2017

Jewish Terminologies for Fabrics and Garments in Late Antiquity: A Linguistic Survey Based on the Mishnah and the Talmuds

Christina Katsikadeli
University of Salzburg

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/texterm

Part of the Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons, Art and Materials Conservation Commons, Classical Archaeology and Art History Commons, Classical Literature and Philology Commons, Fiber, Textile, and Weaving Arts Commons, Indo-European Linguistics and Philology Commons, Jewish Studies Commons, Museum Studies Commons, Near Eastern Languages and Societies Commons, and the Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons

Katsikadeli, Christina, 'Jewish Terminologies for Fabrics and Garments in Late Antiquity: A Linguistic Survey Based on the Mishnah and the Talmuds' (2017). Textile Terminologies from the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD. 10. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/texterm/10

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Centre for Textile Research at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Textile Terminologies from the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
Jewish Terminologies for Fabrics and Garments in Late Antiquity: A Linguistic Survey Based on the Mishnah and the Talmuds

Christina Katsikadeli, University of Salzburg


doi:10.13014/K2QV3JQC

Copyright © 2017 Salvatore Gaspa, Cécile Michel, & Marie-Louise Nosch.

Photographs copyright as noted.
Jewish Terminologies for Fabrics and Garments in Late Antiquity: A Linguistic Survey Based on the Mishnah and the Talmuds

Christina Katsikadeli

The main texts of the Rabbinic literature, the Mishnah and the Talmuds encompass a wide range of textile and clothing terms embedded in everyday situations as well as in ritual contexts. A great deal of intertextuality shared both by the Mishnah and the Talmuds as well as by other exegetical works like the Tosefta and the early Midrash – not to mention the Bible – makes these texts a valuable source for the investigation of cultural history and language change and contact, even in micro-contexts, in adherence to the traditions and heuristics of historical comparative linguistics, concerning etymology, language change and contact linguistics. The first attempt for a systematic presentation of the terminology according to the semantic fields of clothing, textile production and other relevant topics pertaining to fashion goes back to Rosenzweig’s study from the year 1905. The progress in history, archaeology, comparative philology, linguistics and lexicography provides us with a comprehensive overview of the material.

Brief introduction to the major texts of the Rabbinic literature and their language

The Mishnah represents the earliest Rabbinic text, the Oral Tora, as opposed to the Written Tora, the Hebrew Bible, compiled in the early 3rd century (a generally accepted date is 200 AD). It consists of 63 tractates on a variety of topics grouped together into six divisions. Each division, a seder, discusses a different topic, and deals with oral laws, everyday life and traditional wisdom. The language of the Mishnah is a form of Post-Biblical Hebrew (PBH), also called Mishnaic Hebrew, and it is also the language of related writings such as the Tosefta. It was the language used at Qumran and also during the Bar Kokhba revolt (132-136 AD). In the current state of research, we have considerably more knowledge about the vocabulary of the Mishnah than about any other Rabbinic Hebrew composition. The Mishnah contains many elements from the Bible – mainly in quotes or pseudo-quotes from the Bible, while Biblical phrases occur

1. I would like to express my warmest thanks to Susanne Plietzsch, Orit Shamir, Nahum ben Jehuda and Ioannis Fykias for their friendly advice, for sharing their expertise with me and providing me with important material.
2. Onomasiology or “the study of designations” is a branch of semantics. The goal in onomasiology is to identify the linguistic forms, or the words, that can stand for a given concept/idea/object. The establishment of semantic fields contributes to the systematization of the designations and to a clearer understanding of gradual meaning changes.
3. ‘supplement, addition’ (of the Mishnah).
in the Mishnah more frequently than Biblical simpli-
cicia. As expected, beside words that are common to both Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew we also find novel vocabulary.

