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NOTES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH WEEK*

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One of the institutions most taken for granted in our lives is the seven-day week which runs from the end of one Sabbath through the next in an uninterrupted cycle. We schedule appointments and often date important events with reference to the week and weekdays, e.g., 'I'll see you next week,' or 'Sunday, December 7, 1941.' As F. H. Colson noted, 'We measure our time in cycles of seven days primarily because the Jews, by the time of our era, had come to attach vast importance to the religious observance of one day in seven.' For Colson, 'when the recurrence of one day in seven is observed we have, of course, the week'.

The following notes have emerged from the observation that this implicit equation was barely realized in practical terms during the biblical period. Although Sabbath observance was well established in many spheres of life, implicitly establishing the concept of the sabbatical week, there is little evidence in our sources for popular consciousness of the week as a basic unit of time, or for the terminology which we commonly associate with it. Certain aspects of the concept developed only in Second Temple times, while others did not reach their current form until the Middle Ages.

The development of the Jewish sabbatical week coincided with the spread of the seven-day planetary week in the Roman empire. The original relationship between these two superficially similar institutions is unclear, but it appears that they had some impact upon each other and that both contributed to the western week as it is known today (see Colson). In what follows we seek to trace the development of the sabbatical week as it is reflected in Jewish sources.

1. TERMINOLOGY

a. Terms for the week

One index of the existence of a concept and of the attention it received is a name for it and the frequency with which that name is mentioned. In medieval and modern Hebrew the word וַיַּעַל (va-y'ala) refers both to the seven-day period from one Sabbath through the next and to any other seven-day period. We shall term these periods, respectively, the sabbatical week and the non-sabbatical week.

(1) In rabbinic Hebrew the sabbatical week is known as מִצְבָּחָה (mizbash'ah), a name based on the distinctive day with which it culminates. In popular usage מִצְבָּחָה could also refer to a non-sabbatical week (Mishnah Nedarim VIII. 1 end; Mishnah Ketubot V. 5; TB Mo'ed Katan 23a), although this was usually expressed by יְנֵשָׁב (yaneshab). That יְנֵשָׁב refers to a week at least once in the Bible is clear from the adjective יְנֵשָׁב, 'full,' which modifies יְנֵשָׁב in Lev. 23: 15b, but whether this passage refers to sabbatical or non-

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* To my teacher, Prof. H. L. Ginsberg.

In the preparation of this study I was privileged to draw upon the expertise of several scholars whose contributions could be only incompletely indicated in the footnotes. I am particularly indebted to Prof. Saul Lieberman and to my colleague, Prof. Judah Goldin, for the discussion of several issues and to Prof. Menahem Haran, who was kind enough to read the manuscript and offer a number of helpful suggestions. Final responsibility remains, of course, my own.


2 The evidence for the biblical period is reviewed in the recently published seventh volume of Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v. יְנֵשָׁב.

3 See, for example, Lev. 24:8; 2 Kgs. 4:23, 11:5-9; Hos. 2:13; Amos 8:5.

4 Mishnah Megillah III. 4; Nedarim VIII. 1 beginning; Tosefta Ta'anit III. 3; TB Menahot 63b; Pesahim 106a; Aramaic used מִצָּבָה, Targum to Esther 2:9; etc. This word is reflected in ois'barov, Luke 18:12; Mark 16:9; and, as Prof. Chaim Kabin was kind enough to confirm for me, in sanbatit, sanbatita mavoel, Ethiopic Jubilees 6:29-30.

5 As in laws about the confinement of the suspected leper and in the phrase יְנֵשָׁב, on which see J. Bergmann, in MGGW 76 (1932), 465-70 and S. Lieberman, Tosefta Ki-Fshuah, Order Mo'ed (New York, 1962), 1186 f.
sabbatical weeks depends upon the meaning of מַתָּחַת שְׁבָעָה, ‘the day after the Sabbath,’ in vv. 11 and 15a. If מַתָּחַת has its usual meaning of the Sabbath day in these verses, as the sectarian interpretation held, then the שְׁבָעָה שֵׁנָא, ‘seven Sabbaths’ of v. 15b, and perhaps שְׁבָעָה שֵׁנָא שְׁבָעָה, ‘the seventh Sabbath’ in v. 16 are sabbatical weeks. Prof. Ginsberg has argued that ‘the day after the Sabbath’ indeed refers to Sunday, but that the phrase is an interpolation in these verses by a ‘Sunday Pentecostalist.’ The Pharisaic understanding of ‘the day after the Sabbath’ as the day following the first holy day of Pesah — which can fall on other days of the week — implies that the ‘seven Sabbaths’ in vv. 15b and 16 are non-sabbatical weeks, like שְׁבָעָה שֵׁנָא, ‘seven weeks’ in Deut. 16:9. Even if the Pharisaic interpretation should be correct, it probably implies an underlying meaning of sabbatical week (just as שָׂבָט probably referred originally to the month from one new moon to the next and only secondarily to any other thirty-day period?). But since this use of שָׂבָט for the week is at best attested in only one or two biblical passages, in a priestly and perhaps in a royal context, one cannot infer that it reflects popular consciousness of the sabbatical week in the biblical period.

