread-out net, lest you end in them.
Open now your eyes, our sons and our future descendants,[137] and consider all these;
and do not let his words ensnare you.
Behold, we have been enlightened, and we will teach you which way to be right.
Every man who is willing in his heart should read his (ben Meir's) deeds at their proper time in Elul, this is the sixth month,
before the coming of the festivals, at all your [gates],[138]
and all the fools will be corrected and no longer act wilfully like all that he did.
For who does not [fear][139] lest his lot be cursed in every generation?
And who does not want to give himself a good name?—for his righteousness (will) stand forever, blessed will be the tribes

133 Based on the pointing of the manuscript.
134 As aptly translated by Brody or his translator (2013: 155). 'Benighter' is a pun, the opposite in meaning of the name Meir, 'enlightener' (Bornstein). This is the only passage, in the entire corpus of texts from 921/2, where ben Meir's first name is given as Aharon; but it is corroborated in Hayye Gaon's responsum of the late tenth century (RHayye 6v:4).
135 Num. 16:26 and Job 15:34.
136 Ps. 40:3.
137 The addressees of this work.
138 Following my conjecture.
139 Following Bornstein's suggestion (as I have noted on the text).

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20 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3]

יה ובו יתהללו : וזאת אות הברית אשר נחלנו[140] אבותינו מימי קדם יען כי בכתוב
לא נמצאה

21 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC3** T-S 10K4.1 recto]

עשרה מהם אחד מלא ואחד חסר לפקודיהם:
ושני החדשים פעם ימלאון ופעם יחסרון[141] או יהיו כחביריהם
המה השמיני והתשעי
על פי תקופת שנת מאה[142] וחמישים וארבעה יום ושלישית ושמונה מאות ושבעים ושש
חלק
כי הקיפה עד תוך מחצית יום חמישי ועד תֹּצֵאֹ בתשיעית ביום [ה]ששי חסירים יהיון

22 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC3** T-S 10K4.1 recto, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left]

ועד פנות יומם מן השבת יהיו שלימין
ועד תֹּצֵאֹ בתשיעית ביום אחד יגרעון
וימלאון ליום שני עד חציו
ומהחציו[143] עד המחצה ביום שלישי יעמדו

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21. 2 **BCC3** כחביריהם **BCC2** כדובריהן ‖ **BCC3** או י[כ]חסרון **BCC2** ופעם יחסרון 3 **BCC2** ‖ וחמשים **BCC2** וחמישים **BCC3** ‖ תקופות **BCC3** תקופת **BCC2** 4 ח **BCC3** וט השמיני והתשעי **BCC3** שמנה מאות חלק ושבעים ושש **BCC2** ושמונה מאות ושבעים ושש חלק 5 **BCC3** חמישי **BCC2** החמשי ‖ **BCC3** omittit ביום הששי חסירים יהיון

22. 1–2 **BCC3** omittit ועד פנות יומם מן השבת יהיו שלימין ועד תֹּצֵאֹ בתשיעית 3 **BCC3, BCC5** חצ[י] **BCC5** חציו **BCC2, BCC3** ‖ ביום **BCC2** ליום 4 **BCC2** ומהחציו **BCC3** ומחציו **BCC5** *lacuna*

22. 1–2 **BCC5** [שלימין ועד תֹּצֵאֹ בתשיעית ביום אחד] 4 **BCC5** [ומחציו עד המחצה ביום שלישי]

140 Pointed as a *pi'el*.

141 Pointed as *nif'al* in BCC3 and as *hof'al* in BCC2.

142 An error for שלש מאות.

143 So BCC2, as in Jos. 8:33; I favour this reading as the *lectio difficilior*. It is trivialized in BCC3 to ומחציו. Both manuscripts point the *ḥet* with *pataḥ* rather than *segol*; this may reflect Babylonian confusion of these two vowels (see however Khan 2013: 955 and 959).

144 This pronoun is problematic, as it lacks an antecedent (which is presumably 'the months of the year'). For this reason and others (see diplomatic edition of BCC3, Chapter 8.3), it may be surmised that a line or so of text is missing, which would have stated something like: 'The months of the year are not equal in length'.

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20 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3]

of the Lord through him and through him they will be praised. And this is the sign of the covenant which our fathers bequeathed to us from the days of old, for it is not mentioned
in the Scriptures:

21 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 1 recto]

Ten of them[144] are one full and the other [de]fective in order (in alternation);
and the two (remaining) months are sometimes full, sometimes defective, or like the others (i.e. orderly)—[145]
these are the eighth and ninth (months)—[146]
on the basis of the yearly cycle[147] of one hundred[148] and fifty-four days and a third, and eight hundred and seventy-six parts.
When it (the year) comes round (and falls from) the middle of the day of Thursday (i.e. noon) until 491 (parts) of the ninth (hour) of the day of Friday, they (the eighth and ninth months) are defective,

22 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC3** T-S 10K4.1 recto, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left]

and (if) until the turn of the day (noon) of Sabbath, they are full,
and until 491 of the ninth of the day of Sunday, they are reduced (i.e. defective),
and they are full (if the year falls) on the day of Monday until its half (i.e. noon),
and from its half until the half of the day of Tuesday they stand

145 'Like the others'—i.e. conforming to the alternating pattern of 30 and 29 days. This slightly cryptic phraseology is due to the mildly poetic style of these lines (with a mediocre rhyme in the first two), perhaps intended for mnemonic purposes.

146 Following BCC3, where this line is presented as a parenthetical gloss (see diplomatic edition).

147 Lit. 'turning of the year' (Ex. 34:22). The mean length of the lunar year, which is presently given, necessitates a calendar year with variable lengths for the 8th and 9th months (Marḥeshwan and Kislew).

148 An error for 'three hundred' in both manuscripts.

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23 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 1 verso, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left]

על סדרם:
וכן להחסירם עד הרֹצֹת משתי עשרה מליל הרביעי
ומשם עד חצות יום חמישי להימלאת
ונסב השבוע
אלה משפטם בשנה הנוספת[149]
ובשנה הפשוטה לא כן חוקם
כי משמנה עשרה שעות בשביעי ולאחד[150] תשע ורֹדֹ יחסרו
וישלמון לשמנה עשרה מן השני אם היוצאת גם פשוטה
או לחמש עשרה ותקפֹטֹ נוספת אם היתה
ומשתי העתים יסדרון עד

24 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left]

תשע ורֹדֹ מן החמישי:
ואז ימלאון אל שלשת רביעיו
ועד קץ תֹחֹ בששי אם הבאה פשוטה גם היא
או אם נוספת אל תשע ורֹדֹ בו

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23. 1 **BCC2, BCC5** סדרם **BCC3** ס[י]דרם 2 **BCC2** הרצת **BCC3** הריצת **BCC5** *lacuna* ‖ **BCC3** חצות יום החמיש[י ...] **BCC5** חצות יום חמישי להימלאת 3 **BCC3** בליל **BCC2** מליל **BCC5** *lacuna* 5 **BCC3** משפטם **BCC2** משפטיהם **BCC5** משפטהם ‖ **BCC2, BCC5** חצות החמישית להמלאות **BCC2** 6 **BCC2** הפשוטה **BCC3** פשוטה **BCC5** *lacuna* ‖ **BCC3** חוקם **BCC2** חקם **BCC5** *lacuna* 7 **BCC2** משמנה עשרה שעות בשביעי [...] **BCC5** עשרה שעות **BCC3** ורֹאֹ ורד׳ **BCC2** לאחר **BCC3** ולאחר **BCC2** ולאחד **BCC5** מיֹחֹ שעות בז **BCC3** ב[.]ביעי 8 **BCC2** לשמנה עשרה **BCC3** וישלמו **BCC5** *lacuna* ‖ **BCC2** וישלמון **BCC3** *lacuna* **BCC5** עשרה ליֹחֹ [...] ‖ **BCC2, BCC5** אם **BCC3** עד 9 **BCC2, BCC5** נוספת **BCC3** נוספות 10 **BCC2, BCC5** העתים **BCC3** ומשני ‖ **BCC2, BCC5** ומשתי **BCC3** העיתים

24. 2 **BCC2** ימלאון **BCC5** ימלאו ‖ **BCC2** [לשמונה עשרה **BCC5** אל שלשת רבי[בה]׳ רביעיו׳ 4 **BCC5** נוספת **BCC2** תוספת בו]׳ אל שלשת רבעיו׳

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23. 2 **BCC5** [עד הרֹצֹת משתי עשרה מליל] ‖ **BCC3** [י משת 3–5 **BCC5** [וכן להחסירם עד הרֹצֹת משתי עשרה מליל ומשם עד חצות יום חמישי להימלאת] 6–7 **BCC5** [ונסב השבוע אלה הפשוטה לא כן חוקם כי משמנה] 7 **BCC5** ב[ש]ביעי 7–8 **BCC5** פ[שוטה או לחמש עשרה ותקפֹטֹ] 8–9 **BCC5** תש[ע ורֹדֹ יחסרו וישלמון לשמנה] 10 **BCC5** י[סדרון עד]

24. 1 **BCC5** [תשע ורֹדֹ מן החמישי׃] 3 **BCC5** [קץ תֹחֹ בששי אם הבאה] 4–5 **BCC5** ורֹדֹ בו] [וכן לשמנה עשרה בשבת]; see diplomatic edition.

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149 BCC3 reads המעוברת; this, the more common term for 'intercalated', is again a trivialization.

150 This, from BCC5, is the best reading. BCC2 and BCC3 read לאחר or ולאחר, '(and) after',

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23 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC3** T-S 10K4 fol. 1 verso, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left]

in their (alternating) order.
And so they must be made defective until 695 of the twelfth of the night of Wednesday,
and from there until noon of Thursday they must be made full.
And (so) the week has gone full circle.
These are their rules in an intercalated year.
And in a plain year, their rule is different,[151]
because from eighteen hours on Saturday until Sunday nine (hours) and 204 (parts), they are defective,
and they are full until eighteen of Monday if the previous year was also plain,
or until fifteen and 589 (parts) if it was added to,[152]
and after both these times, they are regular until

24 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 recto left]

nine and 204 of Thursday.
And then (i.e. after that) they are full until its three quarters (Thursday noon),
and until the limit of 408[153] on Friday if the following year is also plain,
or if it is added to (i.e. intercalated), to nine (hours) 204 (parts) on it (on Friday).[154]

---

which does not make much sense (it should be 'until', not 'after'), and furthermore, according to these readings the day of the week—Sunday, the first—is omitted.

151 At this point, for no clear reason, the hour count switches from a division of 12 hours night / 12 hours day to 24 hours night/day.

152 i.e. if the previous year was intercalated. According to BCC3, the translation would be 'and 589 additional (parts) if it was', but then something like מעוברת ('intercalated') would be missing at the end.

153 And zero hours, which are therefore not mentioned.

154 Here the verb 'they are defective' is missing.

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וכן יהיו שלימים לשמנה עשרה בשבת
וכן תסובנה לקץ הימין:
גם זאת מפי אבותינו לקדמוניהם שמענוה אף בה בעינינו ראינום ינהגו

[**BCC2** T-S 10K3]

ולמלא גם כן אדר
הנוסף : למדוה הטיב למען תשכילוה שננוה אחרי לבל תשכחוה כאשר
לנו באמונה נתנו כן נתנום באמונה לכם ויהי ייי לעד בכם ללא תדחו עוד

[**BCC2** T-S NS 175.57]

Not continuous with previous folio, as about three lines of text are missing. The left edge of the folio is also missing.

נכתב ספר הזכרון הזה בבית דין הג[דול של ראש גלויות][155]
דכל ישראל בריה דמרותא זכאי ראש גלואת[א]
לדורות הבאים אחריו עד עולם כי בפלא שלא [ ]
והכריזו ראשי הישיבות את מרחשון וכסלו [ ]
שנת ר֯ל֯ג֯ שלימין במעמד החכמים [ ]
ותלמידהם כאשר מנהגם להכריז בכל שנ[ה]
הבאה בחדש אלול שלשנה היוצאת כי החד[ש]

[**BCC2** T-S NS 175.57, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 verso right][156]

ההוא הוא [שבו תלמידי][157]
חכמים נאספים מכל מקומותיהם ובאים כל אחד [ונושאין]

24. 6 **BCC2** תסובנה **BCC5** 7 **BCC5** בעינינו **BCC2** בעיננו
27. 2 **BCC5** ובאים **BCC2** ובאו

24. 6–7 **BCC5** [גם זאת מפי אבותינו לקדמוניהם]: לקץ] ה[ימין 7 **BCC5** [ה֗גו] ינ[ו]ם ראינ֗[ו]
27. 2 **BCC5** [חכמים נאספים]

155 My conjecture. The exilarchic title ראש גלויות דכל ישראל is attested in the text known as the *Qaddish* of the Geonim (ENA 4053.1 recto—reference courtesy of Geoffrey Herman).

156 My line division in this section corresponds roughly, but not completely, to BCC2. My conjectures are based on the contents, with due consideration for the space available in both manuscripts.

157 Conjectural, and based on the space apparently available in BCC2.

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And so they are full until 18 (hours) on Sabbath.
And so they go round until the end of days.
This also from our fathers we have heard, in the name of their ancestors,
and also so we have seen them do with our eyes,

25 [**BCC2** T-S 10K3]

and[158] also to make the additional
Adar full. Learn it well, so that you know it, repeat it after me, so that you do not forget it; just as
to us they entrusted (these rules), so we entrust them to you. And may the Lord be with you forever, so that you are no longer misled again.

26 [**BCC2** T-S NS 175.57]

(Not continuous with previous folio)

This memorandum[159] was written in the high court [of the exilarch]
of all Israel, the son of our master Zakkai, the exilarch […]
for the generations to come after him forevermore. For it is surprising that they did not[160] […]
and the heads of the academies announced Marḥeshwan and Kislew […]
of the year (1)233 (SE) to be full, in the presence of all the sages […]
and their disciples, as it is their custom to announce every year [the calendar of the next]
year during the month of Elul of the outgoing year. Indeed, this month

27 [**BCC2** T-S NS 175.57, **BCC5** T-S NS 219.29 verso right]

is the one [in which the disciples of][161]
the sages gather from all their places, and they all come [and argue]

158 Bornstein suggests that this conjunctive should be deleted, thus that all they heard from their fathers and saw them do was to make the second Adar full.
159 On this phrase as self-referential, see above, p. 92.
160 Based on an uncertain reading.
161 'Disciples of' is conjectural and uncertain (see note on text).

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ונותנין במלחמתה של תורה כל החדש כולו ומדקדקין [ ]
שמעמידין דבר דבר על אמתו ועל בירורו וכן הסכימו [ ]
עם דעת כל החכמים והמשכילים להכריזה שלימין ול[ ]
[ ]ן שיש בתלמידי חכמים שבכל מקום ומי שהוא טועה בדבר הזה [ ]
הוא משפט ברור ומגיה כאור החמה למען כי תשרי שלש[נת לֹ"גֹ נולדה]
לבנה אז בלילי[162] רביעי יֹאֹ שעות תֹתֹקֹלֹבֹ והגבול אשר גבלוהו רבותינו
הראשנים עד יֹאֹ ותֹרֹצֹהֹ בלילי רביעי במעוברת חסר[ין ואם יתר]
אפילו חלק אחד שלימין והמולד היה יתיר על הגבול [מאתים ולֹזֹ]
חלקין לפיכך חרצנו משפט מרחשון וכסלו בשנת לֹ"גֹ [שלימין]
ואף מולד השעה[163] של אחריה שהיא שנת לֹ"דֹ ועוד [ ]
גבלו רבותינו גבול עד תשע שעות לֹ"דֹ חלקין

28 [BCC2 T-S NS 175.57]

מלילי שלישי
אין דוחין את תשרי מיום שלישי יתיר על כן דוחין א[ותו מיומו]
ומולד שנת לֹ"דֹ בלילי שלישי תשע שעות תֹתֹמֹאֹ [חלקין ועבר]
הגבול לֹ"לֹזֹ חלקין בראשנה[164] לפיכך הסכמנו גם ע[ל זה ראש השנה]
בחמישי ומרחשון וכסלו כסדרן : ואף מולד הש[נה השלישית]
יעיד על שתי השנים שלפניה כי באמת מולד [תשרי שלשנה זו]
ביום השבת שש שעות לֹ"לֹזֹ חלקין ולימדונו רבו[תינו כל מולד]

27. 4 BCC5 בירורו וכן הסכימו 5 BCC5 עם דעת BCC2 ודעת [...] ‖ BCC2 שלימין BCC5 שלמין 6 BCC5 ומי שהוא טועה בדבר הזה 8 BCC2 שעות BCC5 שע 13 BCC2 תשע שעות לֹ"דֹ BCC5 סֹ שע רד

27. 3 BCC5 [ונותנין] ‖ BCC5 [ומדקדקין] 4 BCC5 [ש]מעֲמידין 5 BCC5 והמש[כ]לים ‖ BCC5 [להכריזה שלימין ול...] 6 BCC5 חֲ[כמ]ים 7 BCC5 [למען כי תשרי שלש...] 8 BCC2 [בלילי רביעי במעוברת חסר] 9 BCC5 [תֹתֹקֹלֹבֹ והגבול אשר גבל]והו BCC5 ‖ [אז] 10 BCC5 ואף] 11 BCC5 [חלקין לפי]כך חֹ[ר]צנו 12 BCC5 [לֹ"גֹ] ‖ BCC5 [על הגבול] BCC5 [א]פילו ‖ BCC5 [ועוד] 13 BCC5 [גבלו רבות]ינו [מולד השנה]

162 This form, pervasive in the corpus, is a singular construct of לילה (as in *mTerumot* 8:3, *mNedarim* 10:8).

163 Error for השנה; the word is only extant in BCC2.

164 This word is problematic in meaning; perhaps it is an erroneous contraction of בראש השנה.

165 A reference to the plenary meetings during the Kallah months (Adar and Ellul), famously described by the near contemporary Nathan the Babylonian; see Brody (1998*b*) 43–48.

166 Following my suggestion, see note on text.

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and discuss in the 'strife of Torah' during the whole month, and they analyse […]
for they establish everything in truth and in clarity.[165] And so, they agreed […]
with the knowledge of all the sages and scholars to announce it (the next year) full, and to […]
that is among the students of the sages in all places. And whoever errs in this matter […]
it is a clear verdict, which shines like the light of the sun, that (in) Tishri of the ye[ar (1)233 (SE) the moon]
was born then on the night of Wednesday, 11 hours, 932 (parts), whereas the limit which our early
rabbis set is that until 11 (hours) and 695 (parts) on the night of Wednesday (in an) intercalated (year), (the months are) defi[cient, but beyond this],
even by one part, they are full; now the *molad* exceeded the limit [by 237]
parts; we therefore issued the verdict that Marḥeshwan and Kislew in the year (1)23[3 should be full.]
And also the *molad* of the year after it, which is the year (1)234 and also […]
Our rabbis set the limit that until nine hours 204 parts

28 [**BCC2** T-S NS 175.57]

of the night of Tuesday,
Tishri is not postponed from Tuesday, beyond that, it is postponed [from its proper day].
Now, the *molad* of the year (1)234 was on the night of Tuesday, nine hours, 841 [parts, which exceeds]
the limit by 237 parts at the New Year.[166] We therefore also agreed with [regard to that New Year, that it be]
on Thursday, and Marḥeshwan and Kislew be orderly. And also the *molad* of the [third year]
attests to the two years before it:[167] for in truth, the *molad* [of Tishri of that year is]
on the day of Sabbath, six hours, 237 parts, and our rabbis have taught us: [any *molad*]

167 The *molad* of (1)235 SE, i.e. 923/4 CE, confirms the decision taken for the two previous years.

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אלו הוא נכנס בשעה שביעית מן היום אפילו חלק [אחד נדחה מלהיות][168]
בו ביום : לפיכך משלושת הטעמים האלה לא הי[ה]
ההכרזות האלה כחוק וכמשפט הכרזנום וכשם ש[ ]
חשבנו ש[ ]

29 [**BCC2** ENA 2556.1 verso]

Not continuous with previous folio.

חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מכן שלימין תחת מה שקבעו חכמ(ים) כל תשרי
שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם תִּצְאֹ חלקים משעה התשיעית ביום ששי
חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין : גם כתב ואם אין בה עיבור
ולא בשנה הבאה ונולד קודם תִּתְרַמְּטֹ חלקין משעה ראשונה
בלילי ששי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין תמורת משקבעו
חכמים אם אין בה עיבור ולא בשנה הבאה ונולד קודם תֹּחַ חלקין
משעה ראשונה בלילי ששי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין
וגם כתב ואם יהיה שנה הבאה עיבור ונולד קודם תִּתְמַהּ חלקין
משעה עשירית בלילי ששי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין
ועוד כתב שער שני כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם רִנְּוֹ חלקין
משעה ראשונה ביום רביעי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מכן שלימין
תחת משקבעו חכ(מים) כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם תִּרְצֹהּ
חלקין משעת יֹבְ בלילי רביעי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין
וגם כתב ואם אין בו עיבור ונולד קודם תִּתְמַהּ חלקין משעה עשירית

168 Alternatively: [אחד דוחין אותו מן].
169 The *moladot* of the three years, (1)233, (1)234, and (1)235 SE, are treated as three distinct reasons in support of the Babylonians' dates, although of course all three are interdependent.
170 Alternatively: 'its calculation' (this cannot be determined as the word is not pointed).
171 The comparison of ben Meir's Four Gates and the Babylonians' starts here in the middle of the first limit of ben Meir's first gate (Sabbath in an intercalated year).
172 The 'correct' limit, n6:9:204, is omitted (maybe a scribal error).

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if it enters the seventh hour of the day by even one [part, it is postponed from]
its proper day. Therefore, for these three reasons,[169] it was not […]
These announcements, according to the statute and the law we announced them, and just as […]
We thought that[170] […]

29 [**BCC2** ENA 2556.1 verso]

(Not continuous with previous folio)

they (the months) are defective,[171] and if (the moon) is born after that, they (the months) are full—instead of what the Sages laid down: 'every Tishri
in which (in its year) there is an intercalation, and it is born before 491 parts of the ninth hour on the day of Friday,
they (the months) are defective, and if (the moon) is born after that, they (the months) are full'. He also wrote: 'and if there is no intercalation in it (in this year)
or in the next year, and it is born before 1049 parts of the first hour
on the night of Friday, they are defective, and if it is born after that, they are full'—instead of what the Sages
laid down: 'if there is no intercalation in it or in the next year, and it is born before 408 parts
of the first hour on the night of Friday, they are defective, and if it is born after that, they are full'.
And he also wrote: 'and if in the next year there will be an intercalation, and it is born before 845 parts
of the tenth hour on the night of Friday, they are defective, and if it is born after that, they are full'.[172]
And he wrote further: 'Second gate. Every Tishri in which there is an intercalation, and it is born before 256 parts
of the first hour on the day of Wednesday, they are defective, and if it is born after that, they are full'—
instead of what the Sages laid down: 'every Tishri in which there is an intercalation, and it is born before 695
parts of the 12th hour of the night of Wednesday, they are defective, and if it is born after that, they are full'.
And he also wrote: 'and if there is no intercalation in it, and it is born before 845 parts of the tenth hour

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בלילי חמישי כסדרן ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין תמורת משקבעו
חכ(מים) ואם אין בו עיבור ונולד קודם רֵ֫ד חלקין משעה עשירית בלילי
חמישי כסדרן ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין : ועוד כתב בשערים
הללו כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קדם נֵ֫ב חלקין משעה עשירית
ביום אחד בשבת חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין תחת משקבעו
חכ(מים) כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם תֵּ֫צֵא חלקין משעה תשיעית
ביום אחד בשבת חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין וגם כתב ואם
אין בה עיבור ונולד קודם תִּתְמַהּ חלקין משעה עשירית בלילי אחד
בשבת חסרין ואם נולד יתיר על כן שלימין : תמורת משקבעו חכ(מים)
כל תשרי שאין בו עיבור ונולד קדם רֵ֫ד חלקין משעה עשירית בלילי
אחד בשבת חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין : ועוד כתב כל תשרי
שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם אֶמְרֵת משעה שביעית ביום שלישי
אחוז שלישי וכסדרן תוספת על מה שקבעו חכ(מים) כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור
ונולד קדם שעה שביעית ביום שלישי אחוז שלישי וכסדרן וגם כתב ואם
אין בו עיבור קודם תִּתְמַהּ משעה עשירית בלילי שלישי אחוז שלישי
וכסדרן יתיר על כן דחה אותו ליום חמישי אחוז חמישי וכסדרן
{וגם[173] כתב ואם אין בה עיבור ונולד קודם תִּתְמַהּ משעה עשירית
בלילי שלישי אחוז שלישי וכסדרן יתיר על כן דחה אתו ליום חמישי
אחוז חמישי וכסדרן} חילופי משקבעו חכ(מים) ואם אין בה עיבור
ונולד קודם רֵ֫ד חלקין משעה עשירית בלילי שלישי אחוז שלישי

173 This sentence repeats verbatim the previous one, and is clearly an error.

174 Until this point the author has described the Gates in their right order, starting from the first and then to the second. From now onwards, however, the order becomes erratic; and this is the implication of the phrase 'further in these gates'. The author skips to the fourth gate, then goes back to the third, then returns to the fourth. The rationale for this is unclear.

175 The 641 parts.

176 This phrase (ונולד) appears to have been inadvertently left out, as it appears everywhere else.

177 'Hold Thursday' is repetitive (as he has just stated that the beginning of the month is postponed to Thursday), but perhaps intended for clarification.

178 This sentence repeats verbatim the previous one, and is clearly an error.

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on the night of Thursday, they are regular, and if it is born after that, they are full'—instead of what the Sages
laid down: 'and if there is no intercalation in it, and it is born before 204 parts of the tenth hour
on the night of Thursday, they are regular, and if it is born after that, they are full'. And he wrote further in these
gates:[174] 'every Tishri in which there is an intercalation, and it is born before 52 parts of the tenth hour
of the day of the first in the Sabbath (i.e. Sunday), they are defective, and if it is born after that, they are full'—instead of what the Sages
laid down: 'every Tishri in which there is an intercalation, and it is born before 491 parts of the ninth hour
of the day of the first in the Sabbath (Sunday), they are defective, and if it is born after that, they are full'. And he also wrote:
'and if there is no intercalation in it, and it is born before 845 parts of the tenth hour of the night of the first
in the Sabbath (Sunday), they are defective, and if it is born beyond this (limit), they are full'—instead of what the Sages laid down:
'every Tishri in which there is no intercalation, and it was born before 204 parts of the tenth hour of the night
of the first in the Sabbath, they are defective, and if it is born in excess of this, they are full'. And he also wrote: 'every Tishri
in which there is an intercalation, and it is born before 641 parts of the seventh hour of the day of T[uesday],
hold Tuesday (as beginning of the month) and (the months) are regular'—an addition[175] to what the Sages laid down: 'every Tishri in which there is an intercalation,
and it is born before the seventh hour of the day of Tuesday, hold Tuesday and they are regular'. And he also wrote: 'and if
there is no intercalation in it (in that year), (and it is born)[176] before 845 (parts) of the tenth hour of the night of Tuesday, hold Tuesday
and they are regular; beyond that (limit), postpone it to Thursday, hold Thursday[177] and they are regular'.
And he also wrote: 'and if there is no intercalation in it (in that year), (and it is born) before 845 (parts) of the tenth hour
of the night of Tuesday, hold Tuesday and they are regular; beyond that (limit), postpone it to Thursday,
hold Thursday and they are regular'[178]—instead of what the Sages laid down: 'and if there is no intercalation in it,
and it is born before 204 parts of the tenth hour of the night of Tuesday, hold Tuesday

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30 [**BCC2** ENA 2556.1 recto]

וכסדרן יתיר על כן דחה אתו ליום חמישי אחוז חמישי וכסדרן ועוד כתב
ואם היה בשנה שעברה עיבור ונולד אחר קנ חלקין משעה חמישית
ביום שני דחה אותו ליום שלישי אחוז שלישי וכסדרן עשה כל אלה לספות[179]
על טעותו כדי שיהא הגבול [.]שנת רלג עד רנו משעה ראשונה ביום
רביעי חסרין ומולדה הרי היא תתקלב משעת יב בלילי רביעי ויאמר הרי
משפטיו להיות חסרין וכן יהיה הגבול בשנת רלד עד תתמה משעה
עשירית בלילי שלישי אל ידחה ומולדה הרי הוא תמה[180] משעה עשירית
בלילי שלישי ויאמר עדאין לא הגיע למקום הדחיה ואף בשנת רלה יאמר
הרי לא נוסף אמרת חלקין עד[181] שש שעות ויחר לנו הדבר מאד על אשר נעשה
האלה יתיר מן הראשנים הקל הראשון והאחרון הכביד כי לא דיו שטעה
בשלש שנים הללו וגרם למקצת ישראל אשר סביבותם לחלל את המועדות
האלה אלא בקש לנטע דברי טעות בתוך בני יש(ראל) לחלל את המועדים הבאים
ולהוסיף על חטאם[182] פשע להכשיל רבים בתורה ולטעת בעם מוקש אשר
לא ימיש פריו ובכן צוינו ונאספו הראשים והאלופים והחכמים והמלמדים
ונועצנו מה לעשות למכשול הגדול הזה אשר הביאו בן מאיר להעמיד

179 Bornstein suggests that although this word is possible, it might be an error for לחפות, as above BCC 4:22.

180 An error for תמא.

181 An error for על.

182 Perhaps חטאיו.

183 The 'correct' limit, d2:3:589, is omitted; this may be, as above, a scribal error, or alternatively a conscious decision of the author (or scribe) to cut short the end of this detailed comparison.

184 I.e. to add these limits, or Gates, to his error; in other words, not only did he announce the wrong dates for 921/2, but he 'added' to his error by creating a whole set of different Gates in order to justify his error. According to Bornstein's conjecture, however, the translation would be more simply 'to cover up his error'.

185 (1)233 SE = 921/2 CE.

186 An error for 441.

187 i.e. the *molad* has not exceeded the limit which would cause the beginning of the month to be postponed.

188 i.e. his last sins were worse than the first—an echo of the narrative section (BCC 7:8–9; see notes ibid.), which incidentally supports the assumption that the calendrical section belongs to the same literary work.

189 Meaning perhaps 'around him'.

190 Maybe 'his sin'.

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30 [**BCC2** ENA 2556.1 recto]

and they are regular; beyond that, postpone it to Thursday, hold Thursday and they are regular'. And further he wrote:
'and if in the previous year there was an intercalation, and it (the present Tishri) is born after 150 parts of the fifth hour
of the day of Monday, postpone it to Tuesday, hold Tuesday, and they are regular'.[183] He made all these to add[184]
to his error, in order that the limit [of] the year 233[185] should be until 256 (parts) of the first hour on the day of
Wednesday, and (the months) defective; and behold, its *molad* is 932 of the 12th hour of the night of Wednesday. He (thus) said: 'behold,
its rule is that they are defective. And similarly, the limit in the year 234 will be until 845 (parts) of the tenth
hour of the night of Tuesday, let it not be postponed, and behold, its *molad* is 445[186] of the tenth hour
of the night of Tuesday'. And he said: 'it has not yet reached the place of postponement'.[187] And likewise for year 235, he said:
'behold, it does not exceed 641 parts after six hours'. And we were very upset by this, by this being done
in addition to the first, the first being light and the last severe.[188] For it was not enough for him to have erred
in these three years and caused part of Israel around them[189] to desecrate these festivals,
but he tried to implant words of error among the children of Israel so as to desecrate future festivals
and to add offence to their sin,[190] to make the multitude stumble in Torah, and to implant among a people a stumbling-block whose
fruit would not disappear.[191] Therefore, we commanded the heads, leaders (*alufim*), sages and teachers to assemble,
and we took counsel on what to do about this great stumbling-block which ben Meir had brought in support

191 Cf. Jer. 17:8. Ben Meir was not content with his three-year error, but turned it into a permanent, erroneous calendar with long-term consequences that would not easily be removed.

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עצתו ויאמרו לא נוכל לבער את כל הנסחים אשר כתב בן מאיר על
זאת אל המקומות ועוד אפשר כי ננסחו אגרותיו בתוך העם אבל ראוי
לכתוב את הספר הזה להיותו לזכרון בתוך כל יש(ראל) להודיעם את מעשה
בן מאיר הזה מתחילה ועד סוף ולהסירם ולהזהירם ולצוות אותם כי כל
טופס וכותב ונסח אשר ימצאוהו בקרב העם וכתוב בה שעה נֹבּ חלקין
במקום תֹּצֹאֹ או תֹּתֹמֹהֹ במקום רֹדֹ או תֹּרֹמֹטֹ[192] במקום תֹּחֹ או שעה רֹנֹוֹ
במקום תֹּרֹצֹהֹ או שעה קֹנֹ במקום תֹּקֹפֹטֹ לא יסמכו עליהן ולא ישגיחו
בהן כ(ל) ז(ה) בן מאיר בדא מלבו בעת הזאת ולא מפי הראשונים אבל
ארבעה שערים האמת אשר המה מצוים בתוך כל בני ישראל אשר
בכל המדינות מסורות שער ראשון תֹּצֹאֹ תֹּחֹ ורֹדֹ ומסרות שער
שני תֹּרֹצֹהֹ ורֹדֹ ומסרות שער שלישי שש שעות ורֹדֹ ומסרות
שער רביעי תֹּצֹאֹ ורֹדֹ ותֹּקֹפֹטֹ כאשר מסרום לנו רבותינו
בהלכה למעשה ולא בהלכה למעשה בלבד למדונו את המסרות
האלה אילא אף מן התלמוד יש להן עיקר כי כן לימדונו רבותינו
אמ(ר) שמואל יכילנא לתקונה לכולה גולה א(מר) ליה אבה דר(ב) שמלאי
לשמואל ידע מר הא מילתא דתנא בסוף[193] העיבור נולד קודם חצות
או אחר חצות אמ(ר) ליה לא אמ(ר) ליה ומדהא לא ידע מר[194] ומפרשי
רבנן מאי ננהי מילי אחרניאתא רֹדֹ ותֹּחֹ תֹּצֹאֹ ותֹּרֹצֹהֹ ותֹּקֹפֹטֹ

192 An error for תֹּתֹרֹמֹטֹ.

193 *Sic*. Our versions of the Talmud read: בסוד.

194 The rest of the passage, omitted perhaps in error (because of homoioteleuton), reads (according to our text of the Talmud): איכא מילי אחרניאתא דלא ידע מר.

195 Another echo, or in this case almost a repetition, of the narrative section (BCC 12:6–7).

196 i.e. that further copies have been made of his letters (besides those that ben Meir produced and disseminated), which will be even more difficult to trace and call back or destroy.

197 On this phrase as self-referential, see above, p. 92.

198 From ben Meir's teachings.

199 An error for 1049.

200 Referring to the Four Gates; or alternatively, 'who are in all the countries' (referring to Israel).

201 *Sic*; our versions of the Talmud read 'that is taught in the Secret (or: 'Council') of Intercalation'. I am capitalizing 'Intercalation' because the reference appears to be to a named text.

202 The rest of the quotation is omitted (perhaps because of scribal error), but it is actually crucial to the argument. It reads (according to our text of the Talmud): 'there are other things that my master does not know'.

203 As is found in the eleventh-century commentary of Rabbenu Ḥananel. Although what is now quoted is only a commentary, not the Talmud itself, our author is right to claim that his Four Gates draw some support from the Talmud, inasmuch as the phrase 'if it

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of his scheme; and they said: We will not be able to destroy all the copies which ben Meir wrote on
this (and which he sent) to all the places;[195] and furthermore, it is possible that his letters have been copied among the people;[196] but it is fit
to write this book,[197] for it to be a memorandum among all Israel, to inform them of this deed
of ben Meir from beginning to end, and to move them away[198] and warn them and command them that any
document, writing, or copy that are found among the people and in which is written 'one hour and 52 parts'
instead of 491, or '845' instead of 204, or '649'[199] instead of 408, or 'one hour 256'
instead of 695, or 'one hour 150' instead of 589, they should not rely on them or pay attention
to them—all this ben Meir contrived in his heart at this time, and was not from the mouth of the ancients, but [..
the true Four Gates which are found among all the children of Israel, which are
in all the countries,[200] (are as follows): the traditions of the first Gate are 491, 408, and 204; the traditions of the second
Gate are 695 and 204; the traditions of the third Gate are six hours and 204; and the traditions of
the fourth Gate are 491, 204, and 589—just as our rabbis transmitted them to us
as practical law, and not only as practical law they taught us these traditions,
but even in the Talmud they have a source, for so our rabbis taught us (*bRosh Hashanah* 20b):
'Samuel said: I can set (the calendar) for the whole Diaspora. Rabbi Simlai's father said to
Samuel: Does my master know the matter that is taught at the end[201] of the Intercalation: "if it was born before noon
or after noon"? He replied to him: No. He said to him: Since my master does not know this …',[202] and our rabbis
comment:[203] th[ese] other things, what are they?—204, 408, 491, 695, and 589.

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was born before noon or after noon' (which is in Talmud) may be interpreted as a reference to the limit of midday which characterizes the Babylonian Four Gates (whereas in ben Meir's Four Gates, this limit is 641 parts later).

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CHAPTER 8

The Book of the Calendar Controversy: Diplomatic Editions

8.1 BCC1

Two folios of this manuscript of the Book of the Calendar Controversy been found: T-S NS 194.92 and T-S 8K4. These folios are not continuous; the parallel text in other manuscripts of the same work suggests that two folios are missing between them. The contents of the first fragment support the hypothesis that only one folio is missing at the beginning (see above, page 105); and an estimate can be made of the number of missing folios at the end, based again on the parallel manuscripts. The entire manuscript—at least the folios that contained the Book of the Calendar Controversy—consisted therefore of the following folios, in this sequence:

1. Missing
2. T-S NS 194.92 (verso—recto)

3–4. Missing

5. T-S 8K4 (recto—verso)

6–12. Missing

Physical and Codicological Description

Paper, dark brown ink. Dimensions: 18 cm × 13.5 cm (text: 12.5–14.5 cm × 10.2 cm average). T-S 8K4 has been mounted and apparently cropped along its right and left sides, hence a more narrow width of 12.3 cm. Lines number: 18 per page, but T-S 8K4 verso has 19 lines, with the longest text height of 14.5 cm. Margins are of reasonable size: 18 mm (outer) and 13 mm (inner); the latter is reduced to 8 mm in T-S 8K4, again perhaps because of cropping. However, the left margins (whether inner or outer) cannot be properly measured as there is no left justification, in spite of some extended end-of-line letters, and some word stacking. The top margin ranges from 17–20 mm, the bottom less consistently from 15–25 mm.

The condition of the folios is uneven. Both folios, recto and verso, are damaged in the last four lines (five lines in T-S 8K4 verso, which has an additional line of text); this indicates damage sustained while the folios were still bound together in a quire. These lines are generally poorly legible. In addition, in T-S NS 194.92 nearly half these lines are torn off.

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Besides the area at the bottom, the ink on T-S 8K4 recto is generally faded, which affects in particular the legibility of the vocalization and cantillation marks; it is very faded along a diagonal line that runs from top-left to mid-right. The verso is much better preserved, with only sporadic patches of fading. At the top middle of this folio, there is a V-shaped tear. T-S NS 194.92 is damaged with a few small holes, and with a patch of staining in the centre of the verso side.[1]

The manuscript is probably to be dated, palaeographically, to the eleventh century, even though a very similar script was in use again in the early thirteenth century.[2]

Vocalization and Cantillation

Vocalization and cantillation (all Tiberian) are sporadic in places. In general, however, the cantillation is almost complete; cantillation seems to be the scribe's or punctuator's main priority. Vocalization is more selective, although most words have at least one vocalization mark. It can be demonstrated that the pointing was executed at a second stage of writing (fol. 2v:3). The *rafe* sign is very liberally used, even where it is completely obvious (e.g. at the end of a word).

The cantillation is well planned; it is rhythmic, expressive, and well suited to the contents of the text (for example, ben Meir's calendar announcement: fol. 1v:5). Cantillation marks are densely used, avoiding strings of uncantillated words that are characteristic, for example, of BCC5.

Bibliography

T-S NS 194.92

Fleischer (1984), joining it with T-S 8K4. His text edition includes vocalization marks (but no cantillation marks); however, his vocalization marks are completely random; in most cases, they represent his own vocalization rather than the manuscript's, so that overall, his vocalization bears no relationship with what is found in the manuscript.

T-S 8K4

Schechter (1901–1902) 40–41 and 50–52 (Text 11b).

Bornstein (1904) 64–65, with a few corrections of his own that sometimes agree remarkably with the manuscript (e.g. on the last line of the verso).

1 The verso side is what I call here 'fol. 1 verso', but it is catalogued in the Cambridge University Library as T-S NS 194.92 recto.

2 Advice of Judith Schlanger (November 2017).

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BCC1 folio 1 recto
[T-S NS 194.92 verso]

הִשְׁכִּים[3] הַשְׁחִית[4] [כק]שת[5] רמיָה וְסורֵי באִשֶּׁה[6]
בחזקתָו בְּגבהו בכתבֵּי השַׁלִּיט וְנֶאֱלַם פִּי
העֵם מִמְּחוֹת בְּיִדְוֹ אֲזֵ הפִּרִיחוּ שׁוֹרש[7]
פורה־רֹאש[8] ויהִי־חֵרב באֶרץ לאכֹּול עֲנִיֵּיהָ :[9]
כל־עָלֵז[10] ונְשׂוּא־פָּנִים לכַסּוֹת[11] בְּחֵמָה וכל־
נְבָון ואוהֵב־אמֶת יַדֵּמִים בְּמִלָּה : וַיִּגְזוֹר
על ימין באדמַת[12] ישראֹל ויאכל על שמאל[13]
הָוא ובנָיו בְּמִשְׁפַּח וברכילוּתֹ ומְרוּצַת עוּשֶׁק :[14]
ועוֹד מָכרֹ את קדשֵׁי העֵם וַיתנֵם להעמִיד
בהֶם את גדוּלָתֹוֹ ועוֹד דָּחָהֹ את בנֵי[15] אהרֹן
מעמֵיד אֹתֹוֹ על כֵּנֶם : הֹמה בנֵי אבטל֯ון
והזקנים אשר במשפחתָם ויֶּשֶׁב בחבורָה
את שנֵי ילדֶיו במקומותָם ויפרֹוץ גדירֶיה
וַיֶּאֱסֹף־בֶּה אף את קרובָיו : ואין־דובֵר מִן־
[...][16] דבָּר אלָיו אֲבָל הָ[17][.]מֶ[18]אנַ[.....]

3 The vocalization of the *kaf* is faint, and seems to contain more points than the expected *ḥiriq*.
4 Cf. Zeph. 3:7.
5 Following Hos. 7:16, Ps. 78:57. Fleischer: קשת. The cantillation mark is visible because set to the left of the *qof*.
6 So correctly Fleischer, a combination of Jer. 2:21 and Job 31:40; the reading of the last two words is slightly complicated by the scribe's writing around a hole.
7 The second *shin* is written over a (second) *resh*. The *shin*'s *ḥolam* vowel is written above the *shin* rather than above the *waw*, as is common in this and other manuscripts. Space filling sign at the end of the line.
8 Deut. 29:17. There is a trace of ink similar to a *yod* before the beginning of the line, which is probably just a smudge.
9 Cf. Prov. 30:14.
10 The false appearance of an *etnaḥta* is due to an imperfection in the paper. The bottom of the *qamats* is partially effaced.
11 Possibly ולכסות (the beginning of the word is faded), but this is syntactically impossible.
12 Less likely בשדמת.
13 Cf. Is. 9:19.
14 Cf. Jer. 7:17.
15 The dot above the *bet* (and very close to it) is likely insignificant.
16 Fleischer reads העם, but the remnants of these letters are insufficient to confirm this reading.
17 Or ח (so Fleischer).
18 Or פ.

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[ ]חמס ע[ ]
וי[....] את אש[ר]
את מועדי יי ויה[פוד]

BCC1 folio 1 verso
[T-S NS 194.92 recto]

ויום־טוב לְצום ויום־צ[ום] לטוב : כאשר עשה
בן צרועה למען היות שמצה ביקומיו[19] וקיקלון
בנסחה. וישלח את בנו בחודש השביעי[20]
לשנות[21] חמשים ושלוש ויבוא ירושלם ויעבר־[22]
קול ביום הקהל.[23] לאמר מטעם אלהינו[24] ביד
נביאיו וחכמיו אות לברית מרחש[ן]ן וכסלו
חסירים והחודש הראשון ביום אחד[25] וידבר
סרה על אלהינו ולא ענו העם[26] אותו דבר :
וכפרץ הדבר[27] והגה כל ישראל בכל הארצות
לא־כן חשבו כי שמו את החדשים שלמים
על־כן ניסן בשלישי בא : ובמשפט[28]
ובחוקה[29] שתום[30] כן כל בני ישראל אשר

19 Cf. Ex. 32:25.

20 See notes on BCC2, fol. 1r:1 (p. 178), Chapter 3 (pp. 37–38), and Chapter 4 (p. 51).

21 As the pointing confirms, the letter *waw* is superfluous; it is absent in BCC2. The letters *waw-taw* at the end of this word may belong in fact to the end of שלש מאות, two words that the scribe (here and in BCC2) has omitted at this point. The cantillation mark assumes the omission of these words, which confirms that the cantillation in this manuscript is not the same as in the original composition.

22 The last vowel is *segol* (*pace* Fleischer, who gives the expected *tsere*). The word is fully pointed for disambiguation.

23 Dot instead of colon.

24 There is possibly a *telisha* sign at the end of the word. The exceedingly emphatic cantillation of this verse, as well as the anomalous placement of the word לאמר at the beginning of the verse, are well matched to the contents of the text and highlight ben Meir's announcement.

25 The cantillation in this line is counter-intuitive, perhaps again for the purpose of emphasis. The cantillation mark on אחד could be read instead as the *shewa* of וכסלו on the line above, but this is unlikely.

26 There is a dot under and to the left of the *ayin* (after the cantillation mark), which I cannot make sense of.

27 2 Chron. 31:5, where it is pointed וכפרץ.

28 Space filler at the end of the line.

29 The cantillation mark *zaqef qatan* is expected at the end of this word; faint traces of it may be visible.

30 So in BCC2, but there are sufficient traces of these letters here too (in particular, the

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במזרח ואשר במערב ואשר בצפון ובאיי
הים : כי עד שש מאות ותשעים וחמשה
חלקי[שעה אח]רונה[31] בלילה[32] הרביעי חוקה[33]
[ ] ומשם והלאה יהיו מל[אין[34] [ ]
[תש]ע מאות [ו]שלשים ושנים[: ה]גה
[ ][.....]ים לתבונותיהם[35] אשר

BCC1 folio 2 recto
[T-S 8K4 recto]

ת[ר]צה [שעה ורבע גם] שעה וקז[36] תחת [ת]קפט :
לבעבור סבב [את פ]ני הדבר להוסיף על כל
גבול אמרת[37] חלק[ים] לאמר לא עברו שלש
אלה על גבולותה : לא ירא אלהים לדבי[38]
על נביאיו שקר וכ[ז]ב [ול]א חמל על צעירי
הצאן פן ישגו [.....][39] אשר בדאם לו : ולא
פנה בלתי אל עצתו ומזמתו להחטיא עם
ולהכשיל רבים לפרוץ גדירות[40] להסיע
[.]בנים ולבקע את עציו : ויחרף עוד את
הברורים בתהפוכותיו וישימם בוערים[41]
בדרך[42] כל אויל ואמר לכל סכל הוא : ויתר
דברי ספריו וכל אשר עשה ודברי המליצים

---

bottom left foot of the *taw*). Fleischer reads שָׂרִים, a difficult word which does not make sense (Fleischer translates it as 'saw' or 'practised'), and which ignores the vocalization of the *waw* (which he reads as *yod*) in the manuscript.

31 The text in brackets is reconstructed on the basis of BCC2, but there are traces of these letters here too.

32 The *bet* should be pointed *pataḥ*, as in BCC2.

33 Word omitted by Fleischer.

34 As in BCC2. Fleischer reads שלמין, but this is unlikely (particularly at the first letter).

35 Fleischer reads incorrectly: לתכונותיהם.

36 An error for קֹנֵ, as in BCC2. The last letter is unlikely to be a final *nun*, as it does not extend below the bottom line, and it has a short, flat head characteristic of the *zayin*, even though it has some similarity to the final *nun* of זכרון below, fol. 2v:9.

37 The pointing of *resh* with *pataḥ* is intriguing; one would expect *shewa*.

38 Apparently an error for לדבר, unless the ink has faded completely.

39 According to BCC2 this should be בשעריו, but the traces of ink to do not support this.

40 *Sic*; the first two letters should be pointed *shewa* and *tsere* (the latter as in BCC2).

41 The cantillation mark (*pashta*) is not actually written, but it is implicit; it might in fact be represented by the small serif on the final *mem*'s extended upper bar (leftwards and upwards).

42 Schechter reads כדרך.

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המדברים אלֵיו לַהשיבֹו מִדעתָּו[43] הִנֵּם
כתוּבִים על־ספר דברי הימִים לרֹאשֵׁי[44]
הישיבות : ואף כל[45] חָרֵד[46] [מ]ן [הָ]עֵדָה הֵם[47]
נמצאִים : [ו]הִי כִקרוֹאֹ חכמִי דָת את
איגרותיו וַיִקרעוּ אֶת בגדיהֶם וירזחו במספֵּד[48]
על עַנֵּי הצאן אשר ביד אַכְזָרי נָפְלוּ לָמוֹ

BCC1 folio 2 verso
[T-S 8K4 verso]

וּדְמָעוֹת לֶרֹוֹב נִיגְרָה[עינם על ק]ודֶשׁ מִח[ו]לֶל :
ויחדלו־עוד מֵעֲנוֹת א[ותו כ]י הֵבִינוּ להֹם כי
בְּזָדוֹן ובעָקבֵּה[49] כל [מע]שֵׂיו : וַינִיחוּ[50] אותו
לִיום נָקם ועברָה הַשָּׁמור לכל מַרְחָק[51] ולֹא
הִתְעַשְּׂתוּ לָקַחת אגרוֹת מאֵת הֵמֶלך[52] האָרץ
לַהסירו : אַךְ | דּבָר לְהַוְעֵץ על המבינִים מָה
לעשׂות לארבַּעת שעריו אשר בָּדָּה מלבֹו

43 Schechter reads מרעתו. The pointing of the *mem* is probably *ḥiriq*, as would be expected, with a single dot exactly below the centre of the letter. There is a second dot to the right of it, which may give it the semblance of a *tsere*, but it is smaller and probably just a smudge (just like the dot above the centre of the *ayin*, or in the preceding word, below the *beit*, which cannot be vowels or cantillation marks).

44 Space filler at the end of the line. The *yod* is exceptionally large, and could be read alternatively as part of a *heh*. If it is a *heh*, this would be the beginning of the next word on the next line (הישיבות), which the scribe began writing on this line but he then changed his mind and inserted a space filler; however, the last word of this line should then read לראש (singular), which would not make much sense as each *yeshivah* had its own head. The reading of *yod* is therefore preferable.

45 Schechter reads בידי, which is clearly not in the manuscript; this reading is probably under the influence of ENA 2555.1 (Adler and Broydé 1900), which seems generally to have influenced his reading of T-S 8K4.

46 *Sic*; the vocalization of the *resh* should be *tsere*, as in BCC3.

47 So Schechter, although the first letter looks more like *aleph*.

48 Cf. Jer. 16:5. The last word is superscripted because of lack of space. This whole line is very faded (especially איגרותיו and וירזחו), but nearly all the letters are at least partially visible, and thus possible to restore on the basis of T-S 10K4.

49 The first *beit* appears to be vocalized *tsere*, instead of *shewa*.

50 The *pataḥ* of the *yod* is written above the line, because the second *lamed* of לכל on the next line extends up into this line below the *yod*. This demonstrates that the pointing was executed at a second stage of writing.

51 Probably a mistake for מדיח (as in T-S 10K4), influenced by וירזחו a few lines above. Fully pointed, because the word is unusual.

52 The vocalization should be *pataḥ*—*segol*; perhaps this is actually the reading.

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ויאמרו לאמֹר לְא נוּכַל לְבָעֵר[53] את כל כתבֵיו
מן החוּץ והחֵדר : אֶבֶל נכתובֹ סֵפר זכרֹון
לדורותֵינו אחֵרינו בל יָקומו מקצותָם
וְיָהְבְּלוּ בַּדברֹיו ובל יֵתָע בנתיבותָיו עַם
נִבְרֵא בַּהַבַּיְנָם למה זהֹ ועל־מה זֶה עָשה כֵּן
ויעשו כָּזֹאת כי טוֹב נוֹעֲצו : בעשרֵים
באלול נקראו ספרֹיו הוא יום שֵינֵ[י] לִימֵי[54]
המע[שֶׂ]ה[55] וב[חדש] השביעֵי[56] בע[שרים וש]בָּע[57] ושלֹשׁ[י][58]
נִכתַּב [.....]דנו[59] הנשֵיא ויכתבו את
[ ] לדורו[ ]
[ ]ו אל כל המקומות אשר [....]שֶׁאי
שערֵי הממאֵיר[60] אשר בְּדַאֶם [ ]

53 The *bet* should be vocalized *pataḥ*, as in BCC3.

54 Space filler at the end of the line.

55 So Schechter; but of the [שֶׂ], only the *segol* is legible. Schechter reads nothing of the rest of the line. Bornstein conjectures: שנת מאתים שלשים ושלש, and then, from the end of the next line: ויכתבו את כל דברי האגרת הזאת וישלחו ספרים אל כל המקומות אשר הגיעו שמה; but the traces of letters that are discernible in these lines do not support his conjectures.

56 Not read by Schechter, but enough of the letters survive for this reading to be reasonably secure.

57 Although the traces of ink before the *bet* do not look readily like a *shin*, the options are limited, because the *bet* is pointed with *pataḥ* and cantillated; in context, only בָּע[וש] appears to be possible. Another option might be בָּע[ואר], but this is much less likely in relation to the traces of ink before the *bet*, and there is probably not enough space for an additional letter; moreover, this reading would be calendrically problematic, as 24 Tishri was not a Tuesday (whereas 27 Tishri was).

58 There is no trace of the *yod*, but the position of the cantillation mark necessitates an extra letter at the end of the word. It is possible that the scribe deliberately omitted the *yod*, because it was the end of the line and the word needed to be abbreviated. The word is written slightly above the line, another indication of the scribe's awareness that space was getting short. Although Schechter did not read this word, by some remarkable coincidence Bornstein conjectured it, without seeing the manuscript.

59 In these last lines, many of the characters have left traces which could be decipherable. For the time being, this is the best reading I have been able to achieve.

60 As conjectured by Bornstein, and as in fact legible in the manuscript (although Bornstein did not see it). Schechter reads incorrectly איר[בן מ]. At the end of the line, Bornstein conjectures: בדא מלבו, ונחתם (?), in order to create a textual join with T-S 8K5. However, the traces of letters at the end of the line do not support the word ונחתם, and more importantly, the texts cannot be joined because they belong to different manuscripts (see further above, page 105).

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8.2 BCC2

This manuscript, of which four folios are extant, is the most extensive text witness of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. This is partly because more folios of it have survived than of the other manuscripts (where only one or two folios are preserved). It is also because its folios contain an exceptionally large amount of text.

The four folios are, in order, ENA 2555.1, T-S 10K3 (one side only), T-S NS 175.57 (one side only), and ENA 2556.1. Each of these folios are discontinuous with one another, but they certainly belong to the same manuscript. That they follow each other in this sequence can be demonstrated from textual parallels in other manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (see introduction to the Book of the Calendar Controversy). On this basis, I have number these folios in sequence, from 1 to 4.

Physical Description

Paper, brown ink. Average dimensions: 21 cm × 17 cm (text: 19.5 cm × 15 cm); deviations from this are never more than 0.5 cm. Folio 3 (T-S NS 175.57) is fragmentary; it measures 17.5 cm × 12.5 cm at its widest (text 16.5 cm × 12 cm).

The number of lines per page ranges from 29 to 34 (folio 3: 28 lines), which is exceptionally large. The average total height of lines (including text and line space) is 6.1 mm, which is exceptionally low.[61] Margins are narrow: on average 10 mm right (but folio 3 has 2–5 mm), 8 mm left, 0–12 mm top, and 6–12 mm bottom. Left margins are not justified, although attempts are made in various ways to fill the gaps at the ends of lines, notably through word stacking[62] (see further below).

Good condition, except for two dent-shaped tears at the top of folio 1, and a large triangular tear at the top of folio 2. Only folio 3 (T-S NS 175.57) is significantly damaged; it is missing about three lines of text along the top, and a substantial edge along the left of the written side of the folio. This folio was partially restored for us by the conservators of the Cambridge University Library in August 2015 (see Plates).

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61 I have calculated this by dividing the total height of text by the number of lines, for every individual folio. The height of line, and within it the ratio of text to line space, vary in the manuscript according to the hand, as will be explained below. The average total height of lines, similarly calculated, of the other manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy ranges from 7.4 mm to 9.1 mm (the latter, BCC3); this brings out the exceptionality of this present manuscript.

62 Word stacking is a scribal device for filling empty spaces at the ends of lines, that becomes

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The manuscript can be dated palaeographically to around the end of the eleventh century.[63]

Script, Hands, and the Production of the Book

The script is Babylonian documentary, but it is not consistent: at least two scribes were involved in the production of this manuscript, and perhaps as many as four.

Changes of hands are both conspicuous and random. The first such change occurs in the middle of folio 1 recto (ENA 2555.1 verso), near the end of line 20, in the middle of a sentence. At this point, the hand switches suddenly from a rounded, inflated script to a square (or 'semi-square'), compact script. This second hand has smaller letters, wider spaces between the lines and the words, relatively higher total line heights (average 6.5 mm), and less lines per page, all of which noticeably reduce the density of the text. It also adopts the practice of filling (or attempting to fill) the gap at the end of a line by extending the horizontal strokes of the final letter (or of the penultimate letter, if the final letter has no horizontal stroke). This striking change of hand suggests that the manuscript was given over to another, somewhat more meticulous scribe, to continue the copying from this point.

By the time one gets to folio 2 (there is a gap between the folios, as explained below), the hand seems to have changed again: although the layout is similar to that of the second hand,[64] the shape of the letters is different. Folio 3 is again very different from the preceding folio. It is similar in layout and in script to the first hand (for example, with more lines per page, and without extending end-of-line letters), but more cursive and even more dense than it, with the lowest total height of lines in the entire manuscript (average 5.8 mm). The last folio appears to be in the same hand, although even that is not certain. To sum up:

Hand 1: fol. 1 (ENA 2555.1) recto ll. 1–20
Hand 2: fol. 1 (ENA 2555.1) recto l. 20–verso end
Hand 3 (= hand 2?): fol. 2 (T-S 10K3)
Hand 4 (= hand 1?): fol. 3 (T-S NS 175.57)—fol. 4 (ENA 2556.1)

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common in Hebrew manuscripts in Egypt in the latter part of the eleventh century, and that occurs throughout the folios of this manuscript. See Rustow 2014.

63 Based on the advice of Judith Schlanger and Amir Ashur.

64 In terms of word spacing, line spacing, height of lines, and number of lines per page; and here also, end-of-line letters are frequently extended. Although folio 2 has 31 lines of text, whereas folio 1 (verso) has only 29, folio 2 is higher (by about 5 mm) than folio 1, and its top margin is more narrow than folio 1 verso (by about 6 mm), which together create space for two extra lines.

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The variety of hands is quite unusual, but it does not put in question the unity of the manuscript. The change of hands in the middle of the first folio is tangible evidence that more than one scribe produced this manuscript; further changes of hands cannot be invoked, therefore, as a challenge to the unity of the manuscript. There is enough in common between the folios to identify them as from the same manuscript: they share similar outer dimensions, margins, and in broad terms, line numbers; the script is consistently end eleventh-century Babylonian documentary (albeit in different hands), with scribal practices such as word stacking at the end of lines. These folios belong to the same literary composition (as can be demonstrated, in most cases, through textual parallels with other manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy); and there is no textual overlap between the folios. All this supports the conclusion that these four folios belong to the same manuscript.

The evident involvement of several scribes in the production of this single manuscript demands an explanation. It suggests, perhaps, a commercial enterprise in which a team of scribes was employed to produce books, and where the books being copied were passed around the team at the convenience of the scribes' individual work schedules. The objective of the enterprise was to produce books, presumably for sale, at low cost. It is clear, at least, that this manuscript was produced cheaply, and without much attention to its appearance. This is evident not only from the frequent change of hands (and hence the inconsistency of the writing style), but also from the narrow margins on all sides, the length of the lines, the generally low height of the lines, and the exceptionally high number of lines, which reflect a deliberate policy of cost reduction and maximization of use of space on the paper. The copying, besides, is hasty and prone to errors, which are frequently corrected on the page, often by the scribe himself writing over the erroneous letters (as indicated sometimes in my text edition). Moreover, this manuscript is devoid of cantillation marks—which characterize all other manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy—and it is only very sporadically vocalized; this is another reflection of the lower standard on which this manuscript was produced.

This manuscript was clearly not intended as a prestige object, nor as a text to be used for public, liturgical readings (being devoid, for example, of cantillation marks), nor as a reliable scribal or scholarly copy. Its hasty, somewhat sloppy production by a team of scribes suggests that it was intended as a cheap, 'budget' copy, for circulation among a broader, private readership. The social historical implications of this finding are considerable and discussed above, in Chapter 6 (pp. 107–109).

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Reconstructing the Manuscript

The manuscript as a whole, beyond its four extant folios, can be almost completely reconstructed on the basis of a combination of textual and codicological criteria. Textual evidence derives from comparison with other manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, whose textual coverage I have laid out in a synoptic table in Chapter 6 (p. 104). This synoptic table enables one to work out, for example, that the missing text between two of our folios, ENA 2555.1 and T-S 10K3, corresponds exactly to the amount of text that would cover two sides of one folio of this manuscript—thus there is one folio missing in between them. It also reveals that that T-S NS 175.57, although fragmentary (with about three lines of text missing at the top), must be immediately consecutive to T-S 10K3. The latter is further confirmed by codicological evidence, from traces of ink that appear on the verso of T-S 10K3 (as will be explained below). Further inferences are more hypothetical, but nevertheless plausible: thus, that at the beginning, BCC2 is missing exactly one side of a folio, based on the assumption that only one folio (much smaller) is missing at the beginning of BCC1; and at the end, that the gaps before and after ENA 2556.1 must be minimal, hence only one missing folio on each side of ENA 2556.1. All this leads to the following reconstruction of the original sequence of folios in BCC2:

1. one missing folio (verso only)
2. ENA 2555.1 (my 'folio 1')
3. one missing folio
4. T-S 10K3 ('folio 2')
5. T-S NS 175.57 ('folio 3')
6. one missing folio
7. ENA 2556.1 ('folio 4')
8. one missing folio

The most likely hypothesis is that the manuscript consisted originally of a single quire of four bi-folios, which contained the entire text of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. Its outer bi-folio (1 and 8) is lost; the outer sides of 1 and 8 may have been left blank (in lieu of a book cover), or alternatively served as title and *explicit* pages (respectively; the latter could also have been used for text). The next bi-folio (2 and 7) consisted of ENA 2555.1 and ENA 2556.1, two folios which, perhaps not coincidentally, both ended up in Elkan Nathan Adler's collection, now at JTS. The next bi-folio (3 and 6) is lost, but parallel sources indicate that it must have been written, as would be expected, on both sides. The inner bi-folio (4 and 5) consisted of T-S 10K3 and T-S NS 175.57.

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This reconstruction is plausible, but it needs further discussion. A significant feature of the manuscript, in this context, is that two of its folios, T-S 10K3 and T-S NS 175.57, are written only on one side. There are several ways of explaining this, which all have a direct bearing on the reconstruction of the manuscript.

The first explanation, perhaps the most obvious, is that the verso sides of these folios were left blank by the scribe because they were damaged by ink penetration from the recto side. This explanation holds true for T-S NS 175.57, whose centre and lower half of the verso is covered with the writing from the recto side, which has very clearly come through and which would have made it almost impossible for a scribe to write on this side of the folio. But this does not apply to T-S 10K3, whose verso is only faintly stained; it could easily have been written on both sides.

Moreover, on further examination of the evidence (and in particular, of T-S 10K3), this explanation cannot apply to T-S NS 175.57 either. The verso side of T-S 10K3 is marred by some ink penetration from its recto, around the top left corner: thus one reads (in mirror writing) the letter *shin* from the beginning of line 3 of the recto, and traces of בגלות (beginning of line 5) and בישע (beginning of line 6); see figure 1. Further traces can be found at the other end of these lines, in the top right corner of T-S 10K3 verso. However, all this only affects a small area of the folio. On the rest of the page, in its centre and lower half, the traces of ink are not due to penetration from the recto, but rather from ink rubbed off from the facing page. Yet, the writing that can be faintly discerned is not horizontally flipped (mirror writing), as would be expected of a rubbing from the facing page, but actually in the correct direction (right to left).[65] Although very faint, the writing on this part of T-S 10K3 verso can be recognized as the text of T-S NS 175.57, not only as its text but also as its writing and layout; in short, T-S 10K3 verso replicates, like a carbon copy, T-S NS 175.57 (see figures 2–3). This can only lead to the following reconstruction of the layout and order of writing of the centre part of the manuscript:

4. T-S 10K3 recto: writing
   T-S 10K3 verso: blank
5. T-S NS 175.57 recto: blank
   T-S NS 175.57 verso:[66] writing

65 I am grateful to Marina Rustow for pointing this out to me, which led me to the correct identification of the text on T-S 10K3 verso.

66 This side of the folio is correctly catalogued in the Cambridge University Library as 'verso' (as confirmed to me by Melonie Schmierer-Lee, email of 12 February 2018), even though normally the written side of a folio would be called 'recto' (and indeed, Brody 1998*a* calls it recto). The reason why the CUL conservators called it 'verso' is unknown—it might have been serendipity—but this designation is confirmed by the present analysis.

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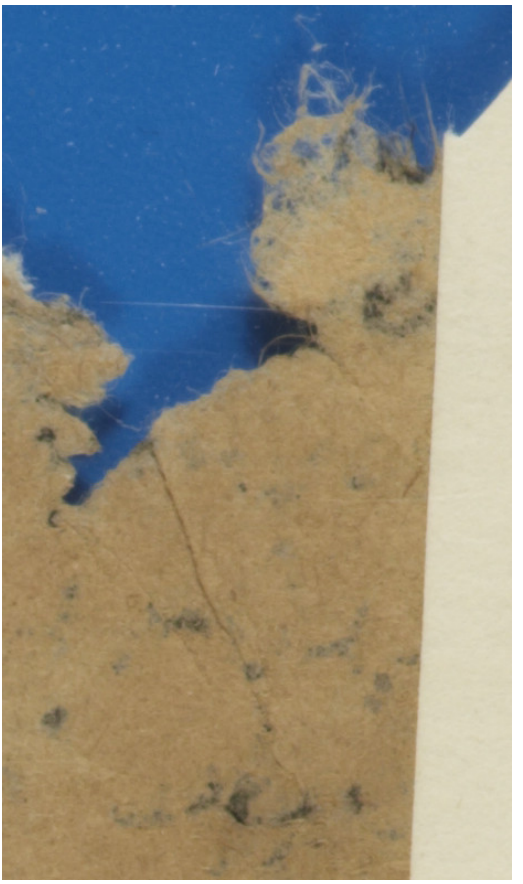
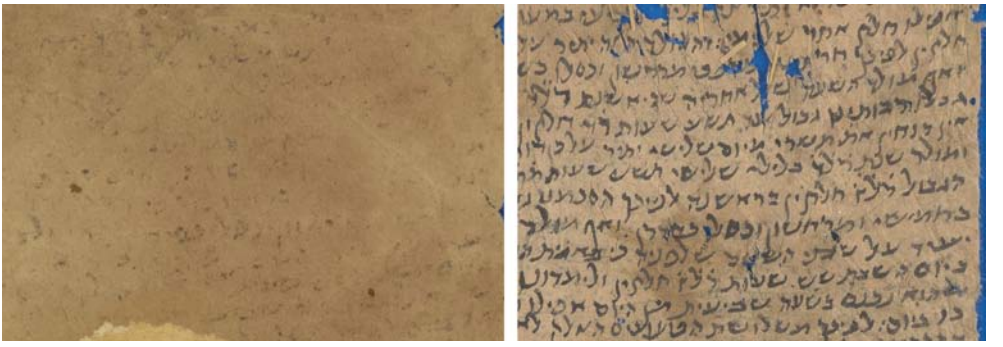


FIGURE 1
T-S 10K3 verso (BCC2 fol. 2), top left corner, horizontally flipped
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FIGURES 2–3 Details from the centre of T-S 10K3 verso and T-S NS 175.57 verso (BCC2 fols. 2–3), on the left and right respectively; the former appears as a 'carbon copy' of the latter (note, in particular, וכסלו in the middle of line 8)
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The ink of T-S NS 175.57 verso penetrated through to its recto, where the writing can be seen very clearly, horizontally flipped; and from there, the ink rubbed off unto the facing page, T-S 10K3 verso, where the writing is considerably fainter, but back in the right direction.

Given this reconstruction, whereby the blank side of T-S NS 175.57 preceded its written side in the quire, it can no longer be argued that the scribe left this side blank because of ink penetration—before the written side had been written. It seems unlikely, indeed, that the scribe predicted that this would happen (on the basis, perhaps, of the thickness of the paper), and then decided to write on the verso rather than on the recto of this folio. Thus although T-S NS 175.57 is heavily affected by ink penetration, this is not the reason why its blank side was left blank. Likewise, the verso of T-S 10K3 was only stained by ink after T-S NS 175.57 had been written; ink staining cannot explain, therefore, why its blank side was left blank by the scribe. Another explanation must be sought as to why these folios were only written on one side.

Another possible explanation, suggested to me by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, is that the manuscript was divided into two separate, unbound fascicles (as opposed to consisting of a four-bifolio quire as described above), with folio T-S 10K3 at the end of the first and T-S NS 175.57 at the beginning of the second. The outer sides of these fascicles (i.e. verso of T-S 10K3 and recto of T-S NS 175.57) would have been left blank, in lieu of a cover or book binding.[67]

The division of works into unbound fascicles is well attested in the medieval Islamic world. This practice enabled book owners, for example, to lend out individual fascicles without having to part with the whole book.[68] In Arabic manuscripts, the unbound fascicle, known as *juz'*, could divide a book at any point, even in the middle of a chapter, without regard to the logical division of the text—just as between T-S 10K3 and T-S NS 175.57. But in many respects, the fascicles suggested for our manuscript would not have conformed to the standard features of the *juz'*. In a *juz'*, indeed, the outer, front page is not left blank (like the recto of T-S NS 175.57), but would normally consist of a title page, with name of author, title of work, and fascicle number in the series; the text

67 On this hypothesis, the other outer sides of the fascicles, recto of missing folio 1 and verso of missing folio 8, would have been similarly left blank. This reduces the textual lacuna at the beginning and end of the extant manuscript to only one side of a folio at each end; but in textual terms, this reduced lacuna is not inconceivable (less likely, in textual terms, would be additional missing folios at the beginning and end).

68 On the Arabic fascicle or *juz'*, see Humbert (1997), also Hirschler (2012) 128. I am grateful to Judith Schlanger for the references and suggestion.

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would then start on the verso, with the *basmala* invocation. The outer back page, similarly, would not be blank (like the verso of T-S 10K3), but would contain a colophon and a preview of what is coming in the next fascicle. Moreover, the normal length of a *juz'* is twenty folios, and sometimes as much as sixty;[69] whereas if our manuscript was divided into fascicles, each fascicle could not have counted more than four folios, which seems far too short. The brevity of our manuscript—in my estimate, eight folios in total—does not seem to justify its break-up into fascicles (unless the manuscript contained other works besides the Book of the Calendar Controversy, but there is no evidence to support this).

It is true that in the context of a Hebrew manuscript, we should not necessarily expect the standard features of the Arabic *juz'* to have applied. The Cairo Genizah book lists edited by Allony (2006) suggest that relatively short works could also be split into fascicles, such as the book of Psalms, and compendia of *Haftarot* or of *Seliḥot*.[70] All these works are still much longer than the Book of the Calendar Controversy; but one book list includes fascicles of the Mishnaic tractate *Avot*,[71] which is shorter than the Book of the Calendar Controversy. It could be argued, however, that all these works consist of collections of psalms, biblical pericopes, prayers, ethical maxims, etc., which could easily be divided into fascicles without affecting their literary integrity; whereas in contrast, the Book of the Calendar Controversy constitutes a single, integral whole which was meant to be read entirely, and which in view of its relative brevity, was less likely to be split.

The main difficulty with this explanation is that the traces of ink on the verso of T-S 10K3 demonstrate, in fact, that this folio must have been bound together with T-S NS 175.57, as it is from there that the ink rubbed unto it (as explained above). They were therefore not the end and beginning of separate fascicles. To

69 For example, in ms Milan Ambr. X 56 sup., a late tenth or early eleventh-century manuscript of the *Kitāb* of Sibawayhi written in Kairouan and divided into fascicles, which Humbert (1997) uses as one of her paradigms for her overview of the *juz'*. The break between the first two fascicles (of 60 pages each) is in the middle of chapter 408, a chapter which only begins on the last page of the first fascicle.

70 For example, JTS ENA 1290 fol. 3, recto l. 22 and verso l. 1 (Allony 2006: 216–217).

71 T-S K3.32, line 18 (Allony 2006: 252), but this example is perhaps exceptional. This same, mid twelfth-century book list also includes, as works divided into fascicles, Saadya's commentary on the Thirteen Attributes (ll. 41–43—in two fascicles), a commentary on tractate *Yevamot* (ll. 52–53), a book of *Seliḥot* (l. 65), and (Hayye Gaon's) *Sefer ha-Meqaḥ*—all of which, however, were probably much longer. The term used for 'fascicle' in these Judeo-Arabic book lists is בראסה; it is perhaps significant that the term *juz'* is not used, if indeed Jewish fascicles tended generally to be shorter than the Islamic *juz'*.

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sustain such an explanation, it would have to be argued that the scribe originally wrote on two separate fascicles, but then very soon after writing—perhaps, while the ink of T-S NS 175.57 verso was still fresh—he bound the two fascicles together. This scenario is perhaps unlikely.

The most plausible explanation, in my view, for these two folios being written only on one side is simply that the scribe skipped a page, by mistake, when copying out his manuscript. At the mid-point of the four-bifolio quire, he turned two pages instead of one, and went from T-S 10K3 recto to T-S NS 175.57 verso, leaving the inner side of the central bifolio blank. Although this implies a gross error on the part of the scribe, on balance it is less implausible than the explanations I have presented above. It finds some support from the fact that the hand writing changes from T-S 10K3 to T-S NS 175.57, which, as explained above, suggests a change of scribe. As the manuscript was handed over to another scribe, it is perhaps more understandable that the new scribe opened the booklet and continued the copying on the wrong page.

On this basis, the hypothesis that the manuscript consisted of a single quire of four bi-folios can be reinstated.

Vocalization

Of all the manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, BCC2 is unique in not being cantillated. It also stands out in being very sporadically vocalized, with some stretches of text completely unvocalized (fol. 1r:21–1v:5 and fol. 4r:12–4v:2; these passages, it should be noted, are written in different hands). This reinforces the characterization of this manuscript as cheaply produced, as has been argued above.

Another unique feature of this manuscript is that it employs Babylonian vocalization, together with the Tiberian one; both systems can often be used in the same word,[72] and sometimes can even double up on the same letter.[73] The choice of pointing, Babylonian or Tiberian, seems random and does not appear to reflect any change of context or register.

In most cases, vocalization is only used in this manuscript for difficult words, disambiguation, or for assisting the reading (typically if letters are misshaped or run into each other).[74] In the case of numbers, it serves to indicate how

72 E.g. fol. 1v:6: ויתמוֹרטוֹן (the first sign is a Babylonian *ḥolam*, not a cantillation mark).

73 E.g. fol. 1v:14, 17.

74 Difficult: e.g. fol. 1r:6: שתום. Ambiguous: e.g. fol. 1r:2: ויעבר. Misshaped: e.g. fol. 4r:11: נולד, a term which is otherwise neither ambiguous nor difficult (it appears frequently in this text).

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the numbers should be orally recited and pronounced.[75] The latter function is important, in that it reminds us that even in the context of private use, a text such as this was expected to be orally read.[76] In a few cases, numbers are also vocalized in a way to make them look like meaningful words, which could serve mnemonic purposes, oral recitation purposes, and more importantly, in this context, polemical purposes.[77]

Pointing appears to be generally in the same hand as the main text. In some places, however, there is evidence, in addition, of secondary pointing, especially in folio 3; although these vowels are often very faint and their reading is debatable, I have adopted a maximalist approach, transcribing all such vowels so long as they are grammatically correct and expected. Numbers can be indicated with dots above the letters, or in rare cases, with a large prime on the last letter.

Bibliography

JTS ENA 2555.1

Adler and Broydé (1900). First edition, with a French translation.
Epstein (1901) 191–197. Re-edition with translation, based entirely on Adler and Broydé.
Bornstein (1904) 62–65. His text is based on earlier editions, but with a few corrections of his own that sometimes remarkably agree with the manuscript or with the parallel text of BCC1 (T-S NS 194.92, which was not yet published in Bornstein's time): verso l. 3, אשון]והח[ודש הר (instead of Adler and Broydé: וה]יו ושין]ע[); l. 16, ויעשו כן (instead of Adler and Broydé: ויעשום).

T-S 10K3

S. Schechter (1901–1902) 40 and 47–48 (Text 11).
Bornstein (1904) 58–60. Based on Schechter.
Sacha Stern made the join on 24 July 2012.

T-S NS 175.57

Unpublished.
Marina Rustow and Sacha Stern discovered it in February 2015, but subsequently found that it had already been discovered and joined to the Book of the Calendar Controversy (although not specifically to BCC2) by the *Ma'agarim*

75 E.g. fol. 1v:4.
76 On the interplay between written text and oral reading in medieval Islamic society, see Hirschler (2012: 11–22).
77 Fol. 1v:20.

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project of the Israel Academy of Language (http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/). It was joined to BCC2 by Sacha Stern on 7 July 2015.

JTS ENA 2556.1

Schechter (1901–1902) 498–500. Text only; transcription prone to error.
Bornstein (1904) 99–102. Based entirely on Schechter, but corrects, through judicious conjecture, some of Schechter's obvious errors.
Adler (1914) 44–49. New edition (but still not free of errors), with French translation. Adler seems unaware of, or has forgotten, Schechter's publication of 1902. He made the join with ENA 2555.1.

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BCC2 folio 1 recto
[ENA 2555.1 verso]

וישלח[78] את בנו בחדש [הש]ביעי[79] לשנת ח[משים][80] ו֯שלוש ויבא ירושלם :
ויעבֵר קול ביום הק[הל][81] לאמר מטע[.....]נו ביד נביאיו וחכמיו אות
לברית מרחשון וכסלֵו חסֵרים והח[ודש הר]אשון ביום אחד וידבר סרה
על אלהינו ולא ענו העם אותו דבר [....]ן הדבר והנה כל ישראל בכל
הארצות לא כֵן חִשבו כִי שמו א[ת הח]דשים שלמ[ים] על כן לניסן בשלישי
בא : וכַמשפט וכַחקה שֹתוֹם[82] כן כל בני ישראל אשר בַמזרח ואשר בַמערב
ואשר בְצָפון[83] ובאיי הים : כי עד שש מאות ותשעים וחמשה חֲלָקי שעה
אחרונה בַלילה הרביעי יהיו חסרים ומשם וָהָלאה יהיו מלאים ובַשנה
ההיא והד[84] תשע מאות ושלשים ושנַים[85] : הנה כתובה בחקת המועדים
לתבונותיהם[86] עֹדֹ[87] אשר הורישוֹנוֹ אבותינו בפינו[88] מאז : ויהי כאשר שמע
נשיאינ[ו] וראשי הישיבות והאלופים וכל הברורים וכל מֵבִין עם תלמיד[89]

78 As is known from BCC1, this marks the beginning of the narrative of the controversy, after an introductory section describing the political rise of ben Meir in the Palestinian leadership. The scribe's decision, in BCC2, to begin the controversy's narrative on a fresh page (unlike, in contrast, BCC1), shows some consideration for the meaning of the text, in spite of this manuscript being, as argued above, a 'cheap' copy.

79 Adler and Broydé read הרביעי, which led to considerable debate among subsequent scholars about the date of ben Meir's announcement; but in actual fact, this reading was merely a conjecture, as the manuscript is torn at the first two letters. A small mark of ink before the letter ב suggests that the word should be restored as השביעי (as in BCC1) rather than Adler and Broydé's conjectured הרביע. Bornstein (1922*b*: 238 and n. 2) brilliantly conjectured, without seeing the manuscript, that the correct reading should be השביעי. See further Chapter 3 (pp. 37–38) and Chapter 4 (p. 51).

80 Adler and Broydé read [תים]מא, and translate 'l'année 1233' (SE); but this interpretation implies the additional word ושלושים, for which there is no space in the lacuna.

81 Adler and Broydé read [ריאה]הק, but the traces of ink do not support this, and there is not enough space for these letters. Bornstein (1922*b*: 238) proposes instead [בוץ]הק, but in a footnote there suggests as another possibility יום הק[הל]. My reading, יום הק[הל], follows BCC1 and is possible here too.

82 Adler and Broydé misread שמום.

83 *Sic*, instead of the *pataḥ* vowel for the *beit*.

84 This makes no sense, and is possibly a scribal error. Adler and Broydé read incorrectly והי, and on this basis translate 'en cette année-là, qui était l'année 932', which is plainly wrong (932 was the number of parts of the molad of Tishri in 921 CE). Bornstein conjectures יהיו, but this is far removed from the correct manuscript reading.

85 In BCC1 it is pointed more correctly with *qamats*, as a pausal.

86 Adler and Broydé read לתכונותיהם.

87 For על דרך.

88 Adler and Broydé read incorrectly בנינו.

89 1Chron. 25:8.

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היושבים בבבל את[90] הרעה הזאת אשר עשה וַיֶּחֱרדו חרדה גדולה ויחר
להם כי לא נ[ה]יתה כֵּן ולא נראָתה[91] : מיום עלות בנֵי ישראל מארץ מצרים[92]
למִדי[93] היותם באדמת הקדש ואחרֵי פּוּטָם[94] לא נשתַנו זמניהם : וַיַּעַצו
החכמים לכתב אגרות ונִשלח[95] ספרים אליו הלא להודיעו את דרך החוק
כי אמרו אולי מִשגה הוא[96] : ויעשו[97] כן וישלחו אליו ספרים שנִיים ולא אבה
לשמַע[98] ויוסיפו עוד וישלחו ספרים שלישים ולא אבה לשמוע ובכל זאת
הִשֵּׁב ישיבם נמרצות : על כן הִצמיתו אתו באולת חטאת[99] על לכתו
שובָב משובת נצח[100] וַיחזיק בתַרמיתו וימאֵן לשוב[101] : אך אל יתר העם שלחו[102]
אגרות להזהירם למען לא יתעו בדברי[103] המִמאיר[104] הירא את לשונו לא מִרֹּהו[105]
ואשר אין עליו עֹל סבלו ויבן ויצליח : וזה פתשגן הכתב[106] אשר שלחו החכמים
אליו ממקום[107] הועדם ה בבל[108] שלום לראש החבורה ולבניך לאחיך ולכל נלוך : לא
האמננו לשמע הבא אלינו כי בנך שם חג שלא כדת וסמוך לבינו[109] כי אם נעשה
הדבר בשגגה הוא : והדבר נכון מאוד ולא נפלא הוא מן התלמידים כי עבר
העת את הגבול בשבעה חלקים ושלשים ומאתים : וגם לתשובת השנה

90 The *aleph* is written over another letter, maybe *resh*.
91 The pointing of the *aleph* should be *ḥataf pataḥ*.
92 The whole line paraphrases Jud. 19:30; the colon in the middle of it is therefore most likely an error.
93 Combination of Tiberian and Babylonian pointing.
94 Babylonian *qamats* unclear.
95 Esth. 3:13. The *ḥiriq* dot is displaced downwards, but it cannot be interpreted in any other way.
96 Gen. 43:12.
97 Faint dot above the first *waw*, suggesting a Babylonian *ḥiriq* (whereas a *pataḥ* is expected).
98 On the *mem*, Babylonian *ḥolam* (not a cantillation mark). There is an unaccounted back slash at the end of the word, above the line; it may just be a stray pen mark.
99 Prov. 24:9. Adler and Broydé read כי זולת חטאת, which does not make sense and does not fit the source verse. The *aleph* of אולת (in H-form, as is common in this manuscript) is missing its middle bar.
100 Cf. Prov. 24:9, Is. 57:17 and Jer. 8:5.
101 Cf. Jer. 8:5.
102 This last word is faint, and may have been added later by the same scribe.
103 The *tsere* should be under the *resh*.
104 Possibly a Tiberian *ḥiriq* under the second *mem*; it should be under the *aleph*.
105 The *Maʾagarim* website (http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx, accessed 23/01/18) is uncertain whether this is a *qal* or *puʿal*. There is a change of hand from לא מרהו onwards (see introduction above).
106 Esther 3:14, 8:13.
107 Final *mem* written over a non-final *mem*.
108 The second *bet* overwrites another character, but this is not the only error here: ה בבל is probably an error for בבבל.
109 Cf. Ps. 112:8.

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כן יעבר את המועד ממאתים וארבעה מן העשירית בלילה השלישית[110] :
וכן לשנה השלישית יעב[ר] את המועד כי פנה יומם מחצי השבת:
אל ירע בעי֗נ֗ך לאמר טעית[י] ואף כי תאמר שגה בניך[111] שא עיניך למרום[112]
אל קדש[ע]֗נ{ו}֗ו וחוס על[113] ס[בי]ביך לבל יהיו קרחה מקרב כל ישראל : וישיבם
האמת אתי וכדת הכרזתי לא לכם המרות את פי ולסור מדברי ימין
ושמאל : ויחפש ע[ל]ילות לחפות על טעותו לאמר כי הגבול בשבת
עד שש מאות וארבעים ואחד מן השביעית ביום ופחתת היזאת[114] ארבע
מאות וארבעה :[115]

BCC2 folio 1 verso
[ENA 2555.1 recto]

ויכתבו אליו בספר השיני וג[ם בשלי]שי[116] נבחרה לנו מ[ש]פט ישת ידו עלינו[117] דברי
הקדמנים אשר שמו בפינו [ארבעה] שערים לא יוסיף כל חק על מחצית
היום : חמש אתות כתובת ה[ ]נה למלאות כל אות שָׁעָה תמימה
וזה מספרם רֹד וּתֹח ותצָא[118] תֹר[צֹה] ותקפָּטֹ[119] : אל תלך לנוע על העצים
אשר לא יועילו רבו לבית ישראל משך הגלות ארוך השבי וידל כבודם
ויתמוֹרָטוֹן : כ[י] מי זה דמה לחש[120] חק בעולו תוחלתו נכזבה[121] או מי נלחם
את יי֗י מורא ישראל ופחד אבתינו וינצחהו : פנה אל אחריתיך ואַל[122]

110 The *taw* overwrites another character.
111 The letter *yod* appears superfluous.
112 *Lamed* overwrites, perhaps, a *mem*.
113 The *ayin* overwrites another character.
114 The letter *yod* appears superfluous. Adler and Broydé read ופחתה היוצאת, but this is incorrect.
115 The scribe has added these words below the line in order to finish the sentence at the end of the page.
116 Adler and Broydé's conjecture.
117 Cf. Job 9:33.
118 The vowel is somewhat random; it indicates, at least, that this word is not the verb וַתֵּצֵא ('and you/she went out'), but rather the number 491. The purpose of the vowel is not merely to identify the word as a number (which would normally be signified by placing dots or primes above the letters—as has been done with the other numbers on this same line), but to instruct the reader on how this number should be orally recited. Further in this manuscript, numbers are similarly vocalized for the same purpose. The scribe is opposed, at least in this context, to turning these numbers into meaningful (or quasi-meaningful) words, which is common elsewhere as a mnemonic device. (Same vocalization below, fol. 1v:21).
119 Here again, the vowel gives guidance on how the number should be orally recited, even though in this case, there is no possibility of confusing the number with a real Hebrew word.
120 Adler and Broydé read לחוק, but this is not in the manuscript.
121 Job 41:1.
122 Pointed with a *pataḥ*, to differentiate it from אֶל that precedes and follows.

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אל יומיך [[כי]] ˊאםˋ עתה יבוש ולא תכלם עד עולמים : [[כ]][123] ויהי כי ארכו הימים
בלכת וָבֹא הספרים אל המחטיא והוא יַדַּבֵּק דברי רוח בלי דעת
ויגנב מדברהם ויסבֵּם אליו : ויפנו המבינים אשר בישיבות אל קהילות
ישראל הקרבים אליהם והרחקים ויזהירו אתהם את [[הקמם]][124] החק[י]ם
ואת התורת ויאַמצו את ידם במועדי אֵל : כי יגורו פן ישמעו
שמע המְמאֵיר[125] ויתעו בו על כן זרו כתביהם בכל פאת{אֹ}י[126] הארץ:
ותהי מבוכה וחרדה על כל אלה בעִיר וָעִיר[127] ומדינה אשר
השיג שמעו : ויתנו את ידם עוד לשלום בינימו לבלתי נדָח נדַח[128]
אין פרץ ויצאת ויאספו ויעשו כן : אחר הדבר הזה לא שב המחשיך
מדרכו הרעה וישב ויחַבר דברים לא כֵן באחרית אגרותיו הֵקַל[129]
עֹזֹנו הראשון והאחַרון[130] הכביד לו : ויעש ארבעה שערים אשר לא[131]
היו בין ישראל לא צֹום אלהינו ולא דברום נביאיו ולא עלו על לב
חכמיו : החליף את רֹדֵּ[132] תְּתַּמֹּהּ[133] ותחת תִּרְצָהּ שעה ורֹנֵן גם שעה
וֹקֹז תחת תִּקְפָּטּ : לבעבור סבב את פני הדבר להוסיף על כל גבול
אֲמִרֹתֹ חלקים לאמר לא עברו שלש אלה גבולותיהן : לא יָרֵא
אלהים לדבר על נביאיו שקר וכזב ולא חמל על צעירי הצאן

123 Marked for deletion with a dot above, and overwritten with a *waw*. The scribe evidently omitted, at first, the word ויהי, and tried to correct this by writing this over the *kaf*.

124 Marked for deletion with lines above the letters. This erroneous word may have been in the scribe's master copy, which would explain why he did not strike through it as elsewhere in the manuscript.

125 The dot above the *aleph* is Babylonian *ḥiriq*, not a cantillation mark (ditto on the next line).

126 The second א appears superfluous, even though the scribe has gone to the trouble of pointing it.

127 Cf. Esther 8:11, 8:17. The *qamats* is written twice on the same letter, in Tiberian and in Babylonian pointing.

128 Perhaps an error for יַדַּח נדָח (as in 2Sam. 14:14), in which case the pointing is also wrong.

129 The *tsere* is written twice on the same letter, in Tiberian and in Babylonian pointing.

130 Cf. Is. 8:23. The *pataḥ* possibly belongs to the *tsade* of צום on the next line, as a Babylonian *pataḥ* (although *ḥiriq* would be expected there).

131 The *ḥolam* is uncertain.

132 One excessive dot above *dalet*.

133 In this case, unlike above fol. 1v:4, the word is vocalized with a *ḥiriq* under the first *taw* so as to make this number look like a verb, which means 'you will be surprised'. This is very deliberate: this number, 845, was part of ben Meir's Four Gates (substituting for 204 in the Babylonian Four Gates); the vocalization intends to suggest that one should be surprised at it. (An insertion mark in the form of a circle, at the end of this word, directs the reader to two lines of text written sideways in the right margin, which belong here and which I have transcribed below.)

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פן ישגו בשעריו אשר בדֹּאם לו : ולא פנה בלתי אל העמיד עצתו
ומומתו[134] להחטיא עם ולהכשיל רבים ולפרץ גדֹּרוֹת[135] ולהסיע את
אבנים ולבקע את עציו : ויחרף עוד את הברורים בתהיפוכותיו[136] וישימם
בוערים כדרך כל אביר ואמר לכל סכל הו׳א׳ : ויתר דברי ספריו וכל אשר
עשה בדברי ⟦הל⟧[137] המליצים המדברים אליו להשיבם אל רֹעתו הנם
כתובים על ספר דברי הימים לראשי הישיבות : ואף ביד

Text in right margin (belonging to line 20)

וישם את תַּחַ מְטָרָף[138] וְיָמֵר את תִּצְאֹ שָׂעָה ונב
ותחת תִּרְצֹה[139]

BCC2 folio 2 recto
[T-S 10K3 recto]

Text only on the recto. There is a large, v-shape tear in the middle of the first lines; most of the first few lines are missing.

[ ]י אפוד : למרחוק
בא[ ]ץ ולעם ולדָּת בַל[140] יכליון:
ש[ ]ת נ[ ]לַחֵבֵר לו מלים כי לולי המה
נשבר מטהו ואת[ ] או ידענו יי״[141] כי פוצינו
בגלות גולל את כל א[ ]שתנו וקרא קץ לשובבינו
בישע לקדמתינו : תכָּת[ב...[142] ר]עות המחשיך שהיה אהרן

134 Adler and Broydé suggest מזמתו, as is indeed attested in BCC1.
135 Error for גדֹּרוֹת.
136 The first *yod* is superfluous.
137 Marked for deletion with lines above the letters, as in fol. 1v:11 above.
138 Here also (as in line 20 above), the number from ben Meir's Four Gates has been vocalized, and in this case the letters re-ordered, so as to form a word meaning 'confused'. The final *peh* is used here with the numerical value of 800 (hence the total value of 1049); this annotation is unusual (elsewhere, e.g. line 20, a double *taw* is used for 800), but it is probably chosen precisely to produce this polemical word.
139 These two words are already in line 20, and indicate where this marginal text should be inserted.
140 The pointing of the *bet* as *pataḥ* confirms this reading (and precludes בלי כליון).
141 Mark above the name of God (different from the mark above, fol. 1v:7, presumably because they are written by different scribes).
142 Judiciously pointed as a *nif'al*; depending one what follows, one expects a masculine or feminine 3rd person plural ending.

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ואל יִנָּקשׁוּ[143] בְּפחזותיו : סורו [ ]שחד נוסו נודו מדעת חנף נודו
נועו מיקידת יה נוגו[144] נוסו סור[ו] מבו[ץ] ה[י]וץ[145] מן שַׁך יקוש ומן רשת מזורה פן
תִּסָּפוּ בם : פִּקְחו נא עניכם בָּנִיו[146] וצאצאנו אחרינו והביטו בכל אלה ואל יהיו דבריו
למוקש
לכם ב[ז]ה הסכלנו[147] ונורה[148] אתכם זה דרך לצדָקה[149] בָּהּ : וכל איש אשר ידבנו לבו
יקרא את מעשיו בקֶצַם[150] באלול הוא החדֶש השִׁשִׁי לפני בוא החגִים בכל ש[...]ך
וְיָסְרו כֹּל הפתאים ולא יזידו עוד ככל אשר עשה כי מִי לא פן תקלל חלקתו בכל
דור ודור : ומי לא יחפץ להטִיב לו שם כי צדקתו עומדת לעד יתברכו בו שבטי
יה ובו יתהללו : וזאת אות הברית אשר נִחַלְנוּ[151] אבותינו מימי קדם יען כי בכתוב
לא נמצאה עשרה מהם אחד מָלא ואחד חסר לפקודיהם : ושני החדשים פעם
ימלאון או יֵ[כ]חסרון או יהיו כדובריהֶן[152] המה השמיני והתשעי על פי תקוּפַת
שנת מאה וחמשים וארבעה יום ושלישית שמנה מאות חלק ושבעים
ושש : כי הקיפה עד תוך מחצית יום החמשי ועד תִּצְאֹ בתשיעית ביום
[ה]ששי חסירים יהיון ועד פנות יומם מן השבָת יהיו שלימין ועד תִּצְאֹ
בתשיעית ביום אחד יָגֵּעוֹן וימלאון ביוֹם[153] שני עד חֲצִיוֹ[154] ומַהֲחצִיוֹ[155] עד
המחצה ביום שלישי יעמדו על סדרם : וכן להחסירם עד הַרצָת[156] משתי עשרה

143 The Babylonian vowel above the *nun* looks a bit like *pataḥ*, but it is probably *qamats*; likewise on line 9 (תספו).

144 Bornstein suggested this was an error for נועו. His intuition proved right, as this is the reading of BCC1 (T-S NS 219.29, first published in 1984).

145 Cf. Ps. 40:3: מטיט היון.

146 An error for בנינו (as in T-S NS 219.29).

147 Bornstein conjectured השכלנו; again, he anticipated the reading of BCC1 (T-S NS 219.29).

148 Cf. Joel 2:23.

149 The intention of the vocalization may have been to disambiguate the word as an infinitive construct (with paragogic *heh*) rather than a noun; however, this was the wrong letter to vocalize, as in both forms the *qof* is vocalized *qamats*.

150 The vowel of *tsade* should be *qamats*. The pointing of this word is faint, and perhaps in a different hand from the rest of the pointing. Schechter suggests unnecessarily that this word should be בקבצם.

151 Schechter reads erroneously נחלפו, but the penultimate letter is indeed unclear, as it is written over another letter (perhaps a *bet* or a *kaf*). The *pi'el* pointing confirms my reading.

152 A scribal error for כחבריהן (as in T-S 10 K 4, where it is spelled: כחביריהן).

153 Although the two dots are displaced to the left, closer to the line above, and slanted, this (a Babylonian *ḥolam*) is the best interpretation I can suggest. The *heh* of השבת on the line above cannot be pointed *shewah*.

154 Dot above the (Babylonian) *pataḥ*, which I cannot explain. On this pointing, see note on critical edition, BCC 22:4 (above, page 144, note 143).

155 The double *pataḥ* may be intended for the *ḥet* (as in the previous word), but it has been written on the *heh*.

156 Number vocalized differently in BCC3.

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בליל הרביעי ומשם עד חצות החמישית להמָלאוֹת ונסַב השָבוע אלה משפטיהם[157]
בשנה הנוֹסֹפֶת[158] : ובשנה הפשוטה לא כן חקם כי משמנה עשרה שעות בשביעי
ולאחר תשע ורד׳ יחסָרו וישלמון לשמנה עשרה מן השני אם היוצאת גם
פשוטה או לחמש עשרה ותקפַּט נוספת אם היתה ומשתי העתים יסדרון
עד תשע ורד׳ מן החמישי : ואז ימלאון אל שלשת רבי[[בה]] ׳רביעיו׳ ועד קץ תַּח׳ בששי
אם הבאה פשוטה גם היא או אם[159] תוֹספֶת אל תּשע ורֹד׳ בו וכן יהיו שלימים
לשמנה עשרה בשבת וכן תסוֹבֵבָּה[160] לקץ הימין : גַם זאת מפי אבותינו
לקדמוניהם שמענוה אף בה בעיננו ראֹינוֹם ינַהֵגוּ ולמלא גם כן אדר
הנוסף : למדוֹתֹ הֹטיֹב למען תשכילוה שננוה אחרי לבל תשכחוֹהֹ כאשר
לנו באמונה נתנו כן נְתַנום באמונה לכם ויהי יי׳[161] לעֵד בכם ללֹא תדחו עוד

BCC2 folio 3 verso
[T-S NS 175.57 verso]

This folio, which is also inscribed only on one side, the verso (see discussion above), is fragmentary. A few lines are missing from the top (three lines in comparison to T-S 10K3, which may have been in the same bi-folio), and a substantial edge on the left of all the lines is torn off. A very small amount of text can be restored on the basis of the overlapping text in BCC5 (NS 219.29 verso right); I have inserted it here in square brackets. Conjectural reconstructions of the other *lacunae* are generally not offered here, but rather in the critical edition of the Book of the Calendar Controversy.

נכתב ספר הזכרון הזה בבית דין הג[...
דכל ישראל בריה דמרותא זכאי ראש גלואת[א ...
לדורות הבאים אחריו עד עולם כי בפלא שלא[...
והכריזו ראשי הישיבות את מרחשון וכסלו [...
שנת [[ש]][162] רלג שלימין במעמד כל הח[כמ]ים [...

157 Schechter omits the final *mem*, perhaps because it is partially cropped. It is written in cursive because of shortage of space; a similar *mem* can be found at the end of fol. 1r:13 above.

158 The two *pataḥ* vowels stand for *segol*, which are confused in Babylonian vocalization (also on line 27).

159 Horizontal bar under the *mem*, which I cannot explain.

160 The vocalization of *bet* and *nun* should be *segol-qamats*.

161 Mark above the name of God (as above, line 4).

162 As correctly read by one of the peer reviewers, who further remarks that this error—which the scribe promptly corrected—is understandable if the manuscript was copied towards the end of the eleventh century, when the Seleucid year was still in the 1300s (or as abbreviated, 300s) and the scribe was used writing a date beginning with ש.

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ותלמידהם כאשר מנהגם להכריז בכל שנ[...
הבאה בחדש אלול שלשנה היוֹצאֹת כי החד[ש ההוא הוא שבו][163]
חכמים נאספים מכל מקומותיהם ובאו כל אחד[164] [...
ונותנין במלחמתה של תורה כל החדש כולו ומדקדקין פ[...
שמ[ע]מידין דבר דבר על אמתו ועל בֵּירורוֹ וכן הסכימו [...
ודע[ת] כל החכמים והמשכילים להכריזה שלימין ול[...
בת[למ]ידי חכ(מים) שבכל מקו[ם] [ו]מי שהוא טועה בדבר הזה [...
משפט ברור ומגיה כאור החמה למען כי תשרי שלש[...
לבנה בלילי רביעי יֹאֹ שעות תתקלב[165] והגבול אשר ג[בלוהו רבותינו][166]
הראשנים עד יֹאֹ ותרצה בליל[י] רביעי[167] במעוברת חסר[ין ...
אפילו חלק אחד שלימין : והמולד היה[168] יתיר על הגבול [[ר]][169] [מאתים ולז]
חלקין לפיכך חרצנו[170] משפט מרחשון וכסלו בשנת רלג [...
ואף מולד השעה[171] של אחריה שהיא שנת רלד ועוד[172] [...
גבלו רבותֵינו גבול עד תשע שעות רד חלקין מלי[לי ...
אין דוחין את תשרי מיום שלישי יתיר על כן דוחין[173] א[ותו ...
ומולד שנת רלד בלילי שלישי תשע שעות תתמא [...
הגבול רלז חלקין בראשנה לפיכך הסכמנו גם ע[ל ...
בחמישי ומרחשון וכסלו כסדרן : ואף מולד הש[...
יעיד על שתי[174] הש[נ]ים שלפניה כי באמת מולד[175] [...

163 The words ההוא הוא have been reconstructed on the basis of BCC5, T-S NS 219.29; the word שבו is my conjecture. On the basis of the dimensions of the other folios of this manuscript, it may be conjectured that at the end of the line, there is additional space for a word like תלמידי.

164 My reading, and as in T-S NS 219.29 verso right.

165 This reading was restored after conservation work on the document in August 2015.

166 Reconstructed partly on the basis of T-S NS 219.29, which reads והו רבותינו[....].

167 Reading following restoration work.

168 Reading following restoration work, and as in T-S NS 219.29 verso right.

169 The two vertical lines above the *resh* are probably deletion marks, as also found in two places in fol. 1v. My conjecture is that although the letter *resh*, for two hundred, was not incorrect, the scribe changed his mind and decided, for some reason, to express the hundreds (of 237) as a word rather than as a letter. Other explanations may also be possible.

170 Reading following restoration work, and as in T-S NS 219.29 verso right.

171 Error for השנה.

172 The *ayin* appears to be written over another letter, possibly *shin*.

173 Reading following restoration work.

174 Written over שני.

175 Reading following restoration work. The *Ma'agarim* website reads (before restoration, hence without the last letter of the word) ב?ה?ו?, but it is difficult to make out of these three letters a word that is intelligible in context (e.g. הוכח or הוכר), and furthermore, the first letter does not resemble a *heh* but is closer to a *mem*. Although the resemb-

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ביום השבת שש שעות רֹלז חלקין ולימדונו רבו[...
אלו[176] הוא נכנס בשעה שביעית מן היום אפילו חלק [...
בו ביום : לפיכך משלושת הטעמים האלה לא הי[ה ...
ההכרזות האלה כחוק וכמשפט הכרזנום וכשם ש[...
חשבנו ש[...

BCC2 folio 4 recto
[ENA 2556.1 verso]

חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מכן שלימין תחת מה שקבעו חכמ(ים) כל תשרי
שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם תִּצְאֹ חלקים משעה התשיעית ביום ששי
חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין : גם כתב ואם אין בה[177] עיבור
ולא בשנה הבאה ונולד קודם תִּתְרַמְטֹ חלקין משעה ראשונה
בלילי ששי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין תמורת משקבעו
חכמים אם אין בה עיבור ולא בשנה הבאה ונולד קודם תִּחֹ חלקין
משעה ראשונה בלילי ששי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין :
וגם כתב ואם יהיה שנה הבאה עיבור ונולד קודם תִּתְּמֹהּ חלקין
משעה עשירית בלילי ששי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין
ועוד כתב שער שֵׁני כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם רִּנֹוֹ חלקין
משעה ראשונה ביום רביעי חסירין ואם נֻולד לאחר מכן שלימין
תחת משקבעו חכ(מים) כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם תִּרְצֹהּ
חלקין משעת יֹבֿ בלילי רביעי חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין
וגם כתב ואם אין בו עיבור ונולד קודם תִּתְּמֹהּ חלקין משעה עשירית
בלילי חמישי כסדרן ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין תמורת משקבעו
חכ(מים) ואם אין בו עיבור ונולד קודם רִּדֹ חלקין משעה עשירית בל(י)לי
חמישי כסדרן ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין : ועוד כתב בשערים
הללו כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קֻדם נִּבֹ חלקין משעה עשירית
ביום אחד בשבת חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין תחת משקבעו
חכ(מים) כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם תִּצְאֹ חלקין משעה תשיעית
ביום אחד בשבת חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין וגם כתב ואם
אין בה עיבור ונולד קודם תִּתְּמֹהּ חלקין משעה עשירית בלילי אחד
בשבת[178] חסרין ואם נולד יתיר על כן שלימין : תמורת משקבעו חכ(מים)
כל תשרי שאין בו עיבור ונולד קדם רִּדֹ חלקין משעה עשירית בלילי

lance of the third letter to *lamed* is moot, now that the last letter (*dalet*) has been restored the only plausible reading is מולד.

176 Reading following restoration work, but still unclear.

177 Cf. בו on the previous line; the gender of this pronoun (as of other pronouns and suffixes) is inconsistent through this text.

178 Vertical line below the *bet*, which I cannot explain.

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אחד בשבת חסירין ואם נולד לאחר מיכן שלימין : ועוד כתב כל תשרי
שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם אֹמֶרֶת משעה שביעית ביום של[ישי]
אחוז שלישי וכסדרן תוספת על מה שקבעו חכ(מים) כל תשרי שיש בו עִיבור
ונולד קדם שעה שביעית ביום שלישי אחוז שלישי וכסדרן וגם כתב ואם
אין בו עיבור קודם תְּתְמֹה משעה עשירית בלילי שלישי אחוז שלישי
וכסדרן יתיר על כן [[דצה]][179] דחה אותו ליום חמישי אחוז חמישי וכסדרן
{וגם[180] כתב ואם אין בה עיבור ונולד קודם תְּתְמֹה משעה עשירית
בלילי שלישי אחוז שלישי וכסדרן יתיר על כן דחה[181] אתו ליום חמישי
אחוז חמישי וכסדרן} חילופי משקבעו חכ(מים) ואם אין בה עיבור
ונולד קודם רֹדְ חלקין משעה עשירית בלילי שלישי אחוז שלישי

BCC2 folio 4 verso
[ENA 2556.1 recto]

וכסדרן יתיר על כן דחה אתו ל[י]ום חמישי אחוז חמישי וכסדרן ועוד כתב
ואם היה בשנה שעברה עִיבור ונולד אחר קְנ חלקין משעה חמישית
ביום שני דחה אותו ליום שלישי אחוז שלישי וכסדרן עשה כל אלה לספֹּות[182]
על טעותו כדי שיהא הגבול [.]שנת רֹלֹג עד רֹנוֹ משעה ראשונה ביום
רביעי חסרין ומולדה הרי היא תְּתְקְלֹבְ משעת יְבְ בלילי רביעי ויאמר הרי
משפטיו להיות[183] חסרין וכן יהיה הגבול בשנת רֹלֹדְ עד תְּתְמֹה משעה
עשירית בלילי שלישי אל [י]דחה ומולדה הרי הוא תְּתְמֹה משעה עשירית
בלילי שלישי ויאמר עדאין לא הגיע למקום הדחיה ואף בשנת רֹלֹה יאמר
הרי לא נוסף אֹמֶרֶת חלקין עד[184] שש שעות ויחר[185] לנו הדבר מאד על ׳אשר׳ נעשה
האלה יתיר מן הראשנים הקל הראשון והאחרון הכביד כי לא דיו שטעה
בשלש שנים הללו וגרם למקצת ישראל אשר סביבותם לחלל את המועדוֹת
האלה אלא בקש לנטע דברי טעות בתוך בני יש(ראל)[186] לחלל את המועדים הבאים
ולהוסיף על חטא[187] פשע להכשיל רבים בתורה ולטעת בעם מוקש אשר

179 Smudge on the first letter, and faint line across the last two letters, suggesting that this word, which is clearly erroneous, has been marked for deletion. Dot or short stroke under the first letter, to the left.

180 This clause repeats verbatim the previous one, and is superfluous.

181 The *ḥet* is written over another letter, perhaps *lamed*.

182 Bornstein suggests that although this word is possible, it might be an error for לחפות, as above, fol. 1r:31.

183 The *heh* seems to be followed by another letter, which is presumably erroneous.

184 An error for על.

185 Bornstein seems to have misread Schechter's transcription as ויתר, leading him to further, unnecessarily complicated emendations.