The Palestinian Talmud, also known as the Jerusalem Talmud or the Yerushalmi, is usually dated between the late 4th century and the first half of the 5th century. The Yerushalmi is organized in accordance to the tractates of the Mishnah. After citing each Mishnah tractate a series of interpretations, called the gemara, follows. The language of the Aramaic gemara of the Palestinian Talmud is Palestinian Aramaic (JPA), which is also used in the Palestinian Targumim (‘translations’ in Aramaic). The central corpus in Rabbinic Judaism is the Babylonian Talmud, completed at the beginning of the 7th century. It is also known as the Bavli. It is based on similar Palestinian traditions like those of the Yerushalmi; but it introduces much of its own exegesis. The Bavli is also organised according to the Mishnah, consecutively alternating between the Mishnah and the interpretation of the gemara. Like the Jerusalem Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud deals only with some of the Mishnah’s divisions. It is composed in Hebrew in the first place, but contains a significant number of passages in Aramaic—more than the Yerushalmi. The Aramaic used is an eastern dialect known as Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (JBA). It is a commonplace that the Babylonian Talmud reflects Jewish life in Babylonia, rather than in Palestine. The last of these major texts, the Babylonian Talmud, in turn became the most influential religious text for Medieval Judaism.

5. The redaction and connection between the two Talmudim has been a central issue of the study of the Rabbinic literature, where scholars have been unable to reach a consensus. For further discussion, see the summaries in Stemberger 2011, 221.
6. See also Shamir’s paper in the present volume.
7. The lexical (and not always semantic!) correspondences for byssus in Hebrew is būṣ ‘fine white valuable web’; Akkadian saddinu ‘tunic (of linen)’ ~ Hebrew sādīn ‘undercloth, wrapper’ (~ Gr. sindōn ‘very fine cloth/fabric’); Akkadian saqqu ‘sack (cloth), ‘cloth of goat-hair, sack’, Hebrew saq ‘sack (cloth)’, Aramaic ś-q. (~ Gr. sakkos ‘cloth of goat-hair, sack’). See also F. Maeder’s paper in the present volume.
8. The transcription follows the common scholarly transcription rules for Biblical Hebrew, PBH and Aramaic. In several cases, where the reading is dubious the lexemes remain unvocalised, in order to avoid biased interpretations. For the same reason, transliterations by other authors are cited as such (in general).
10. Also, occurs as carbasus lina, as a mixture of linen and cotton, Pliny, NH 19.6.23.
11. Cf. EWAia s.v.
Innovations in Terminology

Innovations involving language change from Biblical to Post Biblical Hebrew or from Hebrew to Aramaic

All languages are dynamic systems that are constantly in the process of changing. Thus, it is not a rare phenomenon that the redactors of the Mishnah changed a Biblical lexeme into a PBH or Aramaic corresponding term, and in that way they managed to actualise the content and “update” it, where necessary, e.g. Aramaic gunḵa in the Targ. 2 Kings 8:15 is replacing the expression of the Hebrew text: maḵbēr/ maḵbār ‘something woven, cover or mat’.11 The Aramaic word gunḵa ‘thick cloth’, of Iranian origin, is well attested as a loanword in many languages and dialects of the Mediterranean.14 Its Hebrew correspondence must have been somewhat opaque already during the period of the translation of the Septuagint (ca. 250 BC-100 AD), since in the Greek text it is rendered as μαξύγα, which is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew word, lacking further attestations in the history of Greek. The term might have been familiar among the Greek speaking Jews of that time, but it seems that it became marginal in the subsequent centuries.

Innovations and differences concerning dialectal or geographic distribution

The monumental multi-volume work by Samuel Krauss, Talmudische Archäologie 1910-12, can still serve as the basis for the investigation of this subject, although it is a commonplace that Krauss’ studies suffer from methodological deficits, which are, however, due to the stage of research at his time: the historical-critical paradigm of investigating Rabbinic sources had not yet been established, and archaeology in Israel has since then made immense contributions to the growth of our knowledge. Krauss does mention many types of clothing, referred to in both Palestinian and Babylonian, early and late Rabbinic sources, but he does not provide a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the material.15 Several studies since Krauss’ time have focused on the Jewish clothing and textile production traditions, but the study of possible differences due to regional factors has been played down by generalizing conclusions, stating that Jewish people would more or less share the same ‘basics’ with other inhabitants of the Roman Empire, based on the fact that many Graeco-Roman garment names occur in the texts.16

Let us have a closer look at a representative example from the Rabbinic narrative about clothing vocabulary, namely the passage concerning the 18 garments, which may be carried out of a burning house on the Shabbat.17 Here, we have a special situation, where the Mishnah just mentions 18 garments without explicitly referring to the items involved:

(1) mShab16:4

“Thither a man may take out all his utensils, and he may put on him all the clothes that he can put on and wrap himself with whatsoever he can wrap himself. R. Jose says: [He may put on only] eighteen things, but he may return and put on others

13. Koehler & Baumgartner 2001 s.v.; maḵbēr is attested in Ex. 27,4 with the meaning ‘grid’, the LXX translates with σωγάσα ‘grating’.
14. According to Schmitt 1971, 102-105, *gaunaka- ‘hairy; coloured’ - following patterns common to Iranian -, and is deeply rooted in the whole Iranian area: Avest. gaona- ‘hair’; Middle Persian gônak, Armenian (loan-word from Parthian) goyn, Soghd, ywn-, Modern Persian goyn, all denoting ‘colour’; the Greek form κοινάκης, κοινάκης, attested since Aristophanes, Wasps, 11, 37; 49, as κοινάκη explicitly refers to ‘a woolen Persian mantle’, and also found in the Egyptian Papyri (in derivations and compounds); Lat. gaunaca since Varro; Babylonian and Aramaic (also Syriac gauniça) have also moved eastwards to (Middle Indoiranian) Pâli and to Chinese: Pâli gonaka ‘woollen blanket’; Chinese hu-na (?)
15. Shlezinger-Katsman 2010, 362-365 summarizes the state of the art since Krauss’ works: despite the important works that have been published since then, almost every author mentions -like Krauss- many of the terms used for clothing in Rabbinic writings, but the lacking distinction between Jews who lived in Babylonia and those in the Roman Empire is evident. At this point, we should take into consideration that very remarkable lexicographical work has been accomplished by Sokoloff (1992, 2002) in the Dictionaries on the Palestinian and Babylonian Aramaic respectively, enabling us to differentiate between the two Talmudic traditions.
16. Cf. a.o. Roussin 1994, reaches the following conclusion pertaining to “…the basic items of clothing worn by Jews: they did not differ significantly from those worn by other inhabitants of the Graeco-Roman world. Indeed, almost all of the Hebrew words for the clothing mentioned here are transliterations of Greek and Latin words” (Roussin 1994, 183).
17. Also discussed by Roussin 1994.
and and take them out, and he may return and put on others and take them out, and he may say to others, ‘Come and help me to save them’.” (translation: Danby 1933)

(2a) bTShab 120a
R. Jose said: [Only] eighteen garments. And these are the eighteen garments: a cloak, undertunic, hollow belt, linen [sleeveless] tunic, shirt, felt cap, apron, a pair of trousers, a pair of shoes, a pair of socks, a pair of breeches, the girdle round his loins, the hat on his head and the scarf round his neck.
(translation: Epstein 1952)

(2b) jT Shabbat 16:5, 15d(22), “Rebbi Yose says, 18 garments. And these are: The burnus, arm cover, and money belt, and felt cap, and a kafia, and a linen tunic, and a woollen shirt, and two felt stockings, two garters, and two breeches, two shoes, and the hat on his head, and the belt on his hips, and shawls on his arms.” (translation: Guggenheimer 2012)

Both Talmuds, in (2a) and (2b), offer a list of the garments, but as a matter of fact they employ only 14 terms; the number of 18 pieces can be reached by counting pairs as two single items each. Let us compare the same passage as an interlinear version of the Bavli followed by the Yerushalmi in the second line.18