(2) Another way of describing the sabbatical week is found in biblical texts which distinguish the Sabbath from the rest of the week. They express this by the contrast שֵׁנָא יֶבֶרֶךְ שֵׁנָא, ‘six days... but on the seventh day,’ or שֵׁנָא יֶבֶרֶךְ שֵׁנָא שֵׁנָא, ‘the six days of labor, but on the Sabbath day.’ Since this bifurcation of the

6 Given the adjective שְׁבָעָה even the sectarian interpretation must reckon with weeks in v. 15b. I am unpersuaded by the objections of E. Vogt, in Biblica 40 (1959), 1008-11. Nachmanides, in his commentary on Lev. 23:11, holds that שָׂבָט in 2 Kgs. 11:5 and 9 refers to a sabbatical week (less plausibly, he also mentions Amos 8:5). The use of שָׂבָט שֵׁנָא for septennia (Lev. 25:8) also implies the meaning week; in later times this was expressed by יָנָא (Dan. 9:24-7; Zadokite Document, 16:3 f.; Jubilees 46:1 (DJD III. 79, No. 20, frag. 1:11)).

7 In a lecture delivered to the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in New York, December 1966.

8 Cf. Gen. 29:14; Lev. 27:6; Num. 9:22, 11:20-1; note (יָנָא) in Exod. 2:2; Deut. 21:13 (contrast Num. 20:29; Deut. 34:8); 2 Kgs. 15:13.

9 See above, note 6.

10 Exod. 20:9 f., 23:12, 34:21; Ezek. 46:1.

week is necessitated by the contrast these passages seek to draw, it does not in itself imply non-consciousness of the week as a unity. But it is noteworthy that similar contrasts in rabbinic and medieval texts are sometimes expressed by יָנָא, ‘all the (rest of the) days of the week, but on the Sabbath...’ This phrasing does imply a more explicit awareness of the week as a chronological unit, and nothing like it is found in biblical texts.

(3) The word שָׂבָט in biblical texts adds nothing to the evidence for the sabbatical week, since it refers only to non-sabbatical weeks and to septennia. The word describes the seven weeks between Pesah and Shavu’ot only where there is no hint of the weeks coinciding with sabbatical weeks (Deut. 16:9). Nor does שָׂבָט refer to the sabbatical week in rabbinic Hebrew. The Kassovsky concordances to the Tannaitic Midrashim, the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Babylonian Talmud list only one passage where שָׂבָט refers to a sabbatical week, and that passage is a late interpolation in the Mishnah:12 ‘The men of the lay division used to fast four days a week’ (Mishnah Ta’anit IV. 3). The corresponding Gemara (TB Ta’anit 27b) quotes a Tannaitic source on the subject which uses the word שָׂבָט: ‘four fasts during the week’,13 and the related Tosefta passage also terms the week שָׂבָט (Tosefta Ta’anit III. 3). Shabbat is also used in an authentic passage of Mishnah Ta’anit: ‘the week in which the Ninth of Av falls’ (Mishnah Ta’anit IV. 7).

Apparent cases of שָׂבָט referring to the sabbatical week in other texts of the Talmudic period are


12 See H. Albeck’s note in his edition of the Mishnah (Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, 1957), Ta’anit IV. 3 and H. Malter, The Treatise Ta’anit (New York, 1930), 121, note on l. 2.

13 Malter’s edition (op. cit.), 128, ll. 8-9. The printed editions and parallels cited by Malter have different wording, but none uses שָׂבָט.
contradicted by variant readings in manuscripts. I Avot deR. Nathan, ed. Schechter (New York, 1967), Ch. 11, p. 44, l. 9 reads השבר iht הושב תבש "if a man sat idle all week".14 Schechter cites no variants, but a manuscript in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America reads השבר.15 The same situation obtains in a number of passages in Bereshit Rabba, Ch. 11. In commenting on the distinctiveness of the Sabbath this chapter quotes several statements contrasting it to the rest of the week.16 In the twelfth century London MS used as the base text in the Theodor-Albeck edition, only one of these statements — the legend about the river Sambation — uses הלךソフト,17 the rest use הלךソフト, הלךソフト, הלךソフト, or no equivalent expression.18 For the passage using הלךソフト the apparatus quotes a reading בוש לסתם only from the Venice edition of 1545. However, the old MS. Vat. Ebr. 60,19 which was not utilized for the Theodor-Albeck edition, reads בוש לסתם throughout the chapter, and so, apparently, did the manuscript from which R. David Kimhi quoted the Sambation passage around the end of the twelfth century.20

R. David Luria (1798–1855) observed that the use of השבר for the (sabbatical) week is post-Talmudic, characteristic of the language of the posqim as against the Mishnah.21 The evidence bears this out. The earliest indisputable cases of השבר for the sabbatical week known to me are from the Geonic period (ca. seventh through eleventh centuries). For example, Mishnah Ta'AN 4. 7 states: השבר שלוש בתשבי ואחד אלה בתשבכה אפורים, בלשון ריבע, 'During the week השבר in which the Ninth of Av falls, it is forbidden to cut the hair or launder clothing.' The discussion of this Mishnah in the Gemara (TB Ta'AN 9b) continues to refer to this week as השבר.22 In a Geonic manuscript the Mishnah and Gemara are both rephrased to read השבר.23 השבר also appears in the date section of legal documents and formularies from the Geonic period on,24 with Karaite documents apparently showing a greater25 but still not exclusive preference for the word.26

