

יקרע שיראין: Daf Ditty Ketubot 31
The History of Silk



וקרע שראין של. בביח נפא אמר רב חסדא
 מדה רבי נחניא בן הקנה בנתב חלבי של
 תביח ואלו שהוא חיב שכבר נתחייב
 בנגבה קדם שבא לדי איסור חלב ליטא
 פליגא דרבי אבין דאמר רבי אבין **החורק
 חץ שתחולת ארבע לסוף ארבע וקרע שראין
 בתלינתו פסוד שעקודה צורך העשה הוא
 הבא נמי תגבהה צורך אבילה הוא דבי השתא
 דתם אי אפשר להעשה בלא עקודה הבא
 אפשר לאבילה בלא תגבהה דא בעי *נחן
 ואביל אי נמי דתם אי בעי לאתחודה לא מצי

זורק חץ ברה"ר וקרע שיראין בהליכתו



עקירה צורך הנחה היא

גופא, אמר רב חסדא: מודה רבי נחוניא בן הקנה בגונב חלבו של חבירו ואכלו שהוא חייב, שפבר נתחייב בגנבה קודם שיבא לידי איסור חלב. לימא פליגא דרבי אבין. דאמר רבי אבין: הזורק חץ מתחילת ארבע לסוף ארבע, וקרע שיראין בהליכתו — פטור. שעקירה צורך הנחה היא. הקא נמי: הגבהה צורך אכילה היא!

הזורק חץ מתחילת ארבע לסוף ארבע וקרע שיראין בהליכתו פטור

*He is exempt from תשלומין,
because of בדרכו מיניה*

Although the קריעה incurred through תשלומין preceded, the מיתה of Shabbos incurred through הנחה, the landing of the arrow?

עקירה צורך הנחה היא

מיתה ותשלומין באין כאחד
שעקירה צורך הנחה היא
ומההיא שעתא אתחלה לה מלאכה

If one shot an arrow on Shabbos, and it traveled a distance of four Amos in a רשות הרבים, and also tore a garment during its course, he is exempt from תשלומין, from paying for the garment, because of קים ליה בדרכו מיניה

Although the קריעה incurred through תשלומין preceded, the מיתה of Shabbos incurred through הנחה, the landing of the arrow?

Although the תשלומין incurred through קריעה, preceded, the מיתה of Shabbos incurred through הנחה, the landing of the arrow?

However, since

עקירה צורך הנחה היא

One is חייב מיתה through הנחה only if it was preceded by עקירה. Therefore, as Rashi explains;

מיתה ותשלומין באין כאחד

שעקירה צורך הנחה היא

ומה היא שעתא אתחלה לה מלאכה


The חיוב מיתה is considered to be incurred during the entire duration of the מלאכה of הוצאה והעברה ברה"ר which consists of both, עקירה, removing the item from its initial location, and הנחה, placing it in another location - and the חיוב מיתה is also incurred within that timeframe. Therefore, קים ליה בדרבה מיניה applies, and the מיתה absolves him of the תשלומין.

§ The Gemara analyzes **the matter itself**. **Rav Hisda said: Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana concedes in the case of one who steals another's forbidden fat and eats it that he is obligated to pay for the fat, as he is already liable for theft before he comes to violate the prohibition against eating forbidden fat.**

The Gemara comments: **Let us say that Rav Hisda disagrees with Rabbi Avin, as Rabbi Avin said: One who shoots an arrow from the beginning of four cubits to the end of four cubits in the public domain on Shabbat, thereby performing a prohibited labor for which he is liable to receive a court-imposed death penalty, and the arrow ripped silk as it proceeds, is exempt from the obligation to pay for the silk because he is liable for the more severe punishment for desecrating Shabbat. Although the silk was ripped prior to completion of the prohibited labor, as the arrow had not yet come to rest, he is nevertheless exempt, as lifting is a prerequisite for placement.**

The prohibited labor of carrying on Shabbat is comprised of lifting of the object and placement. Once he shot the arrow, its movement through the air is a continuation of his act of Shabbat desecration, for which he is liable to be executed. **Here, too, say that lifting the fat is a prerequisite for eating, and therefore he should be exempt from payment.**

שִׁירָא III, שִׁירָאָה m. (cmp. sericum) [*of Seres, Chinese,*] silk. Targ. II Esth. V, 1; VI, 10, v. פִּרְנָן. — Keth. 63^b הוּא הַפִּיסָא הוּא שִׁירָא (Rashi 'הוּא ש') she seized a silk garment (Rashi: *a cloak*).—Pl. שִׁירָאָה, שִׁירָאָה, שִׁירָאָה. Targ. Ez. XXVII, 19 בשִׁירָאָה ed. Lag. (oth. ed. בשִׁירָאָה, corr. acc.).—Sabb. 90^a רִשׁ' דְּשִׁירָאָה the worm (*t'khakh*) in silk garments. Kidd. 32^a וְרִשׁ' דְּשִׁירָאָה tore silk garments in the presence of his son Rabbah (to test his filial respect): Snh. 67^b, v. פִּרְנָן III. Ber. 56^a, v. תִּבְלָא II. Y. Sabb. VI, 8^b bot. (expl. שִׁירָאָה, Is. III, 19) שִׁירָאָה silk cloaks(?).


This reasoning CANNOT be applied
to the case of חלב as well to say
 הגבהה צורך אכילה היא
It's considered כאחד

הַכִּי הַשְׁתָּא?! הֵתָם, אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהַנְחִיהָ בְּלֹא עֲקִירָהּ. הֲכָא, אֶפְשָׁר
 לְאֲכִילָהּ בְּלֹא הַגְבָּהָה, דְּאִי בְּעֵי, גְחִין וְאֲכִיל. אִי נִמְי: הֵתָם אִי בְּעֵי
 לְאֶהְדוּרָה — לֹא מְצִי מְהֵדֵר לָהּ. הֲכָא — מְצִי מְהֵדֵר לָהּ.

The Gemara refutes this argument: **How can these cases be compared? There**, in the case of the arrow, **placement is impossible without lifting**, as placement without lifting is not a labor prohibited on Shabbat. Therefore, lifting and placement are a single unit. In contrast, **here, eating is possible without lifting as, if one wishes, he could bend down and eat** without lifting the food to his mouth.

Alternatively, there is another difference between the cases: **There**, in the case of the arrow, even **if he seeks to take back** the arrow after shooting it, **he cannot take it back**; therefore, lifting and placement constitute one action. **Here, he could replace** the fat after lifting it.

10. Therefore, we do not say that the act of eating [for which he is liable to *kares*] begins from when he “lifts” the *cheilev* [which is the time that he becomes liable for theft] (*Rashi*).

[Apparently, this second version means to say that even if one could *not* eat without first lifting the food, you could not compare the case of eating *cheilev* to the case of shooting an arrow on the Sabbath. For in the case of the arrow, the *melachah* (for which the person is eventually liable to death) begins with the release of the arrow because at that point the act is irreversible. In the case of eating, however, the act is reversible until the person actually swallows the *cheilev*; hence, you cannot say that the act for which the eater eventually becomes liable to death begins with the lifting of the *cheilev*. Accordingly, however, *Rashi* ד”ה לא מצי לאהדורה (see note 9) should not have emphasized that at the time of the arrow’s release the *tearing of the silks* is inevitable, but

rather that at the time of the release, the *hanachah* of the arrow is inevitable. For once the *hanachah* is inevitable, then the *melachah* has already begun, and there can be no liability for the tearing of the silks that occurs in the course of the *melachah's* completion! (see *Maharam Schif* and *Rashash*). Perhaps *Rashi* understands the innovation of this second version to be that the mere occurrence of monetary liability during the commission of an act that *results* in the death penalty is not sufficient to exempt the person from monetary liability because of *he stands liable to the greater penalty*. Rather, the monetary liability must occur at the time the person *becomes liable* to the death penalty. Hence, the one who shoots the arrow is exempt from paying for the silks because he becomes liable to the death penalty upon his release of the arrow (at which point the completion of the *melachah* is inevitable) and that is the **very moment at which he would incur liability for the silks as well** because their tearing, too, is inevitable. (See *Meiri*. *Maharam Schif* suggests this as a possible way of explaining *Rashi*, but he concludes that it does not seem that *Rashi* meant this. See *Shitah Mekubetzes* ד"ז לאהדורי וכו' for a different way of explaining *Rashi*. See also the explanation of *Rashi* proposed by R' Aharon Kotler, cited in the *Ginzei HaOhel* section of *Ohel Avraham* to *Kesubos*.)



In the case of זריקה ברה"ר
אי אפשר להנחה בלא עקירה
One CANNOT make הנחה without a preceding עקירה.
Therefore,

עקירה צורך הנחה היא
But in the case of אכילת חלב
אפשר לאכילה בלא הגבהה
דאי בעי גחין ואכיל
One CAN transgress אכילה without a preceding הגבהה, by
stooping down and eating it without lifting it. Therefore,
הגבהה לאו צורך אכילה היא

11. True, the death penalty is not incurred until the knife comes to rest, which is after the liability for tearing the silks occurs. Nevertheless, he is exempt from paying for the silks, since he tore them during the commission of the *melachah* for which he eventually incurs the death penalty (see above, note 5).

In the case of זריקה ברה"ר
אי בעי לאהדורה לא מצי מהדר לה
A זריקה CANNOT be retracted. Therefore,
עקירה צורך הנחה היא
But in the case of אכילת חלב
מצי מהדר לה
The הגבהה CAN be retracted. Therefore,
הגבהה לאו צורך אכילה היא
The difference between these reasons would be in a
similar case of העברה בשבת, where instead of throwing, he
carried a knife through רשות הרבים and it tore a garment
during its course.

The reason of
אי אפשר להנחה בלא עקירה
Applies here as well -
But the reason of
לא מצי מהדר לה
Does NOT apply to here, because he can stop walking -

מאי איכא בין האי לישנא להאי לישנא? איכא בינייהו המעביר ספין
ברשות הרבים וקרע שראין בהליכתו. להך לישנא דאמרת אי
אפשר להנחה בלא עקירה — הכא נמי אי אפשר להנחה בלא
עקירה. להך לישנא דאמרת לא מצי מהדר לה — הכא מצי מהדר
לה.

The Gemara asks: **What practical difference is there between this formulation**, where the criterion is whether the second stage could be performed independent of the first stage, **and that formulation**, where the criterion is whether the second stage is inevitable after performing the first stage? The Gemara responds: **There is a practical difference between them** with regard to **one who carries a knife in the public domain and tears silk as he proceeds. According to that formulation, where you said: Lifting is a prerequisite for placement, here too, lifting is a prerequisite for placement.** As these two stages are inexorably connected, they constitute one action, and the one carrying the knife is exempt from paying the damages.

Conversely, **according to that formulation where you said: He cannot take back** the arrow and that is why they are considered one action, **here, he can take back** the knife; therefore, lifting and placement are separate actions, and he is not exempt from punishment for the damages that he caused.

גופא, אָמַר רַבִּי אָבִין: הַזֵּרוּק חָץ מִתְחַלֵּת אַרְבַּע לְסוּף אַרְבַּע וְקָרַע
 שִׁירָאִין בְּהִלְכָתוֹ — פָּטוּר, שְׁעָקִירָה צוֹרֵף הַנָּחָה הִיא. מֵתִיב רַב
 בִּיבֵי בַר אֲבֵי: הַגּוֹנֵב פִּיס בְּשֶׁבֶת — חַיִּיב, שְׂכָבֵר נִתְחַיֵּיב בְּגִנְיָבָה
 קוֹדָם שְׂיָבֵא לְיָדֵי אִיסוּר סְקִילָה. הִיָּה מְגֵרֵר וְיוֹצֵא, מְגֵרֵר וְיוֹצֵא —
 פָּטוּר, שְׁהָרִי אִיסוּר שֶׁבֶת וְגִנְיָבָה בָּאִין כְּאַחַד.

§ The Gemara analyzes **the matter itself. Rabbi Avin said:** With regard to **one who shoots an arrow from the beginning of four cubits to the end of four cubits and the arrow rips silk as it proceeds, he is exempt, as lifting is a prerequisite for placement. Rav Beivai bar Abaye raised an objection** from that which is taught in a *baraita*: **One who steals a purse on Shabbat is liable for the theft because he was already liable for theft** as soon as he lifted the purse. This took place **before he came to violate the prohibition** against performing prohibited labor on Shabbat by carrying it into the public domain, a violation punishable by **stoning**. However, if he did not lift the purse but **was dragging** it on the ground **and exiting** the private domain, **dragging and exiting, he is exempt, as the prohibition against theft and the prohibition of Shabbat** are violated **simultaneously** when he drags the purse out of the owner's property and into the public domain.

אֲמַאי? הֲכָא נָמִי, לִימָא: הַגְּבֵהָה צוֹרֵף הוֹצָאָה הִיא! הֲכָא בְּמַאי
 עֲסָקִינוּ — כְּגוֹן שֶׁהִגְבִּיהוּ עַל מְנַת לְהַצְנִיעוֹ, וְנִמְלֵף עָלָיו וְהוֹצִיאֻהוּ.

Rav Beivai concludes: **But why** is he liable if he carried the purse? **Here, too, let us say that lifting is a prerequisite for carrying out**, and therefore the theft was performed in the course of performance of the prohibited labor, and he is exempt. The Gemara answers: **With what are we dealing here?** We are dealing with a case **where he lifted** the pouch **in order to conceal it** in the same domain, not to carry it out into the public domain, **and he reconsidered** his plan with regard

to the purse **and carried it out**. In that case the act of lifting was not performed for the purpose of carrying out. Therefore, he is not exempt from the obligation to pay for the theft.

וכי האי גוונא מי תיביב? והאמר רב סימון אמר רבי אמי אמר רבי
יוחנן: המפנה חפצים מזוית לזוית, ונמלך עליהם והוציאן — פטור,
שלא היתה עקירה משעה ראשונה לקד!

The Gemara asks: **And in a case like that**, where he reconsidered, is one **liable** for carrying out an object on Shabbat? **But didn't Rav Simon say that Rabbi Ami said that Rabbi Yohanan said: One who moves objects from one corner of his house to another corner on Shabbat, and he reconsidered his plan in their regard after lifting them and carried them out into the public domain, he is exempt, as the act of lifting was not initially performed for that purpose of carrying from one domain to another.** Here, too, since the thief did not lift the pouch with the intention of carrying it out, he is not liable to be stoned.

Summary

Rav Avrohom Adler writes:¹

The Gemora discusses a previous statement. Rav Chisda says: Rabbi Nechunya ben Ha'kanah (who maintains that just as one who violates Shabbos and at the same time commits an act in which there would be a monetary obligation, he is exempt from paying because he receives the death penalty (*by a human court*), so too one who violates Yom Kippur and at the same time commits an act in which there would be a monetary obligation, he would be exempt from paying because he receives the death penalty) would agree that if someone stole cheilev (*forbidden animal fat*) from his friend and ate it, he is obligated to pay for the fat, as he was already guilty of stealing before he sinned when eating the forbidden fat.

The Gemora suggests that this is in disagreement with Rabbi Avin's statement, for Rabbi Avin says: If someone shoots an arrow from the beginning of four *amos* to the end of four *amos* on *Shabbos* (*desecrating Shabbos, as carrying four amos on Shabbos in a public domain is forbidden*), and the arrow tore someone's clothes along the way, he is exempt from paying for the clothes (*due to "kim ley b'drabah minei" - one who commits a capital offense and simultaneously commits a lesser offense, he receives the death penalty, but he is exempt from the lesser one, and therefore, he would not be required to pay*). This is because the picking up the item to carry it (*the flight of the arrow*) is necessary in order for the object to be placed down and is therefore a part of the action which makes him liable to pay with his life (*and since the monetary obligation happens at the same time, he is exempt from paying*). The Gemora asks: Why doesn't Rav Chisda also reason that picking up the fat is necessary in order to eat it (*and the person should be exempt for paying for the fat due to kim ley etc.*)?

¹ http://dafnotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Kesuvos_31.pdf

The Gemora answers: Now, is this a comparison? In the case of Shabbos, it is impossible to have a hanachah (placing down) without an akirah (picking up) first (and that is why the akirah is considered the beginning of the act for which he is liable for); however, in the case of the forbidden fat, it is possible to eat it without lifting it up (and therefore, the picking up is nonessential), as the person could bend down and eat it.

Alternatively, the Gemora answers that in the case of Shabbos, if he would have wanted to draw the arrow back (after shooting it), he could not have drawn it back; this is in contrast to the case of the forbidden fat, where, if he wanted, he could have immediately returned the fat (that he stole) after lifting it up. [*Accordingly kim ley only applies to the case of Shabbos, not the case of the fat.*]

The Gemora asks: What is the difference between these two answers? The Gemora answers: The difference is in a case where someone carried a knife four amos in a public domain on Shabbos, and within the four amos, he ripped someone's clothing. According to the answer that it is essential to pick up the item (*and transport it four amos*) in order to sin, here too, picking up (*and transporting*) was essential (*and he would therefore be exempt*). According to the answer that in the case of the arrow he was unable to return the arrow once it was thrown, here he could return the knife (*and he would therefore be liable*).

The Gemora discusses a previous statement. Rabbi Avin says: If someone shoots an arrow from the beginning of four amos to the end of four amos on Shabbos, and the arrow tore someone's clothes along the way, he is exempt from paying for the clothes. This is because picking up the item to carry it is necessary in order for the object to be placed down when desecrating Shabbos in this fashion.

Rav Bibi bar Abaye asked from a Baraisa: If one steals a purse on *Shabbos*, he is obligated to pay for the purse as well, as he had already stolen before he had been liable to be stoned (*for desecrating Shabbos*). If he was dragging the purse little by little out of the original owner's domain, he is exempt from paying for the purse, as the act of desecrating *Shabbos* and the act of stealing happened at the same time.

The Gemora asks: Why don't we say that the picking up to steal the purse is necessary for the sinning of carrying on Shabbos as well (*like the logic presented by Rabbi Avin above, and both acts should be considered as being done at the same time*)? The Gemora answers: Here, we are talking about a case where he picked up the purse to hide it (in the house), and then changed his mind and decided to take it outside.

The Gemora asks: Is one who performs such an act indeed liable (for desecrating the Shabbos)? But, Rav Simone said in the name of Rabbi Ami, who said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: If one is moving articles from corner to corner (*in a private domain, and he has no intention of taking them out into a public domain*), and then he changes his mind and carries them out, he is exempt, because his original lifting was not for this purpose?

