LITURGICAL AGGLOMERATION AND THE FORMATION OF COMMUNAL IDENTITY FROM THE AMORAIC PERIOD THROUGH THE RISHONIC PERIOD

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This thesis explores the connection between liturgical agglomeration and community formation.

The goal of this thesis was to analyze selected instances of liturgical agglomeration in the Babylonian Talmud.

This thesis consists of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion:

Examples of liturgical agglomeration were studied primarily through classical rabbinic texts such as the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, medieval legal codes, and liturgies from the Passover Haggadah and the daily prayer book. Secondary sources, especially those by Hoffman and Goodblatt, were helpful in placing the phenomena of liturgical agglomeration in its proper context.

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INTRODUCTION

The Creation of Group Identity Through Liturgy

"Liturgy" can refer to any recognized formula recited communally a public observance or ritual. In coming together as a community, a self-identified group recites words that reflect and reinforce specific notions about the group's history and ideology, as well as its members' relationship with one another. For example, a nation's national anthem may function as liturgy when it is sung at a civic ceremony or before a sporting event.

The liturgy of a religious ritual functions in much the same way, though when a religious community recites liturgy together we refer to it as worship. Lawrence Hoffman characterizes prayer as "a participatory sacred drama" that "defines a world of values that group members share."[1] Liturgy, then, becomes the script for the drama:

> Each worship service is a rereading of a sacred script. It recollects history as we choose to see it, the people of the past as we care to remember them, and the events of our people that made us what we are and that will determine what we choose to become.[2]

Seen in this light, liturgy is far more than words printed on the page of a prayer book. In making each decision of what to include and what to exclude, a liturgical author or redactor is making an important and conscious choice about how a community will define itself, its current relationship with God, and its future actions in the world. The central role that liturgy plays in defining the consciousness of any sacred community

[1] Hoffman, Lawrence. *The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only*. Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 1999. Pages 79, 168.
[2] Hoffman, *Art of Public Prayer*, p. 168.

elevates the canonization of Jewish liturgy to a position of central importance in the formation of Jewish identity.

By the same token, anomalies in the process of liturgical canonization are equally significant because they represent a re-shaping of the process through which communal identity is formed. This thesis is an attempt to describe the process of agglomeration in selected Jewish liturgies. It also aims to utilize contemporary theories of ritual and community-definition to account for these agglomerated liturgies and their possible functions within the Jewish community.

The decisions made by liturgical redactors over the centuries involve far more than deciding which word to utter at which occasions. As indicated above, the selection of liturgy always carries importance far beyond the printing of words on a page. Thus, the goal of this thesis is to develop a coherent theory that explains certain rabbinic tendencies toward liturgical agglomeration and to account for these tendencies through the lens of community formation and definition.

CHAPTER 1

Standardization of Jewish Liturgy

The Basic Unit: the *Bracha*

Jewish liturgy has evolved over time. Early scholars of Jewish liturgy, led by Leopold Zunz, tried to identify the *urtext* from which all later liturgies had evolved. Later scholarship demonstrated that the earliest blessings did not initially require a fixed text. Joseph Heinemann and the form-critical school showed that early Jewish prayer was an oral tradition, rather than a literary tradition. It was therefore marked by a profusion of alternate liturgical formulae which were used interchangeably in worship. The *urtext* had been replaced by an *ur*-theme.[1]

Since the destruction of the Second Temple, the basic unit of Jewish liturgy has been the *bracha*, or "blessing."[2] The most basic requirement for a blessing is that it mention both *shem* and *malchut*, recognizing God's unity and God's sovereignty. These requirements are satisfied in the opening of the blessing which begins *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam*, "We praise You, God, Ruler of the Universe..."

Thus nearly all blessings begin the same way. But all blessings must be used for a specific occasion, and therefore the ending (*chatimah*) of each is unique. Originally, *chatimot* were based simply on a topic and it was left up to the individual worshipper to end the blessing as he chose, as long as he adhered to the given theme. Thus, for a blessing over bread, one would have begun with the traditional *Baruch Atah, Adonai...*,

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[1] Hoffman, Lawrence. *Canonization of the Synagogue Service*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1979. Pp. 2-4.

[2] The origins of the *Baruch Atah Adonai...* formula have been comprehensively studied by Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp. 77-103.

("We praise You, God...") but need not have ended with *...ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz* ("...who brings forth bread from the earth.") as we do today. One could have concluded the blessing with whatever ending seemed appropriate at the time, as long as it held to the theme of thanking God for food.

Of course, ad-libbing a conclusion to a blessing was probably uncommon. Even without a fixed or "official" text, people probably preferred to recite an ending they had been taught or that they had heard from a recognized authority. Such unconscious moves toward standardization probably made people feel more at home within the liturgy and provided a recognized significance to this relatively new form of Jewish worship.

Standardization of Blessings

Almost inevitably, Jewish liturgy began to take on dimensions of standardization. The Mishnah (redacted c. 200-220 CE) cites dozens of prayers whose text had already been fixed by the close of the Tannaitic era. But this does not mean that all Jewish prayer was standardized by the Tannaim. Indeed, following centuries saw great liturgical creativity as well, as the early Amoraim continued to struggle with the problem of thematic blessings. By the early Amoraic period, the themes or topics of blessings were relatively well-known within rabbinic circles. But no *chatimah* had yet been standardized for the blessing upon seeing a rainbow or the Thanksgiving blessing in the *amidah*, for example. Using the established framework handed down to them, various Amoraim worked independently to create *chatimot* that fit the theme or topic of the prayer.

Since the Amoraim worked independently and lived in geographically diffuse areas, it was not uncommon for a number of alternate *chatimot* to exist simultaneously. A certain community in Palestine may have favored the *chatimah* it had been reciting for generations, while a certain respected teacher in Babylonia may have composed an entirely different ending for the same prayer. The number of alternate liturgical formulae understandably multiplied during the early Amoraic period.

Yet by the later part of the Amoraic era – and certainly by the Gaonic era – the move toward standardization of Jewish liturgy became quite strong, probably in response to the anti-rabbinic movement called Karaism. But how were later Amoraic authorities to decide between these various liturgical formulae? In a situation where there are a number of possible formulae, three options for canonization arise. If reduced to an algebraic representation where X and Y represent the alternative liturgical formulae, the choices can be described in three categories:

CHOICE	**RESULT**	**CATEGORY**
Say X, not Y	choose one formula as correct	Exclusionary
Say X, then Y	say both formulae consecutively	Consecutive
Say XY	combine the two formulae into one	Agglomerated

Jewish liturgy was never consistent; examples of each of these three categories of decision-making can be found in Jewish texts throughout the ages. Yet each one can teach us something important about the formation of Jewish community.

Exclusionary Blessings

The process of codification of liturgical formulae can be either inclusive or exclusive. Codification can be used as a method of welcoming disparate groups under the umbrella of a single community. On the other hand, codification can be exclusionary when it censors out "heretical" groups by identifying them as being outside a defined community.

An exclusionary blessing is the result of the redactor's decision to canonize a certain liturgy to the exclusion of all others. The redactor therefore defines one formula as "right" while intentionally or unintentionally excluding the other as "wrong." Such a decision may serve to define who can claim membership in a recognized religious community and who is excluded from the group.

The Babylonian Talmud provides an example of a certain liturgical practice that was intentionally censored out by later redactors:

> Rabbi Alexandri said in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi: One who sees a rainbow in the clouds must fall on his face [in prayer]. As it is said: "Like a the vision of the rainbow that appears in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. I saw it and I fell on my face." (Ezek. 1:28)
>
> They condemned this custom in the West because it seemed as if one was bowing down to the rainbow itself. But one should bless it, of course.[3]

We can see from this sugya that two alternate liturgical practices existed at the same time. Upon seeing a rainbow, some Jews showed their appreciation through the ancient custom of physically bowing down, here in fulfillment of the verse from the prophet Ezekiel. Others used the newer formula of a *bracha* to praise God for this symbol of the covenant. The unnamed liturgical redactor in this passage has followed

authorities "in the West" who have already ruled that bowing down to the rainbow constitutes improper prayer because it is dangerously close to *avodah zarah*, idol worship. He has decided that a blessing is most appropriate for such an occasion.

In his *Canonization of the Synagogue Service*, Lawrence Hoffman describes another situation in which one liturgy is favored over another. Both Ashkenazic and Sephardic minhag dictate the following chatimah for the first blessing before the Shema in the evening: "Praised are You, Adonai our God, who brings about the evening." However, Saadia Gaon provides a different chatimah for the Sabbath evening service: "Praised are You, Adonai our God, who completed His work (*asher kilah ma'asav*) on Shabbat and called it a delight (*va-yikra'eihu oneg*)." Saadia's predecessor Amram, on the other hand, angrily denounces the use of the phrase *asher kilah ma'asav*, writing, "In our academy we do not say it, neither on the Sabbath nor on holidays nor on weekdays." [4]

There are several conclusions we can draw from this evidence. First, it must be noted that the phrase in question seems to be of Palestinian origin. Amram was often adamant about not including the Palestinian text in Babylonian liturgy, and this variant was, as expected, Palestinian. By excluding the Palestinian text, Amram simultaneously excludes Palestinian Jews from using his siddur and therefore from participating in his community's worship.

But this is not the end of the story. Saadia's inclusion of the phrase *oneg Shabbat*, "Sabbath delight" was fraught with political considerations as well. Saadia, it seems, did not simply include this *chatimah* because he favored Western custom, having come to

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[3] BT Ber. 59a.
[4] Hoffman, *Canonization*, p. 79.

Babylonia after a youth spent in Egypt and Palestine. Like Amram, Saadia aimed to exclude a certain group from his community, and this *chatimah* was in fact part of Saadia's anti-Karaite polemic. The Karaites differed strongly from the rabbinic authorities on the concept of "Sabbath delight." While the rabbis had long since ruled that Shabbat was a time to be celebrated – to light candles, to feast, and to enjoy marital relations, the Karaites forbade light and sex, and even recommended fasting on the Sabbath.[5]

We can therefore determine that Saadia included this *chatimah* in the *erev Shabbat* liturgy not only because of his affinity for Palestinian traditions but more importantly to make a political point. By emphasizing the joy one should derive from Shabbat, he effectively censored Karaites out of rabbinic worship, while simultaneously welcoming Palestinian rabbanites into the Babylonian liturgy with the phrase *asher kilah ma'asav*, "...who completed his work."[6]

Consecutive Blessings

Alternatively, the redactor might choose to canonize both extant liturgical formulae, yet keep them separate from one another. This strategy is especially helpful if each formula is valued by a different segment of the community, yet the formulae are found not to be thematically or theologically compatible.

The blessings recited over the Chanukah candles provide an excellent example of how various traditions might be cobbled together into a liturgy of consecutive blessings.

[5] Hoffman, *Canonization*, p. 80.
[6] See chapter 5, below, for further discussion of the inclusionary and exclusionary policies of the Gaonim.

In tractate Soferim, we read:

> How does one bless on the first day [of Chanukah]?
>
> The one who lights the candles says three blessings, and the one who sees the candles says two.
>
> The one who lights says: "Praised are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us with mitzvot and commanded us to light the Chanukah candles." (*...asher kidshanu be-mitzvotav v'tzivanu le-hadlik ner shel Chanukah.*)
>
> "These candles, which we light for the deliverance and the miracles and the wonders that You did for our ancestors on behalf of your holy priests, and these candles are holy for all eight days of Chanukah, and we have no right to use them for anything other than looking at them in order to acknowledge Your name for Your wonders and Your miracles and Your deliverances. Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has given us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season." (*...she-checheyanu, v'kiyimanu, v'higianu la-z'man ha-zeh.*)
>
> "Praised are you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Who did miracles for our ancestors in those days at this season." (*...she-asah nisim l'avoteinu ba-yamim ha-hem ba-z'man ha-zeh.*)
>
> These blessings are for the one who lights the candles....
>
> On the subsequent days the one who lights the candles says two blessings: "...To light the Chanukah candles," and "... Who did miracles for our ancestors in those days at this season."[7]

The blessings listed above were not originally intended to be part of a unified holiday liturgy. They were most likely composed as alternative or ever interchangeable answers to the question posed by the gemara: "How does one bless on the first day of Chanukah?" We know that today, all three blessings of the above blessings are recited on the first night of Chanukah, and that two of the three are recited on subsequent nights, as the last paragraph of the gemara indicates. Thus, instead of choosing one formula as the "correct" blessing to the exclusion of all others, an anonymous redactor seems to have included all three blessings in succession. The text in Tractate Soferim, however, does not hint at a reason or motive behind their linking.

Why were these blessings linked consecutively? Why was one not chosen to the exclusion of others? Why were they not agglomerated into a single formula? When we read the last paragraph of the gemara, we find that there are really only two alternate liturgies for Chanukah. Since on the subsequent days of Chanukah one only needs to recite two blessings, we can conclude that the *shechecheyanu* prayer is really just added onto the first night's liturgy because of its important role in marking the other Jewish *chagim*. The *shechecheyanu* is recited on the first night of Passover and Sukkot, so it might as well be added to the liturgy for the first night of this eight-day holiday too. Nonetheless, the final paragraph of the sugya demonstrates that the problem of selecting a liturgy for Chanukah persisted over all eight days of the festival.

But more importantly, the blessings to be recited throughout the nights of Chanukah serve different purposes because they carry different messages within the structure of our ritual drama. Since the first blessing includes the formula, ...*asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu*..., it is said to be a *birkat mitzvah* – a blessing which is said for the performance of a specific commandment. It serves the purpose of focusing the worshipper on the moment at hand, on the very specific and immediate mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles.

The second blessing (though today it is the final one recited), is known as the *shechecheyanu*, the prayer of thanksgiving recited at all major Jewish holidays. The *shechecheyanu* recognizes our individual and communal passage through the seasons of the year. Just a few short months ago, the worshipper was uttering the very same words during the festival of Sukkot. And in the spring these words will again be recited joyfully at a seder table surrounded by family and friends. The *shechecheyanu* therefore provides

continuity throughout the calendar of Jewish holidays, but more importantly it fastens us to the larger Jewish community. The *shechecheyanu* is, like the others, a communal prayer – one which connects us to the rest of the Jewish community celebrating elsewhere around the world on this very night.