A simple juxtaposition of texts illustrates the increasing frequency of השבר in Rabbinic sources. For example, the Mishnah rules:

A. Ginzburg (Pressburg, 1842), based on a Paris manuscript. The recent edition by M. Kamelhar (Jerusalem, 1970) reads החבר 회ל מיס(Json ירמיה), but since this edition is based on Ginzburg’s, the reading must be a modern error (identical to an older one in the Yalkut passage cited below, n. 31).

21 In his commentary to Pirqui R. Eliezer (Warsaw, 1852), Ch. 1, p. 2a n. 20 (cf. above, n. 15, and Pirqui R. Eliezer, Ch. 6, p. 15b, as cited from manuscript by S. Gandz, in PAAJR 18 [1948–9], 230; Luria also regards this usage as biblical.

22 Malter (The Treatise Taanit, p. 139, l. 12, p. 140, l. 14) lists variants with השבר twice, both from MS. Munich 95.

23 Oscar HaGeonim V, ed. B. M. Lewin (Jerusalem, 1933), Pt. 2 (Ta'anit), p. 64; the text uses השבר frequently. In the letter of the Jews of Kairuwan to R. Semah Gaon (cf. 884–915) about Eldad the Daneite, and in his responsa, the Sambation legend is cited with the phrase השבר לשבר. However, both texts are known only from later printings, see Kivel R. Avraham Epstein, 39, 77.

24 See I. Levi, in REJ 47 (1903), 301 (date 1049 C.E.); J. Mann, Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature (New York, 1972), i. 54 (date 1255). See also the following note.

25 For examples from the eleventh century on, see A. Gulak, Orak HaShekhot (Jerusalem, 1926), Nos. 53, 54 (Karaite prayerbook), 93; Mann, Texts and Studies, ii. 174, No. IV, l. 7; No. V, l. 6; 181, l. 15; 193, ii. 174, 190.

26 For השבר in Karaitic documents of the eleventh century, see Mann, ii. 168, 191 l. 140.
quoted continued to use שַׁבָּת at times, and in legal documents the term predominates even today, as in marriage contacts and divorce certificates.

The substitution of שַׁבָּת for "Sabbath" undoubtedly made for greater clarity. The confusion which could result from the use of שַׁבָּת for both Sabbath and week is reflected in the comment of the Tosafot on TOS Nedarim 60b, just quoted, and even earlier in the statement of the Gemara to which the Tosafot referred. To the Mishnah's inclusion of the following Sabbath in the vow of the Levite (Terah) the Gemara comments: "This is obvious! — You might think that (by שַׁבָּת) he meant (only) the weekdays (יומין) — we are therefore taught otherwise" (TB Nedarim 60b). 20

Similarly open to misunderstanding were such phrases as מִשָּׁרָה (širim) for מִשָּׁרָה (širim), מִשָּׁרָה (širim) for מִשָּׁרָה (širim), and מִשָּׁרָה (širim) for מִשָּׁרָה (širim), etc. (TB Yoreh De'ah 220: 3). 21

The use of שַׁבָּת for the sabbatical week was never entirely displaced by שַׁבָּת. Some of the sources just

Note how the final sentence in the Arba'ah Turim retains the feminine form of the Mishnah even though it has replaced the feminine form with the masculine שַׁבָּת: the Shulhan Arukh corrects the oversight.

Maimonides (1135–1204), intentionally pursuing a Mishnaic style, retained הביא in his formulation of the law (Hilkhot Nedarim 10:2), although he used הביא for the sabbatical week elsewhere (Hilkhot Tefillah 12:2).
Talmudic period; why this solution was not found until the Geonic period remains an unanswered question.33

b. The designations of the weekdays and identification of weeks

(1) The numerical designations of the weekdays are partly reflected in the Greek translation of Psalms and in the New Testament (μία σουββάτον, πρόετρο σουββάτον = ἀρχή / כהות רשבית, etc.) and fully attested in Tannaitic sources (די יראות, etc.).35 It is sometimes assumed that the numeration of days in Gen. 1 and Exod. 16: 5, 22–30 is an early attestation of the same system.36 Given the centrality of Sabbath observance in biblical times, people certainly knew how many days distant the Sabbath was, but it is far from certain that the weekdays were referred to numerically in normal discourse.