The Gemora answers: Our previous answer was not that he picked it up to hide it but rather that he picked it up to take it outside. [*How does this answer the question?*] The Gemora explains that the case is where he stopped and stood still. Why did he stand? If he stood just to rearrange the item (*to carry more conveniently*), this is normal! [*This does not separate the picking up and setting down necessary for a Shabbos violation.*] It must be the case is where he stopped to take a break. However, if he would have stopped to adjust the load on his shoulder, he would still be liable for transgressing Shabbos.

The Gemora asks: If this is true, before stating the second case regarding dragging the purse little by little, the Baraisa should have qualified the first case that this is only said when he stands to rest, but when he stands to adjust the load on his shoulder, he is exempt!? The Gemora answers: The Baraisa is based on the opinion of Ben Azzai, who says that when one walks, he is as if he is standing. *[Each step is considered its own picking up and stopping, so he is therefore not liable for carrying until the last step (see Rashi).]*

The Gemora asks: According to this opinion, if one would throw the purse four amos, he would be exempt from paying (*as this is one full act of carrying, not many stops and starts*). If this is true, before stating the second case regarding dragging the purse little by little, the Baraisa should have qualified the first case that this is only said when he walks; if, however, he throws the purse, he is exempt from paying for the purse!?

The Gemora answers: The second case regarding dragging the purse is necessary. One might have thought to say that dragging is not a normal way of carrying, and one should therefore be exempt from carrying a purse in this fashion. The Baraisa therefore had to state the case of dragging the purse (to teach that one is indeed liable for desecrating the shabbos – even when it is done in such a manner).

The Gemora asks: What is the case where the Gemora must inform us that this is normal carrying? If it is a large heavy purse, then it would be normal to do so! If it is small, he indeed should be exempt as this is abnormal! The Gemora answers: The case must be regarding a midsize purse.

The Gemora asks further: Where is he carrying the purse (*in the case above*)? If he is carrying it to the public domain, he transgresses Shabbos but has not transgressed stealing (*as one cannot make an acquisition in the public domain*)! If he takes it to his private domain (*assuming his private domain is next to that of the owner of the purse*), he has transgressed stealing but he has not transgressed Shabbos! The Gemora answers: The case must be that he takes it to the sides of the public domain.

The Gemora asks further: Who is this according to? If it is according to Rabbi Eliezer who says that the sides of the public domain have the halachic status of the public domain, he transgresses Shabbos but not stealing! If it is according to the Rabbis who say that the sides of the public domain have the halachic status of a private domain, he transgresses stealing but not Shabbos!?

The Gemora answers: It must be like Rabbi Eliezer. When he states that the sides of the public domain have the halachic status of the public domain, he only meant that this is true regarding carrying on Shabbos. This is because the public often doesn't have room, and they use the sides of the public domain as well. However, a person would still be able to make an acquisition there. Why? This is because people are not usually on the sides of the public domain.

Rav Ashi says: The case is (*in the public domain and*) where he put his hand under three handsbreadths and accepted the purse. This is in accordance with the opinion of Rava. Rava says: A person's hand is significant like an area of four by four handsbreadths (*its own domain for acquisitions*). Rav Acha learned (*the Baraisa*) this way as well. Ravina, however, taught as follows: In truth, the Baraisa is referring to a case where he took the purse into a public domain, and (it is regarded as theft, for) even in a public domain he has acquired it (for he maintains that meshichah – pulling an object, is effective in a public domain).

They both (Rav Acha and Ravina) argue regarding the implication of the Mishnah. The Mishnah states: If someone was pulling (an animal) out of the owner's domain and it died while still in its owner's domain, he is exempt from paying for it. If he picked it up or he carried it out from the owner's domain and then it died, he is obligated to pay for it. Ravina deduces (*his opinion above*) from the first part of the Mishnah, while Rav Acha deduces (*his opinion above*) from the second part of the Mishnah.

Ravina deduces (*his opinion above*) from the first part of the Mishnah which stated: If someone was pulling (an animal) out of the owner's domain and it died while still in the owner's domain, he is exempt from paying for it. The reason he is exempt is because the animal is still in its owner's domain. This implies that if he would have taken it out of the owner's domain and it died, he would be obligated to pay (*even if he took it into the public domain*).

Rav Acha deduces (*his opinion above*) from the second part of the Mishnah which stated: If he "picked it up or he carried it out." This implies that carrying out is like picking up. Just as picking up means that it came into his domain, so too the carrying out only works if he carried it out to his domain.

The Gemora asks: Rav Acha's opinion seems difficult to reconcile with the first part of the Mishnah, while Ravina's opinion seems difficult to reconcile with the second part of the Mishnah. The Gemora answers that the first part of the Mishnah is not difficult according to Rav Acha. Being that it did not enter his domain, it is considered to still be in the domain of the owner. The second part of the Mishnah is not difficult according to Ravina, as he does not compare acquiring through carrying to acquiring through picking up. (31a2 – 31b4)

Unity

Our Gemora deals with a case of stealing, accordingly, we cite the following story, recorded by Rabbi Lam and torah.org: A remarkable story circulated around Eretz Yisrael a number of years ago. Even if it is not confirmed as true, it still conveys a deep and relevant message that may help explain why we are made more vulnerable to an enemy attack when our business practices are less than honest.

It was during the time of when a young soldier whose last name was Wachsman, was captured. His parents took an immediate and active role in rallying the entire nation to pray and light extra candles.

There were huge prayer rallies lead by the parents at the Western Wall and there was a profound sense of unity and common purpose that crossed all kinds of ideological lines and stated philosophies of life.

The end of the story, however, is less pleasant. The young man, on whose behalf these forces were set in motion, was brutally murdered and the momentary solidarity faded as fast.

Around that same time a young man who had been in a coma awoke shortly afterward and asked to be brought to a certain luminary personality in our generation. He told the elder Rabbi that he had been visited in a dream by an elderly woman and was told to deliver a specific message. The Rabbi displayed a picture of his deceased wife and asked if that was the woman. He confirmed that it was.

She had asked him to relay the following: That the unity at the time of the incident of that young soldier's capture and the events that followed was so profound that Moshiach could have come at that very moment, if it had not been for the sin of theft and ill-gotten gains in the marketplace.

At the conclusion of the Megilah it states that the Jews “gathered together and stood up for their lives...” The Sefas Emes notes that the word for standing “Amad” is singular- not plural similar to when the Nation of Israel camped by Mt. Sinai with a singular expression. There Rashi says, “Like one man with one heart!” The unity was powerful and real.

Theft on Shabbat²

We are discussing a Mishna that was introduced in daf 29. In practical terms, that means that I had to look back at that Mishna to remember how in the world *our daf* was related to some larger question that we were learning. Rereading the Mishna, I recalled that we were told which women of 'flawed' and 'unflawed' lineage were owed fines - well, their fathers might be owed those fines - if they were raped. In *our daf*, the rabbis are considering how they determine whether or not a fine is paid in other circumstances.

They discuss these cases in impressive detail. Each case introduces the application of different principles. The rabbis discuss how they balance competing interests in each case.

Some of the principles include:

- one cannot throw more than four cubits in the public domain on Shabbat
- lifting is one of the prerequisites for 'placement', which is included under the 39 prohibited actions on Shabbat
- lifting (fat) is a prerequisite for eating (a forbidden food)
- placement is impossible without first lifting
- we acquire an object only if we lift it more than three handbreadths above the ground
- lifting is required for carrying out
- an object in one place must be lifted to move from the private to the public domain
- an object in motion, i.e. one that is dragged, need not be lifted to be transferred to the public domain

² <http://dafyomibeginner.blogspot.com/2015/03/ketubot-31-theft-on-shabbat.html>

- intention matters: if one changes his mind before leaving the private domain; if he stops before proceeding, that interrupts the flow of the action
- a person's hand is deemed to be four by four handbreadths, which allows even handling objects and moving to be against rabbinic law
- acquisition of an animal occurs the moment that one removes the animal from its owner's domain

The cases include

- how to retrieve stolen teruma, for example, wine that his in someone's throat (daf 30)
- one who steals and then eats another person's forbidden fat
- when one shoots an arrow four cubits in the public domain on Shabbat and it rips a silk en route, does the desecration of the Shabbat prohibition override the fine for damages?
- if one steals a purse by carrying it from a private to a public domain on Shabbat, he is liable to the fine for theft, which took effect when he lifted the purse, plus the fine for violating Shabbat through carrying in the public domain
- If one steals a purse by dragging it from the private to the public domain, he is not liable to the fine for theft because both that crime and the crime for violating Shabbat occur simultaneously when the purse leaves the private domain. Thus the Shabbat prohibition overrides the fine.
- If one steals an animal by leading it out of the owner's domain and the animal dies while still within the owner's property, the thief is not liable to pay a fine.
- If that animal dies in the public domain, the thief is liable for the theft and the animal's death

The rabbis introduce possible complications to a number of cases. What if the thief stays low, moving the purse from one hand to another below the three-cubit 'acquisition limit'? What if the purse is lifted in an atypical manner? What about the size of the purse - might pulling be involved, too?

Our daf ends with conversation about the second part of the Mishna from way back (two whole days ago). That part of the text teaches that fines are imposed on men who rape many of their close relatives. But the Gemara questions this. What about Masechet Makkot 13a, which teaches that such rapists are flogged? Are both punishments administered? or just one? which one, and why? Stay tuned...

ONE WHO DRAGS AN OBJECT FROM ONE DOMAIN TO ANOTHER ON SHABBOS

Rav Mordechai Kornfeld writes:³

The Gemara cites a Beraisa which states that a thief who stole a wallet on Shabbos is liable for the theft. The principle of "Kam Lei bid'Rabah Minei" does not exempt him even though he carried the wallet from Reshus ha'Yachid to Reshus ha'Rabim (an act of Shabbos desecration for which he is liable for Sekilah), because "Kam Lei bid'Rabah Minei" applies only when both transgressions are committed at the same moment. Since, in this case, the transgression of thievery occurred before the transgression of Hotza'ah on Shabbos, the offender is obligated to pay and to be put to death.

RASHI (DH ha'Gonev) explains that in the case of the Beraisa, the thief lifted the wallet in the owner's domain and brought it out to Reshus ha'Rabim. Rashi (DH she'Kevar) explains further that Hagbahah (the act of lifting an object in order to acquire it) is effective wherever it is done (even when done in the domain of the original owner).

The Beraisa continues and says that if the thief dragged the wallet upon the ground without lifting it, he is exempt from liability for compensation. **RASHI** (DH Hayah Megarer) explains that since he did not lift the wallet, he acquired it only at the moment he removed it from the owner's Reshus ha'Yachid. At that moment he also carried the wallet from Reshus ha'Yachid to Reshus ha'Rabim. Since the two transgressions, theft and Shabbos desecration, occurred simultaneously, the principle of "Kam Lei bid'Rabah Minei" applies and the thief is exempt from payment.

Why is one liable for Hotza'ah on Shabbos when he drags a wallet from Reshus ha'Yachid to Reshus ha'Rabim? The laws of Hotza'ah state that one is not liable unless he performs an act of "Akirah" (lifting up the object) in Reshus ha'Yachid and an act of "Hanachah" (placing it down) in Reshus ha'Rabim. If the thief dragged the wallet from Reshus ha'Yachid to Reshus ha'Rabim, what act of Akirah did he do? Dragging an object out of a Reshus is not considered an act of Akirah, as is evident from the Gemara in Shabbos (8b) which requires that an object be lifted from the ground in order for the act to constitute an Akirah. Why, then, does the Gemara here rule that the thief is liable for Hotza'ah on Shabbos when he dragged the wallet from Reshus ha'Yachid to Reshus ha'Rabim, if he performed no act of Akirah?

(a) The **CHIDUSHEI HA'RASHBA** answers that the Gemara refers to a case in which the ground level of the Reshus ha'Yachid is higher than the ground level of the Reshus ha'Rabim adjacent to it. When the thief drags the wallet out of the Reshus ha'Yachid, he necessarily performs an act of an Akirah.

(b) In his second answer, the **CHIDUSHEI HA'RASHBA** suggests that it is *not* necessary to lift an object in order for the act to constitute Akirah. Although the Gemara in Shabbos (8b) requires that an object be lifted from the ground in order for the act to constitute an Akirah, the case of the

³ <https://www.dafyomi.co.il/kesuvos/insites/ks-dt-031.htm>

Gemara there differs from the case of the Gemara here. The Gemara in Shabbos discusses a case in which one moves long reeds by lifting up one end and moving it over and above the second, stationary end, placing it down, and then lifting up the other side and moving it in the same manner. In that case, one end of the reeds does not move from its place when the other end of the reeds is lifted and moved, and thus that act does not constitute an Akirah. In contrast, in the case of the Gemara here, the *entire* wallet moves as the thief drags it. No part of it remains stationary as another part of it moves. This act suffices to constitute an Akirah even though the object is not lifted from the ground.

(c) The **CHIDUSHEI HA'RAMBAN** quotes the **RA'AVAD** who explains that an act of Akirah is an essential component of the Melachah of Hotza'ah on Shabbos only when one transports an object four Amos in Reshus ha'Rabim. In contrast, when one carries from Reshus ha'Yachid to Reshus ha'Rabim he may be liable even if he does not lift the object. The mere fact that he transports the object out of Reshus ha'Yachid and into Reshus ha'Rabim (an act the Ra'avad calls "Akiras Reshus") is considered enough of an act of Akirah to obligate him for Hotza'ah on Shabbos.

The Ramban questions the Ra'avad's explanation from another Gemara in Shabbos. The Gemara in Shabbos (8b) teaches that when one lifts an object in Reshus ha'Yachid with intent to put it down in another place in the same domain and then he consciously decides to take it out to Reshus ha'Rabim, he does not transgress the Melachah of Hotza'ah on Shabbos mid'Oraisa (since his first Akirah was not done with intent to carry the object to Reshus ha'Rabim). According to the Ra'avad, why should the concept of "Akiras Reshus" in this case not qualify as an Akirah to obligate him? The Ramban quotes the Ra'avad who explains that the concept of "Akiras Reshus" applies only when the object is resting physically in Reshus ha'Yachid, but not when it is resting in a person's hand. The Ramban rejects the explanation of the Ra'avad and sides with the first answer of the Rashba (in (a) above). (D. Bloom, Y. Montrose)

ACQUIRING AN OBJECT BY LIFTING IT LESS THAN THREE TEFACHIM FROM THE GROUND

The Beraisa (31a) states that a thief who stole a wallet on Shabbos by dragging it from the Reshus ha'Yachid of its owner into Reshus ha'Rabim is exempt from the obligation of compensation. Since he did not lift the wallet in the domain of its owner, he acquired it only at the moment he removed it from that domain. At that moment he also carried the wallet from Reshus ha'Yachid to Reshus ha'Rabim. Since the two transgressions, theft and Shabbos desecration, occurred simultaneously, the principle of "Kam Lei bid'Rabah Minei" applies and the thief is exempt from payment (the lesser of the two punishments).

The Gemara (31b) asks, into what domain did the thief bring the wallet? If he brought it into Reshus ha'Rabim, his act should not be considered an act of theft. **RASHI** (DH Isur) explains that the Gemara at this point understands that an act of Meshichah (the act of pulling an object towards oneself in order to acquire it), without an accompanying act of Hagbahah (the act of lifting an object in order to acquire it), is not a valid Kinyan. The Gemara rejects the possibility that the thief took the wallet into his own courtyard adjacent to the courtyard of the wallet's owner (see Rashi,

DH l'Reshus); although such an act would constitute a valid Kinyan for theft, it would not constitute a violation of Shabbos (mid'Oraisa).

Rav Ashi answers that the Beraisa refers to a case in which the thief dragged the wallet into Reshus ha'Rabim with one hand, and he positioned his other hand within three Tefachim from the ground of Reshus ha'Rabim and received the wallet in that hand. Although an act of Hagbahah requires that the object be lifted more than three Tefachim from the ground, when one performs Hagbahah with his hand it is not necessary to lift the object more than three Tefachim from the ground. This difference is based on Rava's statement that a person's hand is considered a significant area in itself; it has the status of an independent area of four Tefachim in length and width (with regard to Hanachah, see Rashi DH ked'Rava). Rashi explains that just as one's hand is considered an independent domain with regard to the laws of Shabbos, it is considered an independent domain with regard to the Kinyan of Hagbahah (such that the Kinyan is effective even if the object is lifted less than three Tefachim from the ground).

TOSFOS (DH Rav Ashi) questions the comparison of the status of a hand with regard to the laws of Shabbos to its status with regard to a Kinyan Hagbahah. Why does the fact that one's hand is considered a domain of four-by-four Tefachim for the laws of Shabbos necessarily prove that one who performs a Kinyan Hagbahah by placing an object into his hand does not need to lift the object three Tefachim from the ground?

The **PNEI YEHOShUA** answers this question based on the words of **TOSFOS** in Shabbos (4a, DH v'Ha). Tosfos asks why Akirah and Hanachah must be done in a domain of at least four by four Tefachim in order for the act to constitute the Melachah of Hotza'ah. He explains that this presumably was the manner in which Hotza'ah was performed in the Mishkan (from which the Melachos of Shabbos are derived), as an object is not normally placed on an area smaller than four by four Tefachim. Tosfos cites the **RI** who explains, alternatively, that the requirement for an area of four-by-four Tefachim is derived from the verse, "Al Yetzei Ish mi'Mekomo b'Yom ha'Shabbos" -- "No person may leave his place on Shabbos" (Shemos 16:29). While the simple meaning of "his place" refers to a person's place, which is defined as four Amos, it also refers to the place of an *object*, which is four Tefachim. (The Gemara in Eruvin (17b) explains that "Al Yetzei" may be read "Al Yotzi" -- "he should not take out," a reference to carrying an object into a different Reshus on Shabbos.)

Based on the words of Tosfos, the Pnei Yehoshua suggests that the reason for Rava's principle, that a person's hand is considered an independent domain for the laws of Shabbos, is that a person normally places an object in his hand until he is able to deposit it in a safer place. Although he keeps the object in his hand only temporarily, since accepting an object into one's hand is the normal manner of conduct, the hand has the status of a domain on Shabbos. (*According to the first explanation of Tosfos in Shabbos, holding an object in one's hand was the normal way in which an object was carried in the Mishkan. According to the second explanation, one's hand is considered a normal place of rest of an object.*)

In the same way that the definition of a domain for the laws of Shabbos depends on what is the normal area in which objects are placed, the definition of what constitutes Hagbahah (or any other form of Kinyan) depends on how the object is normally acquired. This is evident from the Gemara

in Bava Basra (86a) which states that objects which are normally pulled are acquired with Meshichah, while objects which are normally lifted are acquired with Hagbahah. Rava's principle teaches that since it is normal for a person to put an object in his hand until he puts it in its place of storage, putting an object (which is normally lifted up) into a person's raised hand effects a Kinyan Hagbahah even when the item is not lifted up three Tefachim from the ground.

