

*“In the Dwelling of a Sage
Lie Precious Treasures”*



Essays in Jewish Studies in
Honor of Shnayer Z. Leiman

EDITED BY

Yitzhak Berger and Chaim Milikowsky



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A Lost Hebrew Verb and the Lost Tribes of Israel in a Lost Biblical Commentary from Byzantium

Richard C. Steiner

1. INTRODUCTION

Professor S.Z. Leiman's fame as a יודע ספר stems from his encyclopedic knowledge of traditional and scholarly Jewish books from the biblical period down to the present day. Throughout his life, he has haunted Jewish bookstores and great libraries all over the world in search of treasures (his term) unknown to ordinary scholars – unknown because only one copy has survived the ravages of time or unknown because they were published only one week ago. What he particularly enjoys is searching for books believed to be lost.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to honor him by discussing a book that was lost for almost a millennium: a commentary on Ezekiel and Minor Prophets, written in Hebrew with Judeo-Greek glosses, by a Byzantine Jew named Reuel.¹ Around 1445 lines of the work are pre-

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1. See Nicholas de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 165–294; henceforth: *GJT*. See also Richard C. Steiner, בחינות לשון בפירוש ליחזקאל ולתרייעשר שבמגילות העבריות מביזנטיון, *Lešonenu*

served on two scrolls (more precisely, *rotuli*) from the Cairo Genizah. The scrolls have been dated to ca. 1000 CE.²

There are hints that our copy of Reuel's commentary is an autograph. The text has a good number of one-word interlinear additions, in the same hand as the main text, that serve merely to eliminate ambiguities in the latter.³ These look like the (self-)edits of an author. Had these edits been made by a hired scribe (unconsciously) or a scholar-copyist (deliberately),⁴ they would presumably have been inserted directly into the main text. The absence of typical scribal errors (homoioteleuton, etc.) in both the additions and the main text points in the same direction.

This lost work – the earliest surviving *peshat* commentary written outside of the Islamic empire – preserves a number of lost cultural artifacts of ancient and medieval Judaism: (1) a lost ancient Hebrew verb; (2) the lost contours of a complex midrash known hitherto only from fragments scattered throughout ancient Rabbinic literature; (3) an all-but-lost tradition about Israel's "lost tribes"; (4) a lost set of the earliest non-eschatological interpretations of potentially messianic prophecies; (5) lost details of an ancient theory of biblical redaction; and (6) a lost set of the earliest examples of the (unmotivated) "lemma

59 (1995–1996): 39–56; id., "Textual and Exegetical Notes to Nicholas de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah*," *JQR* 89 (1998): 155–169; id., "The Byzantine Biblical Commentaries from the Genizah: Rabbanite vs. Karaite," in *ש"י לשרה יפת* (ed. M. Bar-Asher, et al.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 2007), 243*–245*, 260*–262*; I.M. Ta-Shma, סביב קדומה, עברית-ביזנטית קדומה, שנת 1000, מן הגניזה, *Tarbiz* 69 (2000): 247–256; Gershon Brin, רעואל וחבריו: פרשנים יהודיים מביזנטיון מסביבות המאה העשירית לספירה (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 2012).

2. See at and in n. 50 below.

3. See, for example, *GJT*, 171 line 55; 173 line 70; 183 line 148; 191 line 229; 195 line 276; 203 line 49; 217 line 123; 233 line 115; 235 line 128; 237 line 154; 241 line 193; 245 line 259; 263 line 120; and 291 line 119.

4. For such edits, see Malachi Beit-Arié, "Transmission of Texts by Scribes and Copyists: Unconscious and Critical Interferences," *BJRL* 75 (1993): 33–52.

complement.” This article will deal with (1), (2), (3) and (4); (5) and (6) have been adequately investigated elsewhere.⁵

2. A LOST ANCIENT HEBREW VERB

At the end of 1994, shortly after meeting Prof. Israel Ta-Shma ז"ל for the first time, I brought a colleague to his home to help him decipher Reuel's Judeo-Greek glosses. Ta-Shma had partially transcribed one of the scrolls on his computer, and he had highlighted an unfamiliar word, מצריטיים, appearing twice in Reuel's comments on Ezekiel 8:16–17. From the context, he had already deduced its meaning: “breaking wind.” Although the verb was unknown in Hebrew, I thought I remembered an Arabic cognate. When I got back to my apartment, I checked my Arabic dictionary and immediately found what I was looking for: the verb *ḍaraṭa* meaning “break wind.”