186 The dot above the second letter is not the diacritic of the *sin*, but rather to indicate an abbreviation.

187 Perhaps חטאיו.

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לא ימיש פריו ובכן צוינו ונאספו הראשים והאלופים והחכמים והמלמדים
ונועצנו מה לעשות למכשול הגדול הזה אשר הביאו בן מאיר להעמיד
עצתו ויאמרו לא נוכל לַבֵּר את כל הנסחים אשר כתב בן מאיר ע֯ל
זאת אל המקומות ועוד אפשר כי ננסחו אגרותיו בתוך העם אבל ראוי
לכתוב את הספר הזה להיוֹתו לזכרוֹן בתוך כל ישׂ(ראל) להודיעם את מעשה
בן מאיר הזה מתחילה ועד סוף ולהסירם ולהזהירם ולצוות אותם כי כל
טופס וכותב ונסח אשר ימצאוהו בקרב העם וכתוב בה שעה נֹבּ חלקין
במקום תֹּצֹאֹ או תֹּתֹמֹהֹ במקום רֹדֹ או תֹּרֹמֹטֹ במקום תֹּחֹ או שעה רֹנֹוֹ
במקום תֹּרֹצֹהֹ או שעה קֹנֹ במקום תֹּקֹפֹטֹ לא יסמכו עליהן ולא ישגיחו
בהן כ(ל) זֹ(ה) בן מאיר בדא מלבו בעת הזאת ולא מפי הראשונים אבל[188]
ארבעה שערים האמת אשר המה מצוים בתוך כל בני ישראל אשר
בכל המדינות מסורות שער ראשון תֹּצֹאֹ תֹּחֹ ורֹדֹ ומסרות שער
שני תֹּרֹצֹהֹ ורֹדֹ ומסרות שער שלישי שש שעות ורֹדֹ ומסרות
שער רביעי תֹּצֹאֹ ורֹדֹ ותֹּקֹפֹטֹ כאשר מסרום לנו {לנו}[189] רבותינו
בהלכה למעשה ולא בהלכה למעשה בלבד למדונו את המסרות
האלה אילא אף מן התלמוד יש להן עיקר[190] כי כן לימדונו רבותינו
אמֹ(ר) שמואל יכילנא לתקונה לכולה גולה אֹ(מר) ליה אבה דר֯(ב) שמלאי
לשמואל ידע מ֯ר הא מילתא דתנא בסוף העיבור נולד קודם חצות
או אחר חצות אמ(ר) ליה לא אמֹ(ר) ליה ומדהא לא ידע מר ומפרשי
רבנן מאי ננהי מילי אחרניאתא רֹדֹ ותֹּחֹ תֹּצֹאֹ ותֹּרֹצֹהֹ ותֹּקֹפֹטֹ

188 Space filler at end of line.

189 Repetition.

190 On the Babylonian use of *dagesh* for the *resh*, see Khan (2013) 958; however, it seems unjustified here.

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8.3 BCC3

This manuscript, consisting of two non-continuous folios (shelf-marked T-S 10K4), is the latest copy we have of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (early twelfth century), and probably the most formal and perfected of all.

The text of these folios overlaps with the texts of BCC1, BCC2 and BCC5, on which basis it can be established that what is catalogued as folio 2 of T-S 10K4 belongs in fact before folio 1, with two folios missing in between. It is possible that our folios originally formed one bi-folio, with one central bi-folio inside it (now missing), although other configurations are equally possible. I refer henceforth to 'folio 1' and 'folio 2' in the correct order.

Physical Description

Paper, black ink. Dimensions: 21 cm × 14.7 cm (text: 13–14 cm × 8–9.5 cm). Line numbers: 15 (folio 1), 14 (folio 2). The lines of folio 2 are shorter; overall, this means less text in folio 2. Margins are generous: folio 1, 22 mm (inner), 35 (outer); folio 2, 22–25 mm (inner), 35–41 mm (outer). Top margins: 27–33 mm; bottom margins: 40–52 mm. Average total line height (text and line space): 9.1 mm, by far the highest of all manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy.[191]

The text is well spaced out, between the lines as well as within the lines, with frequent *vacat* ('tab') breaks which can be longer than half the line (e.g. fol. 2v:1). The left margin is generally not justified, but in some cases (especially fol. 2 verso) it comes close to it. Final letter extension at the end of lines is frequent, and in fol. 2 recto, the scribe has resorted to diagonal writing of longer words at the end of lines.

The manuscript is generally well preserved, in spite of small holes in various places (in folio 1, the holes are concentrated in the upper third of the folio). The paper is torn and/or decayed in the margins, but this does not affect the text (except for a few letters on the bottom right side of fol. 2 verso; on the recto this tear is covered over by mounting). The ink is very well preserved. Ink penetration from the other side is almost pervasive.

The script, in book hand, is elegant, neat, and regular. It can be dated, palaeographically, to the early twelfth century.

191 The total line height in other manuscripts ranges from 7.4–8.2 mm; and cf. introduction to BCC2, p. 167.

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Vocalization and Cantillation

The text is divided into verses and thoroughly vocalized and cantillated, more than any of the other BCC manuscripts. The only exceptions are erroneous words (some marked for deletion), which are left unvocalized and uncantillated; and numbers (alphabetical), which have no vowels. The vocalization is otherwise almost fully complete and accurate, except for the frequent omission of the weak *dagesh*. Because of the thoroughness of the pointing, I have taken the liberty of mentioning all the errors in the footnotes, except for the omission of the weak *dagesh* (for which I only mention two select examples, in fol. 1r:5–6).

The cantillation is similarly very full, except for an unexplained interruption between fol. 2 recto line 8 and verso line 1, and again from verso line 8 to the end. Cantillation is well structured and executed (except for one case of bad planning: see n. 212). It makes use of a wide range of cantillation signs; the cantillation is dense, and avoids strings of uncantillated words that are characteristic, for example, of BCC5. In several instances, the verse is divided in two places by an *etnaḥta*, a mid-verse pausal sign that should normally occur only once in a verse. Two *etnaḥtas* in one verse are attested in fol. 1r:6–7 and fol. 1v:11–13; this anomaly is distinctive of this manuscript.

Vocalization and cantillation appear to be in the same hand and pen as the main text.

Bibliography

Schechter (1901–1902) 40 and 48–50 (Text 11a).
Bornstein (1904) 64–65: only folio 2, based entirely on Schechter's edition.

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BCC3 folio 1 recto
[T-S 10K4 fol. 2 recto]

הַבְּרוּךְ[י]ם בְּתַהְפּוּכוֹתָיו וְיִשִּׁימֵם[192]
בּוֹעֲרִים כְּדָרֶךְ כָּל-אֵוֶיל וְאָמַר לַכֹּל
סֶכֶל הוּא : וְיֶתֶר דִּבְרֵי סְפָרָיו
וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר[193] עָשָׂה וְדִבְרֵי הַמְּלִיצִים
[[אשר יעצוהו]][194] הַמְדַבְּרִים[195] אֵלָיו
לַהֲשִׁיבוֹ הִנָּם כְּתוּבִים[196] עַל-סֵפֶר
דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לְרָאשֵׁי יְשִׁיבוֹת וְגַם
בְּיַד כָּל-חָרַד מִן-הָעֵדָה נִמְצָאִים :
וַיְהִי כְּקָרְאֹ חַכְמֵי-דָתֹ
אִיגְּרוֹתָיו וַיִּקְרְעוּ[197] בִּגְדֵיהֶם וַיִּרְזְחוּ
בְּמִסְפֵּד עַל-עֲנֵי הַצֹּאן אֲשֶׁר בְּיַד
אַכְזָרֵי נָפְלוּ לֶמוֹ וּדְמָעוֹת לָרוֹב
נִיגְּרָה עֵינָם עַל קְדֶשׁ[198] מְחוּלָּל:
וַיִּחְדְּלוּ עוֹד מֵעֲנוֹת אוֹתוֹ

BCC3 folio 1 verso
[T-S 10K4 fol. 2 verso]

כִּי הֵבִינוּ כִּי בְזָדוֹן הָיָה הַדָּבָר וּבְעָקְבֵּה :
וַיַּנִּיחוּ אוֹתוֹ לְיוֹם נָקָם וְעֶבְרָה[199] הַשְּׁמוּר[200]
לְכָל-מַדֵּיחַ[201] וְלֹא הֻתְעַשְּׁתוּ לָקַחַת
אִיגְּרוֹת מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַסִּירוֹ[202] :

192 Two space fillers at the end of the line.
193 Dot over the *aleph*, unexplained (perhaps ink penetration from the other side). Other apparent dots elsewhere in the manuscript often turn out to be small holes.
194 The middle of every letter is dotted for deletion. These words are absent in the other text witnesses, BCC1 and BCC2. It is unclear how, why, or from where these words were inserted here in the first place; but it may be noted that this passage is subject to textual variation in all the text witnesses.
195 The *bet* should have a *dagesh*.
196 The *kaf* should have a *dagesh*.
197 The (strong) *dagesh* of the *yod* runs into the letter, but is probably there. On the *meteg* (of the initial *waw*), also of ונפלו on line 12 and ויחדלו on line 15, see Yeivin (1959–1960) 50.
198 The dot of the *shin* is missing.
199 The *ayin* should be pointed *segol*. Cf. fol. 2v:3 and 11.
200 The cantillation mark is missing because of a whole in the paper.
201 Phonetically written; the *pataḥ* should really be under the *ḥet*.
202 Double *ḥolam*, in error.

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כַּדּ | [[יעצו]][203] הַעֲמִידוּ דָּבָר לְהִוָּעֵץ עִם-
הַמְּבִינִים מַה־לַּעֲשׂוֹת לְאַרְבָּעָה
שְׁעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־בָּדָּה[204] מִלְּבּוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לֹא נוּכַל לְבַעֵר אֶת-כָּל-כְּתָבָיו מִן-
הַחוּץ וְהֶלְאָה : אֲבָל־נַכְתִּוֹב
סֵפֶר זִכָּרוֹן[205] לְדוֹרוֹתֵינוּ אַחֲרֵינוּ בַּל-
יָקוּמוּ מִקְצוֹתָם וְיֶהְבְּלוּ בִּדְבָרֶיו וּבַל-
יִתְעוּ בְּנְתִיבוֹתָיו עִם נִבְרָא בַּהֲבִיָּם
לָמָּה־זֶּה וְעַל־מַה־זֶּה עָשָׂה[206] כֵּן וַיַּעֲשׂוּ
כָּזֹאת כִּי[207]־טוֹב נוֹעֲצוּ :
בְּעֶשְׂרִים בָּאֱלוּל[208] נִקְרְאוּ סְפָרָיו הָוֹא

BCC3 folio 2 recto
[T-S 10K4 fol. 1 recto]

עֲשָׂרָה[209] מֵהֶם אֶחָד מָלֵא וְאֶחָד
חָסֵר לִפְקוּדֵיהֶם : וּשְׁנֵי

203 Word unpointed and uncantillated, indicating that it must be treated as an error.
204 The *dagesh* is there, but out of place.
205 The *kaf* should have a *dagesh*; the *ḥolam* dot is missing.
206 The dot of the *sin* is missing.
207 Vertical line and smudge below the *kaf*.
208 The *pataḥ* of the *bet* is a mistake (for *shewah*), or alternatively suggests a definite article: i.e. the known, or above-mentioned, month of Elul.
209 The context of this passage is problematic. This folio is discontinuous with the previous one, which means that we do not have the text that precedes it. The parallel in BCC2 (2r:15), however, informs us that the word עשרה, at the beginning of this folio, marks the beginning of a new, self-contained textual unit, i.e. a text of the Four Gates; and this suggests, consequently, that the scribe of BCC3 may have deliberately began his text of the Four Gates on a fresh folio. However, the cantillation of the first word (עשרה) in this manuscript, *azla* or *azla geresh*, is unusual for the beginning of a text or sentence, and belongs more often to the middle of a sentence or clause; moreover, the verse ends very soon, in line 2, and there is no mid-verse pause; all this suggests that the verse began much earlier, well before the first word of this folio. In addition, the pronoun מהם (the next word; also in BCC2) is problematic as it does not have an antecedent (referent); an antecedent could have been mentioned earlier in the verse or in the previous verse, but in any event, this entails that our folio is not the beginning of a new text. The cantillation and the pronoun thus suggest that in our manuscript, BCC3, this folio (beginning with the word עשרה) was actually not the beginning of the Four Gates, but an additional piece of text preceded it, where the pronoun's antecedent would have been mentioned (presumably: 'the months of the year'). This additional piece of text, which began the Four Gates in BCC3, would have been erroneously omitted in BCC2. It would remain to be explained, however, by what coincidence the passage omitted

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הַחֲדָשִׁים פְּעָם[210] יִמָּלְאוּן וּפְעָם
יֶחְסְרוּן אוֹ יֶהְיוּ כַּחֲבֵירֵיהֶם :
הֵמָּה ח וט[211] עַל־
פִּי תְּקוּפוֹת שְׁנַת מֵאָה וַחֲמִישִׁים
וְאַרְבָּעָה יוֹם וּשְׁלִישִׁית וּשְׁמוֹנֶה
מֵאוֹת[212] וְשִׁבְעִים וְשֵׁשׁ חֵלֶק :
כִּי[213] הִקִּיפָה עַד תּוֹךְ מַחֲצִית
יוֹם חֲמִישִׁי וְעַד תִּצֹּאת בַּתְּשִׁיעִית[214]
בְּיוֹם אֶחָד יִגָּרְעוּן וְיִמָּלְאוּן לְיוֹם
שֵׁנִי עַד חֲצִיוֹ וּמֵחֲצִיוֹ עַד
הַמַּחְצָה בְּיוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי יעַמְדוּ[215]

BCC3 folio 2 verso
[T-S 10K4 fol. 1 verso]

עַל סִ[ׄ]דְרָם[216] : וְכֵן
לְהַחְסֵירֹם עַד־הָרִיצַּת[217] מִשְׁתֶּ[ׄ]

---

in BCC2 happened to be exactly the text immediately preceding our folio in BCC3. This might be explainable if the scribe of BCC2 used BCC3 as his master copy (and he moved over to the next page too soon, skipping the last bit of text of the previous page); but this is unlikely, as BCC3 is probably of later date, and more importantly, there are several omissions in the text of BCC3 where the text of BCC2 is complete (see critical apparatus to BCC 21:5, 22:1–2, also below, n. 214), as well as evidence of a textual trivialisation in BCC3 as opposed to a *lectio difficilior* in BCC2 (BCC 23:5). In the absence of other text witnesses, therefore, the question must be left unresolved.

210 Pointed with two *segols* instead of *qamats* (and so at the end of the line). The *peh* should have a *dagesh*.

211 This clause is between two blank spaces and uncantillated, suggesting that it is not part of the main text but rather a parenthetical, explanatory gloss.

212 The mid-verse pause is awkwardly placed in the middle of the number of the parts (between 'eight hundred' and 'seventy-six'), when it could easily have been positioned earlier in the verse. This is clearly bad planning.

213 At this point, cantillation ceases, for no obvious reason. The *kaf* should have a *dagesh*.

214 Superfluous dot to the left of the *pataḥ*. The scribe has omitted here, because of homoioteleuton: ביום הששי חסירים יהיון ועד פנות יומם מן השבת יהיו שלימין ועד תִּצֹּאת בתשיעית (cf. BCC2 2:18–20).

215 Pointing of *yod* missing, either because of a tear, or because it has been covered over by mounting paper.

216 There is a hole between the first two letters, with space for a *yod*. At this point, cantillation resumes.

217 Mnemonic word for תִּרְצָה (695), with a superfluous *yod* (vocalized differently in BCC2). Although this is a number, it is pointed and cantillated because it has been made into a word.

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עַשְׂרֵה[218] מִלֵּיל רְבִיעִי וּמִשָּׁם[219] עַד־
חֲצוֹת יוֹם חֲמִישִׁי לְהִימָּלֵאת
וְנָסַב הַשָּׁבוּעַ : אֱלֹהֵי[220]
מִשְׁפָּטָם[221] בַּשָּׁנָה הַמְעוּבֶּרֶת
וּבְשָׁנָה פְּשׁוּטָה לֹא־כֵן[222] חוֹקָם :
כִּי מִיּוֹם שָׁעוֹת בּוֹ לְאַחַר
תֵּשַׁע וּרֹאֹ[223] יֵחָסְרוּ וְיִשָּׁלְמוּ לִיּוֹם
מִן הַשֵּׁנִי—עַד הַיּוֹצֵאת גַּם
פְּשׁוּטָה אוֹ לַחֲמֵשׁ עַשְׂרֵה
וּתְקוֹפַת נוֹסָפוֹת אִם הָיְתָה
וּמִשְׁנִי[224] הָעִיתִּים יִסָּדְרוּן עַד־

218 This unusual vocalization of the *ayin* is consistent in the manuscript, also attested below, line 11. Cf. also fol. 1v:2.

219 The cantillation mark, presumably *merkha*, is missing.

220 The apparent *dagesh* is erroneous. The *tsere* is partially erased.

221 The *dagesh* is in the *tet* instead of the *peh*.

222 For reasons of space, the *ḥolam* is written to the right of the *lamed*.

223 Should be וּרֹד.

224 Pointing of this word is missing or damaged.

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8.4 BCC4

This manuscript, of which only one folio survives (T-S 8K5), is the earliest copy we have of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. It is written in Babylonian square (and pointed) script, and can be dated palaeographically to the early eleventh century. The use of this script suggests that the scribe identified with the local Babylonian community (in Egypt), as would be expected for a manuscript of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. It should be noted, however, that the Babylonian script is generally dominant in Cairo Genizah documents from this period.[225]

Physical Description

Paper; dark brown ink. Dimensions: 19.3 cm × 13.6 cm (text: 13.2 cm × 10.4 cm). Margins: 5 mm (inner), 26 mm (outer), 22 mm (top), 34–37 mm (bottom). Line number: 16. The left margin is not justified; very few end-of-line letters are extended, but space fillers are occasionally used (recto line 5, verso 2, 10, 13, and 16). The layout is tidy and completely consistent from recto to verso. Margins are wide, except for the inner margins.

The folio is generally legible and in good condition. It is damaged by a few holes, some ink fading, and on the top two thirds of the recto, some white flakes on the paper.

Vocalization and Cantillation

Tiberian vocalization and cantillation marks. Cantillation is complete; vocalization is selective and sometimes apparently random (see for example note on verso l. 8). The text is also divided into verses, with colons (in addition to the *sof pasuq* cantillation marks).

In many places the text is difficult to make sense of, as Schechter (1901–1902) already noted. This is due in some cases to scribal errors, but it is not always obvious how they should be corrected.

Bibliography

Schechter (1901–1902) 41 and 52–53 (Text III).
Bornstein (1904) 66–67, based entirely on Schechter's edition.

225 See further Olszowy-Schlanger (forthcoming). I am grateful to Judith Schlanger for her advice.

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BCC4 recto
[T-S 8K5 recto]

הַסֵּפֶר בטבַּעת הנשֹׂיא והָעֵד֯ עליו עֵדִים מִן־[226]
הָאַדִירִים גלוּי לכל־העַם להָפֵיץ בכל־הארצוֹת
את מִשְׁנֵה הסֹּפר להָרֵים מִכְשׁוֹל מִדֶּרֶךְ העַם:
ויהִי כי נכוֹן הסֵפר אשר־הוחַקְ למזכִּיר
עוֹן וַתְּהִי־בְלֵב כָּל־משכֵּיל אֵיבָתוֹ כִּי־יראֶת יי[227] 5
לִשְׁנוֹא רעֹ[228] וְגַם־בָּאוּ הַמוֹשְׁלִים[229] על־אוֹדוֹתָיו: וידברו
לא[מ֯]ר[230] אֶרץ נתנה בְּיד־סכל הוֹי על־יוֹשבֶיהָ:[231] מַיִם

226 Elongated *maqaf*, attested in several places in this manuscript at the end of lines (recto ll. 13, 14, verso l. 11). The cantillation of these two lines is more elaborate than elsewhere, perhaps for dramatic emphasis.

227 Space filler at end of line.

228 Prov. 8:13 (the Masoretic text varies slightly: שנאת).

229 Dot closely under the *mem*, apparently superfluous, and probably insignificant.

230 The reading of this word is most problematic. There is a hole in the middle of it, and the letters around the hole are damaged. The initial *lamed* is certain; the *aleph* is partially damaged (its left side is missing), but its reading is reasonably secure. The third character is most likely *mem*, although only the lower horizontal bar, slanted and ending on the left, is extant; given its shape and position, it could alternatively be *nun* or *tsade*, but neither yield an intelligible word. The last character could be *dalet* rather than *resh* (the upper horizontal bar is damaged); but again, *dalet* does not appear to yield anything intelligible. On this basis, Schechter read לאמר, which he (followed by Bornstein) most likely understood as the infinitive of אמר, 'saying' (*lemor*). He evidently did not notice, however, that the third character, which he read as *mem*, is pointed with *ḥiriq*, which entails a different vocalization and interpretation. The reading of the *ḥiriq*, although very small, appears to me unassailable. Inspection of the original manuscript confirms that the single dot under the presumed *mem* is ink, and is distinct from the brown dots that naturally appear elsewhere on the paper. It is also positioned precisely under the centre of the *mem*, thus clearly deliberate and not a random smudge. It is small but actually bigger than the *ḥiriq* at the beginning of the previous line (לִשְׁנוֹא).

My suggested reading, mainly based on this *ḥiriq*, is thus *la-amir*, 'to the *Amīr*'. On this assumption, a *yod* (indicating a long vowel) can be reasonably conjectured after the *mem*, as there is space for it in the hole between the last two characters. This reading, however, remains tentative and problematic, as the verb דבר, to speak (וידברו, end of the previous line) does not normally govern the preposition -ל (to mark the personal object or addressee), and moreover, it is not normally used for direct speech. Furthermore, reference to an *Amīr* (governor) seems unlikely in context, as no such *Amīr* has been mentioned or announced before in the narrative, nor is he ever mentioned again thereafter. Nevertheless, I have retained this reading and interpretation, as the vocalization seems to preclude any viable alternative. This said, it is not impossible that the original text read in fact לאמר ('saying'), and that this was re-interpreted as לאמיר

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גֵּבִים יִשְׁקֶה[232] אוֹתָם בֵּין־פִּרְחַח[233] וְחָרְוּל[234] יִרְעֶה[235] עֵדָרֶם
ישעינם חורב[236] בצל־עֵב וציון[237] יוכילם[238] אַף־יתיצב
על־דֶּרֶךְ לֹא־טוֹב: אַתָּיו חָרְשִׁים חצבו־קֶרֶשׁ[239] 10
לַמִּכְתָּב[240] מֵחַלְמֵישׁ צוּר נִסְכּוּ־קֶשֶׁת[241] נחושה עֵט
שָׁמֵיר[242] קצוּבוֹ[243] לִכְתָב־בָּם כחקה[244] את־רָעוֹתָיו:

('to the *Amūr*') by the scribe or whoever pointed the manuscript. The latter reading, however, is what appears before us in this manuscript.

Initially I also read a cantillation mark, *etnaḥta*, under the *aleph*. This is the expected cantillation for this word, in relation to the structure of the cantillation of the whole sentence; but its position under the *aleph* would have been problematic, as one would not expect this syllable to be stressed. However, this initial reading, which was based on the library's digital image, turned out to be erroneous. On inspection of the original in Cambridge, it became evident that what appeared to be the left diagonal stroke of an *etnaḥta* was actually a small fold or cut (or split) in the paper, detectable also on the verso (the digital image, also viewable in the website of the Friedberg Genizah Project, is very deceptive in this respect); whilst its apparent, right diagonal stroke was actually very faint, and not obviously ink. In context, it is difficult to interpret the apparent right stroke on its own as either a vowel or some other cantillation mark. It is probably a stray pen mark, or more likely, natural colouration of the paper.

231 The *maqaf* is displaced and runs into the vowel dot of the *waw*.

232 *Sic*; the *yod* should be with *pataḥ*.

233 Schechter has פרחה but this is possibly a printing error, as he refers explicitly to Job 30:12; corrected by Bornstein to פרחח.

234 The *shewah* is incomplete, and like a *ḥiriq*.

235 Schechter reads מרעך, erring at the beginning of the word and mistaking the *munaḥ* below the *heh* as being part of the final letter.

236 Vertical line above the *ḥet*, unexplained.

237 The vocalization is essential here for disambiguation. The expected cantillation mark, *zaqef qatan*, may be erased because of possible damage to the manuscript.

238 *Sic*; Schechter reads (or corrects) to יובילם, but it could also be an error for יוליכם, with much the same meaning.

239 Schechter reads, for these two words: (?) האכתריש.

240 Schechter reads wrongly למכרה. The last character is unclear, because of a small tear in the manuscript and a vertical line or stroke running through the middle of the character, which no doubt misled Schechter to read it as a *heh*; yet this cannot be *heh*, due to the remains of the lower horizontal bar on the bottom left. In context, *bet* (my suggested reading) is most likely, although the vertical stroke remains problematic, as it suggests more likely a *taw*. The latter, however, would not yield an intelligible Hebrew word. It might well be a scribal error.

241 The first *segol* is smudged.

242 The cantillation mark *munaḥ* is written over an *etnaḥta*. The punctuator first planned to make this word, with an *etnaḥta*, the mid-verse pause, but then realized that this had to be positioned at the next word (קצובו); this change of plan led to the awkward repetition of the *munaḥ*.

243 There is the appearance of a *ḥolam* on the *bet*, but in context this cannot be correct (the *bet* requires a *shuruq*); it is probably just a small serif.

244 Cantillation mark very faint.

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אֵיךְ[245] נִכְתֹּוב אֶת־כּוּלָּם וְרַבּוּ מְנֵי־חֹול וּמִמַּעֲדֵי־[246]
רֶגֶל הַנּוֹהֲגֵי[247] יְשׁוּרוֹן בְּאוֹרַח פְּתַלְתֹּול: אוּד־
חַרְוּד הוּא וּשְׁנֵי זַנְבוֹתָיו רֵיק מִכֹּל־טֹוב מְלֵא
כָּל־רֵעַ מִקְרָאָם רְכִילֹות מִשְׁנָתָם בְּצַעָם תַּלְמוּדָם

BCC4 verso
[T-S 8K5 verso]

קְשֵׁי־עֹורֶף מוּסָרָם קַחַת־שְׁחַד וְהַטֹּות מִשְׁפָּט:
אֵלַיִךְ יְיָ אֶדְמָתִי[248] תְּזִעַק כִּי־חַנָּה[249] תַּחְתָּיו
בְּשְׂחִיתוֹתָיו וְחֹתָם[250] יִנָּאקוּן מִלְשׁוֹנָו הָרַע כִּי־הֶאֱכִיל
אֶת־חֵילָם לְמַלְכוּיוֹת[251]: הַזְּקֵינִים אֲשֶׁר־הִפְרִיד חָמָסָם
עֵלָיו כִּי־לְשׁנִי עִגְלָיו נָתַן אֶת חֶלְקָם יֶתֶר הַחֻכְמִים
יְנוּדוּ לֹוּ חֲרָפָה כִּי־נִקְרָא[252] כְּאֶחָד מֵהֶם: מִשְׁפְּטֵי
יְיָ עָלָיו יִצְעָקוּן כִּי-הַטֶּם וִינִיעֵם וְיעוֹלֵם מוּעָדָיו[253]
הַמְקוּדָּשִׁים[254] יְאֻרְבוּ־לֹו כִּי־חַרְצֹוב כָּל־קִיטְרָם[255]
וַיַּפְתֵּחֵם: וְהִקְרֹוב אֵלָיו מֵהֶם יֹאמַר לֹו יִשְׁפּוֹט
יְיָ בִּינָם וּבִינָיו כִּי בְעַצְתֹּו יִכָּרֶת[256] זֶה־אֶת־זֶה

245 The cantillation mark, *yetiv*, may be designed to convey the intonation of a question.

246 Schechter reads וממועדי, but the traces of the *tsade* are clear, and moreover the second *mem* appears to be pointed with *ḥiriq*. The *ayin* is pointed *segol* rather than *ḥataf pataḥ* (cf. Ps. 37:23, Prov. 20:24), which reflects perhaps Babylonian confusion of these two vowels. The phrase מצעדי רגל is liturgical: see T-S NS 229.6 verso left, l. 12.

247 Grammatically problematic; perhaps an error for נוהגי, or an abbreviation of הנוהגת or הנוהגים.

248 Job 31:38; better than Schechter, אדמתו.

249 According to the Ma'agarim website of the Academy of the Hebrew Language (http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il, accessed 14 January 2018), this is a past tense of the verb חנה (to camp, stay; presumably, in 3rd person fem. sing.). This form, however, would be quite irregular, and it is unattested elsewhere. Schechter proposes, far more plausibly, that it is a scribal error for חנפה, a phrase borrowed from Is. 24:5.

250 An error for ומתים (cf. Job 24:12). The word is unpointed, probably because the scribe could not make sense of it.

251 The decision to point this word without a definite article is perhaps significant. See note on translation (p. 138, n. 110).

252 Schechter reads wrongly נתפס (?).

253 Middle letters damaged by a hole in the paper, and not read by Schechter; but reasonably clear in the manuscript, and correctly conjectured by Bornstein.

254 The need for this word to be fully pointed is unclear, especially compared to the difficult word ויעולם on the previous line, which is left unpointed.

255 Bornstein suggests this might be a scribal error for קשרם.

256 Pointed as *nif'al*. Bornstein (p. 67, n. 6) suggests that this might be a mistake, and that

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בְּחַג־מַצָּה[257] וכיפורים בקראתָם על־סֵפר׃ יאמר־
לָ[ו][258] כָּל־מִבִּין הֲרִיקוֹתָה יגיעֵנוּ כל־אֵינ׳ו[259] אָבַד־בָּךְ[260]
לָכֵן לַבֶּהָלָה תהיֶה פְּעָלָתֵךְ יָרֵב־בּוֹ כל־טֹף
הִלחַמְתָּנו אֵסוּר[261] מִבְּלִי דַעְתֵּינוּ תְּבוֹאַתְךְ שׁוֹאָה
לֹא־תֵדָע שַׁחֲרָה׃ יאמרו[262] לוֹ הַפְּתָאִים הִשְׁגִּיחָה
אותָנוּ כַּעֵוֶר בַּדֶּרֶךְ יֶהְדְּפוּךְ מַלְאֲכֵי־רוּם

it should be pointed as an active verb. Even if this is so, it should be noted that the pointing in the manuscript is quite deliberate, as this is the only word in the line that is fully pointed. In T-S NS 219.29 it is not pointed at all.

257 The *ḥet* is possibly pointed *qamats*, which would be wrong.

258 So read or conjectured by Schechter (there is a hole in the paper).

259 The *waw* is pointed with *shuruq*; Schechter suggests, on this basis, that this word is an error for אונינו. This may be further supported by the small prime on *nun*, which is possibly meant to indicate a textual problem. The parallel in BCC5 reads more simply, but with a self-correction, ‖כוחנו אבד‖תה; the reading of BCC4, restored as כל א⟨ונ⟩ינו אבד בך, may be favoured as the *lectio difficilior*.

260 Cantillation mark unclear.

261 The *aleph* is pointed *segol* instead of the expected *ḥiriq* (for the noun) or *qamats* (for the adjective, past participle); the same appears in BCC5. This vocalization is most unusual.

262 Very small strokes above the *aleph* and the *resh*, which I cannot interpret. The former is perhaps a *ḥolam*. There should be a *maqaf* after this word.

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8.5 BCC5

This fifth manuscript of the Book of the Calendar Controversy is a new discovery. Although very fragmentary, the bi-folio that has survived of it, T-S NS 219.29, has helped considerably in the reconstruction of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. The bi-folio is heavily mutilated: its top third is torn off and missing, as well as a substantial external edge on both sides.

This leaves us with small blocks of discontinuous text, which make but a small contribution to the text and critical edition of the Book of the Calendar Controversy. Nevertheless, enough survives to shed important information on the texts of the other manuscripts and on their relative sequences (e.g. folios 2 and 3 of BCC2). Most importantly, the textual overlap of BCC5 with the end of BCC4 proves conclusively that the latter is part of the Book of the Calendar Controversy—earlier scholars, such as Schechter (1901–1902: 41), were hesitant, and we ourselves might have left the identity of BCC4 unresolved, had it not been for this new discovery.

Physical Description

Paper, brown ink. Shape of the fragment: a symmetrical rectangle, with a fold running down its middle. The symmetry indicates that the bi-folio must have been cropped (above and along the side) whilst it was in a closed position. Stitch holes in two places along the fold: near the bottom, and high up in the fragment, at a point which is likely to have been the middle of page.

Measurements: 9.5 cm × 17.2 cm. Assuming a top third of the bi-folio is missing, and on each of the outer sides, nearly half the width of a folio (as can be determined on the basis of textual evidence: see discussion below), the original, total measurements would have been approximately 14 cm × 33 cm; thus each folio measured 14 cm × 16.5 cm.

The only margins that survive are the inner and bottom ones, and they are very narrow: 5–8 mm (inner), 4–10 mm (bottom). The left margin is not justified; there is no extension of letters or stacking of words at the end of the lines. The number of lines per folio (in the fragment extant) ranges from 11–13.

Although its layout is not as dense as BCC2's, this manuscript shares some features in common with it: the letters are uneven (albeit well-formed), the margins are narrow, and the text is prone to errors and erasures. Similarly to BCC2, BCC5 could be viewed as a cheap, low-grade manuscript of the Book of the Calendar Controversy.

The ink is well preserved, but the manuscript is marred on both sides by ink penetration from the other side (notably, the marginal gloss), which sometimes makes the reading difficult. A few holes are scattered across the fragment. On

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both recto and verso, a symmetrical, chevron-shaped stain runs across either side of the bi-folio, with equal intensity; this suggests that a single, diagonal stain penetrated the folios when the book was in closed position.

The Text and lacunae *of BCC5*

The text of this fragment can be partially reconstructed on the basis of the other textual witnesses. It is evident from the parallels that it was a continuous bi-folio, which must therefore have been at the centre of a quire.

The bi-folio begins at verso left, overlapping until line 5 with the text of T-S 8K5 (verso, end), and following with text unattested elsewhere. It then joins up, in recto right, with text of T-S 10K3. Unfortunately the latter is also very fragmentary at this point, which makes the full reconstruction of the text almost impossible. Recto left continues the text of T-S 10K3; the amount of text skipped (more than five lines in T-S 10K3) suggests that about six lines of text are missing in the upper part of our fragment, thus about one third in height. In recto left, the first part of the text is also parallel with T-S 10K4 fol. 1. The text of verso right overlaps with T-S NS 175.57; unfortunately, both are damaged in similar areas, which means that they do not help to reconstruct a complete text.

Of particular interest is the marginal note in recto left, written perpendicularly in the right margin. It is written in a different hand, but the script can be dated to the same period as the main text. This line of text overlaps with text attested in BCC2 folio 1 verso (ENA 2555.1 recto), which belongs to a totally different section of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 6). This line of text thus clearly does not belong here, and was presumably not intended as omitted text to be reinserted into the main text. It seems more likely that it is part of a gloss, which explains the passage before us by referring to a similar passage earlier on in the Book of the Calendar Controversy. The best I can suggest is that this gloss refers to a passage in the upper part of recto right (now lost), which would have included the phrase לחבר לו מלים, 'to join words for himself' (BCC 18:3). The gloss would thus be explaining that this phrase refers to an earlier passage in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 6), which stated that Meir had stolen his opponents' words and turned them to his own advantage.

In this edition I have completed the missing margins, wherever possible, on the basis of the parallel sources. The lacunae suggest that on either side, almost half the width of the page is missing. This would mean that altogether, about a third of the bi-folio's surface area is preserved in this fragment.

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Vocalization and Cantillation

Tiberian vocalization and cantillation, but sporadic (and on the verso right, almost non-existent; elsewhere, cantillation is frequent though not complete). Vocalization and cantillation appear to be in the same hand and pen as the main text. The *maqaf* tends to be written above the letters. There is a tendency to join words together with a *maqaf* (e.g. recto right l. 7, recto left l. 4), with the effect of reducing the density of cantillation.

Bibliography

Unpublished. Discovered by Marina Rustow and Sacha Stern in February 2015.

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BCC5 [T-S NS 219.29] verso left

[ויפתחֵ]ם:[263] והקרוב אליו מהעֵם [יאמר לו ישפוט יי בינם וביניו כי בעצתו]
יכרֵת זה־את־זֶה[264] בֶּחָגֵ[265]־מצה וכפוֹרים ב[קראתם על ספר יאמר לו כל מבין]
הריקוּתה יגיענוּ כוֹחנו[266] אֲבַּד[תה[267]] : לכן לב[הלה תהיה פעלתך ירב בו כל טף]
הלחמתֵנו[268] אֶסור[269] מבלי דעתֵינו[270] תבואתך [שואה לא תדע שחרה: יאמרו לו]
הפתאים השגֵיתה א[ות]נוֹ כעוֵר בדֶרך [יהדפוך מלאכי רום]
[לא][271]־תמצֵא [י]ד [ב]עת הָצֵר[272] לָך : אף מי[ ]
על־פֵּיד עמיתֵך זה היוֹם אשר־קוֵינו ר[ ]
וטפילֵת שקר כי כבֵדה יורד־נא אלהֵי [ ]
בעצת ילד חבֵלתה ארחותיך שחֵתָ[ה[273]]
מעונותֵיך כי־השגֵיתה[274] ישרים בדרך רע : [ ]
באֵין תבונֶה יעֵצת בֵּשת לרוחֵך נקבָ[ ]
[..] האמֵים מאחרֵיו אשר ידֵעת הק[ ]
[..]קה קפֵצת לגדולתֵם שחתךָ מ[ ]

263 Only the lower horizontal stroke of the *mem* is visible, and the pointing of the *ḥet*. The rest of the word is reconstructed on the basis of T-S 8K5.

264 The semblance of *tsere* under the first (and possibly also second) *zayin* (where it should be *segol*) is in fact ink penetration from the other side.

265 The vowels should be *shewah-pataḥ* (the former as in BCC4).

266 The *ḥolam* is on the *kaf*. The semblance of a *pataḥ* sign under the *waw* is in fact ink penetration from the other side (part of the *munaḥ* sign of מאהרן, recto right l. 2).

267 Plene spelling (similarly at the beginning of the line, and on ll. 5 and 9–10 below). Line across the last two letters, to mark a deletion (which conforms to the reading of BCC4, אבד). The pointing is *pi'el* and assumes the full word before deletion, אִבַּדְתָּ ('you have destroyed', in plene spelling אבדתה). After the deletion, the pointing of the word should have become *qal*, אָבַד ('is lost'), but this was not corrected. The deletion was thus carried out after the pointing. The two dots under the *dalet* are more likely a *zaqef qatan* belonging to the line below, than a *shewah*. The colon after this word is problematic, as this is not the end of the sentence (albeit a pause, marked by *zaqef qatan*).

268 The semblance of a *pataḥ* under the *ḥet* is actually a hole.

269 Same pointing as BCC4 (see note there, p. 199). The word may be pointed precisely because its vocalization is unusual.

270 The cantillation mark (*zaqef qatan*) is uncertain; see above, n. 267. The semblance of a colon here is ink penetration from the other side (part of *ayin* and *lamed* of מעל on recto right l. 3).

271 Small traces around a hole.

272 Cf. 2 Chron. 28:22. The *tsade* should be pointed *tsere*.

273 The position of the cantillation mark and the pointing of the *taw* suggests that the word should end in *heh*.

274 Below the end of this word, there are two parallel diagonal lines, which have penetrated from the other side of the page (recto right, l. 9; see below, n. 281).

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BCC5 [T-S NS 219.29] recto right

[וקרא קץ] לשובבנו בישע לקדמתנו :
[ ] רעות המחשיך שהיה [מ] אהרן[275] ואל
[ינקשו בפחזותיו : ס]ורו מעל אהלי שחד נוסו נודו
[מדעת חנף נודו נועו מיקידת] יה[276] נועו סוגו[277] [מ]בוץ[278] היון [מ]ן שך יקוש[279]
[ומן רשת מזורה פן תספו בם : פק]חו נא עינכם בנ[י]נ[ו][280] וצאצאינו
[אחרינו והביטו בכל אלה ואל] יהיו דבריו למוקש לכם ה[נ]ה השכלנו
[ונורה אתכם זה דרך לצ]דקה בה : וכל־איש אשר־ידבנו לבו
[יקרא את מעשיו בקצם באלול] הוא החדש הששי לפני־בא החגים
[בכל שעריך ויוסרו כל הפתא]ים ולא־יזידון עוד[281] ככל אשר
[עשה כי מי לא פן תק]ל חלקתו[282] בכל דור ודור : ומי זה
[לא יחפץ להטיב לו שם כי צ]דקתו עומדת לעד יתברכו־בו שבטי
קכח[283]

275 The *mem* is struck through; indeed, it makes little sense, and it is absent in the parallel in BCC2. Its cantillation sign, *munaḥ*, is probably intended for the word written above the line, שהיה. The whole line has two sets of cantillation marks, which is impossible and indicates a change of mind on the part of the punctuator. It seems that the scribe originally intended to cantillate it as רעות המחשיך מאהרן, but then, perhaps as a result of inserting the missing word, but also after realizing that a mid-verse pausal was needed here, he changed it to רעות המחשיך שהיה אהרן.

276 The semblance of a *segol* between these two words is actually ink penetration from a *segol* on the other side (verso left, l. 5: בדרך).

277 The ג is written over a ר; it corrects the first writing of סורו, which could also have been possible (albeit repetitive), and which is in fact the reading of T-S 10K3. The word overvocalized (with both *qubuts* and *shuruq*, etc.), perhaps to compensate for the scribal correction.

278 Cf. Ps. 40:3.

279 Although the cantillation mark appears below the *yod*, the intention is presumably that it should relate to the *qof*.

280 The *rafe* is incorrect. Although it is faint, its position and inclination make it unlikely to be from ink penetration from the other side (e.g. from the *heh* of הצר on verso left, l. 6).

281 Before this word, there are two parallel diagonal lines, probably some sort of erasure.

282 The pointing of the *ḥet* should be *segol*, and the *taw* should be *rafe*.

283 This catchword is difficult to make sense of. If it is an error for קבה, it might be an abbreviation of קודשא בריך הוא and a substitute for the name of God, יה, which appears at this point in BCC2.

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BCC5 [T-S NS 219.29] recto left

ועד פנּות יוֹם מן השבת יהיו [שלימין ועד תֹּצֹא בתשיעית ביום אחד]
יגֶּרעֹון וְיִמלאֹון ליום־שני עד־חצ[י][284] [ומחציו עד המחצה ביום שלישי]
יעמדוּ על סדרם : וְכֵן[285] להחסירם [עד הרֹצֹת משתי עשרה מליל]
הרביעי ומשֶׁם עד־חצות־יוֹם החמיש[י להימלאת ונסב השבוע אלה]
משפטהֶם בשנה הנוסֶפת : ובשנה [הפשוטה לא כן חוקם כי משמנה]
עשרה שעות ב[ש]ביעי ולְאֶחַד תָּש[ע ורֹד יחסרו וישלמון לשמנה]
עשרֶה מן השני אם־היוצֶאת גם פ[שוטה או לחמש עשרה ותקפֹּד]
נוסֶפת אם היתה ומשתי העתים י[סדרון עד תשע ורֹד מן החמישי :]
ואז ימלאו ⟦לשמונה עשרֶה בו⟧ ׳אל שלשת רבעיו` ועד־[קץ תֹּח בששי אם הבאה]
פשוטה גם היא אֹו אם־נוספת אל־תֹּשע [ורֹד בו וכן לשמנה עשרה בשבת]
⟦יהיו שלמים⟧[286] וכן תסבינה לק[ץ] ה[י]מין: גם זאת מפי אבותינו לקדמוניהם]
שמעֶנוּה אף־בָּה בעינינו ראינ[ו]ם יג[הֹגו]

BCC5 [T-S NS 219.29] recto left, in right margin

[ידב]ק דברי רוח בלי דע[ת ו]יגנב ׳מ`דבריהם ויסבם אליו :

BCC5 [T-S NS 219.29] verso right

[ ] ההוא הוא
[חכמים נאספים] מכל מְקומותיהם ובאים כל אחד
[ונותנין] במלחמתה שלתורה כל החדש כולו
[ומדקדקין ש]מעַמידין דבר דבר על אמתו ועל
[בירורו וכן הסכימו] עִם דעת כל החכמים והמש[כ]לִים
[להכריזה שלימין ול...]ן שיש בתלמידי חַ[כמ]ים שבכל מקום
[ומי שהוא טועה בדבר הזה] הוא משפט בָּרוּר ומגיה כאור החמה

284 There is a hole with only space for a *yod* (and possibly a trace of it), which seems essential as the *tsade* is not final. Parallel sources read חציו, but the blank space at the end of this word seems to preclude a *waw*.

285 *Qamats* instead of *shewah*.

286 In BCC2, these two words belong in the previous line, before לשמנה עשרה בשבת (which belongs to the missing section of this manuscript). The length of the lines suggest that these two words were omitted in the previous line, and written here instead in error. Although the meaning of the text would have been unaffected, the scribe realizing his error struck through the two words, and perhaps superscripted them in their right place in the previous line.

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[למען כי תשרי שלשנת]ה לבנה אֶזַ[287] בלילי רביעי יאֹ שע
[תֹתֹקֹלֹבֹ והגבול אשר גבל]והו רבותינו הראשנים עד יאֹ ותרצה
[בלילי רביעי במעוברת חסרין ... א]פילו חלק א שלמין והמולד היה יתיר
[על הגבול חלקין לפי]כך ח[ר]צנו[288] משפט מרחשון וכסלו בִשנת
[רֹלֹגֹ ואף מולד השנה] שלאחריה שהיא שנת רלד
[ועוד גבלו רבות]ינו גבול עד טֹ שע רד חלקין[289]

287 This pointing stands perhaps for אֶזַי (as in Ps. 124), but there is no trace of a *yod*. The pointing אָז would have been more natural.

288 Reconstructed on the basis of BCC2 (T-S NS 175.57).

289 This final line of text is additional and written in the bottom margin; its script is similar to the rest of the manuscript, but the inclination and spacing of the letters are different, and there has been an apparent change of pen (and possibly ink). It appears to be a later, corrective insertion, possibly (but not necessarily) by the same scribe.

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PART 3

Letters and Polemics, c. 922 CE

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CHAPTER 9

Ben Meir's First Letter

9.1 Introduction

Ben Meir's 'First Letter' is part of the official correspondence exchanged between the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic leadership during the calendar controversy of 921/2.

This letter is critical for understanding the controversy from the Palestinian perspective. As the Book of the Calendar Controversy suggests, as well as our corpus of texts as a whole, the Palestinians and Babylonians never held meetings in person, or confronted each other face to face, to argue out their cases for the calendar dates of 922. It was only through the exchange of letters such as this that the controversy was effectively played out. The preservation of this letter in later manuscripts suggests that it was considered a particularly important element of the correspondence on the Palestinian side. It is attested in two manuscripts.

The text consists of a letter, presumably from the Babylonians, followed by a reply to it, which is attributed to ben Meir. The letter to ben Meir is dated to the month of Tevet, 1233 SE (5 December 921–2 January 922 CE); only the end of it has been preserved, in one of our two manuscripts (L1BM1). Ben Meir's reply, between the two manuscripts, is almost completely preserved. It appears to have been written before Passover of the same year, when the Palestinian and Babylonian dates were due to differ for the first time. His response to Babylonian jibes (L1BM 14:9, 25:8) suggests that the polemic between Palestinians and Babylonians had already soured. Moreover, ben Meir is already employing a Palestinian version of the Four Gates (L1BM 14:8–21:7), which according to the Book of the Calendar Controversy was only developed when the controversy was well under way, and represented a momentous escalation of ben Meir's argument (BCC 7:7–8:4). Nevertheless, even at this stage, ben Meir is still trying to achieve conciliation with his opponents, by appealing to alliances which he had made in previous years with certain elements within the Babylonian Rabbanite camp (L1MB 10:1–12:5), and by referring to his opponents in complimentary terms (L1BM 12:6).

Bornstein (1904) called this text 'Ben Meir's First Letter'. It is certainly the earliest letter attributed to ben Meir that is extant, but there were probably other letters earlier. According to the Book of the Calendar Controversy, Babylonians and Palestinians exchanged several letters before ben Meir devised his

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Four Gates (BCC 4:5–6:1); whereas after he did so, the Babylonians ceased corresponding with him (BCC 11:2). We know of at least one letter that was sent by ben Meir after this one; it is preserved in the Letters Miscellany (Letter 4), and was written after Passover 922 CE. I have retained Bornstein's nomenclature.

Contents

The first folio extant of the first manuscript, L1BM1, contains the end of a letter, including the concluding blessings and greetings, and a date (corresponding, in my edition, to section L1BM 1). This letter presumably challenged ben Meir's calendrical decision, and called on him to either justify it or desist from it. It was probably written by the Babylonian leaders, among the letters that were sent by them to ben Meir, as narrated in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 4:5–6:1). If, as I argue in the diplomatic edition, the earlier manuscript (L1BM1) is missing only one external bi-folio, the letter to ben Meir would have been relatively short.

Ben Meir's reply begins with a lengthy proem in liturgical-poetic style, in two parts. The first part, written in a simple rhyme, consists almost entirely of a list of biblical figures, referred to allusively, as is typical of liturgical poetry (or *piyyut*: L1BM 2–3:4); the second part is an elaborate greeting to the addressees (L1BM 3:4–8:7). This highly literary proem, and in particular its first part, may be following standard epistolary practices, although I can only find one close parallel to it: this is a private letter written much later by a woman in the Byzantine Empire to her brothers in Egypt, with proem incorporating a similar list of biblical, patriarchal figures.[1] But the proem and list of biblical figures is considerably longer here, and appears somewhat excessive and gratuitous, as well as irrelevant to the main body of ben Meir's letter. Ben Meir's intention may just be to show off his literary skills, or to assert his Palestinian identity, inasmuch as the writing of *piyyut* may have been regarded as a distinctly Palestinian tradition. The result is not particularly impressive: as a literary creation, this proem may be regarded as rather mediocre. But in fairness, it must be remembered that at the time of writing, ben Meir did not intend this letter to be more than ephemeral.

Through the second part of the proem (the greeting), the poetic style gradually erodes and gives way to an introduction to the main theme of the letter: the Palestinians' supremacy over the calendar (L1BM 5:9–8:7).

1 T-S 13J11.4, lines 1–4; Mann (1920–1922) i.241–242, ii.306–307 (no. 26). The letter may be dated, by its script, to the thirteenth century, although this is uncertain (advice of Judith Schlanger).

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The main body of the letter begins after that—in L1BM2, on a fresh page—with a long list of Palestinian rabbinic institutions and officials on whose behalf the author is writing (L1BM 9). Ben Meir describes a gathering on the Mount of Olives during the festival of Tabernacles (L1BM 10:1–5), and a journey he made earlier to Baghdad, the friendship he struck at the time with his Babylonian addressees, and the support he gave them afterwards in opposing their enemies (L1BM 10:5–12:5). This claim of friendship may well be exaggerated, serving as a rhetorical ploy to win over his readers, or more cunningly still, attempting to exploit internal divisions within the Babylonian Rabbanite community. He then turns to his opponents in Babylonia, those who sent letters to Palestine regarding his calendar decision. They are named as David ben Zakkai (i.e. the exilarch), his sons, the 'priest' (presumably Kohen Tsedeq, the *gaon* or head of the academy of Pumbedita), and Saʿid ben Yosef al-Dilāṣi (later known as Saadya Gaon—L1BM 12:6–8).[2] Ben Meir goes on to argue at great length (even longer, in fact, than we are aware, since a whole bi-folio of L1BM1 is missing between my sections L1BM 13 and 14), that only Palestinian sages have the authority of making calendrical decisions (L1BM 12:9–14:8).

Then, finally, ben Meir turns to the exposition of his calendar and his Four Gates, and to the justification of his son's calendar announcement. He begins with the general principle—which he attributes to the sages of the Mishnah, Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Judah the Patriarch—that the New Year cannot occur on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday, but only on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and the Sabbath (L1BM 14:8–15:5). He states the (contentious) rule that if the *molad* of Tishri occurs after midday and 641 parts of the hour, the New Year is postponed to the next day (L1BM 15:5–8). He then lays out his version of the Four Gates, which he claims to be from a received tradition. He explains the reason behind the various limits of the Four Gates—which Babylonians rarely, if ever, bother to do—and justifies them through the application of the Palestinian calendar algorithm, ShWḤ KHZ ḤDW.[3]

After describing and explaining the First Gate (Sabbath: L1BM 15:9–19:7) and part of the Second (Thursday: L1BM 19:7–21:7), he interrupts his account of the Four Gates—never to resume it (except for a brief quotation, later on, from the Third Gate)—and shows instead how his calendrical decisions for the years 922–924 CE are justified, largely on the basis of the Second Gate (L1BM 21:8–24:9).

2 For the political background, see in more detail Chapter 2, pp. 17–18.

3 For a general explanation of this algorithm, the Four Gates, and other technical aspects of the calendar, see Chapter 5. The peculiarities of ben Meir's exposition of the Four Gates, and his calculations relating to the years 921/2–923/4 CE, are explained below by means of two tables.

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The letter ends with ben Meir's exhortation to follow his calendar and ignore the calendar of Saadya and his colleagues (L1BM 24:9–25:19).[4]

Ben Meir: Name and Identity

This letter affords the closest evidence that the person known as 'ben Meir' (or more fully elsewhere, 'Aharon ben Meir')[5] was the head of the Palestinian rabbis, whose son made on his behalf the fateful calendar announcement in Jerusalem in the autumn of 921. Indeed, the author of the letter, ben Meir, presents himself in several places as the leader of Palestinian Jewry, with statements such as 'the great Sanhedrin and small Sanhedrin that are seated before us' (L1BM 9:2), 'we commanded every province and every city' (L1BM 10:8); and his unnamed son is the one who made the announcement (L1BM 14:10). However, that the letter was authored by ben Meir—which therefore identifies him as the Palestinian leader—is only known from a line of meta-text in Judeo-Arabic, which is evidently not part of the letter itself (L1BM 1:10). This raises the question of the reliability of the letter's attribution to ben Meir, and hence, of the identity of ben Meir himself.

The widely accepted identification of ben Meir as the 'head of the academy' was challenged by Moshe Gil (1975, 1992: 654–657), who argued that the head of the academy was really called Meir, whereas his son, whom he sent to Jerusalem, was Aharon or the one more commonly known as 'ben Meir'. Gil's argument is based on a single Cairo Genizah fragment, T-S NS 312.82 recto, that comprises a list Palestinian *geonim* (heads of academy), and where Gil reads on line 5: ואחריו מאיר ובנו ר׳ אהרן גאון הנזכר יד שנה, 'and after him (i.e. the *gaon* previously mentioned), Meir and his son R. Aharon Gaon, aforementioned, 14 years'. This phrase suggests to Gil that father and son were somehow joint holders of the position, the son acting as spokesperson for his father; he therefore identifies 'Meir and his son R. Aharon Gaon' as the protagonists of the controversy of 921/2, and hence, the head of the academy as 'Meir'.

His reading of this fragment, however, is tendentious and only partially correct. Before Gil, Shraga Abramson (1965: 33) read this line very differently as: ונהג בן מאיר אחי ר׳ אהרן גאון הנזכר יד שנה, 'and ben Meir, brother of the aforementioned R. Aharon Gaon, ruled for 14 years'. The reason why they differ so widely at the beginning of the line is that the paper is torn off (a fact that neither bother to indicate), so that both their readings are merely conjectural. However, the last two letters of Gil's ואחריו (at the beginning of the line) are clearly pre-

4 Why Saadya is singled out at the end of this letter is evaluated and discussed in Chapter 2.

5 BCC 19:2; RHayye 6v:4.

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served, and there are also remnants of the top of a *resh*; Gil's conjecture of ואחריו is therefore much more plausible, especially as this word ('and after him') is a recurring term in this list of *geonim*. Consequently, this line of text refers to 'Meir', not to 'ben Meir'.

Far less convincing, however, is Gil's reading of the short word between 'Meir' and 'R. Aharon'. He reads it as ובנו ('and his son'), and Abramson as אחי ('brother of'); but both readings, in my view, are incorrect. This word is largely faded in the manuscript, and further damaged by two small holes in the paper. Gil's reading, ובנו, is completely unfounded; almost none of these letters are visible. Abramson's reading, אחי, is slightly better, because at least the letter *ḥet* is visible (although without a serif, whereas in the rest of the fragment this letter is serifed); however, the letter *aleph* is not evident, and there is no *yod* at the end of the word. I would agree with Gil that the word appears to begin with a *waw*, even though this *waw* would be too short. It might be possible, therefore, to read ואח, which could be an abbreviation of ואחריו; this would yield the meaning of 'and after him Meir, and after him R. Aharon Gaon aforementioned, 14 years': ר׳ אהרן גאון הנזכר י״ד שנה (ריו) ואח[ריו מאיר].

This reading, which is based on my examination of digital images as well as of the original in the Cambridge University Library, must still be treated as somewhat uncertain. But if it is correct, Aharon is only listed in the fragment as Meir's successor; he may also have been his son, although this is not mentioned in the fragment, and there is certainly no indication of any co-regency.

Moreover, in the absence of any dates or absolute chronology, the identity of 'Meir' in this small fragment with the Palestinian leader of the calendar controversy of 921/2 remains completely conjectural. If any identification is to be made with the leader of the controversy, a better candidate in this fragment might be R. Aharon ben Moses ben Meir, listed above in lines 1 and 3–4.[6] This Aharon is said to have ruled for 17 years, and was succeeded by a R. Isaac for two years (line 4; the latter was then followed by Meir, line 5). As Abramson (1965:30) points out, an Isaac is referred to in ben Meir's First Letter as the head of his court (L1BM 9:1). If the ben Meir of the calendar controversy is R. Aharon b. Moses b. Meir, he would have been plausibly succeeded by the head of his court, Isaac, at a later stage.

In short, this inconclusive fragment provides no good reason to dispute the attribution of this present letter to a 'ben Meir' (even though the attribution

6 As assumed by Abramson (1965: 29), who argues that although this Aharon was a grandson rather than a son of Meir, he may still have been known as 'ben Meir' as a kind of family name.

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only appears in the meta-text), or to argue, with Gil, that the Palestinian leader at the time of the controversy of 921/2 was really called Meir. That his name was 'ben Meir' finds some support in the Book of the Calendar Controversy, where the name is used and refers in all likelihood to the Palestinian leader.[7] For this reason, the traditional attribution of this letter—and for that matter, of the Palestinian leadership—to 'ben Meir' should be maintained.

The Manuscripts

Our manuscripts are L1BM1 and L1BM2, which are fragmentary but with considerable overlap. It is possible that L1BM2 consists in fact of two distinct manuscripts: T-S 8K7–8, and the manuscript published by Harkavy in 1891, which is no longer extant. There are strong indications that they belong to the same manuscript (see discussion in the diplomatic edition of L1BM2); but if not, three manuscripts in total would be attested. L1BM1 can be dated to the beginning of the eleventh century, and L1BM2 to later in the eleventh century. Both manuscripts, most distinctly L1BM1, are written in a Palestinian script or a script with Palestinian features. This suggests that the letter was preserved and copied in eleventh-century Fusṭāṭ by a specifically pro-Palestinian faction.

In terms of the text, L1BM1 is prone to abbreviations and defective spellings, some quite unusual (e.g. יש for ישראל, L1BM1 *passim*; ואן for ואין, L1BM1 fol. 3r:5); in contrast, L1BM2 is prone to unusual plene spellings (e.g. הייתה, L1BM2 fol. 1v:1,4, fol. 2v:6, never using the normal היתה; and ציוינו, fol. 1r:19). L1BM2 often has words or phrases that are absent in L1BM1 (in eight cases altogether; see apparatus); it is difficult to tell whether this is due to omission in L1BM1 or interpolation in L1BM2. On the whole, it seems that L1BM1 tends towards textual economy, and L1BM2 in the opposite direction.[8]

Calendrical errors are common in L1BM2, or more precisely in ms Harkavy, where calendrical data appear (four errors, all in L1BM2 fol. 3 recto). Perhaps this reveals a lack of calendrical expertise on the part of the scribe.

Some textual errors are shared in common by both manuscripts. For example, לברות reads in both manuscripts instead of לכרות (L1BM1 fol. 2v:6; L1BM2 fol. 1r:4); the former may be possible, as an unusual verb meaning 'to

7 BCC 30:15–23; see also the passage from *Sefer ha-Galuy* quoted in my introduction to the Book of the Calendar Controversy. In support of his argument, Gil (1992: 654) points out that ben Meir is never referred to in our sources (at least explicitly) as head of the academy or *gaon*. This is correct, but equally, it must be pointed out that the name 'Meir' (without 'ben') never appears in our sources either, even though the Palestinian rabbinic leadership is frequently referred to.

8 There are however exceptions: see for example L1BM2 fol. 2v:16 and my note on the diplomatic edition (p. 275, n. 254).

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feed', but the source verse, Job 40:30, indicates that the latter is correct. In the same passage, both manuscripts read בעיר, which makes no sense, instead of בעור (L1BM1 fol. 2v:8; L1BM2 fol. 1r:6). This passage, which may have been difficult for scribes to understand, has also many other errors in both manuscripts. The two examples I have mentioned are not authorial errors but simple scribal errors, due to a confusion of similar letters; as such, these errors could have arisen independently in both manuscripts, but still, the coincidence is unlikely. These shared errors indicate that the two manuscripts are related, their errors being either copied from one another or deriving from a common source.[9]

Less certain is the significance of cases where errors occur on the same word, but the errors are different. Thus in the same, afore-mentioned passage, L1BM1 (fol. 2v:7) reads תנתצה and L1BM2 (fol. 1r:5) הנתצה, whereas the correct reading is most likely הנחצה (again, based on Job 40:30). These errors appear again to be scribal; the word הנחצה is unusual, which explains why errors arose in both manuscripts. But it is unclear whether these errors arose independently of one another, or whether the error was somehow transmitted from one manuscript to the other (e.g. the later manuscript L1BM2 copying from L1BM1 and only partially remedying the error), or derived from a common line of transmission.

Although scribal errors in common suggest that L1BM1 and L1BM2 belong to the same manuscript tradition, many errors are unique to one or the other manuscripts, which makes it unlikely that the manuscripts were directly copied from one another (the later one, L1BM2, from L1BM1). It is more likely, therefore, that they are derived, directly or indirectly, from a common source. This common source was not the original, but an intermediary copy, as it contained itself a number of scribal errors which were passed on to both our manuscripts.

It should also be noted that errors in common between the manuscripts, and different errors on the same words, are only attested in the first part of L1BM2, i.e. the Cambridge folios T-S 8K8 and T-S 8K7; there are no such occurrences in ms Harkavy. If the latter turns out to be a different manuscript, its relationship to L1BM1 and T-S 8K7–8 would need to be re-considered, as it may have belonged to a different line of transmission. What is certain, at the very least, is that the letter of ben Meir was copied several times during the tenth and eleventh centuries, in a complex process of transmission.

9 Further common errors, also likely to be scribal, include שהוקטרו (L1BM 5:6) and ובחזירתנו (L1BM 10:8).

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9.2 Ben Meir's First Letter:

Wherever the text is attested in more than one manuscript, I offer a composite text with critical apparatus. The composite text is based on readings that are preferable in spelling or in grammatical construction, or that appear closer to the original on the basis of contents or of general text edition principles. Sometimes I have used my or others' conjectures. I have omitted many of the editorial annotations that appear in the diplomatic editions (e.g. for interlinear corrections). I have made minor corrections where I felt that readability required it. Abbreviations have been expanded. Footnotes have been kept to a minimum; further information on the text can be found in the diplomatic editions.

Rather than applying continuous line numbering to the whole text, I have divided the text into twenty-five small sections (of various length), according to their attestation in the manuscripts; the lines of each section are separately numbered. If the text is attested in a single manuscript, the original line division has been maintained. The line division of the composite text is mine.

The *variae lectiones* and *lacunae* have been listed in two separate apparatus, following the same editorial principles as for the Book of the Calendar Controversy (Chapter 7). Abbreviations and interlinear corrections by the scribe (e.g. re-insertions of omitted letters) are only indicated in the apparatus if they are particularly significant.

With regard to the translation, a different convention has been adopted here, due to the large number of biblical and rabbinic allusions in the proem: references to the source texts have been generally inserted in the main text rather than in footnotes.

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1 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.1 recto]

תעיר וישבור מוטות עולות גוים מעל צוארכם ויניח לכם
מכל אויבכם מסביב ונזכה ותזכו לראות בנחמה ולהתבשר
ברגלי מבשר משמ(יע) שלום ותשקטו בנוה שלום ובמש(כנות) מבט(חים)
ובמנ(חות) שאננות ולא תהיה משכלה ועק(רה) בארצכם ותזכו לזקנה
ושיבה ולכל אשר תפנו ותשכילו ותכשירו בכל מעשה ידכם
ותשרשו ותעניפו ותעשו שרשים למטה וענפים למעלה ותהיו
מקור ברכה ויהי מקורכם ברוך ומעינכם מתגבר ושלום
רב מן השמים יהי עליכם תמיד וכתב זה ציינו
וחקוק אתו בחדש טבת שנת אׇרׇלׇג
פאגאבה בן מאיר

2 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.1 verso]

שלום מעניף ע[ד שמי] מרומים ומצליל עד יצוק הדומים
סובב ומקיף סב[יב ארץ וימ]ים אפוד חן[10] עטוף רחמים · ממתיק
טעם כמו לרחו[.....] כסוחים[11] כאיתן בא בימים · כאהוב
הנעקד לרצון תמים · וכחקוק מכסא מרומים · ו⟨כ⟩כלכול הפותר
חזיונות וחלומים · וכטוב שניתן בשיע אגמים · וכמלאך משרת
לפני אדון עולמים · וכגער לחרס וסהר מרומים · וכירובעל
שניסה בגזה שני[12] פעמים · וכשמצא[13] ושת⟨ה⟩ מימי לחי בסימים
וכגלעדי ששפט עם וביתו התמימים · וכהקריב טלה חלב

10 For parallels, see note on diplomatic edition of L1BM1 (p. 256, n. 129).
11 This word is problematic; see note on diplomatic edition.
12 Maybe שתי.
13 Most likely an error for וכשצמא, see Jud. 15:18–19 (Friedländer).
14 Year 1233 of the Seleucid era = 921/2 CE.
15 This line, and attribution to ben Meir, is metatext in Judeo-Arabic.
16 A reference to the infant Moses, who was left on the edge of the river in a basket lined with cement and pitch (Ex. 2:3). Alternatively, 'who was laid in the cement of marshes' (i.e. thick, muddy marshes). On the meaning of Aramaic שיע as 'plaster' or 'cement', see Sokoloff (1990) 548, s.v. שיע, and id. (2002) 1138, s.v. שיעא ('sealing clay'). Bornstein interprets the Aramaic שיע as 'smooth', which in this context makes much less sense.

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1 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.1 recto]

... may awaken, and may he break the bars of the yokes (cf. Lev. 26:23) of the nations off your n[e]cks (cf. Jer. 30:8), and may he give you rest
from all your enemies around (cf. Deut. 12:10), and may we merit and you merit to s[ee] consolation and receive the news
with the coming of the herald, harbinger of peace (Is. 52:7), and may you be tranquil, in an abode of peace and in secure dwellings
and in quiet resting-places (Is. 32:18), and may there be no miscarriage or barrenness in your land (cf. Ex. 23:26), and may you merit old age
and longevity, and wherever you turn may you succeed, and may you excel in all your deeds,
and may you grow roots and grow branches, and may you make roots below and branches above, and may you be
a source of blessing, and may your source be blessed (cf. Prov. 5:18) and your spring self-strengthening (cf. *Avot* 2:10), and may abundant peace
from heaven be upon you always. This letter was marked
and engraved in the month of Tevet, year 1233.[14]
Ben Meir replied:[15]

2 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.1 verso]

Peace branching over [from the heavens?] above and casting its shade on the earth below,
surrounding and circling [the earth and the seas], aproned with grace, cloaked with mercy, sweet
tasting like the [...] mowed down (?); like Ethan (Abraham) advancing in his days (Gen. 24:1); like the beloved one (Isaac)
bound as an acceptable (sacrifice), complete; and like (Jacob) carved out of the throne above (cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 82:2); and the sustainer (Joseph—cf. Gen. 50:21), the interpreter
of visions and dreams; and [like] the good one (Moses) (Ex. 2:2) who was laid in cement in the marshes;[16] and like the angel (Aaron) (Malachi 2:7) who served
before the Master of Worlds; and like (Joshua) who rebuked the sun and the moon above (cf. Jos. 10:12); and like Jerubaal
who tested twice with a fleece (cf. Jud. 6:37–40); and like (Samson) who thirsted and drank the scented waters of Lehi (cf. Jud. 15:18–19);
and like (Jephtah) the Gileadite who judged the nation and his household, all perfect; and like (Samuel) who offered a suckling lamb (1 Sam. 7:9)

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לרצות על רחומים · וכתושב שנם ענני שני פעמים · וכמאבל
שהפליא פלאים ע[צו]מים · וכמנגת ששט בעמקי תהומים ·

3 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.2 recto]

ושמע טוב כשנים עשר החתומים · ושם טוב כמנגן בניצוח
טעמים · [ו]כבנה ושכלל בית עולמים · וכשבעה רועים
הקדומים · וכשמנה המסוימים · וכארבעה הדומים והעלומים[17]
יוחקו הברכות כלם בראש קוראיהם בישלומים · לכל המון
קהילות אחינו ישראל הדרים במדנת שנער הרבנים וזקנים וראשי
כנסיות ובתי אבות ופרנסי ציבור וגזברי עם ומרכלים ומלמדי
וחזנים ויתר אחינו יש(ראל) וחבירנו ביראת אל הקדושים הטהורים

17 These two words were misread in the first editions; see diplomatic edition.

18 The word תושב (*toshab*), 'resident', is a double reference to Elijah, who is introduced in 1Kgs 17:1 as התשבי מתושבי גלעד (the Tishbite, among the residents of Gilead).

19 The word ושמע can be vocalized in many ways; the ambiguity is perhaps deliberate, to create a double layer of meaning. If it is pointed as a past *pi'el* (וְשִׁמַּע), as assumed for this passage by the *Ma'agarim* project of the Israel Academy of Language (http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/, accessed 17 January 2019), it takes the meaning of 'summoned'; this usage is attested in only two places in the Hebrew Bible, 1Sam. 15:4 and 23:8, both with reference to Saul. This interpretation works well with the subsequent reference to the twelve tribes (see next note), who were indeed summoned on these occasions by Saul; the only difficulty is then the prepositional prefix כ-, 'like (the twelve sealed)', which I have omitted in the translation. If it is pointed as an infinitive (שְׁמַע), then its combination with טוב alludes again to Saul, in 1Sam. 15:22, הנה שמע מזבח טוב ('behold, to listen is better than a sacrifice'), although the subsequent reference to the twelve tribes becomes a *non sequitur*. Other vocalizations are also possible, but these two are most likely, as they both converge on Saul. Although Saul is out of historical sequence with what precedes (Jonah), he is mentioned here, together David, Solomon, and others (in the next two lines), in anticipation of his eschatological return (Saul appears as an eschatological figure in the Babylonian Talmud, *bSukkah* 52b).

20 The meaning of the 'twelve sealed' was misunderstood by earlier editors. Harkavy (1891: 214 n. 5) thought this referred to the Twelve Prophets (of the Hebrew Bible), in historical sequence after Jonah (on the previous line), and without interpreting the beginning of the line as a reference to Saul; but this is problematic, not least because Jonah is already one of the Twelve Prophets. Bornstein (1904: 46 n. 15) suggested this referred to Hezekiah, but his argument was far-fetched. In actual fact, the 'twelve sealed' appear as an unambiguous reference to the twelve tribes of Israel (or sons of Jacob) in Qaliric poetry (seventh century?), in the liturgy of Shavuot (Pentecost): Frankel (2000) 205, line 159; Elizur (2000) 113, line 324 (with general discussion of the text and its authorship on pp. 21–22, 56–57). The same allusion, again unambiguous in meaning, is used (or re-used) by Saadya in his liturgical poem on the Service of the Day of Atonement (Davidson et al. 1941: 283, line 62, see apparatus). This *topos* is certainly what ben Meir alludes to here.

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to atone for the beloved; and like the resident[18] (Elijah) who said twice 'answer me' (1Kgs 18:37); and like (Elisha) from Abel
who wrought tremendous wonders; and like (Jonah) from Gath (2Kgs 14:25) who swam in the depths of the abysses;

3 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.2 recto]

and (Saul) who summoned[19] well the twelve sealed (the twelve tribes of Israel);[20] and a good name[21] like the musician (David) who mastered his tunes; and like (Solomon) who built and completed the eternal house; and like the seven ancient shepherds, and like the designated eight (Micah 5:4); and like the four silent and concealed[22]
– may all the blessings be engraved on the heads of those who call out to them[23] with greetings. To all the multitude
of communities of Israel,[24] our brothers, who dwell in the province of Shinar (Babylonia), the rabbis, elders, heads
of synagogues and of families, leaders of the community, treasurers of the people, superintendents, teachers,
ḥazzanim,[25] and the rest of Israel our brothers, our equals in the fear of God, holy, pure,

21 A 'good name' is associated with David in 1Chron. 14:17 and *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7:1:3.

22 This is probably an allusion to the eschatological four craftsmen (חָרָשִׁים) of Zach. 2:3, analogous to the seven shepherds and eight princes of Micah 5:4; but the word has been implicitly re-vocalized as חֵרְשִׁים, meaning 'deaf', 'silent' or 'dumb', which in turn has been replaced with the synonymous דומים, followed by the semantically related term העלומים, 'concealed'. The substitution of the word דומים, like that of מסוימים ('designated'), is required for the rhyme, and is also consistent with the allusiveness of the whole proem (typical of liturgical poetry or *piyyut*). Silence and concealement are characteristic of apocalyptic redeemers. The seven shepherds, eight princes, and four craftsmen are identified with named biblical and eschatological figures in *bSukkah* 52b.

23 To all the biblical and eschatological characters mentioned above; but also, implicitly, to the addressees that follow.

24 The term 'Israel' is frequently used in this letter. It may be intended to reinforce the Palestinian identity and authority of ben Meir, presenting himself as leader, in the land of Israel, of the whole nation of Israel.

25 The normal translation of *ḥazzan* is 'cantor', as it later came to mean; but for the tenth century, this interpretation is probably too narrow, as the office of *ḥazzan* included other functions (see for example below, L1BM 11:1). On the wide-ranging functions of the *ḥazzan* in late Antiquity, see Levine (2005) 435–442. Still in the late eleventh century, a figure such as Hillel ben Eli could bear the title of *ḥazzan*, yet his main documented activity, from the Cairo Genizah, was that of a court clerk and scribe (see Weiss 1967). The development of the office of *ḥazzan*, from Antiquity to the late Middle Ages, requires further study. I have therefore left the term untranslated here.

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אוהבי תורה דורשי תעודה הוגה[26] בדת לקח טוב עדת חסידים
להקת תמימים כנת ישרים אילי הצדק נטיעת שלום למודי יי״
בני אל חי האהובים במעשהם הטובים ובדרכיהם הישרות

4 [**LiBM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.2 verso]

המצוינים בתורה ובמצות ומושפעות בכל מדות טובות העשויים
נחת רוח לחכמים ולסנהדרי ישר(אל) הנתונים חפץ לכל ⟨בני⟩[27] חלוף
המה ישאו קולם בהגים בגאון י׳ צהלו מים על כן יבורך יי״

5 [**LiBM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.2 verso, **LiBM2** T-S 8K8 recto]

יי״ אדונינו ויאמן ויגדל שמו על כל שפת רננים וזמרת נוגנים
מישכולו רחמים וחינונים יפצכם מכף סוטנים ותסקרו זיו מלך פנים בפנים
ותכולכלו ממרעית אלף מכמה שנים ולברות בכירת הנחצה בין כנענים
ולהתנחל מעיט אשר קרסוליו בנבך וכרבלתו עד אופנים
ולהסתוכך בעור עקלתון אשר קשקשיו מפנינים
ולהתגונן בחופות י׳ ליציר בעדן גנים[28]
ולסוך מאפרסמון המעולה על כל שמנים

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5. 2 **LiBM1** מישכולו **LiBM2** משכלו ‖ **LiBM1** יפצכם **LiBM2** ופיצכם 3 **LiBM1** (Harkavy conj.) ולכרות ‖ ממ״ר״עיתו **LiBM1** ממרעית **LiBM2** ‖ ותכלכלו **LiBM2** ותכולכלו **LiBM1** תנחצה (Harkavy conj.) הנחצה ‖ בבירת **LiBM1** בכירת **LiBM2** ‖ ולברות **LiBM1 LiBM2** הנתצה **LiBM2** 4 מעינו **LiBM1** מעיט **LiBM2** 5 (Harkavy conj.) בעור **LiBM1 LiBM2** שהוקט[ו]רו **LiBM2** שהוקטרו **LiBM1** 6 מפנימם **LiBM1** מפנינים **LiBM2** ‖ בעיר 7 **LiBM2** כל **LiBM1** omittit

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26 Error for הוגי.

27 See Prov. 31:8.

28 The manuscripts both read שהוקטרו, which translates literally as 'that were burnt (as incense or sacrifice)', and is difficult to comprehend. Harkavy (for LiBM1), followed by Schechter (for LiBM2), reads שהוקשרו ('that were knotted'), which makes more sense in context; indeed, the verb קשר is used in the midrashic source of this passage, *Leviticus Rabbah* 20:2 (Margaliot ed. p. 446). This reading, which is probably due to a misreading or conjecture of Neubauer, could conceivably have been the original text, as the letter ש may have been misread at some point in the transmission as טו (which our present scribe then corrected to ט). The error might also have arisen under the influence of Aramaic, where the verb קטר is equivalent and cognate to the Hebrew קשר. I am therefore inclined to accept this conjecture.

29 This is probably self-referential, as ben Meir refers later to the Sanhedrin as being in Palestine.

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lovers of Torah, seekers of testimony, who speak the law of 'a good take' (Prov. 4:2), congregation of the pious,
company of the perfect, foundation of the upright, mighty in righteousness, plantation of peace, students of the Lord,
10 sons of the living God, beloved in their good actions and upright ways,

4 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.2 verso]

outstanding in the Torah and the commandments, overflowing will all good qualities, who give
peace of mind to the wise and to the Sanhedrin of Israel,[29] a gift of delight to all mortals,
may they raise their voice with words, to the greatness of the Lord they shout from the sea, therefore (cf. Is. 24:14–15) blessed be

5 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.2 verso, **L1BM2** T-S 8K8 recto]

the Lord our lord, may He be trusted and His name made great on all the lips of those who chant and in the melody of those who sing.
He who is all mercy and graces shall disperse you from the palm of (your) enemies. May you gaze face to face at the splendour of the King,
and be fed from his cattle (Behemoth) of many years, and feast at the banquet shared out by Canaanites,
and inherit the bird whose claws are in sea-depths and his crest in heaven,[30]
5 and take cover under the hide of the serpent (Leviathan) whose scales are of rubies,
and take shelter under the ten canopies that were knotted[31] for the created one (Adam) in Eden of gardens,
and be anointed with balsam, the most elevated of all oils,

30 Lit. 'in the wheels' (of the heavenly chariot: cf. Ez. 1). 'Canaanites' (from Job 40:30) usually refer, in late Hebrew Bible books, to merchants. Ben Meir is referring in these lines to the eschatological banquet where the flesh of the wild ox or Behemoth ('his cattle': see Ps. 50:10), Leviathan (Job 40:25–32), and the bird Ziz (Ps. 50:11) will be consumed (see *Leviticus Rabbah* 22:10 Margaliot ed. p. 523, *bBava Batra* 75a, *Midrash Tanhuma Nitsavim* 5, etc.). The tradition that the bird Ziz stretches from the waters below to the heavens above is only attested, to my knowledge, in the Babylonian Talmud (*bBava Batra* 73b), and not in any Palestinian source; but ben Meir's knowledge of Babylonian Talmud is evident further on in this letter, L1BM 14:1–8.

31 See note on the text, and *Lev. Rabbah* 20:2 Margaliot ed. pp. 446–447.

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ולהסב בפרדס עם מצוקים ואיתנים אשר ביום קוראים ובלילה שונים
סנהדרי ישראל הנאמנים

6 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 verso left, **L1BM2** T-S 8K8 recto]

הקובעים מועדים וזמנים חכמי ישראל הדרבונים
מקום אגן הסהר הקדמונים
המעברים ימים ושנים ועל פיהם המועדים מיתקנים
אין רשות לאדם מישראל להשיג גבול ראשונים
שעליהם נאמר היושבת בגנים
ומצוה לעשות על פי זקנים שכן אמר דוד אבי המנגנים מזקנים אתבונן
ואין שבחן שלישראל אלא ירושלים עיר הקודש וסנהדרין גדולה שבתוכה
שכך שנו חכ(מים) ז(כרונם) לב(רכה) מי שלא ראה בשמחת בית השאבה לא ראה שמחה מימיו

7 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 verso left, **L1BM2** T-S 8K8 verso]

ומה היתה שמחת בית המקדש שלא לן אדם בירושלים ובידו עון
שנ(אמר) העם היושב בה נשוא עון
ולא עוד אלא שכל ימים שהיה בית המקדש קיים
היתה הברכה והזול והשובע בעולם דכת(יב) כטל חרמון וג(ומר)
אבל משחרב בית המקדש נסתלקה השמחה

6. 1 **L1BM1** הקובעים **L1BM2** הק[ו]בועים 3 **L1BM2** המועדיים **L1BM1** המועדים ‖ **L1BM2** מתקנים **L1BM1** מיתקנים 6 **L1BM1** דויד **L1BM2** דוד 7 **L1BM2** ואן **L1BM1** ואין 8 **L1BM2** **L1BM1** omittit לא ראה שמחה מימיו

7. 1 **L1BM1** השאבה **L1BM2** המקדש **L1BM1** המקדש ‖ **L1BM2** היתה **L1BM1** הייתה 2 שנ(אמר) 4 **L1BM1** היתה **L1BM2** הייתה ‖ **L1BM2** העם **L1BM1** העיר ‖ **L1BM2** דכתי **L1BM1** שנ וג(ומר) **L1BM1** omittit **L1BM2** וג

32 A reference to the rabbinic *topos* of written Torah versus oral Torah: the former is read, normally in daylight, whereas the latter is recited, which can be done in the dark. The 'strong and mighty' are thus the Torah sages. At this point, ben Meir begins to steer towards his main theme, rabbinic calendrical authority.

33 My interpretation of סהר (Song 7:3) as 'moon' follows the Targum. The moon circle is identified with the Sanhedrin (that was laid out in a semi-circle) in *bSanhedrin* 37a and in subsequent midrashic literature, and particularly appropriate in the context of the lunar calendar.

34 Lit. 'remove the boundary' (Deut. 19:14). This is the first direct attack on ben Meir's calendar opponents.

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and recline in Paradise with the strong and mighty, who in daytime read and at night recite,[32]
the trustworthy Sanhedrin of Israel

6 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 verso left, **L1BM2** T-S 8K8 recto]

who fix the festivals and times, the sages of Israel (who are like) goads (cf. Eccl. 12:11),
the site of the moon circle,[33] the elders
who intercalate days and years, on whose authority the festivals are set—
no man in Israel is allowed to overstep the boundary of the ancients[34]
5 about whom it was said: 'You that dwells in the gardens …' (Song 8:13).[35]
It is a commandment to act on the authority of the sages, for so said David, father of musicians: 'from the elders I have understood' (Ps. 119:100).
And the only praise of Israel was Jerusalem the holy city and the great Sanhedrin that was within it,
for so our sages of blessed memory have taught: 'he who has never seen the rejoicing of the House of Water-Drawing[36] has never seen rejoicing in his life' (*mSukkah* 5:1);

7 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 verso left, **L1BM2** T-S 8K8 verso]

and what was the rejoicing of the Temple?—that no one ever stayed in Jerusalem with any sin (*Song Rabbah* 1:9),
as it is written: 'the people that dwell in it are forgiven their sin' (Is. 33:24);[37]
and furthermore, that all the days when the Temple was in existence,
there were blessing, cheapness, and plenty in the world, as it is written: 'like the dew of Hermon etc.' (Ps. 133:3).
5 But since the Temple was destroyed, joy was removed,

35 In the continuation of this verse, '… the companions hearken for your voice' (Song 8:13), the 'companions' are interpreted in *Song Rabbah* ibid. (and more explicitly in *bBava Batra* 75a) as referring to the rabbinic sages. This is perhaps what is alluded to here, through a quotation of the beginning of the verse.

36 A celebration that took place in the Temple during the festival of Tabernacles, according to the Mishnah.

37 Although the quotation is from *Song Rabbah*, the proof-text from Is. 33:24 belongs to another, similar rabbinic tradition in *Sifre* Deut. 333.

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8 [**LiBM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 recto right, **LiBM2** T-S 8K8 verso]

ולא ירד טל ברכה
וניטל טעם הפירות דכת(יב) כי תאנה לא תפרח וג(ומר) זרעתם הרבה והבא מעט
וכשיופיע הק(דוש) ב(רוך) ה(וא) ברחמיו הרבים לנחם את ישראל
אינו מנחמן ומשמחן אלא בשמחת בית המקדש דכת(יב) כי נחם יי ציון
שיאמר בעל הרחמים ויעשה למען שמו ויביט בעלבון עמו
ויבנה ביתו ואולמו וישכלל מקום הדומו ויחיש להם יומו
ויצמיח ינון שמו

9 [**LiBM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 recto right, **LiBM2** T-S 8K7 recto]

שאו שלום גדול ממנו ומן יצחק אב בית דין שלנו
ומן סנהדרין גדולה וסנהדרין קטנה היושבת לפנינו
ומן החכמים והמשנים ומפלהדרין ומן תלמידין ומן הזקנים
ומן השופטים והסופרין והחזנין ומן החורין והסגנים
ומכל שארית עדת ישראל הדרים במקדש יי ובצבי ארצות
שברחמי יוצרנו אנו חנויים ובצל אברתו אנו מסתופפים
ועל חסדו אנו נשענים כי לא עזב ולא יעזוב לעולם ומעודינו ועד

10 [**LiBM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.3 recto, **LiBM2** T-S 8K7 recto]

היום הזה זכרכם הטוב לא מש מפינו ותפלתינו עליכם תדירה
ועל זקני יקר שלכם בהר הזתים מול היכל יי מקום הדום רגלי אלהינו

8. 2 (ומר) וג **LiBM1** וג׳ **LiBM2** omittit 3 **LiBM1** וכשיופיע **LiBM2** וכשיופע 4 **LiBM2** יי **LiBM1** יי 7 end of line **LiBM2** (?) אמן ואמן קובל בהא **LiBM1** omittit
9. Top margin **LiBM2** בֹּשׁ רֹחׁ 1 **LiBM2** גדול **LiBM1** omittit 4 **LiBM2** ומן השופטים שׁארית׳ עם **LiBM1** שארית עדת ישראל **LiBM2** 5 והשׁפ והסופ׳ והחזנ **LiBM1** והסופרין והחזנין יי **LiBM1** יי **LiBM2** יי 7 **LiBM2** יעזוב **LiBM1** יעזב
10. 1 **LiBM2** תדירה **LiBM1** ותפלתינו **LiBM1** ‖ ותפלתינו **LiBM2** אלהיי **LiBM2** אֹינו **LiBM1** אלהינו

9. 1 **LiBM2** [אב בית] 2 **LiBM2** וסנה[רין קטנה]

38 A name of the Messiah: *Genesis Rabbah* 1:4 (Theodor-Albeck ed. p. 6), etc.

39 'Our' probably has a possessive meaning (rather than a looser, relational one): ben Meir is implicitly flaunting his supreme rabbinic and political status by referring to the Head of Court as 'his', and by referring (on the next line) to the great and small Sanhedrin—of Mishnaic and Talmudic fame—as seated before him.

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8 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 recto right, **L1BM2** T-S 8K8 verso]

the dew of blessing did not fall,
and the taste of fruits was removed (*mSotah* 9:12), as it is written: 'for the fig tree will not blossom' (Hab. 3:17), 'you will sow much and bring in little' (Hag. 1:6).
And when the Holy One, blessed be He, appears in His great mercy to comfort Israel,
He will only comfort them and make them rejoice with the joy of the Temple, as it is written: 'for the Lord has comforted Zion' (Is. 51:3).
Let the Merciful speak and act for the sake of His name, and observe the disgrace of His people;
let Him build His house and hall, and complete the place of His stool (cf. Is. 66:1); let Him hasten for them His day,
and bring forth the one who is Yinon by name (Ps. 72:17).[38]

9 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 recto right, **L1BM2** T-S 8K7 recto]

Receive our great greetings, from us and from Isaac, our Head of Court,[39]
and from the great Sanhedrin and small Sanhedrin that are seated before us,
and from the sages, the reciters, the councillors,[40] the disciples, the elders,
the judges, the scribes, the *ḥazzanim*, the patricians, the deputies,
and all the rest of the congregation of Israel who live in the sanctuary of the Lord and in the 'gem of lands' (cf. Ez. 20:6),
where thanks to our Creator's mercy we are encamped, and in the shadow of His wing we take shelter,
and on His kindness we depend—for He has not abandoned, and will not abandon forever.
From our origins until

10 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.3 recto, **L1BM2** T-S 8K7 recto]

today, favourable mention of you has not left our mouth, and our prayer for you and your honourable elders
has been constant, on the Mount of Olives, facing the sanctuary of the Lord, the place of the footstool (Is. 66:1) of God,

40 See *pYoma* 1:1 (38c).

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ועל שער הכהן ועל שערי מקדש יי בקיבוץ כל ישר(אל) לחג את חג יי חג הסוכות
וכשמוע כל יש(ראל) שבחכם מפינו אז שמחו וששו ועלצו בשלום
אשר הציבו שדי בינינו כי בהיותנו בבגדאד אצלכם
לא נמנענו מלעזור אתכם בכל לבבינו ובכל נפשינו על הקושרים עליכם
וכל מאמרכם ותאוותכם היינו עושים
ובחזירתנו[41] אל ארץ מולדתנו צוינו בכל מדינה ומדינה ועיר

11 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.3 recto, **L1BM2** T-S 8K7 verso]

ועיר לחזנים והיו קוראים הפתיחים שלכם ומנדים שנאכם
ומיכן נטרו איבה עלינו
וביי בטחנו לא נבוש ותנינו שבח כבודכם והודענו בכל החסד

12 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.3 verso, **L1BM2** T-S 8K7 verso]

אשר גמלתונו
והיו חמודיי וכל סנהדרין שלנו בצאתם אל כל המקומות
מודיעים רוב אהבתינו לכם
כי מעולם לא היתה אהבה בין חכמי ארץ ישר(אל) כמות זה הדור
יהי רצון שיתמידה רחום

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10. 3 **L1BM1** ועל שער **L1BM2** בשער ‖ **L1BM1** חג יי **L1BM2** חג יי 4 **L1BM2** וכשמוע **L1BM1** ובשמוע ‖ **L1BM2** וששו **L1BM1** omittit 5 **L1BM1** שדי **L1BM2** שהי 6 **L1BM1** נמנענו **L1BM2** נמנעו ‖ **L1BM2** נפשינו **L1BM1** נפשנו ‖ **L1BM2** לבבינו **L1BM1** לבבנו 7 **L1BM2** ותאוותכם **L1BM1** ותאותכם 8 **L1BM1** ארץ מולדתנו **L1BM2** ארץ ‖ **L1BM2** ובחזירתנו **L1BM1** ובחז[י]רתנו **L1BM2** צוינו **L1BM1** יש ארץ מולדתנו
12. 2 **L1BM2** אל כל המקומות **L1BM1** אל מקומות 4 **L1BM1** היתה **L1BM2** הייתה

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11. 1 **L1BM2** [והיו קוראים הפתיחים שלכם ומנדים] 2–3 **L1BM2** [כן נטרו איבה עלינו ובי] ומי בטחנו לא

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41 So in both manuscripts (although in L1BM2 fol. 2r:18, the unusual *yod* is marked for deletion), as well as in the similar narrative in LMisc fol. 8v:4.

42 On the Priest's Gate and its location, see Gil (1992) 640–646. Ben Meir's mention of these holy sites in Jerusalem is probably meant, again, to impress his readers.

43 i.e. between ben Meir and his Babylonian addressees. The narrative that follows is provided in slightly more detail in Letter 4 of LMisc (fol. 8v:1–7), ben Meir's 'Second Letter'. For further discussion, see Gil (1992) 654–659.

44 The role of *ḥazzanim* was evidently not confined to synagogal liturgy, but extended also

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at the Priest's Gate[42] and the gates of the temple of the Lord, at the gathering of all Israel to celebrate the festival of the Lord, the festival of Tabernacles;
and when all Israel heard your praises from our mouth, then they rejoiced and exulted and applauded the peace
that God had established between us.[43] For when we were in Baghdad with you,
we did not refrain from helping you with all our heart and all our soul against those who were conspiring against you,
and all your words and desires we fulfilled;
and when we returned to our motherland, we commanded every province and every city

11 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.3 recto, **L1BM2** T-S 8K7 verso]

that the *ḥazzanim* read your writs[44] and excommunicate your enemy.
Because of that, they held a grudge against us,
but we trusted in the Lord, without any shame, and we praised your honour again and again, and we made known all the kindness

12 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.3 verso, **L1BM2** T-S 8K7 verso]

that you bestowed on us;
and my sons[45] and our whole Sanhedrin, wherever they went to,
made known our abundant love for you,
for there has never been such love between the sages of the land of Israel[46] as this generation's
– may it be His will, the Merciful, to make it endure!
And these (last) days, we received all the letters written by David so-called[47] son of Zakkai,

---

to public readings and announcements (see above, n. 25). The term *petiḥin*, translated here as 'writs', is technical and refers specifically to the initial writs of excommunication, normally issued by rabbinic courts as a sanction against evaders in civil law suits. For a standard formulary, see Aptowitzer (1913) 26 (text) and 41–42 (commentary); also Harkavy (1887) 84. Gil (1992: 522–523) incorrectly describes the excommunication order in these formularies as a 'curse'.

45 See below, note on L1BM 14:9–10 (p. 232, n. 61).

46 'and you', or 'and the sages of Babylonia', appears to be missing or taken for granted.

47 So interpreted by earlier editors, but the Hebrew is unclear.

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ובאילו הימים הגיעו אלינו כל האגרות אשר כתבם דויד האומר בן זכאי
הידוע אצלכם במעשיו הטובים ודרכיו התמימים הוא ובניו וכוהן
והמתחבר אליהם סעיד בן יוסף אלדלאצי אשר הוא דומה להם והם דומים לו
ובעת אשר התבוננו באגרות ידענו רוב חכמתכם
אשר אתם יודעים בכבודכם כי פירוש אלף אינם מכירים
קל וחומר מכניסים עצמם במה שלא הנחילם חי העולמים ולא הרשם להזכיר בפה
כי אתם יודעים שהנביאים הראשונים והחכמים

13 [**L1BM2** T-S 8K7 verso]

נמנעו מלעבר בחוצה לארץ
וראיה לדבר מאבינו יעקוב זֹצֹל שכך למדנו
מרבותינו זֹל כשיצא יעקוב אבינו לחוצה לארץ

14 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.4 recto]

Not continuous with the previous text.

שאמ(ר) ר(בי) בכך יורה יורה ידין ידין יתיר בכורות אל יתיר בכורות
ומכלל כל הדברים הללו יש הרשות לחבורת ארץ יש(ראל) על חכמי בני
הגולה ואין לבני הגולה רשות על בני ארץ יש(ראל) גם כמה שי[פ]ורץ[48]

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12. 6 **L1BM1** דויד **L1BM2** דאוד ‖ **L1BM2** האומר **L1BM1** האֹ 8 **L1BM1** אליהם **L1BM2** להם
9 **L1BM1** באגרות **L1BM2** באיגרות ‖ **L1BM1** חכמתכם **L1BM2** חכמכם 11 **L1BM1** קל וחומר
L1BM2 קל וחומר 12 **L1BM1** חי **L1BM2** חיי ‖ **L1BM1** הראשונים **L1BM2** הראשנים

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48 Cf. 1Sam. 3:1 (חזון נפרץ).

49 The intention of this compliment is probably not sarcastic, but rather to show willingness for conciliation, and possibly also to shift subtly the blame away from the exilarch, unto figures such as Saadya (see however line 7).

50 Presumably Kohen Tsedeq, the *gaon* or head of the academy of Pumbedita.

51 From the locality of Dilāṣ in the Fayyūm, Egypt. This mention of Saadya's place of origin is what originally prompted Neubauer's and Harkavy's interest in this text, leading to its first edition in 1891 (see introduction to L1BM1, p. 254).

52 This remark runs counter to the conciliatory tone of line 6. In these lines, ben Meir is deliberately blending different, contradictory aims.

53 The Babylonians have got involved in the science of the calendar which they do not understand and which they have no divine mandate to deal with.

54 Alternatively: 'setting the calendar', although this is not the primary meaning of the term. This term, with its two possible meanings, appears again in 14:6, 14:9, etc.

55 The beginning of a quotation from *Pirqei de Rabbi Eliezer* ch. 8, whereby Jacob was

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who is known to you for his good deeds and perfect ways,[49] from him and his sons and the priest,[50]
and their accomplice Sa'id ben Yosef al-Dilāṣi[51] who resembles them and they resemble him.[52]
But as soon as we perused the letters, we recognized your abundant wisdom.
For you know, your honour, that they do not know the explanation of their teaching,
and even worse, they bring themselves into something that the Everlasting Life did not bequeath them and did not allow them to mention aloud.[53]
For you know that the early prophets and the sages

13 [**L1BM2** T-S 8K7 verso]

refrained from intercalating[54] outside the Land (of Israel),
and proof of this is Jacob our father—may the memory of the righteous be for a blessing (Prov. 10:7)—for so our rabbis
have taught us: 'when Jacob our father went out to outside the Land[55] …'

14 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.4 recto]

(Not continuous with the previous text)

… regarding which Rabbi said: 'May he instruct?—he may instruct; may he judge?—he may judge; may he permit first-born (animals)?—he may not permit first-born (animals)' (*bSanhedrin* 5a).[56]
From all these sources, it may be deduced that the academy of the land of Israel has authority over the sages of those
of the Exile, and those of the Exile do not have authority over those of the land of Israel. Also, as is widespread

prohibited from intercalating abroad. Note that ben Meir attributes this work to 'our rabbis' rather than 'our sages'; this choice of term possibly (though not necessarily) indicates awareness of the relative lateness of this work (which modern scholars would normally date to around the eighth century).

56 This is how Rabbi (Judah the Patriarch) ordained Rav, the Babylonian sage, before his return to Babylonia: the authority he conferred upon him was limited to 'instructing' and 'judging', which underlines the subordination of Babylonian sages to the Palestinians. Ironically—and probably with good reason—ben Meir is quoting here a passage from the Babylonian Talmud.

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בתלמודם יורו לומר דשלחו מתם ולא נראתה ולא נשמעה מעולם
לבני הגולה להורות או לדון או להעמיד רשות להם את בני ארץ יש(ראל)
ועוד תלמודם מעיד בכמה הוריות ועיבורים לרבן גמליאל אבינו זל
כרצונו ואין ממיר בארץ מכל החכמים שהיו בדורו כל שכן בחו(ץ)
לארץ ולפיכך הוצרכנו עתה לבאר לכם סוד ארבעה
שעות[57] להראות כי מאחר שהרשות בידנו לעבר לא בדאו ולא
באפס שורש מחשבון הכריז חמודנו גם להודיעכם ביאור כל
שער ושער אשר למדנו מן החכמ(ים) הראשונים זל וכן הוא מפורש

15 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.4 verso]

[לדו]רשים בשלומכם שאין ראש הש(נה) נתכון לא באֹ בשבת
ולא בדֹ ולא בוֹ כענין שלמדנו וירשנו מאבותינו רבן גמלי(אל) הנשיא
ורבנו יהודה הנשיא לא אדֹוֹ ראש הש(נה) אלא בשיני וגֹ והֹ וביום
השבת לא נחלקו חכמ(ים) שיום קידוש ראש הש(נה) נקרא באחד
[מ]אלו ארבעה ימים וכך העמידה סנהדרין גדול(ה) את גבולן

57 An error for שערים, as correctly noted by Bornstein.

58 The Babylonians often preface their instructions with this statement, namely that the Palestinians sent them these instructions from the land of Israel. This statement is not pervasive, but it still quite common in the Babylonian Talmud (e.g. *bBetsah* 4b).

59 By calling Rabban Gamaliel his 'father' (an unusual designation), ben Meir is claiming direct heirship of him as Patriarch. Also in 15:2–3 below, with additional reference to R. Judah the Patriarch.

60 An allusion to the story in *mRosh ha-Shanah* 2:9, where a sage disagreed with R. Gamaliel over a calendar decision, but nevertheless ended up complying with it.

61 Lit. 'beloved', a term of endearment commonly used in this period for 'son', in a formal register. It is used as the title of the son of the exilarch or the son of the head of the academy in a late ninth-century Geonic liturgical text (the *qaddish*: ENA 4053.1 recto, ll. 35, 47, 60; see Danzig 2002: 82). In the late tenth century, the same title is used for sons of heads of the academies in Palestine (e.g. ms BL Or. 5549.1, line 17) and in Babylonia (for both Sherira and Hayye, T-S 13F2 recto; for Hayye alone, Harkavy 1887, nos. 198, 200, and 371; see ibid. p. 88, n. 6). The term is applied to other people, still in the sense of 'son', in many documentary sources from the eleventh century and later. The reference here is to the son of ben Meir who made the calendar announcement at the beginning of 921/2.

62 A term borrowed from 1 Kgs. 12:32–33, where Jeroboam is accused of 'fabricating' a new month in the calendar. Ben Meir is rebutting a Babylonian accusation that he 'fabricated' his Four Gates, frequently mentioned in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 8:7, 12:5, 13:6, 30:23).

63 Self-referential.

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in their Talmud, they will instruct by saying: 'they sent from there'.[58] It has never been seen or heard
that those of the Exile instructed or judged or gave themselves authority alongside those of the land of Israel.
And furthermore, their Talmud attests several teachings and intercalations of Rabban Gamaliel our father,[59] may his mention be for a blessing,
(that were carried out) at his will, and of all the sages that were in his generation, no one rebelled in the Land (of Israel)[60]—all the more so outside
the Land. Therefore, we now need to explain to you the secret of the Four
Gates, to show that our son[61] did not fabricate[62] (his dates) on the strength of our authority to intercalate, and that it was not
without a computistic foundation that he made his announcement. (We need) also to make you know the explanation of every
gate which we have learnt from the early sages, may their mention be for a blessing. And so it is evident

15 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.4 verso]

[to those who seek] your peace[63] that the New Year cannot be set on a Sunday,
Wednesday, or Friday, as we have learnt and inherited from our fathers, Rabban Gamaliel the Patriarch
and our Rabbi Judah the Patriarch: the New Year cannot fall on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday,[64] but only on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and the day
of Sabbath. The sages are not divided that the day of the sanctification of the New Year must be called on one
of these four days, and so the great Sanhedrin established the limits

64 In the text, this rule is expressed through the mnemonic formula *lo ADW Rosh* (on which see Chapter 5, p. 59). The attribution of this rule to R. Gamaliel and R. Judah the Patriarch is historically incorrect; but its attribution to R. Gamaliel is also found in Petrus Alfonsi's *Dialogi* (*Patrologia Latina* 157, p. 655—late eleventh century). The fixed calendar as a whole is attributed to R. Gamaliel in a rabbinic *baraita* quoted by the mid tenth-century Qaraite Sahl b. Maṣliaḥ in his *Tokhaḥat Megullah* (Pinsker 1860: ii. 25–43, on pp. 41–42; see also Bornstein 1922*a*: 358–361; more on Sahl b. Maṣliaḥ in Chapter 16.1, where another passage of the same work is edited). It is attributed to R. Judah the Patriarch (more specifically, the Four Gates) in the late eleventh-century *Megillat Evyatar*, fol. 5a, lines 6–11 (Schechter 1901–1902: 472). See further Stern (2001: 177–179).

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ולארבעת ימים האלה וזה פירושן נולד תשרי בגֿהֿזֿ
רואים אם נשתייר רביע יום חסר אַמְרַתּ חלק(ים)[65] עושים אתו
ביומו ואם חסר בְּמַרַתּ דוחין אותו ואנו מבארים לכם
אלה אלו דֿ הימים בדֿ שער(ים) וכך מפורש בשער ראשון
כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד נֿבֿ חלק(ים) משעה יֿ מיום וֿ אחוז

16 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 recto left]

יום שבת וחסר(ים) וטעם הדבר מפני השנה הבאה כדי להעמידה על
שש שעות תְּרַמְאַ חלק(ים) ביום הֿ והוא אַמְרַתּ כי בין מולד שנת מעוברת
לשנה שלאחריה הֿ ימים כֿאֿ שעות תְּקַפְטַ חלק(ים) כשאתה מונה [מנֿבֿ]
חלק(ים) משעה יֿ ביום וֿ הֿ ימים כֿאֿ שעות תְּקַפְטַ חלק(ים) מגיע החשבון[66]
לסוף אַמְרַתּ חלק(ים) משעה זֿ ביום הֿ ולא נוכל לדחותו מ[יום הֿ][67]
כי לא עבר המולד על אַמְרַתּ בחלק אֿ ומן [דוח]יז[68] ראש הש(נה) [ ]
נמצא תחלת מעוברת יום שבת ותחלת פשוטה שלאחריה [יום הֿ]
ובין זו לזו וֿ ימים וששה ימים במעוב(רת) חסר(ים) שכך נאמ(ר) במסור[ת חכ]מ(ים)
חֿדֿוֿ וגם אמרו אם נולד לאחר מן זה המנין לפני יום השבת [..]ה

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65 This abbreviation is standard in both manuscripts. It is not meant as a collective singular, but rather as the abbreviation of a plural, since in the manuscripts it is usually marked with a dot above the word (see diplomatic editions).

66 My conjecture; see diplomatic edition.

67 Alternatively, מיומו.

68 My conjecture; see diplomatic edition.

69 This amounts to saying, if the *molad* of Tishri occurs on 18 hours and 641 parts of the 24-hour day.

70 If the remaining quarter is minus 642 parts, i.e. if the *molad* occurs on 18 hours and 642 parts.

71 In whose year there will be thirteen months (an intercalated year).

72 i.e. of the 12 hours of daytime. This is the latest limit; but the same is true if the *molad* occurs earlier on the Friday.

73 i.e. the following months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew will count 29 days.

74 5 days (modulo 7). Really the interval from one new year to the next (in an intercalated year) is 383 days (and a fraction), but all multiples of 7 have been cast out, leaving a remnant of 5 days. The justification for casting out multiples of 7, which greatly simplifies the calculation, is that we only need to establish the weekday of the following New Year.

75 According to Bornstein's conjecture, this half line translates: 'and we count the New Year [on Thursday]'. According to my conjecture: 'and we [do not] postpone the New Year'.

76 From Sabbath to Thursday there are six days, inclusively counted.

77 i.e. an intercalated year whose New Year and following New Year occur at a six-day interval (in the days of the week).

78 For an explanation of this Palestinian algorithm, see Chapter 5, pp. 64–65. The first let-

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of these four days, and this is their exposition: If Tishri is born on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath,
one sees: if a quarter of the day minus 641 parts remains,[69] it is set
on the same day, and if it is short of 642, it is postponed.[70] And we shall now explain to you
each one of these four days, in four gates.

(*1. First gate: Sabbath*)
(*1.1. Intercalated year*)
This is the exposition of the First Gate:
any Tishri in which there is an intercalation,[71] and that is born on 52 parts of the 10th hour of the day of Friday,[72] take

16 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 recto left]

the day of Sabbath (as New Year day) and (the months) are defective.[73] And the reason for this is because of the following year, in order to set it (no later than)
the 6th hour and 641 parts of the day of Thursday, and this is the 641-rule; because between the *molad* of an intercalated year
and that of the following year there are 5 days,[74] 21 hours, and 589 parts, and when you count from 52
parts of the 10th hour of the day of Friday (another) 5 days, 21 hours, and 589 parts, [the calculation] reaches
the limit of 641 parts of the 7th hour of the day of Thursday, and we should not postpone (the New Year) from this Thursday,
because the *molad* has not gone over the (limit of) 641 by any part. And from [?] the New Year [?].[75]
As a result, the beginning of the intercalated (year) is the day of Sabbath, and the beginning of the following plain (year) is [Thursday],
and between one and the other there are 6 days,[76] and 6 days in an intercalated year[77]—(the months are) defective, for so it is said in the tradition of the sages:
ḤDW.[78] And they also said that if it is born after this number,[79] before the day of Sabbath, (the New Year is on)

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ter, Ḥ, stands for *ḥaserim*, defective; the last letter, W, stands for 6 (days). The middle letter, D, is not relevant here; it stands for 4 days, and applies in a plain year. Ben Meir is using a Palestinian algorithm to explain and justify his Four Gates.