The fact that the hand is a place where objects are normally kept causes the Kinyan Hagbahah to take effect. (D. Bloom)

The More Severe Punishment

Steinsaltz (OBM) writes:⁴

Most of *our daf* focuses on the Talmudic rule of *kim lei be-derabah minei* – that is, a person who commits an act for which he is liable to receive two separate punishments, Jewish law will only allow him to be punished once, i.e. he will receive the more severe of the two punishments and be freed of the lesser punishment. Thus, if a person performs an act for which he would receive both capital punishments and lashes, he will not receive the lashes, as the capital punishment suffices as punishment for this act.

Our Gemara examines the opinion of Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana who rules that *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur* are the same with regard to this *halakha*. In other words, he believes that when a person commits a crime for which the punishment is *karet* (excision from the Jewish people) the rule of *kim lei be-derabah minei* will be invoked, and *karet* will be seen as the more severe punishment, even though *karet* is a punishment that is in the realm of the heavenly court.

According to Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana, whenever there is a punishment of death for a given act, the Torah does not impose any other punishments on that person for having performed that act. Since *karet* includes *mittah bi-yedei shamayim* – a heavenly capital punishment – the same rule of *kim lei be-derabah minei* should apply.

The Sages who disagree with Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKana argue that a court can only deal with issues that are within its purview, and it cannot take into account heavenly punishments. Moreover, as the Meiri points out, a sinner who is liable for *karet* has the opportunity to engage in a process of *teshuva* – repentance – and will be forgiven. Transgressions for which the penalty is capital punishment, the court will carry out the sentence, even as it hopes that the sinner will choose to do *teshuva*.

⁴ <https://steinsaltz.org/daf/ketubot31/>

Two for the price of one

RABBI SETH GOREN WRITES:⁵

As longtime Daf Yomi students know, sometimes a talmudic tangent goes so far afield we wind up in another conversation entirely. On *our daf*, the conversation that began with a mishnah two days ago about the fines a rapist must pay to his victims has led us to a debate about the consequences for tearing a silk garment while shooting an arrow across a public domain on Shabbat. Go figure.

The Gemara is in the midst of a discussion about double-whammy transgressions: single actions that result in two halachic violations. In such cases, is a person liable for two punishments or one? Rabbi Avin brings an example for discussion:

One who shoots an arrow from the beginning of four cubits to the end of four cubits and ripped silk as it proceeds, is exempt as lifting is a prerequisite for placement.

In Rabbi Avin's example, someone shoots an arrow more than four cubits in the public domain on Shabbat. Shooting an arrow is considered a form of carrying and is a violation of Shabbat. But in the course of the arrow's flight through the air, it damages someone's property — in this case, tearing someone's silk — which is also a violation and would ordinarily require compensating the injured party. Are these two separate actions that merit two separate penalties? Or just one?

The rabbis conclude that the arrow shooter is only liable for one penalty — for violating Shabbat. That's because carrying begins when an object is lifted and concludes when the object comes to rest. Here, the arrow is shot, the silk is torn, and then the arrow lands. As a result, the tearing comes about during the course of carrying and is subsumed in the more serious violation, namely the violation of Shabbat.

In case this wasn't entirely clear, Rav Beivai bar Abaye offers a further edifying illustration:

One who steals a purse on Shabbat is liable because he was already liable for theft before he came to violate the prohibition (against performing prohibited labor on Shabbat by carrying it into the public domain).

However, if he was dragging it on the ground and exiting the private domain ... he is exempt, as the prohibition against theft and the prohibition of Shabbat are violated simultaneously.

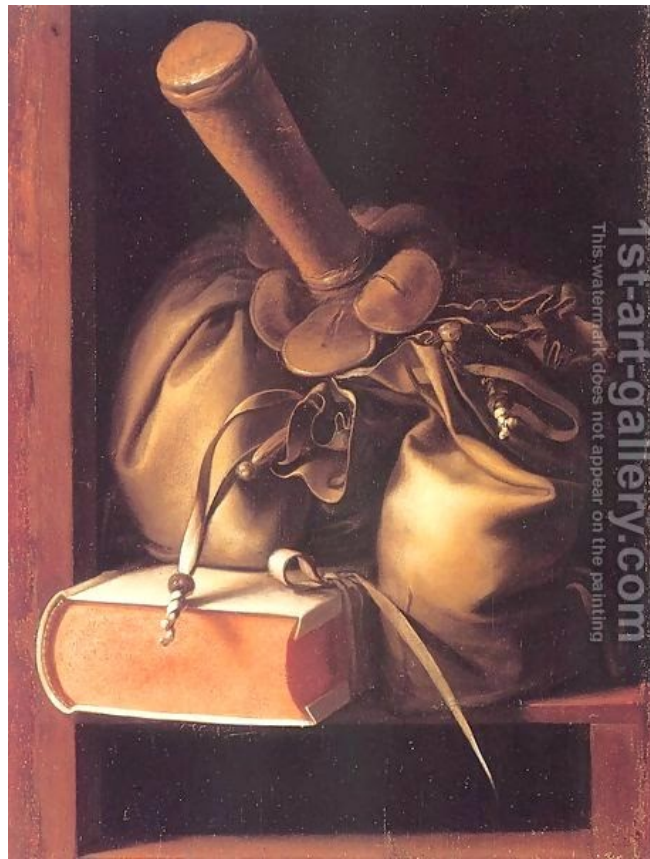
In Rav Beivai's case, someone who steals a purse on Shabbat is liable for the theft the minute he picks up the purse. Then a second violation occurs as the purse is carried into the public domain. But if the thief drags the purse along the ground, no theft has occurred until they leave the owner's

⁵ <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ketubot-31/>

property and enter the public domain. In that case, the crimes occur concurrently and there is only a single punishment.

The discussion continues with additional examples: moving objects from one corner of a house to another; stopping to rest in the course of moving an object; pulling an animal; and others. And lest we think Jewish law is alone in these complexities, there are similar nuances in common law across a variety of countries as well.

The Rambam neatly bundles all of this into a helpful codification in the Mishneh Torah, where he lays out laws relating to theft. But the bottom line is the same: Sometimes what seems on the surface like two different crimes are treated as a single one for the purposes of punishment.



Still Life With Book And Purse By Gerrit Dou

Stealing on Shabbat

Mark Kerzner writes:⁶

Previously we mentioned that if one violates a girl for relations with whom he is liable with his soul, then only this punishment applies, and he does not have to pay the penalty of fifty shekalim. The prototypical example of this, however, is found on Shabbat, when one steals a purse from a house, and then carries it into the street. Since for carrying the purse into the street on Shabbat he is liable to death by the Court, he does not have to pay the penalty for stealing and only has to return the stolen goods. This will apply even if he is not executed, such as if there were no witnesses or no proper warning.

And yet, what are the precise circumstances of his stealing? If he lifts the purse while in the house, he acquires it right then and there, becomes liable to return double, and Shabbat violation - which comes only later, when he crosses the doorstep - would not relieve him of the penalty. The Talmud tries to construct various ways of his walking where this would be true but finds faults with them.

Final conclusion is that this applies when he is dragging the purse on the floor, since he only acquires it when he crosses the doorstep - and then the Shabbat violation happens simultaneously with stealing.

The duration of a prohibited act

עקירה צורך הנחה היא הכא נמי הגבהה צורך אכילה היא

We have already established that no financial restitution is made by a person who simultaneously committed a crime where he is liable for his life as well as having caused property damage.⁷

Rav Chisda taught that even Rabbi Nechunia ben Hakanna agrees that if a person stole forbidden fats (חלב) and ate them, he must pay back the owner the value of the fats, even though he is liable for kares for having eaten this forbidden food.

The reason for his having to pay is that the moment when the fats were stolen occurred first, when they were taken from the possession of its owner, but the moment the punishment of kares was incurred was only later, when the fats were subsequently eaten. Because the kares and the financial responsibility were not at the same moment, both penalties are applied.

The Gemara contrasts this to a case of transporting an item for a distance of four amos on Shabbos in the public domain, which is a melacha. Rav Idi explains that the act of moving an object across a four-cubit distance begins with its being lifted up, and it only ends when it is placed down. If any material damage occurs during any point of its movement, the person who violated the Shabbos is exempt from paying.

⁶ <https://talmudilluminated.com/ketubot/ketubot31.html>

⁷ <https://dafdigest.org/masechtos/Kesuvos%20031.pdf>

The Gemara asks why the case of eating fats is different. The act of eating, which causes the kares, actually begins with lifting the fats, which is the precise moment of when it is being stolen. Why, then, should the person have to pay? The Gemara answers that there is a fundamental difference between the cases. Moving an object on Shabbos four amos in the public domain necessarily must begin with the object being lifted, and it must end with the object being placed down. However, the picking up of the fat has nothing to do with eating it, as eating can be done by leaning over and taking a bite.

Some Rishonim understand that according to the conclusion of the Gemara any act which is necessary in order to eat the חלב is considered part of the act of eating. Therefore, if a monetary damage occurs, for example, while the person is placing the fats into his mouth, he would be exempt from paying.

Other Rishonim understand that the Gemara means to teach that the general rule that any act other than eating itself, even one which is preliminary to eating, is never part of the forbidden act. Therefore, even though placing food in the mouth is necessary in order to eat it, the legal moment of eating does not begin before the actual eating is in progress, and it does not start earlier. This is unlike carrying on Shabbos, where the duration of the act begins as the object is lifted up, and it continues until it is placed down.

Receiving nutrition on Yom Kippur

גונב חלבו של חבירו ואכלו

One who steals his friend's cheilev and eats it...

Poskim debate whether a person violates the prohibition against eating on Yom Kippur when the food goes down his throat (הנאת גרונו) or when his stomach is sated (הנאת מעיו).

Chasam Sofer (1) writes that since the Torah does not prohibit eating on Yom Kippur with the terminology of eating (לא תאכל) but rather instructs that a person must suffer (עינוי) this prohibition against eating is fundamentally different from other prohibitions. Although other eating related prohibitions are violated when the person swallows the prohibited food on Yom Kippur the prohibition is not violated unless one's stomach benefits from the food. One of the proofs cited is our Gemara.

Why, asks Chasam Sofer, does the Gemara refer to a case of stealing and eating cheilev when it could also refer to stealing and eating bread on Yom Kippur?

Explains Chasam Sofer that the food is stolen when it goes down the throat, since at that point it is irretrievable but for eating on Yom Kippur one is not liable until the food reaches the stomach. Therefore the two transgressions are not occurring simultaneously and thus the Gemara was compelled to present a case where the two transgressions occur simultaneously.

According to the approach of Chasam Sofer, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski (2), the Achiezer, was asked whether it is permitted to feed a person through a tube in a way that the food does not touch

his mouth or throat. Achiezer responded that he is certain that the novel ruling of Chasam Sofer is limited to cases where a person eats the food but if the food does not even go into one's throat it is not an act of eating and is not prohibited even if one's stomach benefits from the food.

Rav Avrohom Bornstein (3), the Avnei Nezer, suggests as proof to this position the fact that there is a mitzvah to eat Erev Yom Kippur before it is dark even though his stomach will not benefit from that food until after it is dark. This clearly indicates that benefit in the stomach, without being associated with eating, is not included in the prohibition.

Accordingly, Poskim (4) write that the prohibition against eating is not violated if one receives nutrients intravenously.

1. שו"ת חת"ס אר"ח סי' קכ"ז
2. שו"ת אחיעזר ח"ג סי' ס"א
3. בספרו אגלי טל מלאכת טוחן ס"ק ס"ב אות ב'
4. ע' שו"ת חלקת יעקב אר"ח סי' רט"ז ■

Sir Moses and the Czar

הגונב כיס בשבת חייב

Our daf discusses the situation of a person who has stolen a purse on Shabbos by taking it into the public domain. The conclusion is that the person is not obligated to pay because at the very same time that he stole it, he did the melachah of carrying, and we have a the **קיס ליה בדרבת מיניה** - of principle greater punishment alone suffices when a multiple violation has occurred.

Engaging in labor on Shabbos is certainly d'rabah minei, the greater violation; it is one of the worst possible sins! As everyone knows, only a threat to life or limb can serve as an excuse for chilul Shabbos. In the middle of one of the worst Russian pogroms, Sir Moses Montefiore approached the Czar to petition that he acts to save the Jews' lives.

The Czar, a virulent anti-Semite, was not very interested in going out of his way for a people whom he despised, but Montefiore was a nobleman himself and had many connections to important people. It was clear that he had the power to bring tremendous pressure to bear on the Czar and could make things unpleasant for him. It seemed as though there was no choice but that the pogroms be forcibly halted or there would be very unpleasant publicity which would show Mother Russia in a deplorable light.

As it turned out, however, the Czar had an alternate plan. One Shabbos, the Czar sent a letter to Sir Moses by courier. Although he assumed it was important, Montefiore nevertheless said to the messenger, "It's Shabbos and as an observant Jew I cannot open this letter." The messenger opened it for him... and literally dropped dead!

The letter had contained a highly lethal material which killed anyone who even breathed it. Sir Moses immediately saw how the Czar planned to “solve” the problem. Realizing he was a wanted man, Sir Moses fled Russia at the first opportunity!”

The Melakha of Ha'avara: Transporting an Item in a Public Domain

Rav Moshe Taragin writes:⁸

The first mishna in *Shabbat* spotlights the *melakha* of *hotza'a* (transporting items from a private domain to a public one) by delineating four test cases of transfer of *tzedaka* monies. Though the mishna introduces this list with the heading, "*yetziot ha-Shabbat*," which literally refers to *hotza'a* – bringing items outside one's private home to the public domain, it is clear from the mishna's ensuing examples that *haknasa* – relocating from a *reshut ha-rabim* to a *reshut ha-yachid* – is more or less equivalent to *hotza'a*. Whether *haknasa* qualifies as an '*av*' parallel to *hotza'a*, or as a *tolada* (derivative) of *hotza'a*, is a debate among several *amoraim*. Interestingly enough, the mishna makes no mention of *HA'AVARA* - transporting an item four *amot* within a *reshut ha-rabim*. Later in the masekhet (96b) the gemara classifies *ha'avara* as a *halakha le-Moshe mi-Sinai*, as opposed to *hotza'a*, which stems from various *pesukim*. But the gemara does not identify more specifically the relationship between *hotza'a/haknasa* and *ha'avara*. This shiur will attempt to assess this relationship.

An interesting *machloket* between Rashi and Tosafot may shed light upon the nature of *ha'vara*. A gemara in *Shabbat* (5b) establishes that *hotza'a* is violated only if the act was performed with original intent to relocate. If, for example, an item was moved in a *reshut ha-yachid* with intent to relocate within that *reshut ha-yachid*, but subsequently the item was transported to *reshut ha-rabim*, no *melakha* has been violated. Tosafot in *Sukka* lodge a similar claim regarding *ha'avara* - it is violated only if the action commenced with intention to transport the item four *amot*. Rashi in *Sukka*, however, disagrees, claiming that unlike *hotza'a*, *ha'avara* does not require this premeditation.

Presumably, Rashi and Tosafot debate the correspondence between *hotza'a* and *ha'avara*. Is *ha'avara* fundamentally different from *hotza'a*, in that the latter act involves the item's RELOCATION, whereas *ha'avara* does not relocate, and is forbidden merely as an act of MOVEMENT? Or does *ha'avara* RELOCATE as well - moving the item across a width of

⁸ <https://etzion.org.il/en/talmud/studies-gemara/talmudic-methodology/melakha-haavara-transporting-item-public-domain>

four *amot*? In his comments to the gemara (96b), the *Ba'al Ha-ma'or* invokes the principle of '*daled amot shel adam ke-shelo*' - the immediate radius of four *amot* surrounding an individual is akin to his '*chatzer*.' As such, transferring an item from that four-*ama* radius to another location is functionally equivalent to relocating it from one '*chatzer*' to another. Tosafot apparently concurred with the *Ba'al Ha-ma'or*: since *ha'avara* is comparable to *hotza'a*, it requires original lifting with intent to affect the transfer.

By contrast, Rashi distinguished between *hotza'a* and *ha'avara*. The former act is forbidden as one of relocation, and for this relocation to be fully cognitive it must be originally intended (see Rashi to *Shabbat* 5b). *Ha'avara*, however, entails mere MOVEMENT, and no intent of repositioning is necessary.

Acknowledging this difference between *hotza'a* and *ha'avara*, and noting the viability of a 'non-premeditated' removal, might enable us to understand an even more extreme position staked by a Tosafot in *Eiruvim* (33a), that *ha'avara* does not require removal and placement in *reshut ha-rabim*. Typically, *hotza'a* requires removal from a *reshut ha-yachid* and repositioning in a *reshut ha-rabim*. In fact, the entire purpose of the first *mishna* is to provide scenarios to highlight these dual requirements.

Tosafot claim that if an item were removed from a *reshut ha-yachid*, transferred four *amot* in a *reshut ha-rabim* and replaced in a different *reshut ha-yachid*, *ha'avara* would be violated. The Rashba rejects this approach, claiming that *ha'avara* is violated only if removal from, and replacement in, *reshut ha-rabim* occurs. Clearly, Tosafot in *Eiruvim* follow the logic underpinning Rashi's view in *Sukka* and apply it more radically. If *ha'avara* is dissimilar to *hotza'a* and entails not REPOSITIONING, but rather sheer MOVEMENT, it should perhaps make no difference from where the item was removed or where it was replaced, as long as it was moved a distance of four *amot* in a *reshut ha-rabim*. Rashi in *Sukka* did not suggest this concept; he merely claimed that premeditated intent was not mandatory. Tosafot in *Eiruvim* claim that neither removal from a *reshut ha-rabim* nor replacement in a *reshut ha-rabim* is necessary.

Perhaps the most famous distinction between *ha'avara* and *hotza'a* was developed by Rav Chayim of Brisk (in the recorded *chiddushim* known as the "stencils"). The gemara in *Ketuvot* (31a) discusses the rule of *kim lei be-de-rabba minei* – when a crime which yields capital punishment is committed, accompanying financial penalties are waived. This waiving applies only if the monetary penalties stem from actions which occurred simultaneous to crimes warranting capital punishments. Yet, the gemara claims that if a person fires an arrow four *amot* in a *reshut ha-rabim* on Shabbat and the arrow tears an article of clothing in its trajectory, the monetary payments are waived. Even though the tearing of the garment did not technically occur simultaneous to the shooting of the arrow, nevertheless, the entire process is considered one continuous event, the two events (movement of four *amot* and tearing the garment) are considered simultaneous.

