
Note of further research



EVE KRAKOWSKI AND SACHA STERN

Our article in this issue, “The ‘oldest dated document of the Cairo Genizah’ (Halper 331): The Seleucid era and sectarian Jewish calendars,” examines a fragment of parchment bearing a short text dated to the year 870/1 CE. One of the article’s arguments concerns the protective formulas that appear in this fragment—“With a good sign for us and for all Israel, at a good hour, with an upright horn, (under) a high constellation, (so) may it be for us and for all Israel!” Similar formulas appear at the start of later Jewish marriage contracts (*ketubbot*) preserved in the Genizah (and later, elsewhere). But we suggest that in the ninth century, such formulas were not necessarily distinctive to *ketubbot*, and that Halper 331 may contain the text of some other type of legal document. In support of this suggestion, we noted two other non-*ketubbah* texts from the tenth century that feature similar formulas, including an inscription within a lectionary containing readings from the Prophets (*haftarot*) that was written in 924.¹

After the article went to press, however, we discovered that this lectionary’s inscription is not unique—very similar protective invocations appear in many of the colophons inscribed within the earliest medieval Jewish biblical codices, which like the 924 lectionary come from the tenth century (mainly from Egypt and Palestine). Malachi Beit-Arié, Collette Sirat, and Mordechai Glatzer edited and discussed these colophons in detail in their beautiful volume, *Codices Hebraicis Litteris Exarati Quo Tempore Scripti Fuerint Exhibentes (Tome 1: Jusqu’a 1020)*.² However, the colophons’ formulaic repertoire has not received much scholarly attention.³

This short addendum thus supplements our article to note that six of the tenth-century colophons that Beit-Arié, Sirat and Glatzer published contain invocations of this type.⁴ The earliest among them is EBP.I B 3, a codex containing the text of the Twelve Prophets with Babylonian vocalisation and cantillation marks, completed in 916. This manuscript’s first colophon, in Hebrew, includes the messianic invocation “May the redeemer come in

¹T-S A 42.2, discussed in our article at ns. 44–47.

²Brepols, 1997.

³We are grateful to Dr Ben Outhwaite for confirming that this is the case. However, note Susan Lynn Schmidt’s recent PhD dissertation on the illuminations of the Leningrad Codex: “The Carpet Illuminations of Codex Leningrad: National Library of Russia Ms. Evr. I B 19a” (PhD thesis, University of the Holy Land, 2019).

⁴Besides T-S A 42.2 (part of Beit Arié, Sirat and Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis*, vol. 1, no. 4) and EBP.I B3 (*ibid.*, no. 3), discussed here, related formulas appear in EBP II B 17 (*ibid.*, no. 5), EBP II B 280 (*ibid.*, no. 8), EBP II B 281 (*ibid.*, no. 10), and EBP II B 282 (*ibid.*, no. 11). Such formulas continue to appear in later biblical codex colophons after the tenth century as well.

our lifetime and the lives of all the house of Israel, amen” (יבוא גואל בחיינו ובחיי כל בית ישראל) (אמן) and the protective formula, “May this book (*diftar/daftar*) be a good sign for its owners and all who read it” (סימן טוב יהיה זה הדפּתר לבעליו ולכל הקורא). Its second colophon is likewise in Hebrew but begins with an analogous Aramaic protective formula, here applied to the book’s owners by name: “May this book (*muṣḥaf*) be a good charm and a perfect sign for our master (*rabbana*) Yīṣḥaq b. *rabbana* Yosef and his sons...” (נחשא טבא סימנא מעליא יהיה זה) (...). These colophon formulas’ evolution and their relationships to the closely related invocations and protective formulas that later became typical of *ketubbot* deserve further study.

EVE KRAKOWSKI

Princeton University

eve.krakowski@princeton.edu

SACHA STERN

University College London

sacha.stern@ucl.ac.uk