The third and final blessing is perhaps the most significant because it reaches back through time to bring the historic victory of the Maccabbees into our own reality. With the words *ba-yamim ha-hem, ba-z'man ha-zeh*, "...in those days, at this season," a bond is formed linking this 25 Kislev with the same 25 Kislev all those years ago, the day on which our Temple was reclaimed, our worship restored, and our very national existence secured.

Agglomerated Blessings

Although both of the preceding patterns are important for the development of Jewish liturgy, this thesis will focus on the final pattern, which shall be labeled "agglomeration." The third and final choice before the redactor is to combine two thematically-coherent formulae into a single blessing. This blessing might be said to include two *chatimot*, but it is more correct to say that it carries a single agglomerated *chatimah*. Agglomerated *chatimot* are found most often in the *siddur*.

Yet, liturgical agglomeration need not be confined to *chatimot*. This thesis will therefore analyze rabbinic rulings in which various liturgical formulae are agglomerated into a single liturgy, as is common in the Passover Haggadah. Sometimes, when sources give the researcher a window into the redaction process, pieces of an agglomerated liturgy can be isolated. In certain situations, the origins and even the authors of the

various formulae can be identified. Most often, such agglomeration was the work of Amoraic or Gaonic authorities, though this thesis will explore examples from as early as the Tannaitic period and as late as the end of the Rishonic period as well.

CHAPTER 2

Rules Against Agglomeration

What is Agglomeration?

To "agglomerate" can mean "to assemble" or "to gather into a cluster." It is similar to the meaning of the word "conglomeration." An agglomerated text is one in which disparate pieces have been gathered together one after the other so that that they now appear to be a single text. An agglomerated blessing is therefore one in which various *chatimot* have been pieced together one after the other to form a single blessing. In each case of agglomeration, the editor's intent is to mold two somewhat-related liturgies into a seamless whole.

Nonetheless, agglomerated blessings remain somewhat of an anomaly in Jewish liturgy. Rabbinic rulings against multiple *chatimot* and against changing previously-established liturgical formulae would seem to decrease the possibility of agglomeration.

The Rule Against Multiple Endings

An important rabbinic rule states that a blessing cannot have two endings, or *chatimot*. This law is established in Berachot 49a, where a question is raised concerning the recital of the *binyan Yerushalayim* blessing in the Birkat Hamazon.

> Rabbi Yossi concluded [the blessing] in the name of Rabbi Yehudah, "Savior of Israel." There can be no rebuilding of Jerusalem without a Savior of Israel.
>
> Rabbah bar R. Huna went to the home of the Exilarch and opened with one [theme] but ended with two.
>
> But Rabbi said [in a baraita], "Don't conclude with two endings."

In this passage the *stamma de-gemara* cites an earlier *baraita* (an authoritative Tannaitic teaching) to prove his point. Moreover, the *baraita* is attributed to Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi, the venerable redactor of the Mishnah, and an authority on liturgical matters. Rabbi's *baraita* establishes the rule: *ain chotmin bishtayim* – "we don't put two topics in one ending [of a blessing]."

In fact, the tendency not to allow multiple *chatimot* remained strong throughout the Amoraic period. We see that a similar debate arose over the blessings recited at the conclusion of the Passover seder.

> When the Pesach meal is finished, two cups are brought out. Over the first we say *birkat hamazon* (grace after meals). Over the second we say *birkat ha-yom* (sanctification of the day, or *kiddush*). Why do we need two separate cups? Let them say both over one cup.
>
> Rav Huna said in the name of Rav Sheshet: We never say two blessings over one cup.
>
> What is the reason for this?
>
> Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: Because we don't do mitzvot in bundles.[1]

In this sugya, we are presented with a case in which an anonymous authority suggests saying the two blessings consecutively over a single cup of wine. He is overruled, however, by R. Huna, who cites R. Sheshet in ruling that two blessings cannot be recited in linked fashion. Thus dual cups are necessary. He is later supported by R. Nachman bar Yitzchak who cites the rule *ain osin mitzvot chavilot chavilot* ("we don't bundle mitzvot together").

Interestingly, the phrase *ain osin mitzvot chavilot chavilot* seems to be a halakhic principle that was invented late in the Amoraic era. The phrase is only cited in three sugyot in the Babylonian Talmud, and each time the phrase is used, it is associated with

(though not necessarily attributed to) an Amora of the fourth generation or later.[2] Based on this evidence, we might conclude that the principle *ain osin mitzvot chavilot chavilot* contributed to the late Amoraic impulse toward standardization of blessings.

Nonetheless, the reason for this ruling not evident from either of these two passages. We must therefore turn to the subsequent sugya in Berachot for a clue. In this text, Levi contests Rabbi's rule by citing well-known cases in which two topics are contained in a single *chatimah.*

> Levi challenged Rabbi: We conclude first blessing of *birkat ha-mazon* (which is *birkat ha-aretz*) with two *chatimot*: "...for the land and for the food."
>
> Rabbi responds that this is really one *chatimah* on a single theme: the land produces food...
>
> Then Levi brings another challenge: What about the prayer for Rosh Chodesh which concludes "...Who sanctifies Israel and the first day each month?" Rabbi responds that God sanctifies Israel, and Israel in turn sanctifies Rosh Chodesh...
>
> Then Levi brings a final challenge: What about the prayer for festival kiddush that falls on Shabbat which concludes, "...Who sanctifies Shabbat, Israel, and the Holidays." Rabbi finally gives up, acknowledging that Israel may sanctify the holidays but God sanctifies Shabbat. "Except for this one."
>
> So what's the difference between this blessing [festival kiddush that falls on Shabbat] and *binyan Yerushalayim* (mentioned above)?
>
> The reason why we don't conclude with two *chatimot* is that we do not bundle mitzvot together. That is, we say a separate blessing for each mitzvah by itself.
>
> So what is the ruling in the case of *binyan Yerushalayim*? Even if one begins with, "Have mercy on Israel," you can conclude with "Builder of Jerusalem" since in building Jerusalem God is the Savior of Israel.[3]

Although Levi finally does convince his teacher, Yehudah Ha-Nasi, to allow that there may be a loophole in his rule, the principle established in this sugya is nonetheless

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[1] BT Pes. 102b.
[2] See also BT Sotah 8a and Ber. 49a, excerpted below. The phrase is only used in connection with R. Nachman bar Yitzchak, Abbaye, and the *stam de-gemara.*

clear: *ain chotmin bishtayim*, "we don't conclude with two endings." But it is important to note that Rabbi seems to acquiesce simply out of exasperation. He has a principle, but gives no explanation for it. The lack of an apparent reason later confuses the *stamma de-gemara*, who feels a need to take this sugya one step further. The *stam* explains that reciting two *chatimot* for a single blessing would be like "bundling mitzvot together," which is not allowed. But we must turn to later commentators for further elucidation. Rashi notes that combining *chatimot* would create the impression that we are seeking to accomplish all our tasks at once, rather than appreciating each one individually.[4] The Tosafot add that combining *chatimot* could result in our not performing these mitzvot with the proper intention.[5]

Whatever the reason, the fact that Levi is able to overcome the reasoning of a respected Tanna like Yehudah Ha-Nasi illustrates an important fact for historians of liturgy. Yehudah Ha-Nasi used his authority to support the move toward standardization of liturgy by mandating that each blessing carry only one *chatimah*. However, Rabbi's ruling could not change the fact that certain blessings had long been recited with multiple *chatimot* – here presented by Levi. In bringing these examples, Levi acts as the advocate of popular and accepted practice, seeking to validate liturgical formulae then in use in the Jewish community. It is significant that Rabbi does not outlaw or change the blessings Levi presents – as such an option may, in theory, have been within his power. Rather, he rationalizes that two of these double-endings (*binyan Yerushalayim* and the blessing for Rosh Chodesh) share a single theme and a theology. The festival *kiddush* when it falls on

[3] BT Ber. 49a.
[4] Rashi to BT Sotah 8a.
[5] Tosafot to BT Moed Katan 8b.

Shabbat, could not stand up to such scrutiny. Yet Rabbi relents and the formula is still recited down to today.

The Rule Against Changing Blessings

There are still more Talmudic principles that seem to mitigate against the agglomeration of liturgical formulae. For example, the Tannaim and Amoraim were often loathe to change accepted formulas and procedures. An important rabbinic rule states, *Kol ha-mishaneh me-matbei'ah she-tab'u hachamim be-gittin lo yatzah yedei chovato* – "Anyone who changes the form that the elders established in the formula of a *get* has not fulfilled his obligation."

> If an agent delivers a document of divorce (*get*) and does not declare that it was written and signed in his presence, the husband must send her out and the children are considered illegitimate (*mamzerim*).
>
> Rabbi Meir said: Anyone who changes the pattern established regarding bills of divorce (*gittin*) has not fulfilled his obligation.[6]

The Amoraim were especially reluctant when it came to changing entrenched liturgical formulae. For example, the following sugya explores the trepidation that accompanied departing from the fixed structure of a blessing.

> One can say *shehakol* for all food except bread and wine... One who sees a piece of bread and exclaims, "How nice this piece of bread is! Blessed be God who created it!" has fulfilled his obligation, says R. Me'ir.
>
> One who sees a tree and says, "What a nice tree this is! Blessed be God who created it," has fulfilled his obligation, says R. Me'ir.
>
> But Rabbi Yossi said: Anyone who changes the form that the elders established in the form of benedictions has not fulfilled his duty.[7]

[6] BT Git. 5b.
[7] BT Ber. 40b.

In this case, the *matbei'ah*, or "form," to which R. Yossi refers may at first seem specific to the formula itself, but in fact he is being far more general. R. Yossi is not objecting to R. Me'ir's failure to not end his blessing with the accepted Rabbinic *chatimah* for bread, ...*Ha-motzi lechem min ha'aretz*, "...Who brings for bread from the earth." Rather, R. Yossi is objecting to the fact that R. Me'ir did not use the established *shem v'malchut* formula of *Baruch Atah Adonai...* to begin his blessing. By simply inventing his own liturgical opening by which to thank God for bread, R. Me'ir threatens to disrupt the entire structure of liturgy that the rabbis have established. Changing a *chatimah*, on the other hand, does not present the same grave threat to the structure of rabbinic prayer.

There may also be a deeper theological issue at stake here. In simply commenting on the quality of the bread and then remembering to praise God for it, R. Meir is metaphorically putting the cart before the horse. The rabbis might have said that the whole point of the *shem u'malchut* formula followed by a *chatimah* is to force the individual to acknowledge that God's unquestioned unity and paramount sovereignty are the source from which all good things arise. Only after that is one allowed to recognize God's activity in a specific sphere in the world.

On a side note, one might wonder why R. Meir allows a non-formulaic or spontaneous blessing in one sugya but then insists on the correct procedure for divorce documents elsewhere. One possible answer is that family law is simply different from liturgy. Family law can affect the status of individuals for generations by creating *mamzerim*. Blessings certainly do not have the same extreme repercussions.

Instances of Agglomeration

We have seen that despite all the rabbinic rules against it, agglomeration of *chatimot* was almost a natural process in some cases. In Berachot 49a, cited above, Levi brings examples of *chatimot* that are already agglomerated in his day. Levi certainly did not agglomerate these himself. Rather, he is simply citing facts from his own experience.

But when an Amora actively creates agglomerated blessings – rather than choosing one blessing over another or arranging the various blessings consecutively, we have another case entirely. The Babylonian Talmud presents six examples of an Amora creating an agglomerated liturgy from various extant formulae. These six examples will be explored and analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Six Cases of Agglomeration

We have seen that despite all the rabbinic rules against it, agglomeration of *chatimot* was almost a natural process in some cases. In Berachot 49a, cited above, Levi brings examples of *chatimot* that are already agglomerated in his day. Levi certainly did not agglomerate these himself. Rather, he is simply citing facts from his own experience.

But when an Amora actively creates agglomerated blessings – rather than choosing one blessing over another or arranging the various blessings consecutively – we have another case entirely. The Babylonian Talmud presents six examples of an Amora creating an agglomerated liturgy from various extant formulae. In each of these six examples, the liturgical agglomeration is attributed to a single figure: Rav Papa. Each time he uses the phrase *hilkach leimrinhu letarvaiho* ("Therefore let us say both of them") or an alternate version, *hilkach leimrinhu le-kulho* ("Therefore let us say all of them").

Although all of these passages end with R. Papa combining the existing formulae, two distinct patterns emerge from the text. Three of these six sugyot, Berachot 11b, Berachot 59b, and Megillah 21b, fit a common paradigm. Meanwhile two others, Berachot 60b and Sotah 40a can be grouped into a second model. Within each pattern, unique concerns and political issues arise.

Paradigm A

Berakhot 11b

Mindful of the many extant blessings for Torah, the Bavli asks which one should be said.

The *sugya* presents the views of three *amoraim* and R. Papa's summative statement of

what ought to be done:

> What blessing does one say when beginning Torah study?
>
> Rav Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: "...Who has sanctified us with mitzvot and commanded us to occupy ourselves with the words of Torah."
>
> But R. Yochanan adds on, ending the blessing like this: "Make the words of Torah sweet to us, Adonai our God, in our mouths, and in the mouths of your nation, the house of Israel. And may we, our children, and the children of the whole house of Israel all come to know your name and to occupy ourselves with your Torah. Praised are you, Adonai, who teaches Torah to His people Israel."
>
> Rav Hamnunah said: "...Who has chosen us from among all the peoples and given us his Torah. Praised are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah."
>
> Rav Hamnunah said: This is the best of all the Torah blessings, [since it combines praise to God for the Torah with praise to God for choosing Israel].
>
> ["R. Papa said..."] ...we can say all of them.[1]

Berakhot 59b

In this case the *stamma de-gemara* begins with a question to which the *sugya* provides 3

responses and an agglomeration by R. Papa:

> What blessing does one say [for rain]?
>
> R. Yehudah says: "We acknowledge you for each and every drop that you rain down upon us."
>
> But R. Yochanan finishes the blessing with the following [today found in the Nishmat prayer for Shabbat and festival mornings]: "...if our mouths were as full of song as the sea... We would still not be able to praise you sufficiently, Adonai our God..." up to "all bow down to you. Blessed are you, Adonai, of many thanksgivings."