Although the numeration of days in Gen. 1 and Exod. 16 coincides with that of the sabbatical week, it differs from the latter considerably. The numeration of the weekdays begins anew after each Sabbath and the cycle repeats itself endlessly. The numeration in Gen. 1 begins with the first act of creation, a non-repeatable event. There is no indication in the text that the creation week is part of a continuing cycle, that another week began the day after the first Sabbath. In Exod. 16 the numeration begins with the first fall of manna. The first day of this week is innerrably the day after a Sabbath, though Israel was not aware of this. The seven-day manna period is part of a continuing cycle, and the designations in vv. 26, 29, and 30 refer to future sixth and seventh days. But ‘the seventh day’ is not the ‘name’ of that day, which the text calls ‘Sabbath’, and therefore ‘the sixth day’ is presumably not a ‘name’ either. These phrases simply count the days on which the manna falls or ceases.37 Furthermore, the cycle of manna weeks lasted only until Israel entered the promised land (Josh. 5: 12); the numeration would have had no meaning after that time. For these reasons it is questionable whether these chapters were thought to explain or reflect a numerical designation of weekdays. Certainly some later authorities rejected this possibility. The Talmuds record a discussion in the course of which it is suggested that בְּבָשָׁן 1 Chr. 3: 2 refers to שֵׁשֶׁת בָּשָׁן. This is rejected on the ground that אַל כְּכַפֶּרֶשׂ, רַבּוּן חַוְּרִית, ‘we do not find this numeration in the Torah’. When this is challenged with יֵשׁ רַבָּא בָּשָׁן in Gen. 1: 8, the Palestinian Talmud responds: זו זוומך שבברות, ‘we derive no lesson from the creation of the world’.38

(2) Prior to the period of the Qumran scrolls the only other evidence for names of weekdays comes from the Persian and Hellenistic periods and applies to the days immediately before and after the

33 Profs. Chaim Rabin and Stephen A. Kaufman have both suggested to me that since in Aramaic, too, which the Jews spoke through the Talmudic period, the word for sabbatical week was שָׁבוּר (שָׁבוּר), Hebrew continued to express this meaning by שָׂבָר. With the change to Arabic in the Geonic period this ‘protection’ was lost. Since the use of biblicisms is characteristic of late rabbinic Hebrew, one might consider the new use of שָׂבָר as a false biblicism based on the greater frequency of the word as a term for week in the Bible while overlooking the distinction between the sabbatical and non-sabbatical week (cf. n. 21). Whether Arabic (the Muslim equivalent of the sabbatical week, named for the Friday day of public prayer) or the еврейский епископ used to both the sabbatical and non-sabbatical week in a diary from Baghdad (G. Makdisi, ‘Autograph Diary of an Eleventh Century Historian of Baghdad’, BSOAS 18 (1956), 243 §22 and 19 (1957), 429 §§170–1, kindly called to my attention by my colleague Prof. George Makdisi) and 전형적 ישן (ይימניאב) adopted for the sabbatical week in The Kuzari I. 57–8; II. 20; III. 5; see the Arabic text published by H. Hirschfeld, Das Buch Al-Chazari (Leipzig, 1887). However, in both cases this usage may be due to the Hebrew development rather than vice versa (the Arabic week, which counts the days starting with Sunday, is certainly based on the Jewish week). The later Arabic version of Eldad Hadani, in the Sambation passage, uses שָׁבוּר for the sabbatical week. Prof. J. Blau informs me that the antiquity of these two words in Arabic has not been established.

34 Superscriptions to Ps. 24; 38; 48; 93; 94 (also Ps. 81 in the Old Latin); Mark 16:2, 9, etc. See E. Schürer, in ZNW 6 (1905), 2 f.

35 Mekhilta to Exod. 20:8, s.v. يوم weekday; for later sources see Midrash Hagadol on the same verse and Pesiqta RabbaI 23:1. Cf. Schürer, op. cit., 1 ff.


37 Cf. Ibn Ezra on Exod. 16:16.

38 TP Rosh HaShanah I. 1, 56a; TB Rosh HaShanah 3a (called to my attention by Prof. Lieberman). Note that one side in this discussion does presume that the Bible referred to the weekdays by number. Cf. also the debate in TB Shabbat 87a and b.
Sabbath. At Elephantine the day preceding the Sabbath is called יומד בָּשָׁבָךְ, an early version of rabbinic terms for the day (_pbשָׁבָךְ). In Neh. 13:19 we read: יַחֲדָא חַלֵּה כֵּסֶף יַעֲשֵׂהוּוּ לְמֵפֵרֶת, וְעַרְיָה יִרְדֵּשׁ, יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת, וְעַרְיָה יִרְדֵּשׁ, יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת. As the gates of Jerusalem grew dark (?) before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors be shut, and I gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. The phrases יַחֲדָא חַלֵּה כֵּסֶף לְמֵפֵרֶת יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת and יַחֲדָא חַלֵּה כֵּסֶף לְמֵפֵרֶת יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת are usually understood as simply before and after the Sabbath. A number of considerations suggest that they are actually standard designations for what we term Friday and Sunday. Since Nehemiah had earlier commanded that the gates of Jerusalem not be opened until the sun was hot (Neh. 7:3), his command in 13:19 must refer to the following day and not the night after the Sabbath. Indeed, sources from the Second Temple and rabbinic periods designate the day after the Sabbath as a holy day. For example, Mishnah Shabbat XIX. 4 discusses יַחֲדָא חַלֵּה כֵּסֶף לְמֵפֵרֶת יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת, 'he who had two infants, one to circumcise after the Sabbath and one to circumcise on the Sabbath'. The phrase יַחֲדָא חַלֵּה כֵּסֶף יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת cannot refer to Saturday night here since circumcision normally takes place in daytime.40