It was clear to me that מצריט was not an Arabic loanword. The expected form of such a borrowing would be דורט rather than מצריט – in the *qal* stem (like Arabic *ḍaraṭa*) and (since *spoken* Arabic would be the natural source) with *dalet* rendering /ḍ/.⁶ (Later, I found that, as expected for a Byzantine Rabbanite work, the commentary has no loanwords from Arabic.)⁷ A little further checking showed that

5. See Richard C. Steiner, “A Jewish Theory of Biblical Redaction from Byzantium: Its Rabbinic Roots, Its Diffusion and Its Encounter with the Muslim Doctrine of Falsification,” *JSIJ* 2 (2003): 123–167; and id., “The ‘Lemma Complement’ in Hebrew Commentaries from Byzantium and Its Diffusion to Northern France and Germany,” *JSQ* 18 (2011): 367–79 (esp. 375). I have also dealt with (1) and (2) elsewhere (Steiner, בחינות לשון, 54–56), but I have added new details here.

6. For this phonetic rendering, see Dahn Ben-Amotz and Netiva Ben-Yehuda, מלון עולמי לעברית מדוברת (Jerusalem: Levin–Epstein, 1972), 57 s.v. דַרְטָה. The latter is a *noun* from Arabic *ḍ-r-ṭ* in modern Israeli slang. See also the name פודאיל = *Fudail* in the letter from Alexandria published in *GJT*, 12–13 line 3 and 14–15 line 16. This rendering is the norm in the pre-Saadianic Judeo-Arabic orthography; see, for example, Joshua Blau, *A Handbook of Early Middle Arabic* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2002), 22.

7. See Steiner, “Byzantine Commentaries,” 247*.

this verb had regular cognates with the same meaning in both major branches of the Semitic language family. The only plausible conclusion was that Proto-Semitic had a root *š-r-ṭ meaning “break wind” that was still in use in ancient Hebrew.

I was dumbfounded by this discovery and the questions that it raised. It had always been assumed that students of ancient Hebrew lexicography need not concern themselves with post-talmudic Hebrew. How, then, could a medieval Jew have had knowledge of a verb whose ancient origin is clear beyond a reasonable doubt but which is not attested in any other Hebrew source, ancient or medieval?!⁸

My initial assumption was that מצריט was an obscene word that was normally replaced in Hebrew by euphemisms⁹ but managed to survive in vulgar usage or else (in participial forms) in Judeo-Greek. Later, it dawned on me that the passage containing this word derives from an ancient Palestinian midrash. In *Reuel's* time and place, an archaic form of the midrash was apparently still extant. We turn now to that midrash.

3. A MIDRASH PRESERVED MORE FULLY IN REUEL'S COMMENTARY THAN IN ANY ANCIENT RABBINIC WORK

In Ezekiel 8:16–17 we read:

וַיָּבֹא אֶתִי אֶל-חֲצַר בַּיִת-ה' הַפְּנִימִית וְהִנֵּה-פֶתַח הַיֵּכָל ה' בֵּין הָאוּלָּם וּבֵין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
כְּעֹשִׂים וְחֹמְשֵׁה אִישׁ אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֶל-הַיֵּכָל ה' וּפְנִיָּהֶם קִדְמָה וְהֵמָּה מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיָּתָם
קִדְמָה לְשֹׁמֵשׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הָרְאִיתָ בּוֹ-אָדָם הַנִּקְלָל לְבַיִת יְהוּדָה מַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-
הַתּוֹעֲבוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ-פֹה כִּי-מָלְאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ חָמָס וַיָּשֻׁבוּ לְהַכְעִיסֵנִי וְהָנָם
שְׁלָחִים אֶת-הַזְּמוּרָה אֶל-אֲפָם:

8. I hope to discuss an apparent byform of the Hebrew root in a separate publication.

9. E.g., the “blow” (used in commenting on our passage by Isaiah of Trani, a later Byzantine exegete); עטש “sneeze” (used in commenting on our passage by David Qimḥi); and התריז “burst” (see at and in n. 25 below). In this article, most citations of medieval Jewish exegetes by name alone are from מקראות גדולות הכתר (ed. Menachem Cohen; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1992–).