79 After 52 parts of the 10th hour of the day of Friday.

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יום שבת ושלימ(ים) טעם שלהם לפני שבת מיכן ועד שיעבור גבול
שבת ועלת הדבר שנה הבאה שאם יעבור מיכן חלק אחד נולד לשנה

17 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 verso right]

הבאה ביום ה ושש שע(ות) תתרמב חלק(ים) והם במרת דוחים אתו
ליום שבת ימצא ראש מעוברת שבת וראש הש(נה) שלאחריה
בשבת[80] הרי ח ימים וח ימים במעוברת שלימ(ים) שכך קבעו
[במסו]רת חכמ(ים) שוח וגם אמ(ר) אם לא יהיה באותה השנה
[עיבור][81] ולא בשנה הבאה עיבור ונולד קודם תתרמט חלק(ים)
[משע]ה ראשונה בלילי ששי אחוז יום שבת וחסי(רים) · וטעם הדבר
[שלא][82] יעבר ו שע ואמרת ביום חמישי ועד תתרמט חלק(ים) בשעה
ראשונה בלילי ו וטעם הדבר שתי שנים שלאחריה ועיקר
הטעם שנה שלישית כשאתה מונה מאלף מט שעות משנה[83]
ראשנה בלילי ו ד ימים ח שעות תתעו חלק(ים) יתרון הפשוטה

18 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.5 recto]

מגיע סוף החשבון לילי ג תתמה חלק(ים) משעה י ועוד [אתה מונה][84]
לשנה אחרת כך ומגיע סוף חשבון ליום השבת לשש ש[ע(ות) ואמרת]
חלק(ים) וכשאתה מונה כך יקרא ראש השנ(ה) הראשונה [בשבת ושניה]

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80 Or: שבת; see diplomatic edition.
81 Bornstein's conjecture (and so the beginning of the next line).
82 My conjecture.
83 An error for חלקים משעה.
84 My conjecture.
85 i.e. the following months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew will count 30 days.
86 i.e. between Friday day 9 hours 52 parts, and Sabbath day, 6 hours, 641 parts; but if this limit is transgressed, the New Year is postponed to Monday. This sentence, which I have put between dashes, is rightly interpreted by Bornstein as an explanatory gloss; Bornstein attributes it to a later scribe, but it could equally be the author's.
87 If the *molad* of this year goes over the limit of 52 parts of the 10th hour of the day of Friday.
88 The first letter, Sh, stands for *shelemim* (full); the last letter, Ḥ, stands for 8 days. For an explanation of this algorithm, see Chapter 5, pp. 64–65.
89 'beyond (the limits extending from) 6 hours and 641 on the day of Thursday to 1049 parts of the 1st hour of the night of Friday': this formulation is clumsy. All ben Meir needs to say is second half of the clause, i.e. 'beyond 1049 parts of the 1st hour of the night of Friday', which is the latest the *molad* can occur for the New Year to be on Sabbath and the months to be defective; there is no need for him to mention 6 hours and 641 on the day of Thursday, which is the earliest time the *molad* can occur for this.

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the day of Sabbath and (the months are) full.[85]—What they meant by 'before the Sabbath' is from here until the limit of Sabbath
is gone over.[86]—The reason for this is the following year, because if it goes over from here[87] by one part, (the moon) will be born next

17 [**L1BM1** JTS ENA 2556.2 verso right]

year on Thursday 6 hours and 642 parts, i.e. the 642-rule, and it is postponed
to the day of the Sabbath; as a result, the New Year of the intercalated (year) is on Sabbath and the New Year of the following year
is on Sabbath, behold, (an interval of) 8 days, and 8 days in an intercalated year—(the months are) full, for so they fixed
in the tradition of the sages: ShWḤ.[88]
(*1.2. Plain year followed by plain year*)
And they also said: if there is no [intercalation] in that
year, and no intercalation the year after, and (the moon of Tishri) is born before 1049 parts
of the 1st [hour] of the night of Friday, take the day of Sabbath (as New Year day) and (the months) are defective. And the reason for this is
that (the *molad*) will [not] have gone beyond (the limits extending from) 6 hours and 641 on the day of Thursday to 1049 parts of the first
hour of the night of Friday.[89] And the reason for this is two years later, and the main reason
is the third year: if you count from 1049 parts of the first
hour of the night of Friday another 4 days, 8 hours, and 876 parts, (i.e.) the excess of a plain year,[90]

18 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.5 recto]

the end of the calculation comes to the night of Tuesday, 845 parts of the 10th hour; then [you count]
the same to the next year,[91] and the end of the calculation comes to the day of Sabbath, 6 h[ours, and 641]
parts. When you count this way, the first New Year is called [on Sabbath, the second]

90 4 days, 8 hours, and 876 parts is the interval (modulo 7 days) between one New Year's *molad* to the next New Year's *molad* in a plain year.
91 You add again 4 days, 8 hours, and 876 parts.

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ביום ג׳ ושלישית ביום שבת נמצא ימים שבינהם של[ראשונים ד׳][92]
ארבעה בפשוטה חסיר(ים) וזה עיקר חִדּוּ ובין שתים הא[חרונים ה׳]
וה׳ ימים בפשוטה כסדרן והעיקר כֻּהֲזַ״ת · ואם יעבור ח[לק]
אחד מיכן יעבור שנה ג׳ משש שעות ואֹמְרַ״ת ביום שבת בחלק
בְּמְרַ״ת וצריך הדבר לדחותו עד יום שני נמצאת ראשונה ביום
שבת ושנייה ביום ה׳ ובנֶהם ו׳ ימים וששה ימ(ים) בפשוטה שלימים
והמסורת שִׁוּחַ והשלישית יום שני וביניהם ה׳ ימ(ים) וה׳ ימ(ים) בפשוטה

19 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.5 verso]

[כס]דרן והסימן כֻּהֲזַ״ת וכך אתם מוציאים בירור כל
[ ] וגם אמרו אם היה בשנה הבאה עיבור ונולד קודם
[תְּתְמַ״ה] חֹל משעה י׳ בלילי ו׳ אחוז יום שבת וחסי(רים) וביאור הדבר
[ ] שלא לדחות מעוברת משש שע(ות) ואֹמְרַ״ת ביום ג׳ ואם
[יעבור][93] זה המנין אחוז יום שבת ושלי(מים) והטעם שכיון שיעבור
[חלק את]ד על אֹמְרַ״ת משעה ו׳[94] ביום ג׳ ידחה ליום ה׳ זה הוא כלל שער
[ר]אשון שער שיני כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם רַנְ״ו חלק(ים)
משעה ראשונה מיום ד׳ אחוז יום ה׳ וחסי(רים) ועילת הדבר בזמן שמולד

92 My conjecture (and so in the next line).
93 Bornstein's conjecture, and so in the next line.
94 Probably a mistake for ו׳ (as corrected by Bornstein).
95 The first letter, K, stands for *kesidran* (orderly); the second letter, H, stands for a 5-day interval (in a plain year).
96 i.e. if in the first year, the *molad* occurs one part later than 1049 parts of the 1st hour of the night of Friday.
97 The New Year of the second year cannot remain on Tuesday, because then the interval between it and the New Year of the third year (on Monday) is 7 days (inclusively counted), which is not allowable in a plain year (only a 4, 5, or 6-day interval is allowed in a plain year, following the principle of ḤDW-KHZ-ShWḤ). Ben Meir has omitted to explain this.
98 The contents of this section have already been laid out in the previous section, where the plain year followed by an intercalated year correspond to the second and third years.
99 More correctly, 7th. This may be a scribal error.

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on Tuesday, and the third on the day of Sabbath; as a result, the days between the [first (two years) are 4],
and four in a plain year—(the months are) defective, and that is the principle of ḤDW; and between the [last] two (years they are) [5],
and 5 in a plain year—(the months) are orderly, and that is the principle of KHZ.[95] But if it goes over by one
part from there,[96] in the third year it will go over 6 hours and 641 (parts) on the day of Sabbath by (one) part,
(to) 642, and (the New Year) will have to be postponed to Monday; as a result, the first (year) will be on the Sabbath
day, and the second on Thursday,[97] and between them (there will be) 6 days, and 6 days in a plain year—(the months are) full,
and (that is) the tradition is ShWḤ; and the third year will be on Monday, and between them (the second and third year, there will be) 5 days, and 5 days in a plain year

19 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.5 verso]

– (the months) are orderly, and the sign is KHZ. And so you find the explanation of all …
(*1.3. Plain year followed by intercalated year*)[98]
And they also said: if there is an intercalation in the next year, and (Tishri) is born before
[845] parts of the 10th hour of the night of Friday, take the day of Sabbath (as New Year day) and (the months) are defective. And the explanation of this is
[…] not to postpone (the New Year of) the intercalated (year) beyond 6 hours and 641 (parts) of the day of Tuesday. But if
(the molad) [goes over] this number, take the Sabbath day (as New Year day) and (the months) are full. And the reason of this is that since it goes over
641 (parts) of the 6th hour[99] of the day of Tuesday [by one part], it is postponed to Thursday. This is the whole of the First
Gate.
(*2. Second gate: Thursday*)
(*2.1. Intercalated year*)
Any Tishri in which there is an intercalation, and that is born before 256 parts
of the 1st hour of the day of Wednesday, take Thursday (as New Year day) and (the months) are defective. And the reason for this is that when the *molad*

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שלשנה מעוברת ברנ"ו חלק(ים) משעה ראשונה מיום ד נולד שלאחריה
לשנה הבאה לילי שבת[100] בתתמה חלק(ים) משעה י ושלאחריה ביום
ביום שבת בו שעו(ת)[101]

[**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 recto]

ואמרת חל משעה ז ונמצא ראש השנה

[**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 recto, **L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 recto]

הראשונה חמישי והיא מעוברת שנייה בשלישי פשוטה
ובין זו לזו ו ימים וששה במעוברת חסירים והסימן חדו
והשלישית יום שבת ובין שניה לג ה ימים וה ימים בפשוטה כסדרן
וטעמו שלסוד שאם יעבור המולד ממאתים נו חלק(ים) משעה ראשונה מיום ד בחלק אחד
ימצא מולד שנייה לחברתה תתמו חלק(ים) משעה י בלילי ג
ימצא מולד שלישית בו שעות במרת ביום שבת
ובזמן שהיה כן אנו צריכין לדחות ג ליום ה
ועדאין לא הגענו לגבול בזו השנה שכבר נשאר לנו תד חלק(ים)
מפני שנולד תשרי בשנת תתנג לחשבון הבית לילי ד יא שעות תתקלב חלק(ים)
וראש השנה ביום ה והחדשים

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21. 2 **L1BM1** חדו **L1BM2** הכ״ו 5 **L1BM1** תתמו **L1BM2** קמ״ו 6 **L1BM1** בו **L1BM2** ב׳ ו׳ 7 **L1BM1** ליום ה **L1BM2** ליום השני 8 **L1BM1** ועדאין **L1BM2** ועד אין 9 **L1BM1** תתנג **L1BM2** תתנ״ג **L1BM1** חלק **L1BM2** omittit ‖ תתע״ו

21. 2 **L1BM1** [ושמה]ימי 3 **L1BM1** [ובין שניה לג] 4 **L1BM1** [שאם יע]בור ‖ **L1BM1** מיו[ם] 5 **L1BM1** [לק]ח 5–6 **L1BM1** [י בלילי ג ימצא] 6 **L1BM1** [ביום] 7 **L1BM1** [ד בחלק אחד] 9 **L1BM1** לח[שבון הבית] ובו[זמן שהיה כן אנו]

100 An error for לילי ג.

101 See note on diplomatic edition, p. 265.

102 An error for Tuesday.

103 This is repetitive, as he has already said '6 hours'.

104 i.e. the New Year of the second year. Ben Meir could have made this clearer, but perhaps he feels this is unnecessary, because he is now going to explain this point in more detail, in relation to the contentious New Year of 922 CE.

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of an intercalated year is at 256 parts of the 1st hour of the day of Wednesday, (the New Year) after it
of the next year will be born in the night of Sabbath[102] at 845 parts of the 10th hour, and of the year after that, on the day of Sabbath at 6th hours

20 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 recto]

and 641 parts of the 7th hour,[103] and as a result, the first New

21 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 recto, **L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 recto]

Year is (on) Thursday and (the year) is intercalated, the second (New Year) is on Tuesday and (the year) is plain,
and between one and the other there are 6 days, [and 6] in an intercalated (year)—(the months are) defective, and the sign is ḤDW;
and the third (New Year) is on the day of Sabbath, [and between the second and the third there are] 5 days, and 5 days in a plain year—(the months are) orderly.
And the reason of this secret is [that if] the *molad* goes over 256 parts of the 1st hour of the day of [Wednesday by one part],
as a result the *molad* of the second (New Year) following it will be 846 parts of the [10th] hour [of the night of Tuesday,
and as a result] the *molad* of the third (New Year) will be 6 hours 642 (parts) [on the day of] Sabbath,
and [when it is so], one must postpone from Tuesday to Thursday.[104]
But this year,[105] we have not yet reached the limit, as we still have 404 parts left.
For in the year 853 of the era of the Temple,[106] Tishri is born on the night of Wednesday, 11 hours, 932 parts,
and the New Year is on Thursday, and the months

105 At this point, ben Meir turns to justify his calendrical decisions for the years 921–924 CE, on the basis of the Second Gate.

106 i.e. the era of the destruction of the Temple, of which 69/70 CE must be deemed the first year, since the calendrical data make it evident that he is referring to 921/2 CE, the year in which this letter was written. The era of the destruction of the Temple is a specifically Palestinian tradition, in contrast to the Babylonian common use of the Seleucid era (for example, in the date of the letter addressed to ben Meir, above L1BM 1:9). See further discussion in the introduction to LMisc, Chapter 11.

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22 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 verso, **L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 recto]

חס(ירים) ולא נוכל לדחותו שכבר נשאר תּדּ חלק(ים)
עד זמן שיגיע לגבול רׄנוֹ משעה ראשונה ביום דּ
ומחלק אחד לפני רׄנוֹ לא ידחה
ידחה מדּ מאות ודּ עד שלא יגיע לגבול

23 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 verso, **L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 verso]

שלימין
ובשנה הבאה אתם מוסיפין דּ חׄ תׄתׄעׄוֹ[107]
יגיע המולד לילי גׄ טׄ שעות[108] תׄמׄאׄ חלק(ים)
ובשעה[109] גׄ נאמר אם לא יהיה באותו תשרי עיבור
ונולד קודם תׄתׄמׄהׄ חלק(ים) משעה יׄ מלילי גׄ אחוז יום גׄ וכסדרן
והשנה הבאה שהיא שנת תׄתׄנדּ לחשבון הבית פשוטה
הוא נולד בלילי גׄ בטׄ שעות תׄמׄאׄ חלק(ים) והוא בגבול גׄ והחדשים כסדרן
ונשאר מן החשבון תׄתׄמׄהׄ חל(קים) תׄדּ עד שיגיע לגבול
ולא נוכל לדחותו מפני המולד והשנה הגׄ שהיא שנת

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22. 1 **L1BM1** ולא **L1BM2** היה
23. 2 **L1BM1** מוסיפין **L1BM2** מוסיפים 3 **L1BM2** שעות טׄ **L1BM1** מׄ שעׄ 5 **L1BM2** תתמ״ה **L1BM1** חׄל ‖ **L1BM1** חשבון **L1BM2** החשבון 8 **L1BM1** מתׄתׄהׄ 7 **L1BM1** והוא **L1BM2** והיא **L1BM2** תל׳

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22. 2 **L1BM1** גיע[שי] 3 **L1BM1** [לפני] 4 **L1BM1** [לגבול]
23. 3 **L1BM1** [המולד לילי גׄ] ‖ **L1BM1** [באותו תשרי] 5 **L1BM1** כסדרן[גׄ אחוז יום גׄ ו]

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107 An error for הׄ כׄאׄ תׄקׄפׄטׄ. This error appears to be in both mss. (unless Harkavy has given here a reading of the Oxford manuscript, L1BM1). The error is not scribal, but computational, even though the result of the calculation that is given on the next line, the *molad* of the second year, is correct. This error is therefore more likely to be the author's.

108 Thus L1BM2, i.e. '9 hours', which is syntactically better than my reading of L1BM1 (fol. 8v:5), i.e. מׄ, 'of the 10th hour', although the meaning is the same.

109 An error for ובשער (as corrected by Friedländer; see Bornstein 1904: 55 n. 3), again apparently in both manuscripts.

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22 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 verso, **L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 recto]

are defective, and we cannot postpone it,[110] because there are still 404 parts left
until it [reaches] the limit of 256 of the 1st hour of the day of Wednesday,
and (even if it were) one part [before] 256 it would not be postponed
– shall it then be postponed from 404 until it reaches the limit

23 [**L1BM1** Bodl. Ms Heb f. 26.6 verso, **L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 verso]

(so as to make the months) full?[111]
And in the next year, you must add 4 (days) 8 (hours) 876 (parts),[112]
(and the *molad*) comes to [the night of Tuesday, of the 10th] hour 441 parts,
and in the Third Gate it is said: '[in a Tishri] where there is no intercalation,
and it is born before 845 parts of the 10th hour of the night of [Tuesday, take Tuesday (as New Year day) and (the months are)] orderly'.
And next year, which is 854 of the era of the Temple, is plain,
and it is born the night of Tuesday, 9 hours, and 441 parts,[113] and this is within the limit of Tuesday and the months are orderly,
and of the sum of 845 (parts) there remain 404 parts until it reaches the limit,[114]
and we cannot postpone it[115] because of the *molad*. And the third year, which is

110 i.e. postpone the New Year of the following year, by making the months of this year full (see Epstein 1901: 190). The text is not very clear.

111 Rhetorical question. As explained in the Second Gate, if the *molad* goes over the limit of day of Wednesday, 256 parts, the months are full and the subsequent New Year is on Thursday—as the Babylonians were arguing for 922/3 CE.

112 This is a mistake: since the year 921/2 is intercalated, the interval between the New Year's *molad* and the next New Year's *molad* is 5 (days, modulo 7) 21 (hours) 589 (parts), whereas what is given in the text is the interval in a plain year. The correct value, however, has been used in the subsequent calculation (in the next line).

113 As stated above; this is a recapitulation.

114 441 + 404 = 845. See table below.

115 The New Year of 922/3 CE cannot be postponed from Tuesday to Thursday.

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24 [**L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 verso]

תתנה
לחשבון הבית נולד תשרי ביום שבת
בשש שעות רלז חל(קים) . ועד אין לא הגיע
לגבול נשאר מן החשבון תד חל(קים) ואנחנו
לא נדחהו תרמא והי אמרת וכבר
שפרשנוהו בארבעה חדשים נדחהו
רלז חלק(ים) אין זה ראוי למבינים ולא
למשכילי עם ולא לנושאים דברי
חכמים · ואתם אחינו שמעו והאזינו

25 [**L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 2 recto]

אל תגבהו חוסו על נפשכם ועל ישראל
המפוזרים בין האומות אשר על חדה
של סיף הם עומדים · ואם מאויביהם
מיתיראים יצעקו אל שוכן מעונים ·
ויחלצם מכל מענים · תצא אש מתוכם
ותאכלם כדברי כנענים · אשר עם פורצי
גדרות נמנים · יהומם אל לפנינו בנהממו[116]
בארץ גבעונים · כי הם סילונים וקמשונים ·
רעים וחטאים ומורדים מבני ערקים
וסינים · סעיד בן אלפיומי וחביריו הזידונים ·
המצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו ויזרו בארבע

25. 3 מאויביהם **L1BM2** מאויבי הם 8 וקמסונים **L1BM2** וקמשונים

116 Perhaps an error for כנהממו (Harkavy). Cf. Jos. 10:10.

117 In his explanation of the First Gate and the beginning of the Second, he has given four examples where the rule of 641 parts is applied (Bornstein). See also note on diplomatic edition (L1BM2 fol. 3v:16, below p. 277).

118 or: 'yourselves'.

119 An early liturgical phrase, from the *reshut* of the *qerovot* for festivals.

120 The earlier editors assumed, as would appear at first sight, that the construct 'words of Canaanites' (דברי כנענים) meant 'words said by the Canaanites', which led them to difficulties and unnecessary textual conjectures. My translation assumes the meaning of 'words about the Canaanites'.

121 The Hebrew, סילונים, is taken from Ezek. 28:24. This is ben Meir's direct response to his opponents' use of this verse against him (hence the definite article in my translation: '*the* briers'). Ezek. 28:24 refers to סלון ממאיר, 'a thorny brier'; the word that translates as 'thorny', *mam'ir*, appears in three places of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 4:11, 7:4, 13:6) as a pun on the name Meir (see however my note on BCC 4:11, above

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24 [**L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 1 verso]

855
of the era of the Temple, Tishri is born on the day of Sabbath,
six hours, 237 parts; and it has not yet reached
the limit, there remain 404 parts, and we
will not postpone it (until) 641, which is the 641-rule, as we have
explained for four months.[117] Shall we postpone it
(at) 237 parts? This is not worthy of the wise,
of the intelligent among the people, of those who uphold the words
of the sages. And you, my brothers, hearken, listen,

25 [**L1BM2** Ms Harkavy fol. 2 recto]

and do not be haughty (Jer. 13:15). Take care of your souls,[118] and of Israel
who are dispersed among the nations and who stand
on the edge of a sword. If they are scared
of their enemies, let them cry out to He who dwells in heavens,[119]
and He will release them from all their tormentors. May fire come out of them
and consume, as was said of the Canaanites (Jud. 9:20),[120] those who are counted
among the breachers of fences. May God confuse them before us, as those who were confused
in the land of the Gibeonites (Jos. 10:10), for they are the briers[121] and thistles,
wicked, sinful, rebellious, sons of the Arkites
and the Sinites,[122] Sa'id the son of the Fayyumite and his wicked colleagues,
these Egyptian heretics,[123] may they be destroyed in an instant and scattered in the four

p. 125). Here, ben Meir is retorting that the Babylonians are truly the briers. The fact that ben Meir is responding to a Babylonian jibe suggests that by the time this letter was written, the controversy had already soured and was well under way.

122 Listed as Canaanite families in Gen. 10:17. The point of this reference is unclear, as according to this biblical passage, these families are descendants of Canaan and not of Egypt.

123 Here the Babylonian leaders are no longer named. By shifting the blame entirely unto Saadya and other, unnamed Egyptians, and by venting anti-Egyptian prejudice, ben Meir is attempting to win over his Babylonian addressees.

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פינים · ואלו באנו לספר אחת מני אלף
מתפילתינו עליכם לא יכלנו · מלך ברחמ(ים)
רבים יחזיר את לבב עמו ישראל · וישבור
מעליהם עול ברזל · ויביא להם מורה צדק ·
ונזכה ותזכו להקביל משיח במהרה
ובזמן קרוב אמן · ושלום כבודכם
יפרה וירבה וידגה ויעצם ויושרש ויעונף
ויסולסל לעולם · שלום :

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corners. Were we to try and tell one in a thousand
of our prayers for you, we would not be able. May the King in His great
mercy restore the hearts of Israel his people. May He break
15 off them their iron yoke, and bring to them the Teacher of Righteousness,
and we and you shall merit to welcome the Messiah, soon and
close in time, amen. Peace! May your honour
bear fruit, multiply, develop and grow strong, may it take root and grow
branches
and be glorified forever—peace!

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Tables

The purpose of Table 7 is to present the data relating to the Four Gates that ben Meir supplies in his First Letter. This includes the First Gate and parts of the Second and Third, together with ben Meir's explanations. A table of the complete Four Gates of ben Meir (without explanations), which ben Meir does not supply in this letter, can be found at the end of Chapter 5.

The objective of ben Meir's explanations is to justify the limits, in the Four Gates, that do not correspond to his standard midday limit of 6 hours and 641 parts. The general explanation of any such limit is that if one adds to it the interval between the *molad* of this New Year and the next New Year, which is 4 days, 8 hours, and 876 parts in a plain year or 5 days, 21 hours, 589 parts in an intercalated year, one obtains for the next New Year a limit of 6 hours (daytime) and 641 parts (sometimes this value is only reached by adding up two years: e.g. in the First Gate, plain year followed by plain year). If the limit of the current year is exceeded, this means that the 6–641 limit of the next year will also be exceeded (by the same number of hours and parts); consequently, a postponement is required in both years (e.g. in the Third Gate, plain year). In many cases, however, it is not necessary to postpone the first New Year, when the limit of the current New Year is exceeded: for if the current year is changed from defective to full, this can be enough to cause the next New Year to be postponed (e.g. First Gate, in all years).

In this table, the annotation of the time of the *molad*, which in the Four Gates constitutes a limit, consists as usual of four elements: night (n) or day (d), day of the week (1–7), hours elapsed (1–12), parts (1–1079; not entered if zero).

Table 8 explains ben Meir's calculations for the years 921/2–923/4, and why according to him, the New Years of 922/3 and 923/4 needed no postponement. For the Babylonians, in contrast, the limits were 641 parts earlier. This meant that the *moladot* of these years went over the limits, and consequently the New Year of 922/3 had to be postponed to Thursday, and that of 923/4 to Monday.

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TABLE 7 The Four Gates in ben Meir's First Letter

	Limits of *molad Tishri*	Months of the year	Interval from New Year to New Year	Next year's New Year	Sign of the year	Explanation of the limit
First Gate: New Year on Sabbath						
Intercalated year	d5:6:642 – d6:9:52	defective	6 days	Thursday	ḤDW	d6:9:52 + 5:21:589 = d5:6:641
	d6:9:53 – d7:6:641	full	8 days	Sabbath	ShWḤ	
Plain year followed by plain year	d5:6:642 – n6:0:1049	defective	4 days	Tuesday	ḤDW	n6:0:1049 + 4:8:876 = n3:9:845 + 4:8:876 = d7:6:641
	n6:0:1050 – d7:6:641	full	6 days	Thursday	ShWḤ	
Plain year followed by intercalated	d5:6:642 – n6:9:845	defective	4 days	Tuesday	ḤDW	n6:9:845 + 4:8:876 = d3:6:641
	n6:9:846 – d7:6:641	full	6 days	Thursday	ShWḤ	
Second Gate: New Year on Thursday						
Intercalated year	d3:6:642 – d4:0:256	defective	6 days	Tuesday	ḤDW	d4:0:256 + 5:21:589 = n3:9:845 + 4:8:876 = d7:6:641
	d4:0:257 – d5:6:641	full	8 days	Thursday	ShWḤ	
Third Gate: New Year on Tuesday						
Plain year	d2:6:642 – n3:9:845	orderly	5 days	Sabbath	KHZ	n3:9:845 + 4:8:876 = d7:6:641

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TABLE 8 Ben Meir's Calculations for the Years 921/2–923/4

Year (CE)	Type	*Molad* of Tishri	Limit	Within the limit by	New Year
921/2	Intercalated	n4:11:932 + 5:21:589 =	d4:0:256	404 parts	Thursday
922/3	Plain	n3:9:441 + 4:8:876 =	n3:9:845	404 parts	Tuesday (not Thursday)
923/4	Plain	d7:6:237	d7:6:641	404 parts	Sabbath (not Monday)

9.3 L1BM1: Diplomatic Edition

This manuscript comprises the first Cairo Genizah folios relating to the calendar controversy that were ever published, by Abraham Harkavy in 1891. It is a copy of ben Meir's First Letter. Harkavy published a transcription of the six folios held in Oxford at the Bodleian Library, which we now know are three bi-folios (Heb. f. 26.1–6). Another bi-folio of the same manuscript was published much later by Elkan N. Adler from his personal collection (now in the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York: ENA 2556.2).

This is also a relatively early manuscript. It is written on parchment, and can be dated to the beginning of the eleventh century. Its square script is south-western oriental (which includes Syria, Palestine, and Egypt). This suggests that the scribe might have identified himself as Palestinian, which is appropriate for a copy of a letter of ben Meir.

Physical Description

Parchment; brown-black ink. Shape: rectangle of variable regularity (because of curved and uneven edges); folios 1 and 5 decrease in height towards the left (looking at the recto). Dimensions of the folios are variable and approximately as follows.[124] Outer dimensions: 8.5–9.0 cm (but fols. 3–4: 8.0 cm) high × 14–15 cm wide. Text: 5.7–6.2 cm × 11.5–12.5 cm. Margins: 12–16 mm (inner), 3–10 mm (outer), 10–16 mm (top), 10–18 mm (bottom). The text on the right is justified, but often a bit concave; it is not justified on the left, although sometimes the scribe shows concern to keep the lines within similar length (e.g. fol. 5r:5; see

124 Dimensions of the JTS folios have been inferred from the ruler included in the digital images. I measured myself the Bodleian folios in Oxford (their digital images do not include a ruler).

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note on p. 262), and occasionally last letters are slightly extended. Lines number: mostly 10, sometimes 11. Lines are well, but irregularly, spaced out; in general, the line spaces equal or exceed the height of the text lines.

The Bodleian folios (actually bi-folios), which make up the vast majority of the manuscript extant, are unfortunately mounted. On one side of each folio (which can be either recto or verso: recto in fols. 4, 7, and 8), the mounting is more intrusive and covers margins, holes, and sometimes even parts of the text (fol. 1v, middle of lines 1–3; fol. 5v, right edge; fol. 7r, upper left edge; fol. 8r, lower right edge, left edge, and bottom line). The mounting is made of opaque carton which prevents the reader from seeing through. If only for the sake of the text, removal of the mountings would be a high desideratum.

The text is otherwise generally well preserved and very legible, although in some cases the ink has faded and/or turned to a lighter brown (fol. 5 verso and fol. 8 verso; sporadically on fol. 1 and fol. 5 recto; more faintly on fol. 4 and fol. 7 recto), and some folios are affected by ink penetration from the other side of the parchment (fol. 2 recto and fol. 6 recto). In some of the folios the parchment is damaged by staining (especially fol. 2, mainly on the left half of the recto, and fol. 8). Some folios have small holes and tears (fol. 1, with also a diagonal crack; fol. 6). Folios 6, 7, and 8 all suffer from a similar tear along the outer edge; the text is mainly affected on the verso (thus in fol. 8 verso, only line 1 and the last three lines are more or less intact). These tears look like they may have occurred at once, when the book was in a closed position. Folio 8 is further damaged by tears in the middle of the folio and on the other, inner side.

Another problem that was encountered with the condition of this manuscript was that some of its folios were puckered on one side. This mildly affected folio 5, although the text was still legible. Much worse was the bi-folio ENA 2556.2, as we originally found it; the images that were (and still are, as of 1 March 2018) on the website of the Friedberg Genizah Project showed it to be badly puckered on the verso-right, recto-left (i.e. folio 6). In January 2012, at Marina Rustow's request to David Kraemer (JTS Librarian), Amy Gerbracht Armstrong (Senior Conservator) and her team at the JTS Library stretched the fragment and restored its legibility almost completely. Images of the restored bi-folio were first published in Rustow and Stern (2014: 88), and are again reproduced here (see Plates 2–3). It is worth noting that Adler, who first published this fragment in 1914, seems not to have been impeded by the fragment's puckering (and indeed does not even mention it). His ability to transcribe as much of the text as we have now suggests that he stretched the fragment himself while transcribing, although this did not restore it on a permanent basis.[125]

125 It is less likely that the fragment became puckered after Adler's time. There is some evid-

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Several features support the early dating of this manuscript, to the beginning of the eleventh century: the material (parchment), the script, and the elongated *mise en page* with wide line spaces.

Reconstructing the Manuscript

The sequence of the folios can be determined from the continuity of the text, as well as from the textual parallels in the other manuscript of ben Meir's First Letter, L1BM2. Accordingly, I number the folios of this manuscript in the following sequence:

(Missing)
Folio 1: Bodl. Heb. f. 26.1
Folio 2: Bodl. Heb. f. 26.2
Folio 3: ENA 2556.2 verso left—recto right
Folio 4: Bodl. Heb. f. 26.3
(Missing)
Folio 5: Bodl. Heb. f. 26.4
Folio 6: ENA 2556.2 recto left—verso right
Folio 7: Bodl. Heb. f. 26.5
Folio 8: Bodl. Heb. f. 26.6
(Missing)

At the beginning, we were only aware of the existence of one bi-folio (ENA 2556.2), but this alone enabled me to determine the position of the other folios in relation to it, and hence to reconstruct the manuscript as a whole, with a reasonable level of certainty. Since ENA 2556.2, or folios 3 and 6, formed a bi-folio, it followed that folios 4 and 5 (Bodl. Heb. f. 26.3 and f. 26.4) were originally a bi-folio that fitted inside ENA 2556.2. The textual discontinuity between folios 4 and 5 meant that an additional, central bi-folio (now missing) must have belonged inside the bi-folio of folios 4 and 5. I thus obtained at first the following, three-bi-folio quire:

ence that the fragment was less damaged in Adler's period, but it was clearly damaged to a large extent already then (see notes below on fol. 6r:3 and fol. 6v:3, pp. 263–264). One wonders whether the damage that the fragment sustained later was not due, in fact, to Adler's handling of it while transcribing.

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ENA 2556.2 verso left—recto right
  Bodl. Heb. f. 26.3
    Missing (central bi-folio)
    Missing (central bi-folio)
  Bodl. Heb. f. 26.4
ENA 2556.2 recto left—verso right

I then surmised, more speculatively, that the other Bodleian folios were outer bi-folios of the same quire. This lead to the following reconstruction of the quire (with the possibility of one additional external bi-folio, now missing):

Bodl. Heb. f. 26.1
  Bodl. Heb. f. 26.2
    ENA 2556.2 verso left—recto right
      Bodl. Heb. f. 26.3
        Missing
        Missing
      Bodl. Heb. f. 26.4
    ENA 2556.2 recto left—verso right
  Bodl. Heb. f. 26.5
Bodl. Heb. f. 26.6

Since then, examination of the original in Oxford has confirmed that all the Bodleian folios are actually bi-folios, exactly as originally surmised, and as follows: Bodl. Heb. f. 26.1 and 6, 2 and 5, and 3 and 4. Either Neubauer (in his letter to Harkavy), or Harkavy (in his edition of the manuscript—see explanation below), did not bother to indicate that the Oxford folios were bi-folios. This demonstrates that our manuscript was indeed a single quire, of which four bi-folios are extant, and the central bi-folio is missing.

In the light of this confirmation, the existence of one additional, external bi-folio (now missing), becomes all the more probable. Comparison with the parallel text in L1BM2 (which goes to the end of the letter) indicates that only one additional folio would have been needed, in L1BM1, to complete the letter. If, likewise, only one folio is missing at the beginning of our manuscript (belonging to this missing external bi-folio), this means that the letter that ben Meir responded to would have been quite short (a possibility that cannot, however, be verified, as the letter of ben Meir's opponent is not preserved elsewhere).

Accordingly, our manuscript would have consisted of a single quire of six bi-folios. Its textual layout, and the number of its folios, must have been well

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planned in advance. In general, this manuscript strikes one as well written and executed.

Text Edition

The text contains many abbreviated words, which are indicated by means of dots or short lines above the last letter or other letters within the word. Because dots and short lines are not always easy to distinguish (and the distinction between them is unimportant), I have represented them all with dots.

Bibliography

Bodl. Heb. f. 26.1–6

Harkavy (1891) 213–218: based on a transcription sent to him by Adolf Neubauer (then sub-librarian at the Bodleian Library, Oxford), and mingled with his own edition of ms Harkavy (L1BM2). Neubauer's transcription was sloppy and inaccurate; in all likelihood, he had no intention of it ever being published, and had only transcribed the text and sent it to Harkavy in St Petersburg because of the latter's interest in Saadya being named as 'from Dilāṣ' (אלדלאצי: folio 4v:6, Bodl. Heb. f. 26.3). Harkavy, however, went ahead and published the transcription. This edition, full of errors, has determined all subsequent editions ever since.
Friedländer (1893) 197–199: a revision of parts of Harkavy's edition. According to Bornstein (1904: 45), Friedländer consulted the Oxford manuscript; but Friedländer does not say so in his article, nor does he specify the basis of his revision. He was Principal of Jews' College, in London, but there is no need to assume that he made the journey to Oxford in order to revise Harkavy's edition. Judging by his corrections, it appears more likely that he corrected Harkavy's edition on the basis of his own conjectures; this is evident, at least, in folio 5v:8.
Epstein (1901) 179–191: text and French translation, based on the earlier editions.
Bornstein (1904): based on earlier editions. Folios 1–2 are on pp. 45–47; folio 4 is on pp. 49–50; folio 5 is on pp. 51–52; and folio 7 (with the first line of folio 8) is on pp. 53–54. The rest of his text comes from L1BM2.

JTS ENA 2556.2

Adler (1914) 50–52: text and French translation.
Bornstein (1922*b*) 264–265: second folio only (my folio 6), based on Adler's edition.
Neither Adler nor Bornstein made the join with the Bodleian folios. Adler just noted that the text was the same as that published by Lévi (1900)—i.e. from the other manuscript of ben Meir's First Letter, L1BM2. He did not mention Harkavy's (1891) publication of the Bodleian folios, either because he did not know of it, or because he did not see the connection between them. Born-

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stein did see the connection, noting that this fragment belonged to the same letter of ben Meir, but he did not comment further. Consistently with his general approach, his interest was only in the disembodied texts, not in the manuscripts. The join of Bodl. Heb. f. 26.1–6 and ENA 2556.2, quite straightforward, was only made by Sacha Stern on 4 January 2012.

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L1BM1 folio 1 recto
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.1 recto]

תעיר וישבור מוטות עולות גוים מעל צ[ו]ארכם ויניח לכם
מכל אויבכם מסביב ונזכה ותזכו לרא[ות] בנחמה ולהתבשר
ברגלי מבשר משמ(יע) שלום ותשקטו בנ[ו]ה שלום ובמש(כנות) מבט(חים)
ובמנ(חות) שאננות[126] ולא תהיה משכלה ועק(רה) בארצכם ותזכו לזקנה
ושיבה ולכל אשר תפנו ותשכילו ותכשירו בכל מעשה ידכם
ותשרשו ותעניפו ותעשו שרשים למטה וענפים למעלה ותהיו
מקור ברכה ויהי מקורכם ברוך ומעינכם מתגבר ושלום
רב מן השמים יהי עליכם תמיד וכתב זה ציינו
וחקוק אתו בחדש טבת שנת אׄרׄלׄגׄ
פאגאבה בן מאיר

L1BM1 folio 1 verso
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.1 verso]

שלום מעניף ע[ד שמי][127] מרומים ומצליל עד יצוק הדומים
סובב ומקיף סב[יב ארץ וימ]ים[128] אפוד חן[129] עטוף רחמים · ממתיק
טעם כמו לרחו[.....] כ[קו]סוחים[130] כאיתן בא בימים · כאהוב

126 Isaiah 32:18 (misread by earlier editors). The abbreviations suggest that this verse was commonly used, at least in epistolary contexts. It is attested, indeed, in T-S 12.328 recto ll. 2–3, a letter dating from c. 1025 (Gil 1983: ii. 126–127).

127 Harkavy's conjecture (or Neubauer's—it is never possible to tell); but there is room for more letters.

128 Harkavy conjectures ים[סב[יב יבשת וימ]; but space is limited for this. My conjecture, inspired by Harkavy's, is marginally shorter and also more simple. The conjectural וימים is consistent with the rhyme.

129 This reading, Harkavy's, is probably correct; this phrase is similarly attested in an early eleventh-century epistolary address (in a letter written in Tyre c. 1025), ms Mosseri II.181 recto line 1. More generally, for a similar (but much longer) epistolary address using similar phrases as in these two lines, see JTS ENA 4010.47 recto lines 2–6 (a letter from Tripoli, Lebanon, dated 1025).

130 This word is problematic in meaning ('mowed down'—which does not fit the context) and in form (as it does not conform to the rhyme in מים-); moreover, in rabbinic literature this word nearly always follows קוצים ('thorns'—following Is. 33:12), yet there is no evidence of קוצים in the lacuna (the descender of the *qof* should be visible). I cannot suggest, however, any alternative. Harkavy, presumably following Neubauer, reads the last two words, before and after the lacuna, as [ים]לרחומ; besides the word itself making little sense, this conflation of the two words (which ignores, moreover, the lacuna between them) is plainly impossible.

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הנעקד לרצון תמים · וכחקוק מכסא מרומים · וכלכול[131] הפותר
חזיונות וחלומים · וכטוב שניתן בשיע אגמים · וכמלאך משרת
לפני אדון עולמים · וכגער לחרס וסהר מרומים · וכירובעל
שניסה בגזה שני[132] פעמים · וכשמצא[133] ושת מימי לחי בסימים
וכגלעדי ששפט עם וביתו התמימים · וכהקריב טלה חלב
לרצות[134] על רחומים · וכתושב שנם ענני שני פעמים · וכמאבל
שהפליא פלאים ע[צו]מים · וכמנגת[135] ששט בעמקי תהומים ·

L1BM1 folio 2 recto
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.2 recto]

ושמע טוב כשנים[136] עשר החתומים · ושם טוב[137] כמנגן בניצוח
טעמים · [ו]כבנה[138] ושכלל בית עולמים · וכשבעה רועים

131 Perhaps an error for וככלכול. Neubauer misread ובלבול. Harkavy (1891: 213 n. 13) sensed this was an error, and conjectured instead the correct reading; but Friedländer suggested instead וככבול, and this is the reading that Bornstein chose.

132 Maybe שתי.

133 Most likely an error for וכשצמא, see Jud. 15:18–19 (Friedländer); this metathesis may be due to confusion with מים ... וימץ (Jud. 6:38) in the context of Gideon (Jerubaal), who is just mentioned before this. The next word is for שתה, perhaps again an error.

134 More likely than לפצות of earlier editors.

135 More likely than כמגת (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25) of earlier editors.

136 Neubauer read wrongly בשנים; Harkavy sensed the error and corrected it to כשנים; in fact, this is what the manuscript reads (Bornstein 1904: 46, n. 15, erroneously reverts to בשנים).

137 This reading, as per Neubauer, is certain, even though it is obscured by parchment staining and by ink penetration from the verso (the traces of letters from the verso are a little offset below the line). The word שם, on this line, has similarly penetrated to the verso (there, offset above the line), which helps to confirm its reading. The next word, טוב, is hardly discernible in the digital images, but it can easily be read in the original fragment when it is held up to the light, whereupon the ink of the recto and the penetration from the verso become clearly distinguished. In the digital image, the left upright stroke of the *tet* seems to be joined to the *waw* and form a single letter with it; but the lower horizontal bar that appears to join them is actually the upper bar of letter *bet* of ובמצות which has penetrated from the verso, line 1. See Figures 4 and 5.

138 Neubauer read בנה, and Harkavy conjectured בנה[וכש], which in context is not justified. There is definitely a trace of ink before בנה, which could be read just as a *waw* (ובנה); however, an upper horizontal bar, and possibly also a lower one, appear to be faintly visible on the verso (across the ascender of the final *lamed* of לכל on line 2), due to ink penetration; hence my suggested reading of a *kaf*. My conjecture, in addition, of an initial *waw* follows the pattern of the whole text.

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הקדומים · וכשמנה המסוימים · וכארבעה הדומים[139] וה֯על֯ומים[140]
יוחקו הברכות כלם בראש קוראיהם בישלומים · לכל המון
קהילות ׳אחינו׳ ישראל הדרים במ֯ד֯נת[141] שנער הרבנים וזקנים וראשי
כנסיות ובתי אבות ופרנסי ציבור וגזברי עם ומרכלים ומלמדי
וחזנים ויתר אחינו יש֯[142] וחבירנו[143] ביראת אל הקדושים הטהורים
אוהבי תורה דורשי תעודה הוגה[144] בדת לקח טוב עדת חסידים
להקת תמימים כנת ישרים אילי הצדק נטיעת שלום למודי יי֯[145]
בני אל חי האהובים במעשהם[146] הטובים ובדרכיהם הישרות

L1BM1 folio 2 verso
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.2 verso]

המצוינים בתורה ובמצות ומושפעות בכל מדות טובות העשויים
נחת רוח לחכמים ולסנהדרי ישׂר הנתונים חפץ לכל[147] חלוף
המה ישאו קולם בהגים בגאון יי֯[148] צהלו מים על כן יבורך[149]
אדונינו ויאמן ויגדל שמו על כל שפת רננים וזמרת נוגנים משכולו
רחמים וחינונים יפצכם מכף סוטנים ותסקרו זיו מלך פנים

139 Harkavy, following Neubauer's transcription and notes, has השמים ('the sky') but with a note that the *shin* is doubtful. He struggles to explain what this reading might mean (the fourth heaven?), and suggests that it should perhaps be corrected to השנים ('the years'), interpreting this as a reference to the four New Years (*mRosh ha-Shanah* 1:1); but in language and in context, this does not make much sense either. The reading of this word is disturbed, again, by ink that has penetrated from the verso. On examination of the original folio held up to the light, it is possible to distinguish the ink of the recto from the ink penetration from the verso, and to read, quite clearly, הדומים. What may have appeared to Neubauer as the lower part of an over-sized and badly shaped *shin* is actually ink penetration from the other side, specifically of the letters לם of קולם on line 3 of the verso. See Figures 4 and 6.

140 Harkavy reads והעליונים, which ties in with his preceding השמים, but this is a misreading. The ink is a bit faded, but nevertheless clear.

141 More likely than במדינת; certainly not במדינות (as earlier editors).

142 The *shin* is broken, as often occurs in this manuscript when the word ישראל is abbreviated in this way.

143 *Sic.*

144 For הוגי.

145 Three dots, or rather short lines, in a triangle.

146 *Sic.*

147 As Bornstein suggests, the word בני appears to be missing here (see Prov. 31:8).

148 Three dots in a triangle; likewise, the last word on this line.

149 The whole line paraphrases Isaiah 24:14–15, except that בהגים substitutes ירנו. At this point, L1BM2 begins.

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בפנים ותכולכלו ממ֯ר֯עיתו[150] אלף מכמה[151] שנים ולברות בבירת[152]
תנתצה בין כנעים[153] ולהתנחל מעינו[154] אשר קרסוליו בנבך
וכרבלתו עד אופנים ולהסתוכך בעיר[155] עקלתון אשר קשקשיו
מפנימם[156] ולהתגונן בחופות ׳[157] שהוקטרו[158] ליציר בעדן גנים ולסוך
מאפרסמון המעולה על[159] שמנים ולהסב בפרדס עם מצוקים
ואיתנים אשר ביום קוראים ובלילה שונים סנהד֯[160] יש֯ הנאמנים

L1BM1 folio 3 recto
[JTS ENA 2556.2 verso left]

הקובעים מועדים וזמנים חכמי יש֯ הדרבונים מקום אגן הסהר
הקדמונים המעברים ימים ושנים ועל פיהם המועדים מתקנים[161]
אין רשות לאדם מישראל להשיג גבול ראשונים שעליהם נאמר ה׳[162]
היושבת בגנים ומצוה לעשות על פי זקנים שכן אמ֯ דוד אבי המנגנים
מזקנים אתבונן ואן שבחן שלישראל אלא ירושלי עיר הקודש וסנה֯ד
גדולה שבתוכה שכך שנו חכ֯ זלב֯ מי שלא ראה בשמחת בית
השאבה[163] ו[מ]ה[164] היתה שמחת בית השאבה ֯המקדש֯ שלא לן אדם בירושלים
ובידו עון שֹנ העיר[165] היושב בה נשוא עון · ולא עוד אלא שכל

150 L1BM2 has ממרעית, which is perhaps preferable.
151 The *kaf* is written over another letter, perhaps *mem*.
152 Perhaps בכירת, as in L1BM2.
153 Plausibly corrected by Harkavy as ולברות בכרת הנחצה בין כנעים, based on Job 40:30, with reference to the eschatological meal of Leviathan. The text of L1BM2 is closer to Harkavy's correction, although it still contains some of the errors that are found here: ולברות בכירת הנתצה בין כנעים.
154 An error for עיט, as correctly in L1BM2.
155 Plausibly corrected by Harkavy to בעור. The same, corrupt reading appears in L1BM2.
156 An error for מפנינים, as correctly in L1BM2.
157 Two dots vertically above the letter.
158 So in the manuscript (as well as in L1BM2), but possibly an error for שהוקשרו, as in Harkavy's edition (which was probably drawn from Neubauer's transcription, itself either a conjecture or a misreading). See note on critical edition (L1BM 5:6, p. 222).
159 The word כל, in L1BM2, may be erroneously missing here.
160 Angular symbol at the end of the word, to indicate abbreviation.
161 Misread by Adler: מתוקנים.
162 The short line above the *heh* and the dot above the *yod*, which may be in another hand, indicate that this is only a catchword or space filler.
163 The words לא ראה שמחה מימיו, in L1BM2, may have been omitted erroneously here.
164 Based on L1BM2. Adler reads: ובה. There is a hole in the parchment.
165 An error for העם (Isaiah 33:24), as in L1BM2. Adler reads, somewhat aberrantly: העית.

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ימים שהיה בי׳ המקדש קיים היתה הברכה והזול והשובע
בעולם דכ׳ כטל חרמון · אבל משחרב בי המ׳ק נסתלקה השמחה

L1BM1 folio 3 verso
[JTS ENA 2556.2 recto right]

ולא ירד טל ברכה וניטל טעם הפירות דכ׳ כי תאנה לא תפרח וג׳
זרעתם הרבה והבא מעט וכשיופיע הקב״ה ברחמיו הרבים לנחם
את יש׳ אינו מנחמן ומשמחן אלא בשמחת בי המ׳ק דכ׳ כי נחם יי[166]
ציון שיאמר בעל הרחמים ויעשה למען שמו ויביט בעלבון
עמו ויבנה ביתו ואולמו וישכלל מקום הדומו ויחיש להם יומו
ויצמיח ינון שמו · שאו שלום ממנו ומן יצחק אב בית ד׳
שלנו ומן סנהד׳ גדו׳[167] וסנה׳ד קט׳ן היושבת לפנינו ומן החכמים
והמשנים ומפלהדרין ומן תלמידין ומן הזקנים והשׁפ והסופ׳
והחז׳ן ומן החורין והסג׳ן ומכל ׳שארית׳[168] עם יי׳ הדרים במקדש ׳׳׳[169] ובצבי
ארצות שברחמי יוצרנו אנו חנויים ובצל[170] אברתו אנו מסתופפים
ועל חסדו אנו נשענים כי לא עזב ולא[171] יעזב לעולם ומעודנו ועד

L1BM1 folio 4 recto
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.3 recto]

היום הזה זכרכם הטוב לא מש מפינו ותפלותינו עליכם תדורה[172]
ועל זקני יקר שלכם בהר הזתים מול היכל יי׳ מקום הדום רגלי
א׳אינו[173] ועל שער הכהן ועל שערי מקדש יי בקיבוץ כל יש׳ לחג
חג ׳׳׳[174] חג הסוכות ובשמוע כל יש׳ שבחכם מפינו אז שמחו ועלצו
בשלום אשר הציבו שדי בינינו כי בהיותנו בבגדאד אצלכם
לא נמנענו מלעזור אתכם בכל לבבנו ובכל נפשנו על הקושרים
עליכם וכל מאמרכם ותאותכם היינו עושים ובחזירתנו אל ארץ יש׳[175]

166 Word omitted by Adler.
167 The dot is not a vowel, but like the others, an abbreviation sign.
168 Misplaced by Adler after עם יי׳. There are no dots above the first יי׳, perhaps because the space is taken up with this interlinear word.
169 Three dots in a triangle. Adler reads the third *yod* (which is angular), oddly, as a *gimel*.
170 Misread by Adler ובעל.
171 These two words omitted by Adler.
172 For תדירה, as in L1BM2.
173 The broken *aleph* and the dot above it indicate that this is an abbreviation, presumably of אלהינו (as interpreted by Harkavy; cf. L1BM2).
174 Three dots in a triangle (also on line 10).
175 The last word is added in the margin. In L1BM2, the words ארץ יש׳, somewhat para-

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ארץ מולדתנו צוינו בכל מדינה ומדינה ועיר ועיר לחזנים והיו
קוראים הפתיחים שלכם ומנדים שנאכם ומיכן נטרו איבה עלינו
ובייי בטחנו לא נבוש ותנינו שבח כבודכם והודענו בכל החסד

L1BM1 folio 4 verso
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.3 verso]

אשר גמלתונו והיו חמודיי וכל סנהדר שלנו בצאתם אל מקומות[176]
מודיעים רוב אהבתינו לכם כי מעולם לא היתה אהבה בין חכמי
ארץ ישׁ כמות זה הדור יהי רצון שיתמידה רחום · ובאילו
הימים הגיעו אלינו כל האגרות אשר כתבם דויד האֿ[177] בן זכאי
הידוע אצלכם במעשיו הטובים ודרכיו התמימים הוא ובניו
וכוהן והמתחבר אליהם סעיד בן יוסף אלדלאצי אשר הוא דומה
להם והם דומים לו ובעת אשר התבוננו באגרות ידענו רוב חכמתכם[178]
אשר אתם יודעים בכבודכם כי פירוש אלף אינם מכירים קל
וחו מכניסים עצמם במה שלא הנחילם חי העולמים ולא הרשם
להזכיר בפה כי אתם יודעים שהנביאים הראשונים והחֹכ

L1BM1 folio 5 recto
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.4 recto]

Non-continuous with the previous folio, as is confirmed by L1BM2. This is where the missing, presumably single central bi-folio was located.

שאמ ר בכך יורה יורה ידין ידין יתיר בכורות אל יתיר בכורות
ומכלל כל הדברים הללו יש הרשות לחבורת ארץ ישׁ על חכמי בני
הגולה ואין לבני הגולה רשות על בני ארץ ישׁ גם כמה שי[פ]ורץ[179]
בתלמודם יורו לומר דשלחו מתם ולא נראתה ולא נשמעה מעולם

tactic, are absent. It is possible that in this present manuscript, the scribe wrote by mistake ארץ twice (at the end of this line and the beginning of the next—by dittography) and then covered up his error by adding the word ישׁ in the margin.

176 L1BM2 reads אל כל המקומות, which makes more sense.

177 L1BM2 reads האומר, a word which Bornstein interprets as 'so-called' (following Epstein, who suggested instead האמור), but which remains somewhat obscure. It may be for this reason that our scribe wrote the first letter of the word and then, in doubt, left a blank space. The faint dot or short line over this letter—suggesting an abbreviation—may well be of a second hand.

178 Word added in the margin, in smaller characters.

179 Poorly legible, and meaning obscure; I translate it as 'widespread', similarly to חזון נפרץ (1Sam. 3:1). Misread by earlier editors.

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לבני הגולה להורות או לדון או להעמיד רשות להם את בנ׳ ארץ יש׳[180]
ועוד תלמודם מעיד בכמה הוריות ועיבורים לרבן גמליאל אבינו זל[181]
כרצונו ואין ממיר בארץ מכל החכמים שהיו בדורו כל שכן בחו׳
לארץ ולפיכך הוצרכנו עתה לבאר לכם סוד ארבעה
שעות[182] להראות כי מאחר שהרשות בידנו לעבר לא בדאו ולא
באפס שורש מחשבון הכריז חמודנו גם להודיע׳כ׳ם ביאור כל
שער ושער אשר למדנו מן החכמ׳ הראשונים זל וכן הוא מפורש

L1BM1 folio 5 verso
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.4 verso]

[לדו]רשים בשלומכם[183] שאין ראש הש׳ נתכון לא באׄ בשבת
ולא בד׳ ולא בו׳ כענין שלמדנו וירשנו מאבותינו רבן גמ׳לי הנשיא
ורבנו יהודה הנשיא לא אד׳ו ראש הש׳ אלא בשיני וג׳ וה׳ וביום
השבת לא נחלקו חכמ׳ שיום קידוש ראש הש׳ נקרא באחד
[מ]אלו ארבעה ימים וכך העמידה סנהדרין גד׳ול את גבולן
ולארבעת ימים האלה וזה פירושן נולד תשרי בג׳ה׳ז
[רו]אים אם נשתייר רביע יום חסר אמ׳ר ח׳לק עושים אתו
ב[יו]מו[184] ואם חסר במ׳ר דוחין אותו ואנו מבארים לכם
אלה אלו ד׳ הימים בד׳[185] שע׳ר וכך מפורש בשער ראשון
כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד נ׳ב ח׳לק[186] משעה י׳ מיום ו׳ אחוז

180 The *shin* is broken (as is not uncommon: see above, n. 142) and the word is narrowly written, perhaps because the scribe ran out of space and did not want to extend the line beyond the others.

181 Two vertical dots, or a horizontal bar with a dot above it, above the centre of the word.

182 Error for שערים, as correctly noted by Bornstein.

183 These two words are very faded, but legible; earlier editors omit them completely.

184 The manuscript is puckered at this point, which makes the reading difficult. Harkavy leaves out this word altogether. Friedländer, followed by Bornstein, supplies the word ראש, but there is no basis for this in the manuscript. This can be taken as evidence that Friedländer did not see the original manuscript, and worked only on the basis of conjecture (in spite of giving no indication, in this case, that the word ראש is his conjecture).

185 So Friedländer, in this case making the correct conjecture. Harkavy misreads כמ׳, which he interprets as כמה (and which makes little sense).

186 Abbreviation of חלקים.

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L1BM1 folio 6 recto
[JTS ENA 2556.2 recto left]

The left edge of this folio is missing (except on the last two lines).

יום שבת וחסֵר וטעם[187] הדבר מפני השנה הבאה כדי להעמידה על
שש שעות תִּרְמֹאּ חלק ביום ה והוא אִמְרֹתּ כי בין מולד שנת מעו[ברת]
לשנה שלאחריה ה ימים כֹּאּ שעות תִּקְפֹּטּ חלק כשאתה מונה [מִנֹּבּ][188]
חֵלק משעה י ביום ו ה ימים כֹּאּ שעות תִּקְפֹּטּ חלק מגיע [הח]ש[בון][189]
לסוף אִמְרֹתּ חֵלק משעה ז ביום ה ולא נוכל לדחותו מ[יום ה][190]
כי לא עבר המולד על אִמְרֹתּ בחלק א ומן [..]ין[191] ראש הש׳ [ ]
נמצא תחלת מעוברת יום שבת ותחלת פשוטה שלאחריה [יום ה׳]
ובין זו לזו ו׳ ימים וששה ימים במעו׳ב חס״י(רים) שכך נא׳מ במסור[ת חכ׳]מ[192]
ח׳ד׳ו׳[193] וגם אמרו אם נולד לאחר מן זה המנין לפני יום השבת [..]ה
יום שבת ושלי׳מ(ים) טעם שלהם לפני[194] שבת מיכן ועד שיעבור[195] גבול
שבת ועלת הדבר שנה הבאה שאם יעבור מיכן חלק אחד נולד לשנה

187 Difficult to read because of ink penetration from the other side of the parchment (the word בִּמְרֹתּ from the verso, near the end of line 1).

188 Adler reads: מונה כ׳ב׳. This is an error, but it is evidently a scribal error, or alternatively a misreading (*kaf* instead of *nun*), not the result of Adler's erroneous calculation or conjecture. Indeed, Adler does not use square brackets at the end of this line and the previous two lines, which suggests that whereas our fragment is torn at this place, in Adler's time it was intact and he was able to read the ends of the first three lines. His text might have read כֹּבּ, but a misreading on his part is perhaps more likely. One expects the preposition -מ to be used, hence my conjecture; if it was absent in Adler's fragment, this may have been a scribal error.

189 My conjecture, based on fol. 7r:1–2. Traces of a distorted *shin* are just visible.

190 Alternatively, מיומו. The ink seems to have faded completed.

191 Obscure. There is a hole in the parchment, above and below which there appears to be ink penetration from the other side, which makes the reading of this side all the more difficult. Bornstein suggests that ומן ..]ין should be read מונין (and at the end of the line, בה or ביום ה), but the very clear final *nun* after the *mem*, as well as the space after the word ומן, precludes this. I would suggest ומן דוחין (there are traces of a ד and a ח), ומן being a scribal error for ואין, but this cannot be more than conjectural.

192 Conjecture based on fol. 6v:4 and fol. 7r:10. Adler, followed by Bornstein, reads incorrectly במשנת and ignores the *mem* at the end of the line; he did not have the benefit of the join with Bodl. Heb. f. 26.

193 Small gap in the text, and a faint colon, perhaps in a different hand.

194 Adler reads לפי, but the *nun* is clear.

195 Adler: שיעביר.

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L1BM1 folio 6 verso
[JTS ENA 2556.2 verso right]

{השנה} ״הבאה״ בי[ו]ם ה׳ ושש שע׳ [ת׳ר]מב׳ חלק והם ב׳מר׳ת[196] דוחים אתו
ליום שבת ימצא ראש מעוברת שבת וראש השׁ שלא[ח]ריה
[בש]ב[ת][197] הרי[198] ח׳ ימים וח׳ ימים במעוב[ר]ת שלימ׳ שכך קבעו
[במסו]רת[199] חכ׳מ שו׳ח וגם אמ׳ אם לא יהיה באותה השנה
[עיבור][200] ולא בשנה הבאה עיבור ונולד קודם ת׳ת׳ר׳מ׳ט׳ חלק׳
[משע]ה ראשונה בלילי ששי אחוז יום שבת וחסי׳ · וטעם הדבר
[שלא][201] יעברו[202] ו׳ שע׳ ואמ׳ר׳ת ביום חמישי ועד ת׳ת׳ר׳מ׳ט׳ חלק׳ בשעה
[ר]אשונה בלילי ו׳ וטעם הדבר שתי שנים שלאחריה ועיקר
הטעם שנה שלישית כשאתה מונה מאלף מ׳ט׳ שעות משנה[203]
ראשנה בלילי ו׳ ד׳ ימים ח׳ שעות ת׳ת׳ע׳ו׳ חלק׳ יתרון[204] הפשוטה

L1BM1 folio 7 recto
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.5 recto]

מגיע סוף החשבון לילי ג׳ ת׳ת׳מ׳ה׳ חלק משעה י׳ ועוד [אתה מונה][205]
לשנה אחרת כך ומגיע סוף חשבון ליום השבת לשש ש[ע׳ ואמ׳ר׳ת]
חלק וכשאתה מונה כך יקרא ראש השׁנ הראשונה [בשבת ושניה]
ביום ג׳ ושלישית ביום שבת נמצא ימים שבינהם של[ראשונים ד׳][206]
וארבעה בפשוטה חסי׳ר וזה עיקר ח׳ד׳ו׳ ובין שתים הא[חרונים ה׳]
וה׳ ימים בפשוטה כסדרן והעיקר כ׳ה׳ז׳ · ואם יעבור ח[לק]
אחד מיכן יעבור שנה ג׳ משש שעות ואמ׳ר׳ת ביום שבת בח[לק]

196 Not understanding the text, Adler reads (?) במדת. He misreads the next word דחים.
197 Or possibly just [ת]ב[ש]. Adler leaves out the word completely, with empty square brackets, indicating that he could not read it. Even if the upper corner of the fragment was intact in his period (see above my remarks on fol. 6 recto, end of line 3), the beginning of this line on the verso was presumably missing already then (line 3 on the verso is slightly lower down than on the recto).
198 Adler: הכי; this is perhaps a printing error, as there could hardly have been a misreading.
199 Adler: דב׳; this looks like a gross misreading.
200 Bornstein's conjecture (and so the beginning of the next line).
201 My conjecture, similarly to Bornstein's כי לא עברו.
202 Adler: עברו.
203 An error for חלקים משעה.
204 Adler misreads: ת׳ת׳ו׳ חלק׳ יתרין.
205 My conjecture.
206 My conjecture (and so in the next line); earlier editors did not see the last *lamed*, which led to other conjectures.

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בְּמֹרַ֫ת וצריך הדבר לדחותו עד יום שני נמצאת ראשונה ביום
שבת ושנייה ביום ה׳ ובנֵהם[207] ו׳ ימים ושתה י״מ בפשוטה שלימים
והמסורת שׁוֹחֵ֫ת והשלישית יום שני וביניהם ה׳ י״מ וה׳ י״מ בפשוט[ה]

L1BM1 folio 7 verso
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.5 verso]

[כס]דרן והסימן כֹּהֵ֫ז וכך אתם מוציאים בירור כל
[ ] וגם אמרו אם היה בשנה הבאה עיבור ונולד קודם
[תֹּ֫תְּמֹהּ] ח׳ל משעה י׳ בלילי ו׳ אחוז יום שבת וחסי וביאור הדבר
[ ] שלא לדחות מעוברת משש שׁ֫עֹ ואֹמֹרַ֫ת ביום ג׳ ואם
[יעבור][208] זה המנין אחוז יום שבת ושׁ֫לי והטעם שכיון שיעבור
[חלק] אח׳ד על אֹמֹרַ֫ת משעה ו׳[209] ביום ג׳ ידחה ליום ה׳ זה הוא כלל שער
[ר]אשון שער שיני כל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד קודם רַ֫נוֹ חלק
משעה ראשונה מיום ד׳ אחוז יום ה׳ וחסי ועילת הדבר בזמן שמולד
שלשנה מעוברת בְּרַ֫נוֹ חֵ֫לק משעה ראשונה מיום ד׳ נולד שלאחריה
לשנה הבאה לילי שבת[210] בְּתֹּ֫תְּמֹהּ[211] חֵ֫לק משעה י׳ ושלאחריה ביום
ביום שבת בוֹ שׁ֫עֹ[212]

L1BM1 folio 8 recto
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.6 recto]

This last folio is damaged; its verso is faded and difficult to read. Conjectures are based on L1BM2 (Harkavy's manuscript), but they could reasonably be guessed without it, as the calendrical data and phraseology of ben Meir are highly predictable. Note that it is not always clear which manuscript Harkavy and Bornstein are using, at any given point, in their base text.

207 The pointing, possibly in another hand, makes up for the defective spelling.
208 Bornstein's conjecture, and so in the next line.
209 Probably a mistake for ז׳ (as corrected by Bornstein).
210 An error for לילי ג׳.
211 In the manuscript there are six dots above this word (there should only be four, on the letters תתמה). See also first word of fol. 8r. The addition of a dot on the preposition (prefixing a number) is not uncommon in our corpus.
212 Of these four words, only שבת is necessary (the rest is already stated in the main text, in the previous line or in the next folio). This partial line seems to have been added by the scribe to make up for the omission of שבת, but he added more than was really necessary. It is written in the bottom margin.

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וֹאִמְרֹת חל משעה ז ונמצא ראש השנה הראֹש חמיש[י]
והיא מעוברת שנייה בשלישי פשוטה ובין זו לזו וֹ ימי[ם ושׁשׁה]
במעוברת חסֵי והסימן חֹדֹוֹ והשלישית יום שבת [ובין שניה]
[לֹג] הֹ ימים והֹ ימים בפשוטה כסדרן וטעמו שלסוד [שׁאם]
[יע]בור המולד מאתים נֹוֹ חֹלק משעה ראשׁו מיו[ם דֹ בחלק אחד]
ימצא מולד שנייה לחברתה תֹתֹמֹוֹ[213] חֹ[לק] משעה [יֹ בלילי ג ימצא]
מולד שלישית בוֹ שעות בְּמֹרֹת [ביום][214] שבת וב[זמן שהיה כן אנו]
צריכין לדחות ג ליום הֹ ועדאין לא הגענו לגבול בזו השנה
שכבר נשאר לנו תֹדֹ חֹלק מפני שנולד תשרי בשנת תֹתֹנֹג לח[שבון]
[הבית][215] לילי דֹ יֹאֹ שֹע תֹתֹקֹלֹבֹ חֹלק וראש השׁנ ביום הֹ והחדשי[ם]

L1BM1 folio 8 verso
[Bodl. MS Heb. f. 26.6 verso]

חס ולא נוכל לדחותו שכבר נשאר תֹדֹ חֹלק עד זמן[216]
[שי]גיע לגבול רֹנֹוֹ משעה ראשונה ביום דֹ ומחלק[217] אחד
[לפני] רֹנֹוֹ לא ידחה ידחה[218] מדֹ מאות ודֹ עד שלא יגיע
[לגבול ש]לימֹ[219] ובשנה הבאה אתם מוסיפין דחֹ תֹתֹעֹוֹ יג[י]ע
[המולד לילי ג] מֹ שֹע תמֹאֹ חלקֹ ובשעה[220] ג נאמר אם לא יהיה
[באותו תשרי] עיבור ונ[ולד] קודם מתֹתֹהֹ[221] חלקֹ משעה יֹ מלילי [ג]
[אחוז יום ג ו]כסדרן והש[נה ה]באה שהיא שנת תֹתֹנֹדֹ לחשבון
הבית פשוטה הוא נולד בלילי ג בטֹ שֹע תֹמֹאֹ חֹלק והוא בגבול
ג והחדשים כסֹד ונשאר מן החשבון תֹתֹמֹהֹ חֹל תֹדֹ עד שיגיע
לגבול ולא נוכל לדחותו מפני המולד והשנה הג שהיא שנת

213 This reading of these two words is clear, and corrects all the erroneous readings and conjectures of the first editors.
214 The parchment is erased and damaged, but the missing word here is certainly ביום; the left upright stroke of the final *mem* is visible.
215 As in fol. 8v:7–8.
216 Very poorly legible; reconstructed on the basis of Ms Harkavy.
217 So the earlier editors, but perhaps a better reading is חלק[ב]ו.
218 Friedländer suggests ידחהו ונדחהו (of which Bornstein accepts the second word, ונדחהו), but there is no basis for this in either L1BM1 or L1BM2, and as a correction it is unnecessary.
219 As in L1BM2 (except that Harkavy has של ימין, perhaps a printing error). Bornstein conjectures לימֹ[לגבול רֹנֹוֹ ש], but there is probably not enough space for this.
220 An error for ובשער (as corrected by Friedländer; see Bornstein 1904: 55 n. 3).
221 An error for תֹתֹמֹהֹ, as in L1BM2.

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FIGURE 4 Upper left corner of L1BM1 folio 2 (Bodl. Heb. f. 26, fol. 2) recto
Note: the beginning of the first line is obscured by staining and ink penetration, but when the original is held up to the light, ושם טוב appears very clearly (see also Figure 5). The middle word of the last line, הדומים, is similarly clear when held up to the light; the circular (or triangular) shape below the *dalet* is due to ink penetration from a final *mem* on the other side (see Figure 6).
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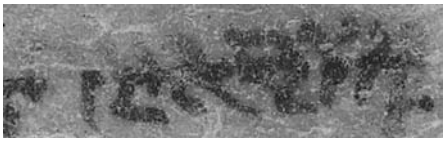


FIGURE 5
Detail of L1BM1 folio 2 (Bodl. Heb. f. 26, fol. 2) verso, line 1, horizontally flipped
Note: above the line are letters that have penetrated from the other side, fol. 2 recto, line 1 (see Figure 4, beginning of the first line). Clearly discernable is ושם. This is followed more faintly by טוב. The first two letters (*tet-waw*) are misleadingly joined at the bottom by the upper horizontal bar of the *bet* of ובמצות (on this image, horizontally flipped).
COURTESY OF THE BODLEIAN LIBRARIES, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

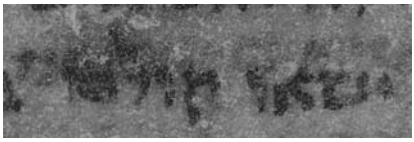


FIGURE 6
Detail of L1BM1 folio 2 (Bodl. Heb. f. 26, fol. 2) verso, line 3
Note: above the line on the left are traces of הדומים (here, in mirror writing), which has penetrated from the recto. The reading of הדומים on the recto is confused by ink penetration from this (verso) side of the *lamed* and, more distinctly, the final *mem* of קולם (see Figure 4).
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9.4 L1BM2: Diplomatic Edition

Of this manuscript of ben Meir's First Letter, only two folios have been preserved: T-S 8K8 and T-S 8K7 (consecutively, and in this order). A further two folios, which may have belonged to the same manuscript, were published by Harkavy in 1891, but they are now lost.

The manuscript can be dated palaeographically to the eleventh century. Its script is local, but with Palestinian features. Although the scribe was not necessarily, for that matter, of Palestinian identification, it should be noted that a Palestinian identification, as in the case of L1BM1, would have been particularly appropriate for a copy of a letter of ben Meir.

Physical Description

Paper, black ink. Dimensions: 19.8 cm × 14.5 cm. Lines number: 19 (on all sides, except fol. 1 verso where the bottom part is left blank). In T-S 8K7 (folio 2), the lines are somewhat shorter and more compactly laid out than in T-S 8K8 (folio 1), with wider margins on all sides, although the latter are difficult to measure accurately because of the mounting. Their text and margin measurements are therefore given separately, as follows. Folio 1:[222] text 16.5 cm × 12.5 cm, margins 8 mm (inner), 15–19 mm (outer), 15 mm (top), 21 mm (bottom). Folio 2: text 15.3 cm × 11–11.8 cm, margins 11 mm (inner), 19 mm (outer), 20 mm (top), 24 mm (bottom). No left margin justification; but in several places, uniquely in folio 2 verso, the end of the line is partially filled with the first letter or letters of the next word on the following line.[223] Throughout the manuscript, the line spaces and lines of text are somewhat irregular, but they are generally of equal height, on average 4.5 mm (folio 1) and 4 mm (folio 2).

Condition: generally excellent. Folio 1 recto has, in a small area in the top left corner, some traces of ink rubbed off from the facing page, which hinders the reading in this area but may be useful to us for reconstructing the manuscript (see below p. 272, note on fol. 1r:2). The top corner of folio 2 is torn off, removing the end of two lines of text.

The script is local but with Palestinian features, such as the occasional use of a khi-shaped *aleph*. The hand-writing can be likened in some features to that of Ephraim ben Shemarya, who headed the Palestinian tribunal at Fusṭāṭ through most of the first half of the eleventh century.[224]

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222 Some of these dimensions only apply to the recto, as the bottom half of the verso is blank. As always, measurements of the left margin (whether inner or outer) are only a rough average, since there is no left justification.

223 Fol. 2v:4,12,14.

224 See Olszowy-Schlanger (2018); I am grateful to Judith Schlanger for her advice.

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Reconstructing the Manuscript and Joining the Harkavy Folios

The reconstruction of the manuscript starts from a textual comparison of L1BM2 with L1BM1. Folio 1 of our manuscript, L1BM2 (T-S 8K8), starts from the middle of the proem of ben Meir's letter, at a point corresponding in L1BM1 to its folio 2 verso, end of line 3. Given that L1BM1 itself does not start from the beginning of the text, but rather in the middle of a letter addressed to ben Meir (to which ben Meir then responds), we must assume that at least two folios are missing from the beginning of L1BM2.

Folio 1 verso of L1BM2 ends at the end of the proem, after which there is a blank space at the bottom of the page, equivalent to about six lines of text. It is probably because of this blank space that the folios were catalogued in Cambridge in the wrong order, on the false assumption that T-S 8K8 verso was the end of the text. Actually, it is only the end of the proem.

Folio 2 (T-S 8K7) continues with the main body of the letter, and ends a little beyond the end of L1BM1 fol. 4 verso (with three extra lines of text which are not attested in L1BM1). In my reconstruction, this folio would have been originally the fourth in the manuscript. There is possibly evidence of this, as something resembling a folio number 'four' (ד) appears at the top of folio 2 recto (see below in the text edition).

The coverage of folios 1 and 2 (total: 4 sides of 19 lines, less 6 lines in folio 1 verso) in L1BM2 roughly corresponds, in L1BM1, to 5 sides of 10 lines (L1BM1 fol. 2 verso—fol. 4 verso). This correspondence will be important, as we shall presently see, in reconstructing the whole of L1BM2.

The text of ms Harkavy begins near the start of the last folio of L1BM1, and continues well beyond it, up to the end of ben Meir's First Letter. As stated above, Harkavy's manuscript has not been found. The sole information Harkavy gives on it, in his edition of 1891, is that it was located in St Petersburg. He does not specify, however, whether it was in a library or a private collection (such as his). Epstein (1901: 174) writes that Harkavy found it in the library of St Petersburg; but this is probably no more than an interpretation of Harkavy's words. I have searched the online catalogues of St Petersburg's National Library of Russia, and perused Harkavy's hand-written catalogue of the same library's first Hebrew series, Evr. I, without finding a record of this manuscript.[225] I have also searched in person Harkavy's personal collection of manuscripts, which is now housed (but uncatalogued) in the Vernadsky Library, Kyiv—all without success.[226] Because of the difficulty of accessing these materials, the possibility

225 A copy of the hand-written catalogue is in JTS library, shelved at Z6621.L45 H4 1974.

226 My visit to the Vernadsky Library took place on 17–20 June 2013; I wish to thank Alexey

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remains that the manuscript is somewhere either in St Petersburg or in Kyiv, but it may also be elsewhere in the world, or completely lost.

There are some indications that Harkavy's manuscript belongs to L1BM2, but no absolute proof. Firstly, Harkavy's manuscript contains parts of ben Meir's First Letter that are not in the extant folios of L1BM2 (although there is textual overlap with L1BM1). Secondly, like the folios of L1BM2, ms Harkavy has exactly and consistently 19 lines per page. When transcribed, the lines of ms Harkavy appear shorter than those of L1BM2 fols. 1–2; but as has been noted above, the lines of folio 2 are somewhat shorter than those of folio 1, so it is perhaps not impossible that they became even shorter when reaching the Harkavy folios (after an interval of four folios in between, as presently explained).[227]

In addition, the assumption that Harkavy's manuscript belongs to L1BM2 leads to a plausible reconstruction of the manuscript as a whole. This reconstruction is based on an estimate of how many folios are missing. As we have seen, the text of L1BM2 folio 2 ends just after the end of L1BM1 fol. 4. Ms Harkavy, on the other hand, begins near the beginning of L1BM1 fol. 8. This means that the textual interval between the end of L1BM2 folio 2 and the beginning of ms Harkavy corresponds to five folios of L1BM1 (missing central bi-folio, and fols. 5–7, total five folios). We have established above that five folios of L1BM1 cover the same length of text as four folios of L1BM2. Thus, the interval between L1BM2 folio 2 and ms Harkavy, if the latter is assumed to be part of the same manuscript, would amount—one could say 'exactly'—to four folios of L1BM2. The lacuna of an exact number of whole folios is consistent with the hypothesis that L1BM2 fols. 1–2 and ms Harkavy are part of the same manuscript. This does not prove that ms Harkavy belongs to L1BM2, but it does make the assumption even more plausible.

On this basis, the manuscript as a whole could thus be reconstructed as follows:

1. At least two folios (missing)
2. T-S 8K8 and T-S 8K7

(Oleksiy) Khamray and other members of the Judaic section of the library, for arranging access to Harkavy's manuscript collection and doing their best to assist in locating these folios.

227 The textual features of the manuscripts do not help to confirm whether ms Harkavy belongs to L1BM2. A distinctive feature of T-S 8K7–8 is its unusual spelling הייתה (fol. 1v:1,4; fol. 2v:6), whereas L1BM1 has the normal היתה. Unfortunately, this word does not appear in ms Harkavy, so that its spelling of the word cannot be verified. A distinctive feature of Ms Harkavy its high number of errors in the calendrical data (four errors, all in the recto of the first folio). Unfortunately, there are no calendrical data in T-S 8K7–8, so that this feature is equally unhelpful for identifying ms Harkavy with the latter.

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3. Four folios (missing)
4. Ms Harkavy (two folios)

In the light of these arguments, our present edition will assume that ms Harkavy belongs to L1BM2. However, this must be treated as uncertain, and will only be verifiable if Harkavy's manuscript is ever re-discovered.

Bibliography

T-S 8K8 (folio 1)

Schechter (1901–1902) 42.
Bornstein (1904) 47–48, based on Schechter's transcription.

T-S 8K7 (folio 2)

Lévi (1900*a*).
Bornstein (1904) 48–50, based on Lévi's edition.
The join was first made by Bornstein (1904: 45), though without drawing much attention to it, seemingly on the basis that both folios were in Cambridge (which Lévi made explicit with regard to T-S 8K7), and that they were textually continuous (although the significance of this is limited, because folio 2 begins a new part of the letter after a page break on folio 1 verso—it could, therefore, have been part of a different manuscript). The join was confirmed by Sacha Stern on 4 January 2012, on the basis of images of the manuscripts.

Ms Harkavy (folios 3–4)

Harkavy (1891) 218–220, an edition mingled with L1BM1.
Friedländer (1893) 197–199, a revision of parts of Harkavy's edition (see introduction to L1BM1).
Epstein (1901) 173–210, and Bornstein (1904) 54–56, both based on the earlier editions.

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L1BM2 folio 1 recto
[T-S 8K8recto]

יי[228] אדונינו ויאמן ויגדל שמו על כל שפת רננים
וזמרת נוגנים מישכלו רחמים וחינונים ופיצכם[229]
מכף סוטנים ות׳ס׳קרו זיו מלך פנים בפנים ותכלכלו
ממרעית אלף מכמה שנים [[מ]][230] ולברות בכירת
הנתצה בין כנענים[231] ולהתנחל מעיט אשר קרס׳ו׳ליו
בנבך וכרבלתו עד ׳אופנים׳[232] ולהסתוכך בעיר[233] עקלתון אשר
קשקשיו מפנינים ולהתגונן בחופות י שהוקט[[ו]]רו[234]
ליציר בעדן גנים ולסוך מאפרסמון המעולה על כל
שמנים ולהסב בפרדס עם מצוקים ואיתנים ·
אשר ביום קוראים ובלילה שונים סנהדרי ישראל
הנאמנים הק[[ו]]בועים[235] מועד׳י׳ם וזמנים . חכמי ישראל
הדרבונים מקום אגן הסהר הקדמונים המעברים ימים
ושנים : ועל פיהם המועדים מיתקנים אין רשות לאדם
מישראל להשיג גבול ראשונים · שעליהם נאמר
היושבת בגנים ומצוה לעשות על פי זקנים : שכן

228 The sign above the middle letter is actually v-shaped with a dot above it.

229 An error for יפיצכם (cf. L1BM1: יפצכם). Above this word, between the lines, the letters וכשבעה appear in mirror writing; these are traces of ink that have rubbed off from the facing page (no longer extant). Indeed, in L1BM1, the word וכשבעה appears in folio 2 recto at the end of line 2, which in my estimation (see discussion above) would have corresponded to almost exactly one page of L1BM2 before our present passage. Below this line, another mirror-written word appears between the lines, which reads המס; these are the first letters of המסוימים, which appears again in L1BM1, ibid. in the middle of the next line. Below this, between lines 3 and 4 of our folio (and still at the end of the line), are the mirror-written letters יוחק, which are the first letters of יוחקו; this word appears in L1BM1 at the beginning of the following line (L1BM1 fol. 2r:4; note that the lines of L1BM1 are wider than of L1BM2, hence the progressive displacement). This confirms the correspondences between the textual layout of L1BM1 and L1BM2 which I have used above towards the reconstruction of L1BM2.

230 Possibly another character (or two characters), clearly written in error.

231 Plausibly corrected by Harkavy as ולברות בכרת הנחצה בין כנענים, based on Job 40:30, with reference to the eschatological meal of Leviathan. See note on L1BM1 fol. 2v:7, above p. 259.

232 This word was left out by the scribe. It is inserted sideways in the right margin, possibly in a different hand; a slanted stroke appears above עד in the main text, to refer to it.

233 Plausibly corrected by Harkavy into בעור. The same, corrupt reading appears in L1BM1.

234 So in the manuscript (as well as in L1BM1). Schechter reads שהוקשרו, probably based on the reading that is given by Harkavy in his edition of L1BM1. See note on the critical edition (L1BM 5:6, above p. 222).

235 Stroke through the first *waw*, but really it is the second one that is erroneous.

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אמר דויד אבי המנגנים מזקנים אתבונן ואין שבחן
של ישראל אלא ירושלים עיר הקודש וסנהדרין
גדולה שבתוכה שכך שנו חכ זל מי שלא ראה
שמחת בית השאבה לא ראה שמחה מימיו

L1BM2 folio 1 verso
[T-S 8K8 verso]

ומה הייתה שמחת בית המקדש שלא לן אדם
בירושלים ובידו עון דכתי העם היושב בה נשוא
עון ולא עוד אלא שכל ימים שהיה בית המקדש
קיים הייתה הברכה והזול והשובע בעולם
דכתי כטל חרמון וג אבל משחרב בית המקדש
נסתלקה השמחה ולא ירד טל ברכה וניטל טעם
הפירות דכ כי תאנה לא תפרח זרעתם הרבה והבא
מעט וכשיופע הקדש בר הוא[236] ברחמיו הרבים לנחם
את ישראל אינו מנחמן ומשמחן אלא בשמחת בית
המקדש דכ כי ניחם יי[237] ציון שיאמר בעל הרחמים
ויעשה למען שמו ויביט בעלבון עמו ויבנה ביתו
ואולמו וישכלל מקום הדומו ויחיש להם יומו
ויצמיח ינון[238] שמו : אמן ואמן[239] קובל בהא[240]
ק

The rest of the page is left blank.

236 The dot over this word is unnecessary, as it is not abbreviated (although it commonly is—hence perhaps the error).

237 Two signs above and between the letters, identical to the sign in fol. 1r:1.

238 Schechter misreads יען, which makes no sense; he proposes to correct it into למען, but this is equally problematic as the verb ויצמיח would then lack an object. The manuscript, however, plainly reads ינון (as in L1BM1 fol. 3v:6). Schechter's error was initially retained by Bornstein (1904). After the relevant fragment from L1BM1, JTS ENA 2556.2, was published by Adler (1914), where Adler correctly read ינון, Bornstein (1922*b*: 264) commented that this was the correct text; but it still did not occur to him that Schechter's יען in L1BM2 was actually a misreading.

239 Horizontal line above this word; perhaps to indicate a deletion. The words אמן ואמן are absent in L1BM1.

240 I cannot make sense of these extra two words. They may be written in a different hand. The final character might be a cursive *aleph*, but this is very uncertain. The large *qof* below, definitely in another hand, looks like a scribble.

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L1BM2 folio 2 recto
[T-S 8K7 recto]

In the top right corner there is a sign resembling ד. Could this be the folio number (4) in a codex? My reconstruction of the manuscript suggests, indeed, that this folio could well be the fourth. Alternatively, this could be the number of a new quire.

בׁשׁ רׁחׁמׁנׁא[241]

שאו שלום גדול[242] ממנו ומן יצחק [אב בית]
דין שלנו ומן סנהדרין גדולה וסנה[דרין קטנה][243]
היושבת לפנינו ומן הח׳כ׳מים והמשנים ומפלהדרין
ומן תלמידין ומן הזקנים ומן השופטים והסופרין
והחזנין ומן החורין והסגנים ומכל שארית עדת
ישראל הדרים במקדש יי[244] ובצבי ארצות שברחמי
יוצרנו אנו חנויים ובצל אברתו אנו מסתופפים ועל
חסדו אנו נשענים כי לא עזב ולא יעזוב לעולם
ומעודינו ועד היום הזה זכרכם הטוב לא מש
מפינו ותפלתינו עליכם תדירה ועל זקני יקר שלכם
בהר הזיתים מול היכל יי מקום הדום רגלי אלהיי[245]
בשער הכהן ועל שערי מקדש יי בקיבוץ כל
ישרׂ לחג את חג ׳יי חג׳ הסוכות וכשמוע כל ישראל
שבחכם מפינו אז שמחו וששו ועלצו בשלום
אשר הציבו שהי[246] בינינו כי בהיותינו בבגדאד
אצלכם לא נמנעו[247] ⟦מלעזרור⟧ מלעזור אתכם בכל
לבבינו ובכל נפשינו על הקושרים עליכם וכל

241 Bornstein expands this correctly as the standard invocation בשמך רחמנא ('in Your name, the Merciful'), although variants of this may also be possible (cf. 3PalMan 1r:1). This invocation, however, is written in the top margin in a different hand, and absent in L1BM1. It is therefore most likely not part of the original text. The dots above the letters are actually the same signs as in fol. 1r:1.

242 This word is absent in L1BM1.

243 Reconstructed on the basis of L1BM1; the descender of the *qof*, however, is visible.

244 Same sign as in fol. 1r:1; likewise below in lines 11–13.

245 Perhaps an error for אלהי, i.e. an abbreviation of אלהינו. L1BM1 reads אׁינו, an abbreviation of the same.

246 Probably a scribal error for שדי, as in L1BM1.

247 An error for נמנענו, as correctly in in L1BM1.

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מאמרכם ותאוותכם היינו עושים ובחז[י]רתנו[248]
אל ארץ מולדתנו ציוינו בכל מדינה ומדינה ועיר

L1BM2 folio 2 verso
[T-S 8K7 verso]

[ועיר לחזנים] והיו קוראים הפתיחים שלכם ומנדים
[שנאכם ומי]כן נטרו איבה עלינו ובי״[249] בטחנו לא
נבוש ותנינו שבח כבודכם והודענו בכל החסד
אשר גמלתונו והיו חמודיי וכל סנהדרין שלנו ב[250]
בצאתם אל כל המקומות מודיעים רוב אהבתינו
לכם כי מעולם לא הייתה אהבה בין חכמי ארץ
ישרׂ כמות זה הדור יהי רצון שיתמידה רחום
ובאילו ה׳׳מים הגיעו אלינו כל האגרות אשר כתבם
דאוד האומר בן זכאי [הֹינִי][251] הידוע אצלכם במעשיו
הטובים ודרכיו התמימים הוא ובניו וכוהן והמתחבר
להם סעיד בן יוסף אלדלאצי אשר הוא דומה להם
והם דומים לו ובעת אשר התבוננו באיגרות יד[כ][252]
ידענו רוב חכמכם[253] אשר אתם יודעים בכבודכם
כי פירוש אלף אינם מכירים קול וחומר מכניסים ע
עצמם במה שלא הנחילם חיי העולמים ולא הרשם
להזכיר בפה כי אתם יודעים שהנביאים הראשנים[254]
והחכמים[255] נמנעו מלעבר [בוצה] בחוצה לארץ
וראיה לדבר מאבינו יעק[ו]ב[256] זֹצֹל שכך למדנו
מרבותינו זֹל כשיצא יעקוב אבינו לחוצה לארץ

248 Dot under and above the letter *yod*, marking it for deletion.
249 Three dots in a triangle.
250 This is the first letter of the next word, and functions as a space filler (as below, lines 12 and 14); however, the dot above it possibly marks it for deletion. This letter is bigger than the others, and possibly in another hand.
251 The dots mark it for deletion.
252 The last letter should be *ayin* (thus completing, as an end-of-line space filler, the first letters of the next word, ידענו); in fact, it may be a badly written *ayin*. The dot above it suggests perhaps that it has been marked for deletion.
253 *Sic*, an error for חכמתכם (as in L1BM1).
254 Uncharacteristic defective spelling, evidently because of lack of space at the end of the line.
255 At this point, L1BM1 breaks off.
256 The *waw* appears to be struck through, and likewise, the dot above it is likely a deletion mark rather than the vowel *ḥolam*. The reason for this deletion is that this name is usually not spelled *plene*. Strangely, this correction does not appear on the same word in the next line.

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L1BM2 folio 3 recto
[Ms Harkavy fol. 1 recto]

The following is a transcription of Harkavy's edition. I have retained Harkavy's editorial conventions, with single or double primes above numbers and abbreviations where the manuscript most likely had dots.

Not consecutive with folio 2.

הראשונה חמישי והיא מעוברת · שנייה
בשלישי פשוטה ובין זו לזו ו׳ ימים וששה
במעוברת חסיר׳ והסימן הכ״ו[257] · והשלישית
יום שבת ובין שניה לג׳ ה׳ ימים וה׳ ימים
בפשוטה כסדרן . וטעמו שלסוד שאם
יעבור המולד ממאתים נ״ו חלק׳ משעה
ראשונה מיום ד׳ בחלק אחד ימצא מולד
שנייה לחבר׳ קמ״ו חלק׳ משעה י׳ בלילי
ג׳ ימצא מולד שלישית ב׳ ו׳[258] שעות במר״ת
ביום שבת · ובזמן שהיה כן אנו צריכין
לדחות ג׳ ליום השש[259] · ועד אין לא הגענו
לגבול בזו השנה שכבר נשאר לנו ת״ד
חלק׳ מפני שנולד תשרי בשנת תתע״ו[260]
לחשבון הבית לילי ד׳ י״א שעות תתקל״ב
וראש השנה ביום ה׳ והחדשים חסיר׳
היה[261] נוכל לדחותו שכבר נשאר ת״ד חלק׳
עד זמן שיגיע לגבול רנ״ו משעה ראשונה
ביום ד׳ ומחלק אחד לפני רנ״ו לא ידחה
מאחת[262] מד׳ מאות וד׳ עד שלא יגיע לגבול

257 Should be ח׳ד׳ו׳, as in L1BM1.

258 An error for בו׳, as in L1BM1 (as noted by Harkavy).

259 An error for חמישי, as in L1BM1 (Bornstein).

260 Harkavy notes that there is a marginal correction in a later hand: תתנ״ג, as is correct and as is found in L1BM1. The number given in our manuscript, תתע״ו, is common in calendar texts as it represents the number of parts in the value of the length of a plain year (as for example here, fol. 3v:2); the scribal error was clearly due to graphic similarity combined with confusion with this common calendrical figure.

261 A gross error for ולא, as in L1BM1.

262 According to Harkavy, the first two characters are difficult to read. If his reading is correct, it is surely a scribal error, as it conflicts with L1BM1 and does not make sense in context; the correct text should be, as in L1BM1, a second ידחה. The scribal error would have been caused by the confusing repetition of this word.

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L1BM2 folio 3 verso
[Ms Harkavy fol. 1 verso]

של ימין[263] ובשנה הבאה אתם מוסיפים ד״ח[264]
תתע״ו יגיע המולד לילי ג׳ ט׳ שעות תמ״א
חלק׳ ובשעה[265] ג׳ נאמר אם לא יהיה באותו
תשרי עיבור · ונולד קודם תתמ״ה חלק
משעה י׳ מלילי ג׳ אחוז יום ג׳ וכסדרן ·
והשנה הבאה שהיא שנת תתנ״ד לחשבון
הבית פשוטה הוא נולד בלילי ג׳ בט׳ שעות
תמ״א חלק׳ והיא בגבול ג׳ והחד׳ כסדרן
ונשאר מן חשבון תתמ״ה תל׳[266] ת״ד עד
שיגיע לגבול ולא נוכל לדחותו מפני
המולד · והשנה הג׳ שהיא שנת תתנ״ה
לחשבון הבית נולד תשרי ביום שבת
בשש שעות רל״ז חל׳ . ועד אין לא הגיע
לגבול נשאר מן החשבון ת״ד חל׳ ואנחנו[267]
לא נדחהו תרמ״א והי אמר״ת וכ⟨ד⟩בר[268]
שפרשנוהו בארבעה חדשים[269] נדחהו
רל״ז חלק׳ אין זה ראוי למבינים ולא
למשכילי עם ולא לנושאים דברי
חכמים · ואתם אחינו שמעו והאזינו

L1BM2 folio 4 recto
[Ms Harkavy fol. 2 recto]

אל תגבהו חוסו על נפשכם ועל ישראל
המפוזרים בין האומות אשר על חדה
של סייף הם עומדים · ואם מאויבי הם[270]
מיתיראים יצעקו אל שוכן מעונים ·
ויחלצם מכל מענים · תצא אש מתוכם

263 An error for שלימין.
264 Harkavy has ר״ח, but this is probably a misreading or a misprint.
265 An error for ובשער; see note on L1BM1 8v:5 (above, p. 266), where the same error occurs.
266 An error for חל׳, i.e. חלקים (Harkavy).
267 According to Harkavy, the last two letters are difficult to read.
268 Bornstein's conjecture. Friedländer suggests וכמו.
269 Friedländer suggests perhaps שערים instead of חדשים, but this makes less sense, as the Four Gates have not all been explained.
270 This should read מאויביהם (Harkavy).

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ותאכלם כדברי כנענים · אשר עם פורצי
גדרות נמנים . יְהוֹמֵם[271] אל לפנינו בנהממו[272]
בארץ גבעונים[273] · כי הם סילונים וקמסונים·[274]
רעים וחטאים ומורדים מבני ערקים
וסינים · סעיד בן אלפיומי וחביריו הזידונים ·
המצרים והמינים כרגע יאבדו ויזרו בארבע
פינים · ואלו באנו לספר אחת מני אלף
מתפילתינו עליכם לא יכלנו · מלך ברחמ׳
רבים יחזיר את לבב עמו ישראל · וישבור
מעליהם עול ברזל · ויביא להם מורה צדק ·
ונזכה ותזכו להקביל משיח במהרה
ובזמן קרוב אמן · ושלום כבודכם
יפרה וירבה וידגה ויעצם ויושרש ויעונף
ויסולסל לעולם · שלום :

Harkavy does not clarify whether the verso was blank, or contained some other text distinct from the letter of ben Meir.

271 The pointing of this word is perhaps Harkavy's, rather than in the manuscript.
272 Perhaps an error for כנהממו (Harkavy).
273 Jos. 10:10.
274 An error for וקמשונים (Harkavy).

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CHAPTER 10

Saadya's Letters

A collection of letters written by Saadya to his former disciples in Egypt is preserved in a single manuscript. These letters narrate the calendar controversy, and express Saadya's opposition to ben Meir and his calendar. As extant, the manuscript contains three letters, although it is likely that it contained originally at least one more.

The attribution of the letters to Saadya is not completely explicit, but reasonably secure. The manuscript is headed with a line of meta-text attributing the text to Saadya; presumably, this attribution is intended to refer to all three letters. The first letter refers to Miṣr, i.e. Fusṭāṭ, suggesting that this is the letter's destination; at the end of the third letter, an address in Arabic states that its addressees are in Qaṣr al-Shamʿ, Fusṭāṭ. The end of the first and third letters suggests that their addressees are the same people, three brothers who had been Saadya's disciples in Fusṭāṭ.

All three letters present an important narrative perspective on the calendar controversy, albeit Saadya's own, subjective perspective. In each of these three letters, Saadya gives away—in spite of all his posturing—that his role in the controversy was actually marginal and subservient to the Babylonian Rabbanite leadership, the exilarch and the heads of the academies.

The manuscript can be dated to the late eleventh century or end of the century. It seems to comprise only Saadya's letters, which raises the possibility that it was copied by a scribe of the Babylonian faction, perhaps for polemical purposes.

Physical Description

A number of single folios, and one or more likely two bi-folios, have been preserved of this manuscript. They are currently held in the following different locations:

– Cambridge (Cambridge University Library, T-S 6 Ja.1), four folios
– Philadelphia (Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, Halper 332), one bifolio[1]

1 Schechter (1901–1902: 43) and Halper (1924: 175–176, no. 332) misleadingly described it as 'two

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– Oxford (Bodleian Library, Heb. f. 56.82–83), two folios which are most probably a bi-folio, although at present this cannot be ascertained in the original, because the two folios are too tightly bound into the guard-book.[2]

The dimensions given here are of the folios, and mainly based on the Cambridge ones.[3]

Paper, black ink. Dimensions: 14.2–14.5 cm × 8.6–9.0 cm (text: 10.2–11 × 6–7).[4] Line numbers: 16–17, except at the end of letters (fol. 4r, with the address in ll. 15–18; fol. 6v, 14 lines; fol. 8v, 7 lines, followed by the address in Arabic, ll. 8–12). Right margins: 1–1.5 cm. Left margins are very uneven, as the lines are unjustified on the left. Top margins: 0.9 cm; bottom margins: 2.5–3 cm. Average total line height (text and line space): 6.4 cm. Stitches along the spine of the Philadelphia bi-folio, symmetrically laid out, in four places.

The manuscript is very clear and well preserved. However, there is much ink penetration from one side of the folios to the other, and in several places, traces of ink have rubbed off from the facing folio. The latter is a defect that works to our advantage, as it enables us to reconstruct missing text and to determine how the folios were joined. In folios 3 verso, 4 recto, and 4 verso, the ink has faded near the bottom of the folios, largely as a result of rubbing off unto the facing pages. There are a few minor holes in the first two folios, and some mild stains throughout the manuscript.

The Hebrew texts are sporadically vocalized, sometimes for disambiguation but sometimes for no apparent reason. The pointing used is both Tiberian and Babylonian, apparently at random.

The script is in Babylonian style; but considering the relatively late date of this manuscript, the choice of this script does not mean that the scribe was specifically of Babylonian affiliation or, for that reason, pro-Saadyan. The script is

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leaves'. Bruce Nielsen, librarian at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, confirmed to me that it is a bi-folio, as described already by Gil (1997: 17), and I later verified this myself too. The Penn Libraries online catalogue (https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9940420103503681) describes it as '2 fols. (bifolium)'.

2 César Merchan-Hamann (Bodleian Library), email of 16 January 2019.

3 The images supplied by the Oxford and Philadelphia libraries do not include a ruler, and consequently, the ruler function is not available for these folios on the Friedberg Genizah Project website. However, the measurements available from other sources for these folios, albeit not complete, confirm that their dimensions are very similar to those of the Cambridge folios.

4 I measure the Cambridge folios externally as 14.5 cm × 9 cm. The dimensions of the Philadelphia folios are given by Schechter (1901–1902: 43) as 14.2 cm × 9 cm (text: 10.2 cm × 6.5 cm), and these dimensions are retained in the Penn Libraries online catalogue (above, note 1). On 16 April 2012, César Merchan-Hamann kindly provided us external measurements of the Oxford folios, as 14.2 cm × 8.6–8.7 cm.

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generally semi-square, but in the last two folios (Bodl. Heb. f. 56.82 and Halper 332 recto left—verso right) it becomes squarer.

Reconstructing the Manuscript

As stated, the extant folios of this manuscript are scattered in three separate libraries in Cambridge, Philadelphia, and Oxford. All three were originally published separately. The earlier editors joined the folios of the manuscript incorrectly, which consequently led to an incorrect reconstruction of the text.

Neubauer (1896) thought that the folios in the Bodleian library in Oxford, Heb. f. 56.82 and 83, were continuous with one another—probably because they were preserved as a bi-folio, and he just assumed it was continuous. Their text, however, is not continuous.[5] Neubauer's assumption led not only to textual incoherence, but also to a repetition in the narrative, with the story going back on itself in a way that seemed unlikely in a single letter. Bornstein was bothered by this problem, and had no better solution than to conclude that the letter had been badly written.[6] In actual fact, however, these folios do not contain the same letter; their repetitiveness is due to the fact that they contain two separate letters, albeit with similar content.[7]

Schechter (1901–1902) committed a similar error with a bi-folio belonging to Mayer Sulzberger (Philadelphia), later known as Halper 332, by publishing it as a continuous text (continuous on its recto side).[8] The text, however, is not continuous, as was subsequently noted by Halper, the author of the collection's catalogue.[9]

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5 In Neubauer's edition (followed by Bornstein), the transition from Heb. f. 56.82 to Heb. f. 56.83 reads: ואין בינינו חלוקה כל עיקר | להזהירו לבלתי עשות כן, which makes no sense at all (I have marked the division between the folios with a vertical line; but Neubauer does not, and runs the text on a single line, as if it were all from the same folio). There is, moreover, a change of script from square (Heb. f. 56.82) to semi-square (Heb. f. 56.83), which does not support the assumption of continuity between them.

6 Bornstein (1904) 70, n. 2.

7 As stated, Neubauer was probably misled by the fact that these two folios, ostensibly from the same manuscript, were in his possession in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. That they both ended up in the same library may be significant, nevertheless, insofar as it can be determined that they were originally part of the same bi-folio (as per my reconstruction of the manuscript, below).

8 Schechter (1901–1902) 61, followed again by Bornstein (1904) 68–69.

9 Halper (1924) 175–176. In spite of this, the Penn Libraries online catalogue (above, note 1) describes the two folios as 'consecutive'.

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Folios of the same manuscript were also in the Taylor-Schechter collection in Cambridge, but Schechter did not edit them, perhaps because he was not aware of them when he published Halper 332, or because most of their text was in Judeo-Arabic, which was perhaps more challenging for him. The Judeo-Arabic text of these folios was published a few years later by Hirschfeld (1904), and the rest of the text, in Hebrew, by Gil (1997: 26).

Schechter believed that the Philadelphia bi-folio and the Oxford folios were each self-contained units, each containing separate letters, which he thought were either by the same author or two versions of the same letter.[10] This error was perpetuated by Malter (1921: 82–84, 413) and Gil (1997: 17–21) who kept the same joins as Neubauer and Schechter (Gil's documents 5 and 6), and assumed that these two documents—the Bodleian leaves on the one hand, and the Philadelphia bi-folio on the other—contained each two separate letters of Saadya, in their view written at different times.

Both the manuscript and its text can be correctly reconstituted, however, on the basis of my revision of the joins (as explained below). This reconstruction confirms that the Bodleian folios consist, indeed, of a single bi-folio, and that like the Philadelphia bi-folio, it is not continuous. The manuscript, as presently extant, contains three letters, all ostensibly by Saadya; originally, there was probably at least one more letter in the manuscript, probably also by Saadya. Every letter begins on a fresh page (although the beginning of Letter 3 is missing). Contrary to what was previously believed, but not surprisingly at all, the division between the three letters does not correspond to the three libraries where the fragments happen to be currently held. My text edition is thus very different from what appears in the earlier editions, because the folios have been re-arranged in the right order.

The correct order of the folios is as follows:

– Folios 1–4: T-S 6 Ja.1, beginning with Letter 1, in Judeo-Arabic, until the end of folio 4r. Folio 4v is the beginning of Letter 2, in Hebrew.
– Folio 5: Halper 332 verso left—recto right. Its join with the previous page (T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4v) can be established on the basis of traces of ink that are at the bottom of Halper 332 verso left, and which must have rubbed off from the facing page; matching traces of ink can be found, indeed, at the bottom of T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4v (see in detail the text edition). This join is also textually confirmed, because the bottom of T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4v (as partially reconstructed on the basis of the ink on the facing page) joins with the beginning of Halper 332 verso left to form a paraphrase of Ps. 113:8.

10 Schechter (1901–1902) 43.

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- Folio 6: Bodl. Heb. f. 56.83. Its join with the previous page (Halper 332 recto right) is based on textual plausibility. The traces of ink at the bottom of Bodl. Heb. f. 56.83r are too faint to be identifiable with the last line of Halper 332 recto right, but I suspect this is their origin. This folio, on the verso, is the end of Letter 2.
- Two missing folios. They would have constituted a central bi-folio, and they would have contained, at some point, the beginning of Letter 3, in Hebrew. Comparison with Letter 2, which is similar to what survives of Letter 3, suggests that only one folio side of Letter 3 is missing, of similar length to T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4v. The remaining three folio sides of the bi-folio are therefore likely to have comprised a fourth letter, presumably also by Saadya. Since such a letter would have been very short, it may be preferable to surmise that two bi-folios are missing here.
- Folio 7: Bodl. Heb. f. 56.82, containing the continuation of Letter 3.
- Folio 8: Halper 332 recto left—verso right. Its join with the previous page is based again on textual plausibility, as well as on continuity of script (both folios are in square script). Here ends Letter 3.

The manuscript did not end here, as there are traces of ink on the last page (Halper 332 verso right) which must have rubbed off from a following page, now lost.

The preservation of Halper 332 as a bi-folio enables us, on its own, to reconstruct the central quire of the manuscript (including folios 5–10) with reasonable certainty, as follows:

- Outer bi-folio: Halper 332 (the 'recto' is the inside of the bi-folio).
- Middle bi-folio: Bodl. Heb. f. 56.82–83. Facing the inside of the bi-folio, 83v is on the right and 82r on the left.
- Central bi-folio: lost. As argued above, perhaps more than one central bi-folio is missing.

Folios 1–4, the four Cambridge folios T-S 6 Ja.1, could have been part of another quire, or could even have formed a quire on their own (if this was the beginning of the manuscript); but they could also have been part of the same quire as the Halper and Bodleian folios.[11] The same applies to the folios that belonged at the end of the manuscript, and that are now lost.

11 Such a quire, however, would have been rather big. In Rustow and Stern (2014: 90), we put forward the view that the Cambridge fragments formed a separate quire, made of two bi-folios. This, however, was based on the erroneous belief that these fragments had been preserved as two bi-folios, whereas in fact they have been preserved as four folios, detached from their original counterparts which we can no longer identify.

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Synopsis and Discussion: Letter 1

Letter 1 is attributed to 'the *ga'on* al-Fayyūmī', i.e. Saadya. It is dated Friday 11 Ṭevet; the year is not given, but according to the Babylonian calendar (which Saadya presumably follows), this date was compatible with the year 922/3 CE (and not with the previous year). The letter was therefore written on Friday 11 Ṭevet, which was 3 January, 923 CE.

The letter is addressed to Saadya's disciples, who are named at the end of the letter: Solomon, Ezra, and Eli, all rabbis. Another rabbi is mentioned between the first two, but his name is not legible. Assuming the same sequence of addressees as at the end of Letter 3, which was sent one year earlier, and based on traces of ink from the facing page (as explained in detail below), this missing name can be reconstructed as 'Abraham'. The addressees of Letter 1 would thus be the same as those mentioned at the end of Letter 3, i.e. Solomon, Abraham, and Ezra, the three sons of 'Alī b. Sulaymān; whilst the reference to 'rabbi Eli' at the end would not be a fourth addressee, but only the patronym of the first three. The reference in Letter 1 to Fusṭāṭ, on fol. 2r, suggests that the disciples were located there, just as is stated explicitly at the end of Letter 3.

After the regular greetings, Saadya begins his letter by reproaching his addressees for not writing to him for a long time, although they did write a letter to the Head of the Academy (*yeshivah*, presumably in Baghdad). He then reproaches them for a must more severe offense, which he never spells out, however, in the entire letter; this reticence is perhaps intended to express abhorrence. From the reference to 'the foolishness of the common people in sighting the new moon', it is clear that this offense relates to the calendar. Given the date of the letter, the only possible explanation is that the addressees are accused of having celebrated the New Year holidays, in September–October 922 CE, on the earlier dates of the Palestinians and in accordance with ben Meir's calendar (this finds further confirmation further down in the letter).

Saadya exonerates them somewhat by suggesting that they had been confused and misled by a popular sighting of the new moon (more on this below), that had no option but to follow the crowds, and that they probably believed that these were the dates observed in Iraq. He then expresses his embarrassment about this incident, particularly when people in Baghdad question him about this; it is clear that as an Egyptian himself, Saadya feels personally implicated.

Saadya explains that he did not write to them at first about this, but waited for the Head of the Academy to do so; the latter's letter of reproof was sent to them in duplicate. Saadya's deference for the Head of the Academy confirms that his role in the calendar controversy was not one of leadership, but rather

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somewhat marginal.[12] Clearly, his reason for writing the present letter is only because of his personal connection with the addressees. He also waited for the Exilarch to send them his memorandum of the controversy, which was similarly sent in duplicate. This memorandum is clearly the work that we call the 'Book of the Calendar Controversy', preserved in five fragmentary copies in the Cairo Genizah, and authored by the Exilarch. Its contents are briefly mentioned in this letter, namely a narrative of how the 'son of the benighter' (a pejorative designation of ben Meir, attested a few times in the Book of the Calendar Controversy) deceitfully innovated the Four Gates by adding 641 to every value.

The letter ends with a lengthy exhortation to the addressees to take responsibility for rectifying their error, by teaching and disseminating the letter of Head of the Academy and the memorandum of the Exilarch, and making copies of them. Saadya makes a final request for them to write him a letter.

This letter is highly significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, this is the latest dated text we have in the entire corpus of the calendar controversy, providing unique evidence that the controversy had still not ended in January 923.