[1] BT Ber. 11b. According to *Dikdukei Soferim*, the last line (*hilkach leimrinhu lekulho*) is attributed to R. Papa in the writings of no less than five Rishonim.

Only "many thanksgivings," and not "all thanksgiving?"

Rava said: Rather, one should say, "God of thanksgivings."

[Rav Papa said:] We can say both endings – "of many thanksgivings," and "of all thanksgivings."[2]

Megillah 21b

In contemplating the correct blessings to say for the reading of the Megillah on Purim, the Bavli poses questions about *berakhot* before and after the reading. While the *sugya* is unanimous regarding the benedictions before the reading, there are multiple views about the formula for the *berakhah* after the Megillah:

What blessing does one recite before reading the Megillah?

Rav Sheshet of Katarzya came before Rav Ashi and recited the blessings *mikra megillah*, *she'asah nissim*, and *shechecheyanu*.

After the reading of the Megillah, what blessing does one say?

[R. Yochanan said,] "Praised are you, Adonai our God, ruler of the universe, Who takes up our grievance, and Who judges our claim, Who avenges our vegeance, Who exacts vengeance from our foes, and Who repays all our deadly enemies just what they deserve. Praised are you, Adonai, who exacts vengeance for Israel from all their foes."

Rava concludes with, "... the redeeming God."

Rav Papa says we should say both: "Praised are you, Adonai our God, who exacts vengeance for Israel from all their foes, the redeeming God."[3]

There seems to be a common pattern, which shall be called Pattern A, among these three sugyot. In the first two sugyot the original two opinions are credited to R.

[2] BT Ber. 59b. Although the Munich manuscript does not attribute the phrase *hilkach neimrinhu letarvaiho* ("Therefore let us say both of them") to R. Papa, it is attributed to R. Papa in this passage in all other manuscripts. Furthermore, the Munich manuscript does name R. Papa as the tradent when this passage is repeated nearly verbatim in Ta'anit 6b-7a. Therefore it seems that R. Papa's name was left out of this sugya in the Munich manuscript due solely to a scribal error.

[3] BT Meg. 21b. The Oxford and London manuscripts as well as the versions of the Rif and the Rosh indicate that R. Yochanan said, "Praised are you..."

Yehudah and R. Yochanan – the two main authorities of the second Amoraic generation and common opponents in the Bavli.

The only difference in Meg. 21b is that the first opinion is attributed to R. Sheshet rather than R. Yehudah. But it is important to note that R. Sheshet learned under R. Huna, who in turn learned from R. Yehudah.[4] In effect, then, Yehudah and R. Sheshet speak in a similar voice, as they are part of the same circle. Since the switching of their names is a relatively minor discrepancy, and since the sugya follows the pattern described below, we can consider Meg. 21b as part of the same pattern observed in Ber. 11b and Ber. 59b.

All three sugyot continue by referring to a later Babylonian Amoraic opinion, presented either by R. Hamnunah and Rava. In each case, R. Papa resolves the issue with the words *hilkach leimrinhu le-tarvaiho* [or *le-kulho*], "We can say both [all] of them." This paradigm can be represented in a chart as follows:

PARADIGM A:

	BER. 11B	**BER. 59B**	**MEG. 21B**
Babylonian custom	R. Yehudah	R. Yehudah	R. Sheshet
Palestinian custom	R. Yochanan	R. Yochanan	R. Yochanan
Late Amoraic opinion	R. Hamnunah	Rava	Rava
Resolution	R. Papa	R. Papa	R. Papa

To begin with, it is important to note that Yehudah/Sheshet and Yochanan represented different geographic communities. Rav Yehudah, a student of Shmuel and a

recognized expert among the Babylonian Amoraim, offers the Babylonian custom first. The Talmud then presents the Palestinian custom in Rabbi Yochanan's name. Rabbi Yochanan is a Palestinian Amora who had studied under R. Yehudah Ha-Nasi. He later taught at Tiberias, which became the center of rabbinic learning in Palestine under his leadership. R. Yochanan, along with R. Abbahu, is credited with much of the construction of the Jerusalem Talmud, or Yerushalmi. But his name is also found in many *memrot* in the Bavli, indicating that he was considered an authoritative source with whom the Babylonian Amoraim felt they needed to contend.

The opening lines of these sugyot thus may reflect the growing cultural difference between the two geographic centers of Judaism in this era. Apparently, the independent Babylonian liturgy began slowly to diverge from the Palestinian liturgy, which in turn was evolving on its own in the Land of Israel. There is however more here than simply a case of divergent practices in the two major rabbinic centers through the Amoraic period. In each case, a Babylonian Amora of a later generation (third or fourth) offers a third opinion on the issue, in the form of an alternate liturgical formula.

In Ber. 11b R. Hamnunah, presents what is ostensibly an alternate custom practiced elsewhere within Babylonia. Hamnunah was head of the scholarly circle at Sura during the third generation of Amoraim. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that his opinion reflects the custom of southern Babylonia. Hamnunah often argued with Rava, who was the head of the rival scholarly circle at Mehoza. Interestingly, it is Rava who joins the debate in the other two sugyot above, Ber. 59b and Meg. 21b, presenting an opinion which most likely represents the northern Babylonian custom.

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[4] See Albeck, *Mavo La-Talmudim*, pp. 312-314 (R. Sheshet) and pp. 199-201 (R. Yehudah).

Finally R. Papa resolves each issue by declaring *hilkach leimrinhu le-tarvaiho* – "therefore let us say both of these [liturgical formulae]." R. Papa was a fifth-generation Babylonian Amora who studied mainly under Rava at Mehoza.

Paradigm B

Before launching into further analysis of these three sugyot, it is necessary to present the second paradigm. We shall see that Paradigm B exhibits a number of commonalities with Paradigm A, yet differs in certain important respects.

Berakhot 60b

In the first example of paradigm B, the Bavli presents the debate over the ending of the prayer recited after using the bathroom (*asher yatzar*) in the ensuing manner:

> What is the ending [of the prayer recited when one exits the bathroom]?
>
> Rav said: "...who heals the sick."
>
> Shmuel said: But then you, Rav, are portraying everyone as sick! Rather, say: "...who heals all flesh."
>
> R. Sheshet said: "...who works wonders."
>
> R. Papa said: Therefore let us say both endings – "...Who heals all flesh and who works wonders."

Sotah 40a

The second example of this paradigm debates the congregation's response to the Thanksgiving prayer (*Modim anachnu lach...*), a larger than usual number of opinions are presented, yet the resolution remains the same:

> When the prayer leader says the Thanksgiving prayer, how do the rest of the people answer?

Rav said: "We thank You, Adonai our God, for the very fact that we can thank you." [Or, "...for the fact that we merit to thank you."]

Shmuel said to conclude: "...God of all flesh, for the fact that we can thank you."

R. Simai says to conclude: "...Our Creator, Creator of Creation, for the fact that we can thank you."

The sages of Nehardea say in R. Simai's name that they conclude: "...Blessings and praises to Your great name, for you have given us life, sustained us, and enabled us to thank you."

R. Acha bar Ya'akov concludes this way: "...So may You continue to keep us alive and find favor with us, and bring us together and gather our exiles to Your holy courts in order to keep your laws and do your will with a full heart, therefore we thank you."

R. Papa said: "Therefore let us say all of them."

The two sugyot presented above form what shall be labeled Pattern B. Each begins with a liturgical formula attributed to Rav, which is immediately contrasted with an opinion attributed to Shmuel. Intermediate opinions are included in Sotah 40a. Both sugyot include a later Amoraic opinion from a third-generation scholar, specifically, R. Sheshet or R. Acha bar Ya'akov. Finally, R. Papa resolves the debate with the phrase that links all five of these sugyot together: *hilkach leimrinhu le-tarvaiho* – "therefore we should say either of these [liturgical formulae]."

This paradigm can be represented in the following chart:

PATTERN B:

	BER. 60b	**SOT. 40a**
Suran custom	Rav	Rav
Pumbeditan custom	Shmuel	Shmuel
Intermediate opinions	--	R. Simai, Sages of Nehardea
Late Amoraic opinion	R. Sheshet	R. Acha bar Ya'akov
Resolution	R. Papa	R. Papa

As in Pattern A, there seem to be two unique traditions represented in Pattern B. In this case both formulae are Babylonian, yet the issue is still one of geographic difference. The formulae are attributed to the two great founders of Babylonian rabbinic scholarship, Rav, who emigrated from Palestine in the first half of the third century CE. Rav was based in Sura, in the southern part of Babylonia, and Samuel, his great rival, who was based at Nehardea, in the north.

Subsequent opinions in these two sugyot are, for the most part, attributed to a variety of later Amoraim. In Berachot 60b, R. Sheshet, a third generation Babylonian Amora associated with line of the sages of Nehardea, provides the next opinion. Although R. Sheshet is known for resolving disputes by bringing proof from *baraitot* or from the Mishnah, here he does not appear to cite an earlier source.[5] His parallel tradent in Sotah 40a is R. Acha bar Ya'akov, also a third generation Babylonian Amora and one of Rava's contemporaries.

The insertion of two extra opinions in Sotah 40a is slightly confusing. First we hear the opinion of R. Simai, a member of the transitional generation between Tannaim and Amoraim, and a contemporary of Judah Ha-Nasi in Palestine.[6] Next, a formula attributed to the Sages of Nehardea is introduced. This statement can be dated no later than 259 CE. In that year Nehardea was invaded and destroyed by Papa ben Netzer and much of the population – including the scholarly circle founded by Samuel – was dispersed. The bottom line is that both of these opinions predate R. Acha.

As in Pattern A, R. Papa resolves both of these cases by declaring *hilkach leimrinhu le-tarvaiho* – "Therefore we should say both of these [liturgical formulae]."

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[5] Albeck, pp. 312-314.
[6] Albeck, p. 158.

Analysis of the Two Patterns

Now that two different patterns have been identified, we must ask what similarities these patterns share and what differentiates one from the other. As noted earlier, both patterns open with tradents from different locales offering formulae that we must assume are representative of the traditions of their communities. These are followed by yet another opinion – most often from the third generation of Babylonian Amoraim, but sometimes from the fourth generation. Of course, the halakhic problem is resolved by R. Papa, who approves an agglomerated liturgy in both patterns.

The first salient difference between these two paradigms seems to lie in the communal traditions represented by the opening tradents. Pattern A includes cases in which the Babylonian and Palestinian communities represented by R. Yehudah and R. Yochanan, respectively have developed divergent liturgies. Pattern B includes cases in which the Babylonian community – even at the very outset of the Amoraic period – has developed alternate *chatimot* for a single blessing.

The second major contrast between the two paradigms lies in the reasoning behind R. Papa's inclusive decision. In fact, no single thread connects all of R. Papa's decisions, as we can see from an analysis of the *sugyot.*

The *sugyot* from Ber. 59b and Meg 21b are the most similar of all those cited above. Both identify a Babylonian custom and a Palestinian custom, citing a second-generation amora from each locale. Both then follow with an attribution to Rava, which R. Papa includes in the agglomeration. There is no apparent reason for R. Papa's decision to agglomerate the *chatimot*, though it is interesting that he does not simply

canonize his teacher's formula, the formula with which he was probably most familiar. This seems at first to be a simple pattern, since one might expect R. Papa to include the words of his teacher in the standardization of a prayer.

Nevertheless, a closer look at Ber. 11b belies this theory. In Ber. 11b R. Hamnunah, head of the scholarly circle at Sura, presents an alternate custom practiced elsewhere within Babylonia – most likely in the south. So along with the Palestinian and northern Babylonian customs presented by Yochanan and Yehudah, there was a third opinion representing the southern Babylonian (Suran) practice. As head of the scholarly circle of Sura, R. Hamnunah often argued with Rava, who was the head of the rival scholarly circle at Mehoza and also R. Papa's main instructor. In this case, R. Papa does not exclude R. Hamnunah even though Hamnunah was his teacher's rival. So perhaps the fact that R. Papa was even willing to agglomerate his teacher's foe's formula indicates that his decision had nothing at all to do with who said what.

But we cannot say that R. Papa's decisions were based solely on the desire for inclusivity. Ber. 59b demonstrates that theological concerns were also of paramount importance. In that case, Rava evidently found R. Yochanan's *chatimah* theologically unacceptable and therefore felt the need to offer an alternative liturgy. How, he asks, can the Creator only be credited with *rov ha-hoda'ot* – "many thanksgivings?" Is not the Master of the Universe *ha-El ha-hoda'ot*, the source of <u>all</u> thanksgiving? Shouldn't the God of all creation be thanked for creating everything? Rava's disciple, R. Papa, then faces a dilemma. While R. Papa agrees with Rava's theology, he cannot ignore the established *chatimah* that was already in use, *rov ha-hoda'ot* – "many thanksgivings."

So R. Papa creates a theologically acceptable chatimah while also preserving both variants.

In Pattern B we of course see a similar inclination towards inclusivity in R. Papa's agglomerations of *chatimot*. In Ber. 60b, the *chatimah* suggested by Shmuel, *rofeh chol basar* – "who heals all flesh," had been in use for several generations, going back to the time of Rav and Shmuel, who were first-generation Amoraim. Two generations later, R. Sheshet came up with an alternate ending for the same blessing, *mafli la'asot* – "who works wonders." R. Papa's decision incorporates both of these texts into an agglomerated chatimah. Yet it is interesting to note that just prior to the sugya cited above, Abbaye suggested what can only be described as a unique formula for the main text of the blessing (mentioned earlier on the same page):

> Abbaye said [to the angels that accompany one to the bathroom]: "Guard me, guard me; Help me, help me; Support me, support me; Wait for me, wait for me; while I enter and exit, for that is how humans behave."[7]

One might have reason to think that R. Papa's omission of this blessing is a partisan decision since Abbaye was the rival of R. Papa's teacher, Rava. However, Abbaye's formula fits a different liturgical model entirely, as it does not adhere to the *shem v'malchut* standard that is so central to R. Papa's understanding of what constitutes a valid blessing. So we may conclude that a specific feature of Pattern B may be the added drive to censor out blessings that did not conform to the rabbinic model, especially since Sotah 40a addresses a similar concern.