Reuel's comments on these verses are worth citing in full:¹⁰

והמה משתחוויתם היו משתחווים קדמה לשמש ד(בר) א(חר) והמה
משחיתים <מצריטים> [ר] וח שיוציאו מתחתם יהיו (צ"ל והיו) אחוריהם
אל היכל ייי ומצריטים אל היכל ייי אמרו הנביא בחילוף קדמה לשמש. והנם
שול(חים) את הז(מורה) אל אפם. יגרמו הם בעוונות [ש] הם עושים כדי
שיבוא להם הזמור(ה) המטה שלק(ודש) ב(רוך) ה(וא) שיכה אותם אל אפם
[א] ל' פניהם. או בשביל הרוח שלהם שהיו שולחים כנגד היכל ייי ולא היה
יוכל [הנ] ביא לדבר אל היכל ייי ואמר אל אפם כלומר (ר) [א] ל' פניהם/ם
[חטמ] הם היו שולחים הרוחם.¹¹ ב' זה אותם.

והמה משתחוויתם (8:16). They were bowing (משתחווים) *to the sun in the east*. Alternatively, they were causing putridity (משחיתים; lit., corrupting), breaking wind – gas that they would expel from their bottoms.¹² Their back(side)s were to the Temple of the Lord, and they were breaking wind towards the Temple of the Lord (in the west), (but) the prophet phrased it antiphrastically (lit., in the opposite) as *to the sun in the east*.¹³ והנם שלחים את הזמורה אל אפם

10. Steiner, בחינות לשון, 54 (corrected here) and *GJT*, 174–77 lines 88–94. Parentheses are used to expand abbreviated words. Angle brackets mark additions inserted above the line. Square brackets are used to indicate the conjectural restoration of letters in a lacuna, and half brackets mark letters that are only partially preserved.

11. The ungrammatical definite article in הרוחם has a line through it. Two uncorrected examples of this error are העוונם and השכינתי in the commentary to Ezekiel 7:19 and 37:27, respectively. (For the reading השכינתי, see Steiner, “Textual and Exegetical Notes,” 163.) These errors seem to reflect the corresponding Greek construction, used in the Septuagint to those verses and elsewhere by Reuel himself, e.g., *GJT* 234–35 line 143; 270–71 line 60; 272–73 line 77; 274–75 line 83; 278–79 lines 130–31.

12. For this use of תחת, see Steiner, בחינות לשון, 56.

13. The fragment of this midrash in the Talmud (see at n. 16 below) has a similar antiphrastic euphemism (לשון סגי נהור): “they were breaking wind towards (the one) *below*.” All witnesses transcribed by the Friedberg Genizah Project have “below” instead of “above” in Sukkah 53b, and some (including Cambridge T-S NS 329.715 and Oxford MS heb. e.51/78, which for some reason do not appear on the Hachi Garsinan site) have it also in Yoma 77a and Qiddushin 72b.

(8:17). Through the sins that they commit, they will cause הַזְמוּרָה, the rod of God, to come upon them, to strike them אֶל-אַפָּם, in their faces. Or else (הַזְמוּרָה was said) about their gas that they were discharging¹⁴ towards the Temple of the Lord, but (in such a context) the prophet was unable to say “towards the Temple of the Lord,” so he said אֶל-אַפָּם, i.e., to their (own) faces/noses they were discharging their gas,¹⁵ (thereby) humiliating them.

These medieval comments preserve a midrash known from the following ancient Rabbinic sources:

תלמוד בבלי: מה תלמוד לומר אחוריהם אל היכל ה' מלמד שהיו פורעין/מפרעין עצמן, ומתריזין כלפי מטה/מעלה.

What does אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֶל-הַיְכָל ה' teach? It teaches that they were baring themselves (= their backsides) and breaking wind towards (the One/one) above/below (*b. Qiddushin* 72b, *Yoma* 77a, *Sukkah* 53b).¹⁶

תלמוד ירושלמי: והמה משתחויים אין כתיב כאן אלא והמה משתחוייתם שהיו משחיתים ההיכל¹⁷ ומשתחויים לחמה.