The order varies between the two Talmudim; here, the primary numeration follows the listing of Bavli:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(3) bT19</th>
<th>&lt;mqtorn&gt;</th>
<th>&lt;wnqli&gt;</th>
<th>&lt;qlbum&gt; shel pishtan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. a cloak (~amictorium),</td>
<td>2. an undertunic (anákōlos??)</td>
<td>3. (and) a money belt (funda),</td>
<td>4. linen tunic (colobium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jT20</td>
<td>&lt;mqtorn&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;niqli&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. burnus</td>
<td>2. armcover</td>
<td>3. money belt</td>
<td>6. felt cap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) bT</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. (and a) shirt (haluq)</td>
<td>6. a felt cap (pilion)</td>
<td>7. maʼaforet (and an apron/cloak (~pallium),</td>
<td>8. a pair [lit. two] of trousers (braccae?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jT</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. maʼaforet kafia</td>
<td>4. kolbin shel-pishtan linen tunic</td>
<td>5. haluk shel-zemer woollen shirt</td>
<td>10. two felt stockings (empilia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) bT</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. (and) a pair of shoes</td>
<td>10. (and) a pair of felt slippers (impilia)</td>
<td>11. &lt;prgd&gt; (and) a pair of breeches</td>
<td>12. (and) the girdle (gur) round his loins,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jT</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. two garters &lt;sbriqin&gt; (&lt;Gr. sybrikion?))</td>
<td>11. two breeches &lt;abriqin&gt;</td>
<td>9. two shoes (min alin)</td>
<td>13. the hat (kovʼa) on his head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) bT</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. (and) the hat on his head,</td>
<td>14. and the scarf (sudarium) around his neck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jT</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;sprqin&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. the belt on his hips</td>
<td>14. and shawl on his arms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. The phonology of loanwords in Mishnaic Hebrew is very problematic: Unlike the Biblical transmission, Rabbinic literature never obtained a canonical form, and each manuscript reveals different versions. Neither the spelling of the loanwords, nor their vocalisation (where occurring), are consistent, so that many equivalents are possible.
While some terms such as the 3. *punda*, 4. *colobium*, 5. *haluk*, 6. *pilion*, 10. *e/impilia* ‘stockings’ or ‘slippers’, 14. *sudarium*, have a widely accepted interpretation, others are translated differently. The pair of *spriqin* under 8. has been interpreted as a term which corresponds to a lexeme *sybrikion* (lat. *subricula*) ‘outer veil, cloak’, but since it occurs as a pair, an interpretation as ‘trousers’ or ‘garters’ seems more plausible. Of special interest are the following expressions: the Babylonian Talmud features *<prgd>* *pargod*, occurring as a pair, a word of Iranian origin, where the Jerusalem Talmud attests *abrigin*, most probably the *braccae* (cf. nr. 11 under (5) in the table above). In this case, the Talmuds seem to employ rather regional terms to designate ‘trousers’, an Oriental garment, not popular among Greeks and Romans. The shift of the etymology to a Greek or Latin counterpart does not make things easier. Some of these words are difficult to interpret in the other languages as well. In both cases we find *<mqtorn>* /*miqtoren*/ at the top of our list, the interpretation of which as amictorium seems to be a plausible phonetic/phonological solution. The word formation and the semantics of a Lat. word amictorium are considered transparent: as a derivation from amictus ‘thrown (upon)’, it can plausibly be interpreted as ‘mantle’ or ‘veil’. The interesting fact in this case is that amictorium is rarely attested in the late antiquity, actually only as ‘a loose outer garment’ (worn by women) (Code of Theodosius 8.5.48.). The amictorium replaces amictus in Medieval times. So in this case, the Talmudim preserve less popular garment names than the *sudarium* and the pilion.

The terms unkli/nikli, which follow the amictorium, are also problematic: Krauss interprets as Gr. *anákōlos* ‘undertunic’, other scholars as Gr. *angálē* (?). As in the case of the amictorium, the *ánákóloς* and *angálē* -ov, is attested in an adjectival usage meaning ‘short, curtailed’ (Diod. 2, 55) and as an attributive adjective to a garment in Plutarch 2, 261 F, describing a *χιτών* (of young women), a term which refers to a short tunic. Gr. *angálē* ‘bent arm, arm pit’ is also a possible phonological interpretation, which has been followed by other scholars, and would lead to a meaning ‘arm cover’ (cf. the translation in Guggenheimer under (2b)). While the etymology and the semantics of this word are sufficiently motivated, it is noteworthy, that a metonymic use of Gr. *angálē* as a garment in the Greek literature – from the Classical up to the Byzantine period – has not been ensured by now, a fact that allows us to assume that in this case we do not deal with a garment name that had been popular throughout the Roman Empire. If the suggested interpretations are correct, then we should keep in mind that they belong to the earliest attestations of these terms or they indicate dialectal usage.

**Examples of semantic change and cognitive universals connected with textiles: the colour terms**

The number of Hebrew colour words has increased with the passage of time, following the order of increasing number of colour terms as arranged by the non random sequence proposed by Berlin and Kay.