There seems to have been a single standardized text of the Thanksgiving prayer that was recited aloud by the *shaliach tzibbur* (prayer leader). The congregation would

follow the recitation with a response, though authorities held a range opinions on what that response should be. The *gemara* provides no less than 5 alternative responses, based on Amoraic authorities from different generations and different places. By R. Papa's time, people were responding to the Thanksgiving prayer with a variety of formulae and *chatimot*. People were responding according to their own authorities, origins, or other factors. R. Papa's ruling, "Therefore let us say all of them," (*hilkach leimrinhu le-kulho*) effectively approves this range of liturgical options. Standardization or canonization was clearly not R. Papa's priority in the case of the Thanksgiving prayer. Why not? Perhaps it didn't matter as much to him because the response was private. While it was important to standardize *the shaliach tzibbur*'s text in the form of a rabbinically-appropriate *bracha*, R. Papa didn't much care exactly how the congregation responded as long as each individual used the proper blessing structure and made it pertain to the topic at hand. All five formulae satisfy these requirements.

While the sixth example of *hilkach leimrinhu le-tarvaiho* (in Berachot 59a) seems not to fit either of the paradigms described above, it is nonetheless an important component of this overall structure which reinforces many of the prior conclusions.

> What blessing should one recite [upon seeing a rainbow]?
>
> "Praised... Who remembers the covenant."
>
> In the Mishnah, Rabbi Ishmael, the son of Rabbi Yochanan ben Beroka, said: "... Who is faithful to His covenant and keeps His word."
>
> R. Papa said: We should say both endings [as one blessing]. "Praised... Who remembers the covenant, and who is faithful to His covenant, and Who keeps His word."

[7] BT Ber. 60b.

Here R. Papa struggles with the problem that arises when two texts of different ages seem to be in conflict. He must reconcile the older tradition attributed to R. Ishmael ben Beroka (a fourth-generation Tanna) with the newer formula attested by the *stamma de-gemara*, ostensibly representing an Amoraic opinion. Again we see that R. Papa's decision is based neither on the age of the formulae, their geographic origin, or the tradent to whom they are attributed.

Yet such a decision was far from inevitable. There are numerous examples of Amoraim who did not choose to agglomerate liturgies. So we must wonder what factors were involved in this desire for inclusiveness and theological unity. What was going on during R. Papa's lifetime that led him to operate on this basis? The following chapter will discuss this important question.

CHAPTER 4

Rav Papa: His Life and Times

All six of the sugyot analyzed in the previous chapter end with a final ruling attributed to R. Papa. He therefore becomes the central player in our drama. To better understand R. Papa's role in these decisions of liturgical agglomeration, we must first analyze the institutional and historical structure within which R. Papa lived and worked. What was going on in R. Papa's world that led him to make such inclusive decisions on liturgical matters?

Relations Between Palestine and Babylonia

First, and most significantly, these six sugyot demonstrate the common exchange of knowledge between Palestine and Babylonia. Neither R. Papa nor the redactors of the Bavli could have known about the Palestinian tradition without the reciprocal transfer of knowledge. Resh Lakish points out that such cultural exchange had facilitated learning between far-flung Jewish communities for centuries:

> Resh Lakish said: May I be an expiation for R. Chiyya and his sons. For in ancient times when Torah was forgotten from Israel, Ezra came up from Babylonia and reestablished it. Again it was forgotten and Hillel the Babylonian came up and reestablished it. Again it was forgotten and R. Chiyya and his sons came up and reestablished it.[1]

[1] BT Sukkah 20a.

Joshua Schwartz notes that this cultural exchange was accompanied by its share of stress and anxiety.[2] The sages who traveled back and forth between the two centers carried traditions of divergent liturgical formulae that naturally came into conflict whenever members of the different communities tried to pray together. The Babylonian authorities then had to work these differences out in some way. They needed a way to reconcile their own tradition with a Palestinian tradition that they respected and that they recognized might have been older than their own.

In each case presented above we see that a later Babylonian Amora – R. Hamnunah in Ber. 11b, Rava in Ber. 59b and Meg. 21b, R. Sheshet in Ber. 60b, and R. Acha bar Ya'akov in Sotah 40a – has offered a third *chatimah* to be recited in each situation. Whether that third opinion was intended to resolve the problem or not remains unclear. What is certain is that the third opinion did nothing but cloud the issue further. Now the Amoraim are dealing not only with two earlier opinions – whether from Palestine and Babylonia (Pattern A) or both from Babylonia (Pattern B) – but a third opinion closer to their own day.

Facing the responsibility to decide between a number of liturgical possibilities, composed in different locations at different times, R. Papa chose the most lenient and inclusive option possible. Rav Papa's liturgical agglomeration made sense in many ways. Most importantly, such a decision was likely to reduce tensions by including both the Babylonian and the Palestinian customs in the canon.

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[2] Schwartz, Joshua. "Tension Between Palestinian Scholars and Babylonian Olim in Amoraic Palestine." *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period.* Vol. 11, no. 1 (July, 1980). Pages 78-94.

Babylonian Education: The Structure of the Schools

Yet, there may have been other currents within Babylonian Amoraic society that led R. Papa to agglomerate these liturgies. The culture and structure of the rabbinic schools in Sassanian Babylonia may also have encouraged R. Papa to agglomerate blessings.

From the beginnings of Jewish historical scholarship in the nineteenth century through much of the twentieth century, accepted histories of the Amoraic period were based on the testimony of Gaonic documents, specifically *Iggeret Sherira Gaon* (ISG) and *Seder Tanna'im Ve-Amoraim* (STA). The eponymous ISG was composed in 987 in response to the inquiry of Rav Ya'akov bar Nissim of Kairouan, who asked a number of questions about the history of the rabbinic period and the redaction of rabbinic sources. The anonymous STA is a late-ninth century document which focuses on the chain of tradition as it was passed down from master to student through the rabbinic era. Both of these texts provide a continuous chronology of the Tannaitic, Amoraic, and Saboraic authorities, and they are the oldest extant sources that provide such information.

Modern scholarship once based its view of the Amoraic period (indeed, the entire rabbinic period through the Gaonim) on ISG and, to a lesser extent, STA. The common view thus held that the Amoraim studied in the two great Babylonian academies at Sura and Pumbedita, which was relocated from Nehardea in 259 CE. Modern scholars followed Sherira who claimed that these academies had been founded by Rav and Samuel after the redaction of the Mishnah in the early third century CE. They were thought to be large, self-sufficient, and stable much like a modern university.

Nearly thirty years ago David Goodblatt challenged the dominant paradigm by choosing to read ISG and STA with a critical eye. Goodblatt disputed both the reliability of the Gaonic sources and structure of the Bablyonian academies themselves. He begins his case by accusing Sherira and the authors of STA of anachronism. "These documents assume that the arrangements characteristic of the Gaonic academies had existed in the earlier period."[3] However, the Gaonim were not necessarily accurate in assuming that the great academies at Sura and Pumbedita had been founded in the third century.

Goodblatt points out that ISG (and, most likely, STA as well) was written with a political purpose in mind. Sherira wanted to assure the Kairouan community of the authenticity of rabbinic law by providing evidence for the unbroken continuity of rabbinic tradition dating back to the late Second Temple period. Proving the legitimacy of the rabbinic tradition would not only have solidified Sherira's own position as the supreme guardian of that chain of learning, but it would have also strengthened the Kairouan community against the resurgent Karaite movement.

In short, the picture described by ISG and STA can hardly be corroborated. When examined from a literary and philological perspective, the Amoraic sources yield "almost no evidence" in support of the Gaonic histories. When referring to institutions of learning, the BT most often uses the terms *bet ha-midrash*, *bei midrasha*, or, for an advanced school, *bei rav*. In fact these terms are used in a total of 252 passages, as opposed to 14 passages in which *yeshivot/metivta* are used – rarely with the meaning of "school." Most importantly, these institutions are never mentioned in connection with a

[3] Goodblatt, p. 35.

specific town or locale. Goodblatt concludes: "The BT knows nothing of 'the two *yeshivot/metivta.*"[4]

> Undoubedly there were rabbinic schools in towns like Nehardea, Sura, and Pumbedita during the Sasanian period. But they were not called *yeshivot* or *metivata*. And more importantly, they were not organized like the institutions of the Islamic era which did bear the latter names.[5]

Goodblatt concludes that any description of the structure of rabbinic instruction in the Amoraic period cannot be based on later documents, but rather must be based on evidence from the Amoraic period itself. Thus we turn to the Amoraic sources.

The names with which the Babylonian Talmud refers to institutions of learning can therefore give us a hint as to the structure of schools in the Amoraic period. *Be midrasha* (or *beit midrash*) seems to have been the name for Palestinian schools, while *bei rav* (or *bei rabbanan*) was reserved for Babylonian institutions. A philological analysis of the Babylonian Talmud leads Goodblatt to conclude that "*bei R. X* was the common designation used by Babylonian Amoraim to name their academic institutions." The fact that the Amoraim referred to a place of learning as a "house" (*bei*) is particularly important. Learning probably took place in the home of the instructor, rather than at a designated academy with "a staff, a curriculum,... a corporate identity."[6]

There is further evidence to support the claim that Amoraic schools were more like close disciple circles than institutionalized academies. When the Bavli refers to someone learning it always uses the formula, "Y learned from R. X." It never claims that someone learned something at "the academy of [place]." The master is always central to

[4] Goodblatt, pp. 40, 50.
[5] Goodblatt, p. 41.
[6] Goodblatt, p. 154.

any passage dealing with learning, whereas a school of a certain name or location is never mentioned. Thus Goodblatt refers to these small groups as "disciple circles."[7]

The circle was charismatic, held together by the knowledge and leadership of the instructor. Students would learn for a time in the home of a teacher, and "When the master died or retired, the institution disbanded." The students then had several options. They could have appointed one of their own as instructor and continued learning, ensuring the continuity of their former master's teachings. They could have gone off in search of a different teacher, taking with them what they had learned at their master's home. Or they could have split up, each taking on students of his own as a craftsman takes on apprentices, disseminating the lessons of their master to a new generation of students.

Ta'anit 9a describes just such a situation when a recognized master – in this case, Rava – passed away.

> R. Huna ben Mano'ach, R. Samuel ben Idi, and R. Chiyya of Astunya used to be found learning before Rava. When Rava died, they came to learn before R. Papa.

The relatively smooth transfer of location and authority are both important in this passage. There seems to be no larger institution in to which these students enter. No school remained independent of Rava; his school did not continue under new leadership after the master's death. The only thing that kept the students in Mehoza was Rava himself. It is therefore natural that after Rava's death the three students would set out in search of another instructor in another location. They found and attached themselves to R. Papa in Naresh.[8]

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[7] Goodblatt, pp. 220, 268.
[8] Goodblatt, p. 268.

This is hardly the description of a formalized academy as existed during the Gaonic period. In fact, it seems like any reference to large academic institutions of learning in the Amoraic period is merely a retrojection of the institutional structure of the Islamic (Gaonic) period back into the Sasanian (Amoraic) period.

Rav Papa: His Life and Times

A number of factors would have made it natural for members of Rava's disciple circle to simply transfer their allegiance to R. Papa aside from the geographic proximity of Mehoza and Naresh. Rav Papa's scholarly line was one in which Rava's students would have felt comfortable.

Rava and Abbaye were the two great rivals of the fourth Amoraic generation, the generation prior to R. Papa. Their animosity might be traced to the account in *Iggeret Sherira Gaon* according to which Abbaye was chosen over Rava to succeed their teacher R. Yosef as head of the scholarly circle at Pumbedita. Abbaye taught there from 333 to 338. Rava therefore went off to Mehoza and gathered a disciple circle there.

Mehoza had first became a center of rabbinic teaching after the destruction of the academy at Nehardea in 259. In fact, the aforementioned R. Yosef had originally headed the school there before moving to Pumbedita. When Abbaye died in 338, after only two and a half years at the helm of the Pumbedita circle, most of the students transferred over to Mehoza to learn from Rava. Thus the disciple circle of Pumbedita effectively relocated moved to Mehoza, making Mehoza the most prominent school in Babylonia – and maybe even the sole place of rabbinic instruction – during the mid-fourth century.

Instruction at Mehoza was under the direction of Rava from 338 to 352. Such was the institutional structure of the world in which R. Papa lived.

Rav Papa was born in Naresh, which was just below Sura on the Euphrates in southern Babylonia, sometime in the second quarter of the fourth century CE. He studied under Rava at nearby Mehoza as a member of the sole prominent rabbinic scholarly circle then active in Babylonia. ISG tells us that after Rava died in 352 CE, his yeshiva was split in two: R. Nachman bar Yitzhak headed a school in Pumbedita, while R. Papa headed one in his hometown of Naresh. Thus R. Papa became one of the leading figures of the fifth Amoraic generation.[9]

We can safely say that R. Papa died somewhere between 370 and 375. According to ISG, R. Ashi succeeded R. Papa as head of the academy at Sura and built it into a major institution to rival the extant school at Pumbedita, which had again risen to prominence in the intervening years. Rav Nachman bar Yitzhak had led the academy at Pumbedita since Rava's death, and he in turn was succeeded by R. Zevid.
Rav Papa is known for reconciling conflicting opinions throughout the Babylonian Talmud. In particular, we find that R. Papa often decided between the opposing positions of Rava and Abbaye. Rava and Abbaye were the two leading Amoraim in the generation preceding R. Papa, and they contended with one another as much as any two figures in the entire Babylonian Talmud.

