

**Babylonian Aramaic and Geonic Aramaic:
Observations on Some Terms from the She'iltot
Roni Shweka**

The first remarks regarding the Aramaic language of the *Sheiltot* of R. Aḥai were originally formulated with the purpose of establishing the book's geographic provenance. Ginzberg wished to demonstrate that the *Sheiltot* were composed by Rav Aḥa after he had already immigrated to Palestine. In his opinion, the book's purpose was to present the Babylonian Talmud to the Jewish Palestinian community and to establish there the Babylonian halakhic tradition. To support this position, Ginzberg noted a number of terms that, according to him, were exclusive to Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (JPA), as opposed to Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA): מתניתא דילנא, היידא, ברם צריך, and the very word שאילתא. In his comprehensive work on post-Talmudic Aramaic in the *Sheiltot*, J.N. Epstein rejected Ginzberg's claims regarding the Palestinian provenance of these terms. According to him, these terms were used in JBA, and especially in the dialect found in Geonic literature.

In my lecture, I will discuss a number of terms used in the *Sheiltot* and determine their place among the various dialects of Jewish Aramaic: the Aramaic in the Babylonian Talmud, the Aramaic of the Geonim and JPA. Among others, I will discuss the formula employed by the *Sheiltot*, “ולעניין שאילתא דשאלנא קדמיכון,” which also appears in the homily of R' Tanḥum of Nave in the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 30b). I will suggest an interpretation for this phrase, and discuss the relationship between the formula in the Babylonian Talmud and the *Sheiltot*. Along the way, I will demonstrate the phenomenon of JPA which has been preserved in Palestinian traditions appearing in the Babylonian Talmud. In relation to this phenomenon, as is true with others, it seems that Genizah fragments of the Babylonian Talmud maintain a more accurate version of the text, while later manuscripts muddled Palestinian formulations and substituted them with ones more familiar from Jewish Babylonian Aramaic.