21. Cf. Schmitt 1971, 107-110: Against older proposals, which explained the word as a loanword from the Targumic Aramaic without consideration of the chronological details, Schmitt convincingly argues for an Old Persian *pərt-gauda*-, a compound with the prefix *pary-* ‘around’ + Old Persian root *gau*- = avest. *gaoz* (= Old Indian *gah*) ‘to hide, cover’, Parthian *<brywd>* = /barayôd/ ‘curtain, veil’, borrowed into Greek in the regular, expected form *paragaudos*, Iano. Laurentius Lydus (6th c. AD); also attested as *paragauς*, ‘a garment with purple border’, Edict Dioec. (19.29), on an inscription from Dura-Europos and in the Byzantine *Chronicon Paschale*; *paragaudos* (*P*Oxy., 1026, 12, 5th c. AD; Iano. Malalas, 6th c. AD and Konst. Porphyrr, 10. c. AD); probably in Hesychius: *paragaudos* (Codex: *γωγας*): *χιτών* παρά *Πάρθοις*; Gr. *paragauδιον* ~ Lat. *paragauda*. Syr. *paragudân*, Armenian *paregawt* ‘*χιτων*’ (in Bible translations), Coptic *parakafu/dion*. We have to keep in mind that the core meaning of the Iranian word ‘wrapped around, covering’ had been subjected to various semantic narrowings and specialised usages in different languages. We find *pargod* as a rendering for the *paroket* (sacred) screen, veil’ in the Jewish Aramaic tradition (*Targ. Yer.* to Ex. 26:31, 33, 35) as well.

22. Cod. Theod. 48.5.48. IDEM AAA. CYNEGIO P(RAEFFECTO) P(RAEUTORIO). Lineae vel amictoria, quibus hactenus onerari raedias solament, nec ulcerias raedias, sed angarias vel navibus dirigantur et si alicubi repertae fuerint huissmodi species, thensauris eius urbis, in qua deprehensae fuerint, deputentur, per angarias, ubi facultas fuerit, destinandae; reliqua vero delicatae vestes, sed et lineament amictorum nostrorum usibus necessarium raedias sub mille librarum ponderatione mittantur.


24. It is noteworthy that ancient lexicographers use this term to explain the *<zeirai>*, *<zirai>* ‘tunics worn by the Thracians’, cf. *Photius, Z* 52.1-3, Hesychius Z. 162.1.
(1969) for the languages of the world. The colour terms for red show the widest differentiation in BH, with 'āḏôm 'red, blood coloured, reddish- brown' being the archilexeme in this group. The red-coloured fabrics are denoted by the words šānî 'crimson, 'crimson thread' (Gen. 38:28,30), tōlā 'crimson; Kermes worm' (Isa.1:18), and 'argāmān 'purple' (Song 7:6; Ex. 25:4; 26:1).26 karmîl 'crimson' (2 Chron. 2:7,14; 3:14), LXX: kókkivôs 'scarlet, crimson'; hāmûš 'crimson dyed' (Isa. 63:1), which very likely originate from metonymical uses of the dyed fabric or the organic elements involved in their dyeing procedure, būs wa- 'argāmān “fine linen and purple” (Est. 1:6); tāḵēl wə-argå̄ må̄ “blue and purple” (Est. 27:7; LXX: υακινθον και πορφυρα).28 and might also represent various hues or different grades of brightness.

A number of new colour words appear in the Rabbinic period, as for instance kahol/kohal ‘blue’ connected with ‘stibium, powder used for painting the eyelids’, bTShab 8:3 (78b) and a novel term milan ‘black’ (cf. Gr. mélas, melanós) that denotes the ‘black pigment’, the ‘ink’. The Biblical word šāhør ‘black’ occurs in PBH in connection with tar, olives, grapes and pots, while in other cases it has been replaced by novel Aramaic terms, e.g. the Mishnah in Bava Qamma 9:6, where the restitution in case of wrong dyeing of the wool is discussed:

(6) jT BQ 9:6:

[If someone told the dyer]

“to dye it red ( ‘āḏôm) and he dyed it black (šāhør), black and he dyed it red, Rebbi Meir says, he gives him the value of his wool”. Rebbi Jehudah says, if the increased value is more than the expenses, he gives him his expenses; if the expenses are more than the increased value he gives him the increased value”

(7) Gemara:

“What means ‘if the increased value is more than the expenses, he gives him his expenses’? A person gave to another five lots of wool, five portions of dye, and ten minas for his wages. He told him, if you had dyed it red (sumaq), but the other had dyed it black (ukam). He told him, if you had dyed it red, it would have been worth 25 minas, now that you dyed it black it is worth only 20 …” (Guggenheimer 2008)

The Mishnah in (6) employs the Hebrew words 'āḏôm ‘red’ and šāhør ‘black’. The Jerusalem Talmud in the gemara of this Mishnah introduces the Palestinian Aramaic words ukam ‘black’ and sumaq for ‘red’. So we learn from the text that these two Aramaic colour names correspond to the “archaic” BH terms in the context of dyeing.