The identity and proclivities of a certain rabbi can often be traced to his scholarly line. Like contemporary university professors, the inclinations and biases of the Amoraim were usually formed by the master under which they studied. Therefore, one might expect R. Papa to exhibit similar tendencies as Rava did. Nevertheless, in Ber. 59b

and Meg. 21b, we see that R. Papa does not simply accept Rava's formula. Rather, he treats Rava's statement exactly as it appears – as an opinion, not as *halakhah*. Rava's former students who came from Mehoza to learn under R. Papa would have felt at home learning from a former colleague who came from a generally similar scholarly background. Rav Papa had been a respected pupil of Rava and he represented the same northern Babylonian scholarly tradition. Therefore R. Papa was a natural choice for these students. Yet for the purposes of our study it is significant to note that R. Papa did not blindly follow all of Rava's rulings. He felt that he had the leeway to deviate from his master's teachings – at least to the point where he considered his master's formula one of a range of valid options. It is also significant to note that the scholarly circle at Sura (of which R. Papa was a product) is known for its tendency to preserve Palestinian variants, since it was founded by Rav, a Palestinian. Pumbedita, on the other hand, is associated with Samuel, a native Babylonian.

All this evidence still leaves us wondering why R. Papa – and not some other Amora – tended to want to standardize *chatimot*. It is not clear that R. Papa was responding to some larger trend going on in the wider Babylonian culture of his day. Rather, the internal politics of the Jewish community most likely are responsible for his leniency.

Politics and *Parnassah*

Rav Papa did not wield any independent power or influence over the other rabbis. Rather, R. Papa's authority was based solely on the fact that others respected him as an

authority and thus came to him to learn. The passage from Ta'anit 9a bears repeating because of its subsequent comment regarding the disposition of R. Papa's disciple circle:

> R. Huna bar Mano'ach, R. Shmuel bar Idi, and R. Chiyya of Vastanya used to be found learning before Rava. When Rava died, they came to learn from R. Papa. Whenever R. Papa would teach them something that didn't make sense, they would gesture to one another, which greatly hurt R. Papa.

This passage is important to our study because it describes the early relationship between R. Papa and his students. The students' grousing indicates their disappointment with the instructor. They are frustrated either because R. Papa is teaching them something they already know, or because he is teaching them something they don't agree with. Rav Papa is also unhappy with the relationship, as one might expect from a teacher whose students fail to grasp the concepts he is teaching.

So little is known about Huna ben Mano'ach, Samuel ben Idi, and Chiya of Astunya that one gets the feeling that the gemara is using them as anonymous figures. But that is exactly the point: Even when these nobodies came to study from R. Papa, he had to please them. He had to teach them something that didn't make them "gesture to one another." Most importantly, if teaching was his livelihood, R. Papa needed to instruct his pupils in a way that made them want to stay and learn with him. This sugya indicates that he may have had a difficult time first.

So how did R. Papa become one of the most important and beloved teachers of his generation? As today, the halakhic rulings a rabbi made had a direct effect on his ability to attract students. When a rabbi makes a decision that alienates a student, he is liable to lose that pupil to a more agreeable or lenient instructor. R. Papa, therefore, seems to have gotten off on the wrong foot with his original (lowly) group of students. But his

decisions in favor of liturgical agglomeration may have been part of his strategy to attract a greater range and quality of disciples, like a headmaster trying to increase the caliber of students in his school.[10] Toward that end, R. Papa never expelled a student.

> R. Papa said: May reward come to me, for I have never expelled a young rabbinical student.
>
> But when a young rabbinical student warranted expulsion, how did R. Papa act? He did as they do in the West, where they vote to lash the student rather than to expel him.[11]

It is also important to note that R. Papa was among the few Amoraim to exhibit what Jacob Neusner labels a "favorable attitude" toward the Exilarch.[12] It is likely that as R. Papa improved his reputation within the community and the government, the more he was able to attract a large number of students and continue his livelihood as an instructor.

These disciple circles had an additional purpose beyond rabbinic education or supporting the instructor and his family. They served as local Jewish law courts, with the master serving as the magistrate and the students as his "clerks." They primarily decided matters of civil law, but matters of ritual law were also among the cases they heard. Thus, when R. Papa decides among several different options for a *chatimah*, he is making what amounts to a legal decision. The tradents named are like litigants, each with his own agenda before the judge, R. Papa. Apparently R. Papa did not deem it necessary to judge in favor of one particular litigant or another. In fact, we have seen that his highest priority may have been the preservation and aggrandization of his own court. Most

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[10] See also Yoma 28b and Yevamot 103a for examples of R. Papa's lenient rulings involving the phrase *shema mina*.

[11] BT Mo'ed Katan 17a.

[12] Neusner, *A History of the Jews of Babylonia*, vol. 5, pp. 102-103. Neusner tepidly notes that among a great number of Amoraim who were positively hostile to the Exilarch, R. Papa was at least "not unfavorable." See BT Shabb. 54b.

likely, his was a local decision that applied only to his scholarly circle. Because of the transient nature of his school, R. Papa probably lacked the authority and the desire to enforce his rulings in the community's liturgical practice. It is unlikely that R. Papa's ruling was ever intended to be a wide-ranging decision that applied to the whole Amoraic world, or that intended to be codified in the gemara.

Perhaps we shall never know R. Papa's true intention. The evidence leads one to speculate that R. Papa was a kind of "dealer" willing to make concessions in order to unite or appease the vast range of interests and traditions within his small disciple circle. On the other hand, he could have been a mentsch working towards *shalom bayit* within the greater House of Israel.

CHAPTER 5

Agglomeration in the Passover Haggadah and the Nature of Jewish Identity

Case #1: "Begin with degradation..."

The Mishnah instructs us to recount the story of our people at the Passover seder in the following manner: "Begin with degradation and finish with exaltation."[1] The Mishnah follows that command by designating a passage from Deuteronomy: "My father was a wandering Aramean..."[2] Thus the Mishnah appears to fix the answer pretty clearly: a single liturgical formula was needed to fulfill the Degradation-to-Exaltation narrative.

E. D. Goldschmidt offers that the whole point of telling the story might have been to spur spontaneous interpretation. In his mind the passage suggested by the Mishnah, "My father was a wandering Aramean...," would have served exactly that purpose:

> And if the "degradation" and "exaltation" mentioned in the Mishnah intend to imply that we are to read or interpret, isn't this [Deut. 26:5-9] a good enough passage? It begins with the degradation of the people in the trials of the forefathers and the enslavement in Egypt and ends with the exaltation of entering the land and building the Temple.... and it would have been a fitting passage to interpret in the time of the Temple.[3]

Nonetheless, the Amoraim involved in explaining the Mishnah were divided on the meaning of this directive, though the reader of the Talmud is left to wonder why. The Mishnah certainly had no intention of requiring two liturgies to be recited here. The gemara text barely gives any clues about the Amoraic rejection of "My father was a wandering Aramean...," and modern scholarship has been silent on this point. Perhaps

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[1] M. Pes. 10:4.
[2] Deut. 26:5-9.

the Amoraim did not consider that passage to be a sufficient liturgy since it was a quote directly from the Torah rather than a rabbinic formula. Perhaps there was truly a debate over what constituted the great "degradation" in Jewish history. Whatever the reason, the Amoraim speculate on what liturgical formula was required by the Mishnah.

> What is "degradation?" Rav said "In the beginning..." and Shmuel said "We were slaves..."[4]

There are number of possible ways to view this passage. M. Kasher, drawing on a number of medieval commentaries, offers four distinct interpretations.

1) There is a real debate over which liturgical formula is correct. The two Amoraim argue against one another, each proposing his own interpretation of "degradation."
2) The two Amoraim agree that both liturgical formulae are needed, but they disagree on which should come first.
3) The second (*avadim hayyinu*) expands on the first (*mitchila*).
4) One may say whichever formula he pleases.[5]

Based on the context of the Mishnah and the gemara, it is most likely that the two opinions are presented in BT Pesachim 116a as competing liturgies (option 1 above). It seems like there was truly a *machloket* – attributed to the two leading authorities of the first generation of Babylonian Amoraim. The Rav/Shmuel argument is not an agglomerated text in its original Talmudic setting. The question posed by the *stam* is "*Ma'i genut?*" – What is the degradation referred to in the Mishnah? Rav presents his interpretation of "degradation" by offering our origin as idolaters as the ultimate humiliation (*mitchila ovdei kochavim hayu avoteinu...*). His opponent Shmuel opines

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[3] E. D. Goldschmidt, *Haggadah Shel Pesach ve-Toldoteiha*. Page 14.
[4] BT Pes. 116a.
[5] Kasher, Menachem. *Haggadah Shleimah*. Jerusalem: Torah Shleimah, 1961. Pages 23-24. The first three interpretations are culled from Avudraham, Ritba, and Rambam, respectively. The fourth interpretation is presumably Kasher's own, since he does not list a source.

that slavery is obviously the great degradation of Jewish history up to that point and therefore explains, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt..." (*avadim hayyinu...*).

According to the context of Pesachim 116b, these are two differing opinions – they are not meant to be read consecutively in liturgy. Yet in the Haggadah, both are included as required part of the Maggid. This is not a great surprise, since the Haggadah often offers an agglomeration of interpretive texts. In fact, we might even say that it is common for the Haggadah to behave this way – to agglomerate texts. These two *Ma'i genut* texts, for instance, are just two of a number of number of rabbinic pieces which follow the Four Questions. The two *Ma'i genut* passages are separated by the story of the five Tannaim studying until dawn in B'nei Brak, a midrash by R. Elazar ben Azariah, and the typologies of the Four Children.

The Passover Haggadah therefore provides an excellent example of an agglomerated liturgy. Two competing liturgies are advanced in the Talmud, both of which have been part of our *Haggadah shel Pesach* for at least the last 800 years. This chapter aims to explain how it came to be that two liturgical formulae were canonized in what came to be the standard Haggadah.

The Passover haggadah is an agglomerated text which preserves both what the Talmud considered to be the "right" answer to the question "What is degradation?" as well as the minority opinion. However, the decision to accept Shmuel's formula as the more important of the two is still troublesome because it violates a key principle of Talmudic decision-making. According to several later authorities, when Rav and Shmuel argued about matters of halakhah, issues of ritual practice were decided according to

Rav's opinion (*halakhah k'Rav be-issurei*), while issues of civil law were decided according to Shmuel's opinion (*halakhah k'Shmuel be-dinei*).[6] We can see examples of this reasoning in the commentaries of several Rishonim:

> How does one harmonize these two contrary opinions? He goes by the general rule: The halakhah is according to Rav in matters of ritual practice and according to Shmuel in matters of civil law.[7]

> In the case of a buyer who has been swindled the merchant must make reparation. We hold that the halakhah is in accordance with Shmuel in matters of civil law.[8]

> Here it seems that the halakhah is according to Shmuel, even though the halakhah is always according to Rav in matters of ritual practice.[9]

In the case of the haggadah, the Gaonim who canonized the text of the *maggid* seem to have violated their own rule. In what is clearly a matter of ritual practice, one would expect the halakhah to be in accordance with Rav's opinion and the formula *mitchila ovdei kochavim hayu avoteinu...* to be the only one recited in the haggadah. But instead both Rav's and Shmuel's opinions are included, and one wonders why. A closer look at textual variants in Talmudic manuscripts might provide an answer.

The Babylonian Talmud was first printed in Venice in the sixteenth century with the permission of Pope Leo X. That edition was based on the only extant complete manuscript of the Talmud, known as the Munich manuscript. Modern printed editions of the Talmud are still based on the Munich manuscript, though they have been emended according to the manuscript of Rabbi Isaac Alfasi, the eleventh-century Moroccan scholar known as the Rif. The Rif's manuscripts attributes the two liturgical formulae ("In the beginning..." and "We were slaves...") to Rav and Shmuel, respectively. However, none

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[6] BT Ber. 49b.
[7] *Sefer Ha-Ittim*, 33.
[8] Rif, commentary on Baba Metzia 48b.
[9] Tosafot to BT Sukkah 14b.

of the other extant partial manuscripts attributes the two formulae to Rav and Shmuel. For example, the Oxford manuscript attributes them to Abbaye and Rava. A second Munich manuscript leaves the first formula anonymous and attributes the second to Rav.[10]

So which manuscript is most correct? To determine the answer, we must start with the first known attribution of these formulae. The Jerusalem Talmud provides the earliest formula: "Rav says: In the beginning..." (*Mitchila ovdei kochavim hayu avoteinu*...).[11] Since it appears in the Yerushalmi, that formula is originally Palestinian. One might therefore conclude that "We were slaves..." was a Babylonian variant that the Amoraim wished to contrast with Rav's well-known earlier opinion from Palestine. Editors of the Alfasi manuscript may have mistakenly attributed "We were slaves..." to Shmuel based on the fact that he and Rav are frequent debating partners on matters of halakhah throughout the Talmud. Similarly, the Oxford manuscript, which attributes "We were slaves..." to Rava, credits Rava's usual opponent, Abbaye, with "In the beginning..." Guggenheimer subsequently discards the manuscripts which attribute these opinions to either Shmuel or Abbaye as a standard reversion to a common pairing. We are left with two reliable sources (Kasher contributes a third manuscript of Yemenite origin) that attributes "We were slaves..." to Rava. Therefore, one might follow Kasher and Goldschmidt in concluding that the most likely tradent of *mitchila* is Rav, while the most likely tradent of *avadim hayyinu* is Rava. Furthermore, the attribution of these two liturgical formulae to Rav and Rava was common among the Rishonim, such as

[10] Originally in Kasher, p. 21. See Guggenheimer, p. 253, for a simple chart.
[11] PT Pesachim 10:5 (page 37d). Goldschmidt adds, in note 18 (p. 18) "The text appears to belong to Halakhah 4, explaining the words of the Mishnah, 'Begin with degradation.'"