Secondly, this is perhaps the only text we have that is external to the Book of the Calendar Controversy and refers explicitly to it. Saadya attributes it very clearly to the Exilarch, which confirms that he (Saadya) was not its author or redactor; for otherwise, one would expect him to have taken at least some credit for it in this letter.[13] This letter also confirms, as the Book of the Calendar Controversy says about itself, that the Book was widely disseminated in many copies; according to BCC 13:2–14:3, this would have been carried out on or shortly after 27 Tishri 922, about three months before the date of this letter. It is tempting to surmise that the two copies that are said here to have been sent to Egypt are those that served in later centuries as master copies for the production of the manuscripts of the Book of the Calendar Controversy that have been preserved for us in the Cairo Genizah.

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12 Note also Saadya's delay in writing to his disciples: according to other sources (the Book of the Calendar Controversy, BCC 13:2–14:3), the Exilarch completed his memorandum at the end of Tishri 922 CE; Saadya suggests here that the Head of the Academy wrote his letter as the same time or even earlier; whereas Saadya only wrote this own, present letter in the following month of Tevet, some three months later. This delay suggests perhaps hesitancy, although there may be other possible explanations for it. On Saadya's unlikely involvement in the writing of the letter of the Head of the Academy—in spite of an apparent reference to this in the text—see below, pp. 300–301 n. 82, on fol. 3v line 11.

13 Bornstein (1922*b*: 245) summarily writes, without providing any evidence, that Saadya was its actual author (and that this work was the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*). The contents of this present letter suggest, however, the contrary. See further Chapter 6, pp. 94–95.

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Thirdly, this letter confirms that in spite of all efforts of the exilarch and Babylonian heads of academies, the Babylonian calendar had far from triumphed. In the winter of 923, in Fusṭāṭ, the heartland of Egypt, the dissemination of the Book of the Calendar Controversy had not yet succeeded to achieve its purpose.

Fourthly and finally, the reference to 'the foolishness of the common people in sighting the new moon' suggests, very importantly, that some Rabbanite Jews in the early tenth century were still using new moon sightings as the basis of calendar decisions, even though the official Rabbanite calendar was by then purely calculated, whereas new moon sighting had become in principle an exclusively Qaraite practice.

The New Moon Sighting in Fusṭāṭ

The precise interpretation of this common people's new moon sighting has been a matter of debate. According to Bornstein, this was the sighting of the new moon of Tishri 922. The New Year (1 Tishri) fell, according to the Babylonians, on Thursday 26 September 922; yet the new moon crescent became visible already on the Tuesday evening (as confirmed also by modern calculation).[14] As a result, Qaraites and Muslims in Fusṭāṭ counted Wednesday as the first day of the month, apparently contradicting the Babylonian reckoning. This led the Rabbanite Jews or 'common people' to opt for the New Year of the Palestinian reckoning, which fell on Tuesday 24 September. Although this fell one day before the new moon sighting, for the 'common people' this date seemed less problematic, since it was known that the Rabbanite month normally began at the *molad* (conjunction), one or two days before the new moon became visible.[15]

The difficulty with this explanation, which Bornstein fails to note, is that the people would had to have made their decision about celebrating the New Year on Tuesday, with the Palestinians, *before* it was known that the new moon would be visible on the Tuesday evening. Bornstein seems to assume that they were able to calculate in advance when the new moon would be first visible, but

14 This is confirmed, for example, by the software 'Planetary, Lunar, and Stellar Visibility' (www.alcyone.de) and by Raymond Mercier's software 'Kairos' (http://www.raymondm.co.uk/), using their default visibility criteria (which are quite different).

15 Bornstein (1922*b*) 244–245. On rare occasions, such as in 921/2, the Rabbanite month can be postponed to the extent of beginning one whole day after the new moon has been sighted.

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this is perhaps assuming too much astronomical knowledge of the so-called 'common people'. If they waited for the moon to be actually sighted, by Tuesday evening it would have been too late to celebrate the New Year, retroactively, from the Monday evening; in this situation, they would have been more likely to proceed with the Babylonian New Year on Thursday.

A different interpretation is proposed by Gil. He takes this passage to refer to an early new moon sighting that occurred in the previous year, when the new moon of Kislew was seen on the eve of 30 Marḥeshwan according to the Babylonian calendar, thus one day too early, whereas this was the eve of 1 Kislew according to the Palestinian calendar.[16] Accordingly, when the new moon was sighted, the 'common people' promptly changed the date from 30 Marḥeshwan to 1 Kislew, thus aligning themselves with the Palestinians. This interpretation is problematic, however, on astronomical grounds. In the Julian calendar, this date would have been Saturday 3 November 921 in the evening, when according to modern calculation, the new moon is unlikely to have been visible without great difficulty.

Another possibility suggested by Gil was at the beginning of the following month, when the new moon became visible on the eve of 30 Kislew according to the Babylonian calendar, which was 2 Tevet according to the Palestinians (Gil's dates here are erroneous). On this date, indeed, Monday 3 December 921, the new moon would have been visible in the evening. If so, the 'common people' could have opted for the Palestinians and jumped from 30 Kislew to 2 Tevet.

The problem with Gil's interpretation is that an event such as this does not necessarily entail that the 'common people' went on to observe the festivals, starting with Passover some three months later, with the Palestinians. Moreover, it does not explain why it took Saadya a whole year to write to them about their error, allowing them in the interim to observe the full cycle of the annual festivals, from Passover to Tabernacles 922 CE, on the wrong dates. On balance, therefore, it seems preferable to opt for Bornstein's explanation.

Given the uniqueness of Saadya's reprimand, it must be assumed that the Rabbanites of Fusṭāṭ normally relied on the calculated rabbinic calendar, without deviating from it because of new moon sightings. The new moon sighting that Saadya refers to, with the calendar confusion that ensued, was exceptional and inherently related to the calendar controversy of 921/2. This controversy, indeed, was fundamentally about whether to make a two-day postponement to the calendar. It was arguably the excessive postponement of the Babyloni-

16 Gil (2004) 219–220.

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ans that led to the unusual situation of the new moon being sighted, in Tishri 922 CE, before the new month began.[17] For this reason, the 'common people' of Fusṭāṭ opted for the seemingly more plausible calendar of the Palestinians. It was the availability of the alternative Palestinian dates, in 922 CE, which gave them a license, on this occasion, to defer to the sighting of the new moon; or perhaps alternatively, it was the sighting of the new moon that led them to decide that the Palestinian calendar was more accurate.[18]

This letter demonstrates that in the winter of 922/3, the debate between Palestinians and Babylonians had not yet been resolved. But it also shows that new moon sighting had retained some significance to calendar reckoning among the Rabbanites of Egypt, if not also among the Palestinians themselves.[19]

Synopsis and Discussion: Letters 2–3

Letters 2 and 3 are very similar in contents, structure, and language. They can be dated to mid-winter 921/2 CE, as they are written in anticipation of the festivals being celebrated, for the first time, on different dates (starting from Passover 922). Thus although they are placed after Letter 1 in the manuscript, Letters 2 and 3 are considerably earlier than it, by as much as about one year.

The letters are addressed to the author's three disciples (see above, on Letter 1). After the regular greetings (which are not extant, however, in Letter 3), the author refers to his own fortunes abroad, tells his disciples that he misses them as much as his own children, and that he looks forward to seeing them again. In Letter 2, he rebukes them for not having corresponded with him for six and a half years ago (which probably means, since he left Egypt); he refers to their request to a David b. Abraham to provide them with letters from the academies in Babylonia concerning the calendar controversy, and implies that he could have been asked the same himself.

17 'Arguably', because it might have been argued against this, at the time, that the unusual phenomenon of early new moon sighting could also occur in some years without disagreement between the Babylonian and Palestinian calendars, so that the occurrence of this in 922 CE according to the Babylonian calendar did not mean that the latter was inherently faulty.

18 Bornstein (ibid.) assumes the latter, but the former deserves equal consideration.

19 Recently discovered sources, Babylonian Letter 2 (L2Bab) and Palestinian Polemic (PalPol), suggest that the Palestinians themselves may have attached similar significance to new moon sighting, at least in 922 CE (see Chapters 13 and 15).

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Letters 2 and 3 then give the following account: while the author was still in Aleppo, in the summer (presumably of 921 CE), he heard of ben Meir's intention to set the calendar with the months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew 921/2 CE deficient (i.e. of 29 days, which in that year would cause Passover to fall on Sunday, as becomes clearer later in the letters). He wrote to him several letters (so Letter 3) to dissuade him—in vain. Then, after ben Meir made his calendar declaration (by which time, according to Letter 3, the author was already in Baghdad), the Exilarch and heads and leaders of the Babylonian academies sent out letters to all Jewish communities claiming that by universal agreement, these months should be full (i.e. of 30 days), and hence Passover on Tuesday. If ben Meir made his declaration in Tishri 921 CE, during the festival of Tabernacles (as we know from the Book of the Calendar Controversy, although this date is not mentioned in this letter), the letters of the Babylonians would have gone out perhaps in the month of Marḥeshwan. According to Letter 3, our author also sent letters of his own. Two months later (which takes us, perhaps, to the month of Tevet, in the middle of the winter), our author sent copies of these letters together with his own to his addressees; Letter 2 (fol. 6r, at the end) implies that he is referring, in fact, to this present letter. He urges his addressees to uphold the dates of the Babylonians, and ensure that Jews do not eat leaven on Passover (by beginning it two days earlier, thus terminating the prohibition on leaven two days too soon) and desecrate the Day of Atonement (in anticipation that the controversy will continue in the autumn of 922 CE).[20] Finally he asks his disciples to report back to him, and also to address him any other question they might have.

Letters 2 and 3 are similar in length and in structure; they cover the same themes, sometimes even sharing identical turns of phrases (e.g. the paraphrase of Ps. 31:23, in LSaad fol. 5r:3 and 7r:4). In some ways, however, they are written quite differently, giving longer or shorter treatment to the various themes. The similarity of Letters 2 and 3 raises profound questions about the origin and redaction of these texts. Malter and Gil thought that the two letters were written at different times; however, they joined the folios differently (and wrongly, as explained above), so that their two letters were completely different from ours. Our Letters 2 and 3 show no evidence of being written at different times. They are clearly by the same author, whom we assume is Saadya, written in midwinter 921/2 CE, and apparently to the same addressees (Letter 2 to 'my three disciples', and 3 to 'my disciples', both with the same circumstantial details).

20 The reason why he only mentions these festivals and prohibitions, and not for example the prohibition on work on Passover, or other festivals such as the New Year, is that these prohibitions alone carry a more severe punishment (the punishment of *karet*).

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Yet, it is highly unlikely that two almost identical letters were sent by the same author to the same addressees. Was the letter repeated, because the author feared that the first had not been, or would not be, delivered? Or are these two letters two literary recensions, reflecting editorial work that was carried out on the text long after the event?

There is no obvious evidence of editorial interference in either letter; the casual use of an Arabic word in Letter 2 (fol. 5v:16), and the poor syntax in Letter 3 (fol. 8r:14), suggest that the texts are unedited. Moreover, if these were two recensions, one could legitimately ask what was the point of copying both in a single manuscript. Other possibilities could be explored: for example, that one of the letters was the one actually sent, whilst the other was written out by the author (perhaps from memory) as his personal (and not entirely accurate) copy to keep; if both versions were subsequently preserved, it might not have been clear to an eleventh-century scribe that they were one and the same (it is interesting, in this context, that the scribe copied these two letters consecutively, although it is possible that a fourth letter was copied between Letters 2 and 3, as the reconstitution of the manuscript suggests). These questions remain unresolved, yet they are critical to our understanding of how these letters were written and how they were preserved and transmitted in the tenth to eleventh centuries.

Bibliography

T-S 6 Ja 1

Hirschfeld (1904), with a rejoinder by Yellin (1904).

Bornstein (1922*b*) 246–249. As always, Bornstein did not see the manuscript, and relied entirely on Hirschfeld, although he suggested conjectural corrections.

Hirschfeld and Bornstein only published the Judeo-Arabic portion, in fols. 1r–4r (the former, with English translation, and the latter, with Hebrew translation).

Gil (1997: 21–26, document 7), including fol. 4 verso (the Hebrew portion). A Hebrew translation of the Judeo-Arabic portion is provided.

Halper 332

Schechter (1901–1902) 43 and 59–61 ('ms Sulzbacher', text VII).

Bornstein (1904) 67–69, based on Schechter's edition.

Gil (1997: 17–19, document 5).

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Bodl. Heb. f. 56.82–83

Neubauer (1896) 36–38: a sloppy edition, which has determined all subsequent editions.
Harkavy, A. (1899) 90–91, based on Neubauer's edition.
Epstein (1901) 200–203, based on Neubauer's edition, with a French translation.
Bornstein (1904) 69–71, based on the earlier editions.
Gil (1997: 19–21, document 6).

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Letter 1

T-S 6 Ja.1, fols. 1 recto–4 recto

Transcription and translation: Marina Rustow and Nadia Vidro.

LSaad folio 1 recto
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 1 recto]

מן כט גאון פיומי זכ לב
שלום רב וחמלה וחנינה ·
ומעטה תהלה[21] ומודע לבינה
ושם טוב ועוז ותעצומות ·
יהיו[22] לכם · כתאבי יום אלגמעה
יאֹ מן טבת[23] עז סלאמה וברוך האים[24] ·
לם אקר לכם כתאבא מגד[25]
זמאן ואנא ואתק באללה מע
עלם ווקוף עלי אנכם פי ·
עאפיה וסלאמה · וסימא
אד וצל כתאבכם אלי ראס
אלמתיבה אעזה אללה ואלי
אבי אלפצל אידה אללה[26]
אנכם לם תרעו[27] אלכתאב
אליי כאצה אלא חיאא
מנכם[28] ממא פעלה אהל

21 Is. 61:3.

22 Hirschfeld: תהין, a misreading. Bornstein suggests תהיינה.

23 The *tet* is written over the beginning of an erroneous letter. Hirschfeld read בת[..] and suggested tentatively רגבת, but Yellin (1904) conjectured correctly טבת, and Bornstein (1922*b*) in turn conjectured the same, based on the calendrical compatibility of this reading.

24 Hirschfeld: הטוב. The second letter, however, is certainly not *tet*, and the last letter does not look quite like *bet*. Final *mem*, in this manuscript, is sometimes a little open (e.g. in אנכם on line 9, and מנכם on line 16), although admittedly the shape of this last letter is different, with an extended lower horizontal bar and without a downward serif at the end of it.

25 Hirschfeld: 'מד?'.

26 Circle at the end of the line; its meaning is unclear. Gil (1997: 22, note) suggests that it refers to an omission (as indeed, according to him, something seems to be missing in the text—which can be disputed), but that the scribe forgot to insert the missing text in the margin or bottom of the page. A similar circle appears in fol. 4v:5.

27 Hirschfeld and Gil: תדעו.

28 Gil: ענכם, a misreading.

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LSaad folio 1 recto

In the hand of the *ga'on* al-Fayyūmī,[29] of blessed memory.
Abundant peace, mercy and grace,
a mantle of praise,[30] knowledge and understanding,[31]
a good name, might and strong deeds,
shall be unto you.[32] I am writing to you on Friday
11 Ṭevet in health, may the Lord be blessed.
I did not read[33] a letter from you for
a long time. I trust in God knowing
and having read that you are
healthy and sound, particularly
since your letter reached the Head
of the Academy, may God grant him strength, and
Abū l-Faḍl, may God be his support.
You have not made it your business to write[34]
to me personally. Are you not ashamed
of what your countrymen

29 The *ga'on*, or head of a rabbinic academy, from the Fayyum can only be Saadya. In the period when these letters were written, however, he was not yet a Gaon. This line is clearly meta-text and not integral to the letter.

30 Hirschfeld: 'of peace', perhaps an error.

31 The Hebrew is drawn from Prov. 7:4, but it seems to be used here in a modified sense. Hirschfeld offers a more literal translation, 'understanding of your kinswoman', which barely makes sense in context.

32 This opening address is mostly in Hebrew.

33 So Yellin. Hirschfeld, incorrectly: 'I did not acknowledge'.

34 According to the earlier editors' reading תדעו, the translation should be 'to appeal'.

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LSaad folio 1 verso
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 1 verso]

אלבלד ואנתם מעהם ובאלעזיז
עליי אן יגרי דאך עלי מא
גרי ולכני ארגע פי הדא
אלי אן אקול · לעלה בל
ארגו אן יכון · אנכם אנמא
פעלתם דלך חין תחירתם
וחין[35] האגת אלעאמה ענד
רויא אלהלל[36] · פלם תגדו
מחיצא ולא מסאגא אלא
מא פעלתמוה ויקוי מא
אקרבה פי׳ה׳ איצא מד דכרתם
פי כתבכם אלתי קראתהא
אנכם תוהמתם אן גמיע מן
באלעראק כדי עמלו ·
ולעלכם בל הו ענדי יקין
לו צח[37] ענדכם · אן אהל

LSaad folio 2 recto
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 2 recto]

אלעראק[38] ליס כדי[39] עמלו לם
תכונו ממן יתכטא[40] אלי הדא
אלאמר אלעטים ואלבליה אלכבירה
אלתי לם[41] יסמע מתלהא וכל
מן יסמעהא יתעגב · וקד
{וקד} צרת אסתחי אן אחדת
בהא וכל מן ידכל אליי[42] ליסלם

35 Hirschfeld: ואן, a misreading.
36 Hirschfeld and Gil: אלהלאל, a misreading.
37 Gil: יצח, a misreading.
38 Hirschfeld and Gil: (!) אלאראק, a misinterpretation of an ink trace from the other side of the folio.
39 Hirschfeld: כדא, perhaps an unintentional correction to a more standard spelling.
40 Hirschfeld: אכטא, a misreading.
41 Hirschfeld: לס.
42 Hirschfeld: אלי, a misreading.

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LSaad folio 1 verso

have done, and you as well?[43] I am pained
that this has happened as it
has. But I will say it
again: perhaps, but
I pray that it is so, you
have done this because you were confused
and because of the foolishness[44] of the common people in
sighting the new moon. You did not find
any way out, nor any possibility other than
what you did. This, furthermore, reinforces what
is most likely[45] in this (matter), that[46] as you mentioned
in your letters which I read,
you presumed that everybody
in Iraq were acting like this.
Perhaps, and I am certain about it,
had it been clear to you that the people of

LSaad folio 2 recto

Iraq were not doing so, you would not
have been among those who dared[47] this
terrible thing and great misfortune,
the like of which is unheard of. Everyone
who hears about this will be amazed. And I
have started to feel embarrassed to talk about
it. Everyone who comes in to greet

43 The earlier editors understand this sentence as a reason clause: 'you did not write to me personally *because* you are ashamed …'

44 Alternatively 'excitement', 'agitation', as favoured by the earlier editors (Hirschfeld, Yellin, also Gil 2004: 219).

45 Bornstein's and Gil's interpretations, 'what I assume' or 'this assumption', and Yellin's 'my hypothesis', are further from the Judeo-Arabic אקרב.

46 Lit. because, since.

47 Following the correct reading יתבטא, which is from the root בטו, i.e. to step over, pass over, go as far as, dare.

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עליי יקול אי שי ענדך מן[48] כבר
מצר פאגיבה במא ליס פיה
מקנע וקד כאן יגב אן אכתב
אליכם מן אול מא סמעת בהדא
אלכבר אן תתלאפוה[49] ותחכמו
ותצלחו מא[50] אפסדתם לכני
צברת חתי כתב ראס אלמתיבה
אעזה[51] אללה פי הדא כתאב תוכחה
ואזהרה אלי אלגמאעה ואנפדה

LSaad folio 2 verso
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 2 verso]

נסכתין[52] ופיה מא תקפו עליה
אכתצר דון דכרה וטול שר[53]
שרחה וחתי כתב איצא
ראס אלגלות[54] אעזה אללה ספר
זכרון ומגלה לדורות פי מא
צנע בן מחשיך מן בדעה
דּ שערים בזיאדה אמרתּ
עלי כל מקדאר וקד אנפדת
הדה אלדּ נסך כתאבי ראס
אלמתיבה ונסכתי כתאב ראס
אלגאלות[55] איצא אליכם וארגו אן
יצל אלגמיע אליכם ותנתפעו
בה אן שא אללה פאללה אללה

48 Hirschfeld: ען, a misreading.
49 As correctly conjectured by Yellin (without access to the manuscript). Hirschfeld: תתלא פיה. Bornstein: תתלא פיה[ו].
50 The ink of this word is faded.
51 Hirschfeld: אעדה, a misreading.
52 The initial *nun* is written again above the line, because the one on the line became illegible because of ink penetration from the other side.
53 So the earlier editors, who interpreted שר as the beginning of the following word.
54 The (second) *lamed* is written over the beginning of another letter, probably an *aleph-lamed* ligature (which is the way the same word is spelled further down this page).
55 Hirschfeld: אלגלות, a misreading.
56 Bornstein construes פי הדא (translated here 'about it') as part of the blessing, i.e. 'may God grant him strength in this'. Hirschfeld's translation is erroneous.

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me says: 'Do you have anything (to say) about the affair
in Fusṭāṭ?', and I give him an unsatisfactory
answer. I ought to have written
to you as soon as I heard about
this affair, so that you made good and judged
and corrected what you had corrupted, but
I waited patiently until the Head of the Academy,
may God grant him strength, wrote about it[56] a letter of reproof
and warning to the community and sent it

LSaad folio 2 verso

in two copies, and in it is what you should stand by.[57]
I will be brief and only mention it and the length
of its explanation. And (I) also (waited) until
the Exilarch, may God grant him strength, wrote a
memorandum and a scroll for generations[58] on what
the son of the benighter[59] did when he deceitfully innovated
the Four Gates by adding 641
to every value. These four copies
have been sent to you:[60] the two letters of the Head of
the Academy as well as two copies of the book of
the Exilarch. And I hope
that everything will reach you and you will profit
from it, so God will. God God,[61]

57 Gil translates, less literally: 'what you shall read'. Other less literal possibilities are 'what you should know', 'what you should learn'.

58 This is clearly the 'Book of the Calendar Controversy', of which we have five fragmentary copies in the Cairo Genizah. The phrase 'a memorandum and a scroll for generations' is in Hebrew, and echoes how the Book of the Calendar Controversy refers to itself (BCC 12:7, 26:1–3).

59 A pun, in Hebrew, on the name 'Ben Meir', which is probably taken from Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 7:7 and 19:2), and thus an oblique reference to its contents.

60 Alternatively, 'I have sent you these four copies'—an interpretation adopted by Hirschfeld and Bornstein. The difference is critical, as it reflects Saadya's role in the controversy. In context, however, our translation must be preferred, since the writer suggests above (end of fol. 2r) that it was the Head of the Academy who sent the two copies of his letter.

61 This is a literal translation. The phrase 'Allah Allah' can mean 'God is God', 'fear God', or even can be used in the sense of 'quickly'.

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יאכותי[62] נובו עני ועז גמיע
אלחכמים אלדין פי אלמתיבתין
פי הדא אלאמר פאנה לו שכץ

LSaad folio 3 recto
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 3 recto]

מנא[63] גמאעה אלי אלבלד ליצלונה[64]
לכנא מחתאגין[65] אלי ענאיתכם
לאני אעלם מא קד גרסה אללה
פיכם מן אלעקל ואלמערפה ואלפטנה
וגודה אלחילה וליס אקול הדא
מדחה לכם בל אקולה תיקט
ותנביה כאפו אלהי ישראל
ואתקוה וחוסו על נפשכם[66] ·
וכונו מן הזוכין ומזכין את הרבים ·
ולא תכונו בכלאף דלך · אלרח
לא[67] יגמני בכם בל יסרני · פיגב
אן תכשפו ענא הדה[68] אלגמאמה
ותזילו הדא אלעאר[69] ויועלם אן
קד בקי פי אלבלד אנסן[70] לה מעני

62 Hirschfeld: יא אכותי, a misreading.

63 Hirschfeld: מכא, a less likely reading. Bornstein suggests correctly מנא, regarding it as a mistake for מן אלגמאעה. The transition from fol. 2v to fol. 3r is not straightforward, although a certain sense can be made of the text (see translation). Bornstein (1922*b*: 248, n. 1) considers but dismisses the possibility that a folio is missing in between. This is confirmed from examination of the manuscript. At the bottom of fol. 2v there are traces of ink that have rubbed off from the facing page, fol. 3r: from the last three lines of the latter, at the beginning of each of the lines, traces of the letters *qof* (l. 14), *yod* (l. 15), and לא תגפלו (l. 16) that have rubbed unto fol. 2v can be faintly discerned. See Figure 7, an image of the bottom left corner of fol. 2v, horizontally flipped; the traces of these letters appear along the right side of the image and along its bottom.

64 Bornstein: צלונה[ו]לי.

65 Hirschfeld: מחתגין, a misreading.

66 Hirschfeld: נפסכם, a misreading.

67 Hirschfeld: מא, a misreading. Yellin conjectures rightly לא.

68 Hirschfeld: הדא, a misreading or typo. Bornstein correctly suggests הדה.

69 In context, better than עאד ('attacking; enemy').

70 Bornstein suggests the more usual spelling אנסאן.

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my brethren, represent me and all
the sages of the academies
in this matter! Indeed, if

LSaad folio 3 recto

a party of us were to travel to the city, we would reach it,[71]
but we would need your solicitude,
because I know what God planted
in you of reason, knowledge, intelligence
and great ingenuity. And I am not saying this
to praise you, but I am saying this to warn
and alert (you). Fear the God of Israel
and be in awe of him, guard your souls,
be pure and make many others pure,
and do not be the opposite of it. The Merciful
will not fill me with grief on your behalf, but with joy. It is imperative
that you lift from us this sorrow
and remove this shame.[72] And it should be known
that there remains in the city a sensible person,

71 The city is probably Fusṭāṭ. Hirschfeld and Bornstein translate this line very differently; Yellin's suggestion is close to ours.

72 So Bornstein. Hirschfeld has 'practice', which is a good translation of עאדה but not of עאד or עאר (see note on text).

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יתקי[73] אלרחמן ויחסן כיף יצלח ·
לא תגפלו ען הדא אלאמר נהאר[74]

LSaad folio 3 verso
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 3 verso]

וליל צבאח ומסא · והו אלמקדם
עלי אלתגארה ואלמעאשׁ וכל
מהם · וינבגי אן תכון נסכה
כתאב ראס אלמתיבה אעזה
אללה בין ידיכם חדא עיונכם
תקרונהא[75] פי כל וקת · פאן כל
כלמה מן כלאמהא אצל מן
אלאצול תתחפצו[76] בהא ויעלמהא[77]
בעׂץ לבעׂץ וינסכהא בעׂץ
לבעׂץ ויגב אן יקרא כל ואחד
מנכם מא[78] ⟦פי⟧ כתבת בה אלי
אלאכר חתי תגתמע אלמעאני
כלהא ותותלף ויקוי אלעזם
ותתפק אלכלמה · ואעלמ[ו] אנא[79]
נחן קד כרגנא ממא יגב עלינא ·
ואלאמר מעלק בכם ואנתם[80]

73 Hirschfeld: יתקו. Bornstein suggests that either this *waw* is a redundant *mater lectionis*, or the reading should be יתקי.

74 Bornstein suggests to correct this word and the next three to more classical forms, with the addition of final *aleph*.

75 Bornstein: תקר[א]ונהא.

76 Hirschfeld: תתחפטו, a misreading, although both ט and צ (with a diacritical dot) are common in Judeo-Arabic documents for the Arabic ظ.

77 Bornstein: ווועלמהא, a typo.

78 Hirschfeld: מי (with a question mark), an error.

79 Hirschfeld: ...ואעלמ. The last two letters, however, are clear.

80 So Gil. This reading finds confirmation from the facing folio (4r), where at beginning of line 16, the ink of the word ואנתם can clearly be read in mirror writing; this has rubbed off from the facing page, fol. 3v (see Figure 8). Below the last line of folio 3v are two additional lines of faint traces of ink; they do not belong here, but are actually rubbed off from the addressee lines at the bottom of the facing page (fol. 4r, the final page of this letter).

81 Hirschfeld: 'learn it by heart', a mistranslation.

82 The text is problematic; my translation follows a conjectural emendation suggested, very tentatively, by Nadia Vidro. The text as it stands could be translated simply: 'what I wrote in it' (the phrase מא כתבת בה is less likely to stand for 'what was written (fem.

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who is God fearing and knows well how to put things right.
Do not neglect this issue by day

LSaad folio 3 verso

or by night, in the morning or in the evening. It takes precedence over
trade and earnings, and everything.
You must keep a copy
of the letter of the Head of the Academy, may God
grant him strength, in front of you, before your eyes,
so that you can read it any time. Indeed,
all its words are principles
of principles. Heed it,[81] teach it
to one other, and copy it for one
other. Each one of you is obliged
to read what is in his letter[82] to
the end,[83] so that all thoughts
come together and are united. Then determination will be strong,
and words consistent. Take note that
we have performed our duty;[84]
the matter now depends upon you, you are

sing.) in it (masc. sing.)', without referring directly to a feminine singular subject). This translation is assumed by Hirschfeld and Bornstein; however, it is problematic, because it would imply that Saadya inserted something inside the letter of the Head of the Academy, or even wrote the whole letter himself—which would contradict its attribution to the Head of the Academy, and the statement on fol. 2r:10–16, that Saadya refrained from writing and waiting instead for the Head of the Academy to do so. Bornstein's translation may have encouraged him (and others) in his belief that Saadya played a leading part in the controversy, but actually, this translation does not fit the context and contradicts what is found elsewhere in Saadya's letter. A further textual difficulty is the form בה ('in it'); the masculine is inconsistent with earlier references to the same in the feminine (e.g. בהא, in line 8), which presumably agree with the feminine נסכה ('copy') on line 3, rather than with the masculine כתאב ('letter') on line 4. A further point to note is the deleted פי ('in') in this line (line 11). This leads to the conjecture that the original text may have read something like מא פי כתאבה, 'what is in his letter'.

83 Alternatively 'to the other', as assumed by all the earlier editors. This depends on the vocalization of אלי אלאכר.

84 Yellin (1904: 775): '[this] is the literal translation of the Hebrew expression יצאנו ידי חובתנו'.

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LSaad folio 4 recto
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4 recto]

מקלדוה[85] והו פי אענאקכם ·
ואלרחמן יטלבה מנכם ויטאלבכם
בה אללה אללה[86] לא תכגלונא אכתר
ממא קד פעלתם · רב שבענו בוז[87]
ואנא ארגו אן תכונו אנמא תטלבו
סבב חתי ימכנכם אלכלאם[88]
והודא אסבאב כתירה התקנאו
לשמים פאן הדא הו וקת אלקנאה ·
ועמדו בפרץ כי עת פְּרצה היא ·
ותוכלו עלי אלרחמן פאנה יעינכם ·
וערפוני מא תפעלוה פי דלך
פי כתאבכם בסלאמתכם
וחואיגכם[89] אן שא אללה ושלומכם
לעד
לכבוד רבנא שלמה ורבנא
[אברהם][90] ורבנא עזרא יעזרם צורנו
[בני מרן][91] ורבנא עלי ויתמכם
זכרו לברכה

85 So Gil. Hirschfeld: מקלודה, an error.

86 Missing in Hirschfeld and Bornstein.

87 Lines above the three words, perhaps to indicate that they are a biblical quotation (Ps. 123:3).

88 *Vacat* at end of line.

89 Hirschfeld: וחואיגתכם, a misreading.

90 The name of the second rabbi is expected here, but it is completely illegible, because it is covered over by ink from the facing page (see above, note 80) and possibly also erased. Nevertheless, the bottom parts of the letters *aleph* and *bet* at the beginning of the word are visible. See Figure 9, which is the same as Figure 8 (the beginning of line 16) but as it appears in the manuscript (i.e. un-flipped): the bottom of *aleph* and *bet* can be seen on the right along the bottom line, which reinforces my conjecture that the name is Abraham (see synopsis above, p. 284). My reading is corroborated by Gil (1997: 26 and note), who claims to have confidently read, in the original, אברהם (although he does not explain how).

91 Traces of ink on the facing page (fol. 3v—see note 80) suggest two short words in this place, which could be read as I suggest (although very conjecturally); see Figure 10. If Eli is the father of the first three, one would expect his name to be used here as a patronym—hence the conjecture '**בני**'—rather than as one of the addressees, because then his name would have been listed first, before his sons' names.

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LSaad folio 4 recto

the ones appointed to it,[92] and it is on your necks.
The Merciful demands it from you and will call you to account
for it. God God,[93] do not put shame on us more
than you have already done! We have had more than enough of contempt
(Ps. 123:3).
I hope that you will just look for
a reason to speak out,
and indeed, there are many reasons. Show yourselves zealous
towards Heaven,[94] for this is the time for zeal.
Stand in the breach, for this is a time of wrongdoing.[95]
Trust the Merciful, and He will help you.
Let me know what you do about this
in your letter about your well-being
and your needs, so God will. Peace be (?) onto you
forever.
To our Rabbi Solomon, and our Rabbi
[Abraham] and our Rabbi Ezra,
[sons of our master] and rabbi Eli, may our Rock help and support them,[96]
of blessed memory.

92 The word מקלדוה was misread by Hirschfeld (and Bornstein) and corrected by Gil (see note on text), but all translated it as 'chain' (e.g. Hirschfeld: 'everything depends on you, like a chain, as it were, hung round your necks'). This translation cannot be justified. Nadia Vidro suggests that the form is a masc. pl. passive participle, with a 3msg object pronoun, of the verb *qallada* which can mean 'to appoint or invest someone with power or office'.

93 See fol. 2v:13 and note 61, above.

94 Hebrew—an unusual phrase.

95 Hebrew (cf. Ps. 106:23).

96 Hebrew.

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Letter 2

Transcription and translation: Sacha Stern.

LSaad folio 4 verso
[T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4 verso]

The ends of the last five lines are very faded.

לשלשת השריגים יְבַלִּים[97] פַלְגִים
ברכות ערוגים · שלומות
נהוגים · בְּמַחוג ⸜מ⸝חוגים · כעובי
שני חוגים · ומעדני תענוגים[98]
למעלה מכל הגיגים[99] · שאו
שלום ממנו ומן התלמידים
אשר לפנינו · ואף על פי
כי התגרו זֵדִים ואפפו צרות
ופגשו הוות · הנה זה יי אלהים
אלהינו אשר פדה את נפשי
מכל צרה ויעש עמי גדולות
ונוראות אשר לא הָרְאֵי[תי][100]
להם הוא בְכבודִי
כל הטובות והחסדים [....]
לשמו · על כן ברוך יי [הפליא][101]
חסדו[102] אשר הביט[103] אל [עני][104]
ונכה רוח ויושיבני עם נד[יבים][105]

97 Gil: חבלים, a misreading.
98 *Rafe* sign on the *gimel*.
99 Obscure; perhaps an error for חגיגים, itself a poetic licence for חגיגות. There is a circle after this word, similar to the circle in fol. 1r:13; again, its function is unclear.
100 Gil's conjecture; he does not explain, however, what this might mean (see my translation).
101 Or perhaps כי הפליא (if space allows it); my conjecture, based on Ps. 31:22.
102 Gil: חסדי (less likely in context).
103 Gil: הבינו, a misreading.
104 My conjecture, based on Is. 66:2.
105 The word עם and the letters נד are faded but just visible. However, at the bottom of fol. 5r (Halper 332 verso left) there are traces of ink that have rubbed off from our folio, and there the word עם is clearly visible (in mirror writing), as well as נדיבים though much more faintly (see below Figures 11 and 12, and note 112 on fol. 5r:16).

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LSaad folio 4 verso

To the three vine-shoots (Gen. 40:12),[106] flowing-out rivers (cf. Is. 30:25),
longing for blessings, peaceful
in conduct, spread out in a circle like the thickness of
two disks,[107] and delights more pleasurable
than all festivities.[108] Take the
greetings of us and the disciples
who are before us. And although
men of evil have attacked and troubles have engulfed (us)
and malice has come in our way, behold, the Lord God,
our God, who has redeemed my soul
from all trouble (2 Sam. 4:9), has done for me great
and awesome (things) (cf. 2 Sam. 7:23, 1 Chron. 17:21) of which [I] was not
worthy.[109] He, in my honour,
all the goodness and the kindness […]
for the sake of His name. Therefore, blessed be the Lord [who has done to me wondrous]
kindness, who considered the [poor]
and the lowly soul (Is. 66:2) and settled me among the nobles

106 His three disciples (see fol. 5r, l. 4); possibly the same as the three sons of 'Alī b. Sulaymān, to whom Letter 3 is addressed (at the end of the letter).

107 Meaning obscure, but the two disks are perhaps the sky and the earth, both called חוג ('circle', 'disk') in various passages in the Bible (Job 22:14, Is. 40:22), and used occasionally in this sense in *píyyut*.

108 Following my conjectural emendation. This concludes the piyyutic introduction to the letter, in rhyme.

109 I take the *hoph'al* הראתי (Gil's conjecture) to be equivalent to הייתי ראוי, 'I was worthy'; this usage, however, is not attested elsewhere in the Hebrew language.

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LSaad folio 5 recto
[Halper 332 verso left]

עם נדיבי עמו · ויתן לי יד וָשֵׁם
בין חכמיו לא אגיע[110] דֵּי שבחו ·
ולא נגרזה מנגד עיני אהבתכם
ג תלמידַיי וחיבתכם כי תרבות
הנעורים מוסד מוסָּד יש לה
בתוך הלבב קל וָחֹמר בהיותה
ביראת אלהים ולשם שמים
וכאשר שַׁמותי מעת פָּרְשִׁי·
מן אהלִי ומֵעַל עוללי[111] כן דאגתי
על פרישתי מכם · שיאמר אלהי
עזי להקבילנו פניכם לשלום
ברוב שמחות · וזה שש שנים
ומחצה לא הגיעני מאתכם
פתשגן אף לא גליון · וכבר
כתבתי תנחומי זקנכם זכרו
לברכה ולא ראיתי תשובה[112]

110 Schechter writes: 'It seems that the scribe wrote first אגיע and corrected it into אגיד'. Although the vertical stroke of (possibly) a *dalet* is visible, the upper horizontal bar is not; it seems unlikely therefore that the scribe corrected his *ayin* into a *dalet*. A similar (though not identical) *ayin*, with a right-hand lower vertical stroke, can be found elsewhere in this manuscript, indeed in the same bi-folio (fol. 8r:15); this may be a feature peculiar to this scribe. I would therefore suggest, as an alternative possibility, that the letter *ayin* is correct and that this word is an error for אביע.

111 Note the assonance.

112 Below this line there are traces of several letters in mirror writing, which result from ink having rubbed off from the facing page (see above, note 105). These letters cannot come from the facing page in the Halper bi-folio (indeed, this part of the facing page is blank), but must come from another folio, which I have identified as T-S 6 Ja.1, fol. 4 verso (the latter, fol. 4v in this edition, counts one extra line; this explains why the traces of ink appear below the last line on this present folio). This confirms my join of Halper 332 verso left (fol. 5r) with T-S 6 Ja.1, fol. 4v. Other traces of letters, in this area and elsewhere on fol. 5r, are of different appearance and can be identified as coming from ink penetration from the other side.

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LSaad folio 5 recto

among the nobles of His people (Ps. 113:8) and gave me a place and a name (Is. 56:5)
among His sages—I cannot express enough His praise.
And my love for you has not been excised from before my eyes (Ps. 31:23),
my three disciples, nor my affection for you, because the education
of the young (leaves) a foundation, a foundation (Is. 28:16)
inside the heart;[113] all the more so when it is
with the fear of God and for the sake of Heaven.
And just as I have been desolate from the time when I separated
from my tent[114] and from my children, so I have been upset
by my separation from you. Let my God, my strength,[115]
declare that we meet you in peace
on many joyful occasions. But it is now six years
and a half[116] that no letter from you has
reached me, nor even a note; and I already
wrote condolences for (the death of) your elder,[117] may his mention be
for a blessing, but I did not see any reply.

113 i.e. of the teacher (Malter 1921: 55).
114 i.e. my wife (Malter 1921: 55). Alternatively, this could also be a translation of 'Fusṭāṭ'.
115 Isaiah 49:5.
116 Presumably this means, since he left Egypt. Given that this letter was written in the winter of 921/2, this would infer that Saadya left Egypt to settle in Palestine in the summer of 915—a chronology that has been widely accepted, e.g. by Malter (1921).
117 Either grandfather, or father (Friedman 2004: 276, n. 27), or maybe even senior leader of the community.

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LSaad folio 5 verso
[Halper 332 recto right]

ובעת הזאת סיפר רב דויד
ידידנו בן רַב[118] אברהם כי כתבתם
אליו לשאלו קחת אגרות
ראשי הישיבות · על אודות
מרחשון וכסלו שלשנת רֹלֹג
וכסבור אני כי לא כתבתם
אליו מבַלעֲדי בלתי כי דימיתם
כי עד עתה עודני בארץ ישראל
כאשר שמעתם · וגם הוא
אמר אולי כן חישבתם ·[119]
וגם שׁאלני לכתוב אליכם
להודיעכם · דעו כי בעודני
בחלב באו מקצת התלמידים
מבעל גד · והגידו כי בן מאיר
חוֹשב לקובעם חסרין · ולא
האמנתי אבל באסתטהאר
כתבתי אליו מתוך הקיץ

LSaad folio 6 recto
[Bodl. Heb. f. 56.83 recto]

להזהירו לבלתי עשות כן · ולא
שמע ויהי כי הכריזם חסרין
דאגו כל רבותינו אשר בישיבות
כי לא נהיתה ולא נראתה כזאת
להכריז מועדים שלא כהלכה ·
ועל כן כתבו אל המקומות להודיע
את ישראל כי ראש הגולה יעזרהו

118 The letter *resh* is written over what appears perhaps to be *aleph*. It is possible that the scribe initially omitted the title, and began writing the name אברהם, before correcting himself. To emphasize the correction, perhaps, the letter *resh* is pointed (Tiberian pointing).

119 *Vacat* at end of line.

120 1233 SE = 921/2 CE. 'Take' ('get hold of') probably means 'take and bring'.

121 A place identified by Gil (2004: 218–219 and n. 142) as Jubayl (ancient Byblos, on the Lebanese coast).

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LSaad folio 5 verso

And recently I was told by Rabbi David
our friend, son of Rabbi Abraham, that you wrote
to him to ask him to get hold of the letters
of the heads of the academies concerning
Marḥeshwan and Kislew of the year 233.[120]
I believe that you only wrote
to him, rather than to me, because you assumed
that until now I was still in the land of Israel,
based on what you had heard; and he also
said that perhaps this is what you thought.
And he also asked me to write to you
to inform you. Know, that while I was still
in Aleppo some of the disciples came
from Baal-Gad[121] and reported that ben Meir
was thinking of making them[122] deficient. And I did not
believe this, but as a precaution,[123]
I wrote to him during the summer[124]

LSaad folio 6 recto

to warn him not to do this. But
he would not hear. And so it happened that when he declared them
deficient,
all our rabbis in the academies became worried,
because nothing like this had ever been or ever been seen (Jud. 19:30),
to declare festivals against the Law.
And therefore, they wrote to (all) places to inform
(the people of) Israel that the Exilarch—may our Holy One

122 The months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew.

123 Bornstein, following a suggestion of Samuel Poznański, interprets באסתטהאר as an Arabic word, *istiẓhār* استظهار, which he translates as 'clearly' or 'explicitly'; similarly, Gil interprets the phrase as 'for clarification'. François de Blois advises me, however, that in medieval Arabic the verb *istaẓhara* (of which this is an infinitive) can mean 'to take precautions' (not unlike, perhaps, the Hebrew root זהר), and that this word should thus be translated 'as a precaution', which perhaps works better in this context; Malter (1921: 82) similarly translates 'as a precaution'. Saadya used an Arabic word because the Hebrew equivalent was not immediately obvious to him.

124 Presumably, the summer of 921 CE.

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קדושנו וגם ראשי הישיבות כולם
יתמכם משגבנו · וכל האלופים
וכל החכמים והתלמידים שוין
בדבר הזה · כי המה שלמין
והפסח בשלישי ואין בינינו
חלוקה · ואין פרץ ואין יוצאת
ואין צוחה ברחבתינו · ושלחתי
מקץ שני חדשים את אגרותיהם
אליכם בתוך אגרותי עתה
כבואם הקבצו וקראום ועמדו

LSaad folio 6 verso
[Bodl. Heb. f. 56.83 verso]

על עמדכם ואזרו נא כְּגִבָּרִים[125]
חלציכם וכאנשי חיל למלחמות[126]
ייי וחוסו על עם ישראל ועל
נחלת י[127] לבל יאכלו חמץ בפסח ·
ובל יאכלון וישתון ויעשון
מלאכה ביום הכיפורים[128]
ותהיה התקנה הגדולה הזאת
עלידיכם[129] ופרשו לפנינו
בכל אשר תעשו עם שלומכם
וחפציכם ושאלותיכם ותנו שלום
לרב ניהיי[130] ולכל רעינו אחינו
כְּכְבוד איש ואיש ושלומכם
ירבה תחלה וסוף

The rest of the page is blank.

125 Word is fully pointed (with Tiberian pointing) for disambiguation.
126 Unidentified sign at the end of the line; perhaps an attempt to write the name of God (with a similar grapheme as in line 4). The name of God is written again, more fully, at the beginning of the next line.
127 Name of God, written as one *yod* followed by a grapheme that joins two more *yods*.
128 *Vacat* at end of line.
129 *Sic*, in one word.
130 Obscure. The last two letters might be punctuation marks rather than *yods*. On this assumption, Neubauer reads לרבניה (which is also problematic). Bornstein suggests this word is an error for לרבנינו.

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assist him—and also all the heads of the academies—
may our Stronghold support them—and all the leaders (*alufim*)
and all the scholars and the disciples were in agreement
on this matter, that they[131] were full
and Passover on Tuesday, and that they was no disagreement
among us, and no breach or exception
or outcry in our streets (Ps. 144:14). And I sent
at the end of two months their letters
to you, among my letters. Now,
when they arrive, gather together and read them, and stand firm

LSaad folio 6 verso

on your position, girdle now your loins like
men and like soldiers for the wars of
the Lord, and take care of the people of Israel and
the inheritance of the Lord, lest they eat leaven on Passover,
and lest they eat and drink and perform
work on the Day of Atonement;
and this major correction will be
thanks to you. And lay out before us
all that you do, together with your greetings,
your wishes, and your questions. Give regards
to [our] rabbis and to all our friends, our brothers,
each person the honour due, and may your peace
abound from beginning to end.

131 The months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew. Note how these months being full is stated here as a fact (and so in Letter 3).

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Letter 3

The beginning of this letter is missing; it was in the central bi-folio that is lost, but probably only occupied the last page of it (see introduction above).

LSaad folio 7 recto
[Bodl. Heb. f. 56.82 recto]

ובלבתי מהמון אל המון ·[132] ובשובי
מחיל אל חיל · כזכרי טַפַי ועוללַיי[133]
לנגדי כן זכרכם תלמידַי · לא
נגזר מניב ולא נגרז מנגד עיני
ומן ייי אלהֵי עזי אשאלה ·· 5
להראותני פניהם ופניכם
בקרוב ברוב שמחות · ועל
דברת השמועה הנשמעת
בארץ · הקדמתי מקץ שני
חדשים וכתבתי אליכם אגרות 10
ובתוך אגרות ראש הגולה
יעזרהו קדושנו וכל ראשי
הישיבות יאמצם משגבנו
להודיעכם כי בתוך הקיץ
שעבר בהיותי בחלב שמעתי 15
כי בן מאיר חושב להכריז
מרחשון וכסלו חסרין[134]

LSaad folio 7 verso
[Bodl. Heb. f. 56.82 verso]

וכתבתי אליו כַּמָּה אגרות
להזהירו מעשות כן ולהודיעו
כי המה שלמין ולבאר לו
מאי זה טעם המה שלמין ·

132 So correctly Gil. Neubauer and subsequent editors read incorrectly האמון.
133 The second *yod* is superfluous.
134 *Vacat* at end of line.

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LSaad folio 7 recto

... and when I was going from crowd to crowd,[135] and when I was turning
from throng to throng (Ps. 84:8), just as I remembered my children and
offspring
before me, so your memory, my disciples, was not
excised from my speech nor was cut off from before my eyes (Ps. 31:23);
and of the Lord, God of my strength, I ask
to show me their faces and your faces
soon on many joyful occasions. And regarding
the news that has been heard
in the land: after the end of two months,
I have set out and written you letters[136]
and among (them) the letters of the Exilarch
– may our Holy One assist him—and all the heads
of the academies—may our Stronghold fortify them—
to inform you that during last
summer, while I was in Aleppo, I heard
that ben Meir was thinking of declaring
Marḥeshwan and Kislew deficient

LSaad folio 7 verso

and I wrote to him several letters
to warn him against doing this and to inform him
that they were full, and to explain to him
for what reason they were full.

135 For various other interpretations, largely based on a misreading of Neubauer, see Epstein (1901: 201, n. 1), Bornstein (1904: 69 n. 2). Bornstein points out that Ps. 84:8, usually translated as 'they will go from strength to strength', is interpreted in *bBerakhot* 64a as referring to scholars wandering restlessly from synagogues to houses of learning; this is probably what Saadya has in mind.

136 Perfect rather than past tense, assuming, as implicit in Letter 2 (fol. 6r, at the end), that he is referring here to his present letter.

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ושבתי אני וירדתי בגדד
והיית סבור כי קיבל · עד
אשר באה השמועה בבגדד
כי הכריזם חסרין ועל זאת
נבהלו כל רבותינו חכמי הישיבות
כי כמוה לא נהיָה[137] מעולם
להכריז המועדים שלא
כהלכה · על כן בחרדתם
כתבו אל כל ישראל אשר
בכל המקומות להודיעם
כי כלנו שוין בדבר הזה ·
ואין בינינו חלוקה כל עיקר ·

LSaad folio 8 recto
[Halper 332 recto left]

וכֹה הִסְכִּים[138] ראש הגולה ·
וראשי הישיבות וכל האלופים
וכל החכמים מבין עם תלמיד ·
והכריזו מרחשון וכסלו שלמין
והפסח בשלישי בשבת ·[139]
גם אנכי כתבתי עם אגרותיהם[140]
אל רוב המדינות האדירות ·
לצאת[141] את ידי חובתי גַם
אתם עִמדו[142] בדבר הזה ·
וגדרו את הפרצה הזאת
ואל תמרו את פי ייי ואל
יעשׂ איש מן העם בזדון
לחלל את מועדי ייי ולאכל
חמץ בפסח גם לא לאכל

137 The pointing is for disambiguation.
138 There is a mark above the *kaf* which I cannot explain. Schechter begins this folio, in error, on the second line.
139 *Vacat* at end of line.
140 The word עם is written over אל (not על, as per Schechter), and the word אגרותיהם runs into the margin. The word אל, at the beginning of line 7, is what the scribe initially intended to write here, omitting in error עם אגרותיהם .
141 Gil: ולצאת (misreading).
142 The pointing is for disambiguation.

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Then I turned away[143] and went down to Baghdad,
thinking that he had conceded—until
the news came in Baghdad
that he had declared them deficient, whereupon
all our scholars and the heads of the academies were astounded,
because nothing like this had ever been (Joel 2:2),
to declare the festivals against
the Law. Therefore, in fear,
they wrote to all Israel who are
in all places to inform them
that we are all in agreement on this matter,
and between us there is no disagreement at all,

LSaad folio 8 recto

and so the Exilarch has agreed,
and the heads of the academies and all the leaders (*alufim*)
and all the scholars, learned as well as student;
and they declared that Marḥeshwan and Kislew are full,
and Passover on the third of the week (Tuesday).
I also wrote together with their letters
to the many mighty cities
in order to fulfil my obligation. You
also, stand firm on this matter
and fence up this breach,
and do not rebel against the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 1:43); and no
one of the people should act perversely (cf. Deut. 17:12)
and desecrate the festivals of the Lord, and eat
leaven on Passover, also not to[144] eat

143 Cf. above, fol. 7r:1. Epstein translates more simply the whole line as: 'Ensuite je me rendis à Bagdad' (which in English could be rendered: 'Then I went to Baghdad'). The verb ושבתי has been alternatively interpreted as 'I returned', implying that Saadya had previously been in Baghdad and was returning there (see Bornstein 1904: 71 n. 1); however, Letter 2 (fol. 5v:7–9) implies that until very recently, he had been residing in Palestine.

144 The syntax is sloppy at this point.

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ולשתות ולעשות[145] מלאכה
ביום[146] הכפורים כן יהי רצון

LSaad folio 8 verso
[Halper 332 verso right]

שלא יהא[147] מכשול ולא מוקש
במקומכם ולא במקומות
ישראל ופרשו לפנינו[148]
תשובת הדברים גם כל
חפציכם עם שלומכם
ושלומכם יגדל ויעצם
לעד

אלענואן ערבי[149]
لابي الفرج وابي اسحق وابي سهل ادام الله حراستهم
سليمن[150] وابرهيم وعزر[151] بنـ(ي) علي بن سليمن اسعدهم الله
من سعيد بن يوسف راس الكل
الفسطاط قصر الشمع دكان علي بن سليمن ان شا الله

There are traces of ink at the bottom of the page. On the right, the ink traces have penetrated from the other side of the folio; but on the left, where there is a humidity stain, there are traces of the beginnings of four lines that have rubbed off from an adjacent folio that has not survived.

145 The *ayin* seems to be written over what first an *aleph*.

146 Above the first letter of this word, there are traces of the last two letters of the previous page (קר), horizontally flipped, again rubbed off from the previous page. Below the line there are further traces, but these cannot be from the previous page or from penetration from the verso (since this part of the verso is blank); they are therefore difficult to explain.

147 A *yod* is possibly written over the *aleph*, which would agree better with the *hiriq* pointing of the preceding *heh* (a *tsere* pointing would be expected before an *aleph*). The *aleph* is also slightly erased. This suggests that an attempt was made to remove the *aleph* and replace it with a *yod*, perhaps at the time when the word was pointed.

148 Followed by an unidentified sign, presumably a space filler.

149 The writing of this line is smaller and more cursive, possibly in a different hand. This may indicate that the Arabic, together with this introductory line, was written by a different scribe.

150 Better than Gil's reading سليم, also twice below.

151 Better than Gil's reading عزرى.

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or drink or perform any work
on the Day of Atonement. So may it be [His] will

LSaad folio 8 verso

that there be no obstacle or snare
in your place or in the places
of Israel. Lay out before us
(your) reply to these words, also all
your wishes together with your greetings.
May your peace grow and be strong
forever.

The address is in Arabic:[152]
To Abū l-Faraj, Abū Isḥaq and Abū Sahl, may God make their protection eternal,
Sulaymān, Ibrahīm and ʿAzar b. ʿAlī b. Sulaymān,[153] may God make them fortunate,
from Saʿīd b. Yūsuf *resh kalla* (*raʾs al-kull*),
(May it arrive in) Fusṭāṭ, Qaṣr al-Shamʿ, the shop of ʿAlī b. Sulaymān, God willing.

152 This line is written in Judeo-Arabic. The address below it is written in Arabic script.

153 The letter is addressed to the three sons of ʿAlī b. Sulaymān: Abū l-Faraj Sulaymān (the eldest, named for his grandfather), Abū Isḥaq Ibrahīm (sic, both names with shortened vowels as was quasi-standard in Middle Arabic) and Abū Sahl ʿAzar (so Ezra in Arabic; Gil erroneously has ʿAzrā, with *alif maqṣūra*). Each of the sons' *kunyā*s is given first, then their *ism*s.

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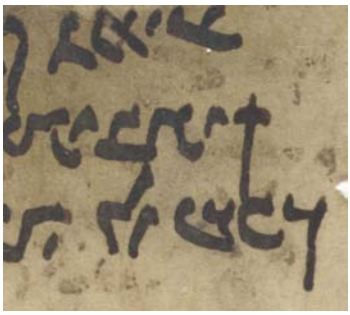


FIGURE 7
Bottom left corner of LSaad folio 2 verso (T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 2 verso), horizontally flipped
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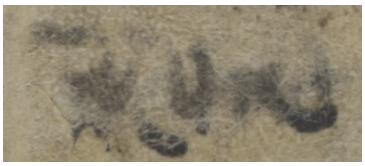


FIGURE 8
LSaad folio 4 recto (T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4 recto), beginning of line 16, horizontally flipped (mirror image of Figure 9)
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FIGURE 9
LSaad folio 4 recto (T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4 recto), beginning of line 16, as in manuscript
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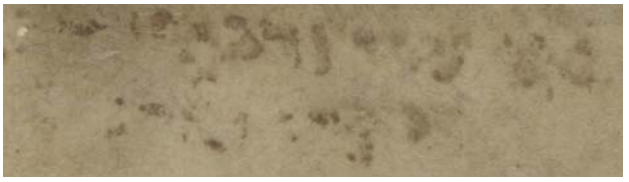


FIGURE 10 LSaad folio 3 verso (T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 3 verso), bottom of page, horizontally flipped
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FIGURE 11 LSaad folio 4 verso (T-S 6 Ja.1 fol. 4 verso), last line, which reads: [יבים]עם נד ויושיבני. The first word is partially faded; following it, faint traces of the letters עם נד are just visible
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FIGURE 12 LSaad folio 5 recto (Halper 332 verso left), last line. Below it, in mirror writing: עם נדיבים (the word נדיבים is partially faded)
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CHAPTER 11

Letters Miscellany

This manuscript contains, perhaps uniquely, a collection of letters representing both sides of the calendar controversy; for this reason, I call it a 'miscellany'. It contains, in the fragments preserved, three letters representing the Babylonian side (although the first letter was probably written by someone in the Levant, and possibly also the second), and one letter representing the Palestinian side. The third letter on the Babylonian side has been attributed to Saadya, on the basis of a separate fragment containing an excipit. However, there are strong reasons to doubt this attribution; the letter was more likely authored by a native Babylonian than by Saadya, who was then a recent Egyptian immigrant in Baghdad. In contrast, the attribution of the Palestinian letter to ben Meir is very plausible; Bornstein called it ben Meir's 'Second Letter'.

The reconstruction of this manuscript has been a challenge to scholars from the very early stages of Cairo Genizah research. The reason for this is that all the folios of this manuscript are torn horizontally in two (and some in three pieces), and in most cases, the fragments of each of the folios were separated from each other and ended up in different libraries. A batch of upper halves of the folios thus went Cambridge (T-S 13K2.1–6), whereas a batch of the lower halves ended up in Oxford (Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27–31). Several fragments from both batches were joined in 1915 by Alfred Guillaume; but some of the fragments remained without a join. Much more recently, we discovered a number of new fragments in Cambridge (including a whole folio, and some lower halves of folios), and new joins were successfully made. Fragments of two folios that were published by Israel Lévi in 1900 have been identified as the upper halves of folios of this manuscript (even though these fragments can no longer be found). As a result, the full text of nearly all the folios has been restored. These new discoveries have also considerably augmented the size of the extant manuscript, compared to what was known of it in 1915.

The manuscript is written in Babylonian, Geonic script, and can be dated palaeographically to the late eleventh century or around 1100.[1] Considering the relatively late date of this manuscript, the use of this script should not be taken to mean that the scribe was specifically of Babylonian affiliation.

1 So Judith Schlanger and (independently) Amir Ashur. Judith Schlanger notes the similarity of the script with Bodl. Heb. d66.9 and d66.3, which were written by Barukh b. Isaac of Aleppo in this period.

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Physical Description

Paper, black ink.

Because of the fragmentary nature of this manuscript—added to the problem that the Oxford fragments are mounted—complete folio dimensions can only be reliably established for folio 6. This folio consists of two fragments from Cambridge which, when joined together, reconstitute the entire folio without any lacuna. Another folio, fol. 1 (T-S 10J32.1, recently discovered), is almost completely preserved in a single piece, and contains uniquely the entire text of the folio, although its bottom margin is torn off and lost; its measurements are thus informative, even if the folio's full dimensions (its bottom margin, and its total height) remain unknown. The following dimensions, accordingly, are based on folio 6 (after both its fragments are joined) and (where applicable) folio 1. Their dimensions are generally consistent, even though line numbers are variable.

Dimensions: 24 cm × 19 cm (text: 14.7–14.8 cm × 13.5–14 cm). Line numbers: 20–22 (except fol. 3v—see note there, p. 355 n. 111). Margins: inner 14–20 mm; outer 25–40 mm; top 32–34 mm; bottom 55–58 mm. Average total line height (text and line space): 7–7.5 mm. Margins are wide (especially top and bottom); dimensions of inner and outer margins are variable. The text is partially justified on the left, with the help of frequent word stacking (although stacked words often run into the margin) and extension of end-of-line letters. The lines are well spaced out, with line spaces slightly higher than the lines. The layout, like the writing, is generally neat and well thought out.

As I ascertained from the original, two of the lower fragments are joined together and form a fragmentary bi-folio: Bodl. Heb. d. 74.30 and 31. The order of the fragments, however, has been reversed in the Bodleian's library binding (due to the bi-folio being folded over backwards): fol. 31 should come before fol. 30. These are the lower fragments of folios 7 and 8, which can now be identified as a bi-folio.

The scribe is prone to unusual *plene* spellings, such as יודיע for the *qal* יודע (fols. 1v:6, 2v:6, 4r:7).

As mentioned above, all the folios in his manuscript are torn horizontally in two (except for folio 2, which is torn in three with the middle fragment missing, and folio 7, also in three, with the bottom fragment missing). In all folios the tear runs through the text, except for folio 1, where the tear runs at the bottom and only the bottom margin in torn off, and folio x, where the tear runs through a blank space (most of the page is anyway blank).

Aside from its torn and fragmentary preservation, the manuscript is generally in good condition. Small holes affect many of the fragments (with somewhat larger holes in folios 1 and 8), and the bottom of the folios tend to be

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stained (e.g. fol. 5 verso), some quite heavily (fol. 1 verso, also higher up), with some of the ink erased or fading. The legibility of the text, however, is generally excellent.

Joining the Fragments, Reconstructing the Manuscript

Fragments of this manuscript were first joined by Guillaume, in 1915. After Schechter's publication, in 1901, of the upper folio fragments that were in the Cambridge University Library (T-S 13K2.1–6), Guillaume identified the lower fragments of the same folios in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27–31). On this basis, he reconstructed the entire folios. But some of the fragments, in Cambridge (T-S 13K2.2) and in Oxford (Heb. d. 74.27), remained without a join.

Guillaume's discovery was quite remarkable, but not without some limitations. His replication of Schechter's errors (*passim*) indicates that rather than comparing his Oxford fragments with the original fragments in Cambridge, he simply relied for the latter on Schechter's transcriptions, which he used and copied into his edition. His methodology was thus not codicological, but rather textual. He probably never went to Cambridge to look at the upper fragments; what he joined to the Bodleian fragments were not the Cambridge fragments, but only Schechter's edition of them.[2] Reliance on Schechter's edition led him to a number of transcription errors of his own, especially at the point where the fragments joined (fols. 7r:17; 8r:13; 8v:13 and 15). These errors would have been avoided if he had been able to collate the original fragments together; but in his period, without the benefit of digital imaging, the comparison of fragments in different libraries was fraught with practical difficulties.

The next significant join was made by Jacob Mann, in 1934. In 1900, Israel Lévi had published the fragments of two folios, which he saw earlier that year at the great Exposition in Paris, in the hands of a merchant from Cairo. These fragments have never been seen since. Nevertheless, Mann was able to join one of these fragments—again, purely textually, and solely on the basis of

2 This corrects our earlier impression of Guillaume's achievement, whereby we imagined that he had actually compared, like us, the Oxford fragments with those in Cambridge. In Rustow and Stern (2013: 84–85), we wrote: 'Guillaume's join was remarkable given the logistical difficulties involved in early twentieth-century travel, the advent of the Great War, and the expense of photography; like other scholars of the period, he could not easily compare manuscripts, so making joins depended on the texts being perfectly continuous (which was the case here), or one made drawings or had excellent visual recall.' In all probability, in fact, Guillaume never left the Bodleian Library.

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Lévi's edition—with Heb. d. 74.27, the lower fragment of Guillaume which had hitherto not been joined (and for which Mann relied, again, on Guillaume's edition). Mann's discovery did not attract the attention that it deserved. Independently from Mann—whose discovery I was not aware of at the time—I made exactly the same join. However, I was also able to join the other fragment of Lévi with one of the recently discovered Cambridge fragments, which I identified as the lower part of this folio; and to identify another newly discovered fragment as the folio immediately preceding this one.

The methodology that I followed, in joining Lévi's fragments to this manuscript, is explained in more detail below (before the text edition). In this case, the join was necessarily textual, as Lévi's fragments are no longer extant. But the other joins that were recently made were primarily based on visual recognition of fragments of this manuscript.

Although most of the fragments have now been joined with one another to form whole (or almost whole) folios, the order in which the folios appeared in the manuscript remains very uncertain. Some of the folios follow each other consecutively, and clearly belong to the same letter. But we do not have two consecutive folios containing different letters, or a single folio where one letter ends and the other begins. As a result, the relative position of the letters cannot be known. The beginnings and ends of nearly all the letters are missing (except, perhaps, for the end of Letter 1), which means discontinuity between each of the four letters. The letters could therefore have appeared in any order in the manuscript.

However, some light may be shed on the original order of the folios by considering the shape, location, and direction of the tears, which undulate horizontally through most of the middle of the fragments (see images of all the fragments in Plates 4–20). The tears of folios 7 and 8, which form a consecutive bi-folio (and are part of Letter 4), are almost identical in shape and in location; the bi-folio was clearly torn in one go, whilst in a closed position. The tears of folios 5 and 6 (Letter 3) are also almost identical, except that the location of the tear of folio 6 is slightly lower down; these folios were probably also torn in one go, but only after folio 6 had become detached of its binding and had slid upwards (by the equivalent of three lines of text).

The almost identical shape and position of the tears of these two sets of consecutive folios (7 and 8, and 5 and 6), and the inference that in each set the folios were torn together in one go, suggests further that the whole book may have been torn together, when its folios were still in order, even though the binding may have been already loosened. This finding is significant for my argument: for it means that the shape and position of the tears could be treated as indicative of the original order of the folios. More precisely, similarity in the tears

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could be used as evidence of proximity of the folios (even if non-consecutive) within the original manuscript.

On this basis, the close similarity of the tears of the two groups of folios above-mentioned (7 and 8, and 5 and 6) with one another could be treated as evidence that the Letters I have called 'third' and 'fourth' were consecutive in the manuscript—as I have assumed, consequently, in my edition. The difficulty with this argument, however, is that the tears of folios 7 and 8 are actually symmetrical to, and thus the mirror images of, the tears of folios 5 and 6. The only explanation would be that the bi-folio 7–8 was horizontally flipped (with its centrefold on the outside) before being torn together with folios 5 and 6. This may put in question the assumption that Letters 3 and 4 were indeed consecutive in the original manuscript. Indeed, the order of Letters 3 and 4 could be inverted, as it is not impossible that the flipped bi-folio of letter 4 (folios 7 and 8) was actually positioned before Letter 3. It seems reasonable, however, to place Letters 3 and 4 together, in whatever sequence—as I have assumed in this edition.

The tears of folios 2 and 3 (belonging to what I call Letter 1), as far as can be made out from what survives of them, are similar to those of folios 5 and 6 and (flipped) 7 and 8, though not quite identical. This would justify positioning them near the group of folios 5-6-7-8 (Letters 3 and 4), though not necessarily in the closest proximity. Possibly significant is that the first folio of Letter 1, folio 1, which consecutively precedes folios 2 and 3, has a very different tear (this is the only folio whose tear does not cut across the text, only across the lower margin). It would therefore be reasonable to place Letter 1 at the beginning, before Letters 3 and 4 (rather than after them—because then the interruption of the untorn folio 1 would be difficult to account for).

Finally, the tear of folio 4 (Letter 2) is similar to folios 2 and 3 (of Letter 1), though it is higher up on the page; a likely hypothesis, again, is that this folio slid downwards before being torn. Letter 2 could therefore be placed between after Letter 1, and before Letter 3. On this basis, I have ordered the folios, and hence the Letters, in the sequence represented in Table 9 below.

If the order of folios has been correctly inferred, in this way, from the shape and position of the tears, it could possibly explain why Schechter initially published the upper, T-S fragments of Letters 3 and 4 (in 1901), but not that of Letter 2 (this was added to his edition of *Saadyana* in 1903)—even though the latter was placed, in 1903, between the two letters published in 1901 (and later, in the library catalogue, it was numbered as the third and middle fragment, T-S 13K2.3). It may be surmised that Schechter only found at first the fragments of Letters 3 and 4, presumably bundled together, as they were originally close together in the manuscript; whereas the fragment of Letter 2, which

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TABLE 9 The letters and folios of LMisc

Letter	Folio in this edition	Upper fragment	Lower fragment
Letter 1	Folio 1	T-S 10J32.1	
	Folio 2	Lévi 1900*b* fgm. 1	T-S NS 98.18
	Folio 3	Lévi 1900*b* fgm. 2	Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27
Letter 2	Folio 4	T-S 13K2.3	Bodl. Heb. d. 74.29
Letter 3	Folio 5	T-S 13K2.1	Bodl. Heb d. 74.28
	Folio 6	T-S 13K2.2	T-S NS 309.68b
Excipit	Folio x[a]	T-S 13K2.6	
Letter 4	Folio 7	T-S 13K2.4	Bodl. Heb. d. 74.31
	Folio 8	T-S 13K2.5	Bodl. Heb. d. 74.30

a The position of this folio (and excipit) here is questionable, as it is discontinuous with the preceding folio, and it implies an attribution of Letter 3 to Saadya which is problematic; see discussion below. The lower half of this folio is missing, but it was almost certainly blank.
Note: empty rows indicate textual discontinuity.

belonged elsewhere in the manuscript and may have been separated from Letters 3 and 4, only came to his attention later. The T-S fragments of Letter 1 had been separated even further, to the extent of ending up being assigned to different boxes (and shelf-marks) in the library; these were never found until much more recently.[3]

The reconstruction of the manuscript on the basis of the shape and location of the tears remains, nevertheless, a somewhat speculative argument. I have used it chiefly for pragmatic reasons, as the only available criterion for ordering the letters and folios in this edition; but it should not necessarily be treated as definitive. I could also add that as a continuous bi-folio, folios 7–8 would have been in the centre of a quire. But this does not help to further this present reconstruction of the manuscript.

3 This scenario would not explain, however, why the lower fragment of folio 6 (in Letter 3), T-S NS 309.68b, was separated from Schechter's first fragments and did not come to light until very recently.

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Letters 1 and 2: Authorship and Relationship to L1Bab

Letters 1 and 2 are pro-Babylonian. Both respond to a polemic on the calendar by the Palestinian leader (or one of his disciples), and both refute systematically each of his polemical arguments. His polemical arguments are numbered in Letter 2, but unnumbered in Letter 1; this suffices to indicate that Letters 1 and 2 are separate compositions.

Bornstein (1904: 78–79) suggested nevertheless that Letters 1 and 2 were at least authored by the same person. His suggestion was based on a third text, T-S 8K6, which contains various elements that are similar to either Letter 1 or Letter 2 (T-S 8K6 is actually a different manuscript, which I refer to as Babylonian Letter 1, or L1Bab—below, Chapter 12). This third text, which Bornstein placed between our two letters in his edition, served to bind them together to the extent of pointing at least towards a common authorship. In a chapter entitled 'Responses to ben Meir', Bornstein (1904: 78–89) presented therefore the following three texts, in consecutive order: (1) Letter 2, consisting then of T-S 13K2 fol. 3 (Bornstein 1904: 79–80; the join with Bodl. Heb. d. 74 was unknown at that time); (2) L1Bab, i.e. T-S 8K6 (ibid. 80–86); and (3) Letter 1, consisting then of Lévi 1900*b* (ibid. 87–89).

Bornstein went one step further, however, and wrote: 'it seems that at the place where the first text ends, the second begins', for his first text (Letter 2) contained a refutation of Palestinian polemical arguments numbered second and third, whereas his second text (L1Bab) appeared to continue with the refutation of the fourth, fifth, and sixth arguments. In his typical way, Bornstein was ignoring the codicological evidence and failed to note, as should have been evident from reading Schechter's summary descriptions of the fragments, that his first and second texts did not belong to the same manuscript. Thus even if the second text appeared to follow from the first, it could only have been in an approximate way, and not in a continuous textual join. It is, moreover, highly unlikely that the texts of Letter 2 and L1Bab belong to the same letter, because the fifth argument in L1Bab is almost identical to the third argument in Letter 2, and they are dealt with in a very similar way; such a duplication would not be conceivable in the same letter.[4]

All this did not prevent Mann (1934: 273–277), however, from adopting Bornstein's conclusions. Although he noted correctly that Bornstein's second text, L1Bab (T-S 8K6), was actually from a different manuscript, Mann still accepted broadly Bornstein's assertion, and even extended it somewhat by assuming that

4 On this error of Bornstein see also Chapter 3, pp. 35–36.

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Bornstein's three texts were not only of the same authorship, but all formed part of a single letter. To this, Mann added further a fourth element, T-S 13K2 fol. 6r (in my edition, LMisc 'folio x'). This small fragment includes an excipit, a date, and a signature; the name of the signature is 'Saadya son of Joseph'. Without much argument or justification, Mann claimed that this fragment belonged to the end of (my) Letter 1, i.e. to the end of the three texts of Bornstein. On this basis, he concluded that Letters 1 and 2, in our manuscript, where authored by Saadya. However, Mann's allocation of the excipit, in folio x, to Letter 1, is not only undemonstrated but also highly unlikely, because Letter 1 uses the era of the Destruction of the Temple for its dates, whereas folio x is dated according to the Seleucid era.[5] There are no grounds for attributing Letters 1 and 2 to Saadya.

Nevertheless, Bornstein was right to identify a number of similarities between Letter 2 and L1Bab on the one hand, and between L1Bab and Letter 1 on the other, and hence, a possible common authorship. Letter 2 and L1Bab have in common that they go through and refute a numbered list of Palestinian arguments, and that they quote and discuss (ultimately to refute) an earlier version of the Palestinian tradition of 641 parts (but this feature is not unique, as it also appears in Letter 3 of LMisc).[6] L1Bab and Letter 1 have in common that they use the era of Destruction; that they test their computation by running it through a long period of past years (50 years in L1Bab, 25 years in Letter 1—a difference that confirms, however, that the letters are not the same); and that they call their addressee, somewhat unusually, 'my sage' and 'my scholar'.[7] All three texts, finally, share in common the somewhat irritating tendency of attributing absurd opinions to their opponent—which we may suspect, at least in some cases, of being deliberate and perverse distortions—in order to refute them easily, which they do at excessive length.[8]

5 Mann (1934: 277) addresses this problem by arguing that Saadya, who in his view authored this letter, is using here the era of Destruction for the benefit of his addressee. This is unconvincing and looks like special pleading.

6 The refutation of a numbered list of Palestinian arguments also appears in Babylonian Letter 2 (L2Bab—below, Chapter 13), a newly discovered text that Bornstein was not aware of. On this basis, it may be possible to add this letter to the group under discussion.

7 LMisc. 3v:8; L1Bab recto l. 27 ('my sage'), verso l. 7 ('my scholar').

8 Bornstein (1904: 78) infers from the unnecessary length of these arguments that their author was not truly expert in the science of the calendar. This inference, however, is debatable, given the polemical advantage that could be gained, in these texts, from belabouring even the most simple point. It would also be incorrect to treat computational errors in the texts (on which see next note) as evidence of lack of expertise in the calendar; computational accuracy is quite a different skill from knowledge of the workings of the calendar. Mann disagrees

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The affinity of Letters 1 and 2—even though, as noted above from the outset, they are distinct compositions—is further reinforced by their belonging to the same manuscript, the Letters Miscellany. This only became evident after 1915, when Guillaume joined T-S 13K2 fol. 3 with of Bodl. Heb. d. 74.29 (folio 4, of Letter 2), and after Mann (1934) joined Lévi's (1900*b*) fragment with Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27 (folio 3, of Letter 1); only then was it possible to confirm that Bornstein's first and third texts, Letter 2 and Letter 1, belonged to the same manuscript. My analysis of the tears suggests, furthermore, their close proximity within the manuscript. This reinforces perhaps Bornstein's hypothesis that the authorship of these two texts, Letters 1 and 2 (as well as L1Bab), is the same, although this still cannot be certain.[9]

As to the identity of this author, his use of the era of Destruction in Letter 1 and L1Bab makes it most unlikely that he was from Iraq, even though he clearly espouses the Babylonian side; for this era, which starts from the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, is not attested in the Babylonian tradition.[10] Babylonian medieval sources, in our corpus as well as elsewhere, only use the Seleucid era (which begins in the autumn of 312 BCE).[11] The era of Destruction is attested only in the Levant, Egypt, and further to the west. It is used in the very many tombstone inscriptions from Zoar (south of the Dead Sea),

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vehemently with Bornstein, but only because he attributes our texts to Saadya; he also does not sufficiently recognize how problematic some of the arguments, in these letters, are. Epstein (1905: 135–136) seeks to argue that not all the opinions attributed in this letter to the Palestinians were as absurd as they may seem, but this argument is very difficult to accept (see in more detail my notes on L1Bab, pp. 390–394 esp. nn. 9,23–24, 28, 47).

9 The same applies, possibly, to L2Bab; see above, n. 6. A notable difference between our letters and L1Bab is that the latter is prone to computational errors (which must therefore be ascribed to the author), whereas the computational sections of Letter 1 and Letter 2 are generally error-free. This slightly undermines the theory that all three letters are of the same author.

10 This point was already argued by Bornstein (1904) 78, on the basis of a more limited range of evidence. The exact epoch of this era varies according to different traditions and usages, ranging from 68/9 CE to 70/1 CE for year 1. According to Letter 1 and L1Bab, year 1 of the era is 69/70 CE.

11 As stated already in the Babylonian Talmud (*bAvodah Zarah* 10a): 'in the Exile [which normally means, in Talmudic literature, Babylonia], they only count according to the Greek kings'. The use of the Seleucid era is pervasive in Babylonian sources; in this manuscript, for example, see LMisc fol. 5v:18 (Letter 3). There is one notable exception, however, near the beginning of the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 3:1), where the era of Destruction is used. As I argue there, the Book of the Calendar Controversy is probably quoting, in this particular passage, a Palestinian source, and more specifically perhaps the official record of ben Meir's calendar announcement.

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dating from the fourth to sixth centuries;[12] in a lintel from the synagogue of Nabratein (Kefar Neburaya, upper Galilee), dated 'year 494 from the Destruction';[13] and closer to our period, in a tombstone from Baalbek, dated year 768 from the Destruction, thus mid ninth century.[14] Moving into our period, the era of Destruction is attested in the colophon of a *Haftarot* lectionary based on the Palestinian triennial cycle, which is dated Thursday 18 Av 856 'of the era of the Temple' (= 22 July 924 CE); it was found in the Cairo Genizah, and its provenance may well have been Egypt.[15] In the mid tenth century, a Bible colophon written in Gaifa (near Bilbeis, north-east of Cairo) is dated to the year 886 of the same era (= 953/4 CE).[16] In his work on marriage contracts, Mordechai Akiva Friedman lists five contracts dated from the Destruction, from Egypt, Syria, and possibly Palestine, all from the late tenth or eleventh centuries.[17] Moreover, the colophon of a liturgical work from the Cairo Genizah is dated 976 from the Destruction of the Temple; another, of the Mishnaic tractate *Avot*, is dated 998 from the same era, thus both mid eleventh century.[18] Last but not least, ben Meir himself, in his First Letter, refers to 921/2 CE as 'year 853 of the Temple', and the following year as 854.[19]

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12 Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou (2016); Stern (2017); also Stern (2001), pp. 87–98 and 146–153. According to the Zoar stones, year 1 of the era of Destruction is 69/70 CE.

13 Naveh (1978) 31–33, no. 13; recent photograph in Meyers and Chancey (2012) 288.

14 Naccach (1989). The year is also given as the 6th of the sabbatical cycle, which determines the year as 837/8 CE (on the sabbatical cycle, see Stern 2001: 91–92, 137, 149). According to this inscription, therefore, year 1 of the era of Destruction was 70/1 CE. The era of Destruction is also attested in ninth-century Italy, in inscriptions in Venosa most recently re-edited by Leonard Rutgers and Ortal Paz-Saar, https://diaspora.sites.uu.nl/projects/3d-pilot-project-in-venosa/ (accessed 9 August 2018).

15 T-S A42.2; see Beit-Arié et al. (1997), no. 4, pp. 48–52. This document just postdates the period, in 922–923 CE, when Babylonian and Palestinian calendars differed.

16 MS Manchester John Rylands University Library, Gaster Genizah 2; Beit-Arié et al. (1997), no. 9, pp. 80–81.

17 The texts appear in Friedman (1980) vol. 2 as follows: no. 1, from Tinnīs, Egypt, late tenth or early eleventh centuries; no. 4, a Palestinian formulary dated 1081/2; no. 7 from Aleppo, Syria, dated 14 Adar 958 from the Destruction, which Friedman (pp. 88–95) is inclined to date to 1027 CE; no. 39, from Tinnīs, late tenth century; and no. 59, from Tyre, eleventh century (?). See discussion in vol. 1, pp. 104–106, with reference in addition to ms Annenberg Research Institute (now the Herbert D. Katz Center, Philadelphia) Halper 375, a Qaraite formulary whereby the custom in Jerusalem is to use the era of the Destruction; this text is partially edited in Friedman (1992). See also Olszowy-Schlanger (1998) 160–163.

18 Liturgical work dated 976: T-S A42.1, fol. 1v. *Avot* dated 998: T-S E3.75, fol. 10v. The full date of the latter is Thursday 25 Tammuz, year 4826 from the Creation, 998 from the Destruction, and 1377 Seleucid, which makes it 21 July 1066, except that this was a Friday. According to this count, year 1 of the era of Destruction was 68/9 CE.

19 LiBM 21:9–24:1. This implies that 69/70 CE is the first year of the era, just as in Letter 1 and

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On this basis, we may conclude that Letter 1 and L1Bab, which use the era of Destruction, were composed in either Syria, Palestine, or Egypt—by someone arguing against ben Meir's position. As argued above, Letter 2 might be of the same author. I refer to the authorship of these letters as 'pro-Babylonian', because the author(s) was (were) not from Babylonia itself. The authorship of these letters confirms that the division between the camps was not strictly geographical, and that the Babylonian position had made some headway further west.

Letter 1: Contents

Letter 1 is addressed to someone who is suspected, with his disciples, of having sided with the Palestinian camp. The author of our letter claims not to suspect him of this, but calls on him nevertheless to denounce this rumour publicly, and to join in the campaign against the Palestinians (fol. 3r:18–3v:19). The addressee appears to be a Palestinian resident, as the author of our letter claims that the majority of Israel are on the Babylonian side, whereas ben Meir's followers are localised and only 'in a few places that are around you' (fol. 3v:7–8). He is writing to his addressee from a position of authority, and appears to know him personally.

The letter is largely a polemic responding to a written text that was apparently written by ben Meir or his disciple. One line (fol. 3v:6–7) suggests that our letter may have been written between Passover and the New Year of 922 CE.

The text extant begins with ben Meir's accusation that the Babylonians have 'removed the boundary', and turns the accusation against him (fol. 1r:1–8). The author refutes the claim that the Babylonians have postponed the festivals for no reason (fol. 1r:8–13), and the alleged argument that Nisan should have been postponed rather than Tishri—for both months are shown, in fact, to be correlated (fol. 1r:14–1v:2). He claims that written records of past calendar dates show that ben Meir's calendar decision was contradicted in the years 829 (from the Destruction, i.e. 896/7 CE) and 832 (899/900 CE: fol. 1v:2–12—in actual fact, however, these cases were not quite the same; the author ignores that the times of their *molad* were different). He then accuses ben Meir of relying covertly on a popular (and inaccurate) rule of thumb for predicting calendar dates (fol. 1v:13–

L1Bab. On the use of the era of Creation (*anno mundi*) and the Seleucid era in Egypt and Palestine (the Seleucid era only from the mid tenth century onwards), see Krakowski and Stern (forthcoming).

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2r:4); and on this basis, he further accuses him of contradicting his own calendar traditions, by falsely ascribing to him a simplistic rule that all plain years are orderly and all intercalated years are defective (fol. 2r:4–10). This alleged rule of ben Meir is then shown to have been frequently contradicted in the last 25 years (fol. 2r:11–2v:5; the author misapplies, however, the alleged rule, which weakens considerably his refutation).[20]

The final part of the letter contains general polemics against ben Meir. Our author accuses him, for example, of disobeying the Sages (fol. 2v:6–10), and turns ben Meir's anti-Babylonian polemics against him (fol. 2v:10–3r:17). He finally asks his addressee to rebuke the disciple who wrote this text, or ben Meir himself (if he was its author), and to call on ben Meir and/or the disciple to repent (fol. 3r:17–3v:19). The letter possibly ends here, with the greeting '*shalom*'.

Letter 2: Contents

Letter 2, of which only one folio is preserved, is a pro-Babylonian response to a Palestinian polemic on the calendar of 921/2 and on the Four Gates. I assume this text is part of a letter (rather than another type of literary work, such as a treatise), even though there is nothing explicit to indicate this (such as the greeting at the end of Letter 1, or the explicit references to an addressee in the other three letters of LMisc). This assumption is based on the inclusion of this text in the Letters Miscellany, where the other texts are all clearly letters, as well as on the similarity of Letter 2 to Babylonian Letter 1 (L1Bab—see discussion above).

The fact that at the time when this letter was written, Palestinians were still polemicizing against the Four Gates, suggests that they had not yet adopted the Four Gates or adapted them to the rule of 641–642 parts. If so, this letter would have been composed in the early stages of the dispute, well before Passover 922. This is however uncertain, because further on (fol. 4r:14–16) the Letter appears to refer ben Meir's addition of 641 parts to the limits of the Four Gates, which would suggest on the contrary that the Four Gates had already been adopted (other interpretations, however, are possible; see below p. 358 n. 122).

The folio begins with the end of the second argument, or more precisely, the end of the refutation of the Palestinians' second argument. The Palestinians were arguing against the Four Gates, with a rather spurious claim that the

20 See pp. 346–347 n. 58.

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Four Gates are incomplete because they only account for four days of the week (the days on which the New Year is allowed to fall). Our letter responds that in the Four Gates, every period of time ends where the next one begins, so that the full week is covered from end to end; moreover, some days of the week are mentioned more than once in the Four Gates (fol. 4r:1–5).

The third argument concerns the rule of 641–642 parts. Our author misinterprets the rule as applying equally to Nisan and to Tishri, which enables him to refute it easily (fol. 4r:5–14).

At this point begins a substantial piece of text that has been misplaced, and actually belongs to before the beginning of our folio (as explained further in the text edition). Here the author is finishing his refutation of the first argument, and refers to the distortion that has been made (or would be made) to the Four Gates through the addition of 641 parts to all the limits (fol. 4r:14–16). Then begins the second argument, as described already above (fol. 4r:16–4v:19).

After the end of the misplaced text, the text resumes with the third argument (fol. 4v:19–21).

Letter 3: Authorship and Date

This letter responds to a letter from the Palestinian 'Head of the Academy', and seems to be addressed directly to him. It responds, point by point, to what 'the Head of the Academy has written'. The Letter is clearly Babylonian, and written sometime in the year 1233 SE, i.e. 921/2 CE.

The determination of a more precise authorship and date depends on whether folio x (T-S 13K2.6) belongs to this letter, as was suggested by Schechter (1901–1902: 41–42). As mentioned above, this small fragment includes an excipit, a date, and a signature; the name of the signature is 'Saadya son of Joseph', and the date is Thursday 19 Tammuz, 1233 SE, which corresponds to 18 July 922 CE. According to Schechter, Letter 3 was therefore authored by Saadya.

The contents of Letter 3, however, do not support this attribution. Letter 3 identifies so strongly with Babylonia, and draws so heavily on local Babylonian traditions, including testimonies from older members of the academies (see especially fol. 5v:2–14), that the authorship of Saadya is questionable: in 922, Saadya was an Egyptian immigrant who had only recently arrived in Baghdad. Furthermore, the mildness of the tone of this letter (in contrast for example to Letter 4, written in the summer of 922), casts doubt on a dating as late as July 922 CE, when the controversy had soured and the relationship between Babylonians and Palestinians had completely broken down.

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If the excipit, folio x, is to be related to Letter 3, as Schechter argued, this would only be through elimination. It cannot belong to Letter 4, which is explicitly Palestinian. As I have argued above, it is unlikely to belong to Letter 1 (as claimed by Mann 1934), because it uses a different era (the Seleucid era, as opposed to the era of Destruction in Letter 1); consequently, Letter 2, which is similar to Letter 1 and perhaps by the same author, can be excluded too. This fragment is torn higher up than the other fragments of the manuscript, and in a straighter line. This tear is not incompatible with any of the extant folios (as this folio could have been torn in several places), but equally cannot be related specifically to the tear of any other folio. The tear, therefore, cannot provide evidence of where the folio would have been positioned within the manuscript, or of which letter it might have belonged to.

I have placed folio x at the end of Letter 3 (folios 5–6), following Schechter but only very hesitantly. It is entirely possible that this excipit belongs to yet another letter in the manuscript, that is no longer extant. It is therefore safer to consider the authorship and date of Letter 3 as unknown.

Letter 3 is famed for its account of a meeting that allegedly took place, many years before the controversy, between Palestinians and Babylonians, at which the Babylonians learnt the secret of the calendar calculation (fol. 5r:21–5v:12). The story and its historical significance has been discussed above, near the beginning of Chapter 2. Also of interest is the mention, in the same passage, of different intercalation cycles that were in use in the period, although the letter emphasizes that there was no disagreement between Babylonians and Palestinians about which years to intercalate (fol. 5r:17–20).

To summarize the contents, the first folio that is extant begins by acknowledging that the sages of Palestine used to hold the monopoly on the decision to intercalate the year, but this was only because this decision depended on agricultural criteria that were specific to the land of Israel and could only be determined there (fol. 5r:1–18). Now that intercalation is regulated by a fixed cycle, there is no disagreement between Palestinians and Babylonians (and implicitly, no need for the latter to defer to the former—fol. 5r:18–20). The setting of the months, however, is another matter. The Babylonians used to defer to the Palestinians, but after their historic meeting (mentioned above), they learnt the secret of the calendar and acquired the authority to set the calendar themselves (fol. 5r:20–5v:6). Ever since then, until now, Palestinians and Babylonians have always agreed on the calendar, as the same calculation has been used (fol. 5v:6–15).

The Letter goes on to defend the Babylonians' calendar decision of 921 CE (fol. 5v:15–6r11) and their use of the Four Gates (fol. 6r:11–13). It refutes ben Meir's application of the rule of 641–642 in 921 CE, on the basis of the earlier

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version of the rule which our Letter suggests is more authentic (fol. 6r:13–6v:3).[21] However, it then refutes even this earlier version, on the basis of the Four Gates (fol. 6v:3–6v:12). The author claims to have checked and found that in past years, for example in 913/4 CE, the rule of 641–642 was never used by the Palestinians (fol. 6v:12–21).

Letter 4: ben Meir's 'Second Letter'

Bornstein (1904) called this letter 'Ben Meir's Second Letter'. It is most likely, indeed, to have been authored by the highest level of authority in Palestine, i.e. ben Meir, the rabbinic leader, and to be addressed to the Babylonian leadership. The identity of the author comes out most clearly from his reference to his disciples' announcement, on the Mount of Olives, of the dates of 921/2 CE (fol. 7v:12), as well as from parallels with ben Meir's First Letter.

The letter was written after Passover 922 CE, as it refers to its celebration as a past event (fol. 7r:2), but before the New Year, as the author warns his addressee not to repeat the error of Passover, and to observe the New Year on the right date (fol. 8r:9–10).

In the folios that survive, the author responds point by point to a letter that was sent to him by his addressee; each point is introduced with 'you mentioned', 'you said', or 'you wrote'. Some of the themes of ben Meir's 'First Letter' appear again in this letter, but as Bornstein already noted, at this advanced stage in the dispute the tone of the correspondence had considerably deteriorated. In several places in this letter, the author suggests somewhat perversely that the Babylonians have gone over to the Ananites, who should have been (and were once) their common enemy (fol. 7r:17–18, 8v:7); and he comes close to suggesting a permanent schism between Palestinians and Babylonians (fol. 8r:2–3, 8v:8; the meaning of these passages, however, needs a more nuanced evaluation; see discussion in my Conclusion). As in ben Meir's First Letter, the author still lays most of the blame on Saadya (fol. 7r:6–8, 8r:14–16, 8v:17–18), as if to give the Babylonians a way out of their entrenched position. Saadya is especially denigrated in folio 7r:6–8, as an Egyptian whose late father is accused of some form of apostasy; in the other passages, Saadya is called a 'Canaanite'.

The folio extant begins with a response to various complaints that the Babylonians have made of ben Meir, including that he caused Passover (in 922 CE) to be observed on different dates (the author retorts that only a minority fol-

21 This earlier version is also attested in later Palestinian calendar manuals (1PalMan and 3PalMan); see discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 72–75.

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lowed the Babylonians, whereas 'all Israel' were with him), that he has plunged the Babylonians into mourning, that he has put them to shame in the eyes of the nations and the heretics (perhaps a reference, again, to the Ananites), that he has spread confusion and created dispute. All these accusations are turned back against the Babylonians (folio 7r).

The author then rehearses the chain of events: how both sides initially exchanged polite letters, but then the conversation soured (fol. 7v:1–11). He defends the truth and authority of his calendar announcement, care of his disciples, on the Mount of Olives (fol. 7v:11–15). He states his determination, therefore, not to change his mind (fol. 7v:16–21). He then suggests that they part ways—a hint at a schism (fol. 8r:1–3)—and generally rebukes them (fol. 8r:3–16).

In response to a challenge of his addressees, he lists biblical and later precedents of martyrdom for the sake of Israel, culminating with his own persecution at the hands of the Ananites some years earlier (fol. 8r:16–8v:3). At the time he sought the help of the Babylonians, and cooperated with their own efforts against the Ananites (fol. 8v:3–7; cf. L1BM 10:5–12:5). He accuses the Babylonians of having gone over now to the other side, and hints again at schism (fol. 8v:7–12). He defends, again, his dates and calendar calculation (fol. 8v:12–21). The end of the letter is missing, but it is possible that like ben Meir's First Letter, the letter ended with a detailed exposition of the Palestinian calendar calculation.

Malter (1913: 504; also 1921: 413) wrote about this letter:

> From the content of this letter it is evident that things were running against him [ben Meir] and that he had suffered some defeat, though he was not yet ready to give in.

I see no evidence, in this letter, of any sentiment of being defeated. Quite on the contrary, the author of the letter ascribes this sentiment to his opponents (especially in the first folio: fol. 7r:2–11). This letter cannot be used in support of an argument that the Babylonians triumphed at the end of the controversy.

This letter, emanating from ben Meir, is of particular historical importance. Its contents have been discussed further in Chapter 2.

Text Edition and Translation: The Upper and Lower Fragments

In the Hebrew text edition, the upper and lower fragments are distinguished through a broken line that follows, as close as possible, the line of the tear.

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For technical reasons, this could not be replicated in the English translation; the lower fragment has therefore been set in dark blue, merely to distinguish it from the upper fragment.

Bibliography

T-S 13K2.1–6

T-S 13K2.1–2 and 4–6: Schechter (1901–1902) 41–43 and 53–59 (reprinted in Schechter 1903). Schechter designated fragments 1, 2, 4, and 5 as Texts IV, IVa, V, Va (respectively); fragment 6 is unnamed and transcribed on p. 41.
T-S 13K2.3: Schechter (1903) 19. He designated this fragment as Text IVb. For some reason, it was left out of the 1901 edition (see discussion above).
Bornstein (1904) 73–77 (T-S 13K2.1–2), 79–80 (T-S 13K2.3), and 90–93 (T-S 13K2.4–5), based on Schechter's editions. Note how Bornstein split the letters apart, as his interest was only in texts, not in manuscripts.

Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27–31

Guillaume (1915); joined and edited together with most of Schechter's fragments (T-S 13K2).
Bornstein (1922*b*) 259–261: fragment 29 only, based on Guillaume's edition.

T-S NS 309.68b

Unpublished. It is listed in Brody (1998*a*, no. 3698) as a text related to the calendar controversy of 921/2. Marina Rustow made the join, on 10 May 2012.

*Lévi 1900***b**

Two fragments edited by Israel Lévi (1900*b*), which may be considered lost. Re-edited by Bornstein (1904) 87–89.
The information Lévi gives about these fragments is minimal: he reports having found them at the great Exposition in Paris, in the hands of a merchant from Cairo; but he does not clarify whether he or anyone else purchased them, or what was their subsequent fate. Israel Lévi's collection was initially deposited in the Consistoire Israélite de Paris, and then transferred, in 1945, to the library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). I have searched the collections of the AIU, but to no avail.[22]

22 All Lévi says is: 'Nous l'avons trouvé à l'Exposition chez un marchand d'antiquités du Caire' (Lévi 1900*b*: 229). Lévi reports in another article published earlier in that year that in an apparently separate transaction, Baron Edmond of Rothschild acquired a bundle of

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The text of one of Lévi's fragments, however, was convincingly joined by Mann (1934: 273–277) to Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27 (for which he relied on Guillaume's edition), and then again (independently) by Sacha Stern, who further joined the other fragment of Lévi with T-S NS 98.18, and hence with the rest of the manuscript.

T-S NS 98.18

Unpublished. Sacha Stern discovered it and made the join on 14 July 2014.

T-S 10J32.1

Unpublished; mentioned by Gil (2004: 220, n. 142) but wrongly identified as a fragment from *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*. Marina Rustow and Sacha Stern discovered it and made the join on 5 February 2015.

Images of the joined and/or reconstructed folios were created by Jay Birbeck; see further below, and Plates 4–20.

Cairo Genizah fragments from unnamed merchants for the Consistoire Israélite de Paris (Lévi 1900c: 1); but these fragments are unlikely to have been part of that bundle. Elkan Adler was also actively purchasing Cairo Genizah fragments in Paris in this period, as evidenced by his publication, in an article joined to Lévi's under the same title ('Nouveaux fragments relatifs à ben Méïr'), of a recently purchased fragment which he edited in collaboration with the Paris-based scholar Broydé (Adler and Broydé 1990). Lévi's use of the first person plural ('Nous', in the passage above-quoted), in a piece immediately following that of Adler and Broydé and under the same title, could suggest that he is referring to all three authors, and thus, that he saw these fragments together with Adler; in such a case, Adler might well have purchased them, although I have not found them in Adler's collection (ENA), now in the JTS library (alternatively, the first person plural might just mean a 'royal we').

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Letter 1 (Pro-Babylonian)

A large part of the text of this letter comes from the fragments edited by Lévi in 1900*b*. The Lévi fragments are now lost, but on the basis of Lévi's edition, I was able to establish beyond any doubt that it belonged to the present manuscript. My methodology was as follows.

I first established that in his edition, Lévi did not preserve the lines of the original manuscript. This was evident for several reasons. Firstly, the lines of his edition were too neatly justified along the right and left margins; this was more likely the result of modern typesetting than a reflection of what was found in the manuscript. Secondly, at the bottom of each fragment in Lévi's edition, the text broke up in several places, in a very scattered and erratic way. This would only have been possible if the manuscript were mutilated with many different holes—whereas Lévi himself described it much more simply as 'tronqué' (truncated). Thirdly, the pattern of this mutilation, in his edition, did not match up recto and verso.

I decided, therefore, to realign the bottom of his fragments by placing the text on one side and the lacunas on the other. I obtained a diagonal pattern which matched up recto and verso, which seemed inherently more plausible. The match was reinforced by the correspondence, thus obtained, between a short lacuna followed by one letter at the end of line 9 (in my edition) in folio 2 recto—ל[...]—and a similar lacuna after one letter at the beginning of line 9 in folio 2 verso—[...]ש.

The truncated pattern at the bottom of the fragments, thus obtained, reminded me of the state of preservation of the Letters Miscellany. I tried, and succeeded very easily, in joining the two fragments of Lévi, thus realigned, with the lower fragments of LMisc for which the top part had not yet been found: T-S NS 98.18r and Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27r. The textual join was perfect and beyond any doubt. Further confirmation was obtained when we subsequently joined the end of the text of T-S 10J32.1 to the beginning of the first fragment of Lévi. Much later, I discovered that Mann (1934: 273–277) has already made the join of Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27r (though not with T-S NS 98.18r and T-S 10J32.1, which had not yet been discovered).

After realigning the bottom parts of Lévi's text edition, and after joining his text with T-S NS 98.18r and Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27r, it became evident that the lines in the top parts of his edition—which as noted above, were clearly justified by modern typesetting—were shorter than they would have been in the original; indeed, they were generally shorter than the lines in the other extant fragments. Moreover, as a consequence to this, the number of lines in Lévi's edition appeared excessive in comparison with the other folios of the manuscript.

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The only way of ascertaining this, and of establishing a more authentic alignment of Lévi's text, was by reconstructing a likely image of Lévi's original fragments on the basis of the other, extant fragments. To this end, I teamed up with Jay Birbeck, a graphic designer and UCL MA student in Digital Humanities, who created a purpose-made alphabetic font which he extracted from samples of characters in the extant fragments, and then laid out Lévi's text with this font whilst imitating, as closely as possible, the layout and spacing of the extant manuscript.[23] The result, a reconstruction of the entire folios which join together Lévi's text, thus re-designed and re-laid, with the extant fragments, can be found among the plates at the end of this volume. As predicted, in most cases the lines are longer than in Lévi's edition, and the total number of lines is smaller (the only exception is Lévi's first fragment, verso, where we ended up retaining Lévi's alignment). Although my edition of Lévi's text is necessarily reliant on his transcription, the alignment of the text has thus been corrected on the basis of our reconstructed folios. This alignment is obviously not definitive (some variations in the detail are possible), but it is at least a reasonable approximation of what the original would have been (see Plates 6–7).

In the case of LMisc folio 2, the lower fragment (T-S NS 98.18r) does not join right up to Lévi's text (his first fragment), as a section in the middle of the folio appears to have been torn off and lost completely. What is missing in this middle section, on the recto side, is a roster of years which continues in the lower fragment (T-S NS 98.18r) and on the next page (LMisc fol. 2 verso). The equivalent of eight years of the roster is missing in the middle section; assuming an average rate, within this roster, of two years per line, it can be estimated that the missing text in the recto is equivalent to about four lines (including line 13, of which a tiny amount of text is extant). The same gap can be assumed on the verso of the folio. As a result, the original pages of folio 2 would have counted 20 lines in total, the same number of lines as in folio 1 and folio 3 recto.

23 For a more detailed explanation, see Stern and Birbeck (2018). Jay Birbeck also created images of the other joins in LMisc and the rest of the corpus (see Plates).

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LMisc folio 1 recto
[T-S 10J32.1 recto]

ישראל · ועוד כתב כי על כל המעשה נאמ֗ לא תסיג גבול רעך [[ו.]] ולא התבונן
בתוך הפסוק שכת֗ בו אשר גבלו ראשונים · והגבולות האלה המתוחמים בארבעה
שערים רבותינו גבלום כאשר קיבלום מן הנביאים הראשונים כאשר ציוה יי֗[24] אותם
ראשון כל ראשונים · מי ששינה כל החוקים האלה גבול תֹּרִצָה וגבול רֹד לא
קרא אותו הטועה הזה מסיג גבול · וקרא את המועדים על גבולותיהם ולא
נטנו ולא אמרנו מסיג גבול הלא על כיוצא בזה נאמר ההופכים ללענה משפט
וצדקה לארץ [הניח][25] גבולות שהציב הקֹבֹה לתורתו אינן גבולות הטועה הזה
גבולות שעש[ה] אותם בן מאיר לנפשו שהוא גבולות הם · ועוד כתיב[26] למה נדחה
שלשה שנים בלא טעם ובלא עלילה כאילו אינו בישוב וכאילו לא שמע
מה שפירש ראש הגולה וראשי הישיבות יתמכם מעוזינו באגרותיהם כי הטעם
והעילה נכונים בשנה שנולד לאחר תֹּרִצָה ובשנה הבאה שנולד לאחר רֹד
ובשלישית שנולד לאחר שש שעות על כיוצא בזה נאמר ראות רבות ולא
תשמר פקח אזנים ולא יש֗[27] דומה הוא כרואה אור החמה וכיחש בו לא ראיתיך ·[28]
ועוד כתב כי מסרו לנו אבותינו אם אי איפשר מלדחות תשרי חזור
לניסן ותקן בו כמדומין שאין בו עיקר דעת בכותב זאת וכי מאחר שעל
תשרי הוא סומך וכבר הורה בפיו שאם הוצרך לדחות תשרי יקדים

24 Slanting line above both letters, written in one stroke with the second *yod*. This is a standard grapheme for the name of God (ditto in lines 10, 12 etc.).
25 Amos 5:7.
26 Probably an error for כתב.
27 Abbreviation of ישמע (Is. 42:20).
28 Job 8:18.
29 Deut. 19:14—meaning both that the Babylonians have removed a boundary, i.e. trespassed, by usurping from the Palestinians the right to calculate the calendar, and that they have removed the Palestinian boundary (or 'limit') of 641–642 parts.
30 God is referred to in this unusual way in order to suggest that the 'first' (Deut. 19:14) who established the limits of the calendar were not only the 'first' (early) prophets but actually God himself.
31 These limits in the Four Gates are specifically mentioned here because they were breached by the Palestinians in Tishri 921 and 922 CE (respectively), as mentioned again below.
32 A reference to the writer whom he is polemicizing against.
33 The syntax of this whole passage is obscure and difficult to make out; my interpretation assumes a paratactic construction with rhetorical questions, but it is only tentative.
34 A reference to the Babylonian postponement of the New Year in 921, 922, and 923 CE.

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LMisc folio 1 recto

… Israel. He also wrote that of this whole incident it is said: 'you shall not remove the boundary of your neighbour'.[29] But he did not reflect
on what is inside the verse, where it is written: '… which the first (generations) established'. For these boundaries, which are defined in the Four
Gates, our rabbis established them just as they were received from the first prophets, whom the Lord commanded,
First among all first.[30] Whoever changed all these rules, the limit of 695 and the limit of 204,[31] this (5) fool[32] did not call him 'remover of the boundary', and he announced the festivals according to those limits. Should we not
turn it round and say (of him) 'remover of the boundary'? Was it not said on this: 'you turn judgment into bitterness,
and justice you cast on the ground' (Amos 5:7)? The boundaries that the Holy Blessed Be He established for His Torah are not the boundaries of this fool,
these boundaries which ben Meir made for his own self—are these boundaries?[33] He also wrote: 'why should we postpone
three years for no reason or justification?',[34] as if he is not in civilized society, and as if he has not heard
what the Exilarch and the Heads of the Academies—may the Almighty support them—have explained in their letters, that the reason
and justification (for this) is clear in the year that is born after 695 (parts), and in the following year that is born after 204,
and in the third (year) that is born after six hours.[35] On this it is said: 'seeing many things but not
observing, opening the ears and not hearing' (Is. 42:20); he is like someone who sees the light of the sun and denies it, 'I have not seen you' (Job 8:18).
He also wrote that our fathers have transmitted to us: 'if it is impossible but to postpone Tishri, go back
to Nisan and correct (the dates) in it.' It seems to us that in writing this, he has no basic knowledge. For if he
relies on Tishri and has already ruled explicitly that if he needs to postpone Tishri, he will postpone

35 The *moladot* of the years above mentioned (in the previous note).

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וידחה ניסן בשבילו למה לו לחפש בניסן הנולד קודם חצות או לאחר חצות
על זה הדבר · ואמרנו כי מולד ניסן לא יועיל ולא יתיר · ועוד אי זה
טוב לעשות לסמוך על תשרי שהוא העיקר ולא לפנות אל ניסן ולא
לקבוע ניסן ביום מימים התבוננו בתשרי כי לא יתכן יחזור ויעקר

LMisc folio 1 verso
[T-S 10J32.1 verso]

מה שקבע כבר ויתקן את אשר עיוותו הלא טוב לראות את הנולד מלשנות
את המעשה וכן דרך כל החכמים יבינו לאחריתם · ועוד כתב דברי
שקר שהכחשתו בהם קרובה וכיזב על הראשונים מה שלא אמרו כי ראש
חדש מרחשון בבאו לשבת בשנה המעוברת תהיה חסירין והפסח באחד
בשבת גולה על עצמו שא[פי]לו להביט בתולדת לבנה הכתובין ומונחין אינו
יודיע[36] שהרי שנת תתכט חלה ראש השנה בה ומרחשון בשבת והיא
מעוברת והיה מרחשון וכסליו שלימים והפסח בשלישי[י ·] וכן שנת
תתלב חל תשרי בה ומרחשון בשבת ומעוברת היתה והיו מרחשון וכסליו
שלימים ופסח בשלישי ואם לחשב קודם לכן אנו מוצאים הרבה אלא שלא
להחחיק[37] את העיתים · ומי שבדא השקר הזה לא דיו שלא ירא את יי אלא
אף מבני אדם לא ירא שלא יחשבו וימצאו שינוי דבריו ויתגלה קלונו ולא
יעשה כן אלא עז מצח העז בפניו לעיני כל ישראל קהל יי ובעיני אלהינו ·
ושקרו השיני וכזבו קשה מן הראשון שבדא דבר שאפילו עמי הארץ אינן
אומרין אותן כי דרך עמי הארץ לומר אם בקשת לידע מתי יהיה הפסח

36 An unusual *plene* spelling of יודע (also in fols. 2v:6, 4r:7).

37 *Sic*, error for להרחיק.

38 This means that if Tishri must be postponed, the foregoing Nisan must automatically be postponed too. In actual fact, it is possible that this is the meaning of the tradition that was quoted; but our author, and probably also his opponent, seem to have interpreted it as meaning that the calendar dates must be recalculated on the basis of the *molad* of Nisan—which our author does not accept.

39 Instead of 'and not' (ולא), one would expect 'or'. The syntax of this text is again poor.

40 By recalculating the dates on the basis of Nisan, as explained above.

41 As was the case in 921/2 according to the Palestinians.

42 This apparently means the written records of past *moladot* and calendar dates, although his following argument ignores, misleadingly, the *moladot*.