While the two terms from the Mishnah BQ must have been semantically transparent for the Rabbis, there are other cases, where the gemara tries to disambiguate older, rarely attested colour terms, which had become obsolete, like in the case of the Biblical taḥāš in Exodus 25:4-5. Before we come to the Rabbinic exegesis of the term, let us have a closer look at the passage from the book of Exodus, as it appears in the LXX, together with the corresponding BH words in brackets:

(9) LXX

Ex 25:4-5 και υακινθον (‘blue’, ~ tāḵēl) και πορφυραν (‘purple’ ~ ’argāmān) και κοκκινον διπλον (‘double crimson or

25. Hartley 2011, offers an up-to-date investigation on the Biblical colour lexemes. Biggam 2012, 124 employs a detailed meta-language for explaining the historical colour designations in the languages of the world: “hue (red, yellow, green, brown etc.); saturation (vivid, mid, dull); tone (achromatic): white black, pale grey, mid grey, dark grey, tone (chromatic) pale medium, dark; brightness light emission; brightness reflectivity; brightness surface illumination (well-lit, purely lit; brightness space illumination (brilliant, dim, unlit); transparency (transparent, translucent)”. BH šāhør ‘black’, and lābân ‘white’ are two possible candidates, which in many cases denote achromatic tone or a type of brightness rather than hue.

26. ‘āḏôm ‘red’ refers to animals, cf. the “red heifer” (Num. 19.2) and the “red horses” (Zech. 1.8; 6.2), ‘āḏmādām “dark red or reddish” (Lev. 13:19, 14:37); ‘āḏmōnī “ruddy” (Gen. 25:25).

27. Also as ‘argāmān “purple” (2 Chron. 2.6).

28. In the book of Ezekiel, we find several examples of colour terms in the context of fabrics and gemstones, see Ezek. 27:24: “… in gorgeous fabrics (ba-maklālīm bi-glōmē), in wrappings of blue and richly woven work (tāḵēl wa-riqmā), and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords (hāḇāšīm) and cedar-lined”, also Ezek. 27:7 šē-ba-riqmā “linen with embroidery”.


The colours listed in (9) constitute strong evidence for the occurrence of the ‘reds’, ‘blues’ and ‘violets’ in BH (and Koine Greek), implying an affinity, or even a “lexical solidarity” between the terms for the dyes and the skins. The problematic expression taḥāš refers to skins and has been translated in Greek with υακινθινα. In the same context, the Jerusalem Talmud in Shabbat 2:4d uses the term ianthinon ‘violet-blue’ for taḥāš, as opposed to glaukinon ‘bluish-gray’:

(8) JTShab 2:4

“Rebbi Eleazar asked, may one make the Tent of leather from an impure animal? But is it not written, and taḥāš skins. Rebbi Jehudah, Rebbi Nehemiah and the Rabbis. Rebbi Jehudah says, violet[-blue] (ianthinon); it was called thus because of its color. Rebbi Nehemiah said, blue [bluish-grey] (glaukinon).” (translation: Guggenheimer 2012)

The violet-blue colours are designated in PBH not only by ianthinon (Gk. ιανθινον ‘violet’) but also by the term iakinthinon (Gr. ἰαικίνθινον, the same as in LXX, Ex. 25:4-5 above), and later also by <altinon>, in the Midrash Kohelet Rabba 1:9,29 which corresponds to Gr. ἀληθινόν ‘true (purple)’, cf. also Mishnah Yoma 3,4,30 is of Greek origin, from the Gr. noun σπόγγος, in the form sepog ‘sponge’, cf. Mishnah Kelim 9,4 “a sponge that absorbed liquids” and from which the verbal forms were then derived.31 The vast majority of them pertain to material rather than spiritual culture.32 Words from all stages of Persian and other Iranian languages have been borrowed into all layers of Hebrew pertaining to clothing, textiles, and jewellery, testifying to the luxurious Oriental lifestyle (cf. below and notes 14, 21).