A parallel gemara in *Bava Kama* (70b), however, discusses a situation whereby a thief consummates his act of theft by hurling the stolen item from a *reshut ha-rabim* into a *reshut ha-yachid* on Shabbat. The gemara does not apply *kim lei* in this instance, since the Shabbat violation occurs only when the item lands in *reshut ha-rabim*, while the theft and the monetary penalty has

concluded when the stolen item reaches the airspace of the thief's courtyard. Since the monetary penalty precedes the capital one, it is not waived. Tosafot in *Bava Kama* question why the gemara does not apply the same principle of *Ketuvot*: since both the monetary and criminal penalties emerge from the same integrated process, they should be considered simultaneous and *kim lei* should be applied.

Rav Chayim distinguished between the gemara in *Ketuvot*, which discusses the Shabbat violation of *ha'avara*, and the gemara in *Bava Kama*, which addressed the violation of *hotza'a*. In the latter situation, the *issur* is one of relocation. The critical stages are the removal and replacement of the item, while the movement from one zone to another is merely incidental: until the item has been moved to the next zone, it cannot be repositioned in another area. However, the 'endpoints' of this act are the critical stages of the violation. Accompanying monetary penalties which accrue DURING the act of movement are not integrated with the critical endpoints of removal and replacement of item.

Since they are not integrated, they are not considered *halakhically* simultaneous, and the principle of *kim lei* does not apply.

However, in the scenario of *Ketuvot*, it is the *melakha* of *ha'avara* which is being considered. As developed earlier surrounding the views expressed by Rashi in *Sukka* and Tosafot in *Eiruvim*, this violation is based upon not relocation, but rather sheer movement. The essence of this Shabbat violation is not its endpoints, but the intervening movement. Any accompanying monetary penalty which occurs during the process of that movement is thus fully integrated in the Shabbat violation and considered simultaneous. Garments torn while the arrow MOVES through the four-*ama* distance are an integral aspect of the Shabbat violation and are therefore subject to the exemption of *kim lei*. Rav Chayim's distinction, applied to *kim lei*, is in concert with the opinions of Rashi and Tosafot, both of whom viewed *ha'avara* as a distinct *melakha*, structurally dissimilar to *hotza'a*.



Silk in Ancient Israel

Though no silk remains have yet been found in Roman period contexts in the region of Roman Palestine, the circumstantial evidence is strong enough to argue that it was a luxury fiber used by people living in the region.

William Mierse writes:⁹

No remains of ancient silk have yet been found in archaeological contexts in ancient Israel. The closest finds are those from Palmyra in the Syrian Desert and Egypt (Schmidt-Colinet, Stauffer, Al-As'ad 2000. Good 1995: 966). There are, however, two biblical references to silk. In the *Book of Revelation*, the author lists silk (*serikon*) among the items that define the wealth of the Babylon (*Revelation* 18.12). If, as is now generally accepted, the *Book of Revelation* was written during the reign of Domitian and the author may have been a refugee from Palestine, a Jewish Christian, escaping from the destruction of the first Jewish Revolt (Mays et al. 1988: 1300; Collins 1981: 377-403), then the silk referenced must have been an eastern import such as John would have known from the markets of the eastern Mediterranean port cities. By the late first century C.E., Chinese sourced silk from the *bombyx mori* silk moth which was reeled from the complete cocoon after the developing larva was killed by boiling, was in demand as a luxury product throughout the Roman world. If we can assume that John's intended audiences for the *Book of Revelation* included not just the newly emerging Christian communities of the Mediterranean but also the Christian communities of Palestine, then the silk had to make as much sense as a sign of excess to readers in Roman Palestine as elsewhere in the Roman Empire.

The use of the word *σηρικόν* (*serikon*), which is derived from *Σήρ* (*Ser*), the Greek designation for China, to describe the fabric makes clear that this is the silk from the *bombyx mori* moth which was only obtained from the Chinese. Writers of the Imperial Age wrote of *sericae* or *serikon*, though Pausanias (6.26.6), in a possibly corrupt passage (Forbes 1956: 53), thought that the term *ser* refers to the caterpillar. For all of these authors, silk was an eastern product brought to Mediterranean markets. Pliny knew of the Chinese (*Seres*) (*NH* 6.54) and that they were famous for a textile item, though he does suggest that the production of suitable cloth for Roman markets from the fiber had to be done in western and not Chinese workshops. His description of the process by which the fibers are obtained seems more likely to refer to cotton or kapok than silk (Liu 2010: 20). When he does discuss silk (*NH* 11.75-76) he identifies it as a product of Assyria not China. While Pliny may be confused about the source of the silk, he does know that the purchasing of the luxury item is beginning to bleed the financial resources of the Empire, in one passage speaking of 50 million *sesterces* (*NH* 6.101) leaving the Empire per annum to feed the luxury trade with the East. Therefore, John's decision to include silk as a recognized luxury item resonated anywhere where the fiber had gained a following.

⁹ <https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/2013/mie378011>

Chinese silk either as woven fabric or as floss was most likely entering the Roman world of the eastern Mediterranean through caravan routes that began in China, ran west to modern day Xinjiang province where they then split into northern or southern routes around the Taklamakan Desert (Poinssotte 1979: 443-449). The finds of wooden tablets from Xuanquanzhi that record merchants and embassies from the West traveling in and out of Imperial Han China show that by the first C. CE the Han government had established a formal system for dealing with these visiting westerners (Kim 2011: 10-20). There was certainly active trade at China's western gate. The two roads joined together again at modern Kashgar and moved west either going north of the Caspian Sea and accessing Roman territory at the Black Sea or heading south of the Caspian where they passed into the Parthian Empire and emerged into Roman lands in modern Syria. However, it should be noted that this neat layout for the trade network after Kashgar has little historical or archaeological support at this moment, and the trade may have been more sea-borne than caravan based (Millar 1998: 527) which seems to be confirmed from the trade pattern evidence from Palmyra itself (Gawlikowski 1996: 139). There is a possibility that workshops developed at Antioch, Berytos, Tyre, and Gaza that served the Roman market by unraveling the plain weave (tabby) silk textiles (Day 1950: 108) and then reprocessing the yarn by redyeing it, incorporating threads of gold, and reweaving it into damasks (Wenying 2012: 119 quoting the Chinese source Pei Songzhi's commentary on *San guo zhi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*) "Biographies of the Western Rong Tribes" in a chapter entitled *Wei lue* (*Brief Account of the Wei Dynasty*), though whether most Chinese silk textiles were reworked in this manner is debated (Wild 2003b: 108). Later Sui and Tang dynasty terracotta representations of Bactrian camels ready for caravan depict cloth in bolts and hanks of yarn or floss loaded onto the camels, and so the silk textiles of the eastern Mediterranean workshops could easily have been produced from the silk floss rather than unraveled textiles.

The silk textile fragments recovered from the tombs at Palmyra date between 9 BCE (Towertomb 7, Atenatan) and 103 CE (Towertomb 13, Elahbel) (Schmidt-Colinet, Stauffer, and Al-As'ad 2000: 99-190; Maecken-Helfen 1943: 358). Among the fragments are weavings that were clearly the products of Han Chinese workshops. The last twenty-five years of Chinese archaeological excavations throughout China and particularly in Xinjiang province have yielded a wealth of early silk textile remains, enough to offer a good understanding of the changing technical and aesthetic aspects of Chinese and Central Asian silk weaving from the Neolithic to the Medieval periods (Kuhn 2012: 1-64). These Chinese finds allow for stylistic comparisons to be made with the Palmyrene finds. The warp-faced, three-color polychrome fragment from Towertomb 44 (Klitot, 40 CE) (Schmidt-Colinet, Stauffer, and Al-As'ad 2000: no. 223) looks quite similar to Han fragments of three-color warp-faced, polychrome *jin* textiles of the type known as animal-and-cloud patterns (*yunqi dongwu wen*) (Wenying 2012:142-156, nos. 3.34a-c) and must be the surviving remains of a larger coverlet that was brought from China to Palmyra.

The Palmyra find demonstrates that some woven Han period Chinese cloth was coming to the far West where it was valued enough to be included among the burial objects. The Dura Europos excavations unearthed silk fibers identified as the *anatheraea mylitta* species of wild *tusseh* silk (Pfister and Bellinger 1945: n. 264). Since the Chinese floss and textiles were produced from the silk of the domesticated *bombyx mori* moth, the wild silk must have come from India. Unlike Chinese silk thread which was plied from strands of fiber unraveled in a single long strand from the cocoon of the *bombyx mori* moth, *tusseh* silk was a raw silk processed from cocoons collected from the forest after the various moths had emerged. Since the moth breaks the silk to escape it

was impossible to unravel a complete strand from a cocoon. The silk filaments and woven textiles had a different texture from the Chinese products. The Indian trade into the Roman world was extensive and of economic significance and came via the Red Sea, Alexandria, and possibly the caravan routes of the old incense network from Arabia (Tomber 2008: 68). Two ports on the Arabian Peninsula that serviced the India trade, Leuke Kome and Kane/Qana, have yielded some evidence for resident Jewish communities (Tomber 2008: 61, 103) which could have had ties to Roman Palestine. Wild silk has shown up in eastern Roman contexts (Wild 2003b: 108) indicating that Indian silk was an import item alongside Chinese silk.

Though no silk remains have yet been found in Roman period contexts in the region of Roman Palestine, the circumstantial evidence is strong enough to argue that it was a luxury fiber used by people living in the region. Silk fabrics of Han Chinese manufacture, perhaps coming from the northern end points of the land caravan routes, and Indian silk floss, moving up the old incense trade network, could probably have been found in the markets of the major metropolitan centers like Jerusalem or Sepphoris. Placing silk among the riches of Babylon would have made complete sense to Christians residing in Palestine, especially since silk was one of the exotic imports so significant in the Roman market economy (Mays et al. 1988: 1316).

The second biblical appearance of silk is in the Hebrew bible, Ezekiel 16:10 and 13. In this extended metaphor Jerusalem, representing Israel, is cast as the adultress wife of Yahweh (16:1-43a). The passages with silk refer to Yahweh's generosity to the young wife, Jerusalem. He made her famous for her beauty (16: 9-14) (Mays, et al. 1988: 673-674). Again, silk is employed to indicate riches and is integrated into a listing of items of wealth that are used to ornament the young wife: leather footwear, fine linen, along with gold and silver bangles. Here the word for silk is *meshi* (*mešî*) at least in the massaretic rendering of the passage (which Forbes 1946: 78 n. 467: doubts is silk). The Talmudic term for silk is *sērkiōn*, coming from the Greek, at least after the establishment of a distant eastern place for its origin (Ser). However, the *Septuagint* translators used *τριχάπτω* (*trichapton*) (having to do with hair) perhaps meaning woven of hair, to gloss whatever word was used in original ancient Hebrew. However, *meshi*, which is perhaps derived from *mashah* (to draw or extract), does seem to indicate something different from fine linen (*shesh*) which is placed in apposition in the text; so here silk seems the reasonable gloss and that it was probably the same in the original version. (Douglas 1962: sv silk; A. E. Day *NETBible*: sv silk; silkworm)

The passage does suggest that silk was known in ancient Israel long before the arrival of Indian or Chinese silk in large quantities during the Roman period. There is some evidence for Chinese silk in far western contexts before the Roman period, two fifth century B.C. burials in the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens, two Hallstatt D1 period burials at Hohmichele Tumulus and Hochdorf-Eberdingen, and a fifth century BC burial at Altrier in Luxemburg (Good 1995: 964-966). There also remains a silk thread found in the hair of a mummy from a 21st dynasty burial at Deir al Medina (Lubeck, Halaubek, Feldi, Lubec, and Strouhal 1993: 25). None of these finds indicates massive trade in finished textiles or even floss but does indicate that some of the eastern fabric was making its way to the West. Even though movement along what would become the caravan routes of the later Silk Roads was extremely difficult before the period of the Han Dynasty, there is still evidence that trade moved both east and west along the land routes albeit, on a quite modest scale (Kim 2011: 6-7). However, this would not have been enough to have allowed the textile by name to be a reference for luxury. There needed to be a more commonly available fabric to allow for its use in this manner in the text.

Herodotus (1. 135; 3. 84; 7. 116) and later Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 8. 1. 40) speak of Median garments, which are considered luxury items, both precious and beautiful, and it has been proposed that these were silk (Forbes 1956: 52), though this is reading beyond what either author actually says. It is the Byzantine writer Procopius who identifies the garments as of silk (*History of the Wars* 1, 20. 9-12). There is no evidence for silk production in Achaemenid Persia, and so most likely if the garments were of silk, then the fiber must have been *tusseh* silk from India. Persian conquests under Cyrus, Cambyses, and later Darius extended Achaemenid control to northwest India (Allchin 1995:130-132), and so Indian goods were making their way to the Persian court, and among those tribute and trade items must have been wild silk. In court workshops it could have been processed into Median garments. A Persian source for the silk reference in Ezekiel will not fit. Ezekiel's work has strong internal dating evidence that allows for it to be placed in the first half of the sixth century B.C. (Mays et al. 1988: 652), at least half a century too early to have been influenced by any Persian sources.

However, there was a possible alternative source for silk which may actually have been available in the Babylon of the early sixth century BCE which is probably where Ezekiel was active (Mays et al. 1988: 65-653). Aristotle provides a somewhat convoluted description of silk in his *History of Animals* (5.19.551b. 13) and identifies the island of Cos in the Aegean as the place where the women process this fiber, and Pliny knows this story as well (*NH* 11. 76-77). This would have been a raw silk processed from the cocoons after the moth had escaped, and so like the Indian silk, quite distinct from Chinese silk, which is probably why Pliny does not identify it as the same fiber coming from China, but which he may actually be describing as the product of the Assyrian silkworm (*HN* 11. 25-26). Roman authors wrote of *vestae Coae*, indicating that there was something special about garments from Cos even into the early Imperial period. Richter (1929: 27-33) has argued that famous *Amorgian* fabric, much of it dedicated to Artemis Brauronia (Cleland 2005: 96-112), was in fact silk from the island of Cos already being used for luxury garments in the fifth century BCE. The word *Amorgis* may well have been the early Greek word for silk. The island of Amorgos is in the same island grouping as Cos, and Richter suggests that it was probably a stopping point for a major trade route between the Levant and the Greek mainland.

A silk product from Cos but easily available on Amorgos came to be associated with that island during the six through the fourth centuries BCE. Oppenheim thought that he had evidence for the penetration of this Coan silk via the port city of Tyre into the heartland of Neo-Babylonian Mesopotamia in the sixth century BCE. In two cuneiform documents from Uruk which record the business activities associated with overland trade that Oppenheim thinks was in the Levantine region, he argues that one of the items being brought to Mesopotamia was silk from the West, very likely Coan silk or *Amorgis* (Oppenheim 1967: 248-253). By Roman time it seems that both *tusseh* silk and the finer Chinese silk were both available in the marketplace, and *tusseh silk* was represented by both indigenous silk and imported Indian silk, but in the sixth century it is much more likely that Ezekiel had in mind Aegean wild silk, still a luxury fiber, with which he had Yahweh drape the young wife. If indeed the documents from Uruk are indicative of a larger scale trade between Mesopotamia and the port cities of Lebanon and if indeed the fine textile item being carried is Aegean silk, then the markets in Babylon must have contained this expensive and rare fabric which the Jewish community would have known but probably could not access. Thus having Yahweh gift it to the young wife makes it an appropriate item to express open-handed generosity.

Though the actual finds of silk in the contexts of ancient Judah or later Palestine are non-existent, the two biblical passages and the evidence for silk in nearby settings permits us to see that silk was a known luxury fiber. It had assumed the same privileged position in the societies of Roman Palestine and earlier in the Judah of the period of Babylonian captivity that it has elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean. Because the audiences for these biblical passages associated silk, whether wild or domesticated, with wealth and luxury, it was the perfect fiber to reference when trying to heighten the sense of value being stressed.

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Judaism and the Silk Route

Richard Foltz writes:¹⁰

¹⁰ The History Teacher , Nov. 1998, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Nov. 1998), pp. 9-16

THE ISRAELITE MONARCHY believed to have been established in Palestine by King David in the tenth century BCE was obliterated by powers from the East in two major stages, beginning in the eighth century BCE and concluding in the sixth. The Assyrians crushed the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 and forcibly relocated its inhabitants to other parts of their empire. The book of 2 Kings (18: 11) states that Ten Tribes of Israel were exiled to “Halah and Habor by the River Gozan and in the cities of the Medes.” Since the former locations have been situated in Khurasan, it has been suggested that Israelite presence in Central Asia should be considered as originating at that time.² It has accordingly been proposed that these earliest exiles may have engaged in long-distance overland trade.³ Such hypotheses are not implausible, but solid evidence is lacking. The southern kingdom of Judah managed to survive for another century and a half through diplomacy, but in 587 a new power, the Babylonians, put an end to Judean independence, destroying Jerusalem and its Temple which had been the center of the priest-dominated sacrificial religion of the Israelites since the time of King Solomon. Like the Assyrians, the Babylonians deported the Judean survivors to Mesopotamia to live as slaves.

Less than thirty years later, in 559 a Persian army under Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon and freed the various enslaved peoples there, including the Judeans. Allowed to return home to Judah, many Judeans

chose instead to stay in Babylon as free citizens of the new Persian empire, while others elected to try their luck elsewhere in the Persian-controlled lands. Many relocated eastward to Iran proper and laid the foundations for Jewish communities that have survived there to the present day, especially in the cities of Hamadan (ancient Ecbatana) and Esfahan.

As Cyrus had also made conquests to the east, as far as Bactria and Sogdiana, it is likely that some of the Babylonian Jews relocated to those provinces as well. The book of Esther states in several places (3:6, 8; 8:5, 12; and 9:20) that the Jews lived “in all the provinces” of the Persian Empire. The modern-day Jewish communities of Bukhara and Samarqand, in particular, like to trace their history back to Assyrian times, and consider themselves to be descended from the Ten Tribes.⁴ Though this origin is attested by Saadia Gaon of Fayyum in the tenth century,⁵ there is no direct evidence for Jewish presence in Central Asia earlier than the Achaemenid period as attested in the book of Esther.