Avudraham and Ritba.[12] Guggenheimer adds in conclusion, "While the combination of Rav-Rava is not frequent, it is not at all unusual in matters regarding Galilean *versus* Babylonian traditions."[13]

However, the context of Pesachim 116a demonstrates that this conclusion is not necessarily correct. Although the gemara never explicitly settles the debate between Rav and Shmuel, there may be a clue as to which opinion the editors thought was more important. The second opinion (*avadim hayyinu...*) is immediately followed by an incident in which R. Nachman asked his slave,

> "In the case of a slave whose master set him free and gave him silver and gold, What should he do?" The slave responded, "He should thank and praise him." R. Nachman said to his slave, "You have exempted us from the Four Questions." Therefore he continued with "We were slaves..."[14]

When the overt theme of Passover, *z'man cheiruteinu* – "season of our freedom," is recalled, it seems obvious that *avadim hayyinu* may have been the favored answer to the question of *Ma'i genut?* But this story has more significance than just a connection to the theme.

If R. Nachman, a second-generation amora, really quoted *avadim hayyinu* to his slave, then that liturgical formula had to be in use in R. Nachman's era in the mid-third century – a full two generations *before* Rava. This fact alone casts serious doubt on the theory that Rava is the author of *avadim hayyinu.* But there is more: R. Nachman was a disciple of Shmuel at Nehardea. Shmuel, it must be remembered, is the tradent who is

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[12] See Kasher, pp. 23-24.
[13] Guggenheimer, Heinrich. *The Scholar's Haggadah.* Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995. Page 254. Emphasis in original. See Guggenheimer, p. 222 for further discussion of Rav/Rava and the debate between Palestinian and Babylonian liturgical formulae.
[14] BT Pes. 116a.

credited with the *avadim hayyinu* formula in certain manuscripts – most significantly the authoritative Munich manuscript. That same Munich manuscript mentions R. Nachman again, this time in connection with that very same quote: *Patach R. Nachman: Avadim hayyinu....* We may conclude from this evidence that *avadim hayyinu* had developed as the stock Babylonian formula simultaneously with the standardization of *mitchila* in Palestine.

We do not know who wrote the first Haggadah that included both *mitchila* and *avadim hayyinu*. As was previously noted, the editors of the Talmud had no intention of canonizing both "In the beginning..." (by Rav) and "We were slaves..." (by Rava) as required liturgical formulae. If it had been their intention to require a composite or agglomerated text, they could have used the term *hilkach leimrinhu le'tarvaiho*, as is employed in similar situations elsewhere. Therefore, we must examine early texts to find out how these two formulae came to exist together in our Haggadah.

The earliest mention of either passage that can be reliably dated is from the Palestinian Talmud, which was finished by the mid-fifth century of the common era:[15] "Rav says: 'In the beginning (*mitchila*) [our ancestors were idol worshippers].'"[16]

It also must be recognized that this passage can be read in a completely different way. Immediately after *mitchila*, the Yerushalmi continues by quoting Joshua 24: "One must start with 'In olden times your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates.'" Thus, the entire passage might read, "Rav says: In the beginning, one must start with 'In olden times your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates.'"

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[15] Strack, H. L. and Stemberger, Gunter. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Bockmuehl, trans. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. Pages 170-171.

Goldschmidt uses this reading to conclude that a certain fragment of text from the Cairo Geniza provides us with the earliest extant version of the Haggadah. This text includes the Mishnah's instruction to "Begin with degradation and finish with exaltation," which is immediately followed by the passage from Joshua 24, "In olden times your ancestors lived beyond the Euphrates."[17] However, it must be noted that there is little to support his claim that this text is the oldest extant Haggadah. It is entirely possible that Goldschmidt's text is simply a later variant of the Haggadah used in some community in Palestine or Egypt, and later stored in the Cairo synagogue's attic.

Goldschmidt's reading of PT Pesachim 10:5 – though supported by a textual fragment – nonetheless results in a problematic repetition of language.[18] According to Kasher, the Yerushalmi may therefore be read as providing only an abbreviated version of Rav's liturgical formula: "In the beginning [our ancestors were idol worshippers]."[19] Palestinian communities may consequently have been the first to use Rav's formula, but the *avadim hayyinu* passage remained unknown to them, as it was only in use in Babylonia.

This fact is made clear by Natronai Gaon in his polemic against a version of the Haggadah. Natronai describes the text before him the following manner:

> When they finish "Why is this night different," [they] say neither "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" nor "In the beginning our ancestors were idolaters," but instead say from "Joshua spoke to all the people" to "Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt."[20]

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[16] PT Pesachim 10:5.
[17] Goldschmidt, pp. 73-80.
[18] "In the *beginning*, one must *start* with..." Both words derive from the root *t-ch-l*. It is therefore logical to conclude that the first *t-ch-l* is Rav's statement while the second *t-ch-l* is an elaboration on his opinion.
[19] Kasher, pp. 22-23.
[20] *Otzar Ha-Gaonim*, Pesachim, pp. 89-90.

First, and most importantly, Natronai's responsa is the first text that clearly requires both "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" and "In the beginning our ancestors were idolaters." These two formulae were evidently part of the standard Haggadah by the mid-ninth century.[21]

Natronai thinks his variant is Karaite, based on the fact that all material omitted is rabbinic, including what he considers key midrashim. However, his next comment makes it clear that he is not dealing with a Karaite text at all.

> [They recite] from "Blessed be He who keeps His promise to Israel" until "Go and learn..." Then they say "Rabban Gamaliel" and "who redeemed us."

Hoffman and others have recognized what Natronai himself didn't. He was not dealing with a Karaite text at all, for Karaites would have included none of these rabbinic texts – neither the piece written by Rabban Gamaliel, nor the midrash identified by "Go and learn," nor the *birkat ge'ulah*. Most likely, Natronai was actually looking at a Palestinian version of the Haggadah similar to the one published by Goldschmidt (see above).

Kasher uses Natronai's responsa as well as the geniza fragment cited previously to claim that the typical Palestinian Haggadah contained only the passage from Joshua and omitted both of the rabbinic liturgical formulae.[22] In the end, it should come as no surprise that Rav and Shmuel are both omitted from both Natronai's and Goldschmidt's two variants, as they are both Babylonian authorities and it seems clear from the Bavli that their origin of the "Ma'i genut" debate is Babylonian. In Palestine, the two Amoraic

[21] Natronai was Gaon of Sura from 853 to 858 CE.
[22] Kasher, pp. 22-23.

opinions which answer the question *Ma'i genut* were never considered required liturgical formulae.[23]

Natronai's polemic against this Palestinian variant is in accordance with the Gaonic tendency to "censor out" liturgical variants. The Gaonim endeavored to present the authoritative voice in the Jewish world. They consequently made an effort to standardize communal praxis, especially in the realm of liturgy.

Still, one is left wondering why Natronai identified his variant text as Karaite if modern scholarship has conclusively determined that it is Palestinian. The answer is that Natronai's aim was not to identify the historical provenance of this text, but rather to make a political point. In fact, politics were a significant factor in halakhic decision-making throughout the Gaonic period.

Each Gaon labeled any variant text as belonging to the group he considered to be his greatest opponents. Early Gaonim, such as Yehudai, usually wrote polemics against what they labeled "Palestinian" texts. In later years, the very same variant might have been identified as "Karaite." Therefore, Natronai attributed this and other variant texts to the Karaites, who were the greatest threat to the hegemony of the Gaonate in the mid-ninth century. In truth, the Gaonim did not really know whether these variant texts were Palestinian or Karaite – nor did it much matter to them. What did matter was that each Gaon take the opportunity to denounce a variant text as belonging to the "enemy." Saadia, who had grown up with Palestinian customs and lived in a period when the Karaites were gaining strength, showed a proclivity for "censoring out" Karaite practices.

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[23] Hoffman, Lawrence. *Canonization of the Synagogue Service*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. Pages 16-18. Hoffman also notes that there is a geniza text that includes these passages, but he concludes that it is "demonstrably Babylonian" (p.19) because it includes four – rather than the

In a later period when the Gaonate was losing influence due to the dispersion of Jews and the concomitant decentralization of rabbinic authority, Hai generally proved more lenient, accepting variant traditions in an attempt to once again unite Jewry under Babylonian leadership. Nonetheless, he sometimes felt the need to censor out Karaism, which had risen to prominence in Palestine in the early eleventh century. In fact, later Gaonim may have prohibited the same practices as earlier Gaonim, but they reached the same conclusion for different reasons because of differing political goals. In Natronai's case, the main concern of his ruling was to construct a polemic against the Karaites.

Let us now return to the original question at hand: Who was the first to require both *mitchila* and *avadim hayyinu* in the Haggadah?

Amram and Saadia include both formulae in their treatises on prayer, though they switch the order in which the texts appear in Pesachim 116a.[24] In placing *avadim hayyinu* before *mitchila*, Amram and Saadia appear to fix the order used today in the standard Haggadah.

Rambam included both formulae as well, though he seems to waffle on which should be recited first. In his *Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah*, he addresses *mitchila* first, calling it the most important passage because it speaks about correct belief in God. This, of course, should come as no surprise to any student of his philosophy, which asserts that correct belief is of utmost importance. However, when Rambam addresses how to teach

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Palestinian three – questions, and in the third question it asks why we dip twice as opposed to not dipping at all, which was in accordance with Babylonian custom.

[24] *Seder Rav Amram*, pp. 113-114. *Siddur Saadia*, pp. 137-138.

one's children during the seder ritual, he focuses on the *avadim hayyinu* passage, which he feels more clearly demonstrates what "degradation" is.[25]

From Amram and Saadia's writings, as well as Natronai's responsa cited above, we can conclude that both *avadim hayyinu* and *mitchila* were required pieces of the Haggadah (and were to be recited in that order) as early as the mid-ninth century. But we know that both are still left with the question of when these texts were first put together.

In trying to solve this conundrum, Kasher turns to Rabbeinu Chananel, the 11th century master from Kairouan who often acted as a bridge between the Gaonim and later Rishonim such as the Rif and Rambam. Rabbeinu Chananel is known for preserving Gaonic rulings (especially those of Hai), even to the point of quoting them directly. Kasher notes that when Rabbeinu Chananel is addressing the question of *Ma'i genut* he uses the halakhic phrase *ve-ha'idana avdinan ke-tarvaiho* – "Today we say both." The term *ve-ha'idana* was frequently used by Rishonim to refer to a decision in which the Saboraim or Gaonim consciously unified variant practices of the two great Babylonian academies, Sura and Pumbedita.

Kasher also presents two other examples of Gaonic rulings that bring together variant practices of the two academies on a matter dealing with the Passover seder. First it was decreed that each of the four cups of wine had to have its own blessing, and later it was agreed that the Great Hallel consisted of Psalms 136 and 137.[26] The use of the term *ve-ha'idana* coupled with the precedent of seder customs being unified by the early Gaonim leads Kasher to the correct conclusion. The two formulae were fixed as part of

[25] Rambam, *Hilchot Chametz u'Matzah*, 7:2; 7:4.
[26] *Otzar Ha-Gaonim*, Pesachim, pp. 112, 126. See Kasher, pp. 26-27. Agglomeration surrounding the Great Hallel will be addressed in the following chapter.

the haggadah text during the Saboraic or early Gaonic periods (somewhere between the by a combined ruling of the two academies at Sura and Pumbedita.[27]

Attaching an actual date to this combination of liturgies is somewhat more complicated, though we can at least define limits. The Saboraim are a shadowy group whose very existence is doubted by some scholars. Strack and Stemberger, on the other hand, assert that "the sizeable contribution of the Saboraim in the BT is increasingly being recognized." They are wont to stretch the length of the Saboraic era on both ends, claiming that the Saboraim were active from as early as the late fifth century to as late as the early seventh century in Pumbedita, where no one bore the title of Gaon until Mar ben Mar Rab Huna in 609.[28] Thus we might say that *avadim hayyinu* and *mitchila* were brought together in the Haggadah as early as the late fifth century.

On the other end of the spectrum, we know that these liturgies were both required by the time of Natronai, who died in 858. But is it possible that they were combined earlier? Scholars have shown that the Babylonian Talmud was a fixed text by the middle of the eighth century, a full century before Natronai. It is possible that the daily and festival liturgy was fixed alongside the Talmud as part of a larger process of standardization of Jewish communal praxis. In the end, we are left with a period that extends from as early as the rise of the Saboraim in the late fifth century to as late as Natronai in the mid-ninth. An attempt to be more exact might yield a shortening of that range by only a century and a half, from the main period of Saboraic influence in the early to mid-sixth century through the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud in the mid-seventh century.

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[27] Kasher, p. 26-28.
[28] Strack and Stemberger, pp. 99-100, 205-206.

While one might certainly guess about the reasons behind this unification of practice, the actual motivation is unclear. Perhaps the Gaonim agglomerated two liturgies as part of their consolidation of authority over the two academies. Perhaps the redactors were simply acting on the Mishnah's mandate, "All those who expand upon the exodus from Egypt are considered praiseworthy."

But the fact that the Yerushalmi mentions only one liturgical formula – *mitchila ovdei kochavim hayu avoteinu...* – leads to the conclusion that this formula is earlier than any other and that it derives from Palestinian custom. *Avadim hayyinu* can thus be described as a later Babylonian invention. The Babylonian Jews had therefore received a liturgy that they knew was Palestinian. The question is, Why was it preserved in Babylonian practice? We can only conclude that *Mitchila* was by that time a known and accepted liturgical formula. In addition, the fact that the formula was attributed to Rav actually helped it remain in the Haggadah, as Rav was among the most noted Babylonian authorities (even if he did spend some time in the Land of Israel).

Moreover, it is possible that the Haggadah was already dominated by Palestinian material by the time the center of rabbinic authority moved to Babylonia in the third century. The Babylonian Jews may have added their own liturgical formula in an attempt to make the ritual seem more familiar – in a sense, to make it their own. The Haggadah may also have been one of the many battlegrounds on which well-known Palestinian-Babylonian conflict over Jewish ritual was contested.

CHAPTER 6

Fertile Soil: Further Liturgical Agglomeration in the Haggadah

Case #2: "Conclude with Redemption"

The previous chapter demonstrated that the creators and redactors of the Haggadah had a penchant for liturgical agglomeration. A number of salient examples hint toward the conclusion that the Haggadah was (and continues to be) a text particularly ripe for liturgical agglomeration. In fact, it almost seems as if any liturgical passage that was not definitively decided one way or another was agglomerated in the Haggadah.