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the foregoing Nisan for this purpose,[38] why does he need to seek in Nisan whether it was born before or after noon
for this purpose? For we say, the *molad* of Nisan is of no use and adds nothing. And further, what
is it better to do: to rely on Tishri, which is the starting point, and not[39] to turn to Nisan or
set Nisan on one day or the other? Focus on Tishri, for it does not make sense that he should go back and uproot

LMisc folio 1 verso

what he has already set, or that he should repair what he has perverted.[40] Behold, it is better to look ahead than to change
what has been done—and so is the way of the wise, who anticipate the future. He further wrote words of
falsehood that are easy to refute, and he misrepresented the ancients with what they did not say, namely that when the new
moon of Marḥeshwan occurs on Sabbath in an intercalated year, it(s months) are defective and Passover is on the first (day)
of the week.[41] He is giving away that he does not even know how to look at the births of the moon that are written and
laid out.[42] For behold, in the year 829 the New Year fell on Thursday and Marḥeshwan on Sabbath, and it
was intercalated, and Marḥeshwan and Kislew were full, and Passover on Tuesday. And similarly, in the year
832 Tishri fell on Thursday and Marḥeshwan on Sabbath, and it was intercalated, and Marḥeshwan and Kislew were
full, and Passover on Tuesday. And if we calculate before that, we find many (examples), but it is not (necessary)
go so far back in time. Whoever contrived this lie, not only did not fear the Lord but also
did not fear men that they would calculate and find the lie in his words, and his shame would be exposed. No one would
do this but someone brazen, brazen in the eyes of all Israel, the congregation of the Lord, and in the eyes of our God.
His second lie and deceit was worse than the first one, because he contrived something that even common people do not
say. For the common people are accustomed to say: 'if you want to know when Passover will be,

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מנה חמשה ימים מן הפסח שעבר בפשוטה ושנת עיבור כשנה שעברה
ובא האיש הזה ועשה בערמה כדי להסתיר את דבריו ולהחביאם והוסיף
על חמשה ימים שלעמי הארץ שבעה ימים ונעשו יְבּ · וכן אילו הוסיף
יְדּ או כְּאּ או כל שבועים לא היה נותר אלא חמשה ואפילו כעמי הארץ
בשנה המעוברת לא אמר שהן אומְ על רוב שנים כשנה שעברה וכן הוא
הדבר כי רוב השנים המעוברות כאשתקד והוא אמר על מיעוט והניח

LMisc folio 2 recto
[Lévi 1900*b* fgm. 1 recto + T-S NS 98.18 recto]

את הרוב ואם הוא כדבריו למה לישראל חכמים וראשים לחשב מולד
לבנה ולקבוע מרחשון וכסליו כפי המצאו על פי החוקות אשר קיבלו מן
הנביאים יניחו כל אלה ויוסיפו על כל שנה פשוטה חמשה ימים ועל כל
שנה מעוברת כדבריו וכן יהיו המועדים · ואף ביטל בדבריו מסורת שׁוֹחֵ
חְדּוֹ כֹּהֵז כיון שאמְ אין בין שנה לשנה כסדורה אלא חמשה ימים נמצאו
כל הפשוטות כסדרן ובמעוברת ששה נמצאו כל המעוברות חסירין
ובטלה תורת שלימים מכל השנים פשוטותיהן ומעוברותיהן וגם בטלה
תורת כסדרן מן המעוברות ותורת חסירין מן הפשוטות אוי לאומר שדברים
אלה מתוקנים כי ביקש להדיח את ישראל מדרכי אור לדרכי חשך ל[...]ל
דבר אשר כל ישראל יכזבוהו עליו ואפילו לשת[ ]
לחפש אולי יש בהם תמורת דבריו [ ]
חוזרין למפרע כֹּהֵ שנים א[ ]

43 This rule of thumb, which is followed by 'common people', is to assume a difference of five days between the last Passover and the current Passover (in terms of the day of the week when it falls) in a plain year, and in an intercalated year, to assume that the last and current Passover are on the same day of the week.

44 In an attempt to conceal the fact that he was following the common people's rule of the five-day difference.

45 After casting out sevens, the remainder would have been the same figure of five as that of the common people. Thus, the addition of seven to five (= 12) did not achieve anything.

46 The Palestinians set Passover of 922 CE on Sunday, whereas in the previous year it had been on Tuesday, thus a five-day difference, in spite of the fact that this year was intercalated. They should have followed the majority of cases, and set Passover 922 CE on Tuesday as in the previous year; but they ignored this majority as if it only applied in a minority of cases.

47 The traditional Palestinian method of computation, which is explained in detail in ben Meir's First Letter. For an explanation, see Chapter 5, pp. 64–65.

48 This must be a mistake for 'plain' (i.e. non-intercalated).

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count five days from the last Passover in a plain year, and in an intercalated year, make it like last year.'[43]
But this man came along and did something clever to hide his words and conceal them, and he added
to the five days of the common people another seven days, and they became 12.[44] Indeed, even if he had added
14 or 21 or any multiple of seven, the remainder would only have been five.[45] But he did not even
say like the common people regarding intercalated years, for they say that the majority of these years are 'like last year', and so it is,
that the majority of intercalated years are like the previous year; whereas he said it as a minority, and he ignored

LMisc folio 2 recto

the majority.[46] If it is as he said, why should Israel, the sages and the leaders calculate the conjunction
of the moon and set Marḥeshwan and Kislew according to what is found on the basis of the rules which they received from
the Prophets? Let them abandon all that, and add to every plain year five days and to every
intercalated year as he says, and so will be the (dates of the) festivals! And he has even abolished, in what he said, the tradition of ShWḤ-
ḤDW-KHZ,[47] because he said that between one year and the next, in an orderly[48] year, there are only five days—which means that
all plains years must be orderly—and in an intercalated year six (days)—which means that all intercalated years must be defective—
and that the concept of full (years) must be abolished from all years, plain and intercalated; and also the concept of
orderly years must be abolished from the intercalated, and the concept of defective from the plain! Woe to whoever says that these words
are correct. For he has sought to lead Israel astray from the ways of light to the ways of darkness,[49] to …
something which all Israel will deny, and even to …
to search maybe there is in them something in exchange for his words …
(We) go back 25 years …

49 Probably a play on the name ben Meir.

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שנת תתכז[50] [ ]
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
בשיני · ושנת תתלו בשבת · ושנת תתלז ב[ ]
תתלח בשלישי · וכדבריו בד · ושנת תתלט באחד בשבת וכדבריו בשבת
ושנת תתמ באחד[51] בשבת וכדבריו בששי · ושנת תתמא בחמישי וכדבריו
בד · ושנת תתמב באחד בשבת וכד[ב]ריו בשיני · ושנת תתמג[52]

LMisc folio 2 verso
[Lévi 1900*b* fgm. 1 verso + T-S NS 98.18 verso]

בשבת וכדבריו בששי · ושנת תתמד בחמישי וכדבריו ברביעי · ושנת
תתמה בחמישי וכדבריו בשלישי · ושנת תתמו באחד בש[53] וכדבריו
בשיני ושנת תתנ בשבת· ושנת תתנא בחמישי · ושנת תתנב בשלישי
וכדבריו בשיני · הרי כאן כה שנים אין בהם כדבריו אלא שבע
שנים ויח[54] הנותרות שלא כדבריו ראוי היה לו להביט בכל אלה

50 Bornstein suggests a correction of this to תתכח (see note 55). The lines that follow would have included the first nine years of the 25-year period. On the extent of the lacuna, see above.

51 This word is an error; it should just be בשבת.

52 In the bottom margin, the following words are written upside down, in another hand: יאסה (meaning unclear) and الحمد لله وحده ('Praise be to God alone'). Nadia Vidro suggests that these may be secondary pen trials; they are certainly irrelevant to our main text.

53 Lévi marks this word with a prime, rather than a dot above the *shin*. I have substituted a dot on the basis that this manuscript, as nearly all the manuscripts in our corpus, does not generally use primes.

54 Lévi reads ויה, probably his error (as numbers are generally accurate in this manuscript); corrected by Bornstein.

55 The year 827 of the era of Destruction = 895/6 CE, some 25 years before the outbreak of the calendar dispute. According to Bornstein's conjecture, the text should read 'year 828', thus making the period exactly 25 years. Either way, the text assumes that year 1 of the era was 69/70 CE, when indeed, historically, the Temple was destroyed. In the passage that is missing, the author goes through the weekdays of 1 Nisan or Passover in the first nine years of his 25-year period (including the year 827, of which the number is extant on this line).

56 i.e. the weekday of Nisan or Passover was on Monday.

57 i.e. both he and his opponent agree in this year that Passover was on Sabbath. 836 era of Destruction = 904/5 CE.

58 As Bornstein explains, our author works out the weekday of Passover 'according to him' (i.e. his opponent) on the basis of his opponent's principle that plain years are always

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The year 827 ...[55]
(...)
(...)
(...)
on Monday.[56] The year 836 (was) on Sabbath.[57] The year 837 (was) on ...
838 on Tuesday, but according to him on Wednesday.[58] The year 839 on Sunday, but according to him on Sabbath.
The year 840 on Sunday,[59] but according to him on Friday. The year 841 on Thursday, but according to him
on Wednesday. The year 842 on Sunday, but according to him on Monday. The year 843

LMisc folio 2 verso

on Sabbath, but according to him on Friday. The year 844 (was) on Thursday, but according to him on Wednesday. The year
845 on Thursday, but according to him on Tuesday. The year 846 on Sunday, but according to him
on Monday.[60] The year 850 on Sabbath. The year 851 on Thursday. The year 852 on Tuesday,[61]
but according to him on Monday. Behold, here are 25 years, of which none agree with him except for seven
years, but the remaining 18 do not agree with him. He should have looked at all these,

orderly, and intercalated years always defective. Accordingly, for each of the 25 years our author takes the weekday of the New Year in his own calendar, and adds 2 days in plain years and 3 days in intercalated years, in order to obtain his opponent's Passover weekday. This, however, is a misapplication of his opponent's scheme, because his New Year weekdays will also necessarily differ from the author's; the author cannot use, therefore, his own New Year weekdays to calculate his opponent's Passover weekdays. Bornstein points out that it would have been much simpler for the author to refute his opponent's alleged scheme on the basis that if full years are completely suppressed from the calendar, the average year length will be too short in relation to the moon, and after even a short period of time, the calendar will unavoidably fall behind the lunar phases (Bornstein 1904: 87, n. 3).

59 Should be: 'Sabbath'.

60 After this, the text erroneously skips three years, no doubt because of a homoioteleuton: according to the calculation outlined in note 58, in the year 849 the day of Passover 'according to him' was also Monday.

61 This is Passover 921 CE, presumably the last Passover before this letter was written.

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אבל ולא יודיע[62] עול בושת · על כן הכותב הבברים האלה
מה נעידהו ומה נדמה לו ואולת וכסילות תלויה לו בין עיניו ·
ולא תורה ולא חכמה ולא יראת י֯[63] ולא בושת פנים ואפילו דרך
ארץ אין בו ואי אפשר לומר שהיתה כואנתו[64] להעמיד את האמת שהרי
ש[קריו][65] גלוים ולא לקיים דברי חכמים כי רחוק רחוק הוא מהם
[ ] לא לפי תומו עשה כחסיד שוטה כי חסיד שוטה
[ ]ל אינו מתכוין במעשיו אלא לשם
[ ]מר אסור ליגע בה ומניחה
[ ] שלדֹ
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]
הלא בפרישת האחים בקרובים ככתֹ האומר לאביו ולאמו לא ראיתיו[66] וגֹ[67]
וכן משבח את אסא ואומֹ וגם את מעכה אמו · ושנו רבותינו
איש אמו ואביו תיראו יכול אם אמר לו אביו עבור על אחת מכל

LMisc folio 3 recto
[Lévi 1900*b* fgm. 2 recto + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27 recto]

מצות האמורות בתורה ישמע להם תֹל לומֹ ואת שבתותי תשמורו כולכם חיבין
בכבודי · ובכל מקום שיש חילול השם אין חולקין כבוד לרב שנֹ אין חכמה

62 The same unusual *plene* spelling of יודע as above (fol. 1v:6). In this case, it is arguably incorrect, as it could be read mistakenly as a *hiphʿil* (whereas, as a quotation of Zephaniah 3:5, it should clearly be *qal*).

63 Lévi places a bar above the whole word (and so throughout his edition). Presumably, it is the same grapheme as in the rest of the manuscript (e.g. fol. 1r:3).

64 Another unusual *plene* spelling.

65 My conjecture.

66 Over each of the last five words there are two horizontal dots, to indicate that this a biblical quotation (Deut. 33:9). I have not marked the dots in the edition, to avoid their being mistaken for vocalization. Same in fol. 5r:11.

67 Slanting line above both letters, in one stroke with the left leg of the *gimel*. This is a standard grapheme for the abbreviation of וגומר ('etc.'), similar to the grapheme used for the name of God.

68 The word בברים is incomprehensible, and may be onomatopoeic; one gets the general sense.

69 A loose paraphrase of Lam. 2:13.

70 Cf. Prov. 14:8.

71 דרך ארץ, lit. 'way of the land'.

72 A reference to the Talmudic passage on a foolish man of piety who lets a woman drown because of his concern for the prohibition on touching her (*bSotah* 21b; see Bornstein).

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but 'and the wicked knows no shame' (Zephaniah 3:5). Therefore, he who writes these (...?)[68]—
how shall we warn him, and what shall we liken to him?[69] Folly and stupidity[70] are hanging between his eyes,
but no Torah, wisdom, fear of the Lord, or humility; and even civility[71]
is not in him. And it is impossible to say that his intention was to establish the truth, because
his l[ies] are evident, (nor was it) to uphold the words of the Sages, for he is far, far from them.
... he did not act in innocence as a foolish man of piety, because the foolish man of piety
... ... does not act deliberately, but rather for the sake
... ... [sa]ys it is forbidden to touch her, and he leaves her[72]
... ... that for
(...)
(...)
(...)
is it not through the separation of brothers? As it is written: 'he who says of his father or mother: I did not see him, etc.'[73]
And similarly (Scripture) praises Asa and says: 'and also Maacah his mother ...'[74] And our rabbis have taught:
'"A man shall fear his mother and father" (Lev. 19:3)—could it be that if his father told him to transgress one of all

LMisc folio 3 recto

the commandments that are said in the Torah, he should listen to him? The verse says: "and you shall observe my Sabbaths" (ibid.)—you are all obligated
to respect me'.[75] 'And wherever there is desecration of the Name,[76] respect need not be given to a rabbi, as it is said: "There is no wisdom

73 '... and his brothers he did not acknowledge, and his sons he did not know' (Deut. 33:9). The author is arguing throughout this passage that the respect normally due to one's parents, brothers, king, etc. is overridden by the imperative to uphold the Law; similarly, in the case at hand, the respect due to the Palestinian rabbinic leader must be overridden.

74 '... he removed from being queen' (1 Kings 15:13).

75 *Sifra, Qedoshim parashah* 1.

76 i.e. whenever a desecration of God must be averted.

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ואין תבונה וג ואפילו למלך שנ וגם אלנתן וגמריהו הפגיעו במלך ולפרוש
גם מארץ מכורתם כאשר כת כי עזבו הלוים את מגרשיהם · וכן דויד ואומ כי
עליך נשאתי חרפה וג מזור הייתי לאחי וג ולא עוד אלא כי הסכיל[77] הזה אשר
חיבר את האיגרות האלה נשא ידו בחכמים וידבר דברי נבלה שכמותו ראוי
להם וכיוצא בו אומרן וכאשר אמר הכת כי נבל נבלה ידבר · ולימדונו רבותינו
כל הפוסל פסול ואמ שמואל במומו הוא פוסל · אמר כי כתבו אליו רבותינו כל
אשפה שלהם על כן אם על אשפה שיש בה חצים אמַר וַדאי כן הוא הדבר כי
דברי רבותינו כחיצים שנונים כאשר שבחן הַכָּתָ בפרשת רחש לבי דבר [שגב][78]
ואמריהם חצים ברורים כאשר נאמ ו[ישׂ]ימני כחץ ברור[79]· ואם על אשפר[80]
מנובלת אמר מומו הזכיר ועליו נהפכים הדברים · ויהי אחרי כל רעתו[81] אוי לו נאם
יי אלהים[82] שהמחזיק[83] עוברי עברה קשה עונשו יתר מהן כי המדינים
העוזרים נאמ בהם צרור את המדינים והמואבים הנעזרים נאמ בהן אל תצר
את מואב · וכן הוא אומ באבימלך בן ירובעל ועל בעלי שכם אשר חזקו את
ידיו · ואומ יען הכאות לב צדיק שקר · ושנינו עוד כל המחטיא את הרבים אין
מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה על כן לא אשאל מלפני הקבה לשעבר שלא תהי אתה

77 So in Lévi, but maybe an error (his or the scribe's) for either הסכל or הכסיל (both meaning: 'the fool').

78 So Guillaume, based on Ps. 45:2. There are faint traces of the bottom of these letters.

79 Is. 49:2; the standard Masoretic text reads לחץ.

80 An error for אשפה.

81 Rather than Guillaume's reading דעתו; similarly, on the next line he reads עובדי, but it should be עוברי (alternatively, these might be typographic errors in Guillaume's edition—which Mann uncritically replicated). In this manuscript the letters *dalet* and *resh* are hardly distinguished.

82 Cf. Ez. 16:23; Guillaume wrongly reads (near the end of the previous line) אז לו. See Bornstein (1922*b*: 243, n. 6) with some remarkably close conjectures.

83 The Hebrew is awkward; Mann conjectures that the word בידי is missing here. The descender of the *qof* of שהמחזיק appears to have left a trace in the lower fragment, which is rather high up in the line; if this word was positioned at that point, there would be space after the word for Mann's conjecture (which Lévi could have omitted accidentally from his edition). In our reconstructed image, Jay Birbeck and I have aligned the *qof* with this trace in the lower fragment, and left a blank space thereafter, in which a word such as בידי could well have fitted.

84 Prov. 21:30: 'There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord'—i.e. the wisdom of a rabbi does not override the honour of God. This ends a quotation (in slight disorder) of *bSanhedrin* 82a (and parallels). What follows appears to be the author's own addition to the Talmudic passage.

85 Jer. 36:25 (with omission of one name). The author is assuming that this entreaty was disrespectful to the king, but justified as a way of preventing him from burning Jeremiah's prophecy scroll.

86 2 Chron. 11:14. They left they land and fled to Jerusalem so as to avoid Jeroboam's idolatrous rule.

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nor understanding etc."',[84] nor even to a king, as it is said: 'And also Elnathan and Gemariahu had entreated the king';[85] and (it is appropriate) to depart
even from land in one's ownership, as it is written: 'For the Levites abandoned their open land'.[86] And so David, as he says: 'Because
for your sake I have carried embarrassment etc. I have become a stranger unto my brothers etc.' (Ps. 69:8–9). And not only that, but this fool who
composed these letters has raised his hand against the Sages and spoken words of villainy, (words) which suit
people like him and are said by those of his like, as Scripture says: 'For the villain speaks villainy' (Is. 32:6), and our rabbis taught us:
'Whoever discredits (another) is discredited (himself) … and Samuel said: with his own defect he discredits (the other)' (*bQiddushin* 70a). He said that our rabbis wrote to him 'all their
rubbish'; well, if he meant (their) quiver[87] with arrows in it, for sure this was true, for
the words of our rabbis are sharpened arrows, as Scripture praises them in the psalm 'My heart is full of something good',[88]
and their sayings are clean arrows, and it says: 'and he has made me like a clean arrow' (Is. 49:2). But if he meant
a filthy rubbish bin, he was referring to his own defect, and his words should be turned round against him. 'And it came to pass, after all his wickedness—woe unto him, said
the Lord God',[89] for whoever lends support to transgressors, his punishment is greater than theirs, for it is said of
the Midianites who helped (Moab against Israel): 'Harass the Midianites' (Num. 25:17), and of the Moabites who were helped it is said: 'Do not harass
Moab' (Deut. 2:9). And so it says of Abimelech son of Jerubbaal and the people of Shechem who strengthened
his hands.[90] And it says: 'Because you have cowed the heart of a righteous one with a lie' (Ez. 13:22). And we have further learnt: 'whoever causes the multitude to sin is not
enabled to do repentance' (*Avot* 5:18). Therefore, I shall not petition the Holy Blessed Be He on that which is past, (i.e.) that you be not—

87 The Hebrew word for rubbish and quiver is the same; lit. 'bin'.
88 This is the incipit of Ps. 45, which goes on to say: 'Your arrows are sharpened' (verse 6).
89 A paraphrase of Ez. 16:23.
90 Judges 9.

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חכמי אשר כתבת זאת אבל אומרה משמועה רעה לא ייִרא · נכון סמוך לבי שלא
היתה ידך באחת מכל אלה · אבל שאול אשאלך להוכיח את התלמיד אשר כתב
הכתב הלז אם ידעתיהו[91] ולפרש לו טעותו ולצות עליו לשוב אל דרך האמת

LMisc folio 3 verso
[Lévi 1900*b* fgm. 2 verso + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.27 verso]

ואף אם יהי הראש אל יבוש מלחזור בו כי כן דרשו רבותינו במשה רבינו הודה
[...][92] ולא בוש לומר לא שמעתי · ואף דויד מלכינו הודה בפני הכהנים
והלוים וכל ישראל שטעה בהעלותו את הארון בעגלה ככתוּ כי למבראשונה
לא אֹ פֹ יי[93] וכמה חכמים ואדירים חזרו והודו לאמת כאשר עשה רב נחמן
שהעמיד תרגמן ואמר דברים שאמרתי לפניכם טעות הן בידי · ואם לא שב
הוא ישובו מסיעיו ואם עשו את הדבר הראשון בשגגה אל יעשו את השיני
בזדון כי כל ישראל אשר במזרח ובמערב הסכמה אחת על זאת חוץ מן מעט
המקומות אשר סביבותיכם ואתה חכמי ונבוני תצוה לכתוב להודיעני כי אתה
עומד על עיקרך[94] הטוב ולא נשתנה כתמך וריחך לא נמר וטעמך לא הובס
ובזאת תישב דעתי ודעת כל [ה]חכמים[95] רבותינו ותוסיף שם טוב על שמך וזכור[96]

91 As noted by Guillaume, probably an error for ידעתהו.

92 The lacuna is presumably due to a smudge, as it appears from Lévi's edition not to be mirrored on the recto side (such smudges can be found elsewhere in the manuscript, e.g. fol. 2r:18, at the word בשלישי, and 2r:20, near the end of the line). The missing text might be משה; Mann (1934: 275) suggests מיד.

93 Abbreviation of 1 Chron. 15:13: לא אתם פרץ יי.

94 Omitted by Guillaume, and hence by Mann.

95 Lévi suggests, by inserting two well-spaced out dots, that more than one letter is missing or illegible in the space where I have conjectured the letter *heh*. Our reconstruction of the fragment indicates, however, that there is no space for more than one letter.

96 Mann (1934) misplaced this word at the beginning of the next line (and so the word ואתה, one line below) on the basis of Lévi's arbitrary alignment of the text, which he seems to have taken as the true alignment of the manuscript. This would have implied a complicated, meandering tear between the two fragments, with the first words of these two lines being torn off and belonging to the upper fragment (which is inherently unlikely). Mann (1934: 275, n. 128) accuses Guillaume of not noticing the tear, in the Bodleian fragment, at the beginning of these lines. But in actual fact, there is no tear in the Bodleian fragment; clearly, Mann made an assumption without consulting the manuscript.

97 I.e. there is no point in praying to God for what has already happened (see *mBerakhot* 9:3), asking that his addressee should not be the one who wrote in defense of ben Meir.

98 Ps. 112:7, where the text reads 'his heart'. The author is adapting the verse from third to first person; Mann suggests that the same should apply to the beginning of the verse, and therefore proposes the textual correction אירא, 'I shall (not) fear'.

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my sage—the one who wrote this,[97] but let me say: 'from a bad rumour he shall not fear, steadfast … secure is my heart'[98] that you
were not involved in any of these things. But I emphatically ask you to rebuke the disciple who wrote
that text—if you[99] know him—and to explain to him his error, and to command him to return to the way of truth.

LMisc folio 3 verso

And even if he is the Head, he should not be embarrassed to recant; for so our rabbis interpreted regarding Moses our rabbi: 'he confessed
and was not embarrassed to say "I have not heard this"'.[100] And even David our king confessed before the priests
and the Levites and all of Israel that he had erred when he brought up the ark in a wagon, as it is written: 'For because you (bore it) not at first,
the Lord has made a breach' (1Chron. 15:13). And many sages and awesome men recanted and confessed the truth, as did Rav Naḥman
when he set up an interpreter[101] and said: 'the words that I said before you were my mistake' (*bEruvin* 104a). And if he does not repent,
let his assistants repent, and if they did the first deed by mistake, let them not do the second one
deliberately.[102] For all Israel in the east and in the west are in single agreement on this, except for a few
places that are around you. And you, my sage and my scholar, (please) order to write and inform me that you
are standing firm on your good principle, and that your colour has not changed, your scent has not altered, you savour has not been trampled,
and through this you will set my mind (at rest) and the mind of all (the) sages our rabbis, and you will add a good name to your reputation. And remember

99 So according to Guillaume's conjecture; the text reads 'I'.

100 *bZevaḥim* 101a and parallels.

101 The function of this interpreter is to help the teacher, such as Rav Naḥman, deliver his lecture.

102 This could be interpreted as meaning: 'if Passover has been observed on the wrong date by mistake, let not the New Year be observed on the wrong date deliberately'. On this interpretation, the letter was written between Passover and New Year in 922 CE. However, other interpretations are also possible.

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את יי אדונינו כי מאתך היא תהילתו ולוּל[א][103] שמו אשר נקרא עלינו מה אני ואתה
וכל עדתינו ואל תגור מפני בני אדם החציר יבש כאשר הוכיח יי אלוהינו
לאמר ותשכח את יי עושך · ראה נא בעני הדור והשׁ[ב רבים-מעו][104]ך וקורא
לך גודר פרץ משובב נתיבות לשבת כאשר נאמ באהרן ורבים השיב מעון
ושמא בשוב התלמיד הזה ישוב גם הראש או[105] שמא הראש תולה את הקולר
בצואר התלמיד הזה המסייע · תסובבם ותבוננם כי באהבה יתירה הוכחתים
כתוכחת בן נורי לר עקיבה זכר כולם לברכה והוסיף לו אהבה ואל תחראש/ריש[106]
ואל תשקוט עד הסירך את השמועה הזאת מעליך ומעל תלמידיך ותכתוב
אלי בפירוש כל זאת עם כל דבריך וחפציך כי ששון לבי המה ושלום

Some Arabic writing at the bottom of the page (perhaps a name?).

103 My conjecture. The bottom of the first four letters is partially visible in the lower fragment.

104 My conjecture; there are traces of the bottom of some of the letters.

105 Perhaps a mistake for אי.

106 תחריש: better than Guillaume's reading תחרש.

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the Lord our Master, for His praise is from you, and were it not for His name that is called upon us, what would I and you and
all our community be. And do not be frightened by men who are withered grass,[107] as the Lord our God rebuked
saying: 'And have you forgotten the Lord who made you?'.[108] Please consider the poverty of our generation, and return [many from sin], 'and you shall be called
repairer of the breach, restorer of paths to dwell in' (Is. 58:12), as it is said of Aharon: 'and he returned many from sin' (Mal. 2:6).
15 And perhaps when this disciple repents, the Head will also repent, if perhaps the Head is laying the blame (lit. collar)
on the neck of this disciple who is assisting him. Make them turn round, and make them understand that I have rebuked them with excessive love
like the rebuke of the son of Nuri to Rabbi Aqiva, may the memory of them all be for a blessing, (a rebuke which led) his love for him to increase.[109] And 'do not be silent
and do not be quiet' (Ps. 83:2), until you have eradicated this rumour from you and from your disciples. And write down
all this to me explicitly,[110] together with all the (other) words and matters of yours, 'because they are the joy of my heart' (Ps. 119:111)—and peace.[111]

107 A reference to Is. 40:6–8 and 51:12.

108 The next verse, Is. 51:13.

109 *Sifra Qedoshim, pereq* 4:9; *bArakhin* 16b.

110 This demand to report back 'explicitly' is perhaps the best indication, in this letter, that its author is in a strong position of authority, at least in relation to the addressee.

111 According to Mann, this is not the end of the letter, but rather the beginning of the excipit. However, the shortage of lines on this page (according to our alignment of the text, 19 lines, as opposed to 20–22 lines elsewhere in the manuscript) suggests that this might be in fact the end of the letter.

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Letter 2 (Pro-Babylonian)

As explained in the notes below, the scribe copied a whole section of text in the wrong place, because one folio in the master copy was out of order. The misplaced text runs from folio 4r:14 to 4v:19. The scribe sensed there was something wrong, and noted this at the beginning and end of the passage in marginal notes. Although this misplaced text clearly belongs somewhere before folio 4, it is not continuous with it. I have therefore left the misplaced text in its current position (in the translation, in curly brackets).

LMisc folio 4 recto
[T-S 13K2 fol. 3 recto + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.29 recto]

שפסק משם הוא מתחיל ומאי זה מקום פסק מחצי יום שלישי יפקחו
עיניהם החברים ויראו התבונות העצומות האלה ואל יאמר כי ארבעה
שערים אין בכלל אלא מעוט ימים ושעות שלד ימים בלבד כי האומר כן
בלא דעת ובלא תבונה אמרה שאין העולם עומד אלא עליהם ואין תקנת
המועדות תלויה אלא בהם · והטעם השלישי שאמר בו אַמַרתּ
ביומו בִּמַרתּ למחר אין לו עיקר מדברי חכמים ואף מי שבדאו מתחילה
וכתבו לא היה יודיע[112] בסוד העיבור בין ימינו לשמאלו כי אמר נולד ניסן
בְּאַגּהּ ותשרי בְּגַהּז עד שש שעות אין דוחין אותו אחר שש שעות
דוחין אתו ולא השיב אל לבו כי בהיולד ניסן בְּאַגּהּ קודם שש שעות
יהיה כנגדן תשרי[113] בְּגַהּז לאחר שש שעות מפני שיש ביניהם שני ימים

112 For יודע (see fol. 1v:6).

113 Not ותשרי (as per Guillaume).

114 As the continuation of the letter indicates, the author is refuting the 'second argument' of the Palestinians, that the Four Gates are inadequate because they only account for a limited number of days of the week. He is arguing here is that in the Four Gates, wherever one period ends the next period begins—so that the full range of days and hours of the week are covered. The example he is referring to is the limit of Tuesday noon (Bornstein's difficulty with this example appears to me unwarranted—1904: 79 n. 1). This line is the end of the refutation of the 'second argument'; the beginning of the refutation appears in the misplaced text (below) which belongs before the beginning of this fragment.

115 i.e. their common adversary.

116 Cf. L1Bab verso l. 30. According to Bornstein (1904: 78), the author is projecting his own ignorance unto his opponent; but see above, n. 8.

117 This rule appears to complement the rule attributed to the 'early' Palestinian sages in Letter 3, fol. 6r:17–20, according to which the limit of 641 only applies to a *molad* of Tishri on Monday; here we are told that on the other weekdays, the limit of noon

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LMisc folio 4 recto

... from where it stops, it starts.[114] And from which place does it stop? From Tuesday noon. Open
your eyes, colleagues, and see these tremendous contrivements. And let him[115] not say that the Four
Gates only include a minority of days and hours, only four (week)days—because whoever says this,
says it without knowledge and understanding. For the world rests on these (Gates) alone, and the correct dating of
the festivals depends only on them. And his third argument, in which he said '641
on its day, 642 the next day', has no root in the words of the Sages, and even the one who originally contrived this (argument)
and wrote it did not know his right hand from his left regarding the secret of the calendar,[116] because he said that if Nisan is born
on Sunday, Tuesday, or Thursday and Tishri on Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath until six hours, it is not postponed, (and if it is born) after six hours,
it is postponed[117]—and he did not notice that when Nisan is born on Sunday, Tuesday, or Thursday before six hours,
the corresponding Tishri on Tuesday, Thursday or Sabbath will be after six hours, because there are between them two (week)days,

(which the Babylonians also follow) applies. The intention of this rule is clearly to apply the limit of noon only to Tishri. But the author of the letter, perhaps deliberately and perversely, interprets this rule as applying the limit of noon to both Nisan and Tishri, which is inherently impossible, and which he goes on to refute with ease.

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אַרְבַּע שעות תְּלָתָא חלק · לפיכך בהולד ניסן בארבע שעות ביום יולד
תשרי בשמונה שעות תְּלָתָא חלק ואם דחינו ניסן מפני תשרי בטלו דבריו
שאמ בניסן קודם חצות אין דוחין אותו · ואם לא דחינו תשרי מפני ניסן
בטלו דבריו שאמ בתשרי לאחר חצות דוחין אותו · ואם[118] יהי שעה
שלימה יתר רְבִיעָא חלקים וכן תְּמָנְיָא יהי שעה שלמה קְנָא חַד כי כולם
בתוספת אַמְרַת והמשכילים יבינו · והשני שאמ בו שחשבון
ד שערים אינו מחזיר אלא על ד ימים בלבד ומעוט שעות וחלקין
הוכיח דברו עליו כאילו לא עבר על פתחה שלאומנות הזו כי חשבון ד
שערים כולל את כל הימים ויש מהן ימים שהוא מזכירן שתי פעמים
או שלשה אבל מי חכם ויבן אלה · והרי אני מפרש זאת בדרך קצרה
[ ] עיבור ונולד קודם תְּצַאַ משעה

LMisc folio 4 verso
[T-S 13K2 fol. 3 verso + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.29 verso]

תשיעית ביום ששי חסירין · ואם נולד אחרי כן שלימים לפי שכשאתה
מוסיף ה ימים כְּאַ שעות תְּמָנְיָא חלקים יגיע לסוף ו מיום ה הא למדתה

118 A circular cue in the text refers to the following marginal note in Judeo-Arabic: תם פי תלד אלדף ('this is the end of the page')—which means that in the scribe's master copy, this was the end of the page. The scribe noted this because he sensed a discontinuity in the text that followed. In actual fact, the text that follows—which was on a new folio in the master copy—is out of place and belongs to somewhere before folio 4. What clearly happened is that the folios in the master copy were in disorder, but the scribe did not want (or was not able) to correct this.

119 This example is not very meaningful. The relevant example should have been 'six hours' (i.e. noon).

120 Because the following Tishri is due to occur after noon, even though Nisan itself is before noon.

121 In order not to breach said rule, that Nisan before noon is not postponed.

122 Here begins the misplaced text. In this earlier part of the letter, the author is explaining that the Palestinians' addition of 641 parts to the limits of the Four Gates changes the limit of 695 parts to one full hour and 256 parts (because 695 + 641 = 1080 + 256); likewise, it changes the limit of 589 parts to a full hour and 150 parts, etc. This is presumably the end of the refutation of the first argument. The exact contents of this first argument can only be conjectured. It may simply have been that the Babylonians ignored the rule of 641–642 parts; to which the refutation was that if this rule were accepted, all the limits of the Four Gates—hallowed by ancient tradition—would need to be redefined. According to this, however, the first argument would duplicate the third, and would therefore appear redundant. It is also questionable whether these lines imply that ben Meir had actually already adapted the Four Gates through the addition of 641 parts to all their limits, or whether the author of our letter is only warning that this might become a possibility.

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four hours, (and) 438 parts, so that when Nisan is born at four hours of the day,[119] Tishri
will be born at eight hours 438 parts; and if we postpone Nisan because of Tishri,[120] this contradicts his rule
that Nisan before noon is not postponed; and if we do not postpone Tishri because of Nisan,[121]
this contradicts his rule that Tishri after noon is postponed. And if {will[122] be a full
hour plus 256 parts, and so 589 will be a full hour (and) 150 parts, and so all of them
by adding 641. And the intelligent will understand (Dan. 12:10). As to the second (argument), in which he said that the calculation
of the 4 Gates only covers 4 (week)days alone and a minority of hours and parts,
his discourse demonstrates that he has not gone past, as it were, the entrance of this art.[123] For the calculation of the 4
Gates includes all the (week)days, and among them some (week)days are mentioned two or three
times—but whoever is wise, let him understand these (Hosea 14:10). And behold, I shall explain this briefly.[124]
['If any Tishri in whose year there is an inter]calation[125] is born before 491 (parts) of the

LMisc folio 4 verso

ninth hour of Friday day, (the months are) defective. And if it is born after that, they are full'. For when you
add 5 days, 21 hours, (and) 589 parts,[126] (the *molad*) will reach the end of the 6th (hour) of Thursday day. Behold, you have learnt

123 The art of calendar calculation.

124 The author's purpose in the passage that follows is to demonstrate, through citations and explanations of the Four Gates, that each of the Four Gates on its own, although focused on a single weekday, refers implicitly to several other weekdays, so that altogether, the Four Gates cover several times over all the days of the week. In the first Gate, where he begins, the limit is a *molad* on Friday, but as he explains, this limit is designed to prevent the transgression of a noon limit on other weekdays in subsequent years (for example, the rule of Friday day, 9th hour, 491 parts, is to prevent the transgression of Thursday noon in the following year—so Thursday is also, implicitly, mentioned).

125 This conjecture is certain. The author is citing a well attested line of the Four Gates, which he then explains.

126 i.e. 'to the *molad* of this Tishri, the *molad* of next Tishri will reach' etc.

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שהזכיר יום חמישי ואמר אם יתר על שש שעות דוחים אותו · ועוד
נאמר[127] ואם אין בה עבור ולא בשנה הבאה ונולד קודם תּחׄ חלק משעה
א בלילי ו חסירים · ואם נולד אחר כן שלימים מפני שכשאתה מוסיף
שתי פעמים ד׳ ימים ח שעות תּתׄעׄ חלקים לשתי שנים יגיע לסוף
שש שעות ביום שביעי הא למדתה שהזכיר יום שבת ואמר לאחר
שש שעות דוחין אותו · ועוד נאמר ואם יש בשנה הבאה עיבור ולולד[128]
קודם רׄדׄ חלק משעה ׳ בלילי ששי חסרים · ואם נולד אחרי כן
שלימים מפני שכשאתה מוסיף ד׳ ימים ח שעות תּתׄעׄ חלקים
יגיע לסוף שש שעות מיום שלישי הא למדתה שהזכיר יום שלישי
ואמר אחר שש שעות דוחין אותו · והזכרת שיני בשבת כבר
פירשנוה בטעם הראשון הרי נגלה כי הזכיר כל הימים · ושאר
השערים שונים את הימים כי גבול תּצׄאׄ אשר בלילי א בשבת
שונה להזכיר גבול שש שעות ביום שבת · וגבול רׄדׄ שבלילי אחד
בשבת שונה להזכיר שש שעות שביום ה וגבול תּקׄפׄטׄ שביום שיני
שונה להזכיר שש שעות שביום השלישי[129] מן השנה שעברה · וכן גבול
רׄדׄ שבלילי שלישי וגבול תּרׄצׄה שבלילי רביעי משלשים להזכיר

127 The letter *nun* is split; its lower horizontal stroke is visible in the lower fragment.

128 An error for ונולד.

129 The full word השלישי is written over the numerical ג.

130 i.e. 'Behold, you already know the limit of Thursday noon, as it is explicitly mentioned elsewhere in the Four Gates'—in a passage which the author goes on to quote. This concludes the demonstration of his first point, that the limit of Thursday noon is implicit in the first rule of the first Gate, even though its limit is on Friday.

131 Thus, the limit of Saturday noon is also implicit in the first Gate, more precisely in its second rule.

132 This sentence is difficult to make sense of, largely because it refers to his refutation of the Palestinians' first argument, an earlier part of this letter which is now lost. It is unclear in what way Monday might already be mentioned, even implicitly, in the first Gate; and he has not really demonstrated, as he seems to claim here, that *all* the days of the week are implicit in the first Gate. The second person is also puzzling; perhaps this is an error (the third person would be expected).

133 This limit was already implicit in the first Gate, and now it is repeated implicitly in the second Gate. What the author refers to here as 'mention' is no more than implicit:

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that it mentions Thursday day,[130] and it says: 'if it exceeds six hours, it is postponed'. And furthermore,
it is said: 'and if there is no intercalation in this or in the following year, and it is born before 408 parts of the 1st
hour of Friday night, they are defective; and if it is born afterwards, they are full'. For when you add
twice 4 days, 8 hours, (and) 876 parts for two years, it will reach the end of
six hours on Saturday day. Behold, you have learnt that it mentions the day of Sabbath, and it says: 'after
six hours, it is postponed'.[131] And furthermore, it is said: 'and if there is an intercalation in the following year, and it is born
before 204 parts of the 10th hour of Friday night, they are defective. And if it is born after that,
they are full'. For when you add 4 days, 8 hours, (and) 876 parts,
it will reach the end of six hours on Tuesday day. Behold, you have learnt that it mentions Tuesday day,
and it says: 'after six hours, it is postponed'. And you have already mentioned Monday—
we have explained this in the first argument—so it is plain that it has mentioned all the (week)days.[132] And the other
Gates repeat the (week)days: for the limit of 491 (parts) which is on Sunday nights
repeats the mention[133] of (the limit of) six hours on Sabbath day; and the limit of 204 which is on Sunday
nights repeats the mention of six hours on Thursday; and the limit of 589 which is on Monday
repeats the mention of six hours of six hours on Tuesday of the previous year. And similarly,[134] the limit of
204 which is on Tuesday nights and the limit of 695 which is on Wednesday nights repeat a third time the mention

similarly to what was laid out more fully above, the author is arguing that the limit of six hours on Sabbath day is the implicit explanation of the limit of 491 parts on Sunday night in the previous year. By applying the verb 'mention' to what are only implicit references, the author is somewhat overstating his case.

134 This introduces the third and fourth Gates, which he presents in one go for the sake of economy.

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שש שעות של יום השבת.[135] ואם לא דחינו ניסן ודחינו תשרי כד[136] לקיים
דבריו הראשונים והאחרונים נמצא בין ניסן לתשרי ד׳ ימים והוצרך למלאות
אייר ותמוז או תמוז ואלול ואין לך טעות [גדו]ל[ה מזו[137] .....] בשאר[138]

Letter 3 (Babylonian, to the Head of the Academy)

LMisc folio 5 recto
[T-S 13K2.1 recto + Bodl. Heb d. 74.28 recto]

מעברין את השנה בחוצה לארץ וכל המשנאות שציוה וכתב מראשו שלפרק
ר׳ אליעזר · התבוננו בהם וידענו אותם ואנחנו יודעים כי מבראשנה ומימים
שהיה בית המקדש קיים לא היה עבור השנה תלוי לקבוע אדר ואדר אלא
בחכמי ארץ ישראל ובארץ ישראל לפי שהעיבור תלוי באביב ובפירות האילן

135 A circular cue in the text refers to the marginal note: והרוצה לבחון הונא יגב יכון. This note, half in Hebrew and half in Judeo-Arabic, means something like 'he who intends to check (the text), the place for this is here' (I am grateful to Nadia Vidro for her advice). This note is meant to indicate another discontinuity in the text: this is where the text of the misplaced folio ended.

136 An error for בדי.

137 My conjecture.

138 So Guillaume; a judicious conjecture, even though most of the word is torn off, and only the top of these letters is visible. It must be doubted that Guillaume has more to read than we have; the loss of the bottom part of the word is not due the Bodleian Library's mounting, but rather to the original tear of the fragment (as I have verified, the mounting covers more of the recto than of the verso side). The preceding word, similarly damaged, is more difficult to conjecture.

139 This is the end of the misplaced text (see above, fol. 4r:14). One expects that this text continued going through the limits in the third and fourth Gates, and then summed up with the conclusion that all the days of the week are covered several times over by the Four Gates, thus refuting the Palestinians' second argument. All this would have been placed before the beginning of what remains of the letter, where the refutation of the second argument ends.

140 At this point, the text rejoins where it left off near fol. 4r:14, where the third argument is being refuted.

141 I.e. that Nisan before noon is not postponed, and Tishri after noon is postponed.

142 Because if the *molad* of Tishri is on Tuesday, Thursday or Sabbath, any postponement from there will have to be of two days; so that the weekday interval between Nisan and Tishri will increase from two to four.

143 i.e. to make these two months full (30 days), so as to reduce the weekday interval between Nisan and Tishri, as it should be, to two.

144 Because in the fixed calendar, these months are meant to be always defective (29 days). This line seems to echo L1Bab recto, l. 16 ('the most mistaken person would not say this').

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of six hours of Sabbath day.[139]} And if[140] we do not postpone Nisan, but we do postpone Tishri, in order to fulfil
his first and last rules,[141] as a result there will between Nisan and Tishri (a difference of) 4 (week)days,[142] and it will be necessary to fill
Iyar and Tammuz, or Tammuz and Elul,[143] and you cannot make a [bigger] mistake [than that] …[144]

Letter 3 (Babylonian, to the Head of the Academy)

LMisc folio 5 recto

'… they [may not][145] intercalate the year outside the Land', and all the *mishnayot* which he ordered and wrote[146] from the beginning of the *Chapter*
of Rabbi Eliezer[147]—we have reflected on them and we know them. And we know that originally, and from the days
when the Temple was in existence, the intercalation of the year—to set an Adar and Adar—[148]depended entirely
on the sages of the land of Israel and on the land of Israel,[149] because the intercalation depended on the ripeness (of the crops) and the fruits of the tree,

145 As Bornstein conjectures, the last word on the preceding folio must have been אין.

146 Meaning perhaps 'which he (the Palestinian Head of the Academy) ordered to write', as his letters would have been dictated.

147 A work commonly known nowadays in the plural, *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* (*Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, henceforth *PdRE*). The reference is not to its very beginning, but rather to Chapter 8 of it, which deals with the intercalation of the year. The *mishnayot* or Mishnaic passages which he, i.e. the Palestinian head of the academy, invoked in support of his monopoly on the calendar were not strictly speaking Mishnaic, as the contents of *PdRE* 8 (e.g. the rule cited here, that intercalations cannot be decreed outside the land of Israel) are not derived from the Mishnah, but they would have been regarded at least as tannaitic.

148 i.e. two months of Adar, in an intercalated year. The phrase 'Adar and Adar' is quite early; it can be used as here to designate the two months themselves (e.g. in the liturgical poetry of Piṇhas ha-Kohen, late eighth century, Elizur 2004: 725, text no. 128, l. 9; or in Joshua ben Allan's calendar treatise, early tenth century (?), ms Kiev-Vernadsky OPI no. 286, fol. 17r, Harkavy 1903), or by extension, the intercalated year (e.g. in the Arabic treatise on the Jewish calendar by al-Khuwārizmī, c. 823/4 CE: Kennedy 1964, de Blois 2014: 65–69).

149 Insofar as the agricultural criteria of ripeness of crops and fruits had to be measured with reference to the land of Israel, as he goes on to explain.

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כמו ששנינו על שלשה סימנין מעברים את השנה על האביב ועל פירות
האילן ועל התקופה על שנים מהם מעברים ועל אחד אינן מעברים ובזמן
שאביב אחד מהם הכל שמיחין · וכיון שעיבור השנה תלוי באביב לא היה
אפשר לעבר על אביב על שאר ארצות מפני שבחוצה לארץ יש מקום
צונן מתעכב חודש אביב עד סיון ויש מקום ׳חם׳ שממהר לבוא מסוף שבט
ומחילין בקצירה מן אדר · ולכך לא היה איפשר לקבוע עיבור שנה אלא בארץ
ישראל שנ׳ לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה[150] כל דרישות שאתה דורש לא יהיו
אלא בשכנו שלמקום ואפילו בארץ ישראל עצמה כבר לא היתה כולה כשירה
לעיבור אלא נחלת[151] בני יהודה הוכשרה יתר מכולן[ם][152] שכך שנינו שלש ארצות[153]
לעיבור יהודה עבר הירדן וגליל ואנחנו אומ׳ בזמן שיהודה אחת מהם הכל
שמחים · וכל המשניות והראיות בין שכתבן ראש ישיבה ובין שלא כתבם
בין שבפני הבית ובין שלאחר הבית כולם ללמד שעיבור השנה תלוי בארץ
כולן בשביל אדר ואדר הן · וכבר אין בינינו וביניכם חילוף בעיבור שנים
באדר ואדר מפני שהכל תפסו את המסורת בידם לחשבון גבטבג
אדוטו בהזז בהזז גוח ולעניין עיבור וחשבון כבר הכל שווין ואין בינינו

150 Over each of the last four words there are two horizontal dots, to indicate that this a biblical quotation (Deut. 12:5). See fol. 2v:19.

151 The middle letters are damaged by a hole in the parchment.

152 Only the upper bar of the *mem* is (barely) visible.

153 The *aleph* is split horizontally between the fragments.

154 One of the signs on the basis of which an intercalation has been made.

155 *bSanhedrin* 11b. 'Place' is a common rabbinic designation of God.

156 i.e. the region of Judaea; reference was preferably made to Judaea, as opposed to the Transjordan and Galilee, for purposes of intercalation. This is perhaps a covert polemic against the Head of the Academy, whose location was probably Tiberias (in Galilee—see Bornstein 1904: 29–30, n. 4).

157 One of the lands on the basis of which an intercalation has been made.

158 *bSanhedrin* 11b, with parallel in *tSanhedrin* 2:3 (p. 416), but in both sources the text is slightly different.

159 See fol. 5r:3.

160 The first sequence of numbers, 3-2-9-2-3, is an abbreviation of 3-2-3-3-3-2-3; it represents the intervals (in years) between intercalations through the 19-year cycle. This is probably the most ancient formulation of the 19-year cycle (see Chapter 5, p. 60). The second and third sequences represent the year numbers, in the 19-year cycle, that are intercalated. According to the second sequence, years 1, 4, 6 etc. of the cycle are intercalated; according to the third, it is years 2, 5, 7 etc. that are intercalated. The author is claiming, however, that all three schemes are in agreement about which years to intercalate; the difference between them is only about how to count, or in which year to start counting. Thus for example, the latter scheme starts counting one year earlier, so that his 'year 2' is called 'year 1' in the former scheme; but they are the same, intercalated year. The author is claiming that although there are different traditions about how to count the years, all agree on which years to intercalate. Note that in the text,

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as we have learnt (*bSanhedrin* 11b): 'on account of three signs they intercalate the year: the ripeness, the fruits of
the tree, and the equinox; on account of two of them they intercalate, but of one they do not intercalate; and when
ripeness is one of them,[154] everyone is happy'. And since the intercalation of the year depends on ripeness, it was not
possible to intercalate on account of ripeness on the basis of other lands, because outside the Land there are places
that are cold, where the month of ripeness is delayed until Siwan, and there are places that are hot, where it hastens to come from the end of Shevat
and they begin the harvest from Adar. Therefore, it was only possible to set the intercalation of the year in the land
of Israel, as it says (Deut. 12:5): 'His dwelling you shall seek and go there'—all your seekings should only
be in the dwelling of the Place.[155] And even in the land of Israel itself, not all of it was fit
for the intercalation, but only the inheritance of the sons of Judah[156] was fit, more than all the others, for so we have learnt: 'there are three lands for the
intercalation, Judaea, Transjordan, and the Galilee, and we say, when Judaea is one of them,[157] everyone
is happy'.[158] And all the (tannaitic) teachings and proofs, whether the Head of the Academy wrote them (himself) or whether he did not,
whether they relate to the period of the Temple or after the period of the Temple, they all stipulate that the intercalation of the year depends on the Land;
these are all for the sake of Adar and Adar.[159] But there is no longer any difference between us and you in the intercalation of years
with Adar and Adar, because everyone has held to the tradition in their hands for the calculation of 3-2-9-2-3,
1-4-6-9-12-15-17, 2-5-7-10-13-16-18,[160] and regarding the intercalation and calculation everyone is already in agreement and there is no difference between us

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the last two sequences are divided into two sub-sequences: 1-4-6-9 and 2-5-7, and 2-5-7-10 and 3-6-8, where all numbers over 10 make up a separate sub-sequence in which only units (without tens) are given (2-5-7, for example, stands for 12-15-17). By the time this manuscript was copied (late eleventh century), this notation was standard.

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לביניכם שינוי בעיבור שנים אבל קביעת חדשים לחשב מליאים
וחסירין וכסדרן אינו מן העיבור שנה · ובודאי שרבותינו שבבבל בדורות

LMisc folio 5 verso
[T-S 13K2 fol. 1 verso + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.28 verso]

הראשונים היו שולחים ודורשין מרבותינו שלארץ ישׂ קביעת חדשי שנה בשנה
לפי שלא היו בקיאין בסוד העיבור כמותן לפיכך היו כותבין אליהם אבל מן שנים
רבות כבר עלו כמה חכמים מבבל אל ארץ ישׂ ודקדקו עם חכמי[161] ארץ ישׂ
בסוד העיבור ופשפשו וחיפשׂו בוועד[162] שנתבוננו בו יפה יפה וכבר הם קובעים
חדשים בבבל זה שנים רבות לבדם וגם חכמי ארץ ישראל מחשבים וקובעים
חדשים לבדם וכבר בכל השנים האלה עלה חשבונם אחד לא נמצא ביניהם
חילוף אלא החשבון על מכונו ועל תיקונו והמועדים מתקדשים חוקה אחת ותורה
אחת מפני שהחשבונות כולם כאחד ניתנו מרועה אחד ולא ראינו קילקול כזה
ולא פירצה כזאת ובודאי אנחנו התחלנו לקבוע חדשים בבבל היה לו לראש
ישיבה להוכיח אותנו ולאמר שניתם מנהג ועברתם על דברי רבותיכם הנה נא
יש בישיבות זקינים שהגיעו לגבורות וגם הזקינו מאד וכולם אין אחד מהם זוכר
שהוצרכו אנשי בבל לשאול עיבור שנים וקביעת חדשים מארץ ישׂ אלא
אתם מעברים כמנהגכם וגם אנחנו מנהג אבותינו בידינו ואנחנו מעברים

161 Should be חכמי.

162 Schechter, followed by Bornstein and Guillaume, read בזו עד; this was clearly a misreading, although we may surmise that a word such as עד was omitted here in error, due to homoioteleuton. In his discussion of this passage, Bornstein (1922*a*: 349–350; followed by Jaffe 1931: 103)—who had no access to the manuscript, and no awareness of the correct reading—seems to have had an intuition that a formal body such as a 'council' was involved, and for this he used the Hebrew terms וועד—remarkably, as per the correct manuscript reading!—as well as the term אספה (assembly).

163 His point is that since the dispute between the Palestinians and Babylonians is only about the setting of the months, not about the intercalation of years, the *mishnayot* and proofs adduced by the Head of the Academy are irrelevant to the dispute, as they only concern the intercalation.

164 i.e., in a general sense, the calendar calculation. As explained above, the issue was not the intercalation of the years, but rather the setting of the months of the year, i.e. whether they should be full, defective, or orderly.

165 As above. This interpretation is preferable, in this context, to the translation 'investigated … in the council of intercalation' which I assumed in Stern (2001: 266–268). For a discussion of this whole passage and its debatable historicity, see beginning of Chapter 2.

166 The term וועד ('Council') should not be given excessive historical weight, as in this context it is probably no more than a Talmudic topos: in the Mishnah and Talmud, this term designates the rabbinic court or committee that is charged with setting the calendar (e.g. *mRosh Hashanah* 4:4).

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and you regarding the intercalation of years. But the setting of the months, to reckon them as either full
or defective or orderly, is not part of the intercalation of the year.[163] And to be sure, our rabbis in Babylonia in the earlier

LMisc folio 5 verso

generations used to send (letters) and seek from our rabbis of the land of Israel the setting of the months of every year,
because they were not expert in the secret of intercalation[164] like them; therefore, they used to write to them. But already many
years ago, a few sages from Babylonia went up to the land of Israel, and analysed with the sages of the land of Israel
the secret of intercalation,[165] and they scrutinized and researched (it) in the Council,[166] (until)[167] they understood it very well. And now already for many years,
they set the months in Babylonia on their own, and also the sages of the land of Israel calculate and set
the months on their own, and now, in all these years their calculation has been the same, there has been no difference
between them, but rather the calculation is firm and correct, and the festivals are sanctified according to one law and one
teaching, because all the calculations were given together by one shepherd.[168] And we have never seen a disruption like this one,
or a breach like this. To be sure, we have started to set (ourselves) the months in Babylonia; the head of the Academy
should have rebuked us[169] and said 'you have changed the custom, and transgressed the words of your rabbis'. Behold now,
there are elders in the academies who have reached the age of strength,[170] and they are very old, and not one of all them remembers
that the men of Babylonia ever needed to seek the intercalation of years and the setting of months from the land of Israel. Rather,
you intercalate[171] according to your custom, and we also, the custom of our fathers is in our hands,[172] and we intercalate

167 My conjecture (see note 162).
168 Cf. *bḤagigah* 3b, citing Eccl. 12:11.
169 Had he originally objected to the Babylonians' setting the months on their own.
170 The age of 80 (*bMoed Qatan* 28a, citing Ps. 90:10).
171 Again, this term is probably meant in the broad sense of calendar calculation.
172 Cf. *bBetsah* 4b, a passage referring to the calendar.

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כדרכנו והחשבון אחד הוא ולא חִשגנו[173] גבול ולא שנינו מנהג ולא הצרכנו עצמינו לבוא
לתוכחת שכבר מנהג אבותינו בידינו ושׂכּתב[174] ראש ישיבה שאף על פי שעיברתם
והכרזתם לא הכרזתם כהוגן כי אמרתם שהשׁנה תִּדשה[175] שלימין ואינה אלא חסירין
ממה שקבעו אבותינו הראשונים כבר התבוננו בסוד העיבור שהיה ביד אבותינו
הראשונים וראינו שכיון[176] שתשרי שלשנה זו שהיא שנת אלף רלג לשטרות
נולד לדיאֹ שעות תתקלב חלק כיון שהיא מעוברת לא היה ראוי לקבעה
אלא שלימים כמו שמפורש בשער שיני שכל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד
בלילי ד מן יאֹ שעות תרצה חלק והלאה אחוז ראש שנה בחמישי והחדשים
שלימים שכיון שתקבע את החדשים שלימים נמצא הפסח בשלישי וראש

LMisc folio 6 recto
[T-S 13K2 fol. 2 recto + T-S NS 309.68b recto]

שנה הבאה בחמישי וחדשים כסדרן והפסח בשבת · והשנה השלישית ראש שנה
בשיני בשבת שכיון שתשרי שלשנה שלישית נולד ביום שבת אחר חצות כבר
עבר זמנו מלקבעו בשבת ובאחד בשבת אין נכון לקבעו לפיכך ידחה לשיני
בשבת · ואם תאמר[177] נקבע שנה ראשונה חסירין כדי שיעשו מועדים
בזמניהם ושנה שנייה תיקבע שלימים נמצא הפסח עירע להיות בערב שבת
ואם תאמר שנה ראשונה כסדרן ושנייה שלימין אם עשית ראשונה כסדרן
יערע הפסח בשיני בשבת ואם תאמר נקבע ראשונה חסירים ושנייה כסדרן ושלישית

173 As per Schechter and not Guillaume (שנינו).
174 The *kaf* is split diagonally between the fragments.
175 The *ḥet* is split horizontally between the fragments.
176 So Guillaume. The upright stroke below the line, under the faded letters, is probably ink penetration from the *lamed* of לחשבון on the other side (fol. 5r:18).
177 A dot in the bottom left corner of this letter gives it the appearance of a *heh*, but this is most likely a smudge. The left upright stroke of the *heh*, in this manuscript, always presents itself as a short line, never as a circular dot.
178 Cf. Deut. 19:14.
179 Lit. 'you have intercalated'.
180 i.e. that the months in the coming year are full, whereas they should be defective (according to the Palestinians).
181 The era of contracts, i.e. the Seleucid era, in which 1233 = 921/2 CE.
182 The *molad* of Tishri 1233 SE (= 921 CE) is on the night of Wednesday, 11 hours and 932 parts.
183 'From' has the meaning of 'after'.
184 i.e. with the months beginning on the days of the *molad*, without postponement. This seems to have been one of the Palestinians' argument for the year 921/2.
185 And Friday is not an allowable weekday for Passover.

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in our way, and the calculation is the same. And we have not removed any boundary,[178] nor have we changed the custom, nor have we brought ourselves perforce
into a rebuke, because the custom of our fathers is already in our hands. And as to what the Head of the Academy has written, that 'although you have made the calendar calculation[179]
and you have announced (it), you have not announced correctly, because you said that the New Year is full, whereas it is defective'[180]—
from what our earlier fathers have laid down, we studied the secret of intercalation which was in our earlier
fathers' hand, and we saw that since Tishri of this year, which is year 1233 of the Contracts,[181]
is born on n-4-11 hours 932 parts,[182] since it (the year) is intercalated, it is only fit to set it
full, as is explicit in the second Gate, (i.e.) that (for) every Tishri that has an intercalation and is born
in the night of Wednesday from[183] 11 hours 695 parts onwards, hold the New Year on Thursday and (set) the months
full. For once you set the months full, Passover will be on Tuesday and the following

LMisc folio 6 recto

New Year on Thursday and the months (of that year) orderly and Passover on the Sabbath, and (in) the third year New Year will be
on Monday; for since Tishri of the third year is born on the day of Sabbath after noon, its time
has already passed for being set on the Sabbath, and it is not possible to set it on Sunday, therefore it is postponed to Monday.
And if you say, let us set the first year defective, so that the festivals will be done
at their right time,[184] and let the second year be set full, the result will be that Passover will fall on Friday.[185]
And if you say, (let) the first year be orderly and the second full, if you make the first orderly
Passover will fall on Monday.[186] And if you say, let us set the first (year) defective and the second orderly and the third

186 And Monday is not an allowable weekday for Passover.

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שלימים נמצא תשרי שלשנה שלישית שהיא שנת אלף רלה נולד אחר חצות
בדלז[187] חלק וכבר עבר זמנו ונדחה לשיני שהרי חיפשנו ודקידקנו בכל השערים
וראינו שכשיעבור מולד תשרי אחר חצות אפילו חלק אחד אין ראוי לקבעו ביומו
אלא לדחותו לפניו · ושכתב ראש ישיבה שאין אנו נסמכין באלה שתי שנים
על ארבעה שערים מפני מה אבותינו בדורות הראשונים לא סמכו בכל השנים
אלא על ד שערים ואנחנו לא נסמוך עליהם · ושכתב ראש ישיבה אבל אנו
נסמכין על דברי חכמ שאם ניסן באגה ותשרי בגהז אין דוחין אותו מיומו
אם מולד תשרי בגהז[188] רואין אם נשתייר רביע יום חסר אמרת חלקים
ביומו אין דוחין אותו ואם חסר במרת דוחין אותו כי זה סוד העיבור ועיקרו
נודיע לפני ראש ישיבה כי זה הדבר שלאמרת במרת כבר שמענו אותו
מן הראשונים ולא כמנהג שכתב ראש ישיבה היו אומרין אלא כן היו אומרים
אם נולד ניסן בשבת ותשרי בשיני בשבת רואין אם נותר רביע יום חסר
אמרת חלק אין דוחין אותו מיומו ואם חסר במרת דוחין אותו לפניו · וראש
ישיבה הוא אומ כי על אגה ובגהז כולם אמרו אמרת במרת וראשונים

187 The first upper dot (on the preposition) is superfluous, but this is common in this manuscript. Schechter (followed by Guillaume) misreads here בדלז, and adds after it the word אל which is completely erroneous (as sensed by Guillaume) and absent in the manuscript. Bornstein (1904: 76 n. 1) was able to correct the first word, but resorted to an unnecessary, far-fetched explanation for the second.

188 Perhaps an error for בבגהז.

189 The 'third year full' takes us beyond Tishri 1235 SE, and hence beyond the contentious period; the point of mentioning it, however, is to explain how the shortness of 1233 SE (defective) and 1234 SE (orderly) will be compensated with a full year in 1235.

190 This statement is contradicted in the next line, according to which postponements from these days of the week are possible (if the *molad* occurs after midday). A further difficulty is that the days of Sabbath (for Nisan) and Monday (for Tishri) are missing; the omission of these two days is internally consistent (if Passover is on Sabbath, the New Year is necessarily on Monday), which indicates that this is not a scribal error. This needs discussion elsewhere.

191 Again, the same should apply to Monday, as is indeed explicit on the last line of this folio. Bornstein (1904: 76 n. 2), who did not have the lower fragment of the folio (which was not available, in fact, until our recent discovery of it), attempted to explain the omission of Monday as an anomaly in ben Meir's earlier understanding of his calendar. But in the light of the lower fragment, this omission is more plausibly explained as an authorial or scribal error (see note 188). This remains, however, problematic.

192 A quarter of the day minus 642 (or more) parts is left of its day; in other words, if the *molad* falls at 18 hours and 642 (or more) parts.

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full,[189] the result will be that Tishri of the third year, which is 1235, will be born after noon
at 237 parts, and its time will already be passed, and it will have to be postponed to Monday, for we have researched and investigated in all the Gates
and we have seen that when the *molad* of Tishri exceeds noon by even one part, it is not fitting to set it on that day
but only to postpone it forward. And as to what the Head of the Academy has written, that we do not rely in these two years
on the Four Gates—why (then) did our fathers in previous generations rely for all years
on the Four Gates only, whereas we should not rely on them? And as to what the Head of the Academy has written: 'but we
rely on the words of the sages that if Nisan is on Sunday, Tuesday, (or) Thursday, and Tishri on Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath, it is not postponed from its day;[190]
if the *molad* of Tishri is on Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath,[191] one sees: if a quarter of the day minus 641 parts is left
of its day, it is not postponed, and if minus 642,[192] it is postponed—for this is the secret of intercalation and its root'.
May we inform the Head of the Academy that this (limit of) 641–642, we have already heard it
from the earlier (sages), but they said it not in the way that the Head of the Academy has written it. Rather, this is what they said:
'if Nisan is born on Sabbath and Tishri on Monday, one sees: if a quarter of the day minus
641 parts is left, they do not postpone it from its day, but if it is missing 642, they postpone it forward'.[193] But the Head
of the Academy says that they said (the rule of) 641–642 with regard to all of them, Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Sabbath and Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Sabbath,[194] whereas the earlier (sages)

193 According to this, which is presented by the author of our letter as the original, authentic Palestinian rule, the limit of 641 parts only applies to a *molad* of Tishri occurring on a Monday. It is difficult to understand why it would not also apply to the other weekdays available for Tishri (Tuesday, Thursday, and Sabbath), as was indeed assumed by the Palestinians in 921/2 CE (when in 923 CE, the contentious *molad* of Tishri was due to occur on Sabbath). The author of our letter is not conceding to this rule, but only is arguing that the Palestinians have got their own rule wrong.

194 These strings of weekdays correspond to the possible weekdays (or 'Four Gates') of Nisan and Tishri respectively, and are presented in the text as numerals.

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LMisc folio 6 verso
[T-S 13K2 fol. 2 verso + T-S NS 309.68b verso]

לא היו אומרים אלא על ניסן בשבת ועל תשרי בשיני בלבד · ותשרי שלשנה
השלישית היא שנת רֹ"לֹז לשטרות מולדו ביום שבת שש שעות רֹ"לֹז חלקים
ולא בשיני בשבת הוא נולד ואינו נכלל[195] אַמַּרְתּ בְּמַרְתּ כשאנו מחשבין את חשבון
אַמַּרְתּ בְּמַרְתּ על ניסן בשבת ועל תשרי בשיני אין אנו מוצאין את החשבון
שהוא נכון עליהם שכך מסרו חכמ בשער רביעי שכל תשרי שלאחר שנת
העיבור שנולד ביום שיני ג שעות תקפט חלק קבע אותו ביומו · ואם נולד
בשלש שעות תקיז חלק דחה אותו לשלישי ולקבע[196] חדשים כסדרן · ואם לא
היה בשנה שעברה עיבור ונולד תשרי עד שש שעות ביום שיני אין נדחה
מיומו · ואם נולד אחר שש שעות חלק אחד נדחה לשלישי מגיד שאין
קובעים אותו ביומו אלא כשנולד עד חצות בלבד · אבל מאחר חצות חלק אחד
לא מצאינו שנקבע ביומו הרי למדנו שאפילו על תשרי בשיני לא יכון חשבון אַמַּרְתּ
בְּמַרְתּ וכל שכן על גֹהֹז שלא יכון שהרי בדקנו בשנים שעברו שהשוינו אנחנו
ואתם על קבעיתן ולא ראינו שקבעתם את החדש על חשבון אַמַּרְתּ בְּמַרְתּ
אלא על ד שערים · יתבונן ראש ישיבה שצז[197] בתשרי שלשנת אלף רֹכֹה
לשטרות שנולד ביום ששי יֹא שעות קפה חלק ומועברת היתה ונקבעה
ראשונה בשבת וחדשים שלימים ונולד ניסן שלה ביום ג ד שעות שלוֹ[198]
חלקים וקבענו אנחנו ואתם את הפסח בחמישי ואם כן הוא שהמסורת בידכם
שאם נולד ניסן[199] באגה אין דוחין אותו מיומו למחר לא קבעתם את חדשי אותה שנה

195 Perhaps an error for בכלל.

196 The *lamed* appears superfluous; this looks like an Aramaic inflexion (imperfect third person, in the model sense of 'should'—I am grateful to Willem Smelik for his advice).

197 = שמרהו צורו, a stock phrase which I have only found in later sources (e.g. in the letters of the Qaraite Tobias b. Moses, mid eleventh century).

198 The *waw* is written, unusually in this manuscript, with two strokes (and a pronounced hook form). Schechter (followed by Guillaume) reads incorrectly שלא, which Bornstein conjectured should be read שלוֹ, an error for שלוֹ.

199 This word is omitted in the text, and inserted in the right margin with a circular cue referring to a similar cue in the main text.

200 Since, according to the 'early' Palestinian sages' own argument, the rule of 641–642 only applies when the *molad* of Tishri is on Monday. From this point onwards, however, the author will argue that this early rule is no longer in practice, and that the limit of 641–642 is never considered even when Tishri is on Monday. A contrastive conjunction such as 'but' is missing at this point.

201 i.e. on or before noon, without the addition of 641 parts.

202 1225 SE = 913/4 CE.

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LMisc folio 6 verso

only said it regarding Nisan on Sabbath and Tishri on Monday. And Tishri of the third
year, which is (1)235 of the Contracts, its *molad* is on Sabbath day six hours 237 parts,
and it is not born on Monday, so it is not included in (the rule of) 641–642.[200] When we make the calculation of
641–642 with regard to Nisan on Sabbath and Tishri on Monday, we do not find that the calculation
works with these (dates). For so the Sages transmitted to us in the Fourth Gate: every Tishri after an intercalated
year that is born on Monday day, 3 hours, 589 parts, set it on its day, and if it is born
at three hours 590 parts, postpone it to Tuesday and set the months as orderly. And if there was
no intercalation in the previous year, and Tishri is born up to six hours on Monday day, it is not postponed
from its day; and if is born after six hours by one part, it is postponed to Tuesday—which indicates that one does not
set it on its day unless it is born until noon only,[201] but after noon by even one part,
we do not find that it is ever set on its day. We have therefore learnt that even with regard to Tishri on Monday, the calculation of 641–642
does not work, and all the more so with regard to Tuesday, Thursday, Sabbath it does not work. For behold, we have checked the past years when we and you
agreed on their settings, and we have not seen that you ever set the month on the basis of the calculation of 641–642,
but rather only on the basis of the 4 Gates. Let the Head of the Academy—may his Rock guard him!—consider Tishri of the year 1225
of the Contracts,[202] which was born on Friday day, 11 hours, 185 parts, and (the year) was intercalated, and its first day
was set on Sabbath, and the months were full, and its Nisan was born on Tuesday day, 4 hours, 336
parts, and we and you set Passover on Thursday; yet if it is true that the tradition in your hand is
that if Nisan is born on Sunday, Tuesday, or Thursday, it is not postponed from its day, why did you not set the months of that year

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חסירים כדי שיהא הפסח בשלישי ביומו שהרי נולד ניסן קודם חצות
ביום ג׳ אלא דחיתם אותו לחמישי לא עיברתם על חשבון אמרת במרת
אלא בעיבור שמפורש בשער ראשון שכל תשרי שיש בו עיבור ונולד אחר
תצא[א][203]

Excipit

Folio x
[T-S 13K2 fol. 6 recto]

On the question of whether this fragment belongs here, see discussion in the introduction.

כבודך ירב ירום וינושא ויתמך לעדי עד נצח · ונכתב ביום חמישי בשבת
ביט יום לחודש תמוז שנת אלף ר׳לג׳
לממשלת חכמים · סעדיה בן
יוסף אלוף ישועה :

The bottom of this fragment and its verso are blank (although something has been scribbled on the verso).

Letter 4 (Palestinian)

LMisc folio 7 recto
[T-S 13K2 fol. 4 recto + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.31 recto]

באו וישראל בני יעקב הקדושים כולהם חוקה אחת ועשה את הפסח ביום
אחד לבד ממאזיני שוא ותפל · ומה שהזכרתם שנהפך בושם למק ומשפט
למספח[204] כבר קנתר הנביא ואמר והיה תחת בושם מק יהיה וג׳ כל זה בגודל

203 This is apparently a catchword; it is fragmentary because of holes in the parchment. Its presence here (but not in the other fragments) suggests that this may have been the end of a quire.
204 Not a biblical topos, but the author's (or his addressee's) original alliteration.
205 Lit. 'intercalate'.
206 This corresponds to Thursday 18 July 922 CE. The date is Babylonian; according to the Palestinian calendar, it would have been a Tuesday.
207 This might be a euphemism for 'Seleucid rule'.

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defective, so that Passover would occur on Tuesday on its day? For Nisan was born before noon,
on Tuesday day! But rather, you postponed it to Thursday, and you did not set the calendar[205] according to the calculation of 641–642,
but rather according to the calculation that is explicit in the First Gate, that every Tishri that has an intercalation and is born after …

4(91)

Excipit

LMisc folio x

May your honour increase, be elevated and uplifted, and may it be sustained forever and ever. And this was written on Thursday
19th day of the month of Tammuz, year 1233 (SE)[206]
of the reign of the Sages.[207] Saadya son of
Joseph, leader (*aluf*) of redemption.[208]

Letter 4 (Palestinian)

LMisc folio 7 recto

… came, and Israel the holy sons of Jacob, all of them (under) 'one law' (Num. 9:14), and made Passover on one
day, except for those who listened to falsehood and nonsense.[209] And as to what you mentioned, that fragrance has changed into rot, and law
into a scab, the prophet has already cried out and said: 'And it shall come to pass, that instead of fragrance there shall be rot' (Is. 3:24); all this is due to the greatness

208 *Aluf* was a formal title within the hierarchy of the Babylonian academies. Saadya's title in Baghdad, at this point of his career, seems to have been *aluf*. The phrase '*aluf* of redemption' is possibly a pun on Gen. 36:18, אלוף יעוש. However, Mann (1934: 276) reads 'redemption' as a separate word (with a full stop after *aluf*), which he interprets as a prayer for redemption.

209 This fragmentary sentence seems to refer to the observance of Passover in 922 CE on 'one day' by all those who followed the Palestinian dates.

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אשמינו ובחילוק לבבינו ברוך דיין האמת · ואמרתם שאתם אבילים
נזופים בבבי תמרורים ואנחה בעזבכם את האמת ובנטותכם מדרך ישרה
לדרך מכשול ובשמעכם לדברי בן פיומי הדלאצי אשר נתברר לפנינו בעדים
ברורים וכשרים היעידו שהיה אביו מכה בפטיש בארץ מצרים לעבודה זרה
ואכל מרק פיגולים ונדחף מארץ מצר ומת ביפו השיגה אתכם הצרה הזאת ·
ואמרתם שנעשתם חרפה בגוים וקלסה בין המינים הלא זה תאותו שלבן פיומי
ובקשתו ויי ידון דינינו וינקום נקמתינו ויעשה נקמה בכל מי שהוא מבקש
עזרת השונאים וזכרתם שנמסך בקרב העם רוח עועים ובערה המדורה רוח
עועים נמסכה שנ׳ יי מסך בקרבה רוח עועים וג׳ והחשבתם לדברי מצרי
לכך בערה המדורה במקומכם ונהפכו חגיכם לאבל ושמחתכם לתוגה
כדבריכם ועל זאת דאגנו והיצר לנו מאד ונשאלה מלפני רחום שירווח
לכם ויחזירכם לאמת · והמחלוקת אשר הזכרתם בכל פינה ופינה
אנו יודעים שמעט היתה ונוספה בכתובי כהן ובן זכאי[210] אשר אתם
מכירים מעשיהם ומכם שמענו מה שנחקק בפתיחין אשר לכם חזרתם[211]

210 Guillaume reads זכאי, but T-S 13K2 fol. 4r (which he did not see) clearly has two *yods*.

211 Schechter read just תם, although the beginning of the word is almost entirely visible in the Cambridge fragment (T-S 13K2 fol. 4r). Guillaume, following Schechter's error, thought he saw in the Oxford fragment the bottom parts of וה, and consequently conjectured תם[קשב]וה. What he actually saw were the bottom parts of חז, the top parts of these letters being clearly visible in the Cambridge fragment. This sequence of errors demonstrates that Guillaume never saw the Cambridge fragments, but relied entirely on Schechter's edition for the upper text.

212 *mBerakhot* 9:2, a blessing to be recited when hearing bad news; in this context, however, the author is implying that God will judge whoever is on the side of truth.

213 Saadya, as referred to in ben Meir's First Letter, L1BM 12:7. Alternatively: 'the words of the Fayyumite of Dilāṣ'.

214 Lit. 'alien worship', but in rabbinic literature *avodah zarah* most commonly means the object of such worship. The author seems to be accusing him of some form of adherence to Christianity or Islam, but the meaning of 'strike a hammer' is unclear. Schechter (1901–1902: 56, n. 3), followed by Malter (1921: 27 and 88 n. 188), believed he was a muezzin.

215 Perhaps a reference to Ananites, who are mentioned again below (implicitly in lines 17–18, and explicitly in fol. 8r:21 and following).

216 An apparent reference to an appeal by the Babylonians to non-Jewish authorities; see further below.

217 Saadya. The verse in Is. 19:14 refers appropriately to Egypt.

218 Lit. 'added', probably meaning that the extent of the dispute was increased and exaggerated.

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of our guilt and the discord among our hearts—'blessed be the Judge of Truth'.[212] And you said that you are mourning,
chastised, in tears, bitterness, and sorrow—(but this because of) having abandoned the truth and swayed from the straight path
to a path of stumbling, and having listened to the words of the son of the Fayyumite of Dilāṣ,[213] regarding whom we have had confirmation from clear and
valid witnesses testifying that his father used to strike a hammer in the land of Egypt for alien gods[214]
and eat the 'broth of abominable things' (Is. 65:4), and that he was expelled from the land of Egypt and died in Joppa—(because of this) this predicament has befallen you.
And you said that you have become the object of shame to the nations and of contempt among the heretics[215]—but was this not the intention of the son of the Fayyumite
and his goal? The Lord will pass judgment and take our revenge, and take revenge of whoever seeks
help from the enemies.[216] And you mentioned that among the people a spirit of confusion has been mingled and the bonfire is alight—(well), a spirit of
confusion has been mingled as it is said: 'The Lord has mingled within her a spirit of confusion etc.' (Is. 19:14); and (as) you have heeded the words of the Egyptian,[217]
therefore, the bonfire is alight in your country, and your festivals have turned into mourning and your joy into sorrow
as according to your own words; and for this reason we were worried and very troubled, and we asked the Merciful that he relieve
you and bring you back to the truth. And the dispute that you mentioned as being in every corner,
we know that it was (really) sporadic, but it was amplified[218] in the writings of the priest and the son of Zakkai,[219] whose actions
are known to you. And from you we heard (that) what was engraved in your writs,[220] you turned over

219 Daud ben Zakkai and the 'priest' are also mentioned in ben Meir's First Letter, L1BM 12:5.

220 Writs of excommunication: see ben Meir's First Letter (L1BM 11:1). As becomes clearer below, these writs were issued somewhat earlier and directed against the Ananites, i.e. the common enemies of the Palestinian and Babylonian Rabbanites, when the latter were still at peace with each other.

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לדבריהם ונעשו כשירים אצלכם הלא זה תימה גדול או חשבתונו כמפותים
בעיניכם ול[ ] אין זו דרך חב[....]ל[...][221] ריעים
ל[ ]

Two lines are missing, as the lower fragment is also torn below.

LMisc folio 7 verso
[T-S 13K2 fol. 4 verso + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.31 verso]

אותנו בפיתוי מפיתוייכם הראשון שנודיע אתכם טעם וכתבנו אליכם באמת לא
במרד ולא במעל ובאו איגרותיכם בלשון כבוד וכיבדנו אתכם ובירכנו אתכם
בכל ישראל והיינו סוברים שאתם עומדים על האמת עד אשר באו האיגרות
האחרונות אשר שלחם[222] אילינו עטרת ישׂ֯ עדיינו היקר והנעים כב֯ גד֯ קד֯ מר֯[223]
אהרן בירבי עמרם נ֯ע֯ מושיע הדור אשר לא היטה אזנו לסור מחוקי י֯י֯ ומיכן
ישמריהו ויחיהו ואושר בארץ ויוסיף לו כבוד על כבודו והדר על הדרו ויקיים
לו את שני חמודיו זרע יקרים ניני כשרים הנאהבים והנעימים · ובהם
חקוק דברים שמבטלים את כל החרותים הראשונים· ותלמידי חכמ֯ אשר
אמרתם כי עיניהם כלות ביגון מפני הרוגז מי שהביאו עליו יאתא · טוב
קוינו ׳מכם׳ ויבא רע ואשר יגורנו בא לנו ערכתם עמנו קרב וישבתם לנו במארב
לירות אותנו בסתר ובגלוי · והזכרתם כי ישבתם שומימין וקרא אתכם
פחד ורעדה על הכרזת תלמידינו בהם[224] הזתים סדרי מועדות באמת הכריזו
כדת קדמונים הפסח באחד בשבת ומרחשון וכסליו[225] חסרין ועל דברי האמת
לא היה ראוי לכם להכריז לא בתילנף ולא בשינויי כי אבותיכם נ֯נ֯[226] ה֯ז֯ מקבלים[227]
הכרזת הר הזתים ומעולם לא שינו אבותיכם נ֯נ֯ זה המנהג ולא החליפו חוק

221 Guillaume conjectures: חביבה עלינו.
222 Guillaume wrongly corrects this to שלחתם.
223 כבור גדולת קדושתו מרנא (Bornstein).
224 An error for בהר, which Schechter gives in his text.
225 Schechter (hence Guillaume) read וכסלו, but the trace of the *yod* is sufficiently clear.
226 The phrase אבותיכם נוחי נפש is common in the Palestinian Talmud in the context of upholding ancestral customs (e.g. *pEruvin* 3:8, 21c; 3:8, 21c; *pPesaḥim* 4:1, 30d), and maybe used here for that reason.
227 The last word is split horizontally along the middle between the two fragments.
228 As will become clearer below (fol. 8v:7), the author is confusing, no doubt perversely, the adherents of the Babylonian Rabbanite calendar with their common enemy, the Ananites.
229 The title of his father, בירבי, suggests to Bornstein (1922*b*: 239) that this ally of ben Meir in Babylonia was of Palestinian origin.
230 In other words, these disciples only have themselves to blame.

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to their words, and (the latter) became acceptable to you.[228] Is this not a great surprise? Or did you think, in your eyes, that
we could be deceived? And for … this way is not [agreeable to us] … friends
(…) [You wrote]

LMisc folio 7 verso

to us with the first of your deceptions, (asking us) that we inform you of our reasoning. And we wrote (back) to you truthfully, not
rebelliously or lying. And your letters came (back) with respectful language. So we honoured you and blessed you
among all Israel, and we thought that you were standing by the truth, until the last letters arrived,
those that were sent to us by the crown of Israel, our glorious and pleasant jewel, his honour, greatness, and holiness, our teacher
Aharon son of Rabbi Amram (may he rest in Eden),[229] saviour of the generation, who did not tilt his ear to stray from the laws of the Lord—may (the Lord) therefore
guard him and sustain him (with) happiness in the land and increase for him glory over glory and splendour over splendour, and sustain
for him his two sons, glorious descendants, virtuous grandchildren beloved and pleasant. And in these (letters)
are engraved words that cancel out all that was engraved in the first ones. And the disciples of the sages of whom
you said that their eyes pine in anguish because of the quarrel—whoever brought this on deserves it himself.[230] We were hoping that
good (would come) from you, but evil came (instead), and what we feared came upon us. You waged battle with us, and laid in wait for us
so as to shoot us in hiding and in the open. And you mentioned that you were sitting astounded, and that fear and tremor
befell you over our disciples' announcement of the order of the festivals on the Mount of Olives—(yet) they made a truthful announcement
according to the law of the ancients, that 'Passover will be on Sunday, and Marḥeshwan and Kislew will be defective'; and for the sake of words of truth,
it would not have been right for them to announce anything different or changed. Indeed, your fathers—may they soul rest—used to accept
the announcement on the Mount of Olives, and never did your fathers—may they soul rest—change this custom nor did they change the law.

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ואמרתם שנגדור את הפרצה עליכם לפרוץ ועלינו לגדור כשנשמע לדברי
כנעני ונסוך[231] מחוקי יי ומעידותיו ומן הסוד שקיבלנו מפי רבותינו זל
[וז][232] היא גדירה אין זו אלא פירצה גדולה והריגת נפשות לא נאים הדברים האלה
אשר אמרתם ואין זור יעשה למזור ולא ישקרו[233] המיתרים ולא יעבור
[.....] האף עד אשר [ ] כולנו חוקה
[ ] מכם

LMisc folio 8 recto
[T-S 13K2.5 recto + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.30 recto]

והזכרתם כי נוסף יגון [ע]ל מכאובכם ונע[ש]ת[234] תקותכם מפח נפש בקראותכם
את איגרותינו · אין אנו [.....][235] להכאיבכם באיגרותינו ובנו ובכם נתקיים
ולא יסף שמואל לראות את שאול · ומה שאמרתם כי אחריתה מרה
כלענה ליראנו ולבהלנו כתבתם ולא אמרתם בלבבכם נירא נא את יי אלוהינו
מצינו שאבותינו הראשונים לא נהרגו אלא על ייחוד השם שנ כי עליך הורגנו וג
וכת אלה ברכב ואלה בסוסים וכת עמו זרוע בשר וג אל תטריחו עצמכם
לעשות ספרים אילינו אם כאלה הם בחילוף חוק · וכתבתם תאמרו אם חטאנו
באשר עבר לא נוסיף עוד אם עשיתם כזאת וחזרתם למוטב הודיתם אולי
תושען · ואם עשיתם בניסן בשגגה אל תעשו בתשרי במזיד ויי הטוב יכפר
בעד כל לבבו הכין · והזכרתם כי רבו השמועות בגלל אחינו ישראל והאגרות

231 Schechter misreads: ונסו.
232 My conjecture; the tip of these letters is visible in the upper fragment.
233 Perhaps an error for יקשרו. Guillaume reads wrongly ישקדו. Bornstein (1922*b*: 240, n. 2) conjectures: [הכאב] אין נזור נעשה מזור, ולא ישקטו המיתרים ולא יעבור.
234 So Schechter, without indicating that the letter is missing because of a hole in the parchment.
235 Hole in the paper. Guillaume conjectures: חפצים.
236 Saadya, as becomes clearer below (fol. 8r:16). Why a Canaanite is unclear, although according to Genesis (10:6), Canaan was a brother of Egypt.
237 The secret of calendar computation.
238 So according to my conjecture. The meaning remains, however, obscure.
239 In other words, let us agree to part company forever—a rather strong statement, suggesting perhaps a permanent schism between them.
240 i.e. martyred because of their core beliefs. The point of this sentence, however, is unclear.
241 Ps. 20:8, where the verse continues: 'but we will mention of the name of the Lord our God'.
242 2 Chron. 32:8, where the verse continues: 'but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our wars etc.'.
243 Or: unintentionally.

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And you said that we should repair the breach—you should make the breach, and we should repair it? Were we to listen to the words of
a Canaanite[236] and stray from the laws of the Lord, from His testimonies, and from the secret[237] that we received from our rabbis of blessed memory,
would this be a repair? This would only be a great breach, and the murder of souls. These words that you
said are improper; the bandage will not be wrapped, the strings will not be tied,[238] and the anger will not pass
... even until ... all of us the law
... from you

LMisc folio 8 recto

And you mentioned that sorrow was added to your pain, and your hope became despair, when you read
our letters. We do not (mean) to pain you with our letters. In us and in you, let there be fulfilled
'and Samuel never saw Saul again' (1Sam. 15:35).[239] And what you said, that 'her end will be bitter
like wormwood' (Prov. 5:4), you wrote (this) to scare us and agitate us, and you did not say in your hearts: 'let us now fear the Lord our God' (Jer. 5:24).
We find that our early fathers were only killed for the unity of the Name,[240] as it is said: 'because for Your sake we are being killed etc.' (Ps. 44:23),
and it is written: 'some are into chariots and some into horses',[241] and it is written: 'with him is an arm of flesh etc.'.[242] Do not trouble yourselves
to write us letters if they are like these, distorting the law. And you wrote: say 'if we have sinned,
we shall not add to what has been done'—if you did this (yourselves) and repented for the good, and confessed, then perhaps
you would be saved. And if in Nisan you acted in ignorance,[243] do not act in Tishri deliberately, 'and the good Lord will atone
for whoever sets his heart'.[244] And you mentioned that there are many rumours about our Jewish brethren, and that letters

244 2Chron. 30:18–19, referring significantly to the episode in the reign of Hezekiah when a number of tribes celebrated and ate the Passover in a state of impurity 'otherwise than it is written'.

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באות אליכם מכל צד · הלא ידעתם שמשה רבינו זל זכה וזיכה את הרבים
וירבעם חטא והחטיא את הרבים · שאו מרום עיניכם וראו בעלבון הדור
לא תשמעו ל[ד]ברי מכשיל[245] עם שטוב לנו ולכם לבקש שלום שלא תארע
תקלה לישראל בימינו · ואמרתם שאין הדבר תלוי אלא בנו לו האמנתם
לא סרתם מן הדרך ודברתם כדברי בן פיומ[י]·[ה]ודיעו לכל שאין למודכם
אלא ממנו וזה חורבן עולם הוא שהוצרכתם לדברי כנעני · והזכרתם
שניתן נפשינו על ישראל זו היא וסתינו ווסת אבותינו · תח[י]ל[ה][246] דויד מלך
ישראל אמ תהי נא ידך בי וג · ושנייה מהלל הזקן שנתן נפשו על ישראל
כמה פעמים ושלישית מרבינו הקדוש שנתן דמו על ישראל וגדרן ורביעית
מר׳ יהודה הנשיא · וחמישית מר׳ מוסי שנהרג בעזרה מתחת יד זרע
ענן · ומאבותינו ר׳ מאיר ור׳ משה שכמה פעמים ביקשו השונאים

LMisc folio 8 verso
[T-S 13K2.5 verso + Bodl. Heb. d. 74.30 verso]

להרגן ועשה שדי למען שמו · וששית ממנו אנחנו אשר עבר עלינו צרות רבות
ורעות וחבישת בית האסורים ועינוי הכבל ומכ[ות][247] עד לצאת הנפש ביום[248]
הכיפורים ראשונה ושנייה מתחת יד בני ענן השונאים · ובאנו אליכם להיעזר
בי״י אלהינו ובכם ועשיתם חסד ושכרכם[249] מי״י ובחזירתינו אל ארצינו תינינו

245 Without seeing T-S 13K2, Guillaume conjectured: כדי מכשיל עם ל[טוב] שמעו ול[א?], which does not fit the space in the manuscript and makes no sense in Hebrew (see also Bornstein's conjecture, 1922*b*: 240, n. 4). He was relying entirely on Schechter's edition, which cautiously reads: ל... שמעו ול.....ל עם. The top halves of the first letters of לא תשמעו are actually clearly legible in T-S 13K2. I read a *yod* at the end of מכשילי; the ascender of the *lamed* is in the upper fragment.

246 The *lamed* is split; only the upper horizontal bar of the *heh* is visible.

247 Schechter suggests ת[לקו]ת ומ and Guillaume ות[לכ]ות ומ (the latter ostensibly in support of Schechter's major historical inference, that an appeal was made to the king against ben Meir—Schechter 1901–1902: 58 n. 2), but there is no room for either. The term מכות is entirely plausible, as this is a phrase drawn from rabbinic sources (*tMakkot* 4: 17, Zuckermandel ed. p. 443; *pNazir* 4:3, 53b; *bKetubot* 86b).

248 Schechter omitted ביום, which led Bornstein to an erroneous conjecture and interpretation.

249 Schechter reads erroneously ושכרם.

250 *Avot* 5:18. The point, again, is not entirely clear; but it may be noted that the same passage is cited by his opponents, in Letter 1 (fol. 3r:16–17).

251 This seems to be a repetition of the third case, since 'our holy Rabbi' is a designation of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (e.g. *pMegillah* 1:13, 72b).

252 This transliteration assumes a Judeo-Arabic spelling (and name). On the identity and fate of this Rabbi Mūsā, which remain very unclear, see Gil (1992) 654–659.

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are coming to you from all sides. Do you not know that Moses our rabbi of blessed memory was meritorious and made the multitude meritorious,
whereas Jeroboam sinned and made the multitude sin?[250] Lift up your eyes up and see the disgrace of this generation.
Do not heed the words of those who make the people stumble, for it is good for us and for you to seek peace, that there should not befall
any misfortune to Israel in our days. And you said that this only depends on us—you have trusted
without deviating from your way and spoken like the words of the son of the Fayyumite; tell everyone that your teachings
are only from him, and that it is a world destruction to have resorted to the words of a Canaanite. And you mentioned
that we should give up our lives for the sake of Israel—this is (indeed) our habit and the habit of our fathers. Firstly, David the king
of Israel said: 'please let you hand be against me etc.' (2 Sam. 24:17). Secondly, Hillel the Elder gave up his live for the sake of Israel
many times. Thirdly, our holy Rabbi gave up his blood for the sake of Israel, and constrained them. Fourthly,
Rabbi Judah the Patriarch.[251] Fifthly, Rabbi Mūsā[252] who was killed in the sanctuary by the hand of the offspring
of Anan; and our fathers Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Moses whom the enemies tried many times

LMisc folio 8 verso

to kill, but the Almighty intervened for the sake of His name. Sixthly, we ourselves suffered many troubles
and evils, incarceration in prison, the torture of the chain, and blows to the point of death, on the day of
Atonement once and twice because of[253] the offspring of Anan, our enemies. And we came to you to seek help
from the Lord our God and from you, and you did kindness—may your reward be from the Lord—and when we returned to our land, we repeated

253 The precise role of the 'offspring of Anan' in this series of incidents is unfortunately unclear.

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שבחכם ובירכנו אתכם בהר הזתים מול היכל יי ובשער הכהן וקראנו הפתיחים
שלכם בכל המקומות ועזרנו אתכם מאד מאד על שונאיכם ונטרו עלינו איבה
מיכן · ואתם חזרתם לדבריהם אוי נא לנו על זאת כי חרדה גדולה אחזתנו
ונבהלנו עד מאד עתה לא לכם ולנו כי הפכתם אהבתינו לשנאה ואבד יגיענו וכל
יקר אשר חלקנו לא נגרע ממנו ואתם כטוב בעיניכם עשו · ויעצתם אותנו
שלא נעמוד על דברי האמת מפני ששמעתם דברים רבים מחרידים את לבו
שלאדם ממי מן השונאים המנויים לצר[254] ביי בטחנו ועליו נשענו ואם באת
עלינו צרה ורציתם בה מה יחשב לכם מן החסד שעשיתם ואילו נהרגנו ואלף
כמותנו לא נשנה מנהג אבותינו ולא נחליף חק ולא נטה משפט[255] אבל משפט
נבחרה לנו · והראיות הגדולות אשר אמרתם דעו והבינו כי הם שלא כדת
מפני שכתבתם שהיכרזתם[256] את החדשים שלימים והינחתם הכרזת הר הזתים
והשלכתם אותה אחרי גווכם ואמרתם חשבון אמרת במרת לא יכון וראיתם
עצמכם גדולים מאבותיכם בחכמה ובדעת זה תמהון ליבב הוא ואינו מכם
אלא מבן פיומי שהיסיתכם הלא לאמת חיבים אתם להודות[257] ודרך אמת
זו היא · סוד זה בני ארץ ישראל סומכים עליו מימות עולם · אם
נולד תשרי ביום הראוי לו עד שש מאות[258] וארבעים ואחד חלק[י]ם לאחר
חצות קובעים באותו היום ראש תשרי וסימ אמרת קבלה היא מפי

254 Schechter reads לצד.

255 Schechter misread the last two letters, which are the only letters extant in T-S 13K2, as כו (probably a misreading of just the *tet*, with the *peh* left out completely). This made it impossible for Guillaume to reconstruct this word.

256 Without the benefit of the lower fragment, Schechter only saw שהיכרז, which did not make much sense but which he retained in his edition. Guillaume, in turn, retained Schechter's erroneous reading, and ignored the final *mem* (and a fraction of the *taw*) that could be seen in the lower fragment. This error demonstrates again that Guillaume relied entirely on Schechter's edition for the upper text.

257 Better than להורות (Guillaume).

258 Written over what looks like שעות.

259 On the Priest's Gate and its location, see Gil (1992) 640–646.

260 Of excommunication: see above, n. 243.

261 As above (fol. 7r:17–18), the author is perversely confusing the adherents of the Babylonian Rabbanite calendar with the Ananites.

262 Ezra 4:3, which continues: 'to build the house of our God, but we alone will build it etc.' Again, the author implicitly calls for a schism between Palestinians and Babylonians, similar to the schism between Judeans and Samaritans in the book of Ezra.

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your praises and blessed you on the Mount of Olives opposite the sanctuary of the Lord and at the Priest's Gate,[259] and we read out your writs[260] in all places, and we supported you very much against your enemies, who bore us grudge because of this. But (then) you turned over to their words[261]—woe now unto us for this, for a great fear has seized us and we are very agitated. Now, 'it is not for you and us',[262] for you have changed our love into hatred, and our toil has been wasted. All the glory that we took as our share, we shall not forego;[263] but as to you, do whatever is best in your eyes. And you advised us not to stand by the words of truth, because you heard many things that scare the heart of a person—from whom? From the enemies appointed to harass the Lord in whom we trust and on whom we rely. But if troubles come upon us and you are content with this, what is the value of the kindness that you did (to us in the past)? Even if we get killed, and a thousand others like us, we shall not change the custom of our fathers, nor we shall not alter the rule, nor shall we distort the law, but rather we shall opt for the law. And as to the grand proofs that you said: know and understand that they are not according to the law, because you have written that you announced the months as full, and you ignored the announcement of the Mount of Olives, and you threw it away behind your backs,[264] and you said that the calculation of 641–642 is incorrect, and you regarded yourselves as greater than your fathers in wisdom and in knowledge. This is bewildering to the heart; but this does not come from you, only from the son of the Fayyumite who incited you. Behold, you must confess to the truth, and this is the way of truth. This secret, the Palestinians rely on it from days of old: if Tishri is born on a day that is fit for it, until six hundred and forty-one parts after Midday, the beginning of Tishri is set on this same day, and the sign for this is 641[265]—it is a tradition from the mouth of

263 Lit. 'remove from ourselves'; the text is somewhat obscure.
264 Cf. Is. 38:17.
265 The mnemonic אמרת.

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CHAPTER 12

Babylonian Letter 1

This polemical letter, in a manuscript of which only one sheet has been preserved (T-S 8K6), shares features in common with Letters 1 and 2 of the Letters Miscellany, and may well be by the same author. The letter, or rather what survives of it, focusses similarly on technical aspects of ben Meir's calendar. In common with Letter 1 of LMisc, it uses the era of Destruction—which suggests that the author was from the Levant or Egypt—and it verifies its computation by running it through a long period of past years (50 years here, 25 years in Letter 1 of LMisc); moreover, the author calls his addressee, somewhat unusually, 'my sage' and 'my scholar'. In common with Letter 2 of LMisc, it goes through and refutes a list of numbered Palestinian arguments. All three texts share in common the tendency of attributing absurd calendrical opinions to their opponent—which we may suspect, at least in some cases, of being deliberate and perverse distortions—in order to refute them easily, which they do at excessive and unnecessary length.[1]

The manuscript, part of a rotulus, can be dated to the early eleventh century. It is written in a Babylonian Geonic style script, appropriate for the Babylonian affiliation of the author (even if, as stated, his provenance was probably Levantine). I call this letter 'Babylonian' because it sides with the Babylonian calendar.

Physical Description

Paper, brown ink. Dimensions: 18 cm × 14.3 cm (narrowing down to 14 cm near the top, as seen from the verso). The text covers almost the whole fragment, especially on the recto, where there is no top margin, and where the right margin is not visible due to the modern binding.[2] On the recto, there is a small

1 See discussion in my introduction to LMisc, Chapter 11, pp. 326–330. The text of L1Bab is also similar to L2Bab, which presents a similar refutation of a list of numbered Palestinian arguments; this raises again the possibility of common authorship.

2 The measurement of the width of the fragment has been taken on the verso side, as on the recto side the right edge is covered up by modern binding material, and is therefore not measureable.

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left margin of at the most 3 mm, and a bottom margin of 4–9 mm (increasing from right to left). On the verso, the right and left margins can be measured as 3 mm; there is a top margin of 5 mm, and the same bottom margin of 4–9 mm. The left margin is not justified, although some end-of-line letters are extended. Line numbers: 33 recto, 30 verso. Average line height (including the line space, with text line and line space generally of equal height): 5.2 cm (recto), 5.6 cm (verso). The writing on the recto is indeed more crowded, although on both sides the manuscript is tightly written.

The script is documentary (non-square), in the Babylonian Geonic style script, serifed. The writing is neat, even, and professionally executed; in spite of being crowded, the letters are well formed and the text is carefully laid out.

This single sheet, T-S 8K6, was originally part of a rotulus, as its recto and verso flip vertically (not sideways). The text is continuous, which indicates that this sheet was in fact at the bottom end of the rotulus (and thus half-way through the manuscript). Looking at the recto side, the top edge of the sheet is dented, whereas the bottom edge is smooth; this confirms that the rest of the rotulus was attached along its top (looking at the recto), most probably with glue. The near absence of margins is characteristic of rotuli. This was a cheaply produced, pocket-size book (less than 15 cm wide) which was evidently produced for personal reading and use.[3]

The sheet is mutilated in several places, especially with a large hole near the bottom left (recto side). There are small holes elsewhere, patches of staining (with some blurring of the ink), and areas of ink fading. The top line of the recto is poorly preserved. In many cases, however, the text can be securely restored on computational grounds.

Numbers and abbreviated words are variously marked with dots, primes, bars, or short slashes above the letters, a single mark often covering two letters, and sometimes not all the letters being covered; often there are no marks at all (typically, for numbers of parts in the *molad*). Because of the technical difficulty of replicating these different marks in the text edition, I have inserted dots above all letters for all numbers and abbreviations that are marked in some way in the manuscript.

3 I am grateful to Judith Schlanger for her advice.

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Contents

The fragment begins with the end of the fourth argument, which appears to be a refutation of the Palestinian calendrical tradition of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW. This formula means that the type of the year, or alternatively, the difference between the days of the week on which this New Year and the next New Year fall, can be worked out on the following principle: in a full year (Sh), the weekday interval is 6 (W) days in a plain year and 8 (Ḥ) in an intercalated year; in an orderly year (K), the interval is 5 (H) in a plain and 7 (Z) in an intercalated year; in a defective year (Ḥ), the interval is 4 (D) in a plain and 6 (W) in an intercalated year. The count of weekday intervals is inclusive: thus in a year that is orderly and plain (for example), the value of 5 means from Tuesday to Saturday (for a more detailed explanation, see Chapter 5, pp. 64–65).

Although this tradition is completely truthful in relation to the rabbinic calendar, the author sets out to undermine it, purely for polemical reasons. He does so by misinterpreting (perhaps deliberately) the formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW, and assuming that it refers to a non-inclusive count; thus, in the example above, 5 would mean Tuesday to Sunday—which is incorrect. As a result, all the values in this formula are incorrect (in relation to the rabbinic calendar), and excessive by 1.

The fifth argument (from recto line 4) is a refutation of the Palestinian addition of 641 parts to the midday limit. The addition of these parts is said to be contrived (recto 9–11) and self-contradictory, as the rule exists in different, inconsistent versions (recto 5–9; as discussed in Chapter 5, pp. 72–75, these versions reflect perhaps different stages in the evolution of the rule). The author misinterprets the rule as meaning that the same limits must be applied to the months of Nisan and Tishri, which leads to an arithmetical impossibility (recto 11–17). He then argues that in the course of the last 50 years, on ten occasions the dates of the calendar—as reliably known through elderly witnesses and documentary evidence—have contradicted the rule of 641 parts (recto 17–30; this is only true if one assumes his misinterpretation of the rule). The Palestinian calendar is further refuted on the basis of the misinterpretation assumed in the fourth argument, based on a non-inclusive count (recto 30–verso 8).

The sixth argument (from verso line 8 to the end) is a refutation of the Palestinian claim that the Babylonian postponement of Passover (in the year 922 CE) led to an excessive interval of 43 hours between the *molad* of Nisan and the first day of the month. This is true, our letter argues, but such an interval is not excessive, as it is a common occurrence in the rabbinic calendar; the interval between *molad* and first day of the month can sometimes extend to as much as 57 hours.

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Besides scribal errors, the text is prone to computational errors, which must therefore be ascribed to the author.[4]

Bibliography

Schechter (1901–1902) 44, 62–63 (Text VIII). Schechter's edition is riddled with errors, which are too numerous to be listed here in this edition.
Bornstein (1904) 80–86. Bornstein was entirely dependent on Schechter, although in a few cases he was able, purely through conjecture, to restore the correct readings.

4 The implications this may have as to the authorship are briefly discussed in my introduction to LMisc, p. 328 n. 9.

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L1Bab recto
[T-S 8K6 recto]

[.....] אשר [....] שאין יכול לומר מיום מולד ליום מולד היא שאין את
מוצא בו לא ששה[5] בפשוטה ולא שבעה ושמונה במעוברת · ואף אין את יכול לומר
מיום מולד ליום קבע היא · כי אז תמצא את הפסח בבֿדֿוֹ אלא מיום קבע קבע היא ולפיכך
מטרם הביננו מתי יהיה יום קידוש : לא אפשר להשתמש במסורת זו : והחמישי חשבון
אמרת · הזכיר בו שני דרכים שסותרין זה את זה · כתחילה אמר נולד ניסן באגהז 5
תשרי בגהז עד וֹ שעות אין דוחין את[6] לאחר וֹ שֹעֹ(ות)[7] דוחין אתו ניסן ובשבת[8] ותשר(י)
בשני עד וֹ שֹעֹ וּאֹמֹרֹתֹ : וחזר ואמר כל תשרי שנולד בבגהז בארבעת הימ[י]ם
עד וֹ שֹעֹ ואמרת אין דוחין אתו וכמה תשובות השיב ותיהו על זאת · כתחילה

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5 The dot on the top right of the first *shin* is most likely accidental, not deliberate pointing, since pointing is not used elsewhere in the manuscript.

6 *Sic*.

7 A standard abbreviation of שעות (in this manuscript), which I have not expanded elsewhere.

8 *Sic*; should be וניסן בשבת.

9 The author is arguing that the Palestinian formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW cannot refer to the weekday interval between the day when the *molad* of Tishri falls and the day of the next *molad* of Tishri, because this interval is always either 4 or 5 days in a plain year, and either 5 or 6 days in an intercalated year. Consequently, the intervals of 6 weekdays in a plain year, and 7 or 8 weekdays in an intercalated year, do not exist. In making this argument, the author misinterprets the formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW, by assuming that the count of weekdays in this tradition is non-inclusive: in his understanding, an interval of (for example) 5 means (for example) from Sunday to Friday. Nevertheless, the author is right that if this formula is interpreted as referring to the day of the *molad*, not all the intervals in this tradition will be possible. Assuming an inclusive count, he should have argued—to the same effect—that the intervals of 5 and 6 days in a plain year, and 8 in an intercalated year, do not exist.

10 Lit. 'day of fixation'. The formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW cannot refer to the weekday interval between the day of the *molad* of Tishri in year 1 and the calendar day of 1 Tishri in year 2.

11 The weekdays when Passover is not allowed to fall. The author does not justify or illustrate this claim, but this can easily be done. If, for example, the *molad* of Tishri in year 1 falls on Sabbath afternoon, the New Year will fall on Monday and the year will be deficient; in a plain year, New Year in year 2 will then fall on Thursday, but this is an interval of 5 days (from Sabbath to Thursday, as non-inclusively counted by the author), whereas the formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW would make it 4 in a plain, deficient year. If an interval of 4 days is applied, then New Year in year 2 will fall on Wednesday, which is a forbidden day. The previous Passover will fall on Monday, also forbidden.

12 Day of sanctification of the month, a.k.a. 'day of fixation', i.e. calendar day 1 of the month.

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L1Bab recto

[for you] cannot [say that it is from day of the *molad* to day of the *molad*, because you] do not
find, this way, either six in a plain (year) or seven or eight in an intercalated (year).[9] Nor can you say
(that it is) from day of the *molad* to calendar day;[10] for then, you will find that Passover falls on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday.[11] But rather, it is from calendar day to calendar day; and therefore,
we still do not understand when the day of sanctification[12] will be.[13] It is not possible to use this tradition. And the fifth (argument): the calculation of
641. Regarding this, he mentioned two ways which contradict one another. At the beginning he said that if Nisan is born on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath,
(or) Tishri [on] Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath until 6 hours, it is not postponed, but after 6 hours, it is postponed, (except for) Nisan on Sabbath and Tishri
on Monday, (where it is) until 6 hours and 641 (parts).[14] But (then) he changed his mind and said that every Tishri that is born on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath on these four days
until 6 hours and 641 is not postponed. And he gave several answers,[15] but they were vacuous on this point. Firstly,

13 This has presumably been explained already above. It is clear, however, that if the author is assuming non-inclusive count, the formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW is incorrect.

14 This alternative version of ben Meir's rule of 641–642, which limits it to when the New Year's *molad* falls on Monday, was incomprehensible to Bornstein, because the New Year of 923 CE, when the *molad* fell just after midday, was not on a Monday but on a Saturday; the rule of 641–642 should therefore not have been applied, and there would have been no disagreement or calendar controversy. For that reason, Bornstein suppressed the rule with a conjectural emendation (1904: 81 and n. 1). This emendation, however, had no basis in the manuscript. He later changed his mind, noting that the same version of ben Meir's rule also appeared in another text (LMisc), although the text available to him at the time (T-S 13K2 fol. 2r:19–v:3) was fragmentary and he had to restore it on the basis of conjecture (Bornstein 1904: 177–179, 1922*b*: 261–262). Our discovery of the missing fragment of LMisc, T-S NS 309.68b, confirms Bornstein's intuition, although his conjectural reconstruction is completely wrong (see now my edition of the complete text, LMisc fol. 6r:19–6v:3, in Chapter 11). This version of ben Meir's rule is now also attested in a number of other, newly discovered fragments: ENA 3235, and T-S Ar. 29.129. See discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 72–75.