Recently an attempt has been made to argue that the fabled Silk Route city of Samarqand was originally founded as a Jewish refugee colony, on the basis of some popular etymologies (e.g., Samar+qand=Samarian-city) and other evidence. While some of the examples given are intriguing, the clear fallaciousness of others undermines the argument’s credibility. For example, the author of this attempt, being ignorant of Persian, also suggests that the Persian new year, *no ruz* (“new day”), is derived from the Hebrew *navra* (“fire”).⁶ In any event it is certain that Samarqand was already an important city by the time of Alexander’s conquest; it appears in Arrian as Maracanda. Therefore the Muslim legend, according to which the city was founded by two of Alexander’s slaves, Samar and Qamar, must be discounted as well as the recent Jewish explanation.

It does nevertheless seem likely that many of the post-exilic Judean settlers in Persian lands took up commerce. It would have been consistent with later patterns for them to set up trade networks with relatives or other Judeans in other parts of the Persian empire or elsewhere. Thus, influences picked up by Judean communities in one cultural environment could easily travel to connected communities in another. It is beginning in the Persian period that a number of Iranian beliefs and concepts appear to have worked their way into the religious tradition of the Judeans, a tradition that would later evolve into Judaism.

probably much further back than that. Despite the lack of firm evidence from the ancient period, it is not unlikely that Jewish merchants were active along the so-called Silk Route linking the Far East with the Mediterranean from the earliest times. Hebrew names appearing on pottery fragments from Marv (modern Turkmenistan) dating from the first to the third centuries CE attest to the presence of Jews living along the Silk Route by then.⁷ Because Jews were spread across a wide geographical area spanning both the Parthian and the Roman lands, they were ideally situated to participate in trade between the two empires.⁸

Naturally the Jewish merchants' religious ideas would have accompanied them on their travels, and therefore would have become familiar to peoples encountered by these merchants along the way. So we can say that in ancient times certain Israelite religious ideas may have spread geographically eastward, in the sense that the *possessors* of those ideas physically went there; this is not to say, however, that any sort of Jewish religious system "grew" or won converts. The great missionary religions had not yet entered the stage of world history.

In traditional societies religions, like people, are generally considered as being attached to a particular locality or region, and by extension to their own local culture. From an Iranian, Inner Asian, or Chinese point of view, whatever religion a foreign merchant of Judean origin practiced was simply the religion of the Judeans; to embrace it as one's own would be to pretend to be something one was not. Still, as Iranians, Turks, Chinese, and other Asian peoples came into contact with these merchants from the west and became familiar with their ways of thinking, subtle influences must have penetrated in both directions through everyday encounters and conversation. It is abundantly clear that from the time of the Babylonian exile at the very latest, Iranian and Israelite religious ideas were interacting with each other.

There is more evidence for Iranian influence on the formation of Jewish ideas than the reverse. The belief in a messianic savior, a bodily resurrection, and a last judgement, are just some of the notions that Judaism (and subsequently Christianity and Islam) seem to have absorbed from the Persians. The concepts of a heavenly paradise (Old Persian *paira daeza*) and a hell of punishment for the wicked (an idea later developed in Christian tradition) are also seen in ancient Iranian religion but absent from pre-exilic Israelite sources. Eventually, the evil figure of Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman, evolves into the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim devil, whose Jewish form first appears in the book of Job as *ha-satan*, "the accuser."

Like some other Indo-European peoples, Iranians believed time would end in a great apocalyptic event. The Scandinavians called this apoca-

lypse *Ragnarök*; the Iranians called it *Frasho-kereti*. In Iranian tradition this event would signal the return of a savior, the *Saoshyant*. It is surely no coincidence that the apocalyptic writings of Jewish tradition, such as those found in the books of Ezekiel and Daniel, appear in the context of the Babylonian captivity and after. Finally, it is likely that the Jewish festival of Purim was originally derived from the ancient Iranian spring-time festival of Fravardigan, which, like Purim, began on the fourteenth day of the month of Azar and included an exchange of gifts.⁹

The Later Development of Jewish Trade Networks

Jews certainly participated in the Silk Route trade networks which linked the Roman Mediterranean with Han China in Classical times. From the advent of Islam in the seventh century Jewish traders known as Radanites¹⁰ held a privileged status which allowed them to move freely between the Muslim and Christian worlds, but the origins of the Radanite system must go back several centuries at least prior to that, since it is highly developed by the time the Radanites appear in Muslim sources. Latin sources seem to indicate that already in the preceding centuries Mediterranean trade was dominated by Jews from the West and Syrians from the Byzantine East.¹¹

The original base of the Radanites was in Roman Gaul, centered in Arles and Marseilles.¹² They trafficked particularly in slaves, and controlled a large operation in Verdun for turning them into eunuchs. It was this involvement in the slave trade that brought the Jewish Radanites into contact with the Turkish Khazars of the north Caspian region, a transit point for captured Slavs (Slav < Lat. Sclav; cf. Sclaveni, Ar. *saqaliba*).

Controlling an important northern offshoot of the Silk Route, the Khazars were ideally situated to serve as middlemen between East and West. They enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the settled Iranian peoples to the south and the East along the Silk Route, which was well-expressed in the Turkish proverb, "*Tatsiz Türk bolmas; bashsiz börk bolmas*," or, "There is no Iranian merchant without a Turkish associate, just as there is no cap without a head". Perceiving the commercial benefits associated with the Radanites' neutral religious status, the Khazar elite eventually embraced Judaism, although the supreme ruler, the khagan, as well as the general population of his subjects retained their original shamanistic Turkic religion. The ninth-century Persian geographer Ibn Khurdadbih describes the Radanites thus:

These merchants speak Arabic, Persian, Roman (Greek), the language of the Franks, Andalusians, and Slavs. They journey from west to east, partly

on land, partly by sea. They transport from the west eunuchs, female and male slaves, silk, castor, marten and other furs, and swords.¹³

Ibn Khurdadbih describes four different trade routes on which the Radanites were active. The first is from Gaul across the Mediterranean and overland to the Red Sea and via the Indian Ocean to the Far East, the second is via Mesopotamia, and the third across North Africa. The fourth route mentioned by Ibn Khurdadbih went northward through the Khazar lands, from where it joined the Silk Route:

Sometimes they likewise take the route behind Rome, and, passing through the country of the Slavs, arrive at Khamlif (Etil), the capital of the Khazars. They embark upon the Jorjan Sea (the Caspian), arrive at Balkh, betake themselves from there across the Oxus, and continue their journey toward the Yourts of the Toghozghor (the Tüqqüz Oghuz Turks), and from there to China.¹⁴

Naturally the raising of Judaism to official status within the Khazar dominions would have facilitated and encouraged the northern alternative. In any event Ibn Khurdadbih's account makes it clear that Jews were active along all the world's major trade routes at that time, which implies the existence of diaspora communities of Jews living all along the various stages of those routes. The widespread extent of these diaspora communities and the fact that they remained in communication with each other is borne out by the many locations referred to in the Gaonic *responsa* literature (a form of rabbinic instruction for the laity of the Jewish diaspora) which began in the eighth century.¹⁵

Judaism in the Far East

A single stone inscription from a synagogue in Kaifeng along the lower reaches of the Yellow River offers a tantalizing suggestion regarding the earliest Jewish presence in the Far East. The inscription, which dates from 1663, reads:

The religion started in *T'ien-chu* (lit. "India," but probably just meaning the West), and was first transmitted to China during the Chou (the Chou dynasty, ca. 1000-221 BCE). A *tz'u* (ancestral hall) was built in Ta-liang (Kaifeng). Through the Han, T'ang, Sung, Ming, and up till now, it has undergone many vicissitudes.¹⁶

If we are to believe this inscription, the Jewish community of China which became extinguished only in the present century would appear to have been founded by traders from the West, who came either via the Silk

Route or by sea, prior to the end of the third century BCE. It has even been suggested that this process was already occurring in the time of King David! Supporters of this theory cite terms in the Hebrew Bible which they take to mean “silk,” although detractors point out that these meanings are far from established.¹⁷ For a long time enthusiasts identified “the land of Sinim” in Deutero-Isaiah with China, a connection since disproven.¹⁸ To argue that Jews may have participated in trans-Asian trade from the earliest times of its existence is one thing, but so far the more extreme arguments regarding dating are purely speculative.

Unfortunately the Kaifeng inscription is uncorroborated by any other piece of evidence, and may just reflect the Kaifeng community’s boldest claim to antiquity in its own origin myth. An earlier inscription from 1512 and a slightly later one from 1679 both date the Jews’ first arrival in China to the Han period. Chinese Jewish informants told a Jesuit missionary in the early eighteenth century that according to their own oral tradition, their ancestors had first come from Persia during the reign of Ming Ti (58-75 CE).¹⁹ Some scholars believe that the Kaifeng community arrived by sea no earlier than the ninth century CE, separately and distinctly from the Jews who had come overland into Chinese territory much earlier.²⁰

That Jews were active along the overland routes to China is supported by the existence of documents, consisting of business correspondence, which have been found along the Silk Route in East Turkestan (modern Xinjiang). These date from the eighth century, and are written on paper (which was produced only in China at that time) in a Judeo-Persian dialect using Hebrew characters.²¹ There is further linguistic evidence to indicate an overland connection originating in Iran,²² but in any event it is clear that Jewish traders came to China via both land and sea routes; the unresolved question is when they did so for the first time.

The Survival of Judaism in Central Asia

Writing in the twelfth century, a Spanish Jew by the name of Benjamin of Tudela, traveled to Central Asia and described a thriving Jewish community there.²³ By the end of the fifteenth century, however, long-distance trade along the Silk Route was in decline. With the declaration of state Shi’ism in Iran in 1501, Jews living in Sunni Central Asia gradually lost much of their contact with co-religionists to the west. The religious pluralism that had characterized Silk Route communities was at an end; Iranians and Turks alike had adopted Islam; Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and other religions were no longer seen in Central Asia. Only Judaism somehow survived the otherwise complete process of Islamization there.

Central Asian Jews today—or Bukharan Jews, as they are commonly called— number perhaps 50,000. Of this number some 40,000 still live in Central Asia, mainly residing in the cities of Bukhara and Samarqand. Roughly 8,000 others have migrated to Israel, and some to other countries, especially the United States.²⁴ Emigration has accelerated in recent years with the demise of the Soviet Union, such that the continued survival of Jewish communities in Central Asia is now in question. Those who remain there are living testimony to the role of long-distance trade in the spread of cultures throughout world history.

Notes

1. This paper is intended as a preliminary discussion, which will be elaborated in my book *Religions of the Silk Route* (New York: St. Martin's Press, forthcoming).
2. Allen H. Godbey, "From Persia to China," in William C. White, ed., *Chinese Jews*, second edition (New York: Paragon, 1966), pp. 136-7.
3. Irene Franck, *The Silk Road* (New York, 1986), p. 63.
4. Itzhak Ben-Zvi, *The Exiled and the Redeemed* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1957), p. 67; Julius Brutzkus, "Bukhara," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Berlin, 1929), vol. 4, col., 1126.
5. L. Rabinowitz, *Jewish Merchant Adventurers: A Study of the Radanites* (London: Goldston, 1948), p. 51.
6. David Law, *From Samaria to Samarkand* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992).
7. V.A. Livshits and Z.I. Usmanova, "New Parthian Inscriptions from Old Merv," in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Metzer, eds., *Irano-Judaica III* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1994), pp. 99-105.
8. Jacob Neusner, "Jews in Iran," in Ehsan Yarshater, ed., *Cambridge History of Iran, v.3, The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 912.
9. Almut Hintze, "The Greek and Hebrew Versions of the Book of Esther and its Iranian Background," in Shaul Shaked and Amnon Metzer, eds., *Irano-Judaica III* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1994), pp. 34-39.
10. *Ar. al-radaniyya*; see Ibn Khurdadbih, *Kitab al-masalik wa'l-mamalik*, DeGoeje, ed. (*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, Leiden, 1889), v. 6, p. 114.
11. Rabinowitz, *Jewish Merchant Adventurers*, p. 15.
12. Omeljan Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus*, vol. 1 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 25.
13. Quoted in Rabinowitz, *Jewish Merchant Adventurers*, p. 9.
14. Rabinowitz, *Jewish Merchant Adventurers*, p. 10.
15. Rabinowitz, *Jewish Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 41-2, 86.
16. Quoted in Donald D. Leslie (*The Survival of the Chinese Jews*, Leiden: Brill, 1972), p. 3.
17. Michael Pollock, *Mandarins, Jews and Missionaries* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1980), pp. 255-6.

18. Pollock, *Mandarins*, p. 257.
19. Leslie, *Survival*, p. 4.
20. Rudolf Loewenthal, "The Jews of Bukhara," *Central Asian Collectanea*, no. 8 (Washington, D.C.), 1961, p. 6.
21. D.S. Margoliouth, "An Early Judeo-Persian Document from Khotan in the Stein Collection, With Other Early Persian Documents," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1903), 735-61; B. Utas, "The Jewish-Persian Fragment from Dandan-Uiliq," *Orientalia Suecana* 17 (1968), 123-26. Interestingly this Jewish business correspondence is the oldest known example of the so-called New Persian language, which evolved from Middle Persian after the Arab conquest of Iran.
22. Donald Leslie, "The Origin of the Kaifeng Jews," in Shaul Shaked, ed., *Irano-Judaica* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi), pp. 101-111.
23. Benjamin of Tudela, "Travels," in Manuel Kamroff, ed., *Contemporaries of Marco Polo* (New York: Dorset, 1989), p. 304, where he estimates the Jewish population of Samargand at 50,000. Zand calls this figure "fantastic," but points out that it demonstrates the contemporary notion that the Jewish presence in Central Asia was significant (Michael Zand, "Bukharan Jews," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1982-), p. 533.
24. Zand, "Bukharan Jews," p. 531.



1,000-Year-Old 'Afghan Genizah' Offers Window on Lost World of Silk Road Jews

Nir Hasson writes:¹¹

The National Library of Israel has purchased the "Afghan Genizah" collection brought to Israel by Israeli antiquities dealer Lenny Wolfe some 10 months ago. The collection includes about 250

¹¹ <https://forward.com/culture/350015/1-000-year-old-afghan-genizah-offers-window-on-lost-world-of-silk-road-jews/>

documents, most from the 11th century, and were most likely discovered in a cave in northern Afghanistan.

About 100 of the manuscripts probably came from the archive of a Jewish family that lived on the Silk Road in the area of today's Afghanistan. Some of the documents concern the family's trading business. Some are private letters and others are religious texts. They include a section from the Mishnaic tractate of Avodah Zarah. This is the earliest example of Jewish religious texts in a Persian speaking region, east of Babylonia.

Scholars now know that the source of the manuscripts is not a genizah – a hidden cache of manuscripts – like the one found in Cairo, but rather the archive of a Jewish family of traders who lived on the Silk Road in northern Afghanistan in the 11th century. The head of the family is named in the manuscripts as Abu Nassar Ben Daniel and the family apparently lived in the central Afghani city of Bamyan. The city made headlines 15 years ago when the Taliban blew up two huge statues of Buddha there.

The collection of manuscripts came to light a few years later, after the war that led to the downfall of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Rumor has it that the collection was found in a cave or deep rock crevice somewhere in Afghanistan, where it had been secreted by its owners about a thousand years ago.

The manuscripts were written in a wide variety of languages – Aramaic, Hebrew, Persian, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Persian – the two latter languages are Arabic, and Persian written in Hebrew letters. Legal and commercial manuscripts can be found in the collection along with sacred writings and personal letters.

The main importance of the Afghani genizah is the treasure trove of information it contains about the Jewish community in Afghanistan a thousand years ago. For example, the personal letters reveal the places in which Jews lived, their professions and family structure. About 150 of the documents are from a later period, the 12th century and the early 13th century. They are written in Persian and Arabic, and are not connected to the local Jewish community, but they are still of incredible importance to scholars researching the region in the early Middle Ages. Most of these texts were written by Muslim traders who lived in the area before the destruction wrought by the Mongol conquest in the mid-13th century.

Researchers have little written information on the life and culture of these regions during these periods, as the Mongol conquest led to the destruction of most documents from that period. Experts are still uncertain about the connection between the two different collections of writings: The Abu Nasser family archive and the non-Jewish collection; or whether they came from the same source, or two different locations.

Cache contains some 250 documents, mainly from 11th century, most likely discovered in cave in northern Afghanistan. The National Library of Israel

Three years ago, the National Library bought 29 other manuscripts from the Abu Nasser Genizah, also from Wolfe. Now they have bought another 100. Experts estimate that another 500 such documents from the same collection are still in the hands of two private antiquities dealers in Europe. The various manuscripts have been appearing in the Judaica antiquities markets over the past seven years. The negotiations between Wolfe and the National Library continued for months and in the end the purchase was made possible because of a special donation made to the library by the William Davidson Foundation and the Haim and Hanna Solomon Fund. Neither side will say how much the deal was worth, but the amount is not thought to be astronomical because the pages include only text and no illustrations or art, and the value of such writings is considered to be limited in antiquities markets.

The National Library is working to digitally scan all the manuscripts and upload all of them to the internet.



References to Silk in Geniza Documents: Eleventh Century A. D.

Moshe Gil writes:¹²

¹² Journal of Near Eastern Studies , Jan. 2002, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Jan. 2002), pp. 31- 38

SILK production, as is well known, began in China sometime in the third millennium B.C. It is only in the mid-sixth century A.D., in the days of Emperor Justinian, that the secrets of its production reached Byzantium. In the Qurʾān, there are a number of references to silk (*ḥarīr*). After death, the faithful believers will be rewarded by, among other things, garments containing silk, *wa-libāsuhum fihā ḥarīrun* (*sūrat al-ḥajj*, 22:23). They will live in gardens and be given garments of silk, which will be their reward, *jannatun wa-ḥarīrun* (*sūrat al-dahr*, 76:12). Pious Muslims, however, would not wear silk garments. ʿUmar entered Jerusalem, in 638, riding on a camel, wrapped in a cloak made of camel hair.¹ Later, however, as attested by one tenth-century writer, silk became an essential desideratum of the upper classes.²

In Jewish sources, silk is mentioned as early as the Talmudic period; for example, we read of a man betrothed to a woman who gives her *shīrayē* as a gift;³ we also read of R. Hūnā, who tore up *shīrayē* in his son Rabba's presence, saying: "let me see whether he does or does not become angry" (probably, to see whether or not he would transgress the commandment: "Honor thy father").⁴

There is also a geonic responsum that attempts to explain the Talmudic terms *metaksa* and *sīraqīn* by indicating that both are a kind of *shīrē faranda*, called in Arabic *ḥarīr* and by Talmudic sages *ibrīshum*. The responsum states that there are various types of this fabric, depending on how it is woven, "in one or two or several warps."⁵

Another expression we find in the Geniza documents (as well as in the responsum cited above) is *ibrīsam*, which is a synonym for *ḥarīr*. Hārūn b. Joseph al-Ghazzāl, in his letter to Joseph Ibn ʿAwakal sent from Qayrawān to Fustat,⁶ mentions *ibrīsam muṭarraz*, an

* The numbers of the Geniza documents published by me and cited throughout this article are printed in bold type and preceded by the letters P or K. For the documents designated P, see my *Palestine during the First Muslim Period* (Tel Aviv, 1983), vols. 2–3 (in Hebrew). For those designated K, see my *In the Kingdom of Ishmael* (Tel Aviv, 1997), vols. 2–4 (in Hebrew).