The Passover seder seems to have been in a state of flux throughout most of the Tannaitic period. The Mishnah is full of debate and discussion over the order of the various sections and which liturgical passages are to be recited at various points. For example, the schools of Hillel and Shammai debate the length of the pre-meal Hallel, with the school of Shammai claiming that it covers only Psalm 113 while the school of Hillel would have it include Psalm 114 as well.

Immediately after that discussion, the Mishnah anonymously instructs, "Conclude with redemption." The vagueness of this statement is the impetus for further liturgical agglomeration in the Passover Haggadah. One reason for the uncertainty is that the directive is unclear even from the very outset, as the following debate between Tannaim demonstrates:

> Rabbi Tarfon said: "Who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt," but he did not conclude [with a blessing].
>
> Rabbi Akiva said: "Therefore may Adonai our God and God of our ancestors bring us to other holidays and festivals to come in peace, joyous in the rebuilding of Your city and happy in Your service, that there we may eat the sacrifices and

the Paschal offerings.... up to, Praised are You, Adonai, Who has redeemed Israel."[1]

At first it seems that Tarfon and Akiva do not simply suggest alternate formulae for this prayer – they are actually interpreting the root *ch-t-m* differently. Tarfon suggests that *ch-t-m* simply means "finish," and thus he offers some sort of liturgy of acknowledgement that includes the formula, "Who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt" which is to be recited after completing the required psalms of Hallel. It seems clear, though, that Tarfon did not recite a *bracha*.

To Akiva, the directive *chotem be-ge'ulah* refers to an actual *bracha* ending with a *chatimah* that addresses the theme of redemption. Although Akiva offers an appropriate blessing, Rava seems confused in the gemara associated with this passage. Rava agrees that a blessing is necessary here, though he wonders exactly what formula is required to fulfill the instruction to "conclude with redemption." Rava knows of three blessings that conclude with redemption: the blessing after *kriyat shema*, the blessing after the Passover Hallel, and the redemption blessing of the *amidah* – and he lists them all as possibilities.[2]

The Tosafot point out that Rabbi Akiva should win this debate, commenting, "The law is according to R. Akiva."[3] Yet for some reason Tarfon's formula is preserved as well. In the modern Haggadah the blessing that follows Psalm 114 is agglomerated from the opinions of these two Tannaim. The liturgy exhibits the characteristics of a "long blessing" (*bracha arukah*). It opens with R. Tarfon's formula, "Praised are You... Who redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt..." and then incorporates R.

[1] M. Pes. 10:6.
[2] BT Pes. 116b.

Akiva's formula before concluding with "Praised are You, Adonai, who has redeemed Israel."

How did these two Mishnaic formulae become agglomerated and codified in the Haggadah? Rambam includes both formulae in his *Mishneh Torah*, yet he seems to quote them independently:

> Conclude: "Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has redeemed us and redeemed our ancestors from Egypt and brought us to this night on which we eat matzah and bitter herbs." *And at this point we add*, "Therefore may Adonai our God and God of our ancestors bring us to other holidays and festivals..."[4]

The fact that Rambam has to tell his reader to continue on after the first half of the blessing demonstrates that the two were not yet considered a unified whole in the twelfth century. While Rambam may or may not have been the one to agglomerate the formulae, here he may be creating a new interpretation of the Mishnaic passage. Perhaps he is assuming that R. Akiva recited R. Tarfon's formula and then added his own blessing immediately after. Rambam's new reading of the Mishnah thus accounts for his use of the word *mosif*, "add."

So now we must reconsider the ruling of the Tosafot, *halacha k'Rabbi Akiva* – "The law is according to R. Akiva." The Tosafot may have read the Mishnah the same way Rambam did, implying in their decision that one was to recite Tarfon's formula first and then follow it with Akiva's *chatimah*. At this point it behooves us to admit that our twelfth-century sources may present the dominant reading of the Mishnah. If this is the case, we can conclude that the tendency to throw together Haggadah liturgies had already begun in the Tannaitic period.

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[3] Tosafot to BT Pes. 116b.

It may be stating the obvious to note that a necessary ingredient in any liturgical agglomeration is the prior existence of two alternate formulae on a similar theme. Over the past several chapters, we have seen that the proliferation of formulae usually arise from one of two phenomena. The first is a later (usually Amoraic) confusion over how to interpret the Mishnah. The second is the evolution of different customs in different locales. But here we have a third model, as evidence suggests that liturgical agglomeration in the Passover Haggadah *may* have begun as early as the Tannaitic period. If we are to accept Rambam's reading of the Mishnah Pesachim 10:6, then Rabbi Akiva's addition of his own formula onto the end of R. Tarfon's liturgy is presented as the earliest identifiable example of liturgical agglomeration.

If Akiva's co-opting of Tarfon's formula is the original example of liturgical agglomeration in the Haggadah, Akiva may have provided a paradigm for later authorities. Those who sought a blueprint by which to connect two related liturgies may have followed his precedent and combined them into one.

Case #3: the Blessing of Song

The subsequent Mishnah presents even more problems for the Amoraim. It concerns the method in which the post-meal Hallel should be concluded:

> Finish Hallel over the fourth cup of wine and recite the Blessing of Song [*birkat ha-shir*]."[5]

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[4] *Hilkhot Chametz u'Matzah*, 8:5. Emphasis added.
[5] M. Pes. 10:7.

The formula of *birkat ha-shir* seems to have been perfectly obvious to the Tannaitic author(s) of this passage, since they neither explain it nor give the formula to be recited. Yet it is abundantly obvious that the Babylonian Amoraim have no clue what the Mishnah is talking about. The Bavli quotes the above Mishnah and then the *stamma de-gemara* asks:

> What is the Blessing of Song?
> R. Yehudah says: "All Your creation shall praise You, Adonai, our God..."
> R. Yochanan says: "May the soul of every living thing bless your name..."[6]

This passage shares characteristics with the opening of Pattern A, as described in chapter 2, in which a liturgical query is initially met with two opposing responses. R. Yehudah presents the Babylonian custom, which holds that *birkat ha-shir* consists of the *yehallelucha* passage ("All Your creation shall praise You, Adonai, our God...") and the blessing that concludes Hallel. R. Yochanan presents the Palestinian tradition, which holds that the Blessing of Song is the paragraph that begins *nishmat kol chai...* ("May the soul of every living thing bless your name...) through *yishtabach....* This passage, however, is never brought to a conclusion in the gemara. In fact, the text immediately jumps to the next topic as it begins discussing the Great Hallel.

It is important to note that the Palestinian Talmud also declines to explain the Blessing of Song.[7] We may therefore conclude that its redactors were relatively clear on what formula was required. Thus when R. Yochanan presents his version in Pesachim 118a, he is likely presenting what Palestinians know to be the "correct" formula for *birkat ha-shir*: "May the soul of every living thing bless your name."

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[6] BT Pes. 118a.
[7] PT Pes. 10:6.

Babylonian authorities were left only to guess at the formula required of *birkat ha-shir*, so we should not be surprised that they offered a number of options – including R. Yochanan's formula. Perhaps the Babylonian Jewish community had been initially unaware of the dominant Palestinian custom, so authorities like R. Yehudah had invented their own. Later editors of the gemara may have been confused enough to include both the Palestinian and the Babylonian traditions without deciding between them.

Why did the editors of the gemara not decide between the formulae? Were they paralyzed because no authority like R. Papa had come along to resolve the dilemma? In his eponymous Seder, Rav Amram Gaon writes:

> Thus says our teacher Rabbi Moses, head of the academy: Immediately after the meal on Pesach evening, one finishes the Hallel and says "All Your creation shall praise You, Adonai, our God..." and concludes with a blessing. However, we changed the procedure... [Pour] the fourth cup, finish Hallel over it, and say over it the Blessing of Song. What is the Blessing of Song?[8]

Amram then quotes the debate between R. Yehudah and R. Yochanan verbatim from Pesachim 118a, and concludes, "The halakhah is according to R. Yehudah, and thus it is practiced in both academies." Amram thus seems to hint that the custom had been more or less standardized in Babylonia by the Gaonic period. Saadia confirms this, as he includes only R. Yehudah's formula ("All your creation shall praise you..."), though he does conclude the paragraph with a *chatimah*.[9]

The Rif follows Amram in advising his readers that the custom is to follow R. Yehudah and recite *Yehalelucha...* rather than *Nishmat kol chai...*.[10] Rambam likewise

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[8] *Seder Rav Amram*, p. 119. The "Rabbi Moses" to whom Amram refers is most likely R. Moses Kahana b. Jacob who served as Gaon of Sura, 825-838.
[9] *Siddur Saadia*, p. 148.
[10] Rif to Pes. 118a.

concludes that only the Babylonian formula should be recited.[11] This is not surprising, since both the Rif and Rambam tend to follow *minhag bavel*. These two also tend to be the definitive arbiters of *halakhah* for most of the Sephardic world, so the debate would appear to be closed with their decisions.

Yet in Ashkenaz this issue was far from settled, as medieval commentators continued to struggle with the Blessing of Song. For them, the gemara remained ambiguous. We read in the *Sefer Ha-Turim*:

> Say the Blessing of Song over [the fourth cup]. There is a debate over what constitutes the Blessing of Song.
>
> R. Yehudah says: "All Your creation shall praise You..." (*yehallelucha*) and concludes with "Praised are You... King exalted with praises."
>
> R. Yochanan says: "May the soul of every living thing bless your name..." (*nishmat kol chai...*) and concludes with "...Praised be your name forever," (*yishtabach*).[12]

The Tur then goes on to quote the opinions of several earlier Rishonim:

> R. Alfasi writes "The custom follows R. Yehudah."
>
> Rashbam writes: "The custom is neither according to one nor according to the other. Rather, *we recite both* formulae and conclude the Hallel with 'Praised are You, Adonai... King exalted with praises.'"
>
> Therefore say the Great Hallel (Ps. 136) and "May the soul of every living thing..." and conclude with "Praised are You, Adonai... King exalted with praises."[13]

It is not surprising that the Tur clearly challenges the Rif's decision, quoting Rashbam's directive to "recite both" formulae. In fact, as such a ruling is in concert with the underlying intent of the work. The origins of the *Arba'ah Turim* go back to the author's father and teacher, Asher b. Yehiel. The Rosh had studied under the great

[11] *Hilkhot Chametz u'Matzah*, 8:10.
[12] Tur, OH 480.
[13] Ibid. Emphasis added.

Ashkenazic authority Meir of Rothenburg, and had risen to the head of the German Jewish community, but he was forced to leave Germany in the early fourteenth century after a rash of persecutions threatened his life.[14] In Spain, the Rosh found himself in a new and unfamiliar Sephardic cultural context so he set about to codify Ashkenazic law (including an almost complete summary of the Tosafists and many of the Maharam's decisions) while mixing in the Gaonic and early Spanish rulings he had learned.[15]

His son, R. Jacob b. Asher, recognized the importance of reconciling the Ashkenazic customs in which he had been raised with the Sephardic milieu in which he now found himself. He therefore wrote the most comprehensive halakhic work yet written, the *Arba'ah Turim*.[16] In the liturgical matter at hand, Jacob b. Asher finds it difficult to accept the Rif's ruling. While he lives in an undoubtedly Sephardic context, he is also familiar with the Ashkenazic convention in which he grew up. These Ashkenazic customs had been evolving over centuries but began to be codified by the Tosafists, Rashbam, Rabbeinu Tam, and Maharam of Rothenburg between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.

The Tur indicates that it was the Ashkenazic custom to agglomerate Yehudah and Yochanan's formulae as early as Rashbam's era, in the twelfth century. Yet we cannot know whether Ashkenazic custom in the period of the Rishonim really did follow Rashbam's ruling, or whether the Tur himself has resurrected a long-ignored ruling of Rashbam in order to justify his own proclivity for agglomeration of the custom.

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[14] "Asher ben Jehiel" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (reprinted from *Encyclopedia Hebraica*), vol. 3, pp. 706-707.
[15] Elon, Menachem. *Ha-Mishpat Ha-Ivri*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1994. Volume 3, p. 1279.
[16] Kupfer, Ephraim. "Jacob ben Asher." In Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 9, pp. 1214-1215.

Whatever the case, Rashbam's ruling certainly provides the sanction or justification the Tur sought in this situation.

Why did Rashbam agglomerate the passages in the first place? We can only conclude that Rashbam is as confused about the *birkat ha-shir* in twelfth-century Ashkenaz as were his predecessors in the Bavli. Although the definition of *birkat ha-shir* may have been relatively clear among Sephardim (having already been determined by the Rif and Rambam), Rashbam proves that the Blessing of Song was much less fixed in the Ashkenazic tradition. In fact, all the various formulae cited in this chapter function as a Blessing of Song at some point in Jewish liturgy, be it in the daily siddur, the Shabbat liturgy, or the Passover Haggadah.[17] Rashbam thus may simply be covering his bases by presenting them all together as one agglomerated unit. On the other hand, the Ashkenazic reluctance to codify R. Yehudah's formulation to the exclusion of R. Yochanan's may be due to the more pervasive influence of Palestinian customs in the culture of early Ashkenaz. Whatever the case, the medieval Ashkenazic authorities never considered the debate closed.

The text of the Shulchan Aruch is more explicit than the equivalent section of the Tur, as it lays out the order of the Haggadah step by step.

> After the Great Hallel, say "May the soul of every living thing..." (*nishmat kol chai*) and "Praised be your name forever..." (*yishtabach*) up to "...You are God forever and ever." Then say, "All Your creation shall praise You..." (*yehallelucha*) and conclude with "Praised are You... King exalted with praises"(*melech mehulal ba-tishbachot*).[18]

[17] Hoffman, Lawrence. *My People's Prayerbook*, vol. 3. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights: 1999. Pages 179-181. Hoffman defines a Blessing of Song as any blessing that follows the recitation of any Hallel.
[18] OH 480:1.