15 To justify himself.

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דבריו האחרונים סותרין את הראשנים : ואף על פי כן חשבון אמרת במרת אין
לו עיקר מדברי חכמים : ואף מי שבדאו מלבו לא היה יודע בסוד העיבור
כלום : ולא זכר שאם נולד ניסן בו׳ שע׳ ביום בכל ימי אגה״ז יהי כנגדו תשרי
בח׳ שע׳ ותל״ח ביום בכל ימי בגהז · נמצא ניסן בכל הימים האלה קודם ו׳
שע׳ וקודם אמר״ת וראוי מבריו לקיימו בו ביום : ותשרי בכל הימים אחר ו׳ שע׳ות[16]
ואחרי אמרת · וראוי לדחותו מן היום ההוא : ונמצא בהיות ניסן באגה״ו[17] יהיה בינו ובין
תשרי ה׳ ימים ובהיותו בשבת ד׳ היום והיומים האלה היתירין מה יעשה בהן : אין להן
צד אלא למלאות אייר ותמוז או תמוז ואלול : או אחד מהן : טועה שבטועין אינו אומר
לא כן : והנה בתוך נ׳ שנה הקרובים אלינו עשו כל ישראל בעשר שנים מועדים שלא
בחשבון אמר״ת : שנת ת״ת לחרבן הבית חסר שנה : נולד ניסן י״[18] ז׳ ו׳ תק״נב[19] : פחות מן
אמרת ודחוהו כל ישראל לאחד בשבת : ושנת ת״ת נולד ניסן ל׳ א׳ ח׳ תתרבז[20] ונדחה

16 *Sic*. The scribe must have intended originally to write the abbreviated word, hence the primes on the first two letters (as everywhere else in the manuscript), but then wrote the word in full, as he saw he had come to the end of the line and some extra space was available.

17 The dot above the preposition is superfluous; this is common, however, in our corpus.

18 Abbreviation of יום, a standard shorthand in *moladot*; likewise ל׳ (on the next line) for לילה or לילי.

19 Should be תקנ״ט.

20 A scribal error for תתרכז, but this also is an error (an authorial, computational one): the text should read ט׳ תשמ׳. The author has taken the hours and parts of the previous month's *molad*, which is d6-8-1027, perhaps momentarily forgetting that this previous month was a second Adar and not Nisan.

21 Lit. 'even so'.

22 i.e. following it.

23 Suggested translation of מבריו (a word that is not attested elsewhere), by analogy with the phrase על בריו. The author is arguing that the rule of 6 hours 641 parts cannot apply both to Nisan and Tishri, because this leads (in this example) to incompatibility. However, this was surely not the intention of the Palestinians, whose rule must have only applied to Tishri. Again, we must suspect the author of deliberately distorting the Palestinian tradition in order to undermine it (Epstein 1905: 135–136 seeks to argue that they may be some truth in the claim that the Palestinians intended to apply the rule of 6 hours 641 parts to Nisan as well as to Tishri; but Epstein's argument is difficult to accept or understand).

24 Inclusively counted, e.g. from Sunday to Thursday. The author is inconsistently abandoning his own interpretation above (in the 'fourth' argument), which assumed a non-inclusive count. As we have seen, this assumption was used for polemical purposes, but now it is no longer necessary.

25 As in this case, Tishri will only be postponed by one day, from Monday to Tuesday, whereas in the other cases Tishri will postponed by two days.

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his last words contradict his first ones. And besides,[21] the calculation of
641–642 does not
have a basis in the words of the Sages. And also, the one who contrived it
in his heart did not know anything of the secret of
calendar calculation. For he did not remember that if Nisan is born at six
hours of the day in any of the weekdays of Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, or
Sabbath, then Tishri corresponding to it[22] will be
at 8 hours and 438 (parts) of the day in any one of the weekdays of Mon-
day, Tuesday, Thursday, or Sabbath; as a result, Nisan in all these days
will be before 6
hours and (needless to say) before (6 hours and) 641 (parts), and thus
surely[23] fit to be kept on that day, whereas Tishri in all these days will be
after 6 hours
and after 641 (parts), and it will be necessary to postpone it from that day;
and as a result, when Nisan will be on Sunday, Tuesday, or Thursday,
there will be between it and
Tishri 5 weekdays,[24] and when it will be on Sabbath, 4[25]—this extra day
and two days,[26] what shall he do with them? There is no solution
for them, except to make Iyar and Tammuz full, or Tammuz and Elul; or
one of them.[27] The most mistaken person would not say
this, no. Behold, within the last 50 years, in ten of the years all Israel kept
the festivals in contradiction to
the calculation of 641.[28] In the year 800 from the Destruction minus one
year, Nisan was born on d7-6-552,[29] (i.e.) less than
641, yet all Israel postponed it to Sunday. In the year 802, Nisan was born
on n1-8-1027,[30] and it was postponed

26 The interval between Passover and the New Year should always be 3 (inclusive), e.g. Sunday to Tuesday. The postponement of the New Year by one or two days (see previous note) increases this interval to 4 or 5, and necessitates the intercalation of one or two extra days in the intervening months, which is not allowed in the fixed rabbinic calendar.

27 The latter if only one day needs to be intercalated.

28 Assuming, again, that the rule of 6 hours 641 parts applies also to the month of Nisan (which really no one could ever have argued).

29 Should be 559 (presumably a scribal or minor computational error), as in 868 CE, the *molad* of Nisan was day 7 (Sabbath), 6 hours, 559 parts. If 867/8 CE = 799 era of Destruction, then this era had 69/70 CE as year 1.

30 Should be n1-9-740 (see note 20 for explanation of this grosser error), i.e. night of Sunday, 9 hours, 740 parts.

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לשלישי : שנת ת֞תֿג נולד תשרי יגא[31] צח ונדחה לחמישי : ושנת ת֞תֿד נולד ניסן
יֿה ה[32] תקלו ונדחה לשבת ושנת ת֞תֿיב נולד ניסן יֿ ד[33] תתרעט ונדחה לאחד בשבת
ושנת ת֞תֿכב נולד ניסן ל א יא נא ונדחה לשלישי :[34] [ושנת ת֞תֿכ]ג נולד תשרי יג ג
שפט[35] · ונדחה לחמישי : ושנת ת֞תֿכט נולד ניסן יאֿב[ת֞תֿרֿב ונדחה לש]לישי : ושנת
ת֞תֿמה נולד ניסן יֿג ד שלו ונדחה לחמישי ושנ[ת ת֞תֿמט נולד ניסן י]א ד שיג
ונדחה לשלישי : וכולן קודם אמרת בין ניסן ב[ין תשרי יש שהו קו]דם אמרת[36]
בחלקים מעט ויש שהו קודם אמרת בשעה וש[תי]ם ושלו[ש ויש ש]הו קרוב לח֞ שֿע
[וי]ש שהו קרוב לד֞[37] שֿע התבונן נא חכמי בשנים [הא]לה וקחם [...]ה הרבה שנים
[ה]מה : אלא שלא יאמר משכתני רחוק אלא היש[....][38] כל שכן הזקנים הבאים בימים
מעדין על הנ֞ שנה האלו כי אמת אמרתי בהן [.....]שאר֞עו[39] בכך הנה הכתובות
[וה]שטרות עדים נאמנים יענו בו בפניו ולא יבושו : ול[...]לה מכל אלה כי העושה
על אמרת ואינו מש[גיח] על ד֞ שערים : יקראוהו שנים שיערך[40] לעשות שלמין
יותר ממרחשון ו[כסלו] שכל שנה פשוטה שמולד תשרי מתחלת שעה אֿ
ש[ל יו]ם גֿ ועד וֿ שעות דינו כדבריו לקיימו בו ביום : ויגיע מולד תשרי של שנה

31 Should be יגב. This error may also be computational and thus authorial.
32 Should be year ת֞תֿג and hour וֿ. Again, computational error must be suspected.
33 Should be גֿ.
34 This colon sign is more elaborate.
35 Should be תפט.
36 Dash at end of line, as a space filler.
37 Perhaps a scribal error for לי֞.
38 Maybe הישישים וכל שכן.
39 As tentatively read by Schechter.
40 This is the reading, but it is probably an error for שיצרך (i.e. שיוצרך).
41 Even though this night-time *molad* fell long before the limit of d1-6-641.
42 Should be d3-2-98.
43 Should be d5-6-536.
44 Should be d7-3-1079.
45 Should be 489.
46 One would expect a higher number than 8; this is perhaps a scribal error for 10 (see note 37).
47 And thus, following the rule of 6 hours, 641 parts, these days should not have been postponed. All this is to ignore, however, that postponements can be made for other reasons—which undermines completely the author's argument.

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to Tuesday.[41] In year 803, Tishri was born on d3-1-98,[42] and postponed to Thursday. In year 804, Nisan was born
d5-5-536,[43] and postponed to Sabbath. In year 812, Nisan was born d7-4-1079,[44] and postponed to Sunday.
In year 822, Nisan was born n1-11-51, and postponed to Tuesday. [In year 82]3, Tishri was born d3–3-
389,[45] and postponed to Thursday. In year 829, Nisan was born d1[-2-1002, and postponed to Tu]esday. In year
845, Nisan was born d3-4-336, and postponed to Thursday. In yea[r 849, Nisan was born d]1-4-313,
and postponed to Tuesday. All these cases are before 641, whether in Nisan or [Tishri; some are be]fore 641
by a few parts, and some are before 641 by an hour or t[w]o or thre[e, and some a]re close to 8 hours (beforehand)
[and so]me are close to 4[46] hours (beforehand).[47] Please reflect, my sage, on [the]se years and take them (?) … these years are
many. But lest anyone says 'you have drawn me too far (back in time)', rather, the el[derly and] all the more so the elders who are advancing in years
[can tes]tify on these 50 years that I have said the truth regarding them … that they occurred in this way, for the marriage contracts
and (other) legal documents, all reliable witnesses, will testify on this before him, and will not be put to shame and … from all these.[48] For whoever follows
641 and does not take account of the Four Gates will encounter years in which he will need to make more
full (months) than Marḥeshwan and Kislew. Indeed, in every plain year whose *molad* of Tishri falls from the first hour
to six hours of the day of Tuesday, the rule according to him should be to set it (the New Year) on the same day, and the *molad* of Tishri of the next year

48 The text is mutilated, but the general sense is clear: the calendar of the last 50 years which the author has outlined can be verified from the memory of the elders and from legal documents that were drawn throughout this period.

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L1Bab verso
[T-S 8K6 verso]

הבאה מן ח שׁעׁ ותתעו ביום ז עד ב שׁעׁ ותתעו בלילי א בשבת ומכל מקום צריך לדחותו
לשיני :[49] נמצא ביניהן ז [...][50] אף על פי שאת עושה אותם שלמין · יותר יום אחד שאין
לו מקום : וכן תשרי שנ[ול]ד בשנה מעוברת ז שׁעׁ ביום ג או ח : כי משפטו כדבריו
להיות בחמישי ולשנה הבאה יהי מולד תשרי ד שׁעׁ ותקפט ביום ב או ה ותקפט
ודי[נ]ו לקדשו בו ביום · נמצא ביניהן ה ימים שאפילו את ע[ו]שה · מרחשון וכסליו
חסרין · אדיין השנה חסירה יום אחד : יבחר הא[..][51]א]ת מי יחסר השבט או ניסן או סיואן
או אב או תשרי כאשר בחר לו בתחילה את מי [.... ח]ילופין :[52] ומדוע לא תעיר נבוני
ותקיץ לכל הטעיות האלה : והששי כתב בו לכ[ם מר]חק[53] יום קידוש ניסן מיום מולדו
מג שׁעׁ והיה בעיניו כי הדבר הזה תמה מאד : ו[זאת][54] מרוב [.....]ו של כותב ·
שלא הבין כי החכמים פעמים שמרחיקין יום קי[דוש נז שׁ]עׁ תנב חלק
ואין חוששין : כי שנה מעוברת שנולד תשרי י [ו ח תצב מרחשון וכס]לו שלמין בה
על כן יהי מולד אדר שני לבי[55] תתקל ונבקע[56] ברביע [ביניהן מז קנ מול]ד אייר לה
ב שנו ונבקע בשבת ביניהן מה תשכד : תמוז ל א ג [תתס]ב [ונב]קע [בש]לישי ביניהן

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49 The colon is lying horizontally, and so near the end of line 3.

50 Bornstein conjectures: ימים.

51 Bornstein conjectures: האדון, but this is a strange formulation. Better perhaps: האחד. Of the third letter, only the right upright stroke is visible, with a further trace of ink on the top left.

52 Bornstein conjectures: את מי למלא חילופין.

53 My conjecture.

54 My conjecture. The bottom left stroke of a *taw* is visible.

55 Should be: לבֿ.

56 *Sic*, for ונקבע; an erroneous metathesis that continues throughout the rest of the text.

57 i.e. between the weekdays of the two New Years. Again, at this stage the author is counting inclusively.

58 In a plain year that is full, the interval between the weekdays of the two New Years (inclusively counted) is only 6. An extra day needs somehow to be inserted in the year, but there is no place to do this: the order of months in the rabbinic calendar does not allow any other deficient month to be filled. The author is pointing to a genuine problem, which the Four Gates address by introducing further limits which prevent the first Tishri (in this example) from falling on Tuesday. The Palestinians, however, had other ways of dealing with this problem (and securing the postponement of this first Tishri from Tuesday), e.g. with the help of the tradition of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW, as is exemplified in ben Meir's First Letter.

59 This wording is slightly imprecise. The author means that the interval between the time of the *molad* of Nisan (in 922 CE, which was n1-5-3) and the beginning of calendar day 1 Nisan (Tuesday, as opposed to Sunday according to the Palestinians) was almost exactly 43 hours. This objection to the Babylonian reckoning is not attested elsewhere in the corpus. Bornstein (1922*b*: 254–255) finds an interesting parallel to it in a much later source.

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L1Bab verso

will fall between 8 hours 876 (parts) on the day of Sabbath and 2 hours 876 (parts) on the night of Sunday, and in any event he will have to postpone it (the New Year)
to Monday. As a result, between them there will be 7 weekdays;[57] and even if you make them (the months) full, one extra day is (needed), for which
there is no place.[58] Likewise, Tishri that is born in an intercalated year at 7 or 8 hours of the day of Tuesday, its rule according to him should be (for the New Year)
to occur Thursday, and in the next year the *molad* of Tishri will be 4 hours 589 (parts), or 5 and 589 (parts), of the day of Monday,
and the rule will be to sanctify it on that same day. As a result, between them there will be 5 weekdays, so that even if you make Marḥeshwan and Kislew
deficient, the year still (needs to be) reduced by one day. Let him choose [this], which (month) shall he reduce? Shevat, or Nisan, or Siwan,
or Av, or Tishri?—similarly to when he chose previously which (extra month) to fill, in compensation. Why do you not wake up, my scholar,
and awaken to all these errors? And the sixth (argument): he wrote, 'For you, the distance of the day of sanctification of Nisan from the day of its *molad*
is 43 hours!'[59]—and in his eyes, this was very surprising. But [this was] due to the excessive … of the writer.
For he did not understand that sometimes the Sages move away the day of san[ctification (as much as) 57 ho]urs 452 parts (from the *molad*),
and they are not concerned. For in an intercalated year where Tishri is born on d[6-8-492,[60] Marḥeshwan and Kis]lew are full,
and therefore the *molad* of the second Adar is n2-10-930,[61] and it (1 Adar II) is fixed on Wednesday, (so) [between them there are 47–150;[62] the *mola*]*d* of Iyar is n5-2-356,
and it is fixed on Sabbath, between them are 45–724; Tammuz is n1–3-[86]2, [and it is fix]ed [on Tu]esday, between them are

60 The significance of this example is that this *molad* of Tishri is just one part after the limit of Friday (in an intercalated year), as appears in the Four Gates. The same applies to the other examples below.

61 Should be n2-0-930.

62 Between the *molad* of Adar II and the beginning of calendar day 1 Adar II, there are 47 hours and 150 parts.

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מֵד רִיחַ : אלול לד ה רפח · ונבקע בש[[ל]ישי[63] ביניהן מֵג[64] תִשְׁצַבּ : וכן יגיע בד
חדשים שבשנה מעוברת שמולדה יאח תצב : וכן תשרי בשנה פשוטה שנולד
לוֹט רֵהּ יהיו מרחשון וכסליו שלמים גם המה : ונמצאו מולדי אדר ואייר תמוז ואלול
כמשפטיהם בשתי השנים המעוברות אשר פירשתים : וכן ימי קידושיהן והביניים
כאשר כתבתי וכן יארע בתשרי שבשנה פשוטה שנולד לֹ אֹ טֹ רֵהּ וכן יארע בשנה
פשוטה שנולד תשרי לֵהּ טֹ רֵהּ אבל בתשרי שבשנה פשוטה שמולדו
לֹגֹט רֵהּ למען כי מרחשון וכסלו כסדרן : יהי בה ששה חדשים יתירין על המידה
הזאת : מרחשון יֹד טֹ תתרצח[65] ונבקע בשבת ביניהן נ פֹּבּ · טבת יז יא תכד ·
ומתקדש בשלישי ביניהן מח תֹּרֹנוֹ : וכן אדר ואייר ותמוז ואלול מולדיהן וקידושיהן[66]
ומשפטיהן ומסרות[67] שביניהן כראשנ[ו]ת : ואת מוצא יותר על כן בשנה פשוטה שנולד
תשרי לוֹ תט · כי מרחשון וכסלו שלמין על כן יהיו בה חֹ חדשים יתירין על המידה
הזאת : ואלוהן[68] כסלו לבא תתקיה ונבקע ברביעי ביניהן מוֹ קסֹהּ · טבת יג ב תרכח
ונבקע בששי ביניהן נוֹ תֹּנבּ : שבט להג שמא וקידושו בשבת ביניהן מֵד תשלט
אדר יוד יד[69] ונבקע בשני ביניהן נֹהּ תתרכו : ניסן ל אד תתמז ונבקע בשלישי
ביניהן מֹג רֹלֹג : אייר יבה תקס ונבקע בחמישי ביניהן נֹד תֹּקֹכּ : תמוז יהו תתרסו
וקידושו באחד ביניהן נֹג יד : אלול יא ח תֹּצבּ וקידושו ברביעי ביניהן נֹא תֹּקֹפּחּ :
מיכ[ו ידע]נו כי אשר דיבק הדברים האלה : אינו יודע באומנות זו כלום[70]

63 The text seems to read בשלישי, but an attempt may have been made to correct it to בשישי, by erasing the *lamed*. This activity, in turn, may have caused the paper to get stained under and around this word.

64 Should be מֹבּ.

65 Should be תתקצח.

66 Dash at end of line, as a space filler.

67 Bornstein corrects this ingenuously to ומותרות.

68 For ואלו הן.

69 Should be נד.

70 Written over כלל.

71 Adar II, Iyar, Tammuz, Elul; the intervals between *molad* and beginning of the month are identical.

72 Lit. 'laws'. The *moladot* are in fact identical expect for the weekdays, and so are the intervals between *molad* and beginning of the month ('days of sanctification').

73 Actually, only the first two of these six months have an interval between *molad* and beginning of the month that is greater than those previously mentioned.

74 Should be d4-9-998.

75 i.e. as in the first paradigm above. 'Intervals' translates Bornstein's conjectural מותרות (lit. 'excesses'); the reading of manuscript, 'traditions', does not fit the context.

76 Specifically, a plain year that follows an intercalated year and precedes a plain year.

77 Again, not all of these eight months have an interval between *molad* and beginning of the month that is greater than those previously mentioned.

78 57 hours and 492 parts: this is the largest possible interval between *molad* and beginning of the month, which the author announced at the beginning. Although he has now reached is target, for the sake of completion he gives the other large intervals for the rest of the year.

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44–218; Elul is n4-5-288, and it is fixed on Friday, between them are 43–792. And the same result is obtained in the 4
15 months[71] of an intercalated year whose *molad* is d1-8-492. And likewise in a plain year where Tishri is born on
n6-9-205, Marḥeshwan and Kislew will also be full, and as a result the *moladot* of Adar, Iyar, Tammuz, and Elul will have
the same values[72] as the two intercalated years which I have explained, and so the days of sanctification and the intervals
as I have written (above). And so will occur in a plain year where Tishri is born on n1-9-205, and so will occur in a plain
year where Tishri is born on n5-9-205. However, in (the case) of Tishri in a plain year whose *molad* is
20 n3-9-205, since Marḥeshwan and Kislew are regular, six months in it (in the year) will exceed this
measure:[73] Marḥeshwan is d4-9-1098,[74] and it is fixed on Sabbath, between them are 50–82; Tevet is d7-11-424,
and it is sanctified on Tuesday, between them are 48–656; and so Adar, Iyar, Tammuz, and Elul, their sanctification
and values and the intervals between them are like the first.[75] But you find even more than that in a plain year[76] where Tishri
is born on n6–409. For Marḥeshwan and Kislew are full, and therefore 8 months in it (in the year) will exceed this
25 measure,[77] as follows: Kislew is n2-1-915, and it is fixed on Wednesday, between them are 46–165; Tevet is d3-2-628,
and it is fixed on Friday, between them are 57–452;[78] Shevat is n5-3-341, and its sanctification is on Sabbath, between them are 44–739;
Adar is d6-4-14,[79] and it is fixed on Monday, between them are 55–1026; Nisan is n1-4-847, and it is fixed on Tuesday,
between them are 43–233; Iyar is d2-5-560, and it is fixed on Thursday, between them are 54–520; Tammuz is d5-6-1066,
and its sanctification is on Sunday, bet[w]een them are 53–14; Elul is d1-8-492, and its sanctification is on Wednesday, between them are 51–588.
30 From th[is we kn]ow that whoever concocted these things does not know anything about this art.[80]

79 Should be d6-4-54.

80 The art of calendar calculation. Cf. LMisc fol. 4r:7 (Letter 2). According to Bornstein (1904: 78), the author is projecting his own ignorance unto his opponent; but see discussion above, p. 327 and n. 8.

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CHAPTER 13

Babylonian Letter 2

This text, attested in a single Cairo Genizah fragment (T-S AS 83.258), is a recent discovery. It is a calendrical polemic, mostly about the Four Gates. Although Babylonians and Palestinians are not mentioned in the fragment, and there is no explicit reference to the controversy of 921/2, there are enough similarities with other polemical letters in our corpus (in particular, Letter 2 of the Letters Miscellany, and Babylonian Letter 1) to relate this text to the calendar controversy. The text is responding, in the fragment extant, to two arguments that were made by ben Meir against the Babylonians at the time of the calendar controversy: that the Four Gates, a Babylonian algorithm, are inadequate because they do not cover all the days of the week, and that festivals should not be excessively postponed, as the Babylonians did in the years of the controversy. It also rejects the Palestinian addition of 641 parts to the midday calendar limits.

I have called this text 'Babylonian Letter 2', because of its pro-Babylonian stance, and because of its close affinity to the text that I have called 'Babylonian Letter 1'. In truth, there is nothing in this fragment to confirm that this text is part of a letter, as opposed to a treatise or some other type of writing; for example, it does not refer to any addressee. But the analogy of our text with other letters in the corpus is sufficient to identify it, at least provisionally, as a letter of the same kind.

This text also echoes the first of Saadya's Letters, in its dismissal of new moon sightings as being irrelevant to the fixed rabbinic calendar. This is perhaps the most important feature of this text. Like Saadya's letter, it implies that for some Rabbanite Jews, new moon sightings were still of some calendrical significance in the early tenth century. Evidence of this, on the Palestinian side, can possibly be found in the Palestinian Polemic (PalPol) within our corpus.

Just like Babylonian Letter 1, this fragment is part of a rotulus and can be dated to the early eleventh century. It is written in a Babylonian Geonic style script, appropriate for the Babylonian affiliation of the author.

Physical Description

Paper, brown ink (perhaps a plant ink—see discussion below). Dimensions: 7.4 cm × 14.5 cm (text: recto 6.3 cm × 13.5 cm, verso 6.8 cm × 14 cm). Margins

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of recto: right 6 mm, left c. 5 mm, bottom: 10 mm—5 mm (decreasing right to left); no top margin. Margins of verso: right 3–4 mm, left 1–2 mm, top 3 mm, bottom 3–4 mm (the latter is not really a margin, as the text continuous beyond). No left margin justification. Line numbers: 11 recto, 12 verso. Average line height (including text and space line): 5.7 mm. Space between lines tends to be slightly higher than the text, which yields a well spaced-out layout, somewhat less crowded than L1Bab.

The script is in Babylonian Geonic style, professionally executed; it is serifed and calligraphic, although rapid with a tendency to cursive. Single-digit numbers (and occasionally, two-digit numbers) are consistently marked with a dot above the letter(s); larger numbers are not marked at all; abbreviations are marked with a slash above the word (sometimes to the left of last letter). Vocalization is very rarely used, for disambiguation (verso line 1).

Like LBab1, this is the fragment of a rotulus, as it flips vertically from recto to verso; its text is continuous, which indicates that this was the bottom end of the rotulus (and thus, our text is at the mid-point of the manuscript). Its width is almost identical to LBab1, which suggests that both rotuli were of similar size. Its height is much smaller than LBab1; but this is because the fragment has been torn off much nearer to the bottom. The fragment appears to be torn, indeed, rather than a glued sheet that became detached, as on the recto the upper line of text is cut through its middle; the tear, nevertheless, is horizontal and straight.

The upper right corner of the recto (lower right of the verso) is torn off, and there are a few tears and holes within the fragment. More importantly, the paper is heavily stained and damaged, with the stains going through almost equally on both sides. The ink is very faded in many places, making the text almost completely illegible.

Legibility

Because of the poor condition of this fragment, legibility has been a major issue. The use of imaging techniques did not assist much in the recovery of the text.

On 22 July 2015, Marina Rustow and Sacha Stern made an initial attempt, at the Cambridge University Library, to read the fragment under infra-red light, but this provided no improvement. In November 2017, Zina Cohen (Paris) applied near-infra-red light to digital images of the fragment, using a Dino-Lite digital microscope, but this had the effect of causing the appearance of the ink to fade further. She commented that this may indicate the use of plant ink,

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which is relatively uncommon.[1] In January 2018, Cambridge University Library supplied me with ultra-violet images, taken without filters and processed in three different ways to enhance the readability of the fragment. The improvement was sporadic and marginal, and in many cases, the ink appeared to fade further (see Plates 21–22; areas where legibility has been improved under ultra-violet light are referred to in the text edition). Maciej Pawlikowski (CUL) also checked the blank spots with an ultra-violet microscope, but no ink particles were visible. Ivan Shevchuk (Hamburg) investigated the potential of multi-spectral imaging; his provisional conclusion, based on the ultra-violet images, was that significantly better results were unlikely to be achieved, although an attempt might be worth making in the future.[2]

In some places, nevertheless, the calendrical contents have been sufficiently predictable to enable a reconstruction of most of the text.

Contents

The letter responds to a numbered series of arguments, starting in this fragment from argument 5, and ending at argument 7. Numbered arguments are similarly refuted in Letter 2 of the Letters Miscellany and in Babylonian Letter 1, although the argument and numbering in each of these letters are different, which clearly marks them out as separate compositions.

Most of the text extant is taken up with the refutation of the fifth argument, which is very similar in contents to the refutation of the second argument in LMisc Letter 2. By analogy with LMisc Letter 2, where the refutation of the argument is more completely preserved, it may be inferred that the fifth argument in our text (or in the author's words, the 'fifth error') was that the Four Gates fail to provide all the information needed, because they only refer to four days of the week (the days on which the New Year can fall). The refutation, in this text as in LMisc Letter 2, consists in demonstrating that explicitly or implicitly, the Four Gates refer to these four days of the week several times over (recto line 1–verso line 6); the idea is apparently to demonstrate the thoroughness of the algorithm. Within the discussion, the point is made in passing that the Palestinians' addition of 641 parts is contradicted by the midday limits in the Four Gates (recto lines 7–8).

1 Zina Cohen, email of 8 November 2017.

2 Ivan Shevchuk, email of 1 February 2018; this project is still in planning. I am grateful to all these individuals for their technical assistance.

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The sixth argument appears to refer to the Babylonians' decision to postpone the New Year, in 922 CE, by two days; the Palestinians argued that this could lead to the new moon crescent being sighted too early, before the beginning of the calendar month. The refutation consists in quoting a passage from the Babylonian Talmud (*bRosh ha-Shanah* 25a), a story that demonstrates that the rabbis were not concerned about the new moon being sighted too early (verso lines 7–10). At this point the text becomes very illegible, and it is impossible to reconstruct what the seventh argument might have been; the end suggests that it is about the authentic tradition regarding the calendar (lines 10–12).

Bibliography

Unpublished; discovered by Nadia Vidro in March 2015.

My translation is of the reconstructed text.

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L2Bab recto
[T-S AS 83.258 recto][3]

[ ] תצא משעה ט ביום ו למען תוסיף עליו חלק[4] תקפט
[שע כא ה ימ ויגי]ע בש[בי]עת מיום ה וכן עד רד משעה י מליל ו בפשטה אחר
[פשוטה תוסי]ף דח תתעו ויגיע לסוף ו שע מיום ג וכן עד תח משעה א
בלילי ו בשתיהן פ[שוטו]ת למען תוסיף ד ח תתעו עליו פעמים [וי]גיע בשלישית
לסוף ו שע ביום[5] ז : וכן בשנה פשוטה שנולד תשרי ברד משעה י
בלילי ה כדי[6] שתוסיף ד ח[7] תתעו ויגיע לסוף ⟨ו⟩ שע[8] מיום שני הא למדת
שהזכיר ד ימי בגהז שתשרי חל להיות בהן : ואמר בכולן אם עבר על ו שע חלק א
דוחין אותו בלא אמרת ולא במרת : וגם נתן מל[דות] בששי {בשני}[9] שאין תשרי
חל בהן : ושאר השערים שונין את הימים : כי גבול תצא [משע[10] ט ביום א במעבר]ת שונה

3 Traces of letters above the first line, belonging to a line of text that has been cut through its middle, could not be read or transcribed.
4 Abbreviation of חלקים.
5 Reading enhanced by ultra-violet imaging.
6 Reading enhanced by ultra-violet imaging.
7 A dot is expected above this letter, but it is not visible in any of the images.
8 The abbreviation sign is barely visible.
9 It this reading is correct, it would be an erroneous word.
10 There are possibly faint traces of this word. The text can be reconstructed, however, on the basis of the calendrical content.
11 The fragment begins with an explanation of the limits in the Gate of Saturday, one of the Four Gates. In this Gate, the *molad* and its limits are on Friday or Saturday, and the New Year is on Saturday. In an intercalated year, the limit is day of Friday, 8 hours, 491 parts. The length of an intercalated year (the total of 13 lunations, after casting out all seven-day weeks) is 5 days, 21 hours, and 589 parts. When one adds this value to the limit of day of Friday, 8 hours, 491 parts, one obtains the limit that will apply as a result in the following year. This limit is midday (the beginning of the 7th hour) of Thursday, which according to a fundamental rule of the calendar, can never be exceeded. What this calculation demonstrates is the rationale for the limit in the previous year (day Friday, 8–491): for if this limit is exceeded, the midday rule will be breached in the next year. But what is important for our author is that the limit of Thursday midday is inferable from the limit of the previous year, even though it is a Friday limit.
12 As we are now referring to the limit of a plain year, the value of a plain year needs to be added to obtain the limit of the next year. This value is 4 days, 8 hours, and 876 parts (the total of 12 lunations, modulo 7 days). Again, what is demonstrated is that the limit of Tuesday is inferable from a limit of Friday.
13 This year and the next year are plain.

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L2Bab recto

(…) 491 (parts) in the 9th hour on the day of Friday, so when you add to it 589 (parts),
21 hours, 5 days, it reaches the seventh (hour) of the day of Thursday;[11] and likewise, in a plain (year) following a plain (year), (the limit is) until 204 (parts) of the 10th hour
of the night of Friday, add 4 (days) 8 (hours) 876 (parts), and it reaches the end of the 6th hour of the day of Tuesday;[12] and likewise, when both (years) are plain,[13] (the limit is) until
408 (parts) of the 1st hour in the night of Friday, so add twice 4 (days) 8 (hours) 876 (parts),[14] and in the third year it will reach
the end of the 6th hour on the day of Saturday. And likewise,[15] in a plain year (the limit is when) Tishri is born at 204 (parts) of the 10th hour
in the night of Thursday, so add 4 (days) 8 (hours) 876 (parts), and it reaches the end of the 6th hour of the day of Monday. Behold, you learn (from this)
that it mentions[16] the four days of Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, when Tishri can fall. And it says in all of them: if (the *molad*) exceeds 6 hours by 1 part,
it is postponed—without 641 and 642.[17] And it also gives *moladot* on Friday, when Tishri
cannot fall.[18] And the other Gates repeat the days a second time: for the limit of 491 (parts) in the 9th hour on the day of Sunday repeats

14 For the next two consecutive plain years.

15 So far the author has shown that the midday limits of Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday are all inferable from the limits of Friday (which are in the Gate of Saturday). To complete this result, and to find a similarly implicit reference to the midday limit of Monday, the author is forced to use a limit from another Gate, that of Thursday.

16 'It' refers to the Gate of Saturday (of the Four Gates), although the Gate of Thursday has also been used for one of the limits (see previous note).

17 The midday limit is stated in the Four Gates without the addition of 641 parts, as claimed by the Palestinians.

18 The point seems to be that the day of Friday is also mentioned, in this way, in the Gate of Saturday.

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להזכיר ו שע[19] של יום ז וגבול רד שבה שונה[20] להזכיר ו שע שליום ה והזכרת
חצי יום ג מפורשת בייחוד הא למדת[21] כי הזכיר יום גה ז [.....]ל הימים

L2Bab verso
[T-S AS 83.258 verso]

[...] : וכן שֵׁלֵש[22] להזכיר ו שע של יום ג באמרו לדחות תשרי שלא[חר מ]עב[רת אחר]
[תק]פ[ט בשע] ד ביום שני מפני שכשהוספת על חצי יום ג בשנת אשתקד [ה כא] תקפט
[י]גיע עד היום הזה המפורש : ושילש[23] להזכיר יום ז באמרו כי אחר רד משע
י[24] בלילי ג נדחה לה : ואף ריבע להזכיר יום ז באמרו כי אחרי תרצה משע
יב בלילי ד שלמין [ג]ם לתשובת השנה יגיע עד ט רד שלשלשי ולתחלת שנה שלישית
יגיע עד סוף ו שע ב[יו]ם ז : על כן החכם יבין כל אלה וישכילם ולא יאמר כי לא
[....] בד [....] אלא ד[...] בלי דעת : והטעות השישית חוששין
אנו פן תיראה הלבנה[25] קודם יום הקידוש ביום אחר[ון] של שנה האומר כן
ישמע מנשמתן[26] הדתנן פעם אחת נתקשרו שמים ב[עבי]ם כוֹל לא היה חושש לכך

19 The abbreviation mark is possibly visible in the ultra-violet image.
20 Vertical line running down from the bottom of the *shin*, resembling a cantillation mark (which it cannot be, however, as it is an unstressed syllable).
21 I am grateful to Nadia Vidro and Zvi Stampfer for this reading, which was subsequently confirmed by the ultra-violet images.
22 This word is exceptionally vocalized, for disambiguation.
23 There appears to be a *ḥiriq* under the *yod* (whereas it should be under the first *shin*), but it is not visible in the ultra-violet image, and thus possibly not an ink mark.
24 A dot is missing above this letter.
25 This reading was subsequently confirmed by the ultra-violet image.
26 Probably a mistake for ממשנתן. This word is only legible in the ultra-violet image.
27 i.e. implicitly refers to it, as this limit will apply in the following year.
28 The midday limit of Tuesday is explicit in the Gate of Tuesday (where it applies in intercalated years). Why this is mentioned here is unclear. The whole point of this argument is not to mention the limits that are explicit in the Four Gates, but rather those that are implicit or inferable from them. Further on, in the verso lines 1–3, the author explains how the midday limit of Tuesday can be inferred from a limit in the Gate of Monday; this is the second (and last) possible inference of the midday limit of Tuesday, and it should therefore have been mentioned here, rather than there.
29 The end of this sentence is illegible and/or missing, but presumably the key word in it is 'twice'.
30 i.e. day of Monday, 4–589, a limit that is explicit in the Four Gates.
31 The author omits to explain that this limit is designed to prevent, in the subsequent year, the breach of the limit of midday on Saturday.
32 My reading is fragmentary but the sense is clear: the sixth argument of the Palestinians is that if the New Year is postponed by two days, as in 922 CE (from Tuesday to Thursday), the new moon crescent may be sighted too early, before the day of sanctification (i.e. the first day of the calendar month).

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the mention[27] of 6 hours on the day of Saturday; and the limit of 204 (parts) on the same (day) repeats the mention of 6 hours on the day of Thursday. And the mention of
midday Tuesday is explicit on its own.[28] Behold, you learn that it mentions the days of Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday … the days

L2Bab verso

…[29] And similarly, it mentions a third time 6 hours of the day of Tuesday, by saying that Tishri is postponed after an intercalated year (that is) after
589 (parts) in the 4th hour of the day of Monday, because when last year you added to midday of Tuesday (the value of) 5 (days), 21 (hours), 589 (parts),
it comes to this day[30] explicitly mentioned. And it mentions a third time the day of Saturday, by saying that after 204 (parts) of the 10th
hour in the night of Tuesday, it is postponed to Thursday;[31] and it even mentions a fourth time the day of Saturday, by saying that after 695 (parts) of the 12th
hour of the night of Wednesday, (the months) are full, so the next year it will reach 9 (hours) 204 (parts) of Tuesday, and at the beginning of the third year
it will reach the end of 6 hours on the day of Saturday. Therefore, let the wise man understand all this and comprehend it, and let him not say that he did not
… without knowledge. And the sixth error is that 'we are concerned
lest the moon be seen before the day of sanctification,[32] on the last day of the year.' Whoever says this,
let him hear from their teaching 'which we have learnt: once the sky became knotted with clouds, etc.'[33]—he was not concerned about this,

33 This is the incipit of a story in the Babylonian Talmud, *bRosh ha-Shanah* 25a: once on a cloudy day, people thought they had seen the new moon crescent and wished to declare the beginning of the new month; whereupon Rabban Gamaliel objected that the month could not be shorter than 29 days, and that the new month therefore had to be postponed (on this Talmudic passage, see Stern 2001: 201–202; id. 2016*a*: 140–144). Although this story suggests that the new moon sighting might have been erroneous, the author of our text takes it as evidence that even if the new moon had really been sighted, the calendar month could still have been postponed to a later day. This proves that the calendar need not be concerned about early sightings of the new moon.

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10 ש[.....] לראותה לכז והוא חשש פן תיראה לכז : והשביעית
[ ] כי על [.....] הטעו את עמי לאמר שלום
[ ] שבא לפני [.....]ת וב[..]קו כחוקי התורה אשר מסרו

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10 that … to see it on the 27th;[34] yet he is concerned lest he sees it on the
27th![35] And the seventh
(error) … for … they have misled my people saying, 'Peace'
… according to the laws of the Torah that were transmitted

34 According to most versions of this Talmudic passage, the new moon was sighted on eve of the 29th (thus one day too early); but according to one of the earlier manuscripts of *bRosh ha-Shanah*, ms British Library Harley 5508, it was on the 27th, and this version is also attested in the late eleventh-century *Megillat Evyatar* (T-S 10 K 7.1, fol. 3v, ll. 7–13; in Schechter 1901–1902: 466). Our text appears to be assuming this version. The use of this version in this early tenth-century text does not prove, however, that it is more ancient or more authentic: since it implies that the next month had to be postponed by at least two days, it is better suited to the present argument, and might have been favoured by the author as a matter of choice.

35 This clause refers apparently to the Palestinian against whom our author is polemicizing: the Palestinian is wrong to ignore the Talmudic evidence—which we may note, however, is only attested in the Babylonian Talmud—and object to the possibility of the new moon being sighted before the beginning of the calendar month.

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CHAPTER 14

Discourse on the Midday Limit

This text, in Judeo-Arabic, is preserved in one very fragmentary folio, T-S AS 160.96 (recto). What survives of the text is sufficient to indicate that it is about the midday calendar limit, whereby the New Year is postponed if the *molad* of Tishri occurs after midday (the rule later known as *molad zaqen*). Babylonians and Palestinians are not explicitly mentioned, but the text contrasts the Babylonian limit of midday with the Palestinian limit of midday and 641 parts.

Although the subject matter is thus related to the controversy of 921/2, it is difficult to establish more precisely how this text is related to it. The author appears to reject the Palestinian limit in favour of the Babylonian one, but it is difficult to be certain of this. On line 8, the author mentions having said something to someone; this suggests personal engagement in a polemic about the midday limit, and raises the possibility that the author participated in the controversy of 921/2. But this is not certain, and a later date for this text is equally possible.

The manuscript is written in Babylonian style, and can be dated palaeographically to the early eleventh century. The Judeo-Arabic orthography, however, is rather unusual for this period, with Hebraized double spellings of *yod* (lines 10, 13) and *waw* (ll. 8, 9), and non-standard *plene* spellings. This is normally a feature of late twelfth or thirteenth-centuries manuscripts; but according to Blau and Hopkins (2017: 47–48), the irregular *plene* and deficient spelling of vowels is also a feature of early Judeo-Arabic that disappeared last in the course of the tenth century, and is still detectable in texts that no longer exhibit other salient features of this early spelling. The spelling, in our manuscript, of 3sg and 3pl suffixes as וה (ll. 14, 21) and הום (line 17) is also, according to Blau and Hopkins, a feature of early Judeo-Arabic. The palaeographic dating to the early eleventh century is thus conceivable if one assumes that the fragment displays some last vestiges of earlier spelling conventions.[1]

1 For this paragraph I am entirely dependent on the advice of Judith Schlanger, Amir Ashur, one of the peer reviewers, and especially Nadia Vidro.

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Physical Description

Paper, brown ink. Dimensions: 18.5 cm × 12 cm (fragmentary; maximum height and width). Margins: right (verso) 6–7 mm, left (recto) c. 10 mm (not justified), bottom (verso) 5–7 mm (the bottom margin is difficult to measure on the recto as a line of text appears to have been added into it). Line number (recto): 28. Average line height (including text and space line): 6.5 mm; space lines tend to be more shallow than text lines.

The folio is torn downwards, very irregularly along its middle; only the left section (of the recto) remains. It is difficult to estimate how much of the folio is missing, as, for example, the missing text on the right cannot be conjectured. Little remains of the top three lines; on the verso, the first line (of which only one word is extant: פי) is cut along the top, which indicates that the folio originally extended higher. The bottom of the folio, however, appears to have been preserved, as a bottom margin is clearly identifiable on the verso, and the bottom edge of the paper is straight and neat. Small holes.

Our text is on the side of the fragment that has been catalogued as 'recto'. The verso, in the same hand, contains a text that is clearly unrelated, on the story of the Exodus (which is not edited here). It is uncertain which side should really be treated as recto or verso, and hence, whether of our text is the beginning or end of this calendrical discourse.

Contents

The text is too fragmentary to be understood with certainty. References are made to the (Palestinian) rule that if the *molad* falls after (midday and) 641 parts, the (New Year) is postponed to the morrow (lines 4–6). The author's own intervention, perhaps in the controversy of 921/2, is mentioned in line 7.

An original feature of this text is the distinction it makes between an 'astronomical' month, which begins on the astronomical conjunction (presumably, the true conjunction), and a 'numerical' month (lines 9–10, 15–16). The latter probably means that its dates are calculated, and refers to the (Rabbanite) calendar month.

Line 11 suggests that the addressees are in Palestine and Egypt, but this is very unclear.

The (Babylonian) limit of midday is mentioned in lines 12–14, suggesting that the postponement of the New Year will lead to a distinction between the astronomical month and the calendar month (lines 15–16).

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A tantalizing reference to what was done in the Maghreb appears in line 17. An objection to difference of opinion is expressed on line 26, and someone or something is said to contradict or deviate from the books and tradition (line 27). This is as much of the fragment as can be understood.

Bibliography

Unpublished; discovered by Nadia Vidro in March 2015.

Text Edition

Transcription and translation are by Nadia Vidro.

The edited text is justified to the left (and the translation to the right), as a reflection of the fact that only the ends of the lines have been preserved. The fragment is torn where the surviving lines begin.

The translation, which begins on line 3, is sometimes annotated as ambiguous, due to insufficient context.

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MidLim
[T-S AS 160.96 recto]

ב[..]
על
סרבן חתא
[סת מייה וארבע]ין ואחדה פקאלו אֹמֹרֹת
יתפיק אל מחר מן אל
גַּד פצארת הדה אלדקיקה
קולנא לוה הדא אלכלם מוך(?) א[..]
ת לכול ראס שהר יתפיק אלמוולד
הו ראס שהר פַּלְכִי מַוולדי ומן
[ע]דִּדִי ליס הו פי אל כתב ולא פי יַד
ה אלתי פי אלשאם ומצר תוצלי
וליד קמרהא קבל אלזואל ובעד אל
[תפ]ריק ביין מא וליד קבל אלזואל ובעד
ולת אן כולמא וליד קמרוה קבל
ואחד פלכי ועדדי ואידא וליד
[י]ום [פ]לכי ואלתיני עדדי ואמא אֹ[2]
ואלמגרב פאנהום יומסכו
ן אלשהר ל יום תאם אֹ
יק ויוצלו יום אל כֹּטֹ
אלשהר כֹּטֹ יומא [..]
ורבוה גדיד ופי גמיע אלדי[..]
ד ליס ילתפיתון אלי [....]
לאו בעד אלזואל ולא יתפקדון
רוס אלשהור עלא מא דכר[3]
מא[...]עא תכרוס וחילה
נפ[..] [מ]נע אלכלאף עלא אלכתב ומן
ליס [מ]ן אלכתב ולא מן וראתת אימח
כריע[4] מוכאליף

2 This may be a number or an abbreviation. The same ambiguity applies two lines below (end of line).
3 Maybe דכרו.
4 The first letter may be *bet*, and the second may be *dalet*. None of these readings affords an intelligible word. The beginning of the word may be missing. This line is possibly written in the bottom margin.
5 The Palestinians say that when the *molad* occurs until 641 parts after midday, the month begins on the same day, but after that it falls on the morrow.
6 This suggests personal involvement in a polemic.

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MidLim

... (?) until
... [six hundred and for]ty-one, and they said 641
... falls on the morrow from the [day][5]
... tomorrow and this one part became
... we said to him this word[6] (?) ...
... to every beginning of a month (that) falls on the *molad*
... beginning of an astronomical, conjunction-based month and from/who
... numerical, it is not in the books and is not in hand (i.e. not available)[7]
... which in Palestine and Egypt you pray[8]
... its moon was born before midday and after the[9]
... distinction between what was born before midday and after
... that any (month) whose moon was born before
... one astronomical and numerical, and if it was born
... (one) astronomical day and the second numerical. And as for ...
... and the Maghreb they adhere[10]
... the month is 30 full days ...
... and they pray[11] (on) the 29th day
... the month 29 days ...
... new and in all that ...
... do not pay attention to ...
... after midday and do not examine
... beginnings of the months according to what was mentioned[12]
... coherence and a means to
... preventing the difference of opinion about the books and from/who
... not from the books nor from the tradition[13] of ...
... divergent[14]

7 In these three lines, the author appears to be arguing that the Palestinian rule of 641 parts has no authority or written source in the context of any conjunction-based calendar, whether astronomical or numerical (see explanation above).
8 Masculine singular; alternatively, 'she prays'. The meaning of this line is unclear.
9 In this line and the next two, the text turns to the Babylonian limit of midday.
10 A reference to calendrical practice in the Maghreb—unfortunately lacunary. Cf. QarNar verso l. 16, whereby the people of the Maghreb were on the Palestinian side.
11 Alternatively, 'they combine'. The plene spelling used in this fragment makes it impossible to distinguish the 3mpl impf forms of these two verbs.
12 Alternatively, 'what (he) mentioned'. If the reading is דכרו, then 'what they mentioned'.
13 Lit. inheritance, legacy.
14 Or: 'contradictory'.

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CHAPTER 15

Palestinian Polemic

This fragmentary folio, T-S 12.725 (recto), was published early on by Schechter, and included in Bornstein's monograph of 1904; but although a polemic related to the calendar, its relevance to the calendar controversy of 921/2 is far from explicit. Epstein considered this text to be part of the Palestinian letter in the Letters Miscellany (Letter 4), which Schechter and Bornstein had attributed to ben Meir (and called it 'Ben Meir's Second Letter').[1] However, both Schechter and Bornstein were unsure of the attribution of this present fragment to ben Meir, let alone of its identification with LMisc Letter 4.[2] What survives of the text consists mostly of an argument that calendrical decisions can only be taken by experts—which is too neutral to be identified with a specific historical context such as the controversy of 921/2.

Several features of this text, however, point in the direction of the calendar controversy of 921/2. It implies in some places Palestinian hegemony in calendrical decisions, and it appears to repudiate the Four Gates, a Babylonian algorithm which we know from other sources was criticized by Palestinians at the time of the controversy (LMisc Letter 2; ibid. Letter 3, fol. 6r:11–13; L2Bab). Particularly interesting is its apparent critique of relying on the *molad*, and its deference to new moon sighting, which will be discussed below.

The copy of this text can be dated palaeographically to around 1000 CE.

The text on the verso is very different and unrelated to the above. It consists of a passage of the rabbinic work *Derekh Erets Zuta* (end of ch. 3 and beginning of ch. 4), written around a couple of lines in Arabic, both in different hands from the recto. The verso is not included in this edition.

1 Epstein (1905: 139 and n. 2). He refers, a little confusingly, to two 'fragments' of ben Meir's second letter; presumably he means two fragments of the text, but not of the same manuscript (which they are plainly not; scholars from that period often used the term 'fragment' with reference to text).

2 Schechter (1901–1902: 249) is only prepared to write of this text that 'it contains a reference to the [Four Gates] and probably has some bearing on the Ben Meir controversy'. Bornstein (1904: 94) is more confident, and attributes this text to either ben Meir, or one of the Palestinian sages.

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Physical Description

Paper, brown ink. Dimensions: 20.5 cm × 13.5 cm (fragmentary; maximum height and width). Left margin (recto): 10–20 mm (unjustified). Line number (recto): 18. Average line height (including text line and space line): 11 mm. The space lines tend to be 1.5 times higher than the text line; the text is thus well spaced out.

The folio is torn down the middle, in a fairly straight and vertical line (although the fragment narrows a little as it goes down); only the left side (of the recto) is preserved. How much of the folio is missing on the right side can be estimated on the basis of textual evidence. This is because most of the text consists of Talmudic quotations, which already Bornstein (1904) was able to reconstruct fairly reliably; this textual reconstruction is all the more plausible in that it consistently provides, on each line, a missing text of similar length. The length of the missing text, on each line, suggests that almost as much as half the width of the folio is missing. The same estimate can be made on the basis of the lacunae of *Derekh Erets Zuta* passage on the verso. The total width of the folio is thus likely to have been well over 20 cm.

The fragment is further damaged with holes in various places, especially at the top and near the bottom. A horizontal strip of the height of over one line of text has been removed from most of the bottom edge of the fragment; but the section that remains, on the bottom left of the recto, might correspond to the bottom of the original folio, as its edge is neat and straight; if so, this means that the last line of text on the recto has been written into the bottom margin. The top part of the folio is missing, which means that the folio was originally higher; this is evident from traces of a line of text at the top of the recto, which has been cut through its middle and is consequently undecipherable. There is some paper staining and some ink fading on the recto, but generally the writing is well preserved and clearly legible.

The writing on the recto is calligraphic and Babylonian style, and can be dated to around 1000. On the verso, as stated above, the text is very different. The rabbinic text, *Derekh Erets Zuta*, is written in a different hand and different mise en page, and can be dated to later in the eleventh century. The lines in Arabic (lines 10 and 15 on the page) are in a different ink and yet another hand, and considerably earlier (maybe ninth century).[3]

It is evident, therefore, that this folio went through different uses. When our text, on the recto, was copied, the verso was already occupied by a few lines

3 Advice of Marina Rustow, Judith Schlanger, and Amir Ashur.

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of Arabic, and our scribe decided not to use it. The decision to write over the Arabic on the verso was taken by another scribe at a later stage. Why he copied unto it an apparently random passage of *Derekh Erets Zuta* is unclear, unless the folio was then being re-used in a book or fascicle containing the entire rabbinic work.

Synopsis

The text extant begins by arguing, largely through Talmudic quotations, that calendar decisions (i.e. the determination of the months and the intercalation of the year) can only be taken by Palestinian authorities who are expert in the science of the calendar (lines 1–3). A passage of the Babylonian Talmud (*bRosh ha-Shanah* 20b) is quoted to show that even Samuel, the great Babylonian sage (early third century CE), was ignorant in parts of this science (lines 4–6). A lengthy passage of Palestinian Talmud (*pRosh ha-Shanah* 2:6, 58b) is then quoted, discussing who has the authority of making calendar decisions (lines 7–15). Finally, the author dismisses the authority of those who determine the calendar on the basis of the *molad* and the Four Gates (lines 16–17). These two lines are of particular interest, and will now be discussed in detail.

Molad and New Moon Sighting

The text of the last two lines, like the rest of the fragment, is incomplete, but some conjectures can reasonably be made, beyond what was suggested by the first editors. The last two words, בלא ראיה, are written in the margin in a fainter ink and with slightly smaller letters, but they are in the same hand as the main text; as this insertion is likely by the same scribe, it is presumably to be read as an integral part of the main text. This draws support from a similar marginal insertion at the end of line 14, which is definitely integral to the main text, as it is part of the quotation of a known passage of the Palestinian Talmud. Accordingly, the last two lines read as follows, after conjectures are implemented:

[אין מש]גיחין לדבריהן ואין חוששין לדברי הקובע חדשים ... [על פי מו]לדות לב[נה]
ומארבעה שערים ומי שעיבר ˊבלא ראיהˋ

Assuming these lines make up one sentence, they translate as follows:

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> [No] notice is taken of their words, and no concern is had of whoever fixes the months … [according to the *mo*]*ladot* of the moon from the Four Gates; and whoever intercalates ˋwithout sightingˊ …

The most likely interpretation of the last two words is 'without sighting (the new moon)'. Bornstein (1904: 95, n. 2) suggests instead 'without evidence'; however, ראיה in the sense of 'evidence' is irrelevant to calendar calculations and intercalation, which are not based on proofs or evidence, but rather on rules, criteria, values, and algorithms; the use of this term in this sense, in the context of the calendar, would therefore be most unusual. In contrast, the same term ראיה (which literally means 'seeing') is a standard designation, in rabbinic literature, of the procedure of new moon sighting; in this context, this is what the term must mean. Thus read, moreover, the marginal words follow on logically from what precedes: the author is criticizing whoever fixes the months according to the *moladot* and the Four Gates—i.e. by calculation—and not through the empirical sighting of the new moon.

For a Rabbanite—which the author of the main text certainly is, given the extensive Talmudic quotations—this position is really quite radical. Although the Four Gates were a bone of contention between Palestinian and Babylonia Rabbanites during the controversy of 921/2, the *molad* certainly was not; it was, in fact, the cornerstone of the Rabbanite calendar by unanimous agreement. New moon sighting, in contrast, is normally associated with the Qaraites in this period. However, some evidence can be garnered that in the period of the calendar controversy of 921/2, the Palestinians and their followers resorted to new moon sightings in support of their position; more precisely, the Palestinians argued that the early appearance of the moon crescent, at the beginning of the month of Tishri (922 CE), confirmed their earlier date of the New Year (on the Tuesday), and proved wrong the Babylonians' postponement of the New Year by two days (to the Thursday). Saadya, in his letter of January 923, thus complains that the Jews of Fusṭāṭ were misled by the appearance of the new moon at the New Year of 922; and Babylonian Letter 2 finds it necessary to argue that early new moon sightings do not contradict later calendar dates, and are inconsequential to the calendar.[4] Our text, the Palestinian Polemic, offers perhaps unique evidence of the Palestinian position.

The authority that Palestinians seem to have given to new moon sightings, in this text and according to some Babylonian sources, obviously served

4 Saadya's Letter 1 (T-S 6 Ja.1); L2Bab verso ll. 7–10. Further evidence may be adduced from the Qaraite Narrative (QarNar).

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an interest, in 921/2, to support and confirm their New Year date of 922 CE. But beyond this very specific interest, there may have been broader reasons for promoting the use of new moon sightings, related to ben Meir's bid for Palestinian calendrical supremacy—a theme which dominates this Palestinian Polemic. Ben Meir, as rabbinic leader, undoubtedly saw himself as heir to a long Palestinian tradition stretching back to the Patriarchs of the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, when the calendar was controlled by a rabbinic court—which this Palestinian Polemic, again, discusses at length through Talmudic quotations—and determined by sightings of the new moon. The context of this passage suggests that his deference to new moon sightings may have been part of an attempt to revive and maintain a certain Mishnaic-Talmudic tradition, even though the calendar had now become calculated and fixed, and care had to be taken not to side with the Qaraites, who rejected the calendar calculation and relied, as a matter of principle, on the sighting of the new moon.[5]

Text Edition

My first edited text is a diplomatic edition, presenting what can be read in the fragment extant. My second edition is a reconstruction of the text, based on our knowledge of the Talmudic passages quoted, as well as on some textual conjectures (this edition is similar to Bornstein's, but it is based on updated, manuscript readings of the Talmudic passages,[6] on a close examination of the manuscript—which Bornstein had no access to—and on avoiding as much as possible uncertain conjectures). The translation is of the reconstructed edition.

Bibliography

Schechter (1901–1902) 249 (Text XXXIX).
Bornstein (1904) 94–95, based on Schechter's edition.

5 As evident, for example, in the Qaraite Narrative (QarNar). This discussion is taken up, from a broader perspective, in my Conclusion (pp. 529–530).

6 For the Babylonian Talmud, mainly ms British Library Harley 5508; for the Palestinian Talmud, ms Leiden Or. 4720. In more than one way, the readings of the Leiden manuscript seem superior to those of our present text.

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PalPol: Diplomatic Edition
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[ ] בחוצה לארץ ורבי עקיבא עיבר בחצה [....] וששבט
[ ] משגיחין בעיבור החדש ובקידוש החדש [.]לא על בני
[ ]והמל[א][7] תורה ואינו בקיא בסוד העיבור אין מעברין את
[ ]קונה לכולה גולה אמ׳ליה אבה אבוי דרבי שמלאי[8]
[ ]חצות או אחר חצות אמליה לא אמליה מדהא לא ידע
[ ]ריה ׳מר׳ שמואל גבור בתורה ומאבות העולם והיו דברים
[ ][.] אנו אומרים[9] בתלמוד שלבני ארץ ישראל תני[10]
[ ]תניתא אמרה כן ראש בית דין אומר מקודש תני
[ ]לרע לא נהגין כן ולא שמעין דאמ׳ רבי חייה בר מדיא
[ ]מתחילין מן הגדול לעיבור החדש מתחילין מן הצד
[ ]שנה מתקדשת בעיבורה אמ׳ רבי יוחנן הרי השנה
[ ]לו אמר בעיבורה הייתי אומר אילו אחד עשר יום
[ ]לך חכמים שלושים יום רבי יעקב בר אחא ורבי
[ ]לכין אחר הרגיל והוא ש[...] כל א[..] ואחד יושב ׳במקומו׳[11]
[ ]בא בר זבדא פתח רבי חייה ורבי אמ[...]בי אסי חתמין
[ ]גיחין לדבריהן ואין חוששין לדברי הקובע חדשים
[ ]לדות לב[..] מארבעה שערים ומי שעיבר ׳בלא ראיה׳
[ ]זו שהיא

7 Schechter's edition reads ירה .... המל, giving the impression of a much longer lacuna than there really is; consequently Bornstein conjectured המלומד בתורה, for which there is simply no space. Misinformed conjectures of this kind are common in Bornstein's edition (he also committed some errors and omissions in copying Schechter's text). My reading of the letter *aleph* must be treated as conjectural, however, because it is very damaged. The other letters are sufficiently legible.

8 Space filler here.

9 So Schechter. These two words are currently covered with tape, and difficult to read.

10 Space filler here.

11 Here and on line 17: marginal insertion, in fainter ink and slightly smaller letters.

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[ ] בחוצה לארץ ורבי עקיבא עיבר בחצה [לארץ] וששבט
[ואין] משגיחין בעיבור החדש ובקידוש החדש [א]לא על בני
[ארץ ישראל][12] [ ] והמלא תורה ואינו בקיא בסוד העיבור אין מעברין את
[את החדש[13] על פיו שאנו אומרים[14] אמר שמואל יכילנא לת]קונה[15] לכולה גולה אמ׳ליה
אבה אבוי[16] דרבי שמלאי
[לשמואל ידע מר האי מילתא דתניא בסוד העיבור נולד קודם] חצות או אחר חצות אמליה
לא[17] אמליה מדהא לא ידע
[מר איכא מילי אחרנייתא נמי דלא ידע מר][18] [ ]ריה מר שמואל גבור בתורה ומאבות
העולם והיו דברים
[ ] אנו אומרים בתלמוד שלבני ארץ ישראל תני[19]
[לקידוש החדש מתחילין מן הגדול אמ׳ רבי חייה בר אדא מ]תניתא אמרה כן ראש בית דין
אומר מקודש תני
[לעיבור השנה מתחילין מן הצד אמ׳ רבי זבידא והן בייתא ד]לרע לא נהגין כן ולא שמעין[20]
דאמ׳ רבי חייה בר מדיא
[רבי יונה רבי בא רבי חייה[21] בשם רבי יוחנן לקידוש החדש] מתחילין מן הגדול לעיבור
החדש[22] מתחילין מן הצד

12 This seems like the only reasonable conjecture, following בני on the previous line. Bornstein suggested something similar, although his conjecture does not fit the space in the manuscript.
13 Bornstein suggests [את השנה ואין מקדשין את החדש], but there is probably not enough space for this. The term עיבור is often associated with חדש in this text (e.g. line 2, and probably also line 17).
14 My conjecture, based on line 7 below. Following is a quotation from *bRosh ha-Shanah* 20b.
15 As in Rabbenu Ḥananel's commentary (ms Vat. Ebr. 126; edited by Metzger 1994). Ms Harley and later Talmud manuscripts read: לתקוני.
16 Ms Harley: אבוה.
17 Ms Harley: לא ידענא.
18 End of quotation.
19 This begins a quotation from *pRosh ha-Shanah* 2:6, 58b.
20 Ms Leiden: שמיע. See note 28.
21 At this point, ms Leiden has the words בשם רבי חייה, which appear to be superfluous (Sussmann 2001: 671). The space available on this line would suggest indeed that these words were absent.
22 Ms Leiden: השנה, which seems more correct. See note 29.

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(…) outside the Land, and Rabbi Aqiva intercalated outside the Land,[23] and that the tribe (?)
(…) regarding the intercalation of the month and sanctification of the month,[24] notice is only taken of the
[Palestinians[25] …] and as to someone who is full of Torah but not an expert in the secret of intercalation, they cannot intercalate
[the month on his advice, as we recite (in *bRosh ha-Shanah* 20b): Samuel said, I can set] it (the calendar) for the entire Diaspora. Abba the father of Rabbi Simlai said to
[Samuel: does the master know this saying, that was taught in the secret of the intercalation: 'if it is born before] noon or after noon'? He said, no. He said: since the master does not know
[this, there are other things that the master also does not know …]—(yet) Samuel was mighty in Torah and among the fathers of the world, and there were words
(…) We recite the following in the Palestinian Talmud (*pRosh ha-Shanah* 2:6, 58b): It was taught:
[for the sanctification of the month, one begins from the more senior.[26] Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Ada said: the] Mishnah says so: 'The head of the Court says, it is sanctified!' (*mRosh ha-Shanah* 2:7). It was taught:
[for the intercalation of the year, one begins from the side.[27] Rabbi Zebida said: in the house] down there, they did not follow this or know[28] (it). For Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Madya said
[(in the name of) Rabbi Jonah, (in the name of) Rabbi Ba, (in the name of) Rabbi Ḥiyya, in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan, for the sanctification of the month], one begins from the more senior, for the intercalation of the month,[29] one begins from the side.

23 See *mYevamot* 16:7, *bBerakhot* 63a.
24 See below, note 29.
25 Conjectural, but see note 12.
26 The most senior judge in court states his opinion first.
27 The more junior judges, on the side, state their opinion first.
28 Lit. 'hear'. According to the text of ms Leiden, this verb refers to Rabbi Zebida: 'Rabbi Zebida said … they did not follow this. But he (Rabbi Zebida) did not know ('hear') the saying of Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Madya …'
29 Ms Leiden: 'of the year'. Our text implies a distinction between 'sanctification of the month', which means declaration of the new month on the 30th day of the old, and 'intercalation of the month', when the new month begins on the 31st. The reading of ms Leiden appears superior.

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[וכבר נכנס רבי יוחנן והוא היה הקטן שבהן אמ׳ לו אמור הרי ה]שנה מתקדשת[30] בעיבורה
אמ׳ רבי יוחנן[31] הרי השנה
[מתקדשת בעיבורה אמ׳ רבי יוחנן ראה לשון שלימדנו בן הנפח אי]לו אמר בעיבורה הייתי
אומר אילו אחד עשר יום
[שהחמה עודפת על הלבנה בכל שנה אלא בעיבור שהוסיפו] לך[32] חכמים שלושים יום[33]
רבי יעקב בר אחא ורבי
[יסא בשם רבי יוחנן לעיבור הולכין אחר המינוי לבית הוועד הו]לכין אחר הרגיל והוא
ש[יהא] כל א[חד] ואחד יושב[34] במקומו
15 [כגון רבי חנינא פתח רבי יוחנן ורבי שמעון בן לקיש חתמין רבי] בא בר זבדא פתח רבי
חייה ורבי אמ[י ור]בי אסי חתמין
[רבי חגיי פתח רבי יונה ורבי יסא חתמין][35] [אין מש]גיחין[36] לדבריהן ואין חוששין
לדברי הקובע חדשים
[על פי מו]לדות לב[נה][37] ומארבעה שערים ומי שעיבר בלא ראיה
[ ]זו שהיא

30 Ms Leiden: מקודשת, which is grammatically more correct.
31 Ms Leiden omit. רבי יוחנן.
32 Ms Leiden: לה. See note 39.
33 In ms Leiden there is an editorial insertion: ועיברוה.
34 Ms Leiden: מדבר במקומו. In our text, במקומו is a marginal insertion, but comparison with ms Leiden shows that it is meant to be part of the main text.
35 End of quotation.
36 Cf. line 2.
37 Bornstein conjectures לבד, but two letters are clearly missing. The top parts of these letters, still extant, support beyond doubt my conjecture. This reading has the effect of supporting Bornstein's original conjecture (for the previous word) of מולדות.

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[Indeed, Rabbi Yoḥanan once went into (court), and he was the most junior among them; they said to him, say] 'behold, the year is sanctified with its intercalation'; Rabbi Yoḥanan said, 'behold, the year

[is sanctified with its intercalation'. Said Rabbi Yoḥanan: look at the phrase which the son of Napaḥ taught us. Had] he said 'with its intercalation', I would have said, these are the eleven days

[by which the sun exceeds the moon every year;[38] but (he said) 'with an intercalation', (i.e.) that the sages added] for you[39] (a month of) thirty days. Rabbi Jacob bar Aḥa and Rabbi

[Yose said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan: for the intercalation, one goes after the appointment; for the meeting house, one] goes after the experienced[40]—provided everyone sits in his place.[41]

15 [For example, Rabbi Ḥanina would open, Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rabbi Simon ben Laqish would conclude; Rabbi] Ba bar Zabda would open, Rabbi Ḥiyya, Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi would conclude;

[Rabbi Ḥaggai would open, Rabbi Jonah and Rabbi Yose would conclude[42] …] No notice is taken of their words, and no concern is had of whoever fixes the months

[… according to the *mo*]*ladot* of the moon from the Four Gates; and whoever intercalates without sighting[43]

[…] that which is

38 The difference of approximately eleven days between the solar and lunar years, which necessitates from time to time the intercalation of an extra lunar month in the lunar calendar. The lunar calendar year can only count either twelve or thirteen months; as Rabbi Yoḥanan implies, it cannot be sanctified with twelve months and eleven days (which would make it, effectively, a solar year).

39 Possibly an ethic dative. According to ms Leiden, 'added to it' (i.e. to the year).

40 For decisions about the intercalation of the year, advice is sought from those appointed for this; for decisions taken in the meeting house, i.e. about the new moon (cf. *mRosh ha-Shanah* 4:4), advice is sought from those who are experienced.

41 According to ms Leiden, 'speaks in turn'; again, this appears superior.

42 End of quotation.

43 On this translation, see discussion in the introduction above.

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PART 4

Later Sources



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CHAPTER 16

Short References and Narratives (Sahl b. Maṣliaḥ, Hayye Gaon, Elias of Nisibis, and Various Genizah Sources)

The sources in this chapter are arranged in approximate chronological order, from the mid tenth century to the turn of the twelfth. They encompass a wide range of literary genres, including epistolary polemic (Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ), calendar manual (Calendar Manual for Cycle 249), Geonic responsum (Hayye Gaon), chronicle (Elias of Nisibis), school exercise (Calendar Data), and another (the genre of Qaraite Narrative is difficult to work out, but it appears to be part of a polemic or a history). Their authors are Rabbanite (Hayye Gaon, Calendar Data), Qaraite (Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, Qaraite Narrative), Christian (Elias of Nisibis), and perhaps Christian or Muslim (Manual for Cycle 249).

These very varied texts contain relatively short references to the calendar controversy of 921/2, mostly in the form of narrative. Each of these texts is significant, in its own way, in the information it provides about the controversy, and more importantly, in what it reveals about the transmission of knowledge of the controversy in the following two centuries. These texts offer, for example, the unique outsider perspectives of Qaraites and non-Jews, of whom we do not have any writings contemporary to the controversy, nor any insight on the position that they might have taken at the time with regard to this purely entirely intra-Rabbanite controversy.

16.1 Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, *Epistle of Admonition*

The earliest description of the calendar controversy of 921/2 to have been written after the event itself is found in a work by the Qaraite scholar and polemicist, Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ; it dates to 957/8 CE. This work, commonly known as the *Epistle of Admonition*, was edited and published by Pinsker in 1860. Although it had been previously copied and preserved in manuscripts, in oriental Qaraite circles, as late as the eighteenth century, Pinsker's edition made this work known for the first time to European scholarship. The Epistle was highly important as a source for Qaraite history, but it also offered the first indication, to European scholars, of the Jewish calendar controversy. As such, it exerted considerable influence on the formation, later in the nineteenth century, of a scholarly consensus regarding this historical event.

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This highly polemical letter, or 'epistle', of Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ is addressed against a number of Rabbanite opponents, mainly a Jacob ben Samuel, in Egypt, and covers a broad range of topics. The reference to the calendar controversy of 921/2 serves the purpose, in this context, of showing that the Rabbanites are divided and not unanimous in their opinions, and in this respect, their opinions are not inherently preferable to those of the Qaraites.

Manuscripts and Edition

The Epistle has been preserved in a number of oriental manuscripts from the early modern period, including two complete texts and several fragments. Most of the manuscripts are in the Firkovich collection at the National Library of Russia (RNL), St. Petersburg. As I have not studied the manuscripts in detail, the following is a list with only the briefest information, based on catalogue entries and my own superficial findings:

1. Ms Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek Cod. Or. 1099N (Warner 73N). Oriental, seventeenth century, 18 fols. Description in Steinschneider (1858) 293–295. Contains the Epistle in full.
2. Ms St. Petersburg, RNL EVR I 736. Oriental, late seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, 21 fols. Contains the Epistle in full.
3. Ms St. Petersburg, RNL EVR II A 40 and EVR IV 68, two fragments belonging to the same manuscript. Oriental, late seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. It is evident, from the catchwords on every verso, that the folios are in disorder. The correct order of the folios is as follows: EVR II A 40 fols. 1–4, EVR IV 68 fols. 5–6, EVR II A 40 fol. 7, *lacuna*, EVR IV 68 fols. 1–4, EVR II A 40 fol. 8. Contains the Epistle in full, except for a *lacuna* of about 3 folios. EVR II A 40 fols. 5–6 belong to a different work.
4. Ms St. Petersburg, RNL EVR II A 159/15. Oriental, late seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, 4 fols. Fragmentary; text coverage is equivalent to Pinsker (1860) 28–32.

The only edition of the epistle, Pinsker (1860: ii.25–43), is reputedly based on two manuscripts that were in Abraham Geiger's possession (referred to by Steinschneider, ibid.). The text that Pinsker published on this basis, and that also appears in several (if not all) of the Firkovich manuscripts, is actually an edition of the Epistle, with the addition of an introduction and some supplementary materials, by the seventeenth-century Qaraite scholar Elijah b. Barukh Yerushalmi. The text of ms Leiden, in contrast, makes no reference to Elijah Yerushalmi and does not include his additional materials; this manuscript may antedate the other manuscripts and the activities of Elijah Yerushalmi, but this requires further investigation. The titles *Tokhaḥat Megullah* ('Open Admonition') and variants thereon, by which the Epistle is commonly known, are most probably Elijah's; the original letter is unlikely to have born any title. An assess-

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ment of the scholarship, with a detailed summary of the contents of the Epistle (in English), can be found in Nemoy (1970–1971). A modern, critical edition, with a translation of the full text, is still awaited.

My dating of this work to 957/8 CE is based on the date given to the work at the end of ms 2 (RNL EVR I 736, fol. 21r, line 3): 'year 4718 from the Creation'. This dating, which seems to have escaped the attention of previous scholars, is not mentioned however in the other manuscripts (ms 1 and ms 3).

Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ and Early Scholarship

When Pinsker first published this text, nothing was known about the calendar controversy of 921/2. The glimpse that this text provided, however, was not very informative: Sahl did not specify the date of the controversy, the festival (or festivals) involved, and why a disagreement had broken out. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the significance of this passage began to be properly understood (see further Chapter 3).

One of the issues that early scholars had to contend with was an inconsistency in the text between the Babylonians' postponement of the festival to 'another day' (יום אחר) and, further on in the text, to 'the morrow' (יום מחר). Frankl, the first scholar to analyse this passage in any depth, suggested that this inconsistency was due to scribal error and that יום מחר, 'the morrow', should be the correct reading in both places.[1] He argued that the error must have arisen from graphic similarity between *aleph* and *mem*. It could equally have been argued, more economically, that both readings are correct but that יום אחר should be translated, by analogy with Arabic, as 'the next day' (rather than 'another day'), consistently with 'the morrow'.

This interpretation was later proved wrong, when it emerged from other sources that the Babylonians had postponed the festivals by two days. In this light, Poznański argued that the text be corrected in the other direction, i.e. with יום אחר in both places, and taken in the sense of 'another day'.[2] Assuming that Sahl was not misinformed, this reading is obviously to be preferred. Again, graphic similarity could be invoked to explain the scribal error—which must have occurred early on, as the erroneous reading יום מחר is attested in all the text witnesses. The error might also have been assisted by a misinterpretation of יום אחר as meaning 'the next day'. The fuzziness of Sahl's 'another day' remains, however, perplexing.

In spite of its opaqueness, this narrative is likely to have exerted considerable influence on the first generations of scholars that studied the calendar

1 Frankl (1871) 355–360.

2 Poznański (1897) 155 n. 2.

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controversy, by virtue of having been the first, and for some time the only, evidence that was ever published. Particularly important was the suggestion, at the beginning of the passage, that the controversy had been goaded by the 'Fayyumite', a polemically veiled reference to Saadya. This interpretation was assumed by Frankl and Poznański, and was still sustained much later by Moshe Gil.[3] The text is not entirely clear, however, as the clause 'who seduced people' could be taken as a general, polemical characterization of Saadya—based on a pun on his toponymical name—rather than a specific reference to his conduct and role in the controversy. But Sahl's need to mention this here does seem to imply that he blames Saadya, to a certain extent, for the outbreak of the controversy.

All this, of course, is only Sahl's perspective; earlier scholars erred in accepting it as a factual historical report. By the time Sahl was writing, Saadya had emerged as a powerful leader of the Babylonian Rabbanite community, as well as a prolific author in many different literary genres—including a tract against ben Meir—and a leading anti-Qaraite polemicist. It was only natural for Sahl to target Saadya, by then deceased, in this and in other passages of his anti-Rabbanite Epistle; it was also natural for him to believe that Saadya played a leading role in the calendar controversy. As I have argued above at length, on the basis of contemporary sources (including Saadya's own letters), Saadya's role in the controversy was limited. But this passage of Sahl's Epistle was influential in forming the scholarly consensus, by the end of the nineteenth century, that Saadya had represented the Babylonians and precipitated, in a certain way, the calendar controversy.

Another influential element in Sahl's narrative was the claim that Palestinians and Babylonians, during the controversy, cursed and 'excommunicated' one another. This implicitly led several scholars, at the turn of the twentieth century, to interpret a line in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 4:9) as meaning that the Babylonians excommunicated ben Meir (an interpretation that was made, however, without explicitly invoking the text of Sahl). As we have argued there, this interpretation is historically unlikely and textually unwarranted. No doubt, Sahl's description of the controversy should be read as exaggerated, polemical rhetoric, not as a factual historical report.

Text and Translation

The short passage where the calendar controversy of 921/2 is mentioned appears in ms 1 (Leiden Or. 1099N), fol. 9v, and in ms 2 (RNL EVR I 736), fol. 13v.

3 Frankl ibid., Poznański (1908) 38, and Gil (1992) 565.

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Unfortunately, it is not preserved in ms 3, where it would have been in one of the missing folios. In Pinsker's edition (1860), it appears on p. 36. Textual variations are minimal. I present here a composite version with critical apparatus in the footnotes (punctuation is as in the manuscripts).

> ולפני מזה בימי הפיתומי אשר פיתה[4] אנשים ונחלקו[5] במועדים ועשו[6] אנשי ארץ ישראל יום[7] והבבלים[8] וההולכים אחריהם עשאוהו[9] יום אחר . ואמרו כי אנשי ארץ ישראל חטאו ואנשי ארץ ישראל אמרו כי הם חטאו[10] וקללו אלו לאלו ונדו אלו לאלו ברוב עונות . ועשו[11] אנשי ארץ ישראל המועד ביום הזה ואנשי בבל עשאוהו[12] ביום מחר[13] והיו מכזבים אלה לאלה . ויש אנשים משוכני ארץ ישראל שהלכו אחרי הבבלים[14] וגם השוכנים בארץ שנער הלכו אחרי אנשי ארץ ישראל[15] .
>
> And some time ago, in the days of the Fayyumite (Saadya) who seduced people, they were divided regarding the festivals. The Palestinians did one day, and the Babylonians and their followers did it another day. And they said that the Palestinians were sinning, and the Palestinians said that they were sinning; and they cursed one another, and excommunicated one another, in their many sins. The Palestinians did the festival on one day, and the Babylonians did it on the morrow, and they were deceiving one another. And there were some residents of Palestine who followed the Babylonians, and also some residents of Iraq followed the Palestinians.

16.2 Calendar Manual for Cycle 249

A brief narrative of the calendar controversy of 921/2 appears within a treatise or manual in Judeo-Arabic on the Jewish calendar, which was composed and

---

4 Ms RNL, Pinsker: פתה. This is a pun on name פיתומי, literally 'of Pithom', a biblical location in Egypt (Ex. 1:11) identified with the medieval Fayyum. This biblicizing toponymical name is commonly used for Saadya by tenth-century Qaraite polemicists.

5 The initial *waw* is superfluous, perhaps due to influence of Arabic usage.

6 Ms RNL, Pinsker: ויעשו.

7 Ms Leiden omit. יום.

8 Pinsker: והבבליים.

9 Leiden: עשאהו.

10 Ms RNL: ˋחטאו׳, interlinear insertion.

11 Pinsker: ויעשו.

12 Mss Leiden, RNL: עשוהו.

13 Probably an error for אחר; see discussion above.

14 Ms RNL, Pinsker: הבבליים.

15 Ms Leiden omit. ישראל.

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written only a few decades after the controversy. The author is unknown, but appears to be an outsider and might even have been non-Jewish.

One bi-folio of this manual has been preserved, T-S NS 98.47. The manuscript can be dated palaeographically to the late tenth century, but the text appears to have been composed a little earlier. Indeed, the calendrical data in the manual, which relate to 'cycle 249' (a 19-year period beginning in 954/5 CE), suggest a dating to the third quarter of the century. In any event, this may well be the earliest manuscript in our entire corpus.

Physical Description

Parchment, brown ink, a bi-folio. Dimensions (folios): 16.5 cm × 13.5 cm (text: 11.5–11.4 cm × 9.2–9.5 cm). Margins: inner 18 mm, outer 20–25 mm, top 25 mm, bottom 28 mm; margins are wide, and left margins are reasonably well justified. Line numbers: 15. Average line height (space line and text line): 8 mm; space line and text line are generally of equal height.

There appear to be only three sets of stitch holes along the centre of the bi-folio, although additional holes in this area make this a little uncertain. Pricked (along the outer edge of recto left and verso right; the opposite outer edge is damaged) and ruled.

The lower part of the bi-folio is severely damaged with large holes. On the verso left—recto right side, in particular, most of the vellum is torn away from the tenth line down to the bottom; only a small portion of these lines, on the inner side, is intact. Much of the hair side (verso) is affected by staining; much of the flesh side (recto) is affected by ink fading.

The script is late tenth-century Babylonian; it is regular and neat. On the top line, the ascenders of the *lamed* are extended to two or three times the normal height.

Contents

The purpose of this manual is to provide essential guidance on how the rabbinic calendar is constructed. The two folios are discontinuous. Only one folio, recto left—verso right, is edited here.

Recto left begins with a calculation of the *molad* of the beginning of cycle 249 (i.e. the 249th nineteen-year cycle since the Creation), which in its reckoning is Tishri of 954/5 CE (lines 1–9). Then come some general principles about the calendar, but the text is very fragmentary. At the top of verso right, the text has moved on to the postponement rules (ll. 1–3; this passage is not edited here, because of its limited relevance). Then, the manual introduces the midday postponement. It claims that originally Palestinians and Babylonians agreed that the limit was midday (and that if the *molad* exceeded this limit, the New

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Year would be postponed), but later the Palestinians added 641 parts to the limit—a clear allusion to the controversy of 921/2 (ll. 4–12). After this point, the text becomes too fragmentary to be made sense of. But in the context of a calendar manual, I would not expect the text to have continued much further on the theme of the calendar controversy.

The other folio (verso left—recto right), which is not edited here, contains other information that would be expected in a calendar manual. On the top line of verso left, we find the end of the sequence of the 19-year cycle. This sequence is of the intervals (in years) between the intercalations through the whole cycle. It ends, at the beginning of verso left, with the intervals 3-2-3.[16] In all likelihood the entire sequence was 3-2-3-3-3-2-3, also known as 3-2-9-2-3 (in its Hebrew abbreviation, גבטבג), a well-known formula which is found elsewhere in our corpus (LMisc fol 5r:18) and is characteristic of early sources on the Jewish calendar.[17] Then follows, over both sides of the folio, an explanation of the Palestinian tradition of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW.[18] The bottom of recto right is very damaged but seems to return to the postponement rules. Because this folio contains more basic calendar rules, it may have belonged, within the calendar manual, before the other folio that is edited here.

Date

The *molad* that is calculated and given on the recto left (day of Thursday, eleven hours, and 476 parts) can only correspond to Tishri of 954/5 CE.[19] This *molad* is identified in the text as the 'birth' (or first *molad*) of cycle 249; it is calculated on the basis of the first *molad* of the previous cycle, 19 years earlier. It is possible that in the preceding pages, the author has been proceeding in this way with a calculation from cycle to cycle; but the fact that the calculation ends here indicates that this is the result that needed to be obtained, and hence, presumably, that cycle 249 is when the author was writing.

According to the reckoning of the era of Creation that became dominant in the later Middle Ages (and is still in use today), the year 954/5 CE would not have been the first year of cycle 249 (i.e. of the 249th cycle of nineteen years since the Creation), but in fact the third year of this cycle. However, in the Letters Miscellany, Letter 3 (LMisc 5r:17–20—mentioned above), a Baby-

16 The text reads: שלוש שתים שלוש, 'three-two-three'.

17 See my note on the LMisc passage , pp. 364–365 n. 160.

18 See explanation in Chapter 5, pp. 64–65.

19 I have been able to confirm this with the help of a programme designed at my request by Nachum Dershowitz and Edward Reingold, that calculates the date(s) of any inputted *molad* (http://nachum.org/Molad.xlsx). This helped, in turn, to determine the reading of the number of the cycle in this fragment (recto left, line 8; see note 23).

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lonian writer in 921/2 mentions that there existed different ways of counting years, and hence, of numbering the years of the 19-year cycle, although everyone agreed about which years to intercalate. The 19-year cycle that appears to be used in our present manuscript (Man249 verso left line 1—not edited here, but described above as 3-2-9-2-3), and which is also mentioned in the Letters Miscellany, is compatible with a reckoning of 954/5 CE as year 1 of the 19-year cycle, which the author here assumes.

Although the author provides the *molad* of 954/5 CE, this is not necessarily the year that he is writing in. Indeed, he is not calculating the *molad* of this year because he happens to be in it, but more likely because this *molad*, which he considers to be the first of the cycle, is calendrically significant for him. The first *molad* of the cycle was commonly used as reference point for the calculation of any other *molad* within the cycle. This means that the author could have been writing at any time within cycle 249, when calculation of its first *molad*, that of 954/5, was relevant. The text was therefore written at some point between the years 954/5 and 973/4 CE. This manuscript, which can be dated by its script to the late tenth century, would have been produced not long after the text was originally composed.

Authorship

The author of this manual is unknown, but the impression is of an outsider.

The narrative begins with a reference to the 'Rabbanites' (or 'Rabbis': verso right, line 4). This suggests a non-Rabbanite author, as in the rest of our corpus (the letters exchanged in 921/2, the Book of the Calendar Controversy, etc.), the parties of the controversy never refer to themselves by this designation. The author, however, is unlikely to be Qaraite, as the calendar in this manual is thoroughly Rabbanite, and unlikely to have been of interest to a Qaraite. The demonstration of how to calculate the *molad*, in particular, would not have been much relevant to him, as it was repudiated by the Qaraites.

The reference to 'Palestinians' and 'Babylonians', on the next line, might similarly suggest that the author is an outsider, being neither one nor the other. This is possible, although the author clearly adopts a Babylonian version of the events, presenting the Babylonian calendar as the original, unanimous tradition, which the Palestinians later sought to change (through the addition of 641 parts to the midday limit). On the other hand, the manual explains and endorses the formula ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW, a specifically Palestinian tradition.

On the recto left (lines 6–7), the author refers to the division of the hour into 1080 parts as 'according to the people' (*al-qawm*), which ostensibly means, the Jews. This attribution is odd, if the text were written by a Jew for a Jewish readership. From a Jewish perspective, indeed, the division of the hour in

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1080 parts would not have been viewed as a common opinion of 'the people', but only the opinion of the Rabbanites, and only of those engaged in the calculation of the *molad* (this hour division is never attested or used in any other context). A Qaraite is certainly unlikely to have attributed this tradition to 'the people', when he himself, one of 'the people', rejected it. But a Rabbanite is also not likely to have written this, as he would rather have attributed this hour division to 'our rabbis', or to 'tradition', or even to Moses at Sinai—as tenth-century Rabbanite calendar-related texts, not least in our corpus (on either side of the controversy), are accustomed to do. The attribution of this tradition to the Jews or the 'people' (as a whole) would not have made much sense to a Rabbanite, no more than to a Qaraite.

In contrast, the phrase 'according to the people' could very well have been used by a non-Jew, Muslim or Christian, from whose perspective this hour division could be attributed to the Jews as a whole, without any finer distinctions. The term 'the people' could be used by Muslims and Christians with specific reference to the Jews;[20] and there is ample evidence that Muslims and Christians, in the ninth to eleventh centuries, were capable of writing detailed descriptions of the rabbinic Jewish calendar.[21] If the author of this treatise was Muslim or Christian, the text would have been written originally in Arabic (in the third quarter of the tenth century), and then (not long after) transcribed, presumably by a Jew, into Judeo-Arabic.[22]

A non-Jewish authorship seems therefore plausible, although the evidence is insufficient for any conclusion to be firmly drawn.

Bibliography

Unpublished. Discovered by Nadia Vidro, March 2015. Transcription and translation: Nadia Vidro and Sacha Stern.

20 Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala advises me that in medieval Arabic sources, the term *al-qawm*, 'the people', can be used by non-Jews as a technical term for the Jewish people (specifically), and that this usage is more generally Muslim than Christian (Alexander Treiger also advises me similarly).

21 The main known authors are al-Khuwārizmī (c. 823/4), al-Biruni (1000), and within our corpus, Elias of Nisibis (1019); for an overview of their works on the Jewish calendar, see de Blois (2014).

22 If this text is a transliteration, some of the spellings would have been domesticated: for example, קאלו (verso right line 8) is spelled here without a final *aleph*, following Judeo-Arabic convention but against Arabic usage (I am grateful to Nadia Vidro for this information). We know from the Cairo Genizah of Judeo-Arabic transliterations of Arabic works by non-Jewish authors, including even Muslim and Christian religious works: see Szilágyi (2006), with an edition for example of T-S Ar. 52.220 (pp. 152–153, with discussion on p. 130).

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1 **Man249** [T-S NS 98.47] recto left

לילה אלתלתא באלסתה סאעאת מן לילה אל
כמיס ואלסתעשר סאעה מן באקי יום אלכמיס
ואכדנא סאעה ללדקאיק לאנא חסבנאה
תֿתֿקֿסֿאֿ חלקים מעתקֿצֿהֿ פצאר אלף דקיקה
וכמס מאיה דקיקה וסתה וכמסין דקיקה
פאכרגנא אלף ותמנין דקיקה סאעה לאן אל
סאעה אלף ותמנין דקיקה ענד אלקום פיולד
מחזור רֿמֿטֿ[23] פי חדעשר סאעה מן יום אלכמיס
וֿתֿעֿוֿ חלקים כמא כתבנא לך פוק ובינא
(....)

2 **Man249** [T-S NS 98.47] verso right

(...)
אתפקו אלרבאנין גמלתהם באסרהם
אלשאמיין ואלעראקיין אנה אדא ולד הלל
תשרי פי סת סאעאת מן אלנהאר יעמל אל
עיד פי דלך אליום תם אסתקאלו אלשאמיין
עלי אלעראקיין אלראי פקאלו אלשאמיין אן
דכל מן אלסאעה אלסאבעה מן דקיקה ואחדה
אלי סת מאיה דקיקה וואח[דה ו]ארבעין דקיקה
והו אֿמֿרֿתֿ פיעמלו אלשאמ[יין] אלעיד[24]
אליום [ו]אן זאד דקיקה ואח[דה.....]
במרת ידפ[עו ...] רא א[.....]
[....]די ק[.. א]מרתֿ במר[ת .....]
[.....] עראק[יין] אן דמ[....]

23 The *mem* is unclear, but this reading is necessitated by the value of the *molad* that is given for this date (see above, n. 19). Faded traces of a *mem* can be identified, apparently written over another letter (perhaps *tsade*); this is likely a scribal self-correction.

24 This word is conjectural, but compatible with the top of the letters which are all visible.

25 As stated below, the first *molad* of cycle 249 was on Thursday, 11 hours of the day, 476 parts. The text is explaining here how the value of 11 hours of the day (= 23 hours of the 24-hour period) was calculated. These 11 hours are conceived as being taken 'from' the night and day of the Thursday.

26 The interval between the *moladot* of two cycles is 2 days, 16 hours, and 595 parts (modulo 7 days). The calculation of the first *molad* of cycle 249 has been carried out by adding this value to the first *molad* of cycle 248, which was Tuesday night, 6 hours, 961

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1 Man249 [T-S NS 98.47] recto left

[We obtained 11 hours of the day[25] by taking the 6 hours of the *molad* of cycle 248, which was on]
the night of Tuesday at six hours, from the night of
Thursday, and sixteen hours from what remains of the day of Thursday.[26]
We (also) took out one hour from the parts, because we counted
961 parts with 595 and it came to one thousand parts
and five hundred parts and fifty-six parts (1556 parts);
then, we cast out one thousand and eighty parts into an hour, because the hour is one thousand and eighty parts according to the people.[27] Hence, cycle 249
was born at eleven hours of the day of Thursday
and 476 parts, as we have written to you above and as we have explained.
(…)

2 Man249 [T-S NS 98.47] verso right

(…)
All the Rabbanites, both the Palestinian
and the Babylonian communities, agreed that if the New Moon of Tishri
is born within six hours of the day, the festival
is fixed on that same day. Then the Palestinians sought to cancel this opinion,
against the Babylonians. The Palestinians said that if
it[28] enters between one part and six hundred
and forty-one parts of the seventh hour,
which is 641, then the Palestinians fixed the festival
on the same day. But if it adds one part …
642 postponed …….
….. 641–642 …..
……. the Babylonians that …….

parts. Therefore, the *molad* of 249 was two days later, on Thursday; and for the calculation of the hours, 16 hours have been added to 6 hours, together with one additional hour which will be presently accounted for (as the surplus of the addition of the parts). This yields a total of 23 hours, or 11 hours of the day.

27 See discussion above.

28 i.e. the moon, or the birth of the New Moon.

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16.3 Responsum of Hayye Gaon

The calendar controversy of ben Meir is briefly referred to in a Geonic responsum of the last decade of the tenth century, attributed to Hayye Gaon (also pronounced Hai or Hayya). Two versions of this responsum have been preserved, but only one refers to ben Meir; this is the version attested in a Cairo Genizah manuscript, ms Strasbourg 4038 (fols. 1–6).

This text is the last known, in Jewish Rabbanite literature, to refer to the calendar controversy of 921/2.[29] It was followed, a little more than two decades later, by Elias of Nisibis, a Christian, who included a short entry on the controversy in his *Chronology*, and sometime after by a Qaraite work (Qaraite Narrative; below, Chapters 16.4 and 16.6). But after Hayye Gaon, through the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, no Rabbanite is known to have written anything new on the controversy, however short—even though copies were still being made in this period, ostensibly by Rabbanites, of the Book of the Calendar Controversy and of letters written during the controversy (as is evident from our manuscript corpus). This responsum, therefore, marks a certain turning point in the preservation and transmission of this historical event in the Jewish, Rabbanite collective memory.

The passage of the responsum that is edited here includes an informative reference to Saadya, which contributes an important corrective to traditional narratives of Saadya's early career and his role in the calendar controversy. This passage also suggests, very importantly, that the calendar of ben Meir was applied again a few years later, in 927 CE, leading once more to a Palestinian deviation from the Babylonian calendar—which would demonstrate, one more time, that the controversy of 921/2 did not end in any Babylonian victory.

Versions, Dates, and Authorship

The responsum as a whole relates to various issues in the calendar calculation, more specifically the era of Creation, the epoch of the *molad* and *tequfah*, and the 19-year cycle. It has been preserved in two different versions. The first version is preserved in a secondary source, Abraham bar Ḥayya's monograph on the Jewish calendar known as *Sefer ha-Ibbur* (3:7), first published by Herschell Filipowski in 1851.[30] The second version, from a Cairo Genizah manuscript (ms Strasbourg 4038 fols. 1–6), was published by Jacob Mann in 1925. Although these

29 Excepting the later, anonymous Calendar Data (below, Chapter 16.5), which as a student's exercise one would hesitate to classify as 'literature'.

30 Filipowski (1851) 97–98.

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two versions share much in common, there are significant textual variations between them, and more importantly, extensive passages that are unique to only one or the other version. Thus, the passage that refers to the controversy of ben Meir, and that is edited below, is only preserved in the Cairo Genizah version.

Another significant difference between the two versions is their dates. The Genizah text uses as paradigm the year 1306 SE (994/5 CE: fol. 4 recto, ll. 4–6), whereas Abraham bar Ḥayya's text uses the year 1303 SE (991/2 CE); these can be taken as the dates when each of the two versions were written.

Mann is of the view that the responsum was only written once, but that it was heavily edited and modified by Abraham bar Ḥayya, with the addition of a substantial interpolation.[31] This does not account, however, for the change of date (unless this originated from a gross scribal error); moreover, there is no internal evidence of any interpolation, and it seems unlikely that Abraham bar Ḥayya interpolated such a major piece of text, especially as he emphasizes that he is quoting the responsum verbatim, without any addition or omission.[32] It seems more likely, therefore, that both versions are authentic and represent different letters that were written and sent at different times, presumably to different addressees, although much of the text of the first letter was re-used for the second.[33] Indeed, the Genizah version (which is the later one, of 994/5 CE) refers explicitly to a similar letter that had been sent previously by the same author 'to the land of Egypt' (RHayye fol. 2r:4–5).[34]

---

31 This alleged interpolation is a passage, unique to Abraham bar Ḥayya's version, in which the institution of the fixed Jewish calendar—or more precisely, of the fixed 19-year cycle—is ascribed to a Hillel b. Judah in the year (1)670 SE (358/9 CE). This is the earliest attestation of a tradition about the origins of the rabbinic calendar, most probably unhistorical, which eventually became accepted as normative (see further Stern 2001: 175–179). In the light of his argument, Mann considers whether this tradition should be attributed to Abraham bar Ḥayya, rather than to Hayye Gaon. If, as I would argue, both versions are authentic, the attribution to Hayye Gaon stands true.

32 'We did not need to add to his words; and this is the text of the question (i.e. responsum), from its beginning to its end' (לא היינו צריכין להוסיף על דבריו וזה לך נוסח השאלה מתחלתה ועד סופה).

33 As implicitly assumed by Lewin (1932) 19, n. 11 and 20, n. 4.

34 It may be of interest to note that Abraham bar Ḥayya's *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* was completed in France in 1123 CE, not long after the Genizah manuscript was copied in Egypt. The absence of ben Meir in Abraham bar Ḥayya's version is perhaps not entirely fortuitous: for in early twelfth-century France, the calendar controversy of 921/2 had little relevance or meaning, and indeed, it is nowhere referred to in the *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur*. It is not impossible that the ben Meir passage was deliberately edited out at some stage in the transmission the responsum to western Europe—although the absence of this passage in Abraham bar Ḥayya's version

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Abraham bar Ḥayya attributes the responsum to Hayye Gaon; but Mann argues that it must have been jointly authored with Hayye's father, Sherira Gaon, for two reasons. Firstly, at the time when the two versions of the responsum were written, in 991/2 and 994/5 CE, Sherira was still active as head of the academy of Pumbedita, and would therefore have been expected, in this capacity, to bear the authorship of the institution's responsa. Secondly, in the second version of the responsum, the early tenth-century Yehudah Gaon is referred to as 'grandfather' (fol. 6 verso, ll. 11–12), which Yehudah was indeed to Sherira (as mentioned frequently in Sherira's *Epistle* of 987 CE). Both arguments are debatable, however, as firstly Hayye was *av beit din* (second in the academy's hierarchy) in this period and probably did author some responsa solely,[35] and secondly, the term 'grandfather' could be used here in a loose sense. I have therefore maintained the traditional attribution, for whatever it is worth, and called this text 'Responsum of Hayye Gaon'.

Saadya's Early Career

The passage that is edited below belongs to an additional section that was apparently appended, in 994/5, to the second version of the responsum (only attested in ms Strasbourg 4038, from the Cairo Genizah). This text contains material of particular relevance to the calendar controversy of 921/2.

The end of this passage refers to Saadya's early career, whilst he was still living in Palestine.[36] His interest in the calendar calculation was evident already then, as according to this passage, Saadya addressed at that time a question about the calendar to Yehudah Gaon, head of the academy of Pumbedita in Baghdad (fol. 6 verso, ll. 10–12).[37] The fact that Saadya addressed his question to a Babylonian leader does not necessarily mean that he favoured already then the Babylonian calendrical traditions over Palestinian ones (in spite of residing in Palestine), as it is possible that he addressed the same question, simultaneously, to Palestinian leaders—there would be no reason for our responsum to mention this. But what is interesting is the question itself.

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can also be explained in other ways (e.g. that it responds to a specific question that was not put to the author in 991/2 CE, but rather only in 994/5).

35 See Brody (1998*b*) 60–62 and (2010).

36 His residence in Palestine and subsequent emigration to Baghdad, probably in 921 CE, are referred to in his own letters of the time: LSaad fols. 5v:7–9 and 7v:5.

37 Yehudah (Judah) Gaon died in 1228 SE (so according to Sherira in his *Epistle*: Lewin 1921: 119), i.e. 916/7 CE. The question must have been addressed to him very close to the end of his life, since LSaad fol. 5r:12–13 implies that Saadya only left Egypt to settle in Palestine around the summer of 915 CE.

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Saadya's question, according to our responsum, was why the calculation of the *tequfah* (equinox) is based on the same epoch (starting point, at the Creation) as the *molad* calculation, but less 7 days, 9 hours, and 642 parts.[38] The answer that was given to him is not extant in our manuscript, but it would have been extremely simple, indeed almost tautological: namely, that the *tequfah* and *molad* of Nisan did not coincide in the year of the Creation, but the *tequfah* occurred 7 days, 9 hours, and 642 parts earlier.[39] For anyone well versed in the calendar, as Saadya was later to become, a question like this would have been simplistic and completely superfluous. The need for him to ask it suggests that at this stage in his career, his calendar knowledge was limited.

This runs counter to the widespread assumption, first flagged by Harkavy (1891: 221), that Saadya was chosen by the Babylonians to represent their side because of his expertise in the Jewish calendar. It is partly due to this hypothesis that the controversy was soon styled by contemporary scholars, for example Bornstein (1904), as 'the dispute between Saadya and ben Meir', Saadya being ascribed a leading role in the controversy (see further Chapter 3). This responsum suggests, quite on the contrary, not only that Saadya's knowledge of the calendar, during his early career in Palestine, was limited, but also that whatever calendar knowledge he had was gained through corresponding with rabbinic leaders in Babylonia. This makes it somewhat unlikely that Saadya was identified by the Babylonians, at the start of the controversy in 921, as an expert in the Jewish calendar who could represent them against ben Meir.[40]

The historical reliability of our responsum, in this context, is obviously open to questioning, but we should not be excessively suspicious. Hayye Gaon would have relied on oral traditions or written records in the academy of Pumbedita,

38 642 is a recurring number in calendar computation; in this context, it is of no relevance to the Palestinian calendar of ben Meir.

39 For an essentially similar, though more convoluted answer to this question, see Tosafot ad *Rosh ha-Shanah* 8a s.v. *li-Tequfot*; also Abraham bar Ḥayya, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* 3:3. The occurrence of the *tequfah* 7 days, 9 hours, and 642 parts before the *molad* at the time of the Creation means that it fell exactly at the beginning of a Wednesday, appropriately as this is the day of the week when the luminaries were created. The *molad* of Nisan was also on a Wednesday, but one week later, and at 9 hours and 642 parts. All this is assuming the accepted, schematic calculations of the equinox and the lunar conjunction (*tequfah* and *molad*), which in astronomical terms (and therefore in historical terms, regarding the year of the Creation) are not necessarily accurate (see further Stern 1996).

40 This hypothesis could only be rescued by assuming that Saadya built up his expertise on the calendar between the years 915 and 921. This is possible, but it could equally be argued that the controversy of 921/2 is likely to have encouraged the likes of Saadya to develop their knowledge of the calendar, and thus, that it is rather as a result of the controversy that Saadya acquired his calendar expertise.

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but quite possibly even on a copy, held in the academy, of the letter that his ancestor Yehudah Gaon had sent in response to Saadya's query.

The Year of ben Meir's Error

Equally important in our passage is the reference to ben Meir's 'error', and the date that is given to it as (1)238 SE, i.e. 926/7 CE (fol. 6 verso, ll. 4–5). To quote (with minor textual corrections):

ובדבר הזה טעה אהרן בן מאיר
בשנת רלח [.....] תשרי לאמרת במרת

And in this matter Aharon ben Meir erred
in the year (1)238, [by applying to] Tishri (the limit of) 641–642

As we know, the Calendar Controversy began in fact in 1233 SE, i.e. 921/2 CE. Jacob Mann read the year number as (1)231 (רלא); this number, however, is no less problematic, so that his reading—tendentious as it was—offered no improvement.[41] Benjamin Lewin assumed a scribal error, and corrected the year number to (1)235, on the basis of a more plausible confusion between רלה and רלח. Admittedly, the year 1235 SE (= 923/4 CE) was not when the controversy broke out; but in this year, the *molad* of Tishri occurred shortly after midday, and it is this *molad* that generated the calendar disagreement retroactively, as far back as 921/2 CE (see explanation in Chapter 5, pp. 65–67). It would thus not have been incorrect to say that ben Meir erred in that year (1235), which is to say, 'regarding that year', even though the error was committed earlier.

Consideration needs to be given, however, to the text as it stands, because the year 1238 SE is actually not an implausible reading. In this year, the same calendrical difference between the Palestinian and Babylonian calendars arose, which would have led to similarly divergent festival dates. The *molad* of Tishri 927 CE was on Thursday, 18 hours (noon) and 214 parts; accordingly, the Babylonians would have postponed the New Year to the Sabbath, because of the midday rule, whereas the Palestinians would have kept the New Year on the same day, on Thursday, because the *molad* had not exceeded 641 parts after

41 See below, text and translation. Mann (1925, p. 248 n. 91) wrongly states that 'the well-known dispute between Sa'adya and Ben-Meir' began in 1231 SE (which, to make things worse, he wrongly converts to 1020/21 CE, instead of 919/20 CE!). But both the Book of the Calendar Controversy and Saadya's Letters confirm that the controversy only began in the summer of 921 CE (i.e. end of 1232 SE), when news first broke of ben Meir's planned calendar announcement.

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noon. Consequently, the preceding Passover in 927 CE (1238 SE) would also have been divided, on Tuesday for the Palestinians and on Thursday for the Babylonians.

In this light, the reading of the manuscript does not need to be erroneous. Indeed, it would seem rather serendipitous that a scribe erroneously hit the only other possible year for this calendar controversy in the whole century, 1238 SE, merely from a graphic confusion between the letters *heh* and *ḥet*.[42] There is thus a good case for arguing that the reading of the manuscript is correct and in no need of emendation as suggested by Lewin.

The possibility that Palestinians and Babylonians disagreed again over the calendar in 927 CE was noted already by Bornstein (1904: 158–159), before the discovery and publication of our manuscript. Bornstein remained agnostic on the matter (ibid. 14); but as I have argued many times over (e.g. in Chapter 2), all the evidence suggests that the dispute remained unresolved in 921/2; and there is much evidence that Palestinians and Babylonians persisted long after in their calendar differences, even as late as the twelfth century (e.g. in the Palestinian Calendar Manuals, Chapter 17). As far as the controversy is concerned, the Book of the Calendar Controversy suggests that it reached a stalemate by the autumn festivals of 922, when Palestinians and Babylonians ceased polemicizing with each other, because they gave up hope of swaying one another to their side. However, this does not mean that they desisted from observing the festivals on their own dates, right until the end of 923 CE—as some sources explicitly tell us (QarNar). In 927, likewise, there was probably no 'controversy', inasmuch as we do not hear about one; but even if they did not argue with each other, it is more than likely that Palestinians and Babylonians observed the festivals on different dates, just as they had done only four year earlier.

If the reading of this manuscript is accepted without correction, this responsum would be the only explicit indication we have so far, in any source, that ben Meir re-asserted his calendar rule in 1238 SE (926/7 CE). The extent to which this late tenth-century source should be used as historical evidence may be debatable. However, if Sherira Gaon was involved in the authorship of this responsum, it would seem unlikely that a chronographer of his stature, famous for his chronographic *Epistle* of 987 CE, was misinformed or mistaken about the year of the controversy.[43] This passage deserves therefore a fair amount of cre-

42 Although close in time to the controversy of 921/2 CE, the recurrence of a difference between Palestinians and Babylonians—due to the *molad* of Tishri exceeding 18 hours, but by less than 642 parts—was actually very unusual. After its recurrence in 927 CE, it was not to recur again until 1108 CE.

43 It is worth noting that the Calendar Controversy is not mentioned anywhere in the chro-

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dence. Some questions would remain: for example, why the responsum chose to mention the little known year of 1238, rather than the much more famous years of 1233–1235, when the calendar difference led to a major political confrontation. So long as the end of this responsum is missing, it would be difficult for us to give this question a full evaluation. Although, in conclusion, this uncertain text cannot be taken as definitive evidence of a divergence of calendars in 927 CE, at least it points to it as a realistic historical possibility.

Further Points of Interest

This short passage is also important for other reasons: it provides evidence of a version of the Four Gates based on the month of Nisan (fol. 6r:10–6v:1); a new interpretation of the midday limit (fol. 6v:1–4); and an original explanation of the origins of ben Meir's error (fol. 6v:4–6). The significance of these points is discussed in Chapter 5; they are also referred to here in the footnotes.

Ms Strasbourg 4038 (fols. 1–6): Physical Description

As explained above, ms Strasbourg 4038 (fols. 1–6) contains the second version of the responsum, dated 994/5 CE. Mann, who edited this manuscript, describes it at '6 paper leaves'.[44] It is actually a set of three continuous bi-folios; the responsum begins at the recto left of the outer bi-folio, and progresses through the other two bi-folios, until it returns to the recto right of the first, outer bi-folio. The end of the responsum is missing. A number has been penciled into the corner of each individual folio, from 1 to 6. The text edition below is confined to a passage of what I shall refer to, therefore, as 'folio 6' (which is verso left and recto right of the outer bi-folio).

Paper, black ink. Dimensions (folio): 16.5 cm × 13 cm (text: 12–12.5 cm × 9.5 cm). Margins: inner 15–17 mm, outer 20 mm, top 18–22 mm, bottom 22–28 mm. Line number: 14–15. Average line height (text and space line): 8.6–8.9 mm; the space line is marginally higher than the text line; the lettering is generally large and well spaced out. Evidence of at least three sets of stitch holes along the center of the bi-folios.