¹ See my *A History of Palestine, 624–1099* (Cambridge and New York, 1992), p. 53.

² R. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles* (Beirut, 1972), pp. 213 f.

³ M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York, 1926), s.v. *shīrā*.

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0022–2968/2002/6101–0002\$10.00.

⁴ On silk, see Serjeant, pp. 199–202; S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley, 1967–73), vol. 1, pp. 101 ff.; and N. Steensgaard, *Harīr*, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed., vol. 3, pp. 209–11. See also the Babylonian Talmud, *Qiddūshin*, 7b, 32a, and B. Kasovskiy's *Ōṣar leshōn ha-talmūd* (Jerusalem, 1954–82) (hereafter *Concordance*), s.vv. *metaksa*, *sīraqīn*, and *shīrāʿin*; cf. S. Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (Berlin, 1898–99), pp. 331 f., 339. On silk during the Roman period, see D. Sperber, *Roman Palestine* (Ramat-Gan, 1974), vol. 1, p. 256, n. 8, who refers to the terms *ḥarīqōn* and *ḥarīqē*; these are, in fact, garbled forms of *sīraqōn* and *sīraqē*.

⁵ S. Assaf, *Teshūvōt ha-geʾōnīm* (Jerusalem, 1928), pp. 155 f.

⁶ K 175.

embroidered silk fabric. *Ibrisam khurāsānī*, on the other hand, is mentioned in around 1065 in a letter from Ismaʿīl b. Isaac al-Andalusī, written in Tyre. Ismaʿīl seems to have been a refugee from Qayrawān, a city that had been destroyed by the Bedouin in the late 1050s; perhaps he brought this silk from the Maghrib, first to Aleppo, then to Tyre, and planned to send the *ibrisam* to Fustat.⁷ The term *ibrisam* is a loanword from Persian *abri-sham*,⁸ probably used mainly in the eastern part of the Muslim world.⁹

In an earlier Geniza document, a papyrus dating to the ninth century A.D., we find the term *īārīd* (pl. *aīārīd*), which was apparently a kind of silk cloth.¹⁰ The most frequently used term for silk cloth in the Geniza letters, however, is *dībāj*, also apparently a Persian loanword.¹¹ We read in an account of goods from A.D. 1058: “five loads of *sirāq*.”¹² In a letter dating to ca. A.D. 1067, we find that small parcels of *madash*, which appears also to be silk, are being sent from Alexandria to Fustat (*madash*, apparently derived from Greek μέταξα).¹³

In the indexes of my books *Palestine during the First Muslim Period* and *In the Kingdom of Ishmael*, there are hundreds of references to either *ḥarīr*, *dībāj*, or *khazz*. With respect to the places of origin of the various kinds of silk, we firstly find *ḥarīr andalusī*, Spanish silk. It appears to have been one of the main products traded between Muslim Spain and Egypt.¹⁴ Nehorai b. Nissim, in an account for the year 1046, cites income for *ḥarīr andalusī*.¹⁵ Also mentioned is *ḥarīr shāmī*, which was a product of either Syria or Palestine. The same Nehorai b. Nissim, writing ca. 1045, mentions that huge shipments of silk, which have arrived from al-Shām, prevented a significant rise in the price of silk in Fustat.¹⁶

The center of silk production in al-Shām may have been near Damascus, as we find mention of *ḥarīr ghūṭī*, i.e., silk from the *ghūṭa*, the fertile area surrounding Damascus. The term appears in a letter written by the *nāsī* and *gāʾōn* Daniel b. Azariah, who before becoming *gāʾōn* of Palestine was engaged in trade.¹⁷ Shāmī silk was probably somewhat

⁷ P 510.

⁸ A. de Biberstein-Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français* (Paris, 1860), vol. 1, p. 4.

⁹ Serjeant, in *Islamic Textiles*, seems to have assumed, as can be seen from his indexes, that *ḥarīr* and *ibrisam* describe two different kinds of silk. The identity in meaning of the two terms can be seen from the fact that the silkworm is sometimes called *dūd al-ibrisam*; for example, see *ibid.*, p. 76. See also J. Karabaček, *Über einige Benennungen mittelalterlicher Gewebe* (Vienna, 1882), vol. 1, p. 21; and my *History of Palestine*, pp. 247 and 250.

¹⁰ K 104; cf. *maqānīʿ īārīd* in J. David-Weill et al., “Lettres à un marchand égyptien du iii/ix^e siècle,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16 (1973): 4 and the editors’ explanation, *ibid.*, p. 7, following R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2d ed. (Leiden, 1927), vol. 2, p. 33. See also *ridāwayn aīārīd* (in K 104a, line 26) meaning “two mantles of silk,” in a papyrus from the mid-ninth century A.D.

¹¹ See Karabaček, *Benennungen*, p. 21: Persian: *dībā*; Syriac: *dībāg*; Armenian: *dipak*, whose root is *dip*, meaning “to shine, glare.” See also Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 201.

¹² K 817; cf. *sarq*, Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire*, s.v., and Kasovsky, *Concordance*, vol. 27, p. 355, and Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, pp. 393 f. Obviously, *shirayē*, *strāqīn*, *sirāq*, etc. are all borrowed from Greek σιρικόν.

¹³ K 524; cf. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, vol. 2, p. 853: *madāsha*; see also in the Babylonian Talmud, *ʿErūvīn* 69a, *Mōʿēd qāṭān*, 12 b: *ḥumretā de-madōshā*; pace Rashi *ad locum* and others, I think it means a “silken scarf”; for *ḥumretā*, compare Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, vol. 1, p. 404, and Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français*, vol. 1, p. 631, where several textile articles are derived from the root *kh-m-r*.

¹⁴ See Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawd*: *al-mīʿtār fī khabar al-aqṭār*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut, 1975), p. 113; cf. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 12; Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l’Espagne musulmane* (Paris, 1950), vol. 3, p. 285; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, p. 102.

¹⁵ K 273 c, line 15, and there are more such references; see the index in my *Kingdom of Ishmael*, vol. 4, p. 936.

¹⁶ K 240.

¹⁷ P 345.

costly, since the *muḥtasib*, the supervisor of the markets, is advised to ensure that the silk dealers do not sell *khazzāsh* (see below) silk for the same price as *shāmī* silk.¹⁸ Silk from Malf, i.e., Amalfi in southern Italy, is mentioned by Nehorai b. Nissim in ca. 1046.¹⁹ Barhūn b. Mūsā al-Tāhīrtī requests, around the same time, that 50 pieces of *ḥarīr sūsi muthallath*, “triple-layered,” *munammaq*, “embroidered with letters,” be sent to him in Jerusalem—*sūsi*, referring to Sūsa in the Maghrib.²⁰ Another Maghribi center of silk production was Qābis. Barhūn b. Mūsā al-Tāhīrtī sells *ḥarīr qābisi* in ca. 1053, and some ten years later he writes about *al-ḥarīr al-qābisi al-qaṣīri* (cut short?).²¹ Salāma b. Mūsā, who writes in 1062, complains about the scarcity of *ḥarīr qābisi*.²²

Silk from Constantinople is mentioned in a letter from Jerusalem, written by Moses b. Jacob in 1053, who asks that seven *raṭls* of *ḥarīr qusṭanīni maṣbūgh* (dyed) be sent to him from Egypt but only if the silk is of a superior quality.²³

Another important center of the silk trade was Sicily. In fact, silk is the most frequently encountered fabric among the textiles of Sicily. The widely accepted opinion is that silk was first introduced to the island by the Norman king Roger II, who in A.D. 1147 brought Jewish prisoners captured in the Greek islands to Sicily, among whom there were experts in silk production.²⁴ A geonic responsum, probably written in the tenth century A.D., of which only the title is preserved, reads: “Reuben sent silk from Sicily’s islands [*sic*] to Simeon” (the names Reuben and Simeon are symbolic ones).²⁵ We first find evidence of huge shipments of silk from Sicily to Egypt about 1025, in a letter from Mūsā b. Yaḥyā al-Majjānī to Benjamin b. Joseph Ibn ʿAwkal.²⁶ Joseph b. Samuel al-Danī, who at about the same time writes from Palermo to his partner (perhaps also a relative) Abū Ismaʿīl b. Abraham, mentions having sent ten *raṭls* of silk worth 10 dinars to his divorced wife in Egypt to serve as payment for what was due to her according to the marriage contract (*ketubbā*).²⁷ A letter from Ḥasūn b. Isaac al-Khawlānī to Ibn ʿAwkal, also written in the early eleventh century, probably in Alexandria, also mentions silk, apparently from Sicily, packed in between a shipment of hides in order to protect it.²⁸ *Ḥarīr siraqūsī*, i.e., produced in Syracuse, is mentioned in January 1048.²⁹ An unidentified merchant mentions *ḥarīr dimunishī*, i.e., from Val Demone (“the Valley of the Demons”).³⁰

¹⁸ Muḥammad Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim al-qurba*, ed. R. Levy (Cambridge, 1938), p. 141.

¹⁹ K 246.

²⁰ P 458; cf. my *History of Palestine*, vol. 1, p. 245; cf. also Yāqūt b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866), vol. 3, p. 191: “the majority of the inhabitants of Sūsa are weavers; it is there that the superior fabrics are woven, each cloth (made there) selling for 10 dinars.”

²¹ K 344, written from Trapani, Sicily, and K 348 a from Alexandria.

²² K 749 a. Yāqūt, *Kitāb al-buldān*, vol. 4, p. 3, writes about the numerous mulberry trees that were grown in Qābis for silkworms; Qābis silk was the best quality of all. In his day, at the beginning of the third century A.D., Qābis was the only place in the Maghrib where there still was a silk industry. On the merits of Qābisi silk, see also Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 180.

²³ P 460.

²⁴ See, for example, *Annales Cavenses* (from Cava, near Salerno), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, *Scriptores* (MGH), vol. 3 (Hannover, 1839), p. 194; see also

Otonis Frisingensis gesta Friderici imperatoris, MGH, vol. 20 (Hannover, 1848), p. 370. Cf. Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641–1204* (Athens, 1939), p. 211 (no. 173); see also my article, “Sicily 827–1072,” in *Italia Judaica*, vol. 5 (Rome, 1995), pp. 133 f.; Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, pp. 102 f., 455.

²⁵ L. Ginzberg, *Geonica* (New York, 1909), vol. 2, p. 65. See also M. Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia* (Florence, 1854–72), vol. 3, p. 441, who assumed that there was silk trade in Sicily long before the Norman period.

²⁶ K 118 a.

²⁷ K 173; cf. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, p. 222.

²⁸ K 218 a. There are more references to *ḥarīr siqilli*; see my *Kingdom of Ishmael*, vol. 4, index.

²⁹ K 379 a, written by Barhūn b. Isaac al-Tāhīrtī, in *Mahdiyya*.

³⁰ K 832 a; *Dimunish* might have been not only a region but a town as well.

Lāsīn was probably a cheaper sort of silk, most likely of an inferior quality; apparently it was produced only in the Maghrib and in Sicily. Nissim b. Khalfūn mentions *lāsīn* in one of his letters, complaining that its price was only 1 dinar per *raṭl*.³¹ We find many more terms designating various other kinds of silk, the meanings of which are generally unclear. Nehorai b. Nissim, for instance, asks Yeshū^cā b. Isma^cīl al-Makhmūri to check a shipment of silk that arrived for him in Alexandria, which contained *maftūl*, *manqūd*, and *muṣallab*.³² Several times we come across a sort called *jizī*, which I am inclined to assume comes from Jizeh, although we have no information on silk being produced there. Possibly, it was a kind of completely raw silk, still with the cocoons, which in Arabic are called *jiz*.³³

Khazzāsh was a silk of inferior quality, as evidenced by a letter written in 1062 where its price is said to have been 2 dinars per *raṭl*, whereas *khazz* (see below) from Andalus was selling for 2½ dinars.³⁴ Another type of inferior silk was *qaṭārish*. At the beginning of the eleventh century, we find a reference to the Judayla family, whose business seems to have involved the final phase of *qaṭārish* production.³⁵ Jacob b. Isma^cīl, who writes probably from Tyre around A.D. 1060 to Abū'l-Walīd Yūnus b. Da³ūd in Fustat, states that *qaṭārish* is to be sent to the ^c*ārēl* (the “uncircumcised,” i.e., a Christian), together with its offal.³⁶ The term *qaṭārish* corresponds to Italian *catarzo*.³⁷ Another type of silk, *zaytūnī*, is mentioned several times in the Geniza letters.³⁸ We also find *zaytūnī ash^carī*, perhaps meaning “fine-spun,” “hairlike,”³⁹ and *zaytūnī siqillī*, “Sicilian.”⁴⁰ In a Karaite *ketubbā* of A.D. 1028, we find listed in the trousseau of the bride *martaba buzyūn* (vocalization uncertain), which I translated as “a bed with ornaments,” thinking it was a derivation from *abū zuyūn*. Goitein, believing the term was derived from Bazyān (a place in Khurāsān) conceived of it as fabric produced there. Serjeant’s interpretation, however, was that it was a type of silk, probably produced in Byzantium.⁴¹ In the Talmud, we find *apozīynī* or *bizīyūnī*;⁴² it is mentioned also in a ninth-century papyrus, where it appears to represent a kind of brocade apparently brought from Byzantium.⁴³

The *siqlātūn* (or *ṣiqlātūn*) was a silk cloth interwoven with threads of gold; it is mentioned in several Geniza letters, such as the letter from Mūsā and Isaac, sons of Barhūn al-Tāhīrtī, writing around A.D. 1015 from Qayrawān to the Tustari brothers in Fustat, in which they praise the *siqlātūn* cloth they have just received, which is “of the utmost

³¹ K 599, written in Taṭāi, a town in the Delta, some ten miles southeast of Ṭanta; see details about it in N. Golb, “The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt,” *JNES* 33 (1974): 116 and 142 f.

³² K 240.

³³ See, for example, K 832, a fragment of a letter from about 1050; cf. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, vol. 1, p. 234, left.

³⁴ K 749; cf. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, p. 454, n. 53.

³⁵ K 126.

³⁶ P 495.

³⁷ S. Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Turin, 1961), considers *catarzo* to be derived from Greek καθαρτέον σηρικόν and Latin *cathartum*, meaning “silk that requires cleaning”; see *ibid.* for more variants in other languages.

³⁸ See, for example, K 810, a letter in which the writer’s name was lost, written to Barhūn b. Mūsā al-Tāhīrtī, ca. A.D. 1060. Karabaček, *Benennungen*, p. 12, says that *zaytūnī* derived from Chinese and that a derivation of it is satin; cf. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 218.

³⁹ K 359 a.

⁴⁰ K 380.

⁴¹ P 305; cf. Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4, p. 305; Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, p. 202, following Ibn al-Faqīh and Jāhīz.

⁴² Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat*, 57b.

⁴³ W. Diem, *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien* (Wiesbaden, 1996), pp. 146 f. (no. 31).

beauty but not exactly what I wanted to have; (I would have preferred) instead of the latter, (in) onion color, an ‘open’ (i.e., bright) color. The lead-colored cloth is superb, better than all the rest.” The origin of the word *siqlātūn* is in Byzantine Greek σιγίλλατος and in Latin *sigillatum*.⁴⁴ *Siqlātūn* is mentioned also in a *ketubbā* written in Tyre in 1054.⁴⁵

There are many more types of silk mentioned in the Geniza letters, in terms whose meanings are rather uncertain,⁴⁶ such as *muqashshar*, perhaps meaning: “peeled off the cocoons.”⁴⁷ *Manqūd* referred perhaps to silk threads unraveled from used silk fabrics, a meaning supported by its prices (see Table I, pp. 36 below, nos. 9 and 25).⁴⁸ Mardūkh b. Mūsā, in a letter from Alexandria written around A.D. 1045, mentions *ḥarīr naqḍ maftūl*, perhaps referring to threads unraveled and retwisted; *ḥarīr muqallab*, in the same letter, probably has a similar meaning.⁴⁹

Muqarran is a fabric in which silk was probably used together with cotton. The writer of the letter, Nathan ha-Kohen b. Mevorakh of Ashqelon, ca. 1090, ordered an elegant garment made of *muqarran* for the *nāsī* (descendant of the exilarchs) David b. Daniel.⁵⁰ Another sort of “peeled off” silk seems to have been *ḥarīr muthallath*, of which one Barhūn b. Isaac al-Tāhirtī sent 740 *dirhams* (ca. five *raṭls*), and then 20 *raṭls*, from Mah-diyya, together with *lāsīn* (see above) *musallakh*, to be sold in Fustat.⁵¹ In the summer of 1050, Ayyāsh b. Ṣadaqa, writing to the same Barhūn b. Isaac, asks that Barhūn send a *qinṭār ḥarīr musallakh* to him (in Alexandria). This type of silk seems to have been a special product of the Maghrib.⁵² *Ḥarīr mulḥam* (or *thawb*, “fabric,” *mulḥam*) is mentioned in several letters. According to Dozy, it referred to a fabric whose warp was silk but whose woof was some other material.⁵³

Turning now to evidence about the dyeing of silk, we find an account record from the mid-eleventh century by an unknown writer.⁵⁴ It enumerates expenses for *ḥarīr maṣbūgh*, “dyed silk”: *qirmiz*, “crimson”; *akḥal*, “blue”; and *akḥḍar*, “green.”

Sixty-six *raṭls* of raw silk were bought for 300 dinars. The dyers (*ṣabbāghīn*) were paid 20 dinars; the cost of the crimson was 85 dinars, to which 25 dinars were added; the dyer of the blue and green was paid 24 dinars; the total for dyeing came to 154 dinars, after 20 dinars were paid for *naqḍ*, probably for removing the cocoons, for a total of 174 dinars. At the end of the process, 63 *raṭls* of dyed silk remained,⁵⁴ which would have cost the producer, who had already paid, as indicated above, 300 dinars for the raw silk, a total sum of 474 dinars, i.e., about 7½ dinars per *raṭl*.

⁴⁴ K 128, according to the English translation of the fragment by Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, pp. 106 f.; see also: C. Cahen, ed., *Kitāb al-ḥāwī lil-aʿmāl al-sultāniyya wa-rusūm al-ḥisāb al-diwāniyya*, MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ar. 2462; idem, “Documents relatifs au début du onzième siècle,” *Ars Islamica* 15–16 (1951): 26. The manuscript states that in *siqlātūn* the weights of the silk and of the gold have to be equal to each other. Cf. also M. Canard, “La procession du nouvel an chez les fatimides,” *Annales de l’Institut d’Études Orientales* (Alger) 10 (1952): 371, n. 26. Cf. also M. Lombard, *Les textiles dans le monde musulman* (Paris, 1978), pp. 242 f., on the origin of the word.

⁴⁵ P 280: the *siqlātūn* mentioned there was valued at 2 dinars.

⁴⁶ See my *Kingdom of Ishmael*, vol. 4, index, p. 936.

⁴⁷ Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, pp. 104 and 418, n. 26.

⁴⁸ Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français*, vol. 2, p. 1328: “étoffe qui s’est effilée.”

⁴⁹ In an account of Joseph b. ʿAlī Kohen Fāsi, *ḥall*, meaning “opening the parcels of silk,” and *naqḍ*, meaning “unraveling,” are listed separately; see K 397.

⁵⁰ P 585.

⁵¹ K 377 and K 383.

⁵² K 484 b.

⁵³ See P 253, a deathbed will of Khalaf b. Yeshūʿā, August 1034; see also P 585, K 111, K 294 c (*mulḥam* produced in Ghazza), and K 580 b; cf. G. Cornu, *Tissus islamiques de la collection Pfister* (Vatican City, 1992), p. 430.

⁵⁴ K 805.

TABLE 1
LIST OF SILK PRICES PER RAṬL, A.D. 1005–80

No.	Description	No. of Document	Date	Price
1	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 187	1005	1.35–1.4 dinars
2	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 175	1025	1.1 dinars
3	<i>khazz</i>	K 329	ca. 1045	300 dirhams
4	<i>ḥarir naqḍ maftūl</i>	K 526	ca. 1045	2½ dinars
5	<i>ḥarir andalusi manqūḍ</i>	K 526	ca. 1045	3 dinars
6	<i>ḥarir muqallab</i>	K 526	ca. 1045	2 dinars
7	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 240	ca. 1045	1½ dinars
8	<i>ḥarir andalusi</i>	K 273	1046	1½ dinars
9	<i>ḥarir muqashshar</i>	K 273	1046	1¼ dinars
10	<i>ḥarir manqūḍ</i>	K 273	1046	1.2 dinars
11	<i>ḥarir andalusi</i>	K 583	1046	3 dinars
12	<i>lāsīn</i>	K 246	1046	20 <i>qīrāṭs</i>
13	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 537	1048	3 dinars and 3 <i>qīrāṭs</i>
14	<i>ḥarir zaytūni siqilli</i>	K 380	1049	
15	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 173	ca. 1050	1 dinar
16	<i>ḥarir jīzi</i>	K 562	ca. 1050	2 dinars
17	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 666	ca. 1050	¾ dinars
18	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 832	ca. 1050	2½ dinars
19	<i>lāsīn siqilli</i>	K 278	ca. 1055	1¼ dinars
20	<i>ḥarir andalusi</i>	K 278	ca. 1055	1½ dinars
21	<i>ḥarir khām</i>	K 805	ca. 1055	4½ dinars
22	<i>ḥarir maṣbūgh</i>	K 805	ca. 1055	7½ dinars
23	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 325	ca. 1056	2.7 dinars
24	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 773	1057	2 dinars
25	<i>ḥarir manqūḍ</i>	K 397	ca. 1057	1.4 dinars
26	<i>lāsīn</i>	K 397	ca. 1057	1 dinar
27	<i>lāsīn</i>	K 397	ca. 1057	0.96 dinar
28	<i>lāsīn</i>	K 397	ca. 1057	1.4 dinars
29	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 308	ca. 1060	2 dinars
30	<i>lāsīn</i>	K 308	ca. 1060	1¼ dinars
31	<i>lāsīn</i>	K 349	ca. 1060	1.4 dinars
32	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 358	ca. 1060	1.2 dinars
33	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 295	1061	1.6 dinars
34	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 295	1061	1.8 dinars
35	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 295	1061	1⅓ dinars
36	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 295	1061	1.9 dinars
37	<i>ḥarir andalusi manqūḍ wa-qaṣīr</i>	K 295	1061	3 dinars
38	<i>ḥarir andalusi</i>	K 295	1061	2⅓ dinars
39	<i>ḥarir manqūḍ</i>	K 295	1061	1.8 dinars
40	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 295	1061	1.9 dinars
41	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 295	1061	2.4 dinars
42	<i>ḥarir muṣallab</i>	K 749	1062	1.9 dinars
43	<i>ḥarir maftūl</i>	K 749	1062	0.8 dinars
44	<i>khazz andalusi</i>	K 749	1062	2.5–2.6 dinars
45	<i>khazzāsh</i>	K 749	1062	2 dinars
46	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 428	1063	2–3 dinars
47	<i>ḥarir</i>	K 576	ca. 1065	3.2 dinars
48	<i>khazz</i>	K 467	ca. 1080	2¾ dinars

In conclusion, the term *khazz* should be explained; it is a silk product mentioned very often in the Geniza letters.⁵⁵ In the mid-ninth century, *dībāj khazz*, silk clothes of the *khazz* type, are mentioned.⁵⁶ To cite a few examples, around the beginning of the eleventh century Ephraim b. Ismaʿīl al-Jawharī complains about the scarcity of *khazz* cloth in Qayrawān.⁵⁷ Šadaqa b. ʿAyyāsh, who writes from Alexandria, notes that whereas linen and pepper are in demand, selling *khazz* is difficult, and it is therefore not worth the investment.⁵⁸ Ephraim b. Saʿīd, who writes from Ahwāz, informs the Tustari brothers, in Fustat, that shipments of clothes, *thawb khazz šāḥībī* (perhaps meant for the upper classes) are on their way; the fabric contains gold threads, is of excellent quality, and the cloth contains *ibrīsam*, “silk.”⁵⁹ An *ʿimāma*, “turban,” of *khazz*, is mentioned in another letter written by Barhūn b. Šālih al-Tāhirtī.⁶⁰ Joseph b. Mūsā al-Tāhirtī, who writes from the Maghrib, complains of the scarcity of *khazz* silk in the market, which is much in demand by the rich.⁶¹

Obviously, *khazz* was considered to be of better quality than regular silk; Nehorai b. Nathan mentions silk that is almost as good as *khazz*.⁶² Mūsā b. Abī'l-Ḥayy writes of *shīsh khazz*, muslin which is *khazz*, probably meaning a type of *khazz* with a linen warp.⁶³ A clear-cut distinction was made between regular silk and *khazz*, such as when David b. ʿAmmār Madīnī asks Nehorai b. Nissim to mix the *khazz* textiles with the silk ones.⁶⁴

According to Steensgaard, *khazz* was a mixture of silk and wool; in light of the above evidence, however, this is not certain.⁶⁵ The original meaning of *khazz* was a kind of rabbit, whose hair was used in textile production⁶⁶ and that was called *šemer arnāvīm*, “wool of rabbits,” in medieval Hebrew sources.⁶⁷ Ibn Faḍlān noted that people of Khwārazm used to produce *al-khuzūz wa'l-awbār*—meaning garments of rabbit hair and camel hair—which were brought from “the land of Jūj and Majūj.”⁶⁸ In later times, however, a way was found to weave fabrics with a silk warp and a rabbit hair woof, and still later it referred to any wool and sometimes even to flax. The term *khazz* remained connected to these fabrics as well. The *Tāj al-ʿarūs* explains *khazz* as *mā yunsaj min šūf wa-ibrīsam*, “which is woven from wool and silk.”⁶⁹

⁵⁵ See the indexes in my *Palestine during the First Muslim Period*, vol. 3, p. 690, and my *Kingdom of Ishmael*, vol. 4, p. 936: *ḥarīr khazz* and *khazz*.

⁵⁶ K 104.

⁵⁷ K 113.

⁵⁸ K 158.

⁵⁹ K 178.

⁶⁰ K 329.

⁶¹ K 365.

⁶² K 416.

⁶³ K 495. See *shīsh khazz*, also in the letter of Farah b. Joseph, K 521.

⁶⁴ K 656.

⁶⁵ Steensgaard, *Ḥarīr*, in *El*, 2d ed., and the same in A. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library* (Cairo, 1934–62), vol. 4, p. 123; both followed Karabaček, *Benennungen*, vol. 1, p. 5, n. 18, citing Ibn ʿAbd Rabbīhī, *ʿIqd*, p. 257 (1316 edition): *al-thiyāb al-sūsiyya min al-khazz*, meaning “sūsi clothes from Sūsa in the Maghrib” (Karabaček understood it to refer to Sūsa in Persia).

⁶⁶ Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, ed. M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1889), pp. 153 f.; Ahmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. de Goeje (Leiden, 1885), p. 270.

⁶⁷ Z. Wolfensohn and S. Schneersohn, eds., *Teshūvōt ha-geʿōnim hemdā genūzā* (Jerusalem, 1863), sec. 82, where there is a warning not to assign value to articles whose price is unstable, such as “wool of rabbits, or precious clothes, or gold”; see also MS British Library 10,123 fol. 1 b, S. Abramson, ed., *ʿInyānōt besīfrūt ha-geʿōnim* (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 203, a fragment from a geonic responsum: “Such as those woolen garments called *al-khazz*, that are thick and hard, and need scraping.”

⁶⁸ Ibn Faḍlān, apud Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb šūrat al-ard*, ed. J. H. Kramers (Leiden, 1938), p. 482; cf. A. Z. V. Togan, *Ibn Faḍlān's Reisebericht* (Leipzig, 1939), p. 199.

⁶⁹ Muḥammad Murtaḍā b. Muḥammad al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs* (Kuwait, 1965), s.v. *khazz*.

We sometimes find the explanation that *khazz* is a fabric made from *soie grège*, “raw silk”; this is based on the Calendar of Cordova, where in the section on October it is said that this was the time to start wearing *khazz* clothes. The Latin version speaks of *setta crossa*; the word *crossa* is not found in Medieval Latin dictionaries. It seems to me, however, that its meaning is not “raw,” as explained by the editors, but rather “criss-crossed,” which relates to the fact that *khazz* was woven by combining silk with other materials.⁷⁰

In this article, I have dealt almost exclusively with the silk trade in the eleventh century. Silk, however, continued to be one of the main commodities of Mediterranean trade in later periods as well.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See R. Dozy and C. Pellat, *Le calendrier de Cordoue* (Leiden, 1961), p. 158. For conclusions that are similar to mine, see R. Brunschvig, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hafsides des origines à la fin du XV^e siècle* (Paris, 1982), vol. 2, p. 25; H. R. Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zirides, X–XII^e siècles* (Paris, 1962), vol. 2, p. 625.

⁷¹ Further references to silk and the silk trade can also be found in a corpus of fifty-five Judeo-Arabic letters written in the twelfth century by the poet Judah ha-Levi and others in his circle. See M. Gil and E. Fleischer, *Yehūdā ha-lēvī ū-venē hūgō* (Jerusalem, 2001).



Emperor Taizong

Silk in Antiquity

Mark writes:¹³

Silk is a fabric first produced in **Neolithic China** from the filaments of the cocoon of the silkworm. It became a staple source of income for small farmers and, as weaving techniques improved, the reputation of Chinese silk spread so that it became highly desired across the empires of the ancient world. As China's most important export for much of its history, the material gave its name to the great trading network the **Silk Road**, which connected East Asia to **Europe, India, and Africa**. Not only used to make fine clothes, but silk was also used for fans, **wall** hangings, banners, and as a popular alternative to paper for writers and artists.

Origins & Cultivation

Silk is produced by silkworms (*Bombyx mori*) to form the cocoon within which the larvae develop. A single specimen is capable of producing a 0.025 mm thick thread over 900 metres (3,000 ft) long. Several such filaments are then twisted together to make a thread thick enough to be used to weave material. Fabrics were created using looms, and treadle-operated versions appear in, for example, the murals in tombs of the **Han dynasty** (206 BCE - 220 CE). The silk could be dyed and painted using such minerals and natural materials as cinnabar, red ochre, powdered **silver**, powdered clam shells, and indigo and other inks extracted from vegetable matter.

THE EARLIEST KNOWN EXAMPLES OF WOVEN SILK DATE TO C. 2700 BCE & COME FROM THE SITE OF QIANSHANYANG IN CHINA.

Sericulture - that is the cultivation of mulberry leaves, the tending of silkworms, the gathering of threads from their cocoons and the weaving of silk - first appears in the archaeological record of ancient China c. 3600 BCE. Excavations at Hemudu in Zhejiang province have revealed Neolithic

¹³ <https://www.worldhistory.org/Silk/>

tools for weaving and silk gauze. The earliest known examples of woven silk date to c. 2700 BCE and come from the site of Qianshanyang, also in Zhejiang. Recent archaeological evidence suggests that the **Indus Valley civilization** in the north of the Indian subcontinent was also making silk contemporary with the Neolithic Chinese. They used the *Antheraea* moth to produce silk threads for weaving.

However, silk production on a large scale and involving more sophisticated weaving techniques would only appear from the Chinese Shang and **Zhou** dynasties in the 2nd millennium BCE. Silk then became one of the most important manufactured and traded goods in ancient China, and finds of **Shang dynasty** (c. 1600 - 1046 BCE) silk in an **Egyptian tomb** are testimony to its esteemed value and use in early international **trade**.

Evolution

During the **Han** dynasty, the quality of silk improved even further, becoming finer, stronger, and often with multicoloured embroidered patterns and designs of human and animal figures. Chinese characters are also woven into the fabric of many surviving examples. The weave of some Han period pieces, with 220 warp threads per centimetre, is extremely fine. The cultivation of the silkworms themselves also became more sophisticated from the 1st century CE with techniques used to speed up or slow their growth by adjusting the temperature of their environment. Different breeds were used, and these were crossed to create silkworms capable of producing threads with different qualities useful to the weavers.



Women Checking Silk, Song China

Weavers were usually **women**, and it was also their responsibility to make sure the silk worms were well fed on their favourite diet of chopped mulberry leaves and that they were sufficiently warm enough to spin thread for their cocoons. The industry became such a vital source of income for families that land dedicated to the cultivation of mulberry bushes was even made exempt from reforms which otherwise took away agricultural land from peasant ownership and mulberry plots became the only land that it was possible for farmers to claim hereditary ownership of. **Mencius**, the Confucian philosopher, advocated the smallest of land holdings always set aside a plot to plant mulberry. As demand grew, then the state and those with enough capital to do so set up large workshops where both men and women worked. Great aristocratic houses had their own private silk production team with several hundred workers employed in producing silk for the estate's needs and for resale. Silk production even became the subject of poems and songs such as this example from the Master Xun philosophical text of the **Warring States period**:

How naked its external form,

Yet it continually transforms like a spirit.
Its achievement covers the world,
For it has created ornament for a myriad generations.
Ritual ceremonies and musical performances are completed through it;
Noble and humble are distinguished with it;
Young and old rely on it;
For with it alone can one survive.

(in Lewis, 114-115)

Eventually, the Chinese could no longer keep the lucrative secret of silk production to themselves and it began to be manufactured in **Korea** and **Japan** where it would become a state-controlled industry. Other states and cultures then acquired the skills of sericulture such as India around 300 CE, and from there it spread to **Byzantium**, **Arabia**, the **Levant**, and **Italy**.

Trade: the Silk Road

The fame of Chinese manufactured silk spread across the famous trade route which took its name - the Silk Road - such was the commodity's importance to the Chinese **economy**. The Silk Road or *Sichou Zhi Lu* was actually an entire network of overland camel caravan routes connecting China to the Middle East and hence is now often referred to as the **Silk Routes** by historians. Silk - in the form of the thread, woven cloth, and finished products - was thus exported via middlemen (no single trader ever travelled the length of the routes) not only to neighbouring states such as the Korean kingdoms and Japan but also to the great empires of India, **Persia**, **Egypt**, **Greece**, and **Rome**. In the case of the latter, it is said that the eventual financial collapse of the state was in part due to the constant drain of silver to the east where it went to purchase the silk that the Romans could not live without. The Romans even called the Chinese *Seres*, after the word for silk in that language.



The Silk Road

Shizhao (GNU FDL)

In addition to land routes and passage across the Inland Sea to Japan, from the 11th century CE Chinese junks sailed and traded across the Indian Ocean and silk thus remained the number one export product of China for centuries; it would only be rivalled by porcelain and tea from the 15th century CE. By the 20th century CE, it would be Japan that would replace China as the world's largest silk producer.

Uses

In China, and later elsewhere, silk was used to make clothing (especially long robes, gowns, and jackets), hand fans, furnishings, wall hangings, screens, decorative scenes for and from famous books and poems, military banners, funeral banners, **Buddhist** mandalas, and for the purposes of **writing** instead of bamboo or paper. Brightly coloured and exquisitely embroidered silk robes became a status symbol and helped distinguish officials and courtiers from the cotton- or plain-silk-wearing lower classes. In other cultures, such as Korea, there were even laws forbidding the

wearing of silk by persons below a certain social rank. Embroidered silk became so varied and refined that a whole connoisseurship developed around the material, similar to that surrounding the fine porcelain of Chinese potters. Taoist priests were another group who were distinguished by their silk robes, often embroidered with ceremonial scenes.

As a valuable commodity bolts of silk were often used as a form of currency, especially in the payment of tribute such as by the Northern Song (960-1127 CE) and the Southern Song (1127-1276 CE) to the Liao and the Jin emperors, respectively. Silk was also an esteemed gift. Given to tributary states in appreciation of their loyalty, it was an impressive symbol of the **Chinese emperor's** great wealth and largesse. For example, in 25 BCE alone, the Han gave as gifts an incredible 20,000 rolls of silk cloth. Traders used it as a payment, people paid their tax with it, and even armies were sometimes paid in silk.



Silk & Textile Shoe from China

In art, silk became a popular surface on which to paint landscape scenes and portraits. **Tang dynasty** (618-907 CE) artists were particularly famed for their skills in dyeing, printing and painting on silk, with many examples of their work surviving in Japan where they were sent as gifts. Silk books were made which had copies of famous paintings and so became reference albums for art connoisseurs.