Later usage also supports understanding יַחֲדָא חַלֵּה כֵּסֶף as a term for all of Friday, not only late Friday afternoon, for its Greek equivalent (πρόσωπον σφακταί) is a standard term for Friday in Hellenistic Jewish literature. For example, Judah 8:6 states that Judith used to fast 'all the days of her widowhood except (the day) before the Sabbath (πρόσωπον σφακταί), etc'. In Hebrew sources, Palestinian MSS of Mishnah Shabbat XXII. 2 read מִשְׁמַר מַעֲשֵׂה, לְשׁוֹן מַעֲשֵׂה in place of the more common מִשְׁמַר מַעֲשֵׂה used in Babylonian MSS.41 This may also be the meaning of the problematic "תֹּלְקֶפֶת יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת in the seventh century Hebrew letter from Mesaid Hashaviah.42

One of the mishmarot texts from Qumran appears to include the numerical designations of the weekdays.43 This text dates the holy days according to the day of the priestly mishmar on which each falls, e.g. 1 בּ, 'On the fourth (day of the mishmar) of Ma'aziah, the Day of Remembrance.' Since each mishmar served seven days, with Sunday its first full day, these numbers coincide with the numerical designations of the weekdays. Unlike Gen. 1 and Exod. 16, the mishmarot texts demonstrably refer to an ongoing cycle of weeks in historical times.

(3) The Qumran text implies a practice of designating the week by the name of its priestly mishmar. Such a practice is also mentioned in the Palestinian Talmud. The Mishnah (Sheqalim V. 5) specifies that vouchers for the purchase of sacrificial materials at the temple were to be dated מִשְׁמַר, יִזְכַּר לְתֹּלְקֶפֶת, 'the “name of the day” was written on them') to prevent their fraudulent use at a later date.44 In the Bible מִשְׁמַר is a general term for date (Ezek. 24:2),45 but in Tosefta Baba Batra X. 2.


41 Sifra Lev. 12:2; Mishnah Megilla II. 5–6; Tosefta Shabbat XV (XVI), 9. For other examples see 2 Macc. 8:28; DJD II, No. 44:9–10; Mishnah Shabbat XIX. 5; Tosefta Shabbat XV. 10; Mishnah Ḥagiga II. 4; TB Menahot 65a. In light of this designation for the day after the Sabbath, it is not impossible that the Boethusians and others took חַלֵּה כֵּסֶף as a standard rather than unique designation of Sunday.


44 Mishnah Tamid V. 1; Tosefta Sukkah IV. 24; Tosefta Ta'anit III. 3; Josephus, *Antiquities*, VII. xiv. 7 (365).

45 For the meaning of fraudulent use, Prof. Lieberman refers me to the interpretation of R. Abraham ben David of Poskéres (Rabad) cited in Tosefta Ḥabadim to Mishnah Sheqalim V. 5 (printed in *Mishnayot* [Wilna: Rom, 1912], p. 259).

(quoted in the next paragraph) it is used for the day of the week within a fuller date. The Palestinian Talmud (Sheqalim V. 3, 49a) discusses the precise content of the date intended by the Mishnah and, after rejecting the possibility that it consisted of the weekday alone, suggests that it included the weekday plus the name of the mishmar on duty during the week of the transaction. It is objected that this information is too equivocal to prevent fraudulent use of a voucher half a year later since the mishmarot serve twice annually. The Gemara then concludes: 'On the first, second, third, and fourth days of the week, the name of the day, the name of the week (תתע), and the name of the month were written on them, so that even if one wished to find a matching date (and use the voucher fraudulently on that date), it is rarely matched.'

The Gemara’s final formula has called forth varying interpretations. The same phrase is part of the dating formula for documents according to Tosafot Baba Batra XI: 2: "The essential formula of a document: "on day x of week x of month x of year x of kingdom x." In commenting on the latter passage, R. David Pardo (1718–90) noted that the formula omits the date within the month and argued that the week was to be identified by its Torah portion, "for there is no other designation or name for weeks." Identification of the week by the Torah portion is known in medieval and modern responsa, letters, and other literary genres, but so far as I have been able to discover, it is not used in legal documents. Nor is such a procedure plausible for Tanaitic times. Even if the weekly sedarim of the Palestinian triennial cycle were established by that period, they were not everywhere identical and could not have served as an intelligible means of identification throughout Erets Yisrael.