14. Most Rabbanite exegetes give this interpretation (Steiner, “Byzantine Commentaries,” 260*–261*), with many of them adding that flatulence is called זְמוּרָה because of the sound that it makes; cf. זְמוּרָה “music, song.” In a different context, Augustine (*De Civitate Dei* 14.24) speaks of people who are so skilled at producing that sound from their bottoms that “they seem to be singing” (*cantare uideantur*).

15. This formulation is very similar to that of a later Byzantine exegete, Isaiah of Trani (ad loc.): “To their nose(s). This is a euphemistic substitute (כינוי): they were (in fact) breaking wind towards the *Temple*.” For the term כינוי in this context, see at n. 21 below.

16. See n. 13 above.

17. So according to Rashi and David Qimḥi at Ezekiel 8:16; see Steiner, בחינות, לשון 55 with n. 75. Printed editions of the Palestinian Talmud, all based on a single manuscript, read ומשתחויים להיכל, and they put this phrase last.

What is written here is not והמה משתחויים but rather מְשַׁחֲוִיָּתָם, for they were making putrid (משחיתים; lit., corrupting) the Temple while bowing down to the sun (y. *Sukkah* 5.5.55c).

שיר השירים רבה: שהיו משתחויין לעב' זר' ופורעין עצמן כנגד בית המקדש
הה"ד ויבא אותי אל חצר בית ה' הפנימית. המד"א כי משחיתם בהם מום
בם.¹⁸

They were bowing down in idolatrous worship while baring themselves (= their backsides) towards the Temple, and that is (the meaning of) *He brought me into the inner court of the House of the Lord* (Ezekiel 8:16). As you say, *their putridity* (מְשַׁחֲוִיָּתָם; lit., corruption) is (from) inside them, a defect is in them” (Leviticus 22:25) (*Song of Songs Rabbah* 1, 6).¹⁹

תרגום יונתן: מתחבלין²⁰ וסגדין למדנחא לשמשא.

They were making themselves putrid (lit., corrupting themselves) and bowing down eastward to the sun (Targum Jonathan to Ezekiel 8:16).

18. Ma'agarim (<http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx>); cf. Zvi M. Rabinovitz, גוזי מדרש (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1976), 92.

19. This midrashic comment is valuable because it adds a proof-text unmentioned elsewhere, but it would be virtually unintelligible without the other comments cited here.

20. So (not מתחברין) according to Rashi and David Qimḥi at Ezekiel 8:16. As noted by them, Jonathan's מתחבלין must correspond to the Palestinian Talmud's מהיכל, since the most common use of the Aramaic root חבל in the *targumim* is as a rendering of the Hebrew root שחח; see Hayim J. Kasovsky, אוצר לשון תרגום אונקלוס (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 1:164–65; and Johannes C. De Moor and Alberdina Houtman, *A Bilingual Concordance to the Targum of the Prophets* (21 vols; Leiden: Brill, 1995–2005), 21:214–15. Unlike the Palestinian Talmud, however, Jonathan uses the reflexive here, apparently as a kind of euphemistic substitute (cf. the interpretation of אָפַם in the Mekhilta and the Sifra below) and perhaps also because a reflexive מְשַׁחֲוִיָּתָם* would be closer in sound to מְשַׁחֲוִיָּתָם than is מְשַׁחֲוִיָּתָם.

מכילתא: והנם שולחים את הזמורה אל אפם. כינה הכתוב.²¹

And they are discharging the(ir) flatulence²² to their (own) nose(s) (Ezekiel 8:17). Scripture has substituted a euphemism (in place of *My nose*).

From all of these ancient fragments, it appears that the original midrash (1) took אַחֲרֵיהֶם in Ezekiel 8:16 to mean “their backsides” rather than “their backs”; (2) interpreted the anomalous form מְשַׁתְּחוּיָתָם in the same verse as a blend of משחיתים “corrupting” (in the sense of “causing putridity”) and משתחוים “bowing down”; (3) glossed משחיתים with מצריטים; (4) took הַזְמוּרָה in Ezekiel 8:17 to mean “the(ir) flatulence”; and (5) understood אָפָם “their nose(s)” in the same verse as a euphemistic substitute for “My nose,” implying that their action was directed against the Lord and, thus, intentionally sacrilegious. It is possible, but not certain, that it also (6) cited מְשַׁחֲתָם בָּהֶם “their corruption is in them” (Leviticus 22:25), in the sense of “their putridity is (from) inside them,” as a proof-text.

In Reuel’s commentary, components (1), (3), and (4) are preserved unchanged, and components (2) and (5) are preserved in modified form, while component (6) does not appear at all. Component (2) is modified in a way that makes it less midrashic: instead of מְשַׁתְּחוּיָתָם expressing משתחוים *and* משחיתים, it now expresses משתחוים *or* משחיתים.²³ Component (5) is modified in a way that makes it less anthropomorphic: אָפָם “their nose(s)” is taken as a euphemistic

21. מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל (ed. H.S. Horovitz and I.A. Rabin; Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann, 1931), 135 line 11; cf. על ספר במדבר וספרי זוטא . . . על ספר דבירב . . . (ed. H.S. Horovitz; Leipzig: G. Fock, 1917), 81 lines 17–18. See also Wilhelm Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur* (2 vols.; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1905), 1:83–85; and Abraham J. Heschel, *תורה מן השמים*, באספקלריה של הדורות (London: Soncino, 1962), 375–77.

22. See n. 14 above.

23. Contrast Rashi and Joseph Kara, who assert that מְשַׁתְּחוּיָתָם “functions as two words.” (The earlier technical term for such exegesis is נוטריוקון – a term that has a second, better-known use.) Similarly, Judah Ḥayyuj, Abraham Ibn Ezra, David Qimḥi, and Menaḥem b. Simeon maintain that מְשַׁתְּחוּיָתָם is a

substitute for “My *Temple*” instead of for “My *nose*.” Component (3) is altered not by Reuel but by the Babylonian Talmud, which replaces מצריטים with a form similar in sound and meaning, מתריזין.²⁴ The verb התריז has the meaning “burst, erupt” in Syriac and Hebrew; it is used several times in Jewish sources of the colon bursting open and forcefully expelling excrement or gas.²⁵ The manuscript evidence suggests that the replacement took place before the Talmud was reduced to writing. The midrash appears there in three places, and מתריזין is the reading of every known witness in all three places, including the citations of Rashi and David Qimḥi in their commentaries on Ezekiel.²⁶ It is likely, therefore, that Reuel had access to a *Palestinian* version of this midrash fuller than any of the ones in ancient Rabbinic literature, a version that preserved the original ancient Hebrew verb in component (3).²⁷

This remarkable midrash exhibits certain similarities to a story about the period 48–52 CE told by Josephus in his *Jewish War* (2.12.1 §224): “The usual crowd had assembled at Jerusalem for the feast of unleavened bread, and the Roman cohort had taken up its position on the roof of the portico of the temple. . . . Thereupon one of the soldiers, raising his robe, stooped in an indecent attitude, so as to turn his backside to the Jews, and made a noise in keeping with his posture.”²⁸ The version of the story in *Antiquities* (20.5.3 §108) omits

portmanteau word (מלה מורכבת, כלמה מרכבה), although for them the component verbs are משתחויים and השתחוייתם, which differ in *tense* rather than *root*.

24. See n. 9 above.

25. Cf. perhaps Akk. *tezû* “excrete” < *zû* “excrement.” Judah Ibn Baʿam cites a comment by Rabbenu Hananel as proof that התרזה means כרוג מן אלאספל אלרי(א)ח “the exiting of gas(es) from below”; see Steiner, “Byzantine Commentaries,” 261* nn. 80–81.

26. For Genizah fragments and numerous other talmudic manuscripts of this midrash, see the Friedberg Genizah Project (mainly in the Hachi Garsinan site but see n. 13 above) and the Lieberman Talmud Databank.

27. For further details, see Steiner, *בחינות לשון*, pp. 54–56.

28. Josephus, *The Jewish War* (trans. H.S.J. Thackeray; London: Heinemann, 1927), 411; cf. *ibid.* (trans. Martin Hammond; ed. Martin Goodman; Oxford:

some of the obscene details but supplies another detail found in the midrash. The soldier's provocation "created anger and rage in the onlookers, who said that it was not they who had been insulted, but that it was a blasphemy against God."²⁹ In these passages, Josephus describes a distinctive kind of sacrilege: a Roman soldier uncovers his backside on the Temple Mount, turns it towards Jews engaged in a holy ritual, and makes the sound associated with breaking wind. This account parallels the midrash in a number of ways. I leave it for others to decide what significance, if any, to assign to these parallels.³⁰

The midrash is also reminiscent of the black obelisk of Shalmaneser III, where Jehu is famously depicted bowing to the Assyrian king on his hands and knees, with his backside raised.³¹ The men depicted in Ezekiel 8:16 had assumed a similar posture (called השתחויה היםודים in b. Horayot 4a), with their raised backsides facing the Holy of Holies.³²

4. AN ALL-BUT-LOST TRADITION ABOUT ISRAEL'S "LOST TRIBES"

We turn now to Hosea 3:4–5:

כִּי יָמִים רַבִּים יָשָׁבוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין מֶלֶךְ וְאֵין שָׁר... אַחַר יָשָׁבוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וּבְקִשׁוּ אֶת־ה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאֵת דָּוִד מֶלְכָּם וּפָחְדוּ אֶל־ה' וְאֶל־טוֹבוֹ בְּאַחֲרִית
הַיָּמִים:

Oxford University Press, 2017), 114; and Steiner, "Byzantine Commentaries," 260* n. 77.

29. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* (trans. Louis H. Feldman; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 447.

30. There are earlier instances of breaking wind as an insult, e.g., a passage in Horace's *Satires* (1.9.69) from ca. 35 BCE: "Today is the thirtieth Sabbath. Do you (really) want to break wind (*oppedere*) at the circumcised Jews (on such a day)?"

31. See the photo in *Wikipedia* s.v. "Jehu."

32. This is true according to both the plain sense of the verse and the anti-phrastic midrashic interpretation adopted by Reuel.

This comment is quite unexpected. It has long been assumed that the Israelites did not return from the Assyrian exile during the biblical period. That is the impression given by 1 Chronicles 5:26 and numerous postbiblical sources. In the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 10:3), for example, we read:

The ten tribes are not destined to return, for it is said (Deuteronomy 29:27), *and He cast them into another land, as this day* – just as this day goes and will not return, so they went and will not return; this is R. Akiba’s view. R. Eliezer said: *As this day* – just as this day becomes dark and then becomes light again, so the ten tribes, for whom it is now dark, are destined to see light again.

The Palestinian Talmud (ad loc., 10.6.29c) gives the same impression when it asserts: “And when they (= the Israelites) return, they will return from three exiles. . . .” The Babylonian Geonim, visited by Eldad ha-Dani in the late ninth century, did not reject his tales of a kingdom near Ethiopia inhabited by descendants of the Israelite tribes.

Some passages in the Babylonian Talmud, however, give a very different impression:

R. Johanan said, “Jeremiah was not there, for he had gone to bring back the ten tribes (and so Josiah consulted Huldah instead). . . . It teaches that Jeremiah brought them back. And Josiah son of Amon ruled over them. . . . (Megillah 14b)

The years from the time that Sennacherib exiled them until Jeremiah came and brought them back are not counted. (‘Arakhin 12b)

Reuel’s view is even more surprising than the one expressed in these talmudic passages. For him, אַחַר־רֵיִת הַיָּמִים in Hosea 3:5 does not refer to the messianic era or even the distant future. Reuel asserts that “David, their king” is a reference to Hezekiah. And he takes יָמֵי רָבִים in 3:4, the predicted duration of Israel’s exile, to be a period of only *eight* years, lasting until the downfall of Assyria’s army at the walls of Hezekiah’s Jerusalem.³⁵

35. Contrast Reuel’s comment on Ezekiel 12:27 (*GJT*, 184–85 lines 177–78; cf.

According to Gershon Brin, “it is possible that Reuel had such a tradition, even though we do not know this tradition.”³⁶ It should be noted, however, that Reuel’s interpretation is not completely unparalleled. At Hosea 3:5, Joseph Ibn Caspi writes: “אַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים does not denote extreme (temporal) distance.” For him, בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים at the end of the verse is, in essence, a resumptive repetition of אַחֲר “afterwards” at the beginning of the verse. Similarly, “David, their king... refers to Hezekiah and Zerubbabel.”

In addition, there are two Rabbinic sources that seem to be consistent with Reuel’s interpretation:

תרגום תוספתא למלכים ב יט, לז: אזלו קטלוהי בסיפא והינון אפכו לארע
קרדו אתר דהוות שיבייתא דיש' דשבא אבוהון. מן יד קרו להון חירותא
ושדרו יתהון לירוש'.³⁷

They (= Adrammelek and Sarezzer) went and killed him (= Sennacherib, their father) with the sword, and then they turned tail and fled to the land of Qardu (= Ararat),³⁸ the/a place³⁹ where the captives of Israel, whom their father had captured, were located. They immediately proclaimed their emancipation and sent them to Jerusalem....

מדרש עשר גליות: עשר גליות גלו ישראל: ד' על ידי סנחריב... ובימי חזקיהו,
בשנת ד' למלכו, עלה סנחריב והקיף על שומרון ג' שנים ולכדה בשנת שש

l. 172), where he takes יָמִים רַבִּים as referring to a *hundred*-year waiting period for the fulfillment of a prophecy.

36. Brin, רעואל, 141.

37. Rimon Kashner, תוספתות תרגום לנביאים (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1996), 149. For earlier editions of this text, see *ibid.*, 148. A midrash on 2 Kgs 19:37 is found in b. Sanhedrin 96a, as well, but it says nothing about the ten tribes.

38. See n. 44 below.

39. Note that אתר ד. may be either definite or indefinite because ... אתר ד., like BH ... מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר, is a genitive construction; see Richard C. Steiner, “Ancient Hebrew,” in *The Semitic Languages* (ed. Robert Hetzron; London: Routledge, 1997), 162.

למלכות חזקיהו, והגלה ישראל שבשומרון, שבט אפרים ומנשה. זו גלות שלישית.⁴⁰

Israel suffered ten exiles, four of them at the hands of Sennacherib...⁴¹ And in the days of Hezekiah, in year four of his reign, Sennacherib went up and besieged Samaria for three years, capturing it in year six of Hezekiah's reign and exiling the Israelites who were in Samaria (2 Kings 17:5–6), the tribe(s) of Ephraim and Manasseh. This is the third exile.

According to the first source, which bears the label “Targum Yerushalmi,” the Israelites (or, at least, some of them) came home after Sennacherib was assassinated by two of his sons. Since 2 Kings 19:35–37 connects Sennacherib's assassination with the disaster that befell his army, Reuel appears to agree with Targum Yerushalmi. One may wonder, however, whether the latter – which refers to Israelites settled in Qardu (= Ararat) by Sennacherib (= Shalmaneser v) – is consistent with 2 Kgs 17:6: בְּשָׁנַת הַתְּשִׁיעִית לְהוֹשֵׁעַ לְכַד מֶלֶךְ־אֲשׁוּר אָתָּה: שִׁמְרוֹן וַיִּגַּל אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשׁוּרָה וַיָּשָׁב אִתָּם בְּחָלָה וּבְחָבוּר נָהָר גּוֹזָן וְעָרֵי מְדֵי. This verse seems to make no mention of Ararat. The following facts, however, suggest that the Rabbis (unlike modern scholars) *did* find a reference in the verse to Ararat: (1) The Rabbis (b. Yevamot 16b–17a, Qiddushin 72a) had a tradition identifying Habor (חָבוּר) in 2 Kgs 17:6, etc. with Adiabene (הַדִּיב, חַדִּיב);⁴² (2) Corduene = Gordyene was a mere district of Adiabene during the reigns of Monobaz I (and his wife Helene), Izates II, and Monobaz II;⁴³ (3) Qardu = Qardunya =

40. מדרש עשר גליות (ed. Samuel K. Mirsky), in מדרש סדר עולם (ed. Dov Ber Ratner; Jerusalem: Tal Orot, 1988), final appendix. I have also consulted the transcriptions of two manuscripts of this work in Ma'agarim (<http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx>).

41. The Rabbis took the names Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, etc. as referring to a single king; see b. Sanhedrin 94a.

42. This tradition may well stem from the period of Helene (הלני) and her son, who converted to Judaism and are frequently mentioned by the Rabbis.

43. Marciak, *Sophene, Gordyene, and Adiabene: Three Regna Minora of Northern Mesopotamia Between East and West* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 245–46.

Qordunya = Corduene = Gordyene was commonly identified with Ararat in Rabbinic and Syriac sources.⁴⁴

The second source – unlike the Palestinian Talmud (Sanhedrin 10.6.29c), *Seder 'Olam* (23:1–3), and *Qohelet Rabbah* (9.18.3) – posits an exile devoted exclusively to the tribes of Ephraim and (half of) Manasseh. This assumption, while based primarily on 2 Kings 17:5–6 and 18:10–11, may also be related to Jeremiah 41:5, where men from Shechem, Shilo, and Samaria appear unexpectedly, on their way to the demolished Temple in Jerusalem. If these men, all from the hill country of Ephraim and (half of) Manasseh, were descendants of former deportees, the exile of those tribes would seem to have been shorter than the exile(s) of the other tribes – perhaps even as short as eight years.

It is possible, then, that Reuel identified Habor in 2 Kings 17:6 with Adiabene and/or Ararat/Qardu, where (according to Targum Yerushalmi) a pro-Israelite branch of the Assyrian royal family took charge after Sennacherib's assassination. It is further possible that he believed Habor to be the place of exile of *only* the one and a half tribes who inhabited the hills of Samaria. Such a belief would be consistent with the findings of modern scholarship: “In the course of his conquests, . . . Tiglath-pileser III appropriated the border regions of the n[orthern] kingdom. . . . The central region of Ephraim, consisting of Samaria and its immediate environs (often called the ‘rump state’ of Ephraim), was retained by King Hosea until, after the fall of Samaria in 722–721, it, too, became Assyrian.”⁴⁵

Reuel's interpretation of Hosea 3:4–5 appears to be the tip of

44. Kasher, תוספתות תרגום, 149; Michał Marciak, *Sophene*, 200–201.

45. Siegfried Herrmann, “Ephraim: Ephraim in the Bible,” in *ABD* 2:552a. Thus, in the biblical reports that Israel was deported to Assyria (2 Kings 17:6, 18:11), the term “Israel” may refer solely to the inhabitants of this rump state, who were primarily from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. For a different view of the number of tribes included in the “third exile” of the northern kingdom, see Rashi and Joseph Kara on 2 Kings 17:1 and Isaiah 8:23, with the supercommentary of Yosef G. Carmel, מעוזיה עד אחז, צפנת ישעיהו: (Jerusalem: Koren, 2015), 257–59.

ketubbah can shed some light on the place of residence of the woman named in it. In my first article on Reuel's commentary I wrote: "The two documents are so similar that it is tempting to assume that they belonged to one family that migrated to Cairo from Mastaura."⁵¹ To make this suggestion more concrete, one might speculate that Namer son of Elkanah, the groom named in the *ketubbah*, was Reuel's grandson and that, after receiving the original autograph copy of Reuel's commentary as a gift or inheritance, Namer moved with his wife to Egypt. According to David Jacoby, "the Genizah letters also document the presence of Byzantine merchants in Egypt" already in the 1060's or early 1070's.⁵² Perhaps Namer was one of them, having been lured there by the lucrative trade between Egypt and the Byzantine Empire.

Jacoby also writes that "there is good reason to believe that the ancestors of the Jews living at Mastaura in the early eleventh century, or some of them at least, had come from Palestine or Syria."⁵³ Based on his analysis of the *ketubbah* and the history of the region, Jacoby believes that these ancestors – presumably speakers of Arabic and perhaps Aramaic, as well – migrated to Asia Minor in the second half of the tenth century.⁵⁴ Reuel himself, whose commentary does not exhibit Arabic influence, grew up in a Greek-speaking environment, but, if Jacoby is right, he may well have been the son and/or grandson of an immigrant.

In any event, we should consider the possibility that Reuel's teacher in Mastaura was not a local scholar. It may be that the exegetical (and scribal) traditions reflected in this textual treasure trove were transmitted to Reuel by a learned immigrant from Eretz Israel, possibly his own father and/or grandfather.

51. Steiner, בחינות לשון, 43 n. 13.

52. David Jacoby, "What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor from the Documents of the Cairo Genizah?" in *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th–12th cent.)* (ed. S. Lampakes; Athens: National Hellenic Foundation, 1998), 92–93.

53. *Ibid.*, 86.

54. *Ibid.*, 87.