Cultural Repercussions

The trade of silk and other commodities along the Silk Road also brought with it ideas and cultural practices in both directions; language and writing were especially important elements transmitted along the routes by traders, diplomats, monks, and travellers. **Buddhism** came to China from India and was then passed on to Korea and Japan. Explorers such as **Marco Polo** used the route, as did Christian missionaries from the west to enter China for the first time. New foodstuffs were introduced into China and then cultivated there such as walnuts, pomegranates, sesame, and coriander. Silk, symbol of China for so long, had opened the doors to new lands and new ideas, and finally connected the great empires of the ancient world.



THE SILK ROAD: CROSSROADS AND ENCOUNTERS OF FAITHS

Azim Nanji and Sarfarozi Niyozov write:¹⁴

The Silk Road evokes images of places and peoples linked by the exchange of exotic goods and fabled treasures. This limited notion of commerce, however, overshadows the fact that the Silk Road as a network of trade routes also spread religious ideas and beliefs.

Communities of faith interacted, co-existed, competed, and influenced each other over long periods of time. These include local traditions that evolved in ancient China, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Korea and Japan, and the subsequent larger traditions that arose in the region — Judaism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam — as well as the shamanistic and animistic traditions of various nomadic peoples stretching across Central Asia, some of which still are practiced today. The history of religions along the Silk Road is a remarkable illustration of how beliefs and indeed civilizations often reflect a broad pattern of synthesis, rather than clash.

Zoroastrianism

Various accounts place Zoroaster's birth sometime between the 11th and the 6th century B.C.E. and somewhere between Mongolia and Azerbaijan. He taught belief in one God (Ahura Mazda), the Lord of Wisdom, and regarded the other Iranian gods (*daevas*) as demons. He also saw an evil force in the Universe called Ahriman (Angra Mainyu). Juxtaposing Ahura Mazda against Ahriman, Zoroaster viewed human life in a cosmology of an eternal dialectical struggle between good and bad. Through this approach emerged profound messages of realism and of a necessary struggle to sustain hope (good) by means of ethical action.

In the 3rd century C.E., long after Zoroaster's death, the Sasanian dynasty began its rule in Iran and embarked on a period of conquest and expansion. It sanctioned Zoroastrianism as the official religion of the state and supported the codification of its texts, practices, and doctrines. Even so, Zoroastrianism continued to interact with and be influenced by local traditions and practices in different regions, and there were a number of rituals that distinguished Central Asian Zoroastrians from their Western Iranian cousins. In Central Asia, for example, the moon was also seen as a divine force. The famous temple of the Moon (Mah) in Bukhara was devoted to its veneration. Similarly, the tradition of a New Year, Nawruz, is a regional ritual that predates Zoroaster.

Judaism

The Silk Road became a meeting point between Iranian religions and another ancient faith, Judaism. Judaism as expressed in both its ancient oral and written traditions was centered on the belief in one God, who revealed Himself to the people of Israel and made a covenant with them to live according to His will, as articulated in the Torah (the first Five Books of the Hebrew Bible) and concretized as Halakah, or "the way." Part of this ancient history is traced to Abraham, the great Patriarchal figure in Judaism, and his descendants, who were chosen by God to lead the people from slavery to freedom. The well-known event of the Exodus, under the prophetic figure

¹⁴ <https://festival.si.edu/2002/the-silk-road/the-silk-road-crossroads-and-encounters-of-faith/smithsonian>

of Moses (ca. 1200 B.C.E.), led to their eventual settlement in Israel, the emergence of a kingdom, and the writing down and codification of the first part of the Scriptures.

In 586 B.C.E., the southern part of the kingdom, Judah, was conquered by the Babylonians, and this led to many Jews being exiled to Central Asia. In 559 B.C.E., the Sasanian ruler Cyrus freed the Jewish population, and, while some returned to Israel, many chose to stay in Iran, where they continued to practice their faith. They also created Jewish settlements along the Silk Road, including in the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. Jewish practices and beliefs were enriched by contacts with existing traditions and the intellectual heritage of Iran, and then Greece. Apart from the original community of exiled Jews, it seems that Judaism gained local converts, too, though these were not a result of proselytization. The Jewish presence in the region continues to the present.

Buddhism

The Silk Road provided a network for the spread of the teachings of the Buddha, enabling Buddhism to become a world religion and to develop into a sophisticated and diverse system of belief and practice. Of the 18 Buddhist schools of interpretation, five existed along the Silk Road. Among these was the less monastic but very significant tradition of Mahayana, which preached the continuity of the Buddha's compassionate nature through bodhisattvas — embodiments of love and teaching who became the bridge to local traditions, communities, and cultures. The tradition suggests that all bodhisattva Buddhist seekers are equal before the Buddha, have a Buddha-nature, and may aspire to reach Buddhahood through right ways of living.

In Central Asia, Buddhism is associated with the rise of the Kushan Empire, which lasted from the 1st to the 3rd century C.E. While Kushan rule marked a significant period in the growth of Buddhism, Kushan coins illustrate more than a narrow adherence to Buddhism. They show that along the Silk Road there were kings and rulers who sought to rise above certain groups, tribes, and religious traditions. Along with figures of their own kings such as Kanishka, Kushan coins depict Buddhist, Greek, and Iranian nobility. Statues made by the Gandharan school also feature a blend of Indian, Greek, and Iranian elements. The rulers-built monasteries and temples along the Silk Road that were often used by the faithful of various religions. One such monastery is believed to have been in the famous city of Bukhara, which later became a major Central Asian cultural center of Islam. The oldest manuscript of an Indian Buddhist text, the *Dharmapada*, has been preserved in the Central Asian Kharosthi script. This combination of patronage, the founding of monasteries, and the rise of Buddhist scholarship produced favorable conditions for the general spread of Buddhism. Rulers, missionaries, monks, and traders all contributed to make Buddhism a very significant presence all over Central Asia.

The greatest success of Buddhism came with its spread to China, where it reinvigorated the existing philosophy, culture, and literature. It also reached Korea and Japan. Its encounter with Daoism and Confucianism helped establish deep roots among the peoples of East Asia. Here Buddhism became a religious and spiritual presence as well as the catalyst for greater links with Eurasia. Thus, during the first millennium of the Common Era, Buddhism was the strongest influence among the peoples of the Silk Road. Great Buddhist scholars always looked at the Silk Road as a connecting thread with what they regarded as the founding values of Buddhism. Among them was the pilgrim-monk,

Xuanzang (595-664 C.E.), who undertook a challenging 16-year journey (629-45 C.E.) towards the West, crossing the Takla Makan and Gobi deserts, the high Pamir Mountains, and also visiting Buddhist monuments in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Herat. Xuanzang returned to China laden with 650 books on Buddhism and provided a colorful account of his journey and the history of Buddhism in the region. He contributed greatly to the survival and spread of Buddhism in East Asia.

Christianity

Along with the growth of Buddhism, the Silk Road nurtured minority groups from other major faiths. Assyrian Christians, or more accurately the Church of the East, were one such group. Often mistakenly identified simply as Nestorianism, the Church was strongest in eastern Syria, where as part of the Persian Empire it gained recognition and subsequently flourished after the arrival of Islam. In Syria, this tradition is a visible presence to this day, attesting to the lasting influence of the Eastern Christian tradition in the region. The Assyrian Christians played a crucial role in the creation of an important intellectual center at Jundishapur, where study of philosophy, astronomy, medicine, and astrology directly influenced Muslim learning. Doctrinally, they shared with other Christian groups the belief in the foundational and redemptive role of Jesus Christ, but they also taught that Jesus Christ had two distinct natures, divine and human, a view that brought the then patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, into conflict with those who held to the doctrine of the inseparability of the two natures of Jesus. Subsequently, the followers of Nestorius were excommunicated and eventually became a separate church with its own distinctive hierarchy, liturgy, and theological tradition.

In Central Asia the Assyrian Christians influenced the Sogdians, who, due to their strategic location, had already become the commercial masters of the Silk Road and its cultural transmitters. Sogdian became the lingua franca of the Silk Road, spreading Christianity further east to China and north among the Turks. The Eastern Christians succeeded in three major mass conversions of Turks in Central Asia from the 7th to the 11th centuries. Despite being seen as a faith of foreign traveling merchants, Eastern Christianity gained acknowledgment as "the Brilliant Religion" (Foltz 2000: 72) in China, with Christian saints being referred to as Buddhas and their treatises as sutras.

Manichaeism

Manichaeism, founded by a royal Parthian called Mani (b. 216 C.E.), was another important religion that emerged in West Asia. A gnostic tradition, Manichaeism "posits a radically dualistic view of the universe, in which 'good' is equated with spirit and 'evil' with matter" (Foltz 2000: 75). The cosmology drew from Iranian figures such as Zurvan, Ahura Mazda, and Ahriman and portrayed good and spirit as light and fire and evil as darkness. Life was a struggle between good and evil in which the former strives to liberate the self from evil matter. Knowledge derived rationally became the basis of an awakening of the self. Blending the major beliefs of Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism, the teachings of Mani reached the peoples of India, Mesopotamia, Iran, Central Asia, and China in their own languages and in concepts familiar to them. Central Asian Sogdians with their pragmatic tolerance helped Manichaen ideas to move further east to the land of the Uyghurs, where Manichaeism became the official state-sponsored religion for about 70

years. Its powerful appeal, offered as a significant alternative to the other major traditions, resulted in tension and conflict as it gained converts. Yet, despite its appeal, Manichaeism was not able to survive the arrival and dominance of new traditions and was eventually eradicated as a distinct religious tradition, though some of its ideas lived on, assimilated into other faiths.

Islam: Arrival and Diffusion

Islam became the faith of the majority of people along the Silk Road. The first Muslim community emerged in Arabia in the 7th century in a region dominated by ancient civilizations and empires. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, a family man and a merchant by trade, was also committed to a life of contemplation. The revelations that came to him are recorded in Arabic in the Koran (Qur'an), the revealed book of Islam. It affirms a belief in one God, unique and merciful; in past messengers and scriptures sent by God to other societies; in the creation of a society ruled by compassion, charity, and justice that would be a model for all peoples. The initial establishment of Muslim rule in neighboring territories in the 7th and 8th centuries was a result of conquest, but the actual spread of Islam was achieved primarily by preaching and conversion undertaken by scholars, merchants, and devout men and women. Muslims are taught by the Koran to spread the faith by example, not by compulsion.

The first Muslim expeditions to Central Asia were part of the general pattern of conquest and expansion of territory during the first centuries of Islam. The consolidation of these early attempts at conquest was continued under early Umayyad rule (661-750) and its successor, the Abbasid dynasty, which established its capital in Baghdad in 762. Muslim armies conquered territories beyond the River Oxus (Amu Darya), and by the end of the 9th century the Samanids emerged as the first of the local Muslim kingdoms in the area. The process of conversion and Islamization of Central Asia that accompanied this spread and diffusion of Muslim culture and influence lasted several centuries. As the Silk Road once again became a vital international artery of commerce and trade, Muslim travelers, preachers, mystics, and merchants acted as mediators of faith, enlarging the communities of Muslims in the various regions of Central Asia.

The famous North African traveler Ibn Batuta (1304-68?), taking advantage of a well-defended and secure pathway along the Silk Road, managed to travel from his hometown of Tangier to China and India, reporting on his travels and illustrating the burgeoning trade, social activity, and vital religious life in the region.

The history of the Silk Road under Muslim influence reveals a diverse religious landscape, among different faiths and also within the Muslim community. Sunni, Shia, and Sufi Muslim groups interacted and flourished together. Charismatic Sufi leaders such as Ahmad Yasawi (d. 1166) and Bahauddin Naqshband (1318-89) built communities that nurtured vernacular tradition and languages. The full diversity of Muslim law, theology, culture, arts, and architecture spread across the Silk Road. This multidimensional world of Islam contributed to a broadly based society, bound by common ethical and cultural assumptions but differentiated in its practices and local traditions, that stretched from Afghanistan to Southeast Asia, China, and the Philippines. Some of the greatest scholars of Muslim science and technology lived in the region. The Ismaili Muslims who founded Cairo in the 10th century also spread along the Silk Road and with many other Muslims brought a tradition of philosophical inquiry and scientific knowledge across the Mediterranean to Iran and

the Karakoram and the Pamirs (Daftary: 1990). The great Ismaili poet and philosopher, Nasir Khusraw (1004-88), traveled along the Silk Road on a seven-year journey from Balkh across the Middle East, North Africa, and on to his pilgrimage destination, Mecca. His *Safarnamah* (travelogue) describes in vivid detail his meetings with famous scholars and visits to the region's religious communities and sites.

Conclusion

A historical view of the Silk Road reveals a world in which religions were living traditions. Central Asia, then one of the most pluralistic religious regions in the world, has again become a center of attention, and perhaps the most important lesson learned on the Silk Road — the ideal of religious pluralism and tolerance — may yet enable it to become a bridge between cultures once more.

Some of the oldest inhabited places in the world can be found along the Silk Road. Each faith has left its signature there, in ideas, art, music, and buildings, and in traditions of learning, remembering, celebrating, and sharing. This cumulative resource from different traditions of knowledge and faith can still, as in the past, help us build trust, reinvigorate civilizational dialogue, and move away from the constraints and ignorance that exacerbate division and generate conflict.

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Jewish Immigrants arriving in Kerala, India in AD 68 (an Artistic depiction)

Jewish Traders in the Malabar Coast, India

Nousheenkhan writes:¹⁵

The Silk Route comprised of terrestrial routes, but it is relatively lesser known that it included maritime routes as well. The sea routes were used between 1st- 6th century AD between Mediterranean Basin and India during Roman Era. The use of the Monsoon winds enabled safer travel and enhanced trade between India and Rome. From the 9th Century, the Arab traders controlled the sea routes and then the Europeans from the 15th Century onwards. As Ships became the preferred mode of travel, the land routes of the Silk Road went into a decline.

While reading the book ‘In an Antique Land’ by Amitav Ghosh, I first stumbled upon the fact that Jews have lived in India since many centuries. I learned this through the story of Abraham bin Yiju (more about him later). Before we specifically talk about Jewish Traders in India, it is important to understand the position of Jewish traders in the World economy historically.

“Wishing to make the village of Speyer into a city, I thought to increase its glory a thousand fold by bringing in the Jews.”

— Rudiger Huozmann, Prince-Bishop of Speyer, 1084 AD

¹⁵ <https://silkroadanecdotes.com/2019/06/09/jewish-traders-in-the-malabar-coast-india/>

This quote probably sums up the commercial prowess of the Jews in that era. It is perhaps true that they were a sought-after community due to their expertise in trade and advancement in other areas as well.



The Indian-Roman trade through Southern India started around 1 AD. The port of Muziris (in Kerala) finds mention in several Greek and Roman literature texts. The trade between the two civilisations influenced both the cultures. In the Tamil Sangam literature too, there is mention of the Roman or ‘Yavana’ traders.

During this period, many Jews lived in the Roman empire and thrived economically (The Jewish-Roman Wars that started in 66 AD changed this dynamic of peaceful co-existence eventually). The earliest Jewish traders possibly visited the Indian Coast during this period. Even after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Jews continued to prosper in trade. One of the main reasons was their far-flung networks of family and friends in a geographically distributed Jewish Diaspora.

For many centuries, the Jews were the link between the East and the West. The Arab postmaster in Spain, “Ibn-Kordadbeh, in the **Book of Routes** (857-874), mentions the Radamite Jews who speak Persian, Roman, Arab, and the Frankish, Spanish and Slav languages. They voyage from the Occident to the Orient, and from the Orient to the Occident, now by land and now by sea. They bring from the Occident eunuchs, women slaves, boys, silk, furs and swords. They embark in the land of the Franks, on the Western sea and sail to Farama (Pelustum) They proceed to Sind, India and China. On returning they are laden with musk, aloes, camphor, cinnamon and other products of Eastern lands. Some set sail for Constantinople in order to sell their merchandise there; others repair to the country of the Frank.”

While there is no historical evidence yet but mentions in ancient texts point to a very early commercial connection between Judea and India's Malabar coast. In the Book of Kings, it is narrated that the ships of King Solomon transported cargo such as Kofim (apes), tukim (peacocks) and almag (sandalwood) to the temple; these unique words in Hebrew are of South Indian origin. Traveler's tales in the Talmud mention trade with India (Hoddu) and mention specific Indian commodities such as Ginger and Iron.

We know quite a bit about the community from the documents of the Cairo *Geniza*. Jews believe that destroying any document that has the word of God in any form is sacrilege. To dispose of such documents a room called *Geniza* was built, next to the synagogue where one could drop off these documents. These documents were preserved over centuries due to Egypt's dry climate and were discovered in the late Nineteenth century. The documents describe trade between Arabian speaking Jews and their Hindu partners in spices, pharmaceuticals, spices, metals, gold, silver and silks from 11th to 13th century. The story of Abraham bin Yiju, a wealthy merchant who lived in Mangalore for many years was unearthed through the *Geniza* letters. He also married an Indian woman named Ashu (there is some reference in the letters which possibly states that she belonged to the Nair community) and had two children with her. There is a chapter dedicated to him in the book 'When Asia was the World' by Stewart Gordon. When Marco Polo traveled through India in the year 1293, he recorded a surprising encounter in his diaries about meeting Jews there who had developed a thriving community on India's South-Western coast.

The Jews enjoyed privileges due to their close relationship with the Indian rulers. After a formal grant from the ruler, the Jews lived in and around Cochin and prospered for 1000 years. Eventually, Jews from Spain, the Netherlands and other European countries settled in Cochin and were known as the White Jews. The local/ Malabari Jews came to be known as Black Jews. However, Inter-marriages between the two communities did not take place.

Jews of India are not a homogenous community, they are divided into sub-communities with each having its own culture and traditions. There are three major groups : Cochin Jews, Bene Israel and Baghdadis who were the last to arrive from Syria and Iraq. There is even a small Jewish community in the Northeast India state of Manipur called Bene Maneshe. The Bene Israel community of Western India claim to be descended from a group of Jews who were shipwrecked in the area thousands of years ago. Some believe they are descendants of the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel who fled Northern Israel in 721 BC after the Assyrian invasion; others maintain their ancestors fled King Antiochus (the king who oppressed Jews in Israel during the time of the Hanukkah miracle.)

After the establishment of Israel in 1948, many of India's Jews began to leave for new lives in the Jewish state. From a population of approximately 30,000 Indian Jews in 1948, only about 5,000 Jews remain in India today. Approximately 80,000 Jews of Indian origin keep their unique traditions alive in Israel. The Israeli towns of Dimona and Ashdod have been dubbed "Little India" by some residents and it's common to hear words in Hindi and the Indian language of Marathi in some homes.

While Judaism was probably the first Monotheistic religion to arrive in India, there are only a few adherents in India today. The study of inter-mingling of communities and cultures often facilitated through trade is a fascinating one.

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