

## Summaries

Moshe Bar-Asher

### Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew in One Homily

This paper discusses the language and the content of a homily by Rabbi Berekhya in the eighth introduction to the series *Petiḥta de-Esther Rabbah* (section 10). The text states:

ר' ברכיה פתח: "מי פעל ועשה קורא הדורות מראש" [יש' מא 4]. מתחל(ה)ת] ברייתו של עולם (הק) התקין הקב"ה לכל בריותיו לכל אחד ואחד מה שראוי לו. אדם ראש ליצורים. קין ראש להורגים. הבל ראש לנהרגים. נח ראש לנמלטים. אברהם ראש למולין. יצחק ראש לנעקדים. יעקב ראש לתמימים. <יהודה ראש לשבטים. יוסף ראש לחסידים>. אהרן ראש לכהנים. משה ראש לנביאים. יהושע ראש לכובשין. עתניאל ראש למחלקין. שמואל ראש למושחים. שאול ראש לנמשחין. {ד} דוד ראש למנגנין. שלמה ראש לכונים. נבוכד־נצר ראש למחריבין. אחשוורוש ראש למוכרין. המן ראש לקונים. וכיון שראו כן התחילו צווחין ואומרים ווי. "ויהי בימי אחשוורוש" [אס' א 1].

Rabbi Berekhya began his discourse: "מי פעל ועשה קורא הדורות מראש" "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?" (Isa 41:4). From the beginning of the creation of the world, the Holy One Blessed be He prepared for all his creations what is fitting for each. Adam is head of created beings; Cain head of killers; Abel head of those killed; Noah head of those who flee; Abraham head of the circumcised; Isaac head of the bound; Jacob head of perfect ones; Judah head among the tribes; Joseph head among the saintly; Aaron head among the priests; Moses head of the prophets; Joshua head of conquerors; Othniel head of dividers; Samuel head of anointers; Saul head of the anointed; David head of musicians; Solomon head of builders; Nebuchadnezzar head of destroyers; Ahasuerus head of sellers; Haman head of buyers. When [the people] saw that, they began to wail, Woe! ויהי בימי אחשוורוש "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus" (Esther 1:1).

## Chanan Gafni

### The Modern Quest for the *Afikoman*

As part of the modern process of cultural assimilation, many Jews gained a better knowledge of classical languages, especially Greek and Latin. Such skills enabled them to decipher foreign words or concepts that appeared in their late antique literary traditions, in the Mishnah particularly. This often led to confusion or discomfort on their part, as they realized that earlier rabbinic scholars, including leading figures in Babylonia and medieval Europe, had stumbled and misinterpreted those same words or concepts.

This paper traces one such example: the interpretation of the famous Passover *afikoman*. Following the Talmud, medieval scholars assumed that this word originated and was rooted in some Semitic context, whether Hebrew or Aramaic. It was only in the modern era that Jewish scholars, in various literary contexts, began to seek the original meaning and roots of *afikoman* in classical languages, but also attempted to defend or explain the views of earlier authorities who seemed to have gotten lost along the way.

## Mila Neishtadt

### The Contribution of Palestinian Colloquial Arabic to the Identification of Two Rabbinic Hebrew Words:

#### קיטנים and דמרמון

The present article discusses two rare Rabbinic Hebrew words denoting types of dried fruit: דמרמון in Yosef berabbi Nisan's *Seder* for *Qedushta* הַנְּנִי מִמַּטִּיר, and קיטנים in Midrash Shir ha-Shirim Zuṭa (according to MS St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Ms. Antonin Ebr. III B 928). The etymology, morphology, and semantics of דמרמון and קיטנים are examined on the basis of the most probable lexical descendants of these words in Palestinian colloquial Arabic, viz. *damdamūn* and *quṭṭēn* respectively. The Palestinian Arabic word *damdamūn* 'over-ripe grapes that are shriveled and dry by the time of the vintage season' matches the Hebrew דמרמון both morphologically and semantically. The Palestinian Arabic word *quṭṭēn*

‘dried figs’ corresponds to the semantics of the unvocalised Hebrew קיטנים and suggests that it might be read as \**qittēn* (pl. *qittānīm* or *qittēnīm*), deriving from the Hebrew root קטן *qtn*.

**Danny Kalev**

### **The Imperative and Volitive Constructions of Contemporary Hebrew**

Contemporary Hebrew (CH) is considered mood impoverished. However, a Construction-Grammar-oriented analysis of corpus data reveals that it has developed a diverse system of hortative constructions comprising two cohortatives, a literary jussive, an optative, and no fewer than six imperatives. I address two ensuing conundrums: what are the origins of these constructions? Why has CH developed six imperatives?

The optative and the military imperative are regarded as loan translations from Judeo-Spanish and Russian, respectively. I propose, however, that the former is the result of internal development. Similarly, the military imperative exhibits new features, including a temporal upperbound and a resultative construal. Finally, I argue that the abundance of imperatives indicates that CH has long sought a general-purpose imperative. A quantitative survey suggests that *tīpʿal* is supplanting *pəʿal* as the default imperative, chiefly in colloquial Hebrew.

**Amir Gaash**

### **A Study of the Chapter on Morphological Patterns in the Karaite Grammatical Treatise *Meʿor ʿAyin***

*Meʿor ʿAyin*, a Karaite pedagogical grammar of Biblical Hebrew written in Arabicized Hebrew, was apparently originally written in Arabic by a Karaite author in Jerusalem in the latter half of the eleventh century and translated into Hebrew in Byzantium later in that century. One chapter of *Meʿor ʿAyin* describes the conditions that must be met to establish that two words belong to the same morphological pattern and explains the

purpose this serves. The description is to a large extent based on similar discussions in the Karaite grammatical treatises *Kitāb al-‘Uqūd fī Taṣārīf al-Luġa al-‘Ibrāniyya* and *al-Kitāb al-Kāfī fī al-Luġa al-‘Ibrāniyya*. The author was also influenced by the Hebrew masoretic text known as *Diqduqe haMiqra*.

### **Aaron Koller**

Yosef Ofer, *The Masora on Scripture and Its Methods*,  
Fontes et Subsidia 7, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018, xii + 286 pp.

Professor Ofer’s new book, *The Masora on Scripture and Its Methods*, is both an important contribution to the study of the Masoretic Text, and an introduction to the field of masoretic studies. The book is divided into three parts. The first, “The Biblical Masora and Its Methods”, introduces readers to the most important Masoretic Bibles, and to the techniques of the masorettes. Ofer explains that the Masorah is not “another type of grammar”, but rather something else entirely; following Dotan, he points out that whereas grammarians focus on the general rules, the Masorah revels in the exceptions. The phenomenon of *qere/ketiv* receives well-deserved, special attention here. The second part focuses on the Aleppo Codex, the best and most famous masoretic copy of the Bible. Ofer’s contributions to the discussion of this text, both in its medieval context and its modern history, are significant. The third section discusses how masoretic studies interact with other fields: grammar, biblical interpretation, and halakhah. This is the best book available on the Masorah in English, and actually in any language.

*English summaries edited by Dena Ordan*