Another suggestion is found in the commentary of R. Meshullam on TP Sheqalim V. 3, 49a, namely that the mishmar in the final formula of the Gemara refers to the mishmar of that week; in other words, the week is identified by the name of the mishmar serving during that week. That such a system existed is confirmed by the mishmarot text and related calendrical texts from Qumran. The Qumran calendar, with its months of fixed length, was able to predict the dates of its mishmarot (which numbered twenty-six at Qumran, due to its solar calendar and fixed fifty-two week year) and consequently to date festivals by the day of the priestly mishmar on which they fell, as in the text cited above. However, Jews who followed the lunar calendar could not date festivals in advance this way, since the day on which the new moon would be proclaimed was not known in advance. But the public at large was aware of the sequence of

Notes of Jews Through the Ages (London, 1952), i. 297; ii. 347, 413, 455 bis, 481, 482, 484; Avraham Yaari, Iggerot Erets Yisrael (Ramat Gan, 1971), 165, 193, 227; Iggerot Chaim Nachman Bialik, I, ed. P. Lachover (Tel Aviv, 1937), 1, 28; S. Y. Agnon, Atem Re’sitem (Tel Aviv, 1962), 16. This is by no means the consistent practice of the writers.

47 The passage is beset with textual problems; cf. Treatise Sheshach (Hebrew), ed. A. Schreiber (Sofer), (New York, 1954), 61 f, including the comments of the student of R. Samuel. The reading of the passage quoted is essentially supported by the genizah fragment published by L. Ginzberg, Yerushalmi Fragments from the Genizah (Hebrew), (New York, 1909), 132, II. 4–5.

48 Haddai David to Tosafot Baba Batra XI, 2, kindly called to my attention by Prof. Lieberman. Some of the conclusions reached in the ensuing discussion bear out explanations tentatively suggested to me by Prof. Lieberman; any distortions or errors which may remain are my own.

49 Cf. Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem, 1971), xi. 62 s.v. 'Letters and Letter Writers'. For examples, see Indices to the Responsa of Jewish Law: Historical Index, ed. M. Elia (Jerusalem, 1973), Pt. II, pp. 163 f., Nos. 1–4, 7, 8; F. Kohler,
mishmarot and could have used it for dating documents as the need arose. The sequence was still remembered in the Tannaitic period, and indeed for centuries thereafter. E. E. Urbach has called attention to early genizah fragments which include chapters of Mishnah Shabbat, with the name of a mishmar accompanying the number heading each chapter (e.g., Chapter twenty Abiaah, or 'Petahiah Chapter nineteen'). There is evidence elsewhere for the study of this tractate on the Sabbath. Since the number of chapters it contains equals the number of priestly mishmarot, Urbach concludes that these notations reflect a semi-annual cycle of studying one chapter each Sabbath, with the name of the week's mishmar being mentioned at the beginning of each lesson. Another genizah text, published by M. Zulay, shows that the name of the weekly mishmar was still announced on the Sabbath in some congregations as late as the eleventh century. The identity of the priestly mishmarot of the weeks was therefore a matter of common knowledge.

The discussion in TP Sheqalim V. 3, 49a actually mentions the mishmar as one of the items in the date, but against R. Meshullam's explanation it may be urged that in mentioning והשב התשנ ושנשב and והשב התשנ ושנשב, the Genara indicates that they are different. Indeed, R. David Fränkel, in his commentary Qorban Ha'Edah on this passage, understands והשב differently, explaining it as the number of the week within a given month. As a solution to the problem of recurrent identical dates this explanation is insufficient, since most dates of the form 'Wednesday of the second week in Tammuz'

occur every year. R. David Fränkel is aware of this problem, for after explaining each item in the formula does he add 'and also the name of the mishmar' (instead of only, erev). Since a mishmar would not serve in the same week of the same month more than once in several years, this adds the required element of uniqueness to each date. However, such a reading of the Gemara is forced, since the final statement of the Gemara specifies three items, not four. The structure of the Gemara seems to be that after each datum is pronounced insufficient one more is added, so that the final statement consists of those previously mentioned plus one new datum. By this reasoning the name of the week equals the previously mentioned name of the mishmar, as R. Meshullam stated. Against the objection that the two terms והשב והשב indicate different things, it may be argued that they are indeed synonymous, with the Gemara switching to the latter term since it is part of a fixed formula found in Tosefta Baba Bata XI. 2. Since the final answer was identical to part of the practice mentioned in the latter source, the Gemara chose to express that solution (and perhaps thereby lend greater credibility to it) with the standard terminology.

It might further be argued against R. Meshullam's explanation that the weekday, mishmar, and month by themselves were not always sufficient to prevent fraud after a year, since a mishmar could serve in the same month two years in a row. A mishmar could not serve in the same week of the same month more than once every several years, and, forced as such an interpretation seems, a separate identification of the week by number in addition to the mishmar would better serve the Mishnah's avowed aim of preventing fraud. However, I know of no evidence from the Talmudic period for a practice of numbering the weeks of a month, and in any case the Gemara apparently did not think the Mishnah referred to a system which was foolproof for more than a year. Had it thought so it could have included the year in its final formulation. This question requires further investigation.