At this point it will be helpful to refer to a chart so as to compare the order of the texts according to the relevant authorities:

BAVLI	RASHBAM	TUR	SHULCHAN ARUCH
Yehallelucha (Yehuda)	Yehallelucha	Yehallelucha	Great Hallel
Nishmat (Yohanan)	Nishmat	Great Hallel	Nishmat
	chatimah	Nishmat	Yishtabach
		Yishtabach	Yehallelucha
		blessing	blessing

There are several important facts to note from this chart. First, we can see that the Great Hallel (Ps. 136) did not yet have a fixed location by the end of the Rishonic period. But more important conclusions can be drawn from the groupings of the other liturgical formulae. Rashbam may have been the first to agglomerate the formulae suggested by Yehudah and Yochanan, but the Tur and Karo follow through with the full agglomeration that carries into our modern Haggadot. The most interesting detail on this chart may be the fact Shulchan Aruch has reversed the order favored by the Tur. This re-ordering is actually quite specific. The Shulchan Aruch places Nishmat and Yishtabach together ahead of Yehallelucha. This demonstrates that by the later Rishonic period the paragraphs that begin *nishmat kol chai...* and *yishtabach shimcha...* were considered a single distinct agglomerated unit. The fact that these paragraphs are also found together in the Shabbat morning service at the conclusion of *pesukei de-zimra* provides further evidence that together they are considered a distinct unit.

The reason for the Tur's order is perfectly clear. He is following Rashbam, who advises reciting Yehudah's formula and then Yochanan's. Thus the Tur places what he knows as R. Yehudah's unit first and follows it with R. Yochanan's. But the Shulchan Aruch gives no particular reason for flipping the units. One might guess that Karo simply wanted to re-order the paragraphs so that the entire Blessing of Song concluded with a proper bracha, as a *bracha ketzara* does.

Guggenheimer considers the Tur's structure Ashkenazic, and traces the order back to the thirteenth-century R. Chayim Cohen. Karo's model, then, is Sephardic – following the "ruling of R. Meir Arama, an exile from Saragossa in Spain who settled in Saloniki."[19]

But the order of the Haggadah was never quite as fixed as Guggenheimer would have his readers believe, and it is therefore difficult to agree with his assertion that there were Ashkenazic and Sephardic customs. For example, the Bach and the Taz continue the debate over *birkat ha-shir*, proving that the order was not generally "accepted north of the Pyrenees," as Guggenheimer claims. But it is important to note that the Bach and the Taz are only concerned with the order of the components and the possible insertion of a fifth cup of wine; they do not discuss which liturgical formulae should be included and which excluded.[20] Although the problem is never definitively solved, an important conclusion can be drawn: By the fifteenth century the formulaic components of the Blessing of Song were established. All five components in the chart above were all to be included, but their order remained up for debate.

[19] Guggenheimer, pp. 369-370.
[20] See Kasher, pp. 182-183.

A glance at some commonly-used present-day Haggadot reveals that the order of these formulae remains unfixed to this day. Nonetheless, the patterns laid out by the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch are generally preserved.

ARTSCROLL, A DIFFERENT NIGHT, BIRNBAUM	**STEINSALTZ, GOLDBERG/GUTSTEIN**
Yehallelucha	Great Hallel
Great Hallel	Nishmat
Nishmat	Yishtabach
Yishtabach	Yehallelucha
blessing	blessing

The differences between these two models are easy to spot. We see that the Great Hallel can be shifted around, and that Yehallelucha can come first or can be delayed until nearly the end. Despite these differences, two distinct patterns emerge. Artscroll, A Different Night, and Birnbaum generally follow the order laid out by the Tur, which is Guggenheimer's Ashkenazic model. Steinsaltz and Goldberg/Gutstein follow the Shulchan Aruch – Guggenheimer's Sephardic model. Nonetheless, classifying the above patterns as "Ashkenazic" or "Sephardic" is a bit too simplistic.

It is unlikely that any of the above contemporary versions were intended solely for use in one tradition or the other. The editors had no intention of following an Ashkenazic or Spehardic model. In fact, the inclusion of English translation in all of them indicates that the editors intended them for an audience that is overwhelmingly

ethnically Ashkenazic. Any geographic distinctions that may have existed seem to be irrelevant today.

These two patterns agree in a number of respects aside from geography. First, it is clear that Yishtabach and Nishmat must be kept together as a discrete unit. Though other components may be shifts around, Yishtabach and Nishmat may not be separated from one another. However, Yehallelucha need not necessarily remain connected to the blessing. Second, all versions agree that the Blessing of Song must conclude with a proper blessing that carries a *chatimah.*

It is also important to note that the formula of the blessing varies with the pattern. If the blessing follows Yishtabach, as in the Haggadot by Artscroll, Torat Chayim, and Birnbaum, then the *chatimah* is normally, "...God, greatly lauded king and God, God of grateful acknowledgement, Lord of wonders, who delights in melodious of songs, our king, our God, eternal life." This formula is somewhat expected when it succeeds the Yishtabach paragraph, as the same *chatimah* is associated with Yishtabach in the daily morning service.[21] But when the blessing follows Yehallelucha, as in the Steinsaltz and Goldberg/Gutstein Haggadot, it concludes, "...King who is exalted with praise."

Both *chatimot* are thematically appropriate for their respective situations. The shorter "...King who is exalted with praise," (*...melech me-hulal ba-tishbachot*) incorporates the exact words with which the preceding Yishtabach (*sh-v-ch*, "praise") and Yehallelucha (*h-l-l*, "exalt") paragraphs begin. The second, longer *chatimah* also focuses on praise and exaltation of God, while also hinting at agglomeration since it contains

[21] Torat Chayim (pp. 183-184) claims that the shorter *chatimah* is from the Sephardic tradition while the longer one is Ashkenazic, although it provides no evidence for this assertion. The modern Sephardic liturgy is actually agglomerated, as it combines much of the supposed "Ashkenazic" formula with the shorter "Sephardic" version.

numerous short phrases – each of which might be a *chatimah* by itself – stacked one after the other.

In a sense, the different blessings to be recited after the Blessing of Song bring our analysis full circle. One will recall that the Bavli began this debate by listing a formula from a Palestinian tradent and a formula from a Babylonian tradent. True to form, the Gaonim adopt R. Yehudah's Babylonian text to the exclusion of the Palestinian version. The Sephardic Rishonim, Rif and Rambam, follow suit. R. Yochanan's formula made its way to Ashkenaz, where it was preserved along with other Palestinian traditions. But medieval Ashkenazic authorities such as Rashbam and the Tur had to reckon with Gaonic material and Sephardic custom, both of which favored the Babylonian rite. As a result, they decided agglomerated the two versions of the *birkat ha-shir*. Thus the Sephardic and Ashkenazic customs were, for a period, different.

But today there has been a full agglomeration of both customs. A representative sample of American Haggadot demonstrates that the two versions are used interchangeably, without regard to the cultural identity of the Jews who will use the text. Moreover, little controversy exits since either version can currently be considered to belong any specific group within the Jewish people.

CONCLUSION

Agglomeration and Jewish Community

One of the defining characteristics of the Jewish community throughout the ages has been its fluidity. Jews have demonstrated an impressive ability to adapt to whatever new cultural or social situation they find themselves in. Liturgical agglomeration is just one product of the ever-changing shape of the Jewish world. Despite repeated rabbinic injunctions against combining or altering formulae, agglomeration has continued across the centuries. Rabbis from the Tannaitic period to the Amoraic period and from the Gaonim to the Rishonim have somehow participated in the process of liturgical agglomeration.

At times agglomeration seems to have been part of a conscious effort to unite disparate cultural elements within the Jewish world. Nonetheless, we have seen that the motivation for such unifying efforts varied. Rav Papa often merged the customs of Amoraic Babylonia with the traditions of Amoraic Palestine (or the practices of northern and southern Babylonia), allowing Jews from these two communities to feel at home in a shared synagogue and in his own scholarly circle. Other authorities attempted to ease their own transition into a new Jewish culture by reconciling the foreign with the familiar. Jacob ben Asher, for example, combined the Ashkenazic custom with which he had grown up with the less familiar Sephardic practice that was common to his new cultural environment.

But liturgical agglomeration need not be either formal or intentional. In fact, evidence suggests that agglomeration can also be an organic process, initiated at the

grassroots level in individual communities seeking to unite various factions or traditions. Newly-agglomerated liturgies may then spread to the larger Jewish world through dissemination of prayer book texts, as authorities such as Rabbeinu Chananel passed liturgical decisions from one era (the Babylonian Gaonim) to the next (the Sephardic Rishonim).

Sources suggest that there may have been a willingness to agglomerate liturgies as early as the Tannaitic period. As early as the second century, R. Akiva added his own liturgy to R. Tarfon's formula in fulfillment of the directive to "conclude with redemption." Yet this agglomeration was not codified until a later authority – in this case, Rambam – explicitly ruled that the two formulae should be recited sequentially. When Akiva co-opts Tarfon's liturgy and adds his own, Akiva unwittingly sanctions later agglomerations.

In fact, the Haggadah proves to be fertile ground for liturgical agglomeration time and again. Thus Akiva's formula may have served as a blueprint for agglomeration which later editors of the Haggadah were eager to follow, as in the case of the agglomeration of Rav and Shmuel's formulae in the early Gaonic period.

The editors of the Haggadah have worked to consistently ensure that the text reflects both Palestinian and Babylonian interests. In fact, authorities were so eager to prove their cultural universalism that later Talmud editors attributed Rava's formula to Shmuel, who was Rav's noted Babylonian opponent. In the example of *birkat ha-shir*, the Palestinian and Babylonian traditions are again included in the modern Haggadah –

though, as we have seen, there is little agreement as to the order in which they should appear.

Why was the Haggadah such fertile soil for liturgical agglomeration? Two answers to this important question emerge. The first has to do with the nature of the Hagaddah, a book unique among Jewish liturgical writings.

The Haggadah is perhaps the most widely-read Jewish book, as more Jews participate in an annual Passover seder than any other Jewish observance. At the same time, the Haggadah is most often read at home by laypeople, without the supervision of clergy or an expert in Jewish law. It is therefore likely that local customs or new liturgies will gain currency at first by popular acclamation and only later be codified by authoritative legal fiat. The addition of an orange to the seder plate in recent years is an excellent example of contemporary liturgical agglomeration that has gained popularity in many communities. The new ritual (the orange) and its explanatory liturgy was added to the traditional seder plate, agglomerating one new symbolic item onto the foods already displayed on the centerpiece of the seder table.

The theme of the Passover holiday itself is also a stimulant toward liturgical agglomeration. By agglomerating a range of Palestinian and Babylonian traditions, Gaonic editors of the Haggadah were making a theological statement about Passover itself. They were consciously or unconsciously stressing the dictum that each Jew is required to consider himself personally redeemed from Egypt: *Chayav adam lirot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza mi-mitzrayim*. The Exodus from Egypt is the central experience of the Jewish people, which is annually re-created and re-enacted through liturgy.

The editors of the Haggadah wanted to stress that the celebration of the Exodus should encompass everyone, just as the original Exodus marked the communal birth of the Jewish people. Anyone who did not include all versions of the Exodus liturgies effectively excluded part of Israel from the experience of *yetziat mitzrayim* and played a role in creating sects among Israel. The Karaites, for example, claimed that they were the only group privileged to be redeemed. The rabbis aimed to be more inclusive, so they emphasized the redemption of the entire Jewish people. It might even be said that liturgical agglomeration eventually became a litmus test: If you refused to accept alternate versions of a prayer, then you chose to play the role of the Evil Son by disassociating yourself from a portion of the Jewish people.

Rav Papa's decisions demonstrate the significance of liturgical agglomeration in the creation and maintenance of a community. Agglomeration is, most significantly, a phenomenon of innovation that maintains Jewish vitality down to the present era. Original liturgical formulae are constantly being edited and created anew as communities evolve. This is especially true in the Reform and Reconstructionist movements. Yet even in the Orthodox world, events have led various communities to re-examine the need for liturgical innovation.

The contemporary Jewish world exhibits increasing degrees of recombination. Instead of deepening the cultural bifurcation of the past – the division into Babylonian and Palestinian spheres in the third century, the division into Ashkenazic and Sephardic spheres in the medieval period – Jews today are mixing together more than ever. In certain select ways the creation of the State of Israel has provided an opportunity for

liturgical creativity. For example, after the creation of the State – and particularly in the wake of her stunning victory of 1967 – a prayer for the State of Israel was added to many a traditional siddur, as was a *Mi She-beirach* for the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces. Although the Chief Rabbinate of Israel has published an "official" text originally penned by writer Shai Agnon, variations and alternate formula abound among Israeli siddurim.[1]

More importantly, the "ingathering of the exiles" has blended Jews from Germany, Russia, Morocco, Yemen, and other nations together into a single community. As might be expected, some rabbinic authorities have sought to create a universal Israeli liturgy. Most notably, Rabbi Shlomo Goren renamed *nusach Sefard* (a commonly-used Ashkenazic rite which incorporates chassidic influences) as *nusach Achid* ("the unity rite") in a bid to standardize its use among Israelis of different backgrounds who found themselves praying together at universities and army bases. But Goren's effort thus far has been met with tepid success, perhaps due to the fact that he simply borrowed an Ashkenazic liturgy rather than incorporating Ashkenazic and Sephardic formulae into an agglomerated form. In effect, then, liturgical agglomeration has yet to be tapped as a source of communal cohesion and cultural inclusivity in the State of Israel.

Liturgy is much more than a magical incantation of certain words recited in a certain order. Liturgy represents a process of communal identity formation. Liturgy tells people who they are – and who they are not. Rav Papa served as the de facto religious authority in a Jewish community rife with fissures and divisions. Debates and rivalries abounded, as scholars were fractured between the followers of Rava and those of Abbaye

[1] See, for example, *Da Lifnei Mi Atah Omed*, p. 193, for the standard text. *Siddur Va-Ani Tefillati* offers an alternate formula on p. 373.

and between northern and southern Babylonian traditions. Rav Papa's efforts to agglomerate liturgies favored by various communities exemplifies his effort to bind together (and perhaps curry favor with) a diverse and fractious hodgepodge of students. Liturgical agglomeration may therefore have played an important role in holding the community together through a tumultuous period, and can serve as a model for those seeking to unite Jewish communities today.

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