The three bi-folios have been similarly damaged by a square hole on the top edge, near outer side, of the recto left (and verso right). This means that the tear

nography of Sherira Gaon's *Epistle*, for either 922 or 927 CE (Lewin 1921: 116–120). But this is likely due to editorial choice rather than to ignorance: the Controversy would have been regarded by Sherira as irrelevant to the main purpose of the *Epistle*, which is about the transmission of the Talmud and of rabbinic tradition through the Talmudic and Geonic periods.

44 Mann (1925) 237, n. 40.

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occurred when the bi-folios were joined and in open position. There is also a much smaller, triangular dent on the top edge of the other side (of all the bi-folios), and even smaller holes inside the pages (mainly in the outer bi-folio). Some staining. In some places, the ink has faded or rubbed away (especially on folio 6 verso, which unfortunately affects the reading of our passage); conversely, ink has sometimes rubbed off and transferred to the facing page (e.g. fol. 6r:8, and fol. 6v *passim*), or penetrated from the other side of the folio. In folio 6 verso, there are several traces of letters between the lines, probably rubbed off from the facing page (which is now lost); these letters cannot be made sense of.

The script is typical of copies of Geonic responsa from the end of the eleventh century (or a bit later), in Egypt.[45]

The bi-folios of ms Strasbourg 4038 belong to same manuscript as T-S G2.97, which contains other Geonic responsa (the join is evident from the dimensions, layout, and hand). Our text was thus preserved in this manuscript as part of a much larger collection of Geonic responsa.

Bibliography

Mann (1925) 237–248.
Lewin (1932) 19–22, based on Mann's edition.

45 I am grateful to Amir Ashur and Judith Schlanger for their advice.

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RHayye [Strasbourg 4038] fol. 6 recto, from line 6

ונמצא לדברי הכל ולעולם
צורך המולד בתשרי הוא ולא בניסן ולפי
כך סמכו הכל לחשוב[46] מולדות מתשרי
ובו אנו צריכין לידע נולד קודם חצות
או אחר[47] חצות והמחשבים מניסן גם הם
עשו מולדות בו וקביעת חדשים בארבעה
שערים שעשו לן[48] ויכולת[49] לעשות כן וחששו
לחצות שלתשרי ושמו המצר עד שעה
אחת ׳א[50]׳ ואמרת מן היום במולד ניסן כי

RHayye [Strasbourg 4038] fol. 6 verso

אינו מגיע לחצות במולד תשרי אבל אם
הגיע שעה ובמדת[51] שהוא מגיע לחצות
היום במולד תשרי ⟦אבל אם הגיע שעה⟧ דוחין
אותו מיומו ובדבר הזה טעה אהרן בן מאיר

46 Between these words are traces of letters, probably rubbed off from the facing page (fol. 5b) where the ink in the same part of the folio has faded. Mann reads דות[המול]; however, the *lamed* is perfectly legible, whereas there are hardly any traces of a *heh*.

47 Mann reads erroneously אחרי.

48 Perhaps a contraction of להן.

49 The *taw* is written over a final *nun*. The need for a vocalization mark over the *waw* is unclear. This word is problematic. Mann reads ויכולים, which is not in the manuscript, and might just be a conjecture. More grammatical would be ויכלו; I assume this in my translation.

50 Written in the same hand above the word אחת, which is poorly legible because of a stain on the paper. Mann overlooks entirely the word אחת.

51 *Sic*, an error for ובמרת. This error suggests that the scribe did not understand what he was copying. The absence of dots over the letters may indicate that he did not even realize this was a number.

52 For purposes of setting the calendar, only the *molad* of Tishri is needed; the other months of the year, including Nisan, are all set in relation to it.

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RHayye [Strasbourg 4038] fol. 6 recto, from line 6

It can be found that according to everyone and in all cases,
the need for the *molad* is in Tishri, and not in Nisan.[52] There-
fore, everyone relies (on this) to calculate the *moladot* from Tishri,
and we need it (the *molad* of Tishri) to know whether it is 'born before noon
or after noon'.[53] And those who calculate from Nisan, they too
made their *moladot* with reference to it,[54] as well as the fixing of the months in the Four
Gates which they made for themselves and were able[55] to do so, but they were concerned
about the noon of Tishri, and they set the limit of the *molad* of Nisan
at one hour 642 parts of the day, because

RHayye [Strasbourg 4038] fol. 6 verso

this does not reach noon at the *molad* of Tishri,[56] whereas if
(the *molad* of Nisan) reaches one hour 642 parts, (it means) that the *molad* of Tishri
will reach noon, (and the New Year) is postponed
from its day.[57] And in this matter Aharon ben Meir erred

53 *bRosh ha-Shanah* 20b. What he means is that the rule of the midday postponement, whereby the New Month is postponed if the *molad* occurs after noon, is only relevant to the month of Tishri—which explains the importance of knowing its *molad*, and also demonstrates that the calendar is constructed on the basis of the month of Tishri.

54 i.e. to the *molad* of Tishri. By '*moladot*', he is perhaps referring to the limits that are given in the Four Gates. Even if the Four Gates are based on Nisan, their limits are determined with reference to the *molad* of Tishri, as he goes on to explain.

55 See note 49. On the Four Gates of Nisan and their historical significance, see Chapter 5, pp. 70–71, and introduction to 3PalMan, Chapter 17.5, pp. 509–511.

56 The limit of the *molad* of Nisan is set at one hour, 642 parts of the day, for the only reason that this entails that the limit of the subsequent *molad* of Tishri is noon.

57 On this new interpretation of the rule of the midday postponement (whereby the New Year is postponed even when the *molad* falls on noon itself), which is not attested in earlier sources but became standard in later rabbinic literature, see Chapter 5, pp. 77–78 and 84–85.

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בשנת דלחּ[58] [.....]תשרי לאמרת במדת[59]
[.....] ולא ידע האיד[60] הדבר · ולענין
זוֹ בּמרתּ שאנו משליכין שבקשת לידע
טעם הדבר ודקדוקו אף דבר זה שאלונו
עליו וכה [...] אחת השאלות אשר
שאל מר רב סעדיה גאון עודנו בארץ ישראל
טרם ב[ו]א[61] בבל[ה][62] את אדונינו מר רב יהודה
[ג]און[63] זקינינו זכרם שניהם לברכה ותשובתה
ברורה היא והיא אשר הקדמנוה למעלה
כי אילו היו מונין ללבנה משעת בריאתה

58 *Sic*, an obvious error for רלחּ. Mann claims that the last letter is faded, and that it stands 'no doubt' for *aleph*. The letter, however, is not faded at all, and it is clearly *ḥet*. It would be difficult to defend Mann's reading on the basis of a scribal error, as a scribal confusion between *aleph* to *ḥet*, in this script, is not likely to have occurred. Moreover, Mann's reading does not offer a more comprehensible dating of the controversy (see introduction above). More plausible is Lewin's correction to רלה, although his correction is arguably also unnecessary. As discussed above, the reading of the manuscript can be accepted as it stands. After this word, there is ink penetration from the other side of the folio; the letters חשבון שבש can be discerned (from the recto, line 5: לחשבון שבשהוסיף). What the scribe wrote in this area has faded, although there are some traces of ink on the bottom edge of the line and below it.

59 Again, an error for בּמרתּ. The preposition *lamed* on the previous word (לאמרת) is unparalleled in our corpus and difficult to explain, which makes it difficult to reconstruct the missing word in the foregoing lacuna (see translation).

60 Word omitted by mistake by Mann.

61 Mann reads [בא]. There are indeed traces of both letters, but there is also a large space between them, which could be filled at least with the letter *waw*—although this is completely conjectural.

62 So Mann. The upper horizontal bar of the final *heh* is just visible, and the shape of the *lamed* suggests that it is joined to letter after it.

63 Correctly reconstructed by Mann; there are perhaps very faint traces of the *gimel*.

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in the year 238,[64] [by applying to][65] Tishri (the limit of) 641–642,
(…) and he did not know how this worked.[66] As to
7-9-642 that we subtract,[67] you wanted to know
the reason for this and its precise justification: this matter also we have been asked
about (before), and this (was) one of the questions that
Mar Rav Saadya Gaon, while he was still in the land of Israel
before coming to Babylonia, asked our master Mar Rav Yehudah
Gaon, our grandfather, blessed be the memory of both; and the answer to this
is clear, it is as we have explained above,
that were we to reckon according to the moon from the time of its creation, …

64 (1)238 SE = 926/7 CE.

65 The lacuna in the text cannot be reconstructed, but the general sense is probably as I suggest in square brackets.

66 More precisely, ben Meir thought that the value of 642 parts belongs to noon limit of Tishri, whereas in fact it belongs to the one-hour (of the day) limit of Nisan. This explanation is original and interesting, although it seems unlikely that ben Meir committed such a gross error, and formulated his rule for this reason. See Chapter 5, pp. 67–68.

67 To calculate the date of the *tequfah* (spring equinox), we take as epoch the *molad* of Nisan of the year of Creation, but subtract from it 7 days, 9 hours, and 642 parts.

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16.4 Elias of Nisibis, *Chronicle*

The entry for the year 921/2 CE in the chronicle of Elias of Nisibis was one of the first indications that came to light, in the late nineteenth century, of the Jewish calendar controversy. It was first published by Friedrich Baethgen in 1884. Its significance, however, was only recognized after the first relevant fragments of the Cairo Genizah were subsequently discovered and published, in the course of the 1890s.[68]

Elias of Nisibis, a Nestorian Christian, completed his chronicle in 1019 CE. This is the latest known reference to the calendar controversy in any medieval literary source (except for Qaraite Narrative, below Chapter 16.6, whose authorship and literary context are unknown).

The Manuscript and Work

Elias was bishop of Nisibis (upper Mesopotamia) through the first half of the eleventh century. His chronicle is part of a much larger chronological compendium, which consists of a lengthy treatise on Christian and other calendars, preceded by a set of chronological lists and tables. It is preserved in a unique, folio-size manuscript in the British Library (Add. 7197). The compendium is bilingual, written in two columns, one Syriac and one Arabic. Both languages should be attributed to the author, who must have used source materials in both Syriac and Arabic and translated them from one language to the other, although the contribution of other translators cannot be excluded. Both columns appear to have been copied, on the whole, by the same scribe. The Arabic palaeography suggests an early eleventh-century dating, thus contemporary with the author; however, the manuscript is not necessarily autograph, inasmuch as the scribal errors such as diplography suggest rather the work of a professional copyist.[69]

The passages that concern us appear in an extensive table of historic events which has been correctly called a 'chronicle', and which runs from the year 336

68 For the history of the scholarship on the calendar controversy of 921/2, and more specifically, the discovery of this passage of Elias of Nisibis and its impact on late nineteenth-century Jewish scholars, see Chapter 3. I am grateful to François de Blois for his general assistance with this text, which he studied at UCL as part of a Leverhulme Trust research project on 'The Jewish Calendar in Islamic and Christian sources' (2010–2012), and not least, for his first showing me this remarkable manuscript in the British Library.

69 On all this, see Delaporte (1910) iv–vi, including evidence of the date of the work (1019 CE: explicit in fols. 85v, 87v, and elsewhere); and de Blois (2014) 73–78, in particular on the work's original language(s) and on the authorship of the manuscript.

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SE (24/5 CE) to the author's own time, in 1018 CE (in the manuscript, fols. 17r–41r). The chronicle is generally laid out as a six-column table, with fixed-sized rows and columns (the latter, of different widths). There are three columns in Syriac and three in Arabic, each comprising a narrow column for the year number (Seleucid and/or Hijri), a narrow column for the source that Elias has drawn on, and a third, much wider column for the entry itself, giving an account of the event or events that are recorded for that year. The Arabic columns have often been left blank, or have been filled in by two or three later hands.

In the entry for 921/2 CE, which appears on fol. 37v, the Arabic columns are blank, but so is the second Syriac column, in which Elias' source should have appeared.[70] Why Elias does not mention his source is a matter of speculation. Perhaps it indicates that his source was oral—which would be interesting in itself—but perhaps it is a mere omission (which, for us, would be rather unfortunate). All we have, therefore, are two cells in this row of the table: one for the date, and the other for the event, both written in Syriac. Each of these two cells is edited and translated below.

The Date of the Entry

Above I have given the date of the entry as 921/2 CE, but this is imprecise and needs clarification; moreover, the date in the manuscript is problematic. Although both Hijri and Seleucid years are mentioned, the date of the entry (as of all entries in this table, starting from the year of the Hijrah) is really only according to the Hijrah. Accordingly, the given year of this entry is 309 of Hijrah, which—as we are told here—started on 12 May 1232 SE (921 CE), and ended on 30 April 1233 CE (922 CE).[71] The event referred to, however, is the New Year (1 Tishri) of the autumn of 922, when Palestinians observed the festival on Tuesday and the Babylonians on Thursday. The event thus falls outside the Hijri year 309; the year for this entry should have been 310.

The mismatch between the date and the event was noticed early on, but it was only properly analysed by Bornstein (1904: 7, n. 4). He sought to resolve it by suggesting that the year number 309 AH referred to outbreak of the controversy, which was in the summer of 921 CE. This explanation has some merit, as the text begins by referring to the 'dispute' or 'disagreement' (*pūlāgā*) that befell the Jews of the West and those of the East, and only after that, it refers to the divergent observance of the New Year of 922 CE. If the controversy described by Elias was known and deemed to have begun in the summer of

70 See de Blois (2014) 76.

71 This end date can be inferred from the next entry.

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921 and to have extended for over more than one year, it is understandable that Elias would have chosen the first year of the event as the date for this entry.

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that it does not explain why Elias only mentions the New Year of 922 CE—which, strictly speaking, lies outside the scope of his chronological entry—and not the preceding Passover, which was still within the Hijri year 309. As a Christian, he should have been particularly interested in a Jewish controversy over the date of Passover, given the long-standing Christian tradition of controversies over the date of Easter, which historically was closely related to the Jewish Passover.[72] As we shall see below, he reports himself on one such controversy on the date of Easter, that occurred much later, in his own lifetime. His interest in the Jewish calendar, specifically in the date of Passover, and his sound knowledge of their calculation, is evident from a series of chapters on the subject which appear further on in this compendium.[73] It is thus hard to believe that Elias would have known about the outbreak of the Jewish calendar controversy in 309 AH without knowing, or even just inferring, that this led to the observance of Passover later in that year (in 922 CE) on different dates, and without telling us what these dates would have been.

Another possibility is that the author or scribe has simply committed an error, and entered this event of 310 AH one row higher, in the wrong box.[74] One could then assume that Elias did not know that the controversy had begun in the previous year, in 309 AH, which would explain why the events of 309 AH (including the Passover of 922 CE) are not mentioned.

The difficulty with this explanation is that the box for 310 AH is already populated with two events for that year (one about a Christian, doctrinal controversy over the Eucharist, and the other about the snowfall that year in Mesopotamia). Had the intention been to write our entry in this box, there would have been no room to insert it (as explained above, the size of these boxes is fixed).

An erroneous insertion can therefore only be argued for if the error was specifically the author's: having entered the Jewish calendar controversy in the wrong year, he believed that there was enough space, in the box for 310 AH,

72 On the late antique tradition of Easter controversy, see Mosshammer (2008), Stern (2012*a*) 382–424; on the early medieval Insular controversies, see Wallis (2014) xxxiv–lxiii.

73 These chapters (in the manuscript, on fols. 84r–87v) comprise a detailed described of the Jewish calendar calculation; for a summary, see de Blois (2014: 74–75). The Jewish date of Passover, and its relevance to Christians, is discussed in detail further on in the treatise (fols. 88r, 89v–91r).

74 de Blois (2014: 77) suggests this and sees it as the 'easiest explanation'.

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for two other events to be entered. Such an error, however, is less likely to be scribal—in the sense of the author inadvertently writing his entry in the wrong box—than substantial: namely, that the author was simply misinformed, or confused, about the year when this event happened, and ascribed the contentious New Year, wrongly, to 309 AH.

The Easter Controversy of 1007

Further on in the Chronicle, in the year 1006/7, Elias of Nisibis reports another controversy that divided this time the Christians, over the date of Easter. This entry is strikingly similar to that of 922, and for that reason, I offer a transcription and translation of this passage too.

According to this entry, the Christians of the West and of the East disagreed, in that year, about the dates of the beginning of Lent and the dates of the festivals that follow from there (chief among them, Easter). The Westerners began the fast of Lent on 17 February 1007, and the Easterners one week later, on the 24th. Consequently, their dates of Easter, seven weeks later, would have been one week apart from each other, on 6 and 13 April respectively. Elias does not mention these dates of Easter, but he does state that Easter occurred in that year—presumably, according to both opinions—in the Muslim month of Jumada II.

Both entries, this one and that of 921/2 CE, are very similar not only in their contents, but also in their wording. It is as if Elias is trying to draw attention to the similarity of the events—although this may be subconscious and unintentional. But what this similarity might mean, to him as well as to us, is open to interpretation. Much of this similarity owes to the common origins of Judaism and Christianity, and in particular, to the intertwined history of the dates of Passover and Easter (although, as we have seen, Passover is not mentioned in the entry of 921/2). The West and East polarity, which dominates both narratives, also happens to be common to both the Jewish and Christian traditions (without however meaning exactly the same thing), and reflects to a large extent the shared geo-political context in which both religions operated in the late antique and medieval Near East. Intriguing as this similarity presents itself, it could be argued that it is of limited significance.

Elias does not explain why the Christians disagreed in 1007, just as he does not explain the Jewish controversy of 922. But a far more detailed narrative of the events of 1007 is provided in another chronicle, written not much later than Elias', by the Melkite scholar Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd of Antioch.[75] The cause of the con-

75 Kratchkovsky and Vasiliev (1924–1932) ii.481–486. Their recension of the text includes

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troversy of 1007, according to Yaḥyā, was the Passover calculation of the Jews.[76] As he explains, the Christian Paschal computation is based on that of the Jews: Easter must always fall on the Sunday following the Jewish Passover. In the year 397 AH, which was 1318 SE,[77] the date of the Passover was uncertain: according to some calculations of the Jews, Passover was to fall on Saturday 5 April, but according to others, on Sunday 6 April (1007 CE). The former meant that Easter would fall the next day, on Sunday 6 April, which in that year corresponded to the Muslim date of 15 Rajab; whereas the latter required the postponement of Easter to the following Sunday, 13 April, or 22 Rajab (these dates are consistent with Elias' dates for the beginning of Lent, seven weeks earlier, on 17 and 24 February respectively; but Elias erroneously dates Easter to the Muslim month of Jumada II). A similar disagreement was also found, Yaḥyā adds, in various Easter tables.

A fierce exchange of letters ensued between the Christian communities of the Near East—not unlike what we find in our controversy of 921/2. Yaḥyā's narrative suggests that the controversy was not played out between opposing Christian denominations, as Elias' 'Christians of the West' and 'Christians of the East' would normally suggest (i.e. Jacobites and Nestorians), but rather, quite literally, between geographical regions. The Melkites, Nestorians, and Jacobites in Egypt all settled for Easter on Sunday 6 April, whereas the Christians in Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine and Syria opted for Easter on Sunday 13 April. Eventually, however, and *in extremis*, the eastern faction relented and observed Easter on 6 April; only a group of Jacobites in upper Egypt persisted in the observance of Easter on the 13th.[78]

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what appear to be some later interpolations, which do not affect however what I am citing here: see Breydy (1983) 94–97 (reference courtesy of François de Blois).

76 Yaḥyā makes it clear, throughout his narrative, that he does not mean the date of Passover as reckoned in Christian Computus (also known as *luna XIV*), but rather the date of Passover as reckoned by the Jews.

77 The Seleucid and Hijri years were almost conterminous; for as Elias tells us, the Hijri year began on 29 September 1317 SE (29 September 1006 CE), very near the beginning of the next Seleucid year on 1 October.

78 A very different account of this controversy, from an Armenian perspective, was given one century later by Matthew of Edessa (*Chronicle* 1:43–44). In his narrative, the dispute was between the Greeks (6 April) and the Armenians (13 April), and it concerned the Christian Computus tradition, without any relation to the Jewish calendar. Nevertheless, at the end of Matthew's narrative, a Jewish expert in the calendar of the name of Moses of Cyprus was summoned by the Greeks to Constantinople; he defended, however, the Armenian position (Dostourian 1993: 41–43; see also pp. 187–191, *Chronicle* 3:8–12, on the recurrence of this Easter controversy in 1102 CE, now between Romans, Franks, and Greeks on 6 April, and Armenians, Syrians, and 'Hebrews' on 13 April).

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The controversy described by Yaḥyā was not really due to the Jewish calendar; it originated far back in the late antique, Christian tradition of Easter Computus. The 19-year cycles that had been designed by Christians in the fourth to sixth centuries for the calculation of the date of Easter listed either 5 April or 6 April as the date of *luna XIV* (the 14th of the lunar month) in this year of the cycle; and this had remained, for centuries, a matter of contention. The date of Easter, always on the following Sunday, was consequently subject to disagreement, but only in the unusual case when 5 April, in this year of the cycle, would fall on a Saturday—as was the case in 1007.[79] This disagreement was still unresolved, in Eastern Christianity, in the eleventh century, and to some extent has remained so until this day.[80]

What is interesting about Yaḥyā's narrative, however, is that he attributes the controversy almost entirely to a disagreement within the Jewish calendar, and only makes the briefest mention of the conflicting Easter tables. The historicity of such a Jewish disagreement is highly questionable. There is no reference, in any Jewish source, to a Passover controversy in 1007; and even Yaḥyā refrains from suggesting that the Jews observed Passover, or came close to observing it, on different dates (at the end of the narrative, he just says that all the Jews of Syria and Egypt observed Passover on 5 April). It is difficult, indeed, to accept that a disagreement about the Jewish Passover could have arisen, given that the rabbinic calendar calculation, by then, had long been standardized and fixed; unlike the calendar dates of 921/2, the Passover (15 Nisan) date in 1007, on 5 April, was completely non-controversial.[81]

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79 The other years are 570, 665, 760 (CE), and thereafter at 532-year intervals.

80 See in detail Mosshammer (2008) 252–266. According to Mosshammer (ibid. 276–277), the *luna XIV* of 6 April (and hence Easter, in a year such as 1007, on 13 April) was adopted by the Armenians, Jacobites, and Nestorians. This is how things eventually crystalized, but the narrative of Yaḥyā suggests that in the eleventh century, the division within the churches of the East ran along more complex lines.

81 Gil (1992: 375) suggests that the disagreement described by Yaḥyā might have between Rabbanites and Qaraites, with Passover dates on 5 and 6 April respectively. It is true that the Qaraite Passover must have had a general tendency of occurring one or two days after of the Rabbanite Passover, because the Qaraite repudiated the calculated calendar (based on the lunar conjunction) and followed instead the first sighting of the new moon. But Gil's attempt to justify Yaḥyā's narrative is unlikely, because the Christian controversy must have begun much earlier, before the beginning of Lent (whose dates needed to be decided together with those of Easter); at that time, it would have been impossible, and indeed wrong, for Qaraites to predict when the new moon of Nisan would first become visible. Besides, Yaḥyā makes it clear that the disagreement was between two alternative Jewish calculations, which could not have involved, therefore, the Qaraites.

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I would therefore suggest that the Jewish disagreement alleged by Yaḥyā was most likely contrived, either by him or by others, and for one simple purpose. As Yaḥyā emphasizes throughout his narrative, the Christians of Palestine and Syria were still committed, in the eleventh century, to the early Christian tradition of observing Easter 'with the Jews', i.e. on the Sunday immediately following the Passover of the Jews.[82] Even the Melkites, such as Yaḥyā of Antioch, appear to have been committed to this tradition. It was therefore important for the Syrians, who argued for different reasons (their computistic tradition) that Easter be postponed to 13 April, to *pretend* that according to the Jewish calendar, Passover in that year occurred on the previous Sunday (6 April), not earlier. This made it possible for them to comply at once with the requirements of the Christian Computus—the dates in their Easter tables—and with the Passover of the Jews.[83]

The Easter controversy of 1007 CE thus opens a fascinating insight into Christian-Jewish relations in the Near East of the twelfth century, even though it is unlikely to have involved directly any Jews. The controversy of 1007, as Yaḥyā interprets it, adds a certain dimension to Elias of Nisibis' suggestion of a close affinity between the Jewish controversy of 921/2 and the Easter controversy one century later.

Bibliography

Baethgen (1884): Syriac and Arabic texts, of only the chronicle from the year of the Hijrah to Elias' day, with German translation. The passage on the controversy of 921/2 appears on pp. 84 (text) and 141 (translation).
Adler (1889): select passages (including this one) in English translation only, probably based on Baethgen's German translation.

82 The custom of observing Easter 'with the Jews' or 'following the Jews' had been condemned by Constantine at the Council of Nicaea of 325 CE, but Syrian Christians are known to have continued observing it through the fourth century and later. It is remarkable to learn, from this passage of Yaḥyā, that as late as the eleventh century the custom was still widely upheld in Syria and other parts of the Near East, even (presumably) in Yaḥyā's home city of Antioch, where in 387 CE, its bishop John Chrysostom had famously condemned the practice (*Adversus Iudaeos* 3:3:1). See in general Stern (2012*a*) 412–422.

83 This double compliance would not have been possible every year. In the preceding year (1005/6), for example, the Easter calendar was intercalated but the rabbinic calendar was not; as a result, the dates of Easter according to Computus—which all Christians presumably observed—were over a month later than those of the Jewish Passover. It would have been much more difficult to argue that some Jewish calculations set Passover one month later. It must therefore be assumed that the Syrians were resigned to complying with the tradition of observing 'with the Jews' only when this was feasible.

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Brooks and Chabot (1909–1910): full Syriac text (SS vols. 21–22, CSCO vol. 62) and Latin translation (SS vols. 23–24, CSCO vol. 63). In the Syriac edition, our passages appear in the first volume (SS 21, first part of CSCO 62, edited by Brooks) on pp. 204–205 and 224. The Latin translation is in SS 23, pp. 97 and 110.

Delaporte (1910): French translation of the Syriac text. Our passages appear on pp. 125 and 140.

The entry of 921/2 has been quoted and discussed throughout the literature on the calendar controversy, e.g. by Bornstein (1904) 7–8, and most recently de Blois (2014) 76–77. The entry of 1006/7 appears not to have been noticed in earlier scholarship.

Text and Translation

Transcription and translation: François de Blois and Sacha Stern.

British Library Add. 7197, fol. 37v (extract)

ܫܢܬ ܬܫܥ ܕܗܓܪܐ ܒܫܒܬ ܒ ܐܝܪ ܫܒ ܕܫܢܬ ܐܠܦ ܬܫܥ ܡܐܐ ܫܢܬ

The year 309 (of the Hijrah), beginning Saturday 12 Īyār (May) of the year 1232 of the Greeks (SE = 920/1 CE).

ܒܗ ܐܬܚܕܬ ܒܝܢ ܒܢܝ ܡܥܪܒܐ ܘܒܢܝ ܡܕܝܢܚܐ ܒܥܕܢ ܚܓ̈ܘܗܝ . ܘܒܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܠܝܐ ܒܪ ܫܢܝܐ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܐܡܪ

In it there befell a division[84] between the Jews of the West and the Jews of the East[85] concerning the calculation of their festivals. And the Jews

84 Or: 'disagreement'. Ditto in fol. 40v.

85 This is a common, contrastive designation of Palestinian and Babylonian Jews (respectively) in Talmudic and early Geonic literature (e.g. *bMegillah* 29b, *bBava Metsia* 90b, and most importantly, the early Geonic *Sefer ha-Ḥilluqim*—Margaliot 1938, Lewin 1942, Elkin 1995—which is first quoted, frequently, by early-mid 10th-century Jacob al-Qirqisani—Nemoy 1930 and 1939–1943). Its use here may be taken as an indication that Elias was drawing on a Jewish source, as would be naturally expected. This contrastive designation would have made sense to Elias from his geographical perspective, being located in Nisibis, upper Mesopotamia; it would also have been associated with the analogous West/East polarity of early and medieval Christianity.

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who are in the West made their New Year[86] Tuesday, and those of the East (made it) Thursday.

British Library Add. 7197, fol. 40v (extract)[87]

ܫܢܬ ܬܠܬ ܡ ܪܒܥܝܬ ܒܟ ܫܢܐ ܡܢܗ ܪܫܝܬ ܫܢ ܐܠܦ ܘܫ ܫܢ ܒܝܘܢ ܫܪܝ

The year 397 (of the Hijrah), beginning Friday 27 Ilul (September) of the year 1317 of the Greeks [SE = 1006/7 CE]

ܘܒܗ ܐܬ ܦܘܠܓܢܐ ܒܝܢ ܡܫܝܚܝ ܡܥܪܒܐ ܘܡܫܝܚܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܚ ܒܚܫܒܢܐ ܕܥܝܕ ܩܕܡ ܡܢ ܫܒܛ ܘܡܫܝܚܝ ܡܥܪܒܐ ܫܪܘ ܒܬܪܥܣܪ ܝܘܡ ܒܫܒܛ . ܘܡܫܝܚܝ ܕܡܕܝܢܚ ܒܐܪܒܥ ܣܪ ܝܘܡ ܒܗ . ܘܐܬ ܒܗ ܫܢܬܐ ܒܬܪܝܬ ܒܫ ܕܡܢ ܝܘܡ ..

ܕܡ ms Berlin ܕܢ
ܘܒܚܫܒܢܐ ms Berlin ܘܒܚܫܒܢ
ܒܬܪܝܬ Brooks (erroneously) ܒܬܪܝܬ

And in it there was a division between the Christians of the West and the Christians of the East concerning the calculation of the Fast (Lent) and the festivals.[88] And the Westerners began the Fast on the seventeenth day of Shebat (February). And the Easterners on the twenty-fourth day of the same. And Easter occurred in that year in the second Jumada.[89]

16.5 Calendar Data

This document lists the differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian calendars in the years 921/2–923/4 CE. The list appears in a single folio, T-S 12.737 (verso; formerly shelf-marked T-S 10K5), which contains a hotchpotch

86 Lit.: 'the beginning (*rēšā*) of their year'.

87 Four passages of Elias' work, including this second passage, are quoted in ms Berlin Sach. 108, fol. 144 (Brooks in Brooks and Chabot 1909–1910: i.5). The few variants readings, as supplied by Brooks, are listed below, although as a secondary source, the readings of ms Berlin should probably be regarded as inferior.

88 According to ms Berlin, 'the Festival' (singular), which would refer to Easter.

89 This month name is erroneous: it should be Rajab (see discussion above).

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of calendrical and chronological data. The document can be dated, on the basis of the chronological data on the recto, to about 1093/4 CE.

The purpose of this text is unclear, but it confirms an abiding interest in the calendar controversy nearly two hundred years later. Interestingly, this document attributes the controversy of 921/2 to Saadya and ben Meir—an attribution that is not found anywhere else in our corpus, but that might have exerted an influence on early twentieth-century interpretations of the controversy.

Physical Description

Paper, black ink. Dimensions: 21.8 cm × 16.8 cm (text, verso: 14 cm × 12.5 cm). Margins, verso: right 30 mm, left 15–20 mm, top 12–15 mm, bottom 65 mm (not a margin, rather the text ends before the bottom of the page). Margins, recto: right 15 mm, left upper half 26–30 mm, left bottom half c. 20 mm (no justification), top 20 mm, bottom 10 mm. Average line height (including text and space lines): 87 mm; text and space lines are roughly equal.

Although the text is somewhat informally laid out, the folio seems to have been part of a codex, as it has similar margins on the recto and verso, and indeed, consistent inner and outer margins (inner c. 15–20 mm, outer c. 25–30 mm). Furthermore, a vertical fold is faintly visible along the inner edge, and beyond it, narrow flaps of paper (fragmentary, in two places) with a small hole in the top flap (possibly a stitch hole) and dark staining on both flaps (especially on the verso side) which might be a trace of glue. This suggests that it might have been a loose leaf that was inserted and stitched and/or glued into a bound book.

The folio is damaged and torn around all its edges; only the outer edge is fairly intact (it has been restored, moreover, with the addition of pieces of paper backing, glued on the recto). A few small holes, especially near the top. In some areas the ink has faded.

In the recto, numbers are only marked with dots. In the verso, they are marked with a continuous line above the letters; if the number is of one letter only, it is sometimes marked with a dot. Abbreviations are marked with dots.

Parts of a different text, with quotations of biblical words, are written sideways in another hand in the bottom margin of the verso.

The handwriting, square with a cursive tendency, can be dated palaeographically to around 1100,[90] which concurs with the calendrical dating of c. 1093/4.

90 So Judith Schlanger (16 November 2017), independently of the calendrical dating and without knowledge of it.

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Contents

The text is written, on both sides, in a mixture of Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic.

The recto, which is not edited here, is divided into four sections, separated by horizontal lines:

(1) a list of remainders of *moladot* in periods of 247 years, headed with: הדה פצלה אלמחאזיר אלכב[יר]ה ('these are the remainders of the great cycles').[91]

(2) a world chronology (entitled אלתואריך), apparently based on *Seder Olam*, providing the intervals (in years) between significant historical events, up to the current year. The chronology goes from Adam to Noah's birth (1056 years), then to the Flood (600 years), Isaac's birth (392 years), the Exodus (400 years), the building of the Solomon's temple (480 years), its destruction (410 years), the building of the Second Temple (70 years), and its destruction (420 years). The text concludes that from the destruction of the Second Temple until today there are 1025 years (ולה אליום בענותינו הרבים אלכה סנה).

(3) a list, in order, of these same numbers—presumably with the intention of adding them up.

(4) the same numbers broken up into individual letters, and re-grouped in another order—possibly to facilitate the grand addition.

At this point, the end of the folio is reached, and the result of the grand addition is not given. But enough information is provided here for the text to be fairly precisely dated. The intervals 'until today' add up to 4853. The conversion of this number into a precise date depends on when the era of Adam was deemed to start. A reasonable guess, within a margin of error of one year, is 1093/4 CE—this, then, is the date when the text was written.[92]

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91 On the 247-year cycle, see Vidro (2017); I am grateful to Nadia Vidro for her reading of this passage. The list of remainders of *moladot* extends through nineteen 247-year cycles, i.e. 4693 years. The scribe stopped at this point because the 247-year cycle that follows, from 4694 to 4941, had not yet come to an end in his time (as is evident from our dating of this text, based on the next section), and its remainder was therefore irrelevant for calculations of the *molad*.

92 On the different epochs of the era of Creation (or 'Adam'), see Chapter 5, pp. 62 and 69–70. According to the Palestinian reckoning, which is dominant nowadays and which may already have been so in this period, the year 4853 from the Creation would correspond to 1092/3 CE; according to the Babylonian reckoning, it would correspond to 1093/4 CE. However, even the Palestinian reckoning would acknowledge that Adam's era—which seems to be referred to here—begins one year later than the era of Creation, when the *molad* of Tishri was 6:14:0 (*WeYaD*), on the Friday of Adam's creation. Moreover, inasmuch as this chronology is based on intervals (rather than on an era), it is possible that the count of years begins from the *end* of Adam's first year. All this creates several uncertainties, but it is still possible to date this text with a fair degree of precision.

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The verso presents a list of the differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian calendars in the years 921/2–923/4 CE, more precisely, from the outbreak of the controversy (New Year 921 CE) to the last incidence of disagreement between the two parties (New Year 923). The two parties are identified, in the heading, as Saadya and ben Meir. Throughout the text, only Saadya is granted honorific phrases and titles (such as 'Rabbi', 'of blessed memory', 'Head of the Academy', etc.), which suggests that the author favours him; but otherwise, the data is presented in a neutral and impartial manner.

The mention of Saadya in the heading is significant, because this is the only text within our corpus that attributes the calendar of the Babylonians to him. It demonstrates that as early as the end of the eleventh century, if not earlier, the controversy was believed to have been led by Saadya—even though, as I have argued on many occasions, this is not borne out by the texts that were written at the time of the controversy (e.g. the Book of the Calendar Controversy, and even Saadya's own Letters).[93] Presumably, this belief was formed in later generations with historical hindsight, namely the knowledge that by the late 920s, Saadya eventually did become head of a Babylonian academy and a major Babylonian leader.

By the time this folio was first published (in 1901, by Schechter), the (false) hypothesis that Saadya had led the Babylonians was already well established (see Chapter 3).[94] But it is plausible to assume that the publication of this folio did much to support the emerging, scholarly consensus of the early twentieth century.

The purpose of all these texts, recto and verso, is unclear. This may be no more than an intellectual exercise; perhaps this folio is a school exercise, the work of a student in the science of calendar computation. But the text on the verso does confirm that the calendar controversy of 921/2 was still well remembered in Egypt at the end of the eleventh century.

Bibliography

Schechter (1901–1902) 59 (Text VI).
Epstein (1902) 235–236, with French translation; Bornstein (1904) 95–96; both depended entirely on Schechter's edition.

93 See Chapters 2 and 6. In his letters (L1BM and Letter 4 of LMisc), ben Meir blames Saadya for misleading the Babylonians—a claim that I read with suspicion. But even ben Meir falls short of attributing the Babylonian calendar to Saadya, as is done in the present text.

94 This view was already completely taken for granted, for example, by Epstein (1901) 172.

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CalData
[T-S 12.737 verso]

סנה אלכלף[95] בין[96] רבי סעדיה זלˊ ובן מאיר
ד תרפב ליצר[ה] תתנג לחרבן במחזור רמז
באדו[ט]בהז שישית בבהזיגוח שביעית
בגוחאדזט שמינית נולד תשרי ליל ד
יא שעות תתקלב[97]
עשאה בן מאיר חסרים וראס[98] אלמתיבה שלמים[99]
נולד ניסן לילה אלאחד ה שעות ג חלקים
הפסח לבן מאיר אלאחד ולאלגאון אלתלתא
נולד תשרי לילה אלג ט שעות תמא חלקים
ראש השנה לבן מאיר אלתלתא ולאלגאון אל כמיס
עשאה בן מאיר כסדרן וראס אלמתיבה כסדרן
כאן אלפסח לבן מאיר אל כמיס ולראס אלמתיבה אלסבת[100]
נולד ניסן יום אלה א תתעו[101]
נולד תשרי יום אלסבת ו שעות רלז[102]
ראש השנה לבן מאיר אלשבת
ולראס אלמתיבה אל תאני[103]

95 These first words were not transcribed by Schechter; Epstein and Bornstein hence made erroneous conjectures (חילוקים and חילופים, respectively). The letters כלף are very faint; I am grateful to Nadia Vidro for helping with their reading.

96 The text apparently reads בן; however, Nadia Vidro suggests to me that the *nun*, which is smudged, is actually meant to be a *yod-nun* ligature, since in this fragment the final *nun* in usually written in ligature or joined to the preceding letter.

97 The rest of the line is blank; Bornstein conjectures how it could be filled, but this conjecture is unwarranted.

98 Schechter misreads וראש, and so through the rest of the text.

99 This last word is stacked above the line. Schechter assigned it wrongly to the previous line; Bornstein restored it correctly to this line.

100 Epstein believes this line belongs after the next one, but this is unnecessary.

101 Should be תתעט (879). The error can easily be explained, as תתעו (876) is the number of parts, together with 4 days and 8 hours, that constitute the length of a plain year (modulo 7), and this number was consequently well known.

102 Number unmarked.

103 Reading very uncertain, but context demands this.

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The year of the differences between Rabbi Saadya of blessed memory and ben Meir.
(In the year) 4682 from the Creation, 853 from the Destruction,[104] in the 247th cycle
according to (the 19-year cycle) 1-4-6-9-12-15-17 the sixth (year), according to 2-5-7-10-13-16-18 the seventh,
according to 3-6-8-11-14-17-19 the eighth, Tishri was born on the night of the fourth,
11 hours, 932 (parts).
Ben Meir made it [i.e. Marḥeshwan and Kislew] deficient, and the Head of the Academy full.
Nisan was born on the night of the first, 5 hours, 3 parts.
Passover according to ben Meir was on Sunday, and according to the Gaon[105] on Tuesday.
Tishri[106] was born on the night of the third, 9 hours, 441 parts.
The New Year according to ben Meir was on Tuesday, and according to the Gaon on Thursday.
Ben Meir made it [i.e. Marḥeshwan and Kislew] orderly, and the Head of the Academy orderly.
Here, Passover according to ben Meir was on Thursday, and according to the Head of the Academy on the Sabbath.
Nisan was born on the 5th day, 1 (hour), 879 (parts).
Tishri[107] was born on the day of Sabbath, 6 hours, 237 (parts).
The New Year according to ben Meir was on Sabbath,
and according to the Head of the Academy on Monday.

104 Assuming 69/70 CE as year 1.
105 Title given, in this period, to the head of an academy. Saadya is interchangeably called 'Head of the Academy' and 'Gaon' (neither of which he was, historically, at the time of the dispute).
106 Of year 4683.
107 Of year 4684.

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16.6 Qaraite Narrative

This recently discovered document presents, uniquely, a detailed account of the calendar controversy from the perspective of a Qaraite. It is also the only source attesting that the controversy continued until the beginning of 924, when Palestinian and Babylonian calendars converged back to the same dates, without however either side emerging victorious over the other. The author uses this intra-Rabbanite controversy as a platform to promote the Qaraite calendar. He mentions, in passing, the Jews of the Maghreb as siding with ben Meir. This Qaraite narrative was presumably written sometime after the event, but authorship and date of composition are unknown.

Two fragments of a single folio have been preserved: T-S NS 262.17 and T-S AS 155.112. Each fragment contains a bit less than half the folio, vertically from top to bottom. When the fragments are joined together, a central section of the folio is still missing, although in some places (including top and bottom) the fragments join up (see Plates 23–24). The resulting *lacunae* make it difficult to reconstruct the text completely.

The script is difficult to date, although the early twelfth century is likely. The language is Judeo-Arabic.

Physical Description

Paper, brown ink. Dimensions: T-S NS 262.17: 21.2 cm (height) × 3.7 cm (width at top) and 9.6 cm (width at bottom; these widths happen to be the narrowest and widest of the fragment). T-S AS 155.112: 21.2 cm × 10.7 cm (width at top) × 5 cm (width at bottom). The dimensions of the whole folio would thus have been 21.2 cm × 14.5 cm. Margins: inner 20–25 mm, outer 19 mm, top 11 mm, bottom 22 mm; the margins are very consistent, although left margins are not justified (space fillers are occasionally used). Lines number: 25. Average line height (including text line and space line): 72 mm; space lines are wider than the text. The text is therefore well spaced out. The script is square and very regular.

Apart from being torn vertically into two fragments, with a section missing in the middle, the manuscript is in relatively good condition. Exactly half way down the folio, the text on line 14 is damaged by a horizontal fold (the folio was evidently folded, at one point, in two); this damage has been partially made good, at our request, by the Cambridge University Library conservation team. There are large stains in the top two corners of the folio.

Contents

The narrative begins with the events surrounding the New Year of 922. According to the calculation of the Babylonian Rabbanites, the New Year was to fall

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on Thursday; according to the Palestinians, on Tuesday. The new moon crescent, however, was sighted on Tuesday evening; accordingly, the Qaraites (who are not mentioned by name in this passage) would have set the New Year on Wednesday.

The author's description of the confusion and 'agitation' of the people at the time, with regard to the date of the New Year, recalls what is found in Saadya's Letter 1. However, the description of the events is far more detailed here. We are told that when it came to the fast of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), the most important date in the month of Tishri (10 Tishri), the people of Babylonia were divided into seven groups. Yom Kippur could have been observed on Thursday (the Palestinian date), Friday (the Qaraite date), or the Sabbath (the Babylonian date). Each of the seven Babylonian groups fasted on a selection of these dates (and one group fasted on all three). Because of the pressure to conform to the Babylonian date, those who fasted on Thursday and/or Friday did so in secret, and either fasted openly on the Sabbath, or pretended to fast on the Sabbath by making a 'false declaration' (see Table 10 and further discussion below). The only exception was the seventh group, which the author lauds for opting only for the Qaraite date of Friday, and for fasting openly on that day.

The narrative so far, which occupies nearly the entire recto (lines 1–18), serves the author's purpose of advocating the truth of the Qaraite calendar and of the 'commandment' of following the sighting of the new moon. It is also an opportunity for him to depict the Rabbanites as divided and undecided, and at times disloyal to their own leaders. The focus of the narrative is entirely on Babylonia, and the assumption is that Babylonian Rabbanite authority forced the waverers into secrecy. The setting of the narrative is clearly Babylonia, maybe even Baghdad itself.

After the divided observance of Yom Kippur and the other festivals, business resumed as normal and the discussion was momentarily forgotten, each faction rallying behind its leaders. The confusion was to return, however, at the next festival season in 923 (recto line 19–verso line 1).

The narrative then interrupts to explain the cause of the disagreement between Babylonians and Palestinians regarding the date of the New Year of 922; it was due to the Palestinians' addition of 641 parts to the limits of the calendar (verso ll. 3–16). Ben Meir is not named here, but presumably he is earlier in the text; reference is certainly made to a single leader. The narrator agrees that the New Year should not have been postponed (as demanded by the Babylonian Rabbanites), but only, in his view, because the new moon was sighted earlier (ll. 3–6).

The narrative resumes with the statement that the Palestinians, together with the people of the Maghreb who followed ben Meir, persisted in their dis-

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agreement with the Babylonians (ll. 16–18). Divergent dates were consistently observed right until Passover 924 CE, when the calendars naturally converged back to the same dates (ll. 18–25). The narrative concludes that the disagreement was then settled, but without necessarily implying that one side submitted to the other's opinions, or that the calendar controversy ended in a Babylonian victory.

Bibliography

Unpublished. T-S NS 262.17 was discovered by Marina Rustow and Sacha Stern in February 2015. T-S AS 155.112 was discovered and joined to the first fragment by Sacha Stern in January 2017. The fragments increased considerably in legibility after they were unfolded and restored by the Cambridge University Library conservation team. Transcription and translation was carried out by Nadia Vidro, in consultation with Sacha Stern. Images of the joined fragments were created by Jay Birbeck; see Plates 23–24.

Text Edition

In this text edition, the end of the fragment on the right is marked with a vertical bar, and the beginning on the fragment on the left is marked with another vertical bar. In most lines of text there is a lacuna between the two bars, sometimes filled in with conjectural text; this lacuna belongs to neither fragment. In some lines of text, only one vertical bar is given, because the two fragments physically join up. Thus for example in the first line of the recto, only one vertical line is given, because the two fragments join up; but since on the left side, only part of the top of the letters is visible for the first two words, a lacuna is indicated; in this case, the lacuna belongs to the left side.

Some of the lines end with a space filler, in the shape of a short diagonal line (top left to bottom right) and a dot on the upper right of it; I have indicated this sign with a colon.

The text, in Judeo-Arabic, uses some non-standard plene spellings.

The identity of the recto and verso was determined on the basis of the chronological order of the narrative, as well as on the textual continuity from recto to verso.

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QarNar recto
[T-S AS 155.112 recto (on the left) + T-S NS 262.17 verso (on the right)]

ל[.]ן יקודה | [...] [...]א[...]קו[.....]
אלפריקין | [... תק]|דם טלוע אלהלא[ל] פי תלך אלסנה
ראס תשרי אלמ|[...] | עלי חסאבהם פמאגת
אלבלדאן בדלך וא|[.....]|ה אהלהא ואנכרוה
גדא פלסראה אלצדמה | [.....|....] יקרב
אלחירה אנקסם אהל אלער|[אק] [ס]|בעה אקסאם
פצאם בעצהם אלכיפור יום | [אלכמיס וי]|ום אלגמעה
באלחקיקה סרא ואטהר אנ|[...]|ם יום אלסבת
זורא כופא ובעץ צאם אלכ|מיס ואלסבת באלחקיקה
וסתר אלכמיס וצאם אכרון אלס|[בת][108] | פקט וצאם : :
אכרון אלגמעה סרא ואטהרו| אנהם צאמו אלסבת
וצאם אכרון אלגמעה ואלס[ב|ת] | ואטהרו אנהם צאמו
אלסבת פקט וצאם [אכר]|ון [אלכ]מיס ואלגמעה ואלסבת
גמיעא באלחק[יק|ה ואטהרו] | מנהא אלסבת וחדה
ואלאקל אליסיר והו | [אלקסם אלס]|אבע מן הדה אלאקסאם
תנבה פאנתבה במ|[.....]|ד טאעה אללה פרפץ
אהל אלאקסאם ותחקק אמר | צחה רויה אלהלאל
פצאם יום אלגמעה פקט טאה|ר[109]א ותרך מא סואה
ולזם אמר אלרויה מנד דא|[...]|בר עלי אדיתהם
אלאאן זאלת ענה ומא אלא אן| [..] | אלכפור ועברת
אלאעיאד חתי תנאסו אלנא|[ס] |אגמעין מא מצא
ותרכו דכרה ואהמלו אל|[....|.] ואתרו מא :
ירצי רוסאהם ויכפיה|[ם ...]|ם פרגעו אלי מא
כאנו עליה ועדלו ען אלקבול מ|נהם ואלתסלים
להם חתי ירצו וימסכו ענהם ומ|תאל קבול אלנאס

108 The left foot of the letter *taw* might be visible. Below the letter there appears to be the pointing of a *segol*, but this is more likely traces of ink from elsewhere (the other side of the folio, or perhaps the facing folio). Between the rest of this line and the next line there are several dots of ink of a similar kind.

109 The letter *resh* appears to be split between both fragments.

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QarNar recto

(…) leads it (…)
the two parties (…) The first appearance of the moon in that year preceded
the beginning of Tishri (…) according to their calculation, and
the lands[110] were agitated by this. And their people (…) it and renounced it[111]
strongly. Then at the height of the upset (…) be near
the confusion, the people of Bab[ylonia] became divided into seven groups.
Some of them fasted the Kippur on the day of [Thursday and the d]ay of Friday
in reality in secret, and declared (…) on Saturday
falsely, out of fear. Some fasted on Thursday and Sabbath in reality,
and hid the Thursday. Others fasted only on Saturday.
Others fasted on Friday in secret, and declared that they fasted on Saturday.
And others fasted on Friday and on Saturday, and declared that they fasted
only on Saturday. And others fasted on Thursday, Friday and Saturday
together in reality, [and they declared] of them only Saturday.
And the smallest, and it is the seventh of these groups,
became aware and realized (…) obedience to God, and forsook
the people of the groups and recognised the commandment of the correctness of observing the Moon,
and so openly fasted on Friday only and refrained from the rest.
The commandment of the observation was imposed for (…) upon their damage
until it came to an end and …[112] (…) The Kippur and
the festivals passed, until all the people forgot what came to pass
and refrained from mentioning it and neglected the (…) and followed what
their leaders approved and it was enough for them (…) But then they returned to what
they did before,[113] and refrained from obeying them and submitting
to them, to the point that they were pleased and refrained from them. And an example of the people's obeying

110 Or: towns.
111 Perhaps, the calculated date of the beginning of Tishri.
112 This sentence cannot be made sense of.
113 Presumably, with the oncome of the next season of festivals, Passover of 923 CE. Lines 22–26 appear to be self-contradictory, but the general meaning is clear.

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QarNar verso
[T-S NS 262.17 recto (on the left) + T-S AS 155.112 verso (on the right)]

רואסא[114] אלעראק[יי]ן פ[י ד]לך [....] | עלי שרט[115]
אלחסאב קבל חצור תשרי | [.....]|באן הדא
מא דהב עני ואלצואב מא | [...|.] מן אלתקד[י]ם
לאן אלפ[...]ם ענד | [.....|.]א בתקדים רויה
אלהלאל יום ק[ב]ל| [.....]|ם א[..]טם מן אלפ[..]ח[116] :
בתרך שרט אל|[.....]|ר עבר יעלמונה ומע :
הדא כלמא| [.....] | אלצורה תעלקת באלראי
אלאכר אלדי לק[...]|א פי חסאב אלעבור והו אִמְרֹת
אִמְרֹת[117] לאן פיה א|ן אלחד בר למיתין וארבע אגזא
מן אלסאעה אלעא|[ש]|רה מן לילה אלתלתא אנמא
הו תמאן מיה וכמסה| וארבעין גזוא מן הדה אלסאעה
ודלך בזיאדה סת|[ה מיה] |ואחד וארבעין גזוא עלי
מיתין וארבעה א[ג]|א פל|[ד]ל[ך] ל[ם[118] י]גז אלמילאד הדא
אלחד לתשרי הדא ||[.....|..] [ר]אס אלסנה יום
אלתלתא עלי הדא ||[.....]|מל בה מע הדא אלחאל
אולי ובקי הו ואלש|[אמיון וא]|הל אלמגרב ומן :
יקבל מנה עלי ה|דא[119] [אלכֶל]ף[120] בינהם ובין אהל
אלעראק ומן יקב|ל[121] מנהם נצף[122] אלסנה אלמאצ̇יה
ומדה הדה אלס|[נה] |לאנהא כאנת ענדהם גמיעא
מעתדלה פכאן ||[אלניס]|אן[123] פיהא ללשאמיון אלכמיס

114 Non-standard plene spelling.
115 On this line, of the letters of difficult reading, only small traces survive.
116 The missing letters look like צד, but this does not make a word.
117 A scribal error for בִּמְרֹת.
118 The second *lamed* of פלדלך and the *lamed* of לם can be identified from remains of their upright strokes (but less clearly in the former).
119 The letter *heh* is split between both fragments, and not entirely preserved.
120 Only the pointing (*qubuts*) and the lower bar of the *kaf* are visible, as well as the bottom end of the ligature *aleph-lamed*.
121 The letter *lamed* is split between both fragments.
122 The function of the dot on the *nun* is unclear.
123 Non-standard plene spelling, as on the last line.
124 Tishri of 922 CE. According to the calculation of the Babylonian Rabbanite leaders, the New Year should have been postponed from Tuesday to Thursday.
125 More likely than, alternatively, 'I forgot' or 'I lost sight of', but either way the sentence cannot be made sense of.
126 The general sense seems to be that it was correct to refrain from postponing the New Year.

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QarNar verso

the leaders of the Babylonians in this (…) on the [stip]ulation of
the calculation before the advent of Tishri[124] (…) this
what went.[125] And it was correct (…) from the postponing[126]
because the (…) at (…) in making the sighting of the moon
precede one day before[127] (…) from the (…)
by dropping the stipulation[128] (…) they know it and with
all this (…) The form[129] depended on the other
opinion which (…) in calendar calculation which is 641-
642,[130] because according to it, the limit is outside[131] two hundred and four parts
of the tenth hour of the night of Tuesday; rather,
it is eight hundred and forty-five parts of this hour,
which is by adding [six] hundred and forty-one parts to
two hundred and four parts.[132] For [this reason], the *molad* did [not] exceed this
limit of Tishri.[133] This (…) the beginning of the year on the day of
Tuesday according to this …… in it, with this situation[134]
it was the first.[135] And he adhered, and the Pal[estinians] and the people of the Maghreb and those who
obey him, to this [differen]ce between them and between the people of
Babylonia and those who obey them half of the previous year[136]
and during this year,[137] because it was according to all of them
orderly, and Nisan in it was according to the Palestinians on Thursday

127 The new moon of Tishri 922 was visible, and thus presumably sighted, on Tuesday evening, one day before Wednesday evening when the Rabbanite New Year began. The latter was thus one day late, and incorrect.

128 It was thus better to drop the stipulation of the Rabbanite calendar (postponement).

129 Unclear. The author is now turning to ben Meir's opinion.

130 Ben Meir's rule of 641–642. The text reads erroneously 641 (*bis*).

131 Or: above, i.e. more than 204 parts.

132 Ben Meir's limit is 641 parts later; 204 + 641 = 845. See the Four Gates tables at the end of Chapter 5 (third gate, Tuesday).

133 The *molad* of Tishri 922 CE was n3-9-441. For the Babylonians, 441 exceeded the limit of 204 parts, and therefore the New Year had to be postponed. For the Palestinians, 441 was within the limit of 845, and therefore no postponement was made.

134 Or: 'condition'.

135 Perhaps this means that the New Year fell the first of the possible dates, Tuesday.

136 From Passover to the New Year, 922 CE.

137 922/3 CE, from one New Year to the next.

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וללעראקיון אלס|[בת ..] |תם חצרת אלסנה אלאכרי
פכאן ראס תש|[רי מנה]א ללשאמיון אלסבת :
וללעראקיין אל|[תאני פ]|עלהא אלשאמיון כאמלה
ואלעראקיין נא|קצה פאתפקו חיניד פי אן ראס
ניסאן מנהא |אלתלתא ואלנאס מע הדא ינקאדון

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and according to the Babylonians on [Sabbath].[138] Then the next year came in
and the beginning of Tishri in it according to the Palestinians was on Sabbath
and according to the Babylonians on [Monday]. Palestinians made it full
and Babylonians defective. Then they agreed that the beginning of
Nisan in it was on Tuesday, and with this the people submitted.[139]

138 Nisan 923 CE.

139 Nisan 924 CE. 'Submitted' meaning perhaps that they settled the difference.

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The Seven Groups: Discussion

The seven groups presented in the recto are summed up in the following table (Table 10).

In 922 CE, Yom Kippur (10 Tishri) fell on Thursday for the Palestinian Rabbanites; on Friday for the Qaraites (assuming the new moon was sighted one week earlier on Tuesday evening); and on Saturday for the Babylonian Rabbanites. The Jews of Babylonia were undecided and split into seven groups, each group observing the fast on different dates.

According to the narrative, all the Babylonian Jews—except for the last group, which effectively aligned with the Qaraites—either fasted or pretended to fast on the official Babylonian date (Saturday). The groups differed with regard to whether the Palestinian, the Qaraite, or both dates should also be respected. The observance of these additional dates was always carried out in secret. Most of the possible permutations are listed, although no group is said to have fasted in secret on Thursday and in pretence on Saturday (I cannot explain this omission). Noteworthy is group 4, who were effectively crypto-Qaraite, although the author does not note this or praise them as he does for the openly Qaraite group 7.

Some of the other groups fasted two days (groups 1 and 5) or even three days (group 6) in succession. This would have been extremely demanding, inasmuch as the prohibition on eating and drinking on Yom Kippur applies through the day as well as the night, and thus fasting must have been uninterrupted. In the Babylonian Talmud (*bRosh ha-Shanah* 21a), Rava is said to have been stringent with himself and to have observed every year two days of Yom Kippur, just as all other festivals are observed in the Diaspora for two consecutive days. The implication of this passage is that fasting for two days was not a normative requirement, presumably because of the difficulty of it. Later, medieval rabbinic sources confirm that Yom Kippur should not be observed for more than one day. According to Jacob al-Qirqisānī, one of the Maghrebian Rabbanite scholars argued that two days of Yom Kippur should be kept, just like for the other festivals; however, the Rabbanites did not obligate people to fast two days, as this was too difficult.[140] It is unclear whether Qirqisānī means that the Maghrebian rabbi intended to institute this in practice, or rather just to put forward a theoretical argument. In 922 CE, however, when the dates of that particular year were contentious, the Rabbanites of Babylonia may have had good reason to observe two or even three days. What our narrative claims seems unlikely, but is not impossible.

140 Jacob al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-anwār wa-al-marāqib*, 7:12:8 (Nemoy 1939–1943: iv. 817); see Friedman (2016) 599, n. 240.

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TABLE 10 Observed dates of Yom Kippur 922 CE according to Qaraite Narrative

	Lines in recto	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Group 1	7–9	secret	secret	pretence
Group 2	9–10	secret		real
Group 3	10			real
Group 4	11		secret	pretence
Group 5	12–13		secret	real
Group 6	13–14	secret	secret	real
Group 7	15–18		real	

The historicity of these seven groups is obviously moot. If most of these fasts (on Thursday and on Friday) were carried out in secret, and some of the Saturday fasts were only a false pretence, one wonders how the information would have become available to our author, particularly if he himself belonged to the Qaraite community. Qaraite writers have a predilection for listing divisions into sects and groups (so, for example, Jacob al-Qirqisānī);[141] this narrative evokes this Qaraite tradition.

141 Nemoy (1930 and 1939–1943).

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CHAPTER 17

Palestinian Calendar Manuals

The texts presented in this chapter, all from recent discoveries in the Cairo Genizah, are Jewish calendar manuals dating from the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. They all display a number of Palestinian calendrical features, and in particular, the rule of 641–642 with led ben Meir to his controversy with the Babylonians in 921/2. These manuals demonstrate that the controversy of 921/2 did not end in a Babylonian victory; the Palestinians, or those who affiliated with this tradition, upheld and used the calendar of ben Meir for almost two centuries after the controversy. However, as has been noted in the Introduction (Chapter 2), through most of this period the calendar of ben Meir was inconsequential, in the sense that it would not have led the festivals being set on different dates. It is perhaps precisely for this reason that Palestinians and Babylonians in Cairo (or elsewhere) could afford, in this period, to maintain their distinct calendar traditions, without the risk of igniting controversies as in 921/2.

17.1 Palestinian Calendar Manual 1: Introduction and Critical Edition

This calendar manual, in Judeo-Arabic, aims at providing as much information as is needed for an individual to calculate and construct the calendar of any year. It was probably quite a short text, although we only know its beginning; the end of it missing. Its use of ben Meir's calendar rules, in particular the rule of 641–642, gives it its distinctively Palestinian identity. As a manual that was presumably intended for practical use, this text confirms that the calendar of ben Meir was maintained and promoted for a long time after the controversy of 921/2 CE.

This manual is attested in two manuscripts, each in rather different versions. A common text was clearly used in both manuals, but the scribes took the liberty to word it in their own ways. This level of scribal freedom reflects a general tendency, in the context of calendar manuals (of which many are preserved in the Cairo Genizah), to produce original texts rather than to copy old ones, often because the calendar data needed to be updated to the scribe's own year. But in this case, in spite of the textual variation, a common, pre-existing text was used.

The provenance of this manual may be Palestine, although it could equally have been authored in Egypt by members of the local Palestinian community.

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The first manuscript, 1PalMan1, can be dated by its script to the late eleventh century or c. 1100; the second manuscript, 1PalMan2, cannot easily be dated and could be considerably earlier or later.

Contents

The following topics are covered in what survives of the manual, in both versions, in the following order: the length of the lunar month (lines 2–4); the New Year date (1 Tishri), and the postponement rule of midday and 641–642 parts (ll. 5–9); a traditional mnemonic to assist the calculation of consecutive *moladot* (l. 10); the length of the lunar year, plain and intercalated, and of half years (ll. 11–17); the 19-year cycle and its sequence (l. 18); the postponements known as *lo ADW Rosh* (days of the week when the New Year is not allowed to occur—l. 19); the three types of year and the formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW (ll. 20–30); again the rule of 641–642 (ll. 30–32); the length (in days, hours, and parts) of the 19-year cycle (ll. 32–33); again the length of the intercalated year (ll. 33–34); and finally, an elaborate algorithm for calculating the *molad* from first principles. (ll. 35–50; the text is incomplete). It is impossible to estimate how much, at the end of the manual, is missing.

The disorder of these topics is striking. There are repetitions (the rule of 641–642, the length of the intercalated year), single topics are randomly broken up (e.g. the 19-year cycle, with its sequence and its length in two difference places), and topics are presented in an illogical order. Although the information is accurate, its disorder suggests a certain lack of professionalism. Nevertheless, the fact that it was copied in more than one manuscript indicates that this manual was treated as authoritative.

A similar structure is used in Palestinian Calendar Manual 2, as will be analysed there.

Palestinian Features: The Rule of 641–642

The most important feature of this short treatise is its emphatic and repeated reference to the rule of 641–642, i.e. that Tishri is postponed if the *molad* exceeds the limit of 641 parts after midday (ll. 5–9, 30–32). This is a specifically Palestinian calendar rule, which generated in fact the controversy of 921/2 CE. The rule is presented here as given and true, without any suggestion that some might disagree. A further Palestinian feature in this manual is the formula of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW (ll. 20–30), which was also used and favoured by ben Meir and the Palestinians at the time of the controversy.

The second reference to the rule of 641–642 is not identical to first, and presents a more restricted version of it, whereby the limit of 641–642 only applies when the *molad* of Tishri falls on a Monday. This more restricted version

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of the rule is first attested in Letter 3 of the Letters Miscellany (LMisc fol. 6r:13–6v:3), a Babylonian letter, where the opponents of ben Meir claim that this is the earlier (and the only authentic) Palestinian rule. The inconsistency between these two versions of the rule is not pointed out or resolved in this present manual.[1]

The repetition of the 641–642 rule, somewhat random, is itself significant. Although there is no indication in the text that this rule might be controversial, its repetition is clearly polemically motivated, and intended to assert the author's Palestinian identity. Equally interesting is the way in which this rule does not appear, in this text, as a postponement rule alongside that of *lo ADW Rosh*, as they are often and naturally presented in calendar manuals; instead, the rule of 641–642 is completely self-standing. Furthermore, the rule of 641–642 in its first occurrence is positioned very near the beginning of the manual, incongruously tucked in between the lengths of the month and of the lunar year, as if it were one of the most fundamental principles of the Jewish calendar. All this has the intended effect of bringing to the fore the rule of 641–642 parts, and reflects a deliberate attempt to emphasize the Palestinian identity of this calendar manual and its author.

Critical Edition

The manual is preserved in two manuscripts, 1PalMan1 and 1PalMan2. Both start at the beginning, but the end of the manual is missing; 1PalMan2 contains only half of what is covered in 1PalMan1. The text in these manuscripts is by no means identical, although the contents are the same and much of the wording is the same. In structural terms, this is clearly one and the same text, but the scribes took the liberty to phrase it in their own way.

For this reason, I do not present a traditional, critical apparatus, as the differences between the two manuscripts are too pervasive to be listed. I have taken as base text 1PalMan1, which has the more complete text; but the first three lines are taken from 1PalMan2, as they are very fragmentary in the first manuscript. In some places, the reading of 1PalMan2 has been preferred. Significant textual variants are indicated in footnotes.

The first half of the text, which is attested in both manuscripts, has been realigned in the critical edition. Throughout the critical edition, I have included minor conjectures and corrections that are not indicated here, but that have been clearly marked out in the diplomatic editions. In my notes, I have ignored minor variants such as alternative spellings, abbreviations, variant Arabic par-

1 See discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 72–75.

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ticles, variant numeral notations, and the occasional use of cognate Hebrew terms; only the more significant textual variants are noted. As always, for more textual information, the reader is referred to the diplomatic editions that follow afterwards.

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1PalMan

בסם אללה[2] אלרחמן אלרחים
שהר אלקמר כ֯ט יום ונצף ת֯ש צ֯ג חלקים
כ֯ח יומא תכרוג סואביע יבקא יום ונצף ת֯ש צ֯ג חלקים
פבין אלשהר[3] ואלשהר יום ונצף ות֯שצ֯ג חלקים
ואדא ולד תשרי פי אלסאעה אלסאבעה באלנהאר[4] וסת מאיא ומ֯א דקיקה
פדלך אליום הו יום ראס אלשהר
ואדא זאדת אלדקאיק דקיק
פראס אלשהר[5] פי ג֯ד דלך אליום[6]
ומאסרה דלך א֯מ֯רת֯ ליומו ב֯מ֯רת֯ למחר :
ומסרה כוסור[7] דקאיק אלשהר ג֯ו֯ט֯ ב֯ה֯ח֯ א֯ד֯ו֯ [8]י
סנה אלקמר ש֯נ֯ד֯ יומא ו֯ח֯ סאעאת ות֯ת֯ע֯ו֯ חלקים
ש֯נ֯ תכרג סואביע יבקא ד֯ איאם ו֯ח֯ סאעאת ות֯ת֯ע֯ו֯ חלקים
פבין אלסני ואלסנה ד֯ איאם ח֯ סאעאת ת֯ת֯ע֯ו֯ חלק(ים)[9]
פאדא כאנת אלסנה זאידה[10] שהר
פבין אלסנה ואלסנה ה֯ איאם כ֯א֯ סאעה ות֯ק֯פ֯ט֯ חלקים :
ובין ניסן ותשרי יומין וארבע סאעאת ות֯ל֯ח֯ חלקים :
ואדא לסנה שהר זאיד[11] פבין תשרי וניסן[12] ג֯ איאם ו֯י֯ סאעה וקנא חלקים:

---

2 In 1PalMan2, where this line of text is attested, the divine name is represented with a grapheme.

3 In 1PalMan1 the text up to this point is largely missing because of a tear in the manuscript.

4 1PalMan2: אד֯א וליד אלהילל באלנהאר פי אלסאעה אלסאבעה.

5 1PalMan2: ואדא וליד אלהילל באלנהאר פי אלסאעה אלסאבעה פי סיתה מיה ב֯מ֯ דקיקה.

6 1PalMan2: פמין אלג֯ד ראס אל שהר. The difference in meaning is negligible.

7 1PalMan1: כסור.

8 1PalMan1 omits ׳י.

9 1PalMan1 omits this whole line, presumably because of homoioteleuton.

10 1PalMan2 has instead פאד֯יל; the meaning is the same.

11 1PalMan2 reads instead (from the beginning of this line): פאיד֯א כאן פי אל סנה שהר פאד֯יל; the meaning is again the same.

12 So in 1PalMan2; but 1PalMan1 has ניסן ותשרי, clearly an error.

13 Lit. 'go out'.

14 i.e. modulo 7, after casting out the sevens. The *molad* of the second month will occur one day of the week, twelve hours, and 793 parts later than the first.

15 1PalMan2 has less accurately 'the moon' instead of 'Tishri'.

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1PalMan

In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate
A lunar month is 29 days and a half and 793 parts.
28 days are cast out[13] as weeks, what remains is one day and a half and 793 parts.
Between one month and the next there are one day and a half and 793 parts.[14]
If Tishri[15] is born in the seventh hour of the day and 641 parts,[16]
that day will be the beginning of the month.
But if the parts count one extra part,
the beginning of the month will be on the morrow of that day.
The tradition for this is '641 on its day, 642 on the morrow'.[17]
The tradition for the fractions[18] of the parts of a month is 3-6-9-2-5-8-1-4-7-10.[19]
The lunar year is 354 days, 8 hours and 876 parts.
350 are cast out as weeks, and what remains is 4 days, 8 hours and 876 parts.
Between one year and the next there are 4 days, 8 hours, 876 parts.
If one month is added to the year,
then between one year and the next[20] there are 5 days, 21 hours and 589 parts.
Between Nisan and Tishri there are two days, four hours and 438 parts.
If the year has an added month, then between Tishri and Nisan there are 3 days, 17 hours and 151 parts.

16 Judeo-Arabic דקיקה, which translates the Hebrew חלקים that is used earlier in this text.

17 This is the rule of ben Meir, which is expressed here in Hebrew.

18 The author really means 'units': in any set of consecutive *moladot*, the units of the number of parts will follow in this sequence. This tradition, also in 2PalMan fol. 1r:2–4, is intended to assist the calculation, or perhaps the verification of the calculation, of consecutive *moladot*.

19 '10' is used in the absence of a cipher for zero (which is not represented in alphabetic numeral notation). In principle, zero should be appearing in this position. In 1PalMan1, '10' is omitted; this is not incorrect, given that 10 is neither a unit nor a substitute for zero.

20 i.e. the interval modulo 7.

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מחזור אלקמר יֹט סנה ומאסרתה אדוטבהז : ובהזיגוח : וגוחאדוט[21]
אלדחיות לא בדו פסח : ולא גהז עצרת : ולא אדו ראש השנה : ולא אגו יום כפורים:
אלסנה ג אקסאם פי מרחשון וכסליו[22] אמא שלמים ואמא חסרים ואמא כסדרן
ומאסרתהמא שהז חגה כדו : ואמא שוח חדו כהז :
ש רמז לשלמים : וח לחסרים וכאף לכסדרן[23] :
פאדא כאן בין אלפסח ואלפסח ה איאם פאלסנה[24] שלמים והי בסיטה :
ואדא כאן בינהמא ז והי מעוברת
[ ]
[ ] איאם פהי כסדרן:
ואדא כאן בין [.....]חו [...] ואלסנה מעוברת פהי כסדרן :[25]
לא שלמים שלמים וחסרים וכסדרן שתים : שנת עיבור
כשנה שעברה ולא כל השנים אדא כאנת סנה עיבור וכאנת
שלמים כאנת כשנה שעברה : ניסן בשבת תשרי בשיני רואים
אם יש רביע יום חסר : אמרת חלקים אין דוחים : חסר
במרת חלקים דוחים אותו לפניו : אלמחזור יֹט סנה והו

21 The last two number sequences are missing in 1PalMan2; probably an error.

22 1PalMan2 omits: פי מרחשון וכסליו.

23 1PalMan2 omits וח לחסרים וכאף לכסדרן, and instead reads ה כמסה, which is equally possible.

24 At this point 1PalMan2 breaks off, corresponding to near the end of 1PalMan1 recto. From here onwards, the alignment of 1PalMan1 has been retained.

25 This colon appears to be out of place (and so on l. 31). See note 31.

26 The numbers indicate the position of intercalated years within the cycle. These sequences of numbers are three different ways of expressing the same cycle, depending on which year is taken as epoch (starting point). The first two sequences (beginning with year 1 and year 2, respectively) are already attested in early tenth-century sources, such as, in our corpus, Letter 3 of the Letters Miscellany (LMisc fol. 5r:17–20). The third sequence, together with the first two, first appears in a late tenth-century responsum of Hayye Gaon, which is quoted in Abraham bar Ḥayya's *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur* (3:7) and also attested separately in ms Strasbourg 4038 (Mann 1925; a different passage of this responsum has been studied above, Chapter 16.3). Both Hayye Gaon and Abraham bar Ḥayya identify the second tradition as Babylonian; the third is identified by Abraham bar Ḥayya as Palestinian. See further Stern (2001) 272–273.

27 i.e. not on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday: if the *molad* of Nisan falls on any of these days of the week, the first of Nisan, and hence likewise Passover (two weeks later), are postponed to the next day.

28 This possessive is 3rd person dual, whereas a plural would be expected (referring to the three types). The dual possessive may be referring to the two months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew.

29 These mnemonics, as the author goes on to explain, provide the intervals (modulo 7) from one Passover to the next in a full, defective, and orderly year, each one either intercalated or plain (the interval for the latter is always shorter by 2 days). The difference between the two mnemonics is that in the first, the intervals are exclusively counted,

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The lunar cycle is 19 years, and the traditions for this are 1-4-6-9-(1)2-(1)5-(1)7, 2-5-7-10-(1)3-(1)6-(1)8, and 3-6-8-(1)1-(1)4-(1)7-(1)9.[26]
The postponements are: Passover not on 2, 4, 6;[27] Pentecost not on 3, 5, 7; New Year not on 1, 4, 6; Day of Atonement not on 1, 3, 6.
The year is of three types regarding Marḥeshwan and Kislew: either full, or defective, or orderly,
and their[28] tradition is ShHZ-ḤGH-KDW, or ShWḤ-ḤDW-KHZ.[29]
'Sh' stands for full, 'Ḥ' for defective, and Kaph ('K') for orderly.[30]
If between one Passover and the next there are 5 days, the year is
full and plain; if there are 7 days between them, it is intercalated.
[If there are 3 days, the year is defective and plain; if there are 5 days
between them, it is intercalated. If there are 4] days, it is orderly;
and if between [them there are 6 days] and the year is intercalated, then it is orderly,
not full.[31] Full, defective, and orderly are (each) two.[32] An intercalated year
is like the previous year, but not (in) all years:[33] (only) if the year is intercalated and
full, it is like the previous year.[34] If Nisan falls on a Sabbath, and Tishri on a Monday, one sees:
if there remains[35] a quarter of a day less 641 parts, it is not postponed, but if it is less
642 parts, it is postponed forward.[36] The cycle is 19 years, which is

---

and in the second inclusively. In the explanation that follows, the author assumes the former. The latter, inclusive mnemonic is well attested in the Palestinian sources of the dispute of 921/2, and was part of a distinctly Palestinian algorithm for calculating the calendar (see Chapter 5, pp. 64–65).

30 Instead of the phrase 'Ḥ for defective and Kaph ('K') for orderly', 1PalMan2 has: 'H is five'. This version is equally possible.

31 The purpose of clarifying 'not full' is unclear. However, in spite of the colon at the end of the previous line, these two words do appear to belong to the previous sentence.

32 Each type of year has two options: plain or intercalated.

33 This means that an intercalated year ends with the New Year on the same day of the week as the previous New Year (at its beginning); but this rule does not apply to all intercalated years, only to full intercalated years—as the text goes on to explain.

34 The New Year starts on the same day of the week.

35 After the time of the *molad*.

36 This whole sentence is in Hebrew, which suggests that it is a traditional wording. Indeed, the identical wording appears in Letter 3 of the Letters Miscellany (LMisc fol. 6r:19–20) and in Palestinian Calendar Manual 3 (3PalMan fol. 1r:14–1v:1). The restriction of the rule of 641–642 to when the *molad* of Tishri falls on Monday is discussed above in Chapter 5, pp. 72–75.

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ו אלא[ף] ותתק ולט יומא ויו סאעה ותקצה דקאיק : אלסנה
אלכביסה יג שהר תכון איאם שפג כא סאעה תקפט דקיקה
אדא ארדת אן תעלם מתי ולד אלהלאל אעני ראס תשרי
מן גיר אצל מעך פכד סני אלעאלם אלי חית אנת וציירהא
מחאזיר קמריה יט יט והי מחאזיר[37] וכד
לכל מחזור ז אשהר ז אשהר ואגמע אלשהור כלהא ואבצר
כם הי וציר כל יב שהר סנה ואצֵיפהא סני אלכליקה : ומא
בקי מן אלשהור לם י[תם סנה] פכד לכל שהר יום ו<[38] ותשצג
חלקים וצמהא ואנטר סני אלעאלם ומא אנצאף אליהא מן
אלסנין ואבצר כם אגתמע ואטרח מנהא סנה אלטופאן
ואגמע אלסנין אלדי מעך כד לכל תסעין סנה יום וסאעה
ומא בקי לא יתם צ סנה כד לכל סנה ד איאם ח סאעאת
תתעו חלקים וצם אליום מע אליום אלסאעאת אלי אלסאעאת
וכלמא אגתמע כד סאעה ציירהא יום מע אליום וכל מא
אגתמע אלף ופ דקיקה ציירה א סאעה וצמהא אלי אלסאע<[39]
ואסקט אלאיאם ז ז פמא בקי מן אלאיאם מא לא יתם ז
פפי דלך אלמקדאר ולד ראס תשרי מן אול כליקה אלעאלם
ויכון טרחך למא בקי פי ידך מן יום אלגמעה ללסאעה

37 See note 41.

38 This sign seems to represent a half aleph, and to mean 'half of one' or ½.

39 The same 'half' sign (above, line 16), but here it seems to be used as an abbreviation mark (of אלסאעאת).

40 i.e. the years of the era of Creation. The algorithm that is presented here consists in converting all the years that have elapsed since Creation into 12-month years (without intercalation), and then counting one day and one hour for every 90 years. This algorithm is well known in calendar treatises, e.g. Abraham bar Ḥayya, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur*, 2:6.

41 There is an empty space at this point in the manuscript. Perhaps the scribe intended to calculate the number of cycles for his own year and insert it here as a paradigm, but had not yet carried out the calculation, and therefore left it blank. The continuation of the text, however, does not use any paradigm.

42 The suppression of the year of the Flood, during which according to early rabbinic sources the motion of the heavenly bodies was suspended (*Genesis Rabbah* 34:11, Theodor-Albeck edn. p. 323), enables the reconciliation of two different epochs for the *molad* calculation (*molad BaHaRaD*, 2-5-204, and *molad WeYaD*, 6-14-0), as if they relate in fact to the same month of Tishri at the time of the Creation. For this purpose, those who use the epoch of *WeYaD* must deem the Flood year to be suppressed. This device for reconciling the two epochs appears already in an early tenth-century (?) treatise attributed to Joshua ben Allan (ms Kiev-Vernadsky OPI no. 286, fol. 18v; Harkavy 1903), and in a passage of Saadya Gaon's *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* or *Sefer ha-Hakkarah*, quoted by Abraham bar Ḥayya, *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur*, 3:7 (ed. Filipowski 1851, pp. 96–97). The suppression of the Flood year in our passage is consistent with the text that follows, where the epoch that is assumed for the *molad* calculation is *WeYaD* (6–14), i.e. a *molad*

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6939 days, 16 hours and 595 parts. An intercalated
year is 13 months, which is 383 days, 21 hours and 589 parts.
If you want to know when the new moon is born, i.e. the beginning of Tishri,
without prior knowledge, (then take) the years of the world[40] until your time, and break them down
into lunar cycles, in nineteens, and this is [your number of][41] cycles. Take
for each cycle 7 months, and put all these months together, and see
how many they are, and make of every 12 months a year, and add them to the years from Creation. As to what
remains of the months that did not (make a full year), take for every month 1 and 1/2 day and 793
parts, and add them up. Look at the years of the world with the years that were added
to them, and see how much they make together, and (subtract) from them the year of the Flood.[42]
Take all the years that you have, and take for every ninety years one day and one hour.
And as to what remains and does not make 90 years, take for each year 4 days and 8 hours
and 876 parts, and add up days with days and hours with hours.
Make a day out of all that adds up to 24 hours, (and add it) with the other days, and all that
adds up to 1080 parts, make one hour (out of them) and add it to the hours.
Cast out the days by sevens. What remains of the days that does not amount to 7
is the interval from the birth of the beginning of Tishri at the beginning of the Creation of the world.[43]
Subtract[44] what you obtain from Friday, hour …[45]

---

on Friday (but only the word 'Friday' is extant here). The preference, in this manual, for the epoch of *WeYaD* may be to simplify the *molad* calculation (this epoch is easier to use, as it has no parts), even though it is of Babylonian origin rather than Palestinian (see Chapter 5, pp. 62 and 69–70).

43 i.e. the interval modulo 7 between the first *molad* of the Creation and the present *molad* that is being calculated.

44 This is very surprising: one would expect, on the contrary, 'add' (see next note).

45 The continuation of the text must be '14', i.e. hour 14 of Friday (or '2', i.e. hour 2 of the daytime of Friday): this is the epoch's *molad* of 6–14, to which is added the result obtained (the 'interval') in order to get the present *molad*.

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17.2 Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, Manuscript 1: Diplomatic Edition

This single leaf, T-S Ar. 29.129 (1PalMan1), is one of the text witnesses of Palestinian Calendar Manual 1. It is tidy and well produced, although the verso is somewhat more crowded. The script can be dated to the late eleventh century or c. 1100.

Physical Description

Paper, dark brown ink. Dimensions: 15.7 cm × 12.7 cm (text cannot be measured, because the top lines are broken off). Margins: right 11–17 mm (recto and verso); left approximately 10 mm (recto), 5 mm (verso); bottom: 10 mm (recto), 3–5 mm (verso). The margins are inconsistent, but considerably smaller in the verso; there is no left margin justification, except in parts of the recto. Line numbers: recto 23,[46] verso 26. Average line height (text and space lines): recto 6.1 mm, verso 5.7 mm. Text lines are generally higher than the space lines, particularly on the verso.

As is evident from the dimensions, the text is considerably more crowded on the verso, with more shallow space lines, more lines, and minimal left and bottom margins. The recto has wide paragraph breaks, including a whole line break (between ll. 8 and 9); whereas on the verso, paragraph breaks take the form of short *vacats*. The writing is square and serifed, but prone to irregularity throughout the manuscript (with smaller lettering, for example, in recto second half of line 7), and particularly in the verso. The scribe may have attempted to finish the text on the verso, which led to a more crowded layout, although this did not succeed (it is difficult to estimate how much of the text, at the end, is missing).

Apart from the damage at the top of the folio, and a number of small holes inside the folio, the manuscript is generally well preserved. The paper and ink are in good condition, and the text is completely legible.

Bibliography

Unpublished. Discovered by Sacha Stern and Marina Rustow, February 2015. Transcription: Nadia Vidro and Sacha Stern.

46 Including the missing line at the top (see next note). In the edition below, I only have 22 lines.

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1PalMan1 recto
[T-S Ar. 29.129 recto]

שהר אלקמר כ[ט][47] [ ]
סואביע יבקא [ ]ן אלשהר
ואלשהר יום ונצף ותשעה חלקי[ם] : [ואד]א ולד תשרי פי
אלסאעה אלסאבעה באלנהאר וסת מאיא ומאה דקיקה
פדלך אליום הו יום ראס אלשהר : ואדא זאדת אלדקאיק
דקיקה פראס אלשהר פי גד דלך אליום ומאסרה דלך
אמרת ליומו במרת למחר : כסור דקאיק אלשהר גוט בהה
אדז
סנה אלקמר שנד יומא וח סאעאת ותתעו חלקים שנ
תכרג סואביע יבקא ד איאם וח סאעאת ותתעו חלקים
פאדא כאנת אלסנה זאידה שהר פ[ב]ין א[לס]נה ואלסנה ה איאם
כא סאעה ותקפט חלקים : וביז נ[יס]ן ותשרי יומין וארבע
סאעאת ותלח חלקים : ואדא ל[סנה] שהר זאיד פבין ניסן
ותשרי ג איאם ויז סאעה וקנא חלקים : מחזור אלקמר
יט סנה ומאסרתה אדו[ט] בהז : ובהזיגוח : וגוחאדזט
אלדחיות לא בדו פסח : ולא גהז עצרת : ולא אדו ראש
השנה : ולא אגו יום כפורים :
אל[ס]נה ג אקסאם פי מרחשון וכסליו אמא שלמים
ואמא חסרים ואמא כסדרן ומאסרתהמא שהז חגהר[48]
כדו : ואמא שוח חדו כהז : ש רמז לשלמים : וח לחסרים
וכאף לכסדרן : פאדא כאן בין אלפסח ואלפסח ה איאם פאלסנה
שלמים והי בסיטה : ואדא כאן בינהמא ז והי מעוברת

1PalMan1 verso
[T-S Ar. 29.129 verso]

[ ]
ז[49] [ ] איאם [פ]הי כסדרן:
ואדא כ[א]ן [בי]ן [.....]חו [...] ו[אל]סנה מעוברת פהי כסדרן :
לא שלמים ש[למ]ים[50] וחסרים וכסדרן שתים : שנת עיבור
כשנה שעברה ולא כל הש[נים] אדא כאנר[51] סנה עיבור וכאנת

47 Partially preserved letters, on this line and on the rest of the folio, are restored on the basis of 1PalMan2. There is most likely a line of text above this one, with the standard *basmala* invocation (as in 1PalMan2); but it is broken off.
48 This last letter is superfluous.
49 Possibly the tail of a letter on the preceding line.
50 The *yod* resembles a *waw*; reading unclear.
51 An error for כאנת.

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שלמים כאנת כשנה שעברה : ניסן בשבת תשרי בשיני רואים
אם יש רביע יום חסר : אמרת חלקים אין דוחים : חסר
במר[ת] חלקים דוחים אותו לפניו : אלמחזור יֹט סנה והו
ו אלא[ף] ותתק ולט יומא ויו[52] סאעה ותקצה דקאיק : אלסנה
אלכביסה יג שהר תכון איאם שפג כא סאעה תקפט דקיקה
אדא ארדת אן תעלם מתי ולד אלהלאל אעני ראס תשרי
מן גיר אצל מעך פכד[53] סני אלעאלם אלי חית אנת וציירהא
מח[א]זיר קמרי[ה] יֹט יֹט והי מחאזיר וכד
לכל מחזור ז אשהר ז אשהר ואגמע אלשהור כלהא ואבצר
כם הי וצייר כל יֹב שהר סנה ואצֵיפהא סני אלכליקה : ומא
בקי מן אלשהור לם י[תם סנה] פכד לכל שהר יום ו<[54] ותשצג
חלקים וצמהא ואנטר סני אלעאלם ומא אנצאף אליהא מן
אלסנין ואבצר כם אגתמע ואטרח מנהא סנה אלטופאן
ואגמע אלסנין אלדי מעך כד לכל תסעין סנה יום וסאעה
ומא בקי לא יתם צ סנה כד לכל סנה ד איאם ח סאעאת
תתעו חלקים וצם אליום מע אליום ואלסאעת[55] אלי אלסאעאת
וכלמא אגתמע כד סאעה צייהרא יום מע אליום וכל מא
אגתמע אלף ופ דקיקה צייהרא א סאעה וצמהא אלי אלסאע<[56]
ואסקט אלאיאם ז ז פמא בקי מן אלאיאם מא לא יתם ז
פפי דלך אלמקדאר ולד ראס תשרי מן אול כליקה אלעאלם
ויכון טרחך למא בקי פי ידך מן יום אלגמעה ללסאעה

52 The first *waw* is truncated and possibly not there, whilst the *yod* is excessively elongated; perhaps the correct reading is וֹו, an error for וֹיו.

53 The reading of *dalet* is very uncertain.

54 This sign seems to represent a half aleph, and to mean 'half of one' or ½.

55 Should be אלסאעאת.

56 The same 'half' sign (above, line 16), but here it seems to be used as an abbreviation mark (of אלסאעאת).

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17.3 Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, Manuscript 2: Diplomatic Edition

This manuscript, 1PalMan2 (T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 9), contains the first part of Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, of which the other text witness is 1PalMan1.

It consists of a discontinuous bi-folio, each side written in a different hand. Our text, on the recto right side only, marks a new beginning, following a blank page on its verso. The manuscript is tidy and well produced.

The dating of this manuscript is problematic, as will be explained below.

Physical Description

Parchment, brown ink. Dimensions (folio): 15.2–15.6 cm × 17.8 cm, wider than high (text: 12.8 cm × 13.5 cm, not including writing in the margins). Margins: right 18 mm, left approximately 15 mm (no left margin justification), top 12–15 mm, bottom 19–22 mm. Lines number (excluding margins): 19. Average line height (including text and space line): 6.7 mm; the text line is generally higher than the space line, yielding a fairly compact text. Some vacats.

The invocation (line 1) is written in the top margin, and there is an extensive gloss in Hebrew, in an other hand, in the bottom margin. Smaller glosses appear in the right margin and inside the text (in the blank space at the end of line 8). These glosses detract from the tidiness and well-spaced layout of the page.

Some stitch holes are visible in the centre of the bi-folio, but in most cases the area of the holes has been torn out.

Except for a small hole in line 14, the manuscript is very well preserved.

Dating

The dating of this manuscript is problematic. Its script is square, hybrid, with vertical block letters that betray Spanish influence and indicate a late dating. On palaeographic grounds, therefore, the manuscript should be dated to the twelfth century—thus making it, perhaps, the latest manuscript in the corpus. However, the script of the Hebrew gloss in the bottom margin resembles eleventh-century Masoretic script (although the word separation is unusually wide); which raises a question about the later palaeographic dating.[57]

On textual grounds, in contrast, an early dating suggests itself on the basis of spellings that the scribe has employed. Some of the spellings, indeed, are non-standard and characteristic of Judeo-Arabic papyri that belong to before the

57 Advice of Judith Schlanger, 16 November 2017. Amir Ashur, in an email of 21 June 2017, advised very differently that the script was early and should be dated to the tenth or early eleventh centuries. Further investigation is needed, although I would provisionally lean in favour of a later palaeographic dating.

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tenth century,[58] and that are still attested in Cairo Genizah Judeo-Arabic documents from the tenth century, but hardly later.[59] These include the use of the *dalet* for the emphatic /d/ sound (instead of *sadi*, as in standard Judeo-Arabic spelling), as well as the use of plene spellings for the short /u/ (written with *waw*) and, in many cases in our fragment, for the short /i/ (written with *yod*).[60] Also noteworthy is the T-shaped grapheme for the name of God (line 1), which is common in the earlier papyri, as here, in conjunction with the ligature *aleph-lamed*.[61] On this argument, the manuscript should be dated very early, not later than the tenth century.

Finally, the material of this manuscript, parchment, could be taken as an indication of an early date such as the tenth century.

Because of these conflicting arguments, the date of the manuscript remains, therefore, in complete aporia. Pending further investigation, the options range between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, although the palaeographic arguments for the later date probably overweigh the others.

Text Edition

In the manuscript, all numbers and some words (to mark abbreviations, or for emphasis) are marked above the letters with either single dots or a triangular three-dot sign; these signs appear to be randomly interchangeable. I have used single dots in all cases.

Sentence and/or paragraph breaks are marked in the manuscript with a variety of symbols. I have used the normal full stop (period).

Bibliography

Unpublished. Discovered by Sacha Stern, March 2017. Transcription: Nadia Vidro and Sacha Stern.

58 Blau and Hopkins (1987).

59 Blau and Hopkins (1984). Note, however, that these spellings are still sporadically attested in the eleventh century (and the short /u/ in plene as late as the thirteenth century), in a few documents from Egypt and especially the Maghreb: see Wagner (2010) 36, 52–55. I am grateful to Nadia Vidro for her advice.

60 Blau and Hopkins (1984) 19–24; *eidem* (1987) 132–137. It must be emphasized that not *all* the characteristics of early Judaeo-Arabic orthography are evident in this fragment (such as the phonetic spelling of the article *al-*, where the *lām* is assimilated; this fragment uses throughout the standard spelling אל).

61 Blau and Hopkins (1987) 151. Similar graphemes are common in the Genizah manuscripts: e.g. Seewald (2016) 28.

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1PalMan1

[T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 9, recto right]

בסם אל֗[62] אלרחמן אלרחים[63]
שהר אלקמר כ֯ט יום ונצף ת֯ש צ֯ג ח֯לקים כ֯ח יומא תכרוג סואביע
יבקא יום ונצף ת֯ש צ֯ג ח֯לקים פבין אלשהר ואלשהר יום ונצף ת֯ש צ֯ג
ח֯לק[64] אד֯א וליד אלהילל באלנהאר פי אלסאעה אלסאבעה פי סיתה מיה
מא֯ דקיקה פדאך אליום ראס אלשהר ואד֯א וליד אלהילל באלנהאר פי
אלסאעה אלסאבעה פי סיתה מיה ב֯מ֯ דקיקה פמין אלג֯ד ראס אל
שהר ומסרתוה [[מ]] א֯מ֯ר֯ת֯ ליומו ב֯מ֯ר֯ת֯ למחר . ומסרה כוסור
דקאיק אלשהר ג֯ו֯ ט֯ב֯ ה֯ח֯א֯ ד֯ז֯ י֯ .[65]
סנת אלקמר ש֯ יום ד֯ נ֯ יומא ח֯ סאעאת ת֯ת֯ע֯ו֯ ח֯לק֯ ש֯נ֯ תכרוג
סואביע יבקא ד֯ איאם ח֯ סאעאת ת֯ת֯ע֯ו֯ ח֯לק֯ פבין אלסני ואלסנה ד֯
איאם ח֯ סאעאת ת֯ת֯ע֯ו֯ ח֯לק֯ פאיד֯א כאן פי אל[[שהר]] סנה שהר פאד֯יל[66]
[[פב]] פבין אלסנה ואלסנה[67] ה֯ איאם כ֯א֯ סאעה ת֯ק֯פ֯ט֯ ח֯לק֯ ביין ניסן
ותשרי יומין ד֯ סאעאת ת֯ל֯ח֯ ח֯לק֯ פאיד֯א כאן פי אל סנה שהר
פאד֯יל פבין תשרי וניסן ג֯[68] [אי]אם י֯ז֯ סאעה ק֯נ֯א֯ ח֯לק֯ .[69]
מחזור אלקמר י֯ט֯ סנה ומסרתוה א֯ד֯ו֯ט֯ ב֯ה֯ז֯ . אדחאיא
לא ב֯ד֯ו֯ פסח ולא ג֯ה֯ז֯ עצרת ולא א֯ד֯ו֯ ראש השנה ולא א֯ג֯ו֯
יום הכפורים . אלסנה ת֯ל֯ת֯ה֯ אקסאם אמא
ש֯ל֯י֯מ֯ים ואמא ח֯ס֯י֯ר֯ים ואמא כ֯ס֯י֯ד֯ן ומסרתוה ש֯ה֯ז֯ ח֯ג֯ה֯
כ֯ד֯ו֯ . ואמא ש֯ו֯ח֯ ח֯ד֯ו֯ כ֯ה֯ז֯ ש֯ רמיז [[לשמיל]] לשלימים
ה֯ כ֯מסה פאיד֯א כאן ביין אלפיסח ולאפיסח ה֯ איאם פאלסנה

62 Grapheme representing the name of God. It is broadly T-shaped, but appears, more precisely, as a serifed dash with a dot or rhombus below it.

63 This line is written in the centre of the top margin.

64 Perhaps an abbreviation of חלקים.

65 At the end of the line, in another hand (the same as the gloss in the bottom margin): ש֯נ֯ד֯ח֯ ת֯ת֯ע֯ו֯ ('354, 8, 876'). This gloss functions like a summary heading of the three lines that follows.

66 This term, with its non-standard spelling (see discussion above), is specific to our manuscript (here and three lines below); T-S Ar. 29.129 uses instead the term זאיד.

67 In the right margin, written sideways, possibly in the same hand as the main text but slightly more cursive and in a different pen: ש֯פ֯ג֯ ('383')—the full number of days in an intercalary year, which the main text has not bothered stating. This gloss belongs approximately here in the text, although this is not explicitly indicated in the manuscript.

68 In the right margin, written sideways, in the same hand as the previous gloss: ר֯י֯ג֯ ('213'). This is presumably, again, an attempt to provide the full number of days from Tishri to Nisan in an intercalary year, which the main text does not bother providing. This number, however, is wrong: it should be 206.

69 *Vacat* at end of line.

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Bottom margin, in another hand:

ו ימים בלא עיבור שלימים : ח ימים בעבור ש : ד[70] ימים בלא עיבור
חסירים : ו ימים בעבור חסרים :[71] ה ימים בלא עיבור כסדרן :
ז ימים בעבור כסדרן :[72]

70 This overwrites an erroneous ח.

71 The colon is represented here in the form of a (capital) L.

72 The translation of these Hebrew lines (which is not supplied in my critical edition of Palestinian Calendar Manual 1) is as follows: '6 days without intercalation full; 8 days with intercalation full; 4 days without intercalation deficient; 6 days with intercalation deficient; 5 days without intercalation orderly; 7 days with intercalation orderly'. This is an expansion of the mnemonic שׁוֹחֹ חֹדוֹ כֹהֹז.

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17.4 Palestinian Calendar Manual 2

This calendar manual, in Judeo-Arabic, is preserved in T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 13 (a bi-folio). Its importance lies in the fact that it includes the Palestinian calendar rule of 641–642 and treats it as normative.

The manual is very concise and only provides minimal information on the calendar, often just mentioning concepts but without explaining them.[73] It seems to be intended as a mere *aide mémoire* for those who are already in the know but still need a check-list or reminder on how to calculate the calendar. Given its practical orientation, this manual provides strong evidence that the calendar of ben Meir was in use for a long time after the controversy of 921/2 CE.

The manuscript can be dated by its script to the eleventh century; the script contains some Palestinian elements, but generally it is local Egyptian.[74] Its untidy, irregular layout without much margin space suggests that this manuscript was cheaply produced; as a short manual, it was intended for practical use rather than as a formal codex.

Physical Description

Parchment, brown ink. Dimensions: 13.8–14.2 cm × 12.8–13.2 cm (text: 13 cm × 11.5–12 cm). The upper edge of the bi-folio is uneven. The dimensions of folio 2 are larger than folio 1, partly because folio 2 is diagonally torn and slightly disjoined, hence slightly distorted.

Margins: inner 10–20 mm (but no left margin justification), outer 0–3 mm (but outer margins are cropped), top 3–6 mm, bottom 2–7 mm. The layout is irregular, and margins are variable and often negligible. The only well-sized margins are the inner, right margins of folio 1 recto (13 mm) and folio 2 recto (16–20 mm).

Line numbers: 13 (except folio 2 verso: 14). Average line height (text and space line): 9.3–10 mm; space lines are generally lower than text lines. The lettering is thus particularly large, and occupies most of the space on the whole page.

The bi-folio is damaged along the lower parts of both outer margins, where a substantial amount of parchment on each side is broken off; there are also holes in both folios; and as mentioned above, folio 2 is diagonally torn. The upper parts of both outer margins appear to be cropped, as some end-of-line letters

73 The only exception is a digressive explanation of how the length of the lunar year was calculated (fol. 1 verso ll. 1–11).

74 Advice of Judith Schlanger. Amir Ashur would opt for a slightly earlier dating, late tenth or early eleventh centuries.

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touch the left edge and appear to be incomplete (fols. 1r:1–2, 2r:1). In general, however, the missing text can be reconstructed with a fair degree of certainty.

The parchment, mainly on the hair side (fols. 1r and 2v), is marred by ink penetration from the other side (but also on some lines of the flesh side: see notes on text).

Text is continuous on the flesh side.

Contents

The text begins in the middle of an account of the length of the month, and the interval between the *moladot* of two months (fol. 1r:1–2). It then provides a traditional mnemonic to assist the calculation of consecutive *moladot* (fol. 1r:2–4); the length of a plain lunar year; and the interval between the *moladot* of one New Year and the next (fol. 1r:5–13). This value, it is then explained, was reached by multiplying by 12 the interval between the *moladot* of two consecutive months (fol. 1v:1–11). Then for an intercalated year, the interval between the *moladot* of one New Year and the next is given (fol. 1v:11–2r:1).

The following topics are then covered much more briefly. First, the Palestinian calendar rule of 641–642 is quoted: namely that if the *molad* of Tishri occurs after midday and 641 parts, the New Year is postponed, sometimes by two days (fol. 2r:2–12). The 19-year cycle is given in the sequence of intervals, 3-2-9-3-2 (fol. 2r:13–2v:3). The three types of years are mentioned (defective, orderly, and full), as well as the Palestinian formula ShHZ-HGH-KDW—but it is not explained (fol. 2v:4–6).[75] The days on which festivals are forbidden to fall are listed (fol. 2v:6–8).

This appears to be the end of the calendar manual. After this, an astrological text begins, on the passage of the moon through the signs of the zodiac (fol. 2v:9–13).

The order of the topics, in this manual, is somewhat arbitrary and without a logical progression; but the manual is so brief that this does not really matter, as in the space of less than two short folios, nearly all the headings of the rabbinic calendar calculation are covered. One significant omission, however, is the epoch of the *molad* calculation, an essential element of the calendar calculation which, as we shall now see, is also omitted in Palestinian Calendar Manual 1. Both manuals explain how to infer one *molad* from the other (based on intervals between *moladot*), but not how to calculate it from first principles.

75 This stands in contrast with 1PalMan 20–30, where the formula is explained in detail. As suggested above, this present manual is only intended as an *aide mémoire* for those who are already in the know.

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Palestinian Calendar Manuals 1 and 2: A Synoptic Comparison

A synoptic comparison of the contents of Palestinian Calendar Manuals 1 and 2, both manuals in Judeo-Arabic and from a similar place and period, is presented in Table 11. The similarity between the manuals is evident not just in their contents—with the inclusion of the same Palestinian calendrical traditions, and the glaring omission of the epoch of the *molad* calculation—but also in their structure. If we ignore the last section of 1PalMan (the last four rows in the table), which repeats parts of the main section and is clearly additional to it, we find the same structure in both manuals, except that two items (rule of 641–642, and forbidden days) have been positioned differently.

In my edition of Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, which is attested in two manuscripts, I noted that the text of these manuscripts was structurally identical, and much of their wording was the same, although the scribes often took the liberty to phrase the text in different ways. Palestinian Calendar Manual 2 is structurally not identical, nor does it use the same wording, but nevertheless, it is based on a very similar structure.

The differences between these manuals, in spite of being based on a common skeleton, reflects the considerable freedom of the scribes to organize and word calendar manuals in their own way. This scribal flexibility reflects the fact that calendar manuals were not conceived as literary works that needed to be faithfully copied, but rather as unique artefacts, in many cases composed by the scribe himself, which were intended to respond to the practical need of calendar calculation. Scribal freedom has been noted already in the context of the manuscripts of Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, but it is even more distinctive here.

Synoptic comparison of these two manuals reveals, in addition, that not much text is likely to be missing at the beginning Palestinian Calendar Manual 2. Indeed, the theme that it begins with on the extant bi-folio—the length of the month—is the same as the opening theme of Palestinian Calendar Manual 1, whose beginning has been preserved. Given the structural similarity of these manuals, Palestinian Calendar Manual 2 is likely to have started on the same theme, which would mean that hardly more than the side of one folio is missing. We may therefore regard our text of Palestinian Calendar Manual 2 as almost complete.

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TABLE 11 Synopsis of 1PalMan and 2PalMan

1PalMan	2PalMan
Length of the month, interval between two months	
Rule of 641–642	
Mnemonic for consecutive *moladot*	
Length of the year, interval between two years	
	Rule of 641–642
19-year cycle	
Forbidden days	
The three types of year: defective, orderly, and full	
ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW or ShHZ-HGH-KDW	
	Forbidden days
Rule of 641–642	
Length of 19-year cycle	
Length of intercalated year	
Algorithm for *molad* calculation	

The Manuscript

Since not much of the text appears to be missing at the beginning of the manual, the manuscript might well have consisted originally of no more than a quire of two bi-folios, this bi-folio being the inner one (as its text is continuous). The astrological section, at the end, may have been added as an afterthought, after the scribe realized that a whole folio (and a few lines at the end of our folio 2 verso) remained available. However, it is equally possible that

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this short manual was part of a larger codex, such as a liturgical or a scientific compendium.[76]

The manuscript frequently uses non-standard *plene* spellings for the short /u/ and /i/, similarly to 1PalMan2; but unlike the latter, it uses the standard 𐤑 for the emphatic /d/. Various signs are used for punctuation, including plain dots and circles; they are not differentiated in the edition.

Bibliography

Unpublished. Discovered by Nadia Vidro, March 2015. Transcription and translation: Nadia Vidro and Sacha Stern.

76 The latter is less likely, given the lack of sophistication and detail in the texts.

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2PalMan folio 1 recto
[T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 13 verso left]

אלאכר יום ונצף וסבע מייה ותלאתיה
ותסעין דקיקה ומאסרת הדיה
אלדקאיק אעני כסורהא פי אלמואליד
גוֹ טַבּ הַחַא דֹז ·
סנת אלקמר תלת מייה וארבעה
וכמסין יומא ותמאן סאעאת
ותמאן מייה וסתה ו[ס]בעין דקיקה
תלת מייה וכמסין תכרוג סואביע
יבקא ארבעה איאם [ותמאן]
סאעאת ות[מ]אן מייה ו[סתה וסבעין]
דקיקה לד[לך] קולנא אן ביין [סנה]
לאלסנה ארבע איאם [ו]תמאן סא[עאת]
ותמאן מייה ו[סת ו]סבעין ד[קיקה]

2PalMan folio 1 verso
[T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 13 recto right]

ואן[77] קאל קאיל מן איין גאת הדיה אלארבעה
איאם ותמאן סאעאת ותמאן מייה
וסתה וסבעין דקיקה . קולנא אן לכל ⟦סנה⟧[78]
שהר פצל יום ונצף וֹתִשְׁעָה חלקים .
פצרבנא יום ונצף פי אתניין עשר
חידי[79] אתניין עשר שהר אלסנה פגאת
תמאן עשר יומא אכרגנא ארבעה
עשר סבועין בקיא ארבעה איאם
וצרבנא[80] תִשְׁעָה פי אתניין עשר
פגא[ת תמאן] סאעאת ותמאן מייה
[וסת וס]בעין דק[יק]ה פאידא כאן
[פי אל]סנה שהר פאצל פביין אלסנה

77 In the margin before the beginning of the line, the letters *heh-yod* have penetrated from the other side (the last letters of ותלאתיה, at the end of the first line of the recto). Similar ink penetration affects the beginning of line 7.
78 This word is an error, and is marked with a sign above for deletion.
79 Obscure. Perhaps what is meant is הידי, i.e. a phonetic, non-standard spelling of הדא (occasionally spelled הדי, 'this').
80 Reading unclear.

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2PalMan folio 1 recto

and the next is a day and half, seven hundred and ninety-
three parts. The tradition
for these parts, i.e. for their fractions in the *moladot*,
is 3-6-9-2-5-8-1-4-7.[81]
The lunar year is three hundred and fifty-
four days, eight hours, and eight
hundred and seventy-six parts.
Three hundred and fifty days are cast out as weeks,
what remains is four days, eight
hours, and eight hundred and seventy-six
parts. For this reason, we said that between one year
and the next there are four days, eight hours,
and eight hundred and seventy-six parts.

2PalMan folio 1 verso

If someone says: where did these four
days, eight hours, and eight hundred
and seventy-six parts come from? We would say that the
the surplus of each month is one day and a half and 793 parts.
We multiplied one day and a half by twelve
for the twelve months of the year, and it came to
eighteen days. We cast fourteen
out as two weeks, what remains is four days.
We multiplied 793 by twelve,
it came to eight hours and eight hundred
and seventy-six parts. If there is
an additional month to the year, between one year

81 The same tradition appears in 1PalMan line 10. It means that in any set of consecutive *moladot*, the units of the number of parts will follow in this sequence. This tradition is intended to assist the calculation, or perhaps the verification of the calculation, of consecutive *moladot*.