Novel terminology due to new onomasiological needs: new materials, techniques, and trading routes

The weaver’s shuttle34

In Biblical Hebrew, there are attested terms for weaver’s equipment, as for instance ’ereg ‘weaver’s...
bobbin’, cf. Job 7,6: “My days are swifter than a weaver’s bobbin,35 and are spent without hope” and dallāh (Is. 38,12) a ‘warp’, properly something dangling, that is, a “loose thread or hair; figuratively indigent: hair, pining sickness, poor (-est sort)”.36 In the Rabbinic literature we find more frequent attestations of the weaver’s shuttle than in the Bible, and even loanwords are employed, e.g. krkd (mShab 8:6; bTShab. 8b; jT Shab. 10b) ~ Gr. κερκίς, -ίδος ‘weaver’s shuttle; peg; pin; measuring rod’ (Hom.+).

The silk production
As expected, one of the most obvious innovations and differentiations in terminology concerns the emerging silk production in the late antiquity. The Mishnah Kilaim 9:2 adds silk to the older rule of the distinction between wool and linen of the Deuteronomy 22:11 (also in Lev 13:19; and Ex 39:27-29) using the terms shirii and kalakh for two different kinds of silk:

(10a) mKil 9:2
“Silk (shirii) and kalakh-silk do not come under the law of Diverse Kinds, but they are forbidden for appearance sake”37

The term kalakh has been associated with the Gr. word κάλχη38 denoting ‘murex; purple flower, Chrysanthenum coronarium’ (Alcm., Nic., Str.).39

The Palestinian Aramaic gemara of the tractate Kilaim introduces metakhsa as an explanation for shirii and at the same time it gives us information about the usage of the term kalakh, as kalka:

(10b) “Raw silk (shirii) and silk noil (kalakh).
Raw silk is metakhsha. Kalakh-silk is imperial ‘gbyn. Rabban Simeon ben Gamliel said, I went around among all sea-faring men and they told me that it was called kalka.” (translation: Guggenheimer 2001)

While the Yerushalmi seems to connect kalakh with ‘imperial purple’40 and informs us about ‘pure silk tissues’, the <closerika> jTShab10:8b, which correspond to Gr. τό ὁλοσηρικόν (Edict. Dioec. 22:14), the Babylonian Aramaic gemara, although it attests the word metaksa, for example in the tractsates Ketubboth and Shabath,41 it actually uses another term to explain the metaksa-silk in the gemara of Shab 20b(31) and differentiates it from the sirah (or shirah) silk, namely by the term pranda-silk (also in Shab 20b(33) Soṭ 48b(44), which leads us to the Middle Persian parand, also known from the Pahlavi Ṣāyast-ṇēšyast (4:1). In Targ. 2 Esth. 5:1; 6:10 we find another silk of Iranian provenience, the p’rangan (pranigan) silk, probably connected with a geographical term.42

Terminological innovations due to religious and social factors
The Bavli addresses the issue of how and when clothes can reveal the origin and social status of the person who wears them, and indicates that Jews who traveled from Palestine to Babylonia were recognised as foreigners by their clothes:

(11) bTShab145b-

“Why are the scholars of Babylonia distinguished [in dress]? Because they are not in their [original] homes, as People say, in my own town my name [is sufficient]; away from home, my dress.” (translation: Epstein 1952)

High quality and luxury items, like puzmaq PBH ‘gaiter, fine shoe’ and trousers as an Oriental garment, like sarbal ‘cloak, trousers’ are mainly Persian/Iranian lexemes in PBH, mostly via Aramaic mediation.43 Like the majority of loans, they belong to a very high literary register of language. On the contrary, there is no evidence for a distinctive slave attire: “ordinary slaves seem to have been wearing the

