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Biblical Hebrew in Mishnaic Hebrew

The paper deals with the place of biblical language within Mishnaic Hebrew. The expression “the language of the Torah is one thing and the language of the Sages is another” does not mean that there is no connection between the two languages, as later generations claimed.

The author endeavors to clarify several matters:

1. There is a clear tendency among the rabbis when citing and interpreting a verse to use their own language and not that of the biblical text. For example: the expression, **בא אל אשה** is replaced by the expression **בא על אשה** in the course of interpreting the verse (Sifrei Deuteronomy, sect. 213).

2. Some scholars have made the unjustifiable claim that the Rabbis paid no attention to the language of the Bible and they, thus, correct the language of the liturgy, for example: