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## ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

### THE EARLIEST EXTANT VERSION OF *SEFER YESIRAH*

Avishai Bar-Asher

The earliest manuscript witnesses of the composition known as *Sefer Yesirah* date from the tenth century CE. By that point, texts of the work itself and commentaries on it already reflected three primary recensions: a 'short recension', a 'long recension', and what scholars have designated 'Sa'adia Gaon's recension'. The latter was given this title because for a long time it was known exclusively from Sa'adia Gaon's very early commentary on *Sefer Yesirah*. Scholarship has generally treated this third recension as inferior, the artificial product of late editing. This article advances the opposite claim: that it reflects the earliest extant form and text of *Sefer Yesirah*.

The study is divided into five chapters accompanied by an appendix.

The first chapter broadly surveys the scholarly discussion of the so-called 'Sa'adia Gaon recension' and the tendency to dismiss its authenticity, even after the discovery of an independent, old copy of this version in a rotulus from the Cairo Genizah. In the conclusion of that discussion, I propose renaming it the 'earliest version attested in the Genizah'.

The second chapter clarifies the structure of this old and early version of *Sefer Yesirah*. It is divided into four chapters that take up different themes, and each chapter is further subdivided into fixed paragraphs based on repeated lemmata.

The third chapter traces the transmission lines of the 'earliest Genizah-attested version', which were in fact distinct, in documents composed throughout the Middle Ages until the Early Modern Period. This version saw widespread use; it was copied all over the Jewish world for over half a millennium, and it had other commentators in addition to Sa'adia Gaon.

Chapter four establishes the chronology of the three versions based on manuscript witnesses, claiming that the earliest Genizah-attested lemmatic version is the oldest of all and was reworked into what we call the 'long recension', based on the sorting out, regrouping and reorganization of paragraphs for formal, technical reasons. The lemmatically ordered chapters of the 'Genizah-attested version' had undergone a systematic redaction, through which *Sefer Yesirah* was reorganized into allegedly thematic chapters. Close textual and structural examination of the earliest witnesses of the various versions reveals these editorial changes. One piece of textual evidence, among many, is the corruption in the order of the text of an earlier (now lost) text witness that crept into all subsequent versions known to us.

The fifth chapter shows how this account supersedes earlier ones in clearing up longstanding confusion regarding the origins and development of the various versions and recensions. The paper concludes by discussing the possibility of reconstructing even earlier stages of *Sefer Yesirah*'s textual history given these new textual findings.

Finally, the appendix includes a new edition of the 'earliest Genizah-attested version', in which the work's original structure presented in the article is reinstated and clearly marked.

Applying the tools of comparative philology to the recensions of *Sefer Yesirah*, one arrives at a new and different history of their formation. First, a prototype of the 'earliest Genizah-

attested version' underwent intensive editing to become the 'long version'. Later, an exemplar of the work in this new format was abbreviated, yielding the 'short version'. All three were transmitted independently and underwent various expansions, omissions, and other kinds of editorial intervention, which were further disseminated along new lines over the centuries. The present account lifts one of the many veils of mystery shrouding *Sefer Yesirah* and lights the way for a new critical edition.

THOUSANDS UNTO SOLOMON:  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIDRASH KOHELET RABBAH  
AND MIDRASH SHIR HASHIRIM RABBAH

Tamar Kadari

This article examines significant parallels between midrash Kohelet Rabbah and midrash Shir Hashirim Rabbah, in order to determine the relationship between these two aggadic midrashim. These parallels indicate that the editor of Kohelet Rabbah was familiar with Shir Hashirim Rabbah as a redacted and cohesive work and made use of its materials, whereas there is no evidence that any material was transferred in the opposite direction. Comparison of the opening passages (proems, *ptihtaot*) of these two compositions reveals that the editor of Kohelet Rabbah was also acquainted with the five *ptihtaot* added to Song of Songs Rabbah at a later stage. The editor used material both from the midrash and from the proems, and inserted passages in the appropriate places in the text of Kohelet Rabbah. Hence, Kohelet Rabbah was redacted after the redaction of Shir Hashirim Rabbah, and after the inclusion of the five *ptihtaot*. This comparative textual study contributes to our understanding of the creative and editorial processes, to the dating of these midrashim, and to the connections between them.

## REMNANTS OF 'MA'ASIM LIVNE EREZ YISRA'EL' WRITTEN ON A SCROLL

Elyashiv Cherlow and Adiel Breuer

Some new fragments of Palestinian Halachic literature of the Geonic period written on a scroll are published in this paper for the first time. The main issues discussed in the fragments are:

1. The prohibition applying to certain women against marrying a priest.
2. Can a Jewish woman free her slave and marry him?
3. Are the wives of priests who were captured along with their husbands forbidden to remain married?
4. A little girl kidnapped by 'Barbarians'.

In addition, the scroll contains remnants of other laws. The paper includes an edition of the text and a commentary.