41. The Bavli does not include a gemara for the Mishnah tractate Kilaim.
42. Sokoloff 1992 s.v.
43. MP šalwār ‘trousers’ reached PBH through Aramaic also as šarvul ‘leather sleeve’, Gindin 2013, cf. also Schmeja 1978.
simple and ragged clothes characteristic of members of the lower strata of society. Others who had higher positions within the servile hierarchy will have resembled wealthier free persons in their outward appearance”. An example for upcoming distinctions in late antiquity pertains to the differences between the monks and the Rabbis. Furthermore, a case of ideological differentiation in attire can be traced in the clothing of the inhabitants of Qumran, who must have deliberately abstained from the use of wool as a raw material and the ‘luxury’ dyed garments (Shamir & Sukenik 2011). Head covering also offers a representative example for regional customs in combination with religious and social ‘dictates’. Although the strict rule of head cover for women in Biblical and post Biblical times has been a matter of discussion, the kind of veil or head cover could vary and be replaced according to different periods and geographical regions, e.g. there is evidence for local differentiations, cf. mShab 6:6:

(12) “One goes out with a tetradrachma on a arthritic foot. Girls go out with threads and even chips in their ears. Arab women go out veiled and Median women pinned, and also everybody, but the Sages spoke about what is.”

The term employed here is a participle passive in the fem. pl.: ra‘ulot ‘veiled’, a verbal root derived from a noun ra‘alah, also Arabic ra‘u‘ ‘veil’, which can be interpreted as ‘veiled (in Arabian fashion)’.

Apart from ‘veils’, also hairnets are mentioned in the Mishnah, cf. Kelim 24:16:

(13) “There are three kinds of hairnet (svacha): that of a girl, which is susceptible to uncleanness; that of the old woman, which is susceptible to corpse uncleanness; and that of a harlot, which is not susceptible to any uncleanness”

As in the case of the Arabian fashion, we benefit from other passages about garments not traditionally worn by Jewish people. A more ‘exotic’ term can be found in the Babylonian Talmud, in the Berachot (20a): karbalta means a type of a hat, of a certain woman who was wearing a head covering in the street.

(14) “There was the case of R. Adda b. Ahaba who saw a heathen woman wearing a red head-dress (karbalta) in the street, and thinking that she was an Israelite woman, he rose and tore it from her. It turned out that she was a heathen woman, and they fined him four hundred zuz” (translation: Epstein 1952)

The word is also attested as ‘cock’s crest’, probably continuing an Akkadian form karballatu ‘for a piece of linen headgear for soldiers’. In addition to the head dress and the trousers, which were unpopular or even unacceptable garment pieces for the Graeco-Roman style, another feature of Oriental fashion gradually enters the Rabbinic lexicon, namely the ‘long-sleeved tunic/coat, tunica manicata’, as the term <krdot> (Targ. 1 Sam 2:28) ~ Gr. χειριδωτός, suggests.
Conclusion and prospects

On the one hand, the study of language change can be very useful – as supporting evidence to the archaeological findings – for the purpose of reconstructing cultural and technical innovations concerning clothing and textile production. Next to their religious importance, the Rabbinic texts are an invaluable source for the investigation of linguistic and cultural transitions throughout many centuries, pertaining not only to Judaism and Palestine, but to the greater area of the Eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, the writing system, the transmission of the texts and the various manuscript editions pose numerous problems for the identification and interpretation of specialised vocabulary in the Rabbinic literature, especially of loanwords. Scholars working on Greek loanwords in the Rabbinic literature suggested principles and criteria which can be useful for revising out-of-date etymologies and offering new etymological solutions.53

Linguistic analyses on the level of the clothing and textile vocabulary of the Rabbinic literature produce parallel results to the findings of archaeology and ancient history. Further, the linguistic evidence allows us to assume a moderate case of language contact: where the secure terms from the Graeco-Roman world become lesser, the vocabulary from other areas of the Near East increases, revealing new dimensions for our cultural understanding. It is also important, that the differences between the attestations of the Palestinian and Babylonian traditions, respectively, and the vocabulary of Josephus and the Diaspora should not be neglected, in order to highlight the particular linguistic varieties of the texts, which enable us to reconstruct regional and sociolinguistic characteristics of the textile terminologies.54

Abbreviations

bT = Babylonian Talmud
BH = Biblical Hebrew
CAD = The Assyrian Dictionary
EWAia = Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen
Gr. = Greek
jT = Jerusalem Talmud
Lat. = Latin
LXX = Septuagint
PBH = Post Biblical Hebrew

Bibliography