55 Cf. Mishnah Ta'anit IV. 2; Tosefta Ta'anit IV. 3; and see below, § 2.
56 Tosefta Ta'anit II. 2-3 (see Avi-Yonah in EI 7 [1964], 27); Soferim XVII. 4 (see E. E. Urbach in Turbit 42 [1972-3], 313 [Hebrew]). For fragments of mishmarot lists, see S. Talmon in Scripta Hierosolymitana 4 (1958), 171; Avi-Yonah, op. cit., 24-8; R. Degen in Turbit 42 (1972-3), 302 f. (Hebrew); Urbach, op. cit., 304-7 (cf. Turbit 43 [1973-4], 224); Z. Ilan, Turbit 43 (1973-4), 225 f.
57 Turbit 42 (1972-3), 309.
58 Yedid'ot HaMa'akhan LeHecker HaShirah Ha'Ivrit Bi-Yerushalayim, V (1939), 111.
60 This was pointed out to me by Prof. Shamma Friedman.
61 For the consecutive numbering of Sabbaths throughout the year see J. M. Baumgarten in VT 16 (1966), 277-86.
2. Increasing consciousness of the sabbatical week and the rejection of the planetary week

a. We have seen that the concept of the sabbatical week was implicitly established by the observance of the Sabbath. But a search for some practical impact of the concept in the biblical period seems practically in vain. No biblical date mentions the weekday.62 While rabbinic sources often list the divisions of time which were significant in contemporary life and include the week and weekday,63 the few comparable biblical passages do not.64 Above we have noted the infrequent use of the word for sabbatical week and the absence of names or designations for most of the weekdays in the Bible.

Indications that the sabbatical week had become an object of widespread consciousness appear only in later Second Temple and Tannaitic times. In the earlier part of the Second Temple period the evidence is still limited to the temple and its procedures.65 But in later Second Temple times the Qumran/Jubilees calendar reflects the special significance of the week by establishing a year of exactly fifty-two weeks.66 Tannaitic sources imply that Jewry at large was kept aware of the cycle of weeks by the lay groups associated with the priestly mishmarot. When the latter traveled to Jerusalem for their semiannual week of duty, members of their lay counterparts abstained from work for the entire week, some accompanying the mishmarot to Jerusalem and the rest remaining in their local communities, fasting on some days and reading

sections of Gen. 1:1–2:3 for each day the week.67 As noted above, the tradition of these groups was kept alive following the destruction of the temple.68

It is around the same period that we first hear (in Tannaitic sources) of institutions and customs pegged to a weekly cycle, recurring on particular days of the week: the special Levitical psalms for each day,69 the court sessions, Torah reading,70 and proclamation of fasts on Mondays and Thursdays,71 the marriage of virgins on Wednesdays and widows on Thursdays,72 and laundering on Thursdays.73 The time of origin of these practices is unknown, but one of the daily Levitical psalms is already attested in the Masoretic text and most of the others in the Greek translation of Psalms,74 while the court sessions, Torah reading and laundering days seemed sufficiently ancient in Tannaitic times to be credited to Ezra.75

b. The earliest evidence of a calendar dating holidays by week and day comes from Qumran, as we have seen. But we have also seen that this sectarian practice could not have been shared by Jewry at large. Furthermore, the date clauses of documents continued to ignore the weekday in the time of Bar Kochba.76 The earliest reference to the

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62 Cf. above, nn. 38, 46.
63 Mishnah Baba Mešia IX. 11; Ketubot V. 6; Sanhedrin V. 1; Tosefta Baba Batra XI. 2; TP Nedarim IV. 10, 38d; TB Gitin 17b.
64 Num. 9:22; Esther 3:7. Contrast the addition in Targum Esther 2:9.
65 1 Chr. 9:25 and 2 Chr. 23:8 refer to the weekly divisions serving in the temple; 1 Chr. 9:32 to the weekly replacement of the showbread, a practice taken over from the First Temple period (Lev. 24:8; cf. 1 Sam. 21:7 and M. Haran in Encyclopaedia Biblica iv. 494). Cf. also R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel (New York, 1961), 188.
67 Mishnah Ta'anit IV. 2–3; Tosefta Ta'anit III (IV). 3.
68 See nn. 56–58.
69 Ps. 92:1; LXX and/or Vulgate titles of Ps. 24; 48; 38; 94; 93; 92; Old Latin title of Ps. 81 (see E. Schürer, in ZNW 6 (1905), 5); Mishnah Tamid, end.
70 Mishnah Megillah III. 6; IV. 1; Ketubot I. 1; TP Megillah IV. 1, 75a; TB Baba Qama 82a.
72 Mishnah Ketubot I. 4.
73 TB Baba Qama 82a; cf. Mishnah Baba Batra V. 10.
74 See n. 69.
75 See the last two passages cited in n. 70.
76 See for example the documents published in DJD II (1961) and by Y. Yadin and H. J. Polotsky in Yeditot 26 (1962), 204–41 (Hebrew). A number of narrative passages in biblical and postbiblical sources mention that certain events took place on, before, or after the Sabbath, but this is never done as a matter of routine but because the character of the day affected the course of events (Exod. 16:24–30; Num. 15:32–6; Neh. 13:15–22 (cf. also 2 Kgs. 11:5–9/2 Chr. 23:1–8); cf. the various reports involving the Jews' refusal to defend themselves on the Sabbath (such as I Mac. 2:32–3); the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus and its aftermath (Mark 15:42; 16:1, 2, 9; etc; Sunday is mentioned for etiological reasons).
week and weekday in the dating of documents is the formulary of *Tosefta Baba Batra* XI. 2 (see above). Evidence for the actual use of this formulary during the Talmudic period is meager. There is no comparable prescription in the *Mishnah*. The discussion in *TP Sheqalim* V. 3, 49a is academic. It may be inferred from a case heard by R. Joseph (*TB Ketubot* 94b) that the documents in question did not state in which week they were written, since that *datum* would have affected the decision and would therefore have been mentioned if it had been stated. On the other hand, the divorce documents discussed in *TB Gittin* 17b did identify the week. Apart from this case, I have found no example of a legal document between the Talmudic period and modern times which actually mentions the week in which it was written.