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[לאל]סנה כמסה איאם וחד ועשרין
[סא]עה וכמס [מייה] ותסעה ותמאנין

2PalMan folio 2 recto
[T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 13 recto left]

דקיקה[82]
אמרת ליומו במרת למחר מענא
דאליך אדא וליד אלהילא בנהאר פי
אלסאעה אלסאבעה פי כמס מייה
וחד וארבעין דקיקה פחיסא[בוה]
ליומה דאך ואלי[....]אס אלהיל[אל]
ואן זאד חלקה ואחידה אע[ני]
דקיקה עלי כמס מייה וחד
וארבעין פקד צאר במרת[83]
חיסאבוה לאלגד סווא יום [....]
אלכמיס פאן לוה פצל [.....]
סאעאת עלי הדא אלחיס[אב][84]
מחזור אלקמר תסעה עשר

2PalMan folio 2 verso
[T-S Ar. 29.190 fol. 13 verso right]

סנה ומסרתה גבטבג · ואיצא
שלוש שתים שלוש שלוש שלוש
שתים שלוש ·
[ס]נין אלקמר תלאת אקסאם תאמה
[ונא]קיצה ומועתדילה ומסרתה
[שה]ז חגה כדו · לא בדו פסח

82 This is followed by a horizontal line with two circles at each end, presumably to mark the end of a paragraph or subject. At the end of the line, the ink of the first words of the verso (סנה ומסרתה) has penetrated through.
83 Most of the last two letters is missing.
84 There follows a line break in the manuscript.
85 The Palestinian calendar rule, which is given here in its original Hebrew language.
86 An error: it should be six (and so four lines below).
87 i.e. the beginning of the month will be set on the day of the *molad*.
88 Word given in Hebrew, followed by its Arabic translation.
89 The meaning of these two lines is obscure, largely because of the lacunas at the end of the lines. The general meaning appears to be that in some cases, the rule of midday

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and the next there are five days and twenty-one
hours and five hundred and eighty-nine

2PalMan folio 2 recto

parts.
'641 on its day, 642 on the morrow'.[85] The meaning
of this is: if the Moon is born during the day in
the seventh hour at five[86] hundred
and forty-one parts, its calculation is on
its day[87] and the .... the Moon.
But if it adds one *heleq*,[88] I mean
one part, to the five hundred and forty
one, then it becomes 642,
its calculation is on the morrow, except day ....
Thursday. Indeed, it has a surplus .....[89]
hours over this calculation.
The lunar cycle is nineteen

2PalMan folio 2 verso

years, and the tradition for this is 3-2-9-2-3 and also
'three, two, three, three, three,
two, three'.[90]
Lunar years are of three types: full,
defective, and orderly (lit. balanced), and the tradition for this is
ShHZ-HGH-KDW.[91] Passover not on 2, 4, 6;[92]

---

and 641–642 leads to a two-day postponement of the New Year, if the *molad* falls before a day of the week when the New Year is not allowed to occur. However, it is unclear why the author refers specifically to Thursday, unless it is just intended as an example (namely that if the *molad* occurs on Tuesday after midday and 641 parts, the New Year cannot be postponed to Wednesday, and must therefore be postponed to Thursday). The notion of 'surplus' (of hours?), however, seems out of context here.

90 This sequence of numbers is given in its original Hebrew language. It is the most ancient, rabbinic formulation of the 19-year cycle; see Chapter 5, p. 60.

91 This is equivalent to the more common formula ShWḤ-ḤDW-KHZ, but with non-inclusive counting. Both are mentioned in 1PalMan line 21 (see above, pp. 484–485 and n. 29); see general explanation in Chapter 5, pp. 64–65.

92 i.e. not on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday: if the *molad* of Nisan falls on any of these days of the week, the first of Nisan, and hence likewise Passover (two weeks later), are postponed to the next day.

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לא גהז עצרת לא אדו ראש
[הש]נה לא אגו כיפור ·
[....] אלקמר יקטע אלברוג פי
[..... יו]מין ותלת פקד פהימת
[...] פי הדא פי אי בורג יכון
[.....] אלקמר ולם תפהם פי כם
[.....] דרגה מן אלברג פאידא

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Pentecost not on 3, 5, 7; New
Year not on 1, 4, 6; Day of Atonement not on 1, 3, 6.
... the moon traverses the zodiac signs (each) in
... two [days] or three. Thus, you have understood
... thereby in which zodiac sign will be
... the moon, but you have not understood in how many
... degrees of the zodiac sign. If

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17.5 Palestinian Calendar Manual 3

This calendar manual includes distinctive Palestinian calendar traditions, such as the rule of 641–642. However, it also defers to Babylonian calendar rules, in a way that is not only inconsistent but also calendrically impossible. The outcome is a flawed manual that could never have been used. Nevertheless, I call it a 'manual', since this is evidently what it sets out to be, and 'Palestinian', because its starting point appears to be the Palestinian calendar tradition.

This text confirms that Palestinian calendar rules were preserved for well over a century after the controversy of 921/2. It also provides us, for the first time ever, with explicit evidence of a different version of the Four Gates, based on the month of Nisan.

The manuscript, JTS ENA 3235 fols. 1–2, can be dated by its script to the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries.[93] The text begins on the first folio, and appears to finish at the bottom of the second; thus the manual appears to be preserved completely.

Physical Description

Paper, dark brown ink. Two folios, that appear to have belonged originally to a codex, and to have been cut or torn off from the other side of the original bi-folios beyond the line of the stitch holes (as the latter are preserved in the present fragments, and so is the central fold, running down the spine through the stitch holes). There are seven sets of stitch holes along the inner side, at intervals of a little more than 2 cm.

Dimensions: 16.8 cm × 12.7 cm (text: 12.5 cm × c. 9.5 cm; except fol. 2v, see below). Margins are wide: inner right, measured to the spine, 6–9 mm; inner left, to the spine, c. 10–15 mm; outer right 12–15 mm; outer left c. 15–20 mm (there is no left margin justification); top 13–18 mm; bottom (except fol. 2v) 25 mm. Line numbers: 15–16 (except fol. 2v:19). Average line height (text and space line) 8 mm, with considerable variation in the ratio of space line to text line. Near the bottom of the pages, the lines become curved and dip downwards in the center.

The writing is generally large and well spaced out, but in some places very irregularly. On folio 1 verso line 8, where the 'signs of the festivals' are introduced, the writing changes (although still in the same hand) and becomes more extended. On folio 2 verso, line 5, the writing changes again (this time perhaps,

93 Judith Schlanger favours the late eleventh century; Marina Rustow and Amir Ashur would date it to the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries. See further discussion below, n. 95.

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but not necessarily, in a different hand), with a different pen and font; the writing is now more cursive and crowded. In textual terms, this marks the beginning of an entirely different section, on the *tequfot*; it may have been added later as an afterthought, perhaps by another scribe. The writing in this section is inconsistent, with several more changes in the middle of sentences, on line 9, and more distinctly, from the end of line 13, where the writing becomes smaller and even more crowded. This reflects the scribe's attempt to fit his entire *tequfot* text in the blank space on this page, but he appears to have miscalculated—even though he manages eventually to squeeze it all in, by writing until the bottom edge of the folio. When all is done, however, the scribe still finds it necessary to add a gloss along the whole of the right margin.[94]

The folios are very well preserved, and the text is highly legible. The only damage is a line of small holes in the top corner of folio 1, apparently the result of a clearly visible, diagonal fold in the corner of the page. The corner may have been deliberately folded by one of the users of the codex, to mark the beginning of calendar manual.

One other Cairo Genizah fragment can be joined to this one: JTS ENA NS 10.25. This folio is of identical dimensions (external and internal) to ENA 3235 fols. 1–2, in a same handwriting, and similarly calendrical (on the calculation of *tequfot*). Its language, however, is Judeo-Arabic, which marks it out as a separate composition, even though it was copied by the same scribe and as part of the same codex. Because it is a separate composition, without relevance to the calendar controversy of 921/2, I have not included this folio in the present edition. It is difficult to infer from this join whether the codex was dedicated to calendrical texts, or whether these folios happen to have been part of a different, larger compendium (which could have been, for example, liturgical).[95]

94 I am grateful to Judith Schlanger for her analysis and discussion of this manuscript.

95 This join was made by Nadia Vidro on 2 March 2015. Two additional fragments, T-S Ar. 29.41 (folio) and T-S K2.15 (bi-folio), also discovered by Nadia Vidro, are in a similar hand and layout and are also calendrical, but probably belong to a different manuscript: the handwriting is slightly different, the external dimensions are slightly larger (by about 5 mm), and the literary composition is of a very different type, being a formal calendar treatise divided into four chapters (the chapters are listed at the beginning of the first folio extant, T-S Ar. 29.41). The manuscript of T-S Ar. 29.41 and T-S K2.15 can be firmly dated to the middle of the twelfth century (as it includes, in the fragments extant, the calculation of the *moladot* of Tishri from 1152 to 1154 CE), which makes it later than the palaeographic dating of 3PalMan. However, the similarity of the manuscript of 3PalMan to this mid-twelfth century manuscript suggests perhaps that 3PalMan should be dated to the early twelfth century rather than to the late eleventh.

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Contents

This manual differs from our other Palestinian manuals in its language (Hebrew) and structure. Its structure is in some ways more rational, and follows a more logical progression. It begins, similarly to the other manuals, with the length of the lunar year and the interval between two consecutive New Years, in plain and intercalated years, and further intervals between the months of Tishri and Nisan (fol. 1r:2–10). But then—unlike the other manuals—the postponements are explained, which the author calls the 'secret of the calendar': postponements can be due to the *molad* of Tishri falling on forbidden days, or to the midday rule. At this point, the Palestinian rule of 641–642 is introduced, although only in its more restricted version (i.e. applying only when the *molad* of Tishri falls on Monday after midday: see Chapter 5, pp. 72–75) (fols. 1r:10–1v:1). Then, for someone who wishes to construct a calendar, a method is given for determining from the number of days in the year whether the months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew should be defective, orderly, or full (fol. 1v:1–7).

At this point, two short items are inserted out of place: first, the interval between the *moladot* of two consecutive cycles (this should have been included in the first section of the manual: fol. 1v:7–8); and second, the forbidden days, for each of the main festivals (they should have been listed when the postponements were explained: fol. 1v:8–11).

The manual resumes, finally, with the Four Gates, which forms its longest section (fol. 1v:11–2v:4). These Four Gates are of great interest but also fundamentally flawed, as they contradict not only the Palestinian rule of 641–642 that is given above, but also Babylonian calendar principles. I discuss this in detail below.

Right at the end, instructions are given for calculating the *tequfah* (fol. 2v:5–19). This topic is marginal to the lunar calendar, and did not need to form part of the original manual (it is not included, for example, in the other Palestinian Calendar Manuals). As argued above, there are signs that this section is a later addition, possibly by a different scribe, to fill the blank space that was left by the first scribe.

In common with the other Palestinian Calendar Manuals, there are significant lacunas in this manual: in particular, the epoch of the *molad* is not given, nor any explanation as to how it should be calculated from first principles.[96] But in addition, our manual omits to provide the structure of the 19-year cycle.

96 The Palestinian Calendar Manuals only explain how to infer one *molad* from the other, based on intervals between *moladot*.

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The Four Gates of Nisan

The Four Gates have been explained in detail in Chapter 5. Originally a Babylonian algorithm, which ben Meir polemicized against, it was eventually adopted by the Palestinians—even by ben Meir himself, who adapted the Four Gates to his calendar rule. By the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries, when our manual was written, the Four Gates were treated by the Palestinians as their own, and were no longer associated with polemics against the Babylonians.[97] The inclusion of the Four Gates in this manual does not contradict, therefore, its Palestinian identity; quite on the contrary, they are structured in a novel way which could be characterized as specifically Palestinian.

In this manual, the Four Gates are formulated, rather uniquely, with reference to the *molad* of Nisan. This contrasts with all the sources from the controversy of 921/2, as well as the vast majority of later medieval calendar works, where the Four Gates are invariably formulated with reference to the *molad* of Tishri. It is important to emphasize that albeit faulty (as will soon be explained), the Four Gates of Nisan in our manual are not, essentially, a deviant calendar. They are designed to produce exactly the same calendar as the Four Gates of Tishri, by indirectly ensuring that in the month of Tishri, the midday postponement rule will be obeyed. For example, if the *molad* of Nisan falls on the limit of 5d:1:642 (day of Thursday, one hour, 642 parts), the month must be postponed, because then six months later the *molad* of Tishri will fall on the limit of 7d:6:0, which is the midday limit. All the limits in the Four Gates of Nisan are thus counterpart to the limits in the Four Gates of Tishri; the foundation of the Gates of Nisan remains the midday postponement rule of Tishri. In this respect, the Four Gates of Nisan in our text can be seen as derived from the Gates of Tishri; and indeed, their dependence on the Four Gates of Tishri is explicit, in our text, when the author justifies one of his limits on the basis of the counterpart limit of Tishri (fol. 2v, ll. 2–3).

This raises the question of why the Four Gates in our text were shifted to the month of Nisan, when it was acknowledged that the midday rule only applied to Tishri, and that this is what really determined the calendar. The best suggestion that can be made is that this re-formulation of the Four Gates was related to a tradition, originally biblical, of treating Nisan as the first month of the year. It may also have been part of a Palestinian agenda to appropriate the Four Gates and, through modification, to make them their own; but to sustain this argument, the specifically Palestinian character of these Four Gates needs to be substantiated.

97 This is evident from the Palestinian *Megillat Evyatar* (late eleventh century), which refers to the Four Gates as 'from which no one should deviate right or left' (see Chapter 2, p. 24).

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Although this calendar manual is, to my knowledge, the first explicit evidence ever discovered of Four Gates of Nisan, the existence such a tradition was suspected by Bornstein more than a century ago. In Bornstein's time, evidence of a calendar based on the *molad* of Nisan, rather than on the *molad* of Tishri, was known from a handful of sources from twelfth to thirtheenth-centuries France and Italy. These were the calendar book of Jacob bar Samson (northern France, c. 1123), the *Midrash Sekhel Tov* (twelfth-century Italy), a mid thirteenth-century manuscript of *Maḥzor Vitry*, and a calendar compendium composed in 1300.[98] Bornstein reconstructed out of these sources the Four Gates of Nisan, and suggested, on very tenuous grounds, that reckoning on the basis of Nisan corresponded to a Palestinian tradition.[99]

In actual fact, however, none of these sources are Palestinian; and furthermore, the Four Gates of Nisan are actually not attested, as such, in any of these sources. In Jacob bar Samson's calendar book, the calendar calculation based on Nisan is presented in the form of seven gates, which follow a similar exposition of the seven gates of Tishri, and are all attributed to the 'commentary' (*perush*) of 'our rabbi Saadya'. In *Midrash Sekhel Tov*, the Four Gates of Nisan are integrated into the Four Gates of Tishri and presented together with them in one piece (followed by a separate list of the seven gates of Tishri). In the London *Maḥzor Vitry* manuscript and the compendium of 1300, there are no gates at all, but only the four postponement rules which are presented in relation to Nisan rather than Tishri.[100]

98 Jacob bar Samson: ms Oxford Bodl. Opp. 317, fol. 99a (chapter 38). *Midrash Sekhel Tov*: Buber ed. 1901, vol. ii, pp. 90–93. *Maḥzor Vitry*: ms London, British Library, Add. 27201, fols. 265v–267r (chapter 578), which can be dated to the year 1241/2 on the basis of the starting year of the calendar roster in the section that follows (fols. 267v–268v, chapter 579), in Berliner (1923:10–12); see further Isserles (2012) 51–54 and 334–344. Calendar compendium of 1300: ms Berlin Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Or. Oct. 352, fols. 9v–10r. All these sources were referred to by Bornstein (see next note).

99 Bornstein (1922*b*) 233–236 and 273–279. He noted, for example, that in his writings ben Meir always mentions Nisan before Tishri, even though the calculation is always ultimately based on Tishri. But on p. 235, he acknowledged that the Four Gates of Nisan were not explicitly attested in any of his sources.

100 To the evidence cited by Bornstein, we may now add two similar but slightly earlier manuscript sources: (1) an early Italian manuscript from about 1100 (so confirmed by Judith Schlanger, personal communication 23/01/2018), ms Vat. Ebr. 299 fols. 73r–76r, which provides the postponement rules and *molad* limits in relation to Nisan (fol. 74r–v), followed later on by the Four Gates of Tishri (fols. 75r–76r); and (2) the earliest *Maḥzor Vitry* manuscript, ms ex-Sassoon 535, fol. 470, a French manuscript of the early-mid twelfth century, where the four postponement rules of Tishri are followed by their counterparts for Nisan (Stern and Isserles 2015: 298–301). The four postponements of Nisan are also

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Shortly after Bornstein published his final article on this subject (1922*b*), Jacob Mann published, in 1925, a late tenth-century responsum of Hayye Gaon that refers explicitly to an alternative version of the Four Gates based on the month of Nisan (in our corpus: RHayye fol. 6r:10–15). This confirmed the existence of the Four Gates of Nisan, which Bornstein had conjectured; but it still did not provide the Four Gates themselves, and did not confirm their Palestinian provenance. This present document, 3PalMan, is therefore of great significance, as it provides for the first time the text of the Four Gates of Nisan in a pure form. Its Palestinian identity also lends support to Bornstein's theory that the Four Gates of Nisan was a specifically Palestinian tradition.

Palestinian Identity

The Palestinian identity of this short manual is most evident in its inclusion of the Palestinian rule of 641–642 (in fols. 1r:10–1v:1), which had generated the whole controversy of 921/2—even though this rule is later ignored in the Four Gates (more on this below). Another indication of Palestinian identity is that the character of the year (whether defective, orderly, or full) is not determined, as in Babylonian tradition, by the Four Gates—which effectively defeats one of the Four Gates' main purposes. Instead, the character of the year is worked out on the basis of the relative dates of the New Year and Passover, similarly (though not identically) to the Palestinian tradition of ShWḤ-KHZ-ḤDW, which is based on the dates of consecutive New Years.

The problem with this manual is that it is not consistently Palestinian, and that the author appears to be equally anxious to obey the rules of the Babylonian calendar. This is probably why 642 parts have been omitted from the limits of his Four Gates, even in places where the Babylonian calendar would actually demand them. According to Babylonian calendar, indeed, a midday limit in Tishri demands that the counterpart limit of the preceding Nisan occurs two days, four hours, and 438 parts earlier, thus at the first hour of the day and 642 parts (in the example quoted above: 5d:1:642). In this manual, however, all values of 642 parts have been omitted (so the Nisan limit becomes, in this example, 5d:1). This omission, or rather perhaps suppression, of 642 parts is more than a mere error, but probably to be interpreted as a hypercorrection, out of the author's excessive concern to conform to the Babylonian calendar.[101] This leads to an internal inconsistency in his Four Gates, as 642 parts are subtracted from

attested, alongside those of Tishri, in a literary mnemonic attributed to a Rabbi Meshullam in Jacob bar Samson's calendar book (ibid.), ch. 36, fol. 97v.

101 See tables below. The omission of 642 parts is unlikely to be an abbreviation, because other limits in the Four Gates are given in full, including the number of parts.

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some of his limits (those that result in a round hour) but not from others.[102] Consequently, not only does the author breach the Palestinian rule of 641–642—whereby 641 parts should have been *added* to all his limits[103]—but he also fails to conform to the Babylonian calendar, by arbitrarily deducting 642 parts from some of the Babylonian limits. These Four Gates are thus too flawed to have been of practical use to anyone.

Besides the calendrical inconsistencies and flaws, to the point of practical uselessness, the Hebrew grammar and language of the text are also often faulty.[104] The general inadequacy of this manual indicates beyond doubt that it could not have been an authoritative, literary work that was copied and transmitted from earlier generations. It was an amateurish, ephemeral work, quite possibly that of the scribe himself, and quite possibly composed as the manuscript was being written. Our ability to date, therefore, the composition of this work to the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries—based on the dating of the script—is all the more significant. In spite of the manual's inconsistencies, it demonstrates the survival and use of a variant of ben Meir's calendar traditions long after the dispute of 921/2, in the late eleventh or early twelfth centuries, when this manuscript and text was written.

Text Edition

Numbers are sometimes represented with primes or dots above the letters, but in many cases with a v-shaped symbol and dot above it, above each of the letters. In this edition, I have used a dot above the letters without distinction. Very frequently, numbers have been left in the manuscript without any markers (e.g. fol. 1r:6, 8 etc.); I have kept this in the edition.

Bibliography

Unpublished. Discovered by Sacha Stern, June 2014.

102 For example, to be consistent the author should have subtracted 642 parts from the limit of 1n:4:846 (in fol. 2v:1), hence 1n:4:204.

103 Or at least to some of the Nisan limits, such as that of 7d:1:642, if the rule of 641–642 is restricted to Tishri falling on Mondays.

104 As noted in many placed in the text edition, e.g. fol. 1r:11.

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3PalMan folio 1 recto
[JTS ENA 3235 fol. 1 recto]

בשמך רחמן[105]
ימי שנת הלבונה[106] שנד ח תתעו [כ]שתוציאם
זז ישתירו בידך דח תתעו והוא שיהיה
בין מולד שנה למולד שנה כשתהיה
פשוטה ושנת[107] יהיה בין מולד תשר[108] למולד
תשרי ה ימים כא שעות תקפט חלקים
והם[109] הכי נמי בין מולד תשרי למולד
ניסן שני ימים ד שעות תלח חלקים
ובעיבור בין מולד תשרי למולד ניסן
גיז קנא זה סוד העיבור שכלל השנים
פעמים שנידוחו מולודות[110] כיצד אם
נולד ניסן באגהז ותשרי בגהז[111] אין
דוחין אותו מיומו ניסן דוחין אותו בבדו
ותשרי דוחין אותו באדו ניסן בשבת
ותשרי בשיני בשבת רואין אם נשתיר
רביע יום חסר אמרר[112] חלק אין דוחין
ואם חסר במרת חלק דוחין אותו

3PalMan folio 1 verso
[JTS ENA 3235 fol. 1 verso]

לפניו : ואם בקשתה[113] לעביר
השנה[114] ראה יום שיהיה בו פסח אם

105 The invocation is written in the top margin, but I have still counted it with the lines.
106 *Sic* throughout the text, instead of לבנה. The substitution of *waw* (*ḥolam*) for *qamats* might reflect Babylonian pronunciation: see Khan (2013) 955 (suggestion of Nadia Vidro).
107 The word העיבור is apparently missing.
108 *Sic* for תשרי.
109 Perhaps an error, but see note 115.
110 The morphology, orthography, and syntax are unusual and faulty. One would expect something like שנדחות ממולדותן.
111 Should be בבגהז or בבּגהז.
112 Possibly אמרד, but in any case should be אמרת.
113 Unusual *plene* spelling.
114 Unusual phrase, probably meaning to calculate the annual calendar.
115 It is remotely possible that הם (*ham*) is the Persian word meaning 'also', which is used in Judeo-Arabic texts by Qaraites from Persia and Iraq: see Khan (2000) 157 (suggestion of Nadia Vidro).

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3PalMan folio 1 recto

In Your name, Merciful One
The days of the lunar year are 354 (days), 8 (hours), 876 (parts). When you cast this out
by sevens, you get a remainder of 4 (days), 8 (hours), 876 (parts), and this is what is
between the *molad* of one year and the next when (the year) is
plain. And (in) an (intercalated) year, between the *molad* of Tishri and the next
there are 5 days, 21 hours, 589 parts.
Also,[115] likewise, between the *molad* of Tishri and the *molad* of Nisan
there are two days, 4 hours, 438 parts;
and with an intercalation, between the *molad* of Tishri and the *molad* of Nisan,
(there are) 3 (days), 17 (hours), 151 (parts). This is the secret of the calendar: that all the years
are sometimes postponed (from their) *molad*. How? If
Nisan is born in (days of the week) 1, 3, 5, (or) 7, and Tishri (in) 2, 3, 5, 7, it
is not postponed from its day.[116] Nisan—is postponed (when it is born) in 2, 4, (or) 6,
and Tishri—is postponed in 1, 4, 6. (If) Nisan is (born) on Sabbath
and Tishri on Monday, one sees: if a quarter of the day
less 641 remains, it is not postponed,
but if less 642 parts, it is postponed

3PalMan folio 1 verso

forwards.[117] And if you want to calculate the annual
calendar, look at the day (of the week) on which Passover falls; if

116 The New Year is not postponed from the day of the *molad*.

117 This formulation is complex but not unusual. It means that if 6 hours ('a quarter of the day') less 641 parts (i.e. 5 hours and 439 parts—or a longer period of time) remains of the 24-hour period after the occurrence of the *molad* of Tishri, the New Year is not postponed; or in more simple terms, if the *molad* occurs on or before 18 hours (noon) and 641 parts, the New Year is not postponed. If 6 hours less 642 parts (or a shorter period of time) remains, i.e. if the *molad* occurs on or after 18 hours and 642 parts, the New Year is postponed to the next day. This is the rule of ben Meir, except that it is only applied when the *molad* is on a Monday (see discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 72–75). 'Forwards' has been retained in the translation, although it is pleonastic with 'postponed'.

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יהיה בין ראש השנה לפסח ח׳ ימים
מרחשון וכסליו חסרים ואם ט׳ כסדרן
ואם י׳ שלימים ובשנת העיבור אם
י׳ חסרים ואם י״א כסדרן ואם י״ב
שלימים ובין כל מחזור י״ט למחזור י״ט
ביו תקצה ואלו סימנין שלמועדים
לא בדו פסח ולא גהז עצרת ולא
אדו ראש שנה ולא אגו כפורים ולא
זבד פורים : ארבעה שערים
לחודש ניסן שהן סוד העיבור אם
נולד לבונה שלניסן בליל ביום[118] ראשון בשבת
או בליל שני או [[בליל]] ביום שני או
בליל שלישי משעה אחת ליום א׳
עד שעה אחת ליום שלישי הפסח

3PalMan folio 2 recto
[JTS ENA 3235 fol. 2 recto]

יום שלישי ואם יהיה מולד ניסן יום
ג או ליל ד או יום ד או ליל חמישי
משעה אחת ליום ד[119] עד שעה
אחת ליום ה יהיה הפסח יום ה
ואם יהיה [[הפסח]] מולד ניסן ביום[120] {ליל} ה או ליל
ו או ביום ו או ליל ז משעה אחת
ליום אלה[121] עד שעה אחת ליום
אלז יהיה הפסח יום ז ואם יהיה
מולד ניסן משעה אחת ליום אלז[122]
או ליל אלא׳ משעה אחת ליום

118 In the right margin of this line, sideways: ביום, probably to correct the word בליל on this line (rather than to correct the same word, marked for deletion, on the next line).
119 Should be ג.
120 These three words are superscript above the struck out הפסח.
121 The Arabic article becomes common, from this point onwards, for weekday numbers.
122 This line is probably an error for: מולד ניסן ביום אלז.
123 Remaining after casting out 28 days for each month.
124 The difference between the first *molad* of two consecutive cycles is 2 days (of the week), 16 hours, 595 parts.
125 Passover cannot occur on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, represented numerically with the letters or 'sign' *BDW*.

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there are 8 days[123] between the New Year and Passover,
Marḥeshwan and Kislew are defective, if 9, they are orderly,
and if 10, they are full; and in an intercalated year, if
10, they are defective, if 11, orderly, and if 12,
full. Between two 19(-year) cycles,
there is 2-16-595.[124] And these are the signs of the festivals:
Passover is not on 2, 4, 6,[125] Pentecost is not on 3, 5, 7, the New
Year is not on 1, 4, 6, Yom Kippur is not on 1, 3, 6, and Purim
is not on 7, 2, 4. The Four Gates
of the month of Nisan, which are the secret of the calendar: if
the moon of Nisan is born on the day[126] of Sunday,
or the night of Monday, or the day of Monday, or
the night of Tuesday, from the first hour[127] of the day of Sunday
until the first hour of the day of Tuesday, Passover

3PalMan folio 2 recto

is on Tuesday. If the *molad* of Nisan is on the day of
Tuesday, or the night of Wednesday, or the day of Wednesday, or the night of Thursday,
from the first hour of the day of Tuesday until the first
hour of the day of Thursday, Passover is on Thursday.
if the *molad* of Nisan is on the day of Thursday, or the night
of Friday, or the day of Friday, or the night of Saturday, from the first hour
of the day of Thursday until the first hour of the day
of Saturday, Passover is on Saturday. And if the
molad of Nisan is from the first hour of the day of Saturday[128]
or on the night of Sunday, from the first hour of the day

126 Following the marginal correction.

127 Here, and in all the other one-hour limits that follow, 642 parts are missing, i.e. it should be one hour and 642 parts (according to the Babylonian calendar; whereas according to ben Meir's calendar, 642 + 641 parts are missing). This cannot be read as an approximation, since precise limits (including parts) are given further on (all in accordance with the Babylonian values). The best explanation is that the scribe has committed a hypercorrection, by suppressing the 642 parts which he wrongly believed would reflect the calendar of ben Meir, and from which he was anxious to disassociate himself. He did not apply this correction, however, in the passage above.

128 The text should probably read, more simply: 'And if the *molad* of Nisan is on the day of Saturday'.

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אלז עד שעה אחת ליום אל
אֹ יהיה הפסח {?}[129] יום אל א׳ ואם
תהיה שנה פשוטה שלאחרי
מעוברת ובא המולד שלניסן עַל ז[130]
קנא מן יב דוחין אותו מיום ז

3PalMan folio 2 verso
[JTS ENA 3235 fol. 2 verso]

ליום אלאֹ וכן יאֹ ˊיוֹם[131]ˋ אם בא בלא תתמו
מן היא דוחין אותו ליום שלישי
משום תשרי שיבוא בלגרדׄ מן יוד
ודוחין חשבון ⟦לתקופת⟧ ˊלתקפותˋ
אלתקופות בבין כל תקופה ותקופה
צא ˊיוֹם[132]ˋ ז שעות ומחצה הוציאם שבעה
שבעה ישתייר בידך שבע שעות ומחצה
והי שבין כל תקופה ותקופה ובין תקו[133]
שנה לתקופת אחרת יום ורביע יום ˊשהיא ד [.]קופות[134]ˋ
יום ורביע יום ותרוצה כשאתה חפץ
לידע באיזה יום באיזה שעה באיזה
חלק תקופת ניסן טול השנים משנברא
העולם עד השנה שאתה ˊשהוא עומד[135]ˋ בה ויעשה

129 One undecipherable character, probably an error.
130 Possibly an error for על ל ז.
131 The word יום is superscript above the *yod* of יאֹ, to explicate the abbreviation.
132 An insertion mark here refers to the word יום in the margin (this word runs into the word יחשוב below it, which is part of the long marginal note—see below). Suggestion of Nadia Vidro.
133 Incomplete, for תקופת.
134 The ink is well preserved, but the letters are poorly shaped and cannot be deciphered. Nadia Vidro suggests ד תקופות; it is possible that the scribe intended to write this, but erred and then gave up.
135 From this line onwards, the text seems to switch freely from 2nd person imperative to 3rd person imperfect (the superscript words שהוא עומד, in this line, are perhaps an unsuccessful attempt to correct this). This confusion may have been the result of translating from an unpointed Arabic original (suggestion of François de Blois).
136 This is inaccurate. The implication of 'likewise' is that this limit applies similarly to a plain year following an intercalated; but in fact, this limit also applies to a plain year following a plain (see tables below).
137 'of the fifth hour' has been omitted.
138 Suggestion of Nadia Vidro, היא being an abbreviation of the somewhat awkward היום אֹ.

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of Saturday until the first hour of the day of
Sunday, Passover is on Sunday. And if
the year is plain following an
intercalated one, and the *molad* of Nisan falls on (the night of) Saturday
(at) 151 (parts) of the 12th (hour), it is postponed from Saturday

3PalMan folio 2 verso

to Sunday. Likewise[136] for Sunday: if (the *molad*) occurs on the night of Sunday (at) 846 (parts),[137]
from the Sunday[138] it is postponed to Tuesday,
because Tishri will occur on the night of Tuesday, 204 (parts) of the tenth (hour),
and it is postponed.[139] The calculation of
the *tequfot*: between every *tequfah* there are
91 days 7 and a half hours; cast them out by
sevens, and the remainder is 7 and a half hours;
and this is what is between every *tequfah*. And between the *tequfah*
of one year and the *tequfah* of the next, there is a day and a quarter of a day,[140]
a day and a quarter of a day.[141] And the solution, when you want
to know on which day and hour and
part[142] the *tequfah* of Nisan is, is to take the (number of) years from when the world
was created until the year in which you are/he is[143] standing, and he should make

139 The last two rules are fully consistent with the calendar of the Babylonians; the second one, furthermore, is explicitly based on the Babylonian counterpart limit of Tishri (n3-9-204). Note that according to these Four Gates, if the *molad* falls on the limit itself (e.g. 'on the night of Sunday at 846 parts'), the month is postponed; consequently, the limits in these Four Gates must be treated as *post quem* (e.g. if the *molad* occurs on the night of Sunday at 846 parts *or later*, the month is postponed). This contrasts with the Four Gates from the period of the controversy of 921/2, where a *molad* on the limit itself does not lead to postponement, and where the Four Gates are *ante quem* (see further Chapter 5, pp. 84–85).

140 A marginal insertion may read: 'which are the 4 *tequfot*'.

141 This passage is marred by repetitions and/or tautologies.

142 'Part' is superfluous, as the time of the *tequfot* is never at a smaller fraction than a half an hour.

143 'He is' is superscript; the scribe is attempting, unsuccessfully, to correct the frequent changes in this passage from 2nd to 3rd person.

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מהן מחזורין שלכ֫ח והשנים שלא השלימו
15 מחזור טול לכל שנה מהן יום ורביע יום ויקבץ
הימים כולם ויוציאם זז והנשאר מן[144] הימים
באיזה יום ובאיזה שעה יכלה המנין שם נפלה
תקופת ניסן שבין כל תקופה ותקופה ז שעות
ומחצה והם ד תקופות בשנה

Right margin

שלא השלימו ז יחשוב מליל רביעי שהוא ראש לכל מחזור

144 An insertion mark above this word refers to the marginal note (here, below).

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out of them cycles of 28 (years), and of the (remaining) years that do not complete
15 a cycle, take for each year one day and a quarter day, and he should add up all the days and cast them out by 7s, and the remainder of the days,*
on whatever day and hour the calculation ends, that is where the *tequfah* of Nisan falls; for between every *tequfah* there are 7 and a half hours, and 4 *tequfot* are in the year.

Right margin

* (i.e.) that have not completed 7, should be counted from the night of Wednesday, which is the beginning of every cycle[145]

145 This gloss belongs to the end of line 16.

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TABLE 12 The Four Gates of Nisan, derived from the Babylonian Four Gates of Tishri

	FOURTH GATE		THIRD GATE		SECOND GATE		FIRST GATE
Weekday of 1 Nisan	**Saturday**		**Thursday**		**Tuesday**		**Sunday**
Character of the year	**Defective**	**Full**	**Defective**	**Full**	**Defective**	**Full**	**Orderly**
Intercalated year[a]	d5:1:642	d6:4:53	d3:1:642	d4:4:53	d1:1:642	n2:7:257	d7:1:642
Plain year after plain		n6:4:846		n4:4:846	**Orderly** n1:4:846	n3:4:846	
Plain year between two intercalated							n7:11:151
Plain year before plain[b]				d3:7:1050			

a Assuming, throughout the table, that the year begins in Nisan.
b And thus always after an intercalated, like the previous row. On this basis, the last two rows are merged in the Four Gates text of 3PalMan.

TABLE 13 The Four Gates of Nisan in 3PalMan

	FOURTH GATE	THIRD GATE	SECOND GATE	FIRST GATE
Weekday of 1 Nisan	**Saturday**	**Thursday**	**Tuesday**	**Sunday**
Intercalated year	d5:1	d3:1	d1:1	d7:1
Plain year after intercalated			n1:4:846[a]	n7:11:151

a Actually this limit also applies to a plain year after a plain (see Table 12).

Note: all limits in these tables are *post quem* (see above, note 139).

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Conclusion

A New Perspective on the Controversy

More than a century has passed since H.Y. Bornstein wrote his monograph on the so-called *Dispute between Saadya and ben Meir*. Few could have undertaken a work of such breath-taking proficiency, and for this reason, generations of scholars after Bornstein were content to treat his work as definitive. Yet for all its expertise and genius, this work suffered from fundamental limitations, above all, Bornstein's lack of access to the manuscripts. A tradition of uncritical reliance on Bornstein and other early twentieth-century scholarship has been increasingly compromised, moreover, by the significant advances that have been made in the last few decades in philology, history, and manuscript studies. The purpose of this present work has thus been to reappraise entirely our perception and knowledge of this major event of Geonic history.

By way of conclusion, it may be instructive to begin by evaluating what my present study has achieved. Many of my conclusions are revisionist and innovative, and challenge the scholarly consensus that was established ever since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I present my conclusions here in the form of an itemized list (under five general headings), to highlight the fact that each item—every single item in this list, in fact—is new, innovative, and/or differs from the established consensus.

1. The so-called *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*
   - *Sefer ha-Mo'adim* is Harkavy's invention; no book ever bore such a title.[1]
   - The Genizah fragments that were identified, by earlier scholars, as belonging to the *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, are really part of an official memorandum that was composed in the autumn of 922. It is called in our sources *Sefer Zikaron* (memorial book); I call it the 'Book of the Calendar Controversy'.[2]
   - This book was not authored by Saadya. It was authored by the exilarch and the heads of the Babylonian academies. It was not even written by Saadya on their behalf. Saadya wrote other works on the calendar, not all related to the controversy; most of these works appear to be lost, but this is not one of them.

1 On all the items in this section, see Chapter 6.

2 Malter (1913 and 1921) treated the *Sefer Zikaron* as a separate work from the so-called *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*; but see discussion in Chapter 6, pp. 91–92, 97, and 106 n. 48.

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- The Book of the Calendar Controversy, formerly known as *Sefer ha-Mo'adim*, is not a manual on the Jewish calendar. It lacks essential information about the Jewish calendar computation, such as the 19-year cycle and some other calendar rules. It is only a narrative of the controversy, a polemic against ben Meir, and a comparison of the Babylonian and Palestinian computations, to enable the recipient to identify the legitimate calendar and follow it.
- As my revised reading of one of the manuscripts (BCC1 fol. 2) reveals, the writing of this work was completed on Tuesday, 27 Tishri (22 October 922), whereupon it was widely disseminated.
- Five manuscript copies of this book have survived in the Cairo Genizah, all written long after the controversy (early eleventh—early twelfth centuries). This attests the longevity of this work and its wide dissemination.
- Some of these manuscripts (BCC1, BCC3, BCC4) are neatly produced, and fully vocalized and cantillated; they may have been used for annual public readings of the book. But the other manuscripts (BCC2, BCC5) were cheaply produced, and most likely intended for private readers. The production of cheap manuscripts confirms the popularity of this work in later medieval Egypt. Even if readers did not always understand the technical details in the book, reading it may have been valued as a statement of identification with the Babylonian tradition.

2. Saadya and the calendar controversy
   - Saadya's role in the controversy was marginal. He is not mentioned in the Book of the Calendar Controversy (see Chapter 7). In his own Letters (Chapter 10), Saadya himself reveals that he did not participate in the exchange of letters between the Babylonians and ben Meir, and that he had no authority or influence over the Babylonian leadership.[3]
   - Saadya did write to ben Meir, from Aleppo, before the controversy broke out, but this was his last direct engagement with him. During the controversy, while in Baghdad, he wrote letters but not to ben Meir, only to his disciples in Egypt and (allegedly) to other communities.
   - Ben Meir, in his letters, blames Saadya for the position taken by the Babylonian leadership. Why ben Meir does so is open to interpretation; but his claim is implausible (in the light of Saadya's own letters and

3 On this and the following items, see Chapters 2 and 10, pp. 284–285.

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the Book of the Calendar Controversy), and should not be given factual credence. He seems to be shifting the blame to Saadya for political reasons.

- The calendar controversy of 921/2 was not run by intellectuals such as Saadya. It was a religious and political matter, and was accordingly run by the Jewish communal leaders: ben Meir as head of the Palestinian Council, and on the Babylonian side, the exilarch and heads of the Babylonian academies.
- Inasmuch as this controversy was fundamentally religious and political, the arguments on each side were only about the true tradition (*mesorah*, sometimes backed up by rabbinic sources such as the Talmud) and political legitimacy (the authority of the 'land of Israel' versus the ancient Babylonian academies). No attempt is ever made, in the sources, to invoke scientific accuracy or plausibility, or for example to explain the scientific basis of the midday postponement rule (in its Palestinian versus Babylonian formulations), its origins and its rationale.[4] Although a controversy about the calendar, the arguments lack scientific depth; they appear in the sources as superficial, simplistic, and perfunctory.

3. The controversy did not end in a Babylonian 'triumph'
   - There is no evidence of Palestinian defeat or Babylonian victory at the end of the calendar controversy. There is no statement, in any of our sources, to suggest this.
   - The Palestinians had no reason to declare defeat. Ben Meir remained defiant throughout the whole controversy. In contrast, the Babylonians, in the Book of the Calendar Controversy, admit their helplessness in getting the matter resolved to their favour. They voice concern that for practical reasons, it will be impossible to counter and eradicate ben Meir's competing calendar.[5]
   - The apparent cessation of all correspondence, and silence of contemporary sources, after the end of 922 does not mean that the Palestinians, any more than the Babylonians, were defeated. According to the Qaraite Narrative (Chapter 16.6), both sides persisted in reckoning their own calendar right until the beginning of 924, when the calendars naturally converged and returned to the same dates. The controversy *per*

4 This contrasts very starkly with the lengthy astronomical explanations and justifications that are given to the midday postponement rule in later medieval calendar treatises, such as Abraham bar Ḥayya's *Sefer ha-Ibbur* (2:7; c. 1123 CE) and Isaac Israeli's *Yesod Olam* (4:8; 1310 CE).

5 BCC 12:6, 30:16–17.

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se may well have ended by 923, but most likely only because both sides lost interest in pursuing the argument.

4. The Palestinian calendar tradition of ben Meir survived for at least two centuries
   - The production of manuscripts with texts from the controversy of 921/2—our corpus of sources—during the tenth to twelfth centuries (and significantly, not beyond that point) is evidence that the controversy remained relevant and interesting to the Jewish community of Fusṭāṭ throughout this period.
   - Within our corpus of manuscripts, texts from the Babylonian side (e.g. the Book of the Calendar Controversy and the Babylonian Letters) are written in a Babylonian writing style, whereas the texts from the Palestinian side (e.g. the First Letter of ben Meir), are written in a Palestinian writing style.[6] This suggests that scribes chose to copy texts with which they personally identified, as members of either the Babylonian or the Palestinian communities of Fusṭāṭ. The transmission of these texts was therefore not random but served a cultural, and perhaps even a political, purpose for each of these communities.
   - Palestinian calendar manuals flagging the calendar rules of ben Meir were still being produced as late as the twelfth century (Chapter 17). This demonstrates that the Palestinian calendar was upheld as authoritative for a long time after the controversy of 921/2.
5. Calendar disagreement persisted, after 921/2, until the twelfth century
   - A similar disagreement on the dates of the festivals could have recurred, and may well have done so, in 927 CE. A late tenth-century responsum of Hayye Gaon appears to indicate this (Chapter 16.3). The absence of contemporary evidence may just mean that Palestinians and Babylonians had no interest, at the time, in rekindling the controversy, even though they observed again the festivals on different dates.
   - The continuity of Palestinian calendar tradition may have been facilitated by the fact that after 927, Palestinian and Babylonian dates would not have differed again until 1108. By remaining dormant, in this way, for nearly two centuries, both calendar traditions could remain firmly ensconced, without the risk of generating any undesirable controversy.
   - It seems likely, however, that by 1108, no serious attempt was made to reinstate the Palestinian tradition and differ from the Babylonian dates—there is at least no evidence of this. The *Megillat Evyatar*, writ-

6 See Chapter 4, pp. 48–49.

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ten in 1094 by the head of the Palestinian academy, still postures about Palestinian authority over calendrical matters, but its silence regarding ben Meir's calendar rule (the rule of 641–642) suggests that a disagreement with the Babylonians on the dates of festivals, which would have been possible, due to ben Meir's rule, in the forthcoming year of 1108, was no longer on the Palestinian agenda.

– The eventual decline and disappearance of the Palestinian calendar tradition was not due to defeat through controversies or polemics. It was more likely part of the general decline of Palestinian traditions in the Near East in the later medieval period.

Further Points of Interest: Literature, Language, Calendar, and Qaraites

The innovative conclusions presented above are essentially historical, but this book has also contributed to scholarship in other ways. My editorial work, including transcriptions, critical and diplomatic editions, and translations, has brought to light a substantial corpus of Cairo Genizah texts; its contribution to the study of medieval Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, and Jewish literature in the Geonic period is not explored in this present work, but will be available for others to investigate further. The Book of the Calendar Controversy, for example, will hopefully be ranked from now onwards among the classical works of Geonic literature, and subjected in the future to analysis and interpretation from a variety of literary perspectives.

The language of my corpus, overwhelmingly Hebrew, is also worthy of note. All the works in my corpus are in fact in Hebrew, including the Book of the Calendar Controversy and all the letters exchanged between the parties in 921/2 CE. The only exceptions are the Judeo-Arabic 'Discourse on the Midday Limit' (MidLim), a text which was not certainly composed during the controversy but could be somewhat later, and one letter of Saadya in Judeo-Arabic, which although appearing as Letter 1 in the manuscript of Saadya's Letters, was actually written last, in January 923, and is the latest text we have from the period of the calendar controversy (his Letters 2 and 3, written a year earlier to the same addressees in Fusṭāṭ, are in Hebrew). The other Judeo-Arabic texts in the corpus are edited in Part 4 of this book, and are much later sources.

In the case of the Book of the Calendar Controversy, the choice of Hebrew can perhaps be explained on the basis of the authors' intention of widely disseminating this work to all Jewish communities of the Near East, including for example Persia, where Judeo-Arabic would not have been known. Hebrew was

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also the appropriate language for a work intended for quasi-liturgical purposes, with annual public readings not unlike those of the scroll of Esther or the scroll of Antiochus.[7] But the use of Hebrew in the other writings of 921/2 demands a different explanation, which will belong to the much broader study of language use among Jew writers of the tenth-century Near East.

It goes without saying that my corpus of texts has also much to contribute to the study of the rabbinic calendar, and of the origins of the fixed calendar that has now become normative in Judaism. Not everything, in this area, has been innovative and revisionist. The early twentieth-century scholars, especially Epstein and Bornstein, devoted most of their efforts towards explaining the technical aspect of the calendar controversy: why Palestinians and Babylonians differed about the dates of the calendar, what were the differences between their algorithms and computation, and what technical arguments were used in the polemical, epistolary exchanges between them. The elucidation of the technical content of the corpus was competently executed by Bornstein; if ever I have differed, this has only been on points of detail. The new discoveries have not helped, however, to resolve some of the outstanding questions: in particular, what were the origins of ben Meir's calendar rule (as we have seen in Chapter 5, the theory proposed by Bornstein remains the most plausible).

Nevertheless, some new, interesting discoveries have been made relating to various aspects of the Jewish calendar. Thus, a new fragment of Letter 1 of the Letters Miscellany describes a popular method of calendar reckoning, i.e. how the calendar was reckoned approximately by the 'common people'.[8] In a hitherto unpublished Cairo Genizah text (3PalMan, in Chapter 17.5), I have found a Palestinian version of the Four Gates based on the month of Nisan—whose existence Bornstein had long suspected, but that he had never been able to substantiated or prove. This discovery is rich in implications for the history of the rabbinic calendar, which cannot be explained in detail here. Of further interest is an alternative version of ben Meir's rule of 641–642 parts, limited to when the New Year's new moon falls on Monday, which has been discussed in detail in Chapter 5 (pp. 72–75). This rule was known already to Bornstein (1904: 177–179), but he was at pains to give it a cogent explanation (and so was later Jaffe). This rule has now been attested and confirmed in three newly discovered fragments. I have suggested a possible explanation of it, which needs however to be developed further elsewhere.

7 As discussed in Chapter 6, in the context of the vocalization and cantillation of the manuscripts of this work.

8 LMisc fol. 1v:14–19 (Chapter 11). The new fragment is T-S 10J32.1.

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Calendar-related discoveries, but with broader socio-historical implications, include a newly discovered text (a fragment of the Book of the Calendar Controversy) which tells us—whether reliably or not—that by the tenth century, the exilarch and heads of the academies in Baghdad made their own, annual announcement of the calendar dates, similarly to the Palestinians. This announcement was made in the month of Elul, about a month before the Palestinian announcement in Jerusalem (which was made at the festival of Tabernacles), at the plenary assembly of the sages and disciples of Babylonia famously known as the *kallah*.[9]

It has also become evident, very significantly, that the Palestinians defended their position, in 921/2, on the basis of new moon sightings. It was already known from Saadya's Letter 1 that at the New Year of 922, the Jews of Fusṭāṭ were induced by an early sighting of the new moon to follow the earlier dates of the Palestinians. But the use of new moon sightings by Palestinians now finds confirmation in several newly discovered or newly re-interpreted fragments: a hitherto unknown Babylonian polemic against the Palestinian calendar (Babylonian Letter 2, in Chapter 13), a Palestinian polemic on the calendar (Chapter 15), and the newly discovered Qaraite Narrative of the controversy (Chapter 16.6). All these sources, each written from different denominational perspectives, suggest that the Palestinians, as well as wavering Babylonians, reasoned in 922 CE that the New Year could not be postponed by two days, as per the Babylonian calendar, because then the new moon crescent would be sighted too early, before the beginning of the new month. This was not the first time that visibility of the new moon crescent created a disagreement among the Rabbanites. In the letter of the exilarch of 835/6 CE, a Palestinian decision to set Passover two days earlier was defended on exactly the same basis, the early appearance of the new moon.[10]

The emerging impression is that resort to the evidence of new moon sightings was a distinctly Palestinian Rabbanite practice. This undermines the general assumption, in modern scholarship, that Rabbanite Jews in this period used the fixed, calculated calendar that had been instituted no later than the early ninth century, whereas the Qaraites relied instead on monthly new moon sightings, as had been the custom in Antiquity (and as is reflected in Talmudic

9 BCC 26:4–27:5. The new fragment is T-S NS 175.57. This *kallah* announcement was unknown and unmentioned in earlier scholarship.

10 T-S 8G7.1, recto 11–13; see Stern (2001) 277–283; the text refers to the moon being sighted 'in the West', which from the Babylonian standpoint of the exilarch, presumably means Palestine.

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literature).[11] This neat dichotomy now needs to be qualified. The newly discovered sources suggest that although the Rabbanites had adopted and generally followed a fixed calendar scheme, the sighting of the new moon was still treated as significant in making calendrical decisions. In the Palestinian tradition, and for ben Meir in particular, this reliance on new moon sightings may have been part of a claim of continuity with the Palestinian calendrical court of the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, which supported more generally their political claim, in the tenth century, of Palestinian calendar supremacy.[12]

In connection with this, it is important to remark that the calendar controversy of 921/2 was strictly intra-Rabbanite, opposing only the leaders of the Rabbanite academies of Palestine and Babylonia, and affecting only Rabbanite communities in the Near East and Egypt.[13] It may be expected that the Qaraites, who rejected entirely the fixed Rabbanite calendar, watched with glee as the Rabbanite communities were tearing each other apart over their own, illegitimate calendar schemes. The silence of the Qaraites at the time, however, is a bit surprising. We have no evidence of any Qaraite reaction to the controversy, except for the brief comment of Sahl ben Maṣliaḥ, one generation later, and the Qaraite Narrative, which was written perhaps a lot later than the controversy (Chapter 16.6). The Qaraite Jacob al-Qirqisānī, whose *Kitāb al-ʾAnwār wa-al-Marāqib* (written c. 937) makes copious references to the variety of calendar reckoning among the Qaraites and Rabbanites, says nothing about the controversy of 921/2.[14] Within our own corpus, no significant reference is ever

11 This paradox, that the Qaraites were more faithful in this area to Talmudic tradition than were the Rabbanites, has never been given proper consideration; I intend to pursue this elsewhere.

12 For initial thoughts on this, see Stern (2001) 180–181, and Rustow (2008) 59–60 and 63. Rustow's argument depends largely on a passage of Jacob al-Qirqisānī (*Kitāb al-anwār wa-al-marāqib*, 1:3:27, 31; Nemoy 1930: 342, 344), which I do not think however is relevant: Qirqisānī probably means only to draw a contradiction between Talmudic sources, which advocate empirical methods, and current Rabbanite practice, which relies on a calendar calculation (*ʿibbur*). See also discussion in my introduction to Palestinian Polemic (Chapter 15).

13 The effect of the controversy in Egypt is evident from Saadya's Letters. The first two letters of the Letters Miscellany were written in support of the Babylonian position, but by someone in the Levant or possibly in Egypt.

14 In 7:1:3–4 and 7:8:9–10, Qirqisānī states there are some who place the limit of the *molad* of Tishri at 6 hours of the day and 641 parts (i.e., the Palestinian rule), and others who have no limit for the *molad* at all (this corresponds to a sectarian calendar that observes the *molad* but rejects all the postponement rules, which Qirqisānī also describes in book 1 chs. 15–16; see further Krakowski and Stern, forthcoming). Oddly, he does not mention in this context the Babylonian limit of 6 hours (midday), and oddly, he does not mention the recent calendar controversy (further on in book 7, in 7:13.4, he refers briefly to the *molad*

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made to the Qaraites, for example to the potential ridicule that ben Meir and his opponents would have exposed themselves, in the sight of the Qaraites, by disagreeing on their calendar.[15] Again, the silence of our own sources is surprising; it is as if the Qaraites were completely absent when the controversy took place. At present, I have no explanation for this.

Unity, Diversity, and Schism

In my view, the most important gain of this project has been to establish that the calendar controversy of 921/2 did not end in a Saadyan or Babylonian victory, and that the Palestinian calendar tradition persisted for at least two centuries thereafter.

The false theory of a Babylonian triumph, largely initiated by Malter (1921), has dominated modern scholarship for more than a century. This theory was poorly argued out, by Malter or by his followers; the underlying, scholarly motivations behind it were generally not acknowledged or spelled out. As I have argued in Chapter 3, one of Malter's purposes was to build up the figure of Saadya and explain how, albeit a foreigner, he rose so rapidly to the leadership of the academy of Sura in Baghdad, the first outsider ever to be appointed to this position.[16] But there were other motivations that led most scholars, in the past century, to embrace Malter's theory without much questioning.

The theory of a Babylonian triumph was motivated, I would suggest, by two main factors. The first was historical hindsight. The Jewish calendar in use today by virtually all Jewish denominations—from Reform to ultra-Orthodox—corresponds exactly, in structural terms, to the Babylonian calendar of the early tenth century.[17] Already in medieval Europe, this was the standard rabbinic

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occurring before 6 hours, but this is a passing reference and could be an abbreviation of 6 hours, 641 parts; I have not found in Qirqisānī's work any clear reference to the Babylonian midday limit). Similarly, no mention is made of the calendar controversy in book 1, ch. 10, where Qirqisānī lists in full the legal and customary differences between Palestinians and Babylonians (I am grateful to Nadia Vidro for referring me to Qirqisānī's book 7).

15 See my remarks on BCC 5:3–5, which contrary to Bornstein's suggestion, makes no allusion to the Qaraites. In his 'Second Letter', ben Meir quotes the Babylonians as saying that as a result of the controversy, they have become 'the object of shame to the nations and of contempt among the heretics' (LMisc fol. 7r:9); this is vague and subjective, and can hardly be used as evidence of a Qaraite response to the controversy.

16 See Chapter 3, pp. 40–41.

17 The only exception is probably the Qaraite movement, which is currently enjoying a modest revival.

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Jewish calendar; the calendar monographs and manuals that began to proliferate from the twelfth century onwards, starting with Abraham bar Ḥayya's *Sefer ha-ʿIbbur*, only know this calendar. All this encouraged modern scholars to view the Babylonian calendar as predestined to emerge victorious; in their eyes, this was the right calendar, whereas ben Meir was mistaken and wrong.[18] It made sense, therefore, to assume that ben Meir must have been defeated at the conclusion of the controversy of 921/2.

The second factor, more important and more deep-seated, was the difficulty of modern scholars to come to terms with the possibility that two Jewish communities, particularly rabbinic ones, should have reckoned different calendars over any period of time, and observed the festivals on different dates. They were partly misled by the experience of modern life, where the Jewish but also many other calendars, not least the Gregorian, are universal, standard, and fixed. They were also driven by a well-documented notion, attested already in early rabbinic sources, that rabbinic Judaism could only tolerate the observance of a single, identical calendar by all Jews. The Mishnah and contemporary works present the calendar as in the exclusive control of a single rabbinic court, whose decisions needed to be disseminated across the Jewish world in order for all Jews to comply with them. On this basis, it seemed unlikely that rabbinic authorities would have tolerated, for any period of time, a disagreement about the calendar. The controversy 921/2 must have ended with some kind of resolution, and this could only have been Palestinian defeat.

In historical terms, however, this assumption has been profoundly misguided. The notion of a single calendar that everyone is bound to observe is admittedly taken for granted in Mishnah *Rosh ha-Shanah*, but the implementation of such a system, as described there, is idealistic and unlikely to have reflected historical reality. As I have demonstrated in detail elsewhere, throughout Antiquity and still in the early Middle Ages, the Jewish calendar was reckoned very differently by different communities, in the Diaspora as well as in Palestine; and there is reasonable evidence that even rabbinic communities, if only through lack of effective long-distance communication methods, ended up observing festivals on different dates.[19] Disagreements about calendar rules are very common in early rabbinic literature, and there is no reason to assume that they did not continue into the post-Talmudic period. The above-mentioned letter of the exilarch, dated 835/6, is evidence of dis-

18 Thus Epstein (1901) went as far as explaining ben Meir's calendar rule as a gross, ignorant error. Rustow (2008: 19) ascribes the assumption of a Babylonian victory to 'presentism', i.e. the projection of present experience unto the past.

19 Stern (2001) 247–252, (2012*a*) 331–352.

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agreement about calendar dates within the Rabbanite communities; and as late as 946, there is evidence that Jews in southern Italy were using a different calendar from the rabbinic calendar in the Near East.[20] In this light, a protracted, unresolved disagreement about the calendar calculation in the tenth century no longer appears problematic and so far-fetched, especially if it only affected a very small number of years through the tenth to twelfth centuries.

It is pertinent to note, in this context, that while modern scholars, starting with Epstein, have described the controversy of 921/2 as an incipient schism,[21] there is actually little or no evidence, in all the polemical correspondence and writings of 921/2, to support this. Although ben Meir and the Babylonians reasserted the rabbinic assumption that there could only be one legitimate calendar, their disagreement and their observance, in practice, of different calendar dates in 922 and 923, did not mean to them that they were no longer one people. Each side accused the other of the worst crimes, but fomenting a schism was not one of them; the crime of a deviant calendar was not social, but primarily halakhic.[22] It is only in his 'Second Letter' that ben Meir, by then rather exacerbated, suggests on two occasions that Palestinians and Babylonians should part ways and have nothing more to do with one another, each time resorting to a biblical quotation: 'in us and in you, let there be fulfilled "and Samuel never saw Saul again" (1 Sam. 15:35)' (LMisc fol. 8r:2–3), and again, 'it is not for you and us' (ibid. fol. 8v:8), a verse in Ezra 4:3 about the Judean split from the Samaritans. This, however, is rhetoric; it is hard to believe that in these allusive, throwaway lines, ben Meir is seriously contemplating the formation of two separate nations, denominations or religions.

This raises of course the question of what is meant exactly by 'schism'—a critical question that scholars have too often eluded. If ceasing to correspond or to have direct contact with one another is equivalent to schism, then this is quite likely what ben Meir had in mind in these passages; but modern scholars have assumed, unreasonably, a much more profound cleavage between the Palestinian and Babylonian Rabbanite communities, for which there is no evidence in the literature of 921/2. The absence of a Babylonian triumph and the

20 Stern and Mancuso (2007).

21 Epstein (1901) 172: 'Il s'en fallu de peu que les mesures prises par Ben Méïr ne provocassent, dans le sein du Judaïsme rabbinique, un schisme gros de conséquences.' See also, in particular, Rivkin (1962).

22 Transgression of the law is frequently mentioned on both sides (e.g. LSaad 6r:5, 7v:11–12; LMisc 8v:9), as well as rebellion against God (BCC 3:5, LSaad 8r:11–13) and against rabbinic authority (BCC 4:21, LMisc 3r:6), desecration of the festivals of the Lord (BCC 16:4, 30:11–13, LSaad 8r:11–13), and causing the multitude to sin (BCC 8:9, LMisc 3r:16).

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persistence of calendar diversity, together with the focus of our sources on breaches of the law rather than on social division, puts in question more generally the claim that many scholars have sustained, especially in relation to Qumran and to the Qaraites, that the observance of a different calendar necessarily leads to social severance and schism. Indeed, the theoretical underpinnings of this claim—based on the authority of Emile Durkheim—were never more than superficial and weak, and this claim has increasingly lost credibility in the cultural reality of multi-ethnic, post-modern urban societies.[23]

Why the Controversy?

This said, there is no question that ben Meir and his Babylonian counterparts were deeply perturbed by this controversy. Both regarded the observance of the festivals on different dates as a transgression of Mishnaic law, if not of Divine law, because both assumed that only one set of dates could be legitimate, and that the festivals could only be observed at this one time. The determination of each party to prevail over the other and impose their calendar over the whole of Israel was, to be sure, politically motivated, but it also sprang from a specific halakhic ideology that demanded the calendar to be the same for all.

The political motivations behind the controversy, which finds ample expression in the Book of the Calendar Controversy and the letters exchanged by ben Meir and the Babylonian leaders, has been given much attention in earlier scholarship.[24] There is no doubt that the controversy unfolded in a political context, including ben Meir's allegedly aggressive rise to power in Palestine, and the succession crisis in the leadership of the Babylonian academies. But questions remain be asked about the calendrical dimension of the controversy. Firstly, why was it so important to observe the festivals on the same dates?

The answer to this question cannot be taken for granted. Although early rabbinic literature assumes calendar unity to be imperative, it does not clearly explain why this should be so—why it is objectionable for Jewish communities to observe the festivals on different dates, due to different ways of reckoning the calendar (which was in fact a common occurrence in ancient Jewish society). This stands in contrast with the exacting scriptural proofs and justifications that are normally given to halakhic rules in rabbinic literature. As I

23 Rustow (2011), Stern (2011) and (2012*a*: 372–373).

24 The political dimension is evident, for example, in the prologue to the Book of the Calendar Controversy (BCC 1–2) and throughout the book (e.g. BCC 5:4–5).

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have observed elsewhere, the rabbinic assumption that there could only be one legitimate calendar was related to a similar trend, within late antique Christianity, regarding the date of Easter; but it was also driven by a specific urge to unify the dispersed rabbinic community, to compensate for its status as a religious minority, and to create a sense of solidarity and social unity—issues which remained live and pertinent to Rabbanite Jews in the early tenth-century society.[25]

A second, calendar-focused question that may be asked concerns the calendrical objectives of the parties of the controversy. To what extent was the objective of the Babylonians, in their opposition to ben Meir, and of ben Meir himself, as the controversy evolved, to institute a standard calendar for all generations, rather than just to prevail in this particular dispute? With hindsight, it has often been assumed that the controversy of 921/2 marked the finalization of the rabbinic calendar; but it was not necessarily perceived as such at the time. Given the persistence of ben Meir's calendar in the tenth to twelfth centuries, it is in fact debatable whether the controversy had any particular, long-term effect on the standardization and fixation of the Jewish calendar in the medieval world.

There are some indications that the parties of the controversy saw themselves at a momentous historical juncture, with the responsibility of settling the calendar once and for all. Ben Meir's decision to adapt the Four Gates to his calendar rule may suggest that he was thinking beyond the controversy of 921/2, towards establishing a permanent calendar compliant to the Palestinian rules—as, at least, the Babylonians interpreted this move. In the long term, ben Meir was not successful, but it may be argued that the measures taken on the other side, by the Babylonians, to enforce their version of the Four Gates were equally not particularly effective.

The universal standardization of the Jewish calendar, in conformity to the Babylonian model, was the result of a complex, drawn-out historical process, which unfolded through several centuries before and after the controversy of 921/2. The controversy of 921/2 was undoubtedly an important part of this process, but standardization of the calendar was not necessarily the controversy's main objective. The protagonists of the controversy, the leaders of the Palestinian and Babylonian academies, were primarily concerned about their immediate present. But the long-term significance of this short-lived controversy did not escape anyone's attention. The calendar controversy of 921/2 was sensed, then as much as now, as a highly significant milestone in the history of

25 Stern (2001) 232–256, (2012*a*) 335.

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the Jewish calendar, of the relations between Jewish communities in the medieval Near East, and of the emergence of standard time keeping and time-related practices in medieval and modern Judaism.

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Glossary

BaHaRaD Epoch of the *molad* calculation, corresponding to the *molad* of the month of Tishri in year 1 of the era of Creation (as reckoned in the western tradition; year 1 = 3761/3760 BC).

Also known as *LeBaHaRaD*.

LeBaHaRaD = night 2 (night of Monday), 5 hours, 204 parts.

See also '*WeYaD*'

Birth, born See '*molad*'

Conjunction, lunar Astronomical new moon, when the moon and sun are at the same longitude, and the moon is at its minimal illumination (invisible to the naked eye).

Defective, orderly, full With reference to months: the consecutive months of Marḥeshwan and Kislew with the lengths of 29 and 29 days (defective), 29 and 30 days (orderly), 30 and 30 days (full).

With reference to years (less common in our sources): years with the lengths of Marḥeshwan and Kislew as above.

Epoch Starting point of chronological era or of other chronological measurement. An epoch serves as reference point for the calculation, for example, of the *molad* of any month.

Exilarch Leader of the Babylonian Jewish community.

Four Gates An algorithm (mathematical procedure) for determining the dates of the calendar on the sole basis of the *molad* of Tishri and the position of the year in the 19-year cycle. See Chapter 5, end.

Full See 'defective'

Gaon (pl. *Geonim*) Title of the head of an academy (see '*Rosh yeshivah*').

Halakhah Law (in rabbinic tradition).

***Ḥeleq* (pl. *ḥalaqim*)** See 'part'

Hour In our sources, the 12 hours of the night and 12 hours of the day are usually counted separately.

Intercalated year Year of 13 months, in which a thirteenth month has been intercalated; as opposed to 'plain year'.

Lunation Interval in time between two consecutive new moons.

The lunation assumed in the calculation of the *molad* is 29 days, 12 hours, and 793 parts.

***Molad* (pl. *moladot*)** Lit. 'birth', of the new moon; i.e. the lunar conjunction (see 'conjunction'), or astronomical new moon.

This term is generally used to designate the day (or night) of the week and the time of the day (or night), in hours and in parts (see 'part'), when the new moon of any month is 'born'.

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The date and time of the *molad* of the month of Tishri are used to determine the date of the New Year. The *molad* of the month of Nisan is also often used in calendar calculations; less frequently, the *molad* of other months.

The *molad* does not represent the true astronomical new moon, but rather a mean new moon that is obtained through calculation. The calculation is based on an epoch (see 'epoch', *'BaHaRaD'*, and '*WeYaD*') and on a constant lunation (see 'lunation').

'If Tishri is born on …' = if the *molad* of the month of Tishri occurs on … (day/night of week, hours, parts).

Orderly See 'defective'

Part (Hebrew *ḥeleq*, pl. *ḥalaqim*) 1/1080 hour, a division of the hour that is used exclusively for calculating and defining the time of the *molad*.

Plain year Year of 12 months; as opposed to 'intercalated year'.

Rosh yeshivah 'Head of an academy'. Equivalent to 'Gaon'.

Tannaitic rabbinic, of approximately the first to early third centuries CE.

***Tequfah* (pl. *tequfot*)** Equinox and/or solstice.

WeYaD Epoch of the *molad* calculation, corresponding to the *molad* of the month of Tishri in year 1 of the era of Creation (as reckoned in the eastern tradition; year 1 = 3760/3759 BC).

WeYaD = day 6 (Friday), 14 hours (0 parts)

On this day, Adam was created.

Yeshivah Academy.

The months of the Jewish year are listed in Chapter 5, p. 59.

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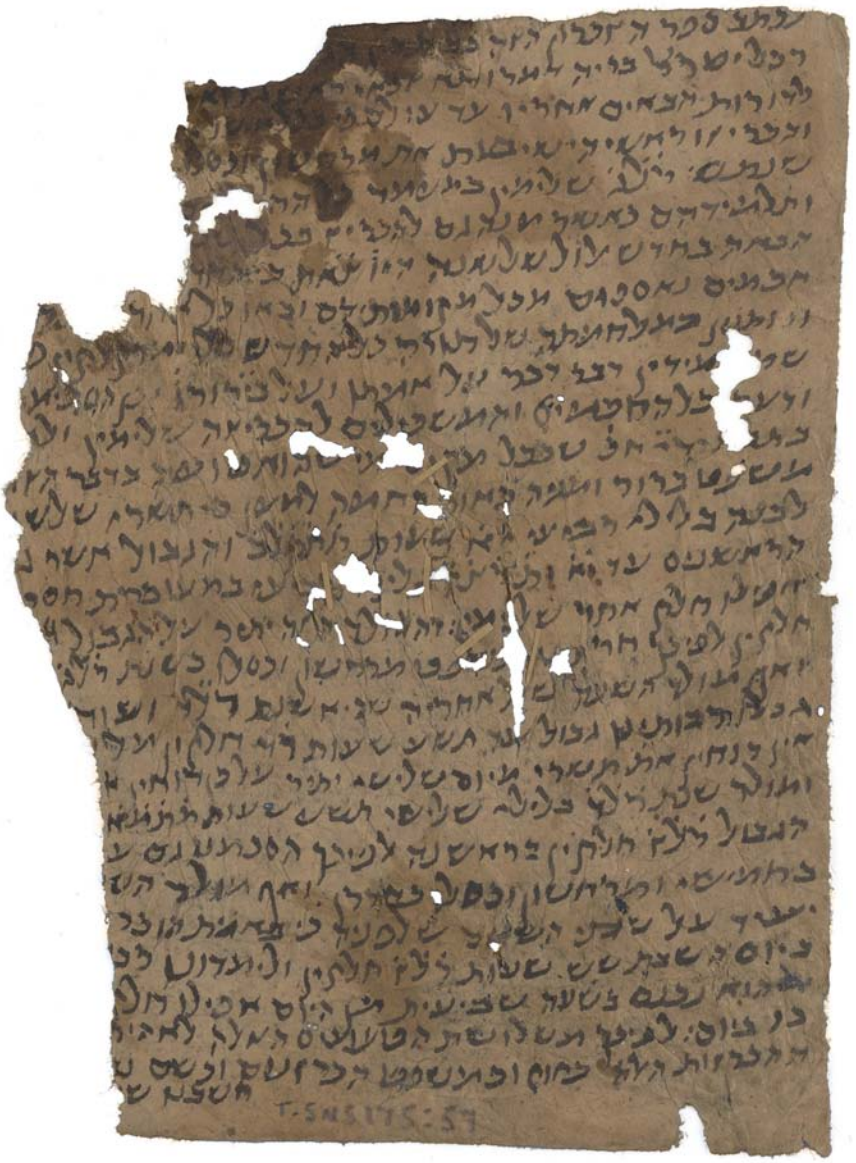


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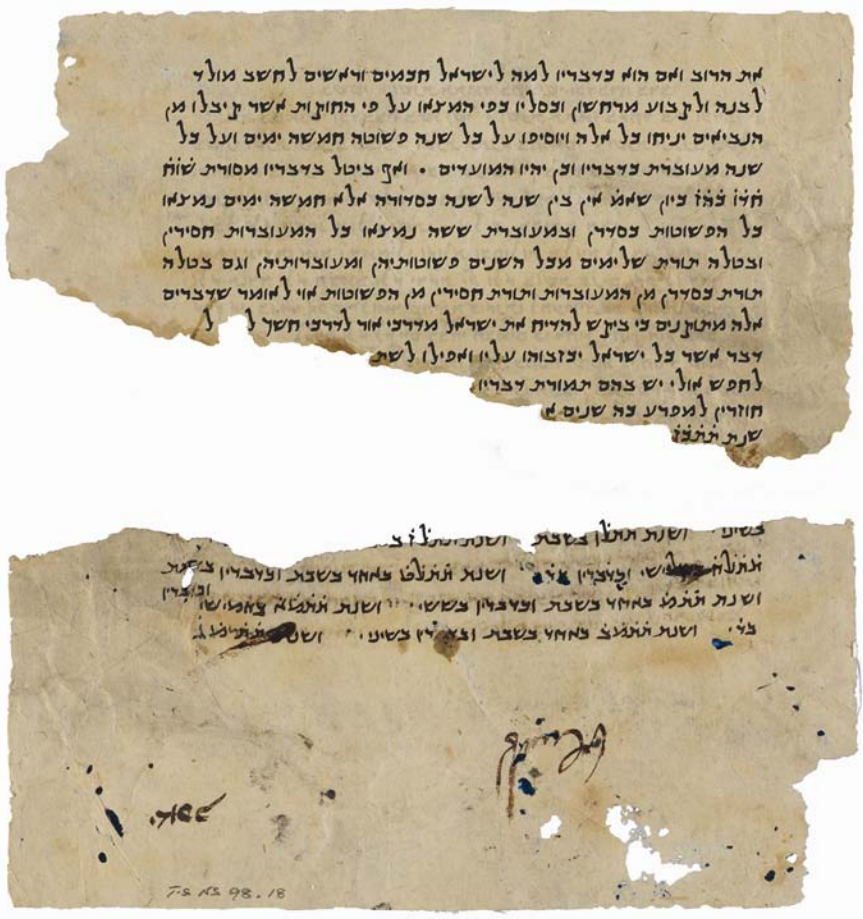


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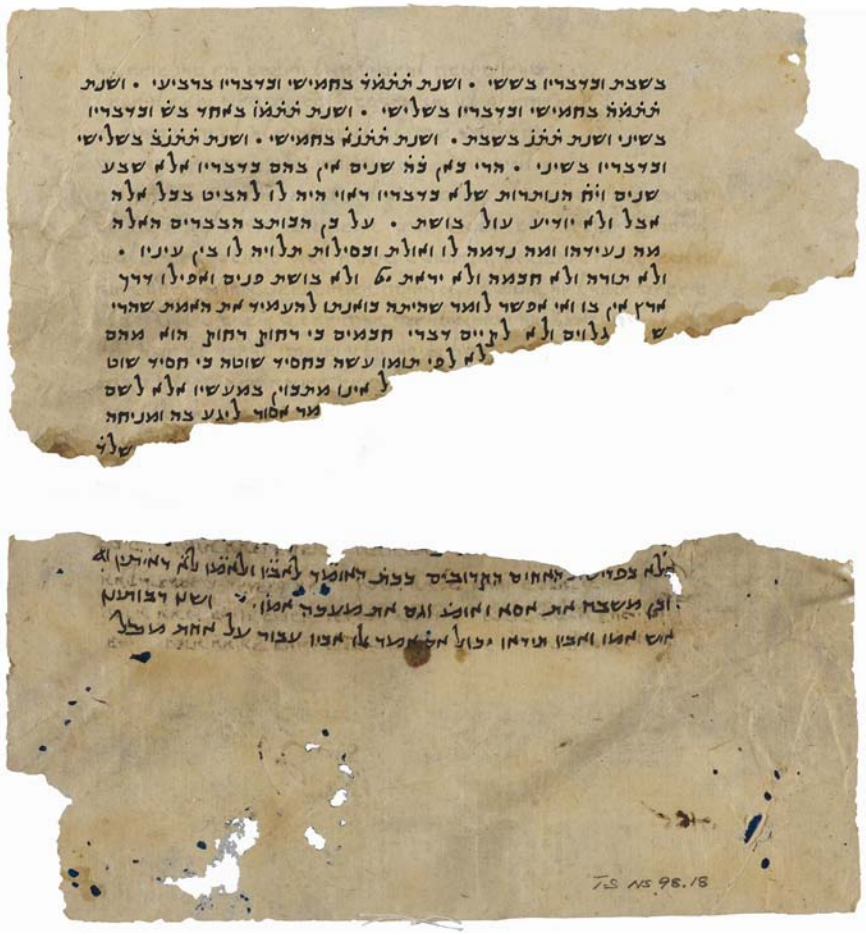


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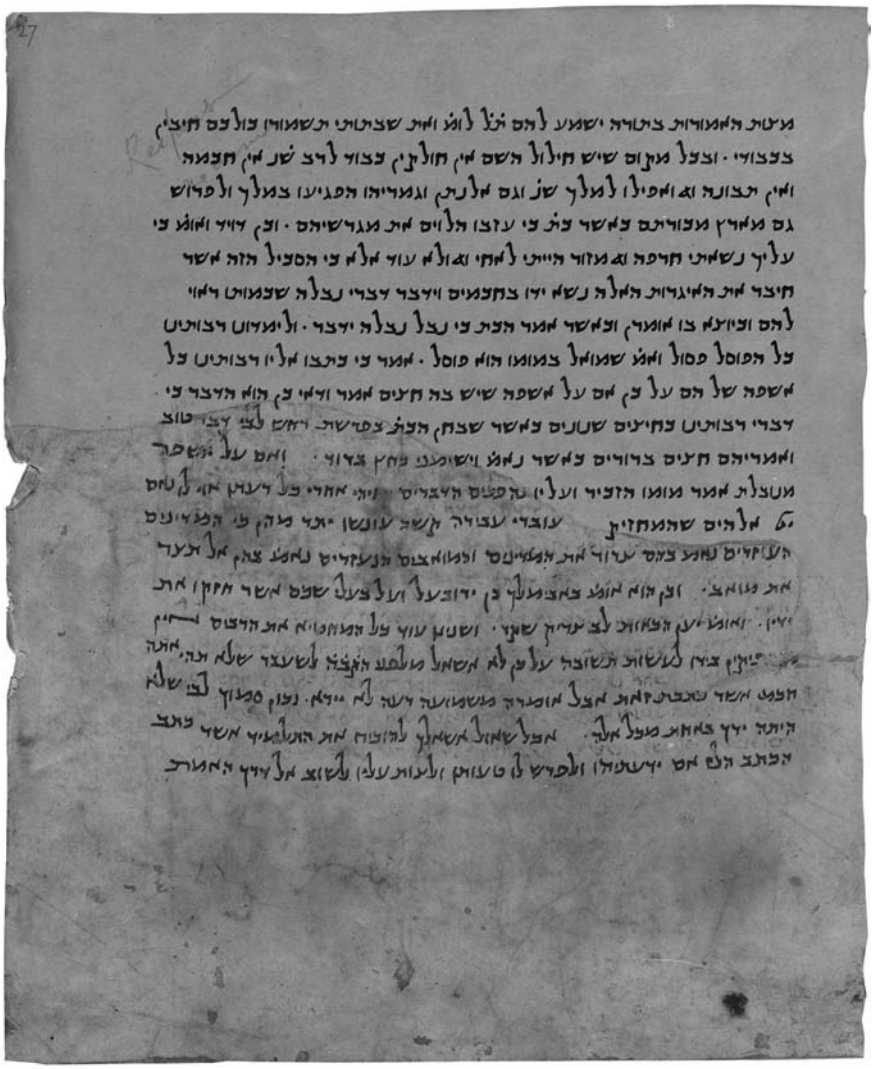


PLATE 8 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 3 recto. Upper fragment reconstructed and joined by Jay Birbeck. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 27 recto
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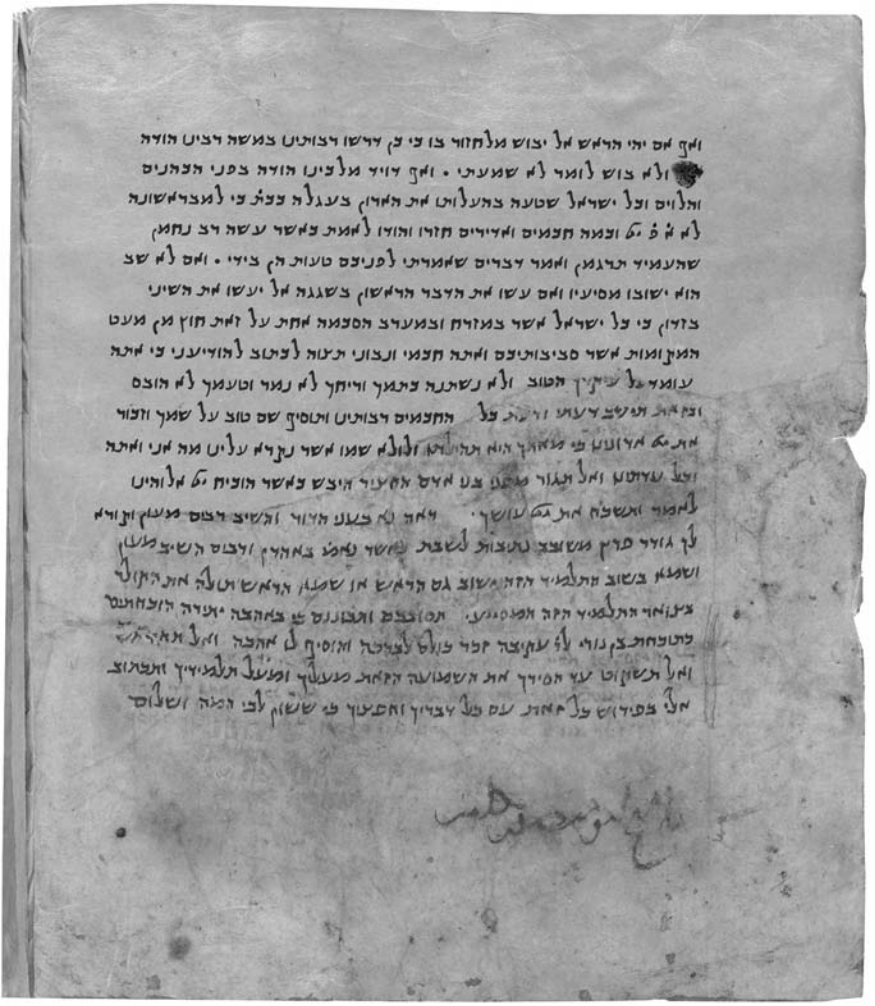


PLATE 9 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 3 verso. Upper fragment reconstructed and joined by Jay Birbeck. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 27 verso
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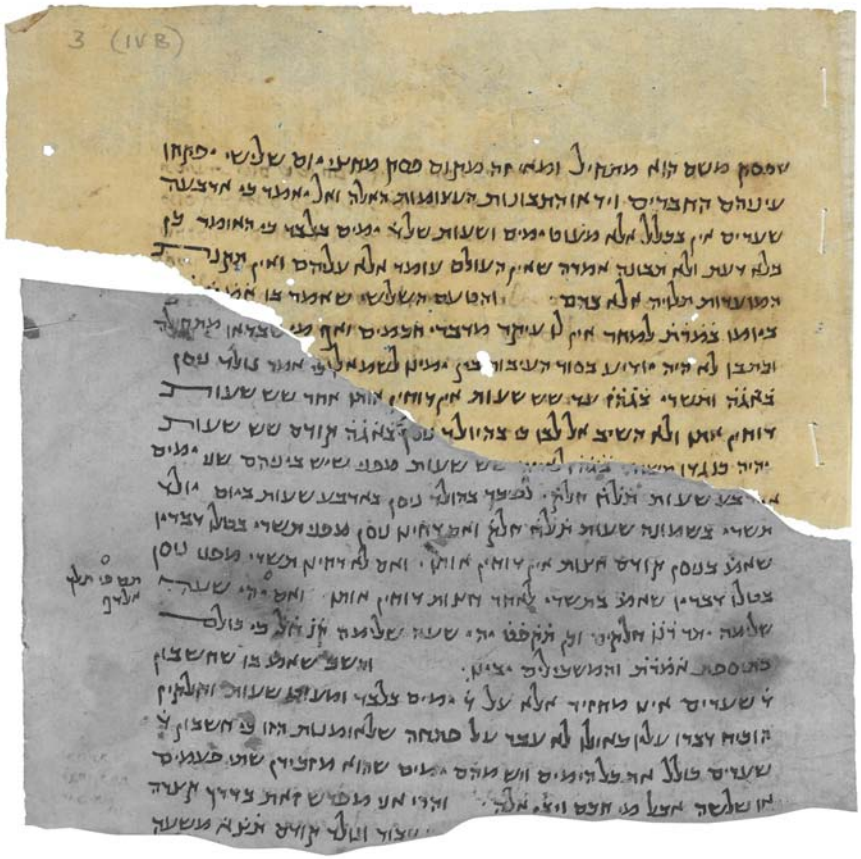


PLATE 10 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 4 recto, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.3 recto. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 29 recto
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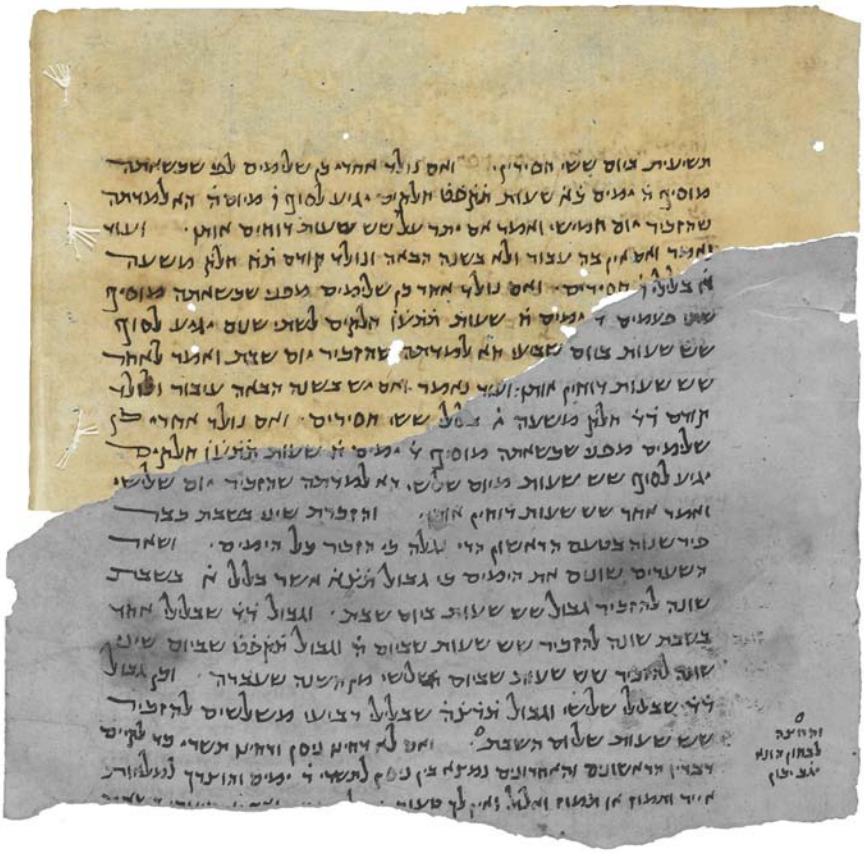


PLATE 11 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 4 verso, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.3 verso. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 29 verso
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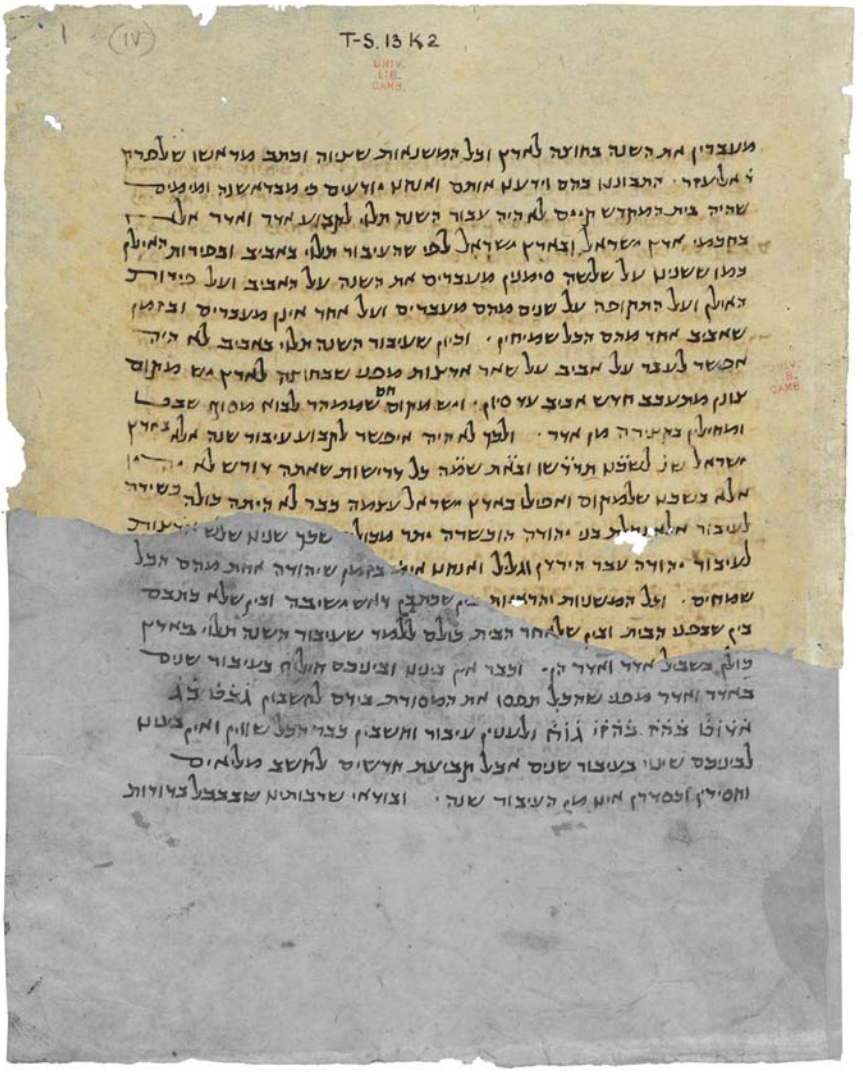


PLATE 12 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 5 recto, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.1 rectoy. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 28 recto
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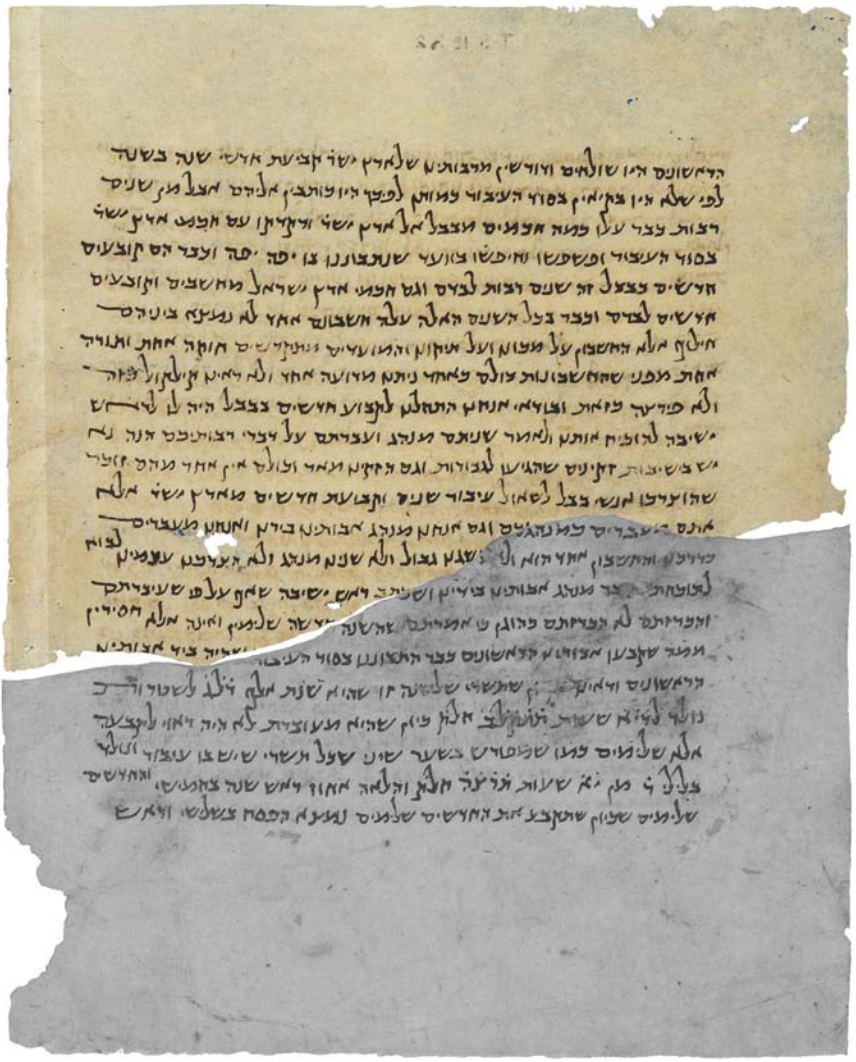


PLATE 13 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 5 verso, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.1 verso. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 28 verso
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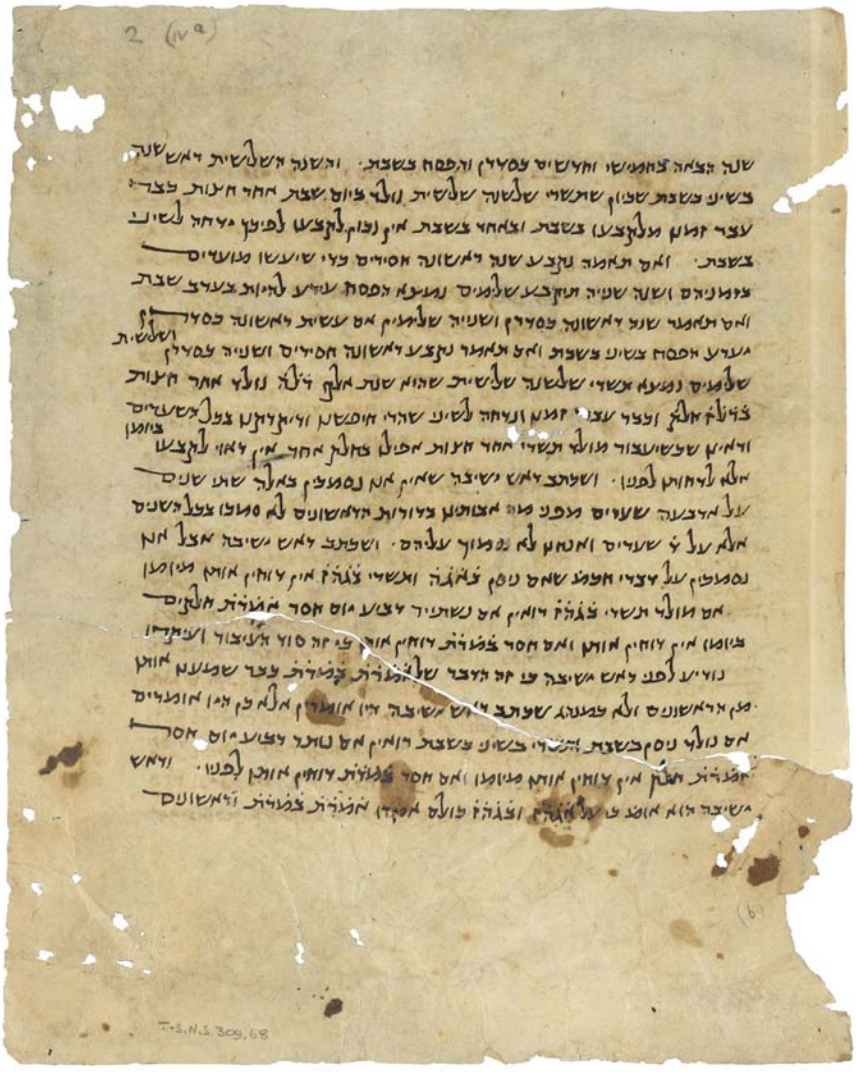


PLATE 14 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 6 recto, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment T-S 13K2.2 recto; lower fragment T-S NS 309.68b recto
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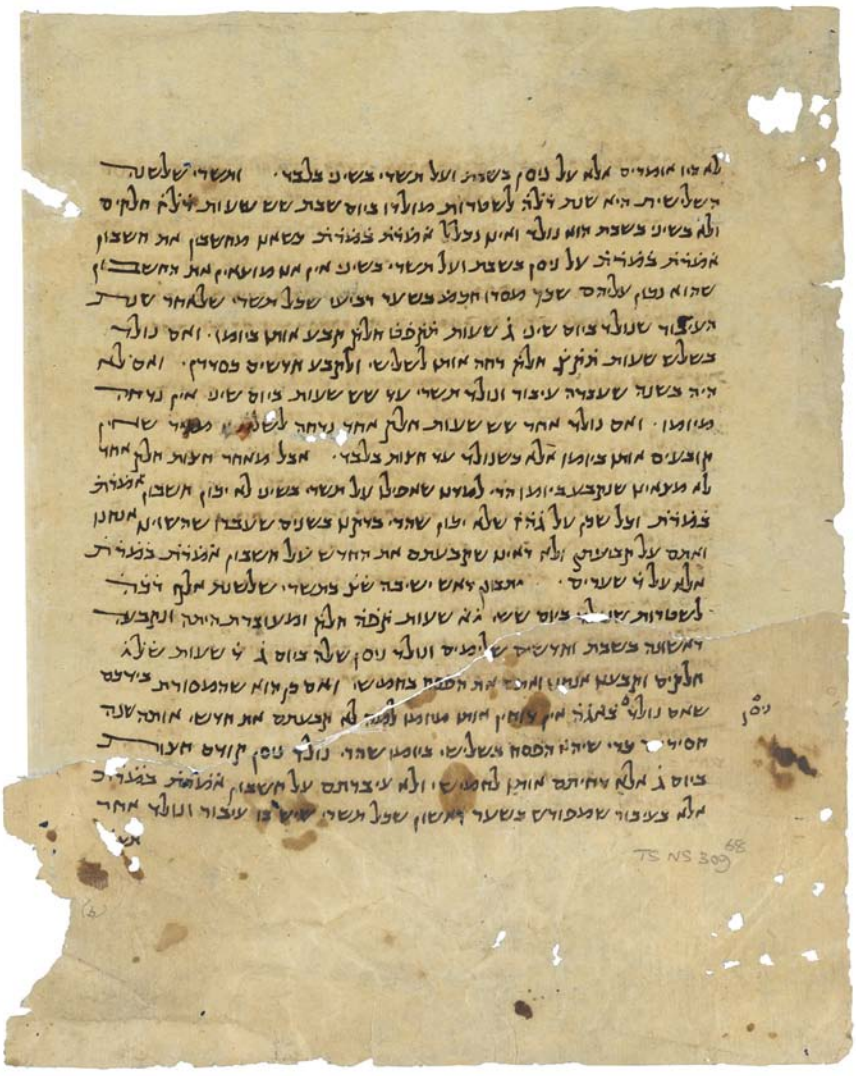


PLATE 15 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 6 verso, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment T-S 13K2.2 verso; lower fragment T-S NS 309.68b verso
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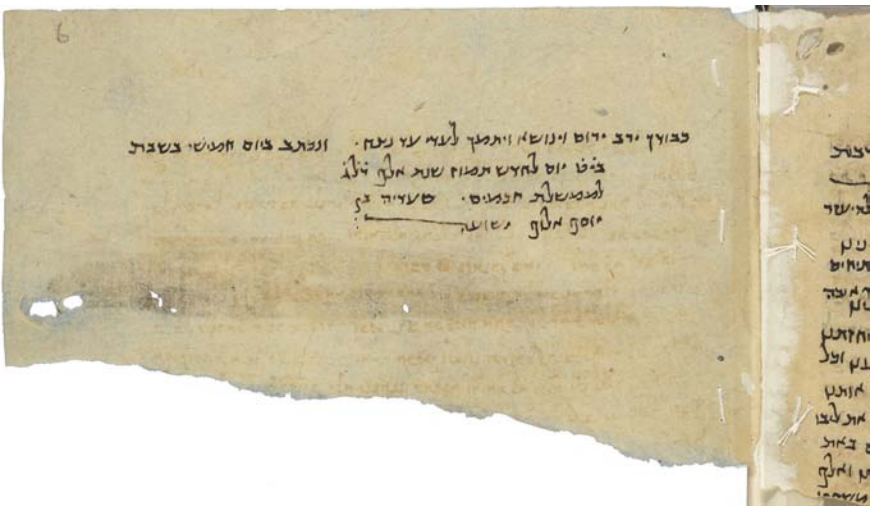


PLATE 16 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio x (T-S 13K2.6)
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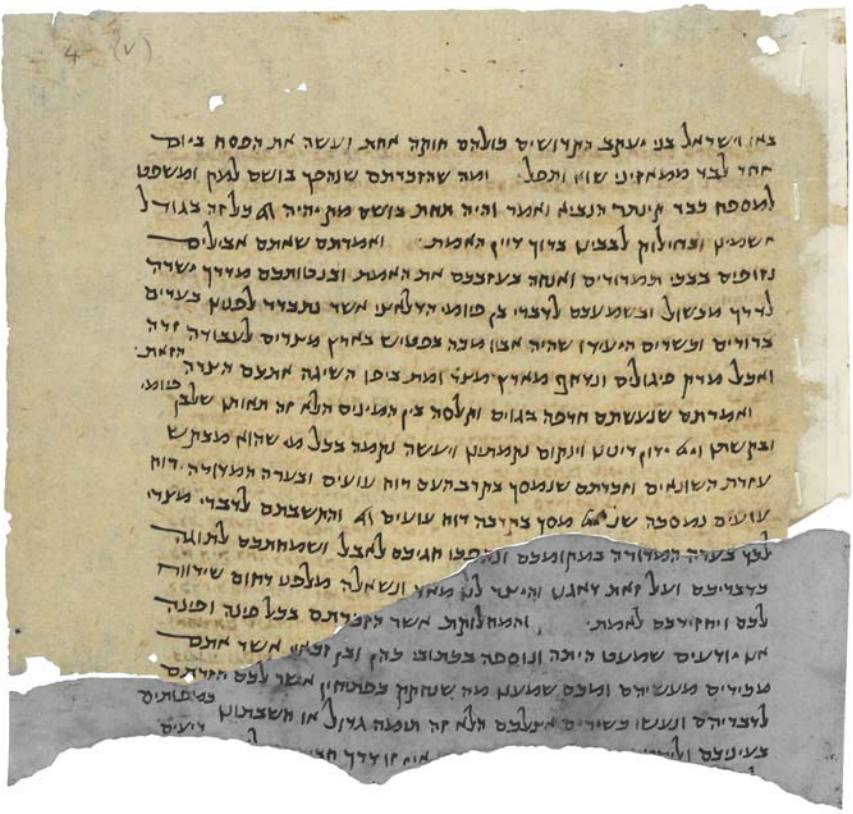


PLATE 17 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 7 recto, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.4 recto. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 31 recto
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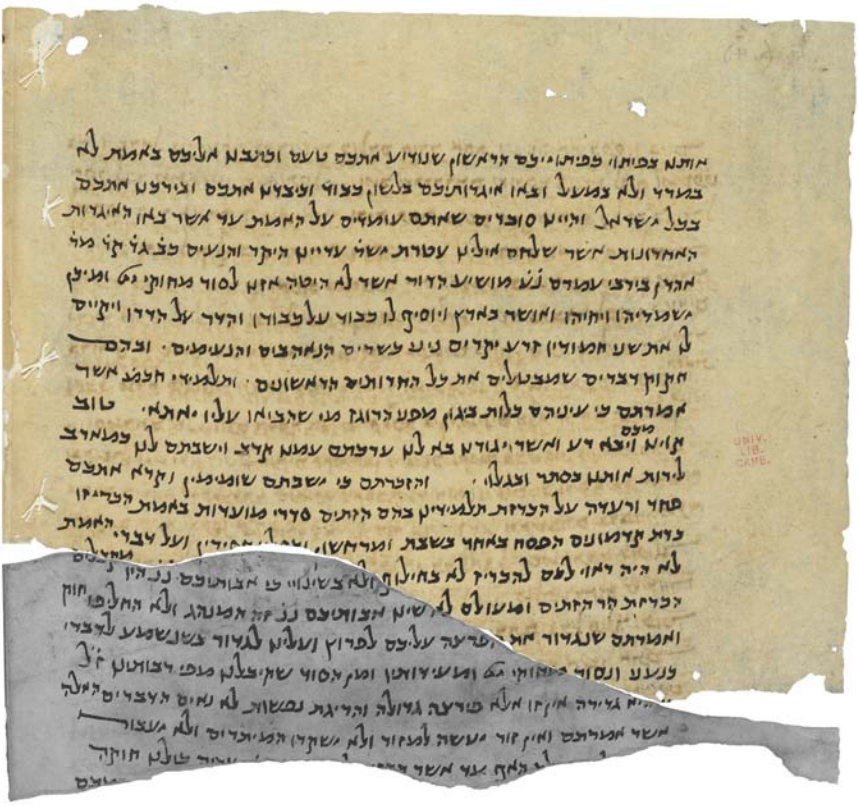


PLATE 18 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 7 verso, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.4 verso. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 31 verso
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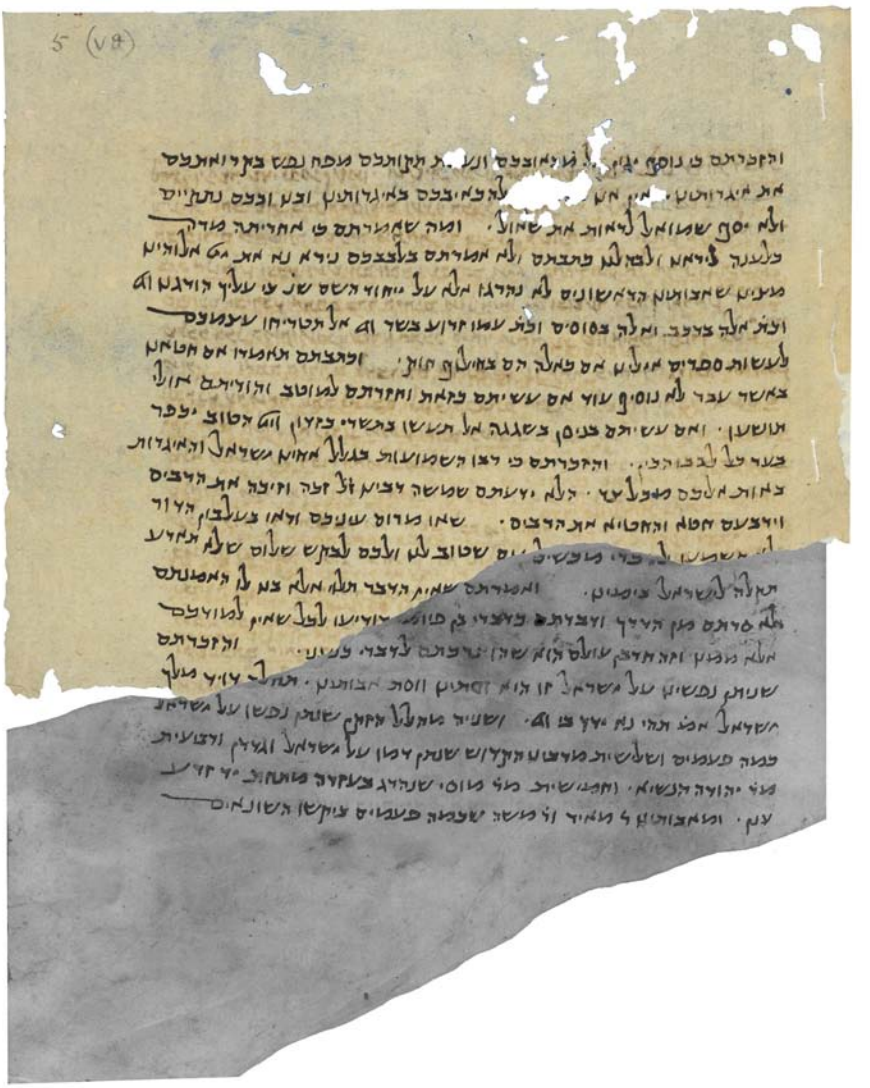


PLATE 19 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 8 recto, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.5 recto. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 30 recto
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PLATE 20 Letters Miscellany (LMisc) folio 8 verso, joined by Jay Birbeck. Upper fragment, T-S 13K2.5 verso. Lower fragment, Bodl. Heb. d. 74 fol. 30 verso
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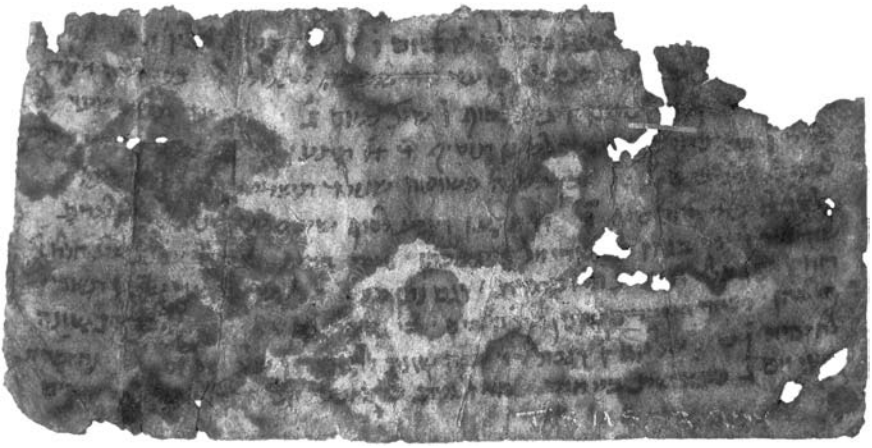


PLATE 21 T-S AS 83.258 recto (Babylonian Letter 2), ultra-violet exposure (January 2018) WITH PERMISSION OF THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

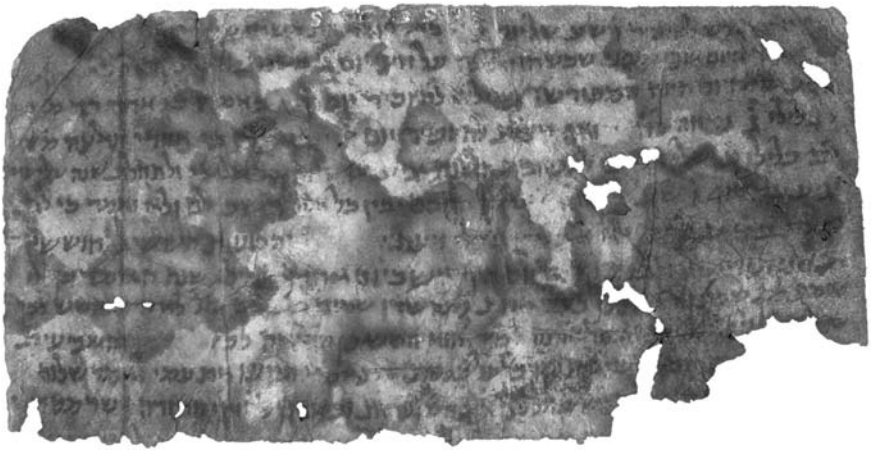


PLATE 22 T-S AS 83.258 verso (Babylonian Letter 2), ultra-violet exposure (January 2018) WITH PERMISSION OF THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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PLATE 23 Qaraite Narrative (QarNar) recto, joined by Jay Birbeck. Right fragment T-S NS 262.17 verso; left fragment T-S AS 155.112 recto
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PLATE 24 Qaraite Narrative (QarNar) verso, joined by Jay Birbeck. Right fragment T-S AS 155.112 verso; left fragment T-S NS 262.17 recto
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