The earliest Hebrew inscription known to me which dates an event by the day of the week is a tombstone from Zoar which states — exceptionally — that the deceased 'died on Tuesday, the eleventh of Elul, the [...] year of the septennium, in the four hundred and thirty-fifth year of the destruction of the temple'.

By the time of the *genizah* documents and the later Middle Ages, the weekday has become a standard item in most legal documents.

c. Coincident with the growing prominence of the sabbatical week in Jewish life was the spread of the seven-day planetary week in the Roman empire. Ancient Rome had followed an eight-day market week, in which each town held a market on one of the eight days. Since each town's turn recurred every ninth day the days were known as *numiniae*. On calendars they were designated by the letters A through H, which served as numbers (one, two, etc.). Around the turn of the era the seven-day planetary week began to spread through the empire. At Pompeii (destroyed 79 C.E.) a wall inscription, with the heading 'days of the gods', lists the planets in the order Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus (i.e., Saturday through Friday). The system at first received no official support, though it gained currency among the population at large. But by the beginning of the third century C.E. the planetary day began to appear in dates. The earliest known instance is from 205 C.E., in an inscription from Karlsruhe, Transylvania, while the earliest case from the eastern empire is a school lesson from Egypt, dated 294 C.E.

This is not the place to discuss the possible Jewish stimulus behind the spread of the seven-day planetary week in the Roman empire. What interests us is the coincidence between this development and certain Tannaitic prescriptions regarding dating. While known Palestinian legal documents through the early second century C.E. omit the weekday from dates, around the beginning of the next century the *Tosefta* stipulates its inclusion (*Tosefta Baba Batra* XI. 2), at just about the time the weekday is first attested as part of the date in inscriptions from the Roman empire. Another Tannaitic prescription shows resistance to contemporary practice in the empire: 'Do not count (the days) as others do (i.e., with planetary names), but count with reference to the Sabbath', i.e., זאפ בתשנ, etc.

If the Jewish practice owes anything to the Roman, then what was borrowed was characteristically modified to suit Jewish beliefs.

When Christianity inherited the sabbatical week from Judaism, at first it modified only the name of the first day and preserved the Greek forms of the old Jewish names for the rest of the days. This is still reflected in the modern Greek names of the days: κυριακή (the 'Lord's Day'), δευτέρα, τρίτη,


82 See Colson, *The Week*, Ch. 5.

83 *Mekhilta* to *Exod*. 20:8, s.v. זאפ בתשנ; cf. Ibn Ezra (short commentary) and Nachmanides to the same verse, and *Pesiqta Rabbati* 23:1.

84 The Talmud knows the Christian 'Lord's Day' as עיִי.
etrapeis, ἐπικτῆ παρασκευῆς. Likewise Arabic adopted, perhaps via Christianity, the standard Jewish names for all days but the Islamic day of assembly, Friday (يوم الجمعة). Like the rabbis, the leaders of the Church objected to the use of the planetary names, but only the Eastern Church succeeded in excluding them, as reflected in the modern Greek names. In western Europe the planetary names were for the most part accepted, either in a form based on the Roman names (e.g., Saturday, Lundi, Mardi, Mercredi, Jeudi, Vendredi) or local European counterparts (e.g., Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, etc.). The astrological basis of the planetary names (the influence of the planets on the days of the week) penetrated Jewish sources in late Talmudic times and afterwards, but the names themselves were never accepted in Judaism.

ADDENDA

To p. 116, nn. 40-41: For further discussion of ליום שבת see my forthcoming note in Vetus Testamentum.

To p. 120: “The earliest Hebrew inscription...” This may be due to the paucity of the evidence or to my ignorance. Note that the use of the weekday is already specified in Tosefta Baba Batra XI, 2. In Christian inscriptions (in Latin and Greek) the weekday appears in the date as early as 269 C.E. and becomes frequent in the fourth century. See H. Leclercq, art. ‘Jours de la semaine,’ in Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie (Paris, 1907-53), Vol. 7(2), 2738-42; Anastasius C. Bandy, The Greek Christian Inscriptions of Crete (Athens: Christian Archaeological Society, 1970), 21 f. and passim. For the weekday in third century Roman inscriptions see the end of the next paragraph in the body of the article.

To p. 121, n. 84: MS Jewish Theological Seminary of America 44830 reads simply ירוש (S. Abramson, Tractate 'Avodah Zarah [New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1957], ad. loc.).

85 Cf. TB Berakhot 59b; Shabbat 129b, 156a; 'Erav 56a; Pirqei R. Eliezer, Ch. 6. See S. Gandz, in PAAJR 18 (1948-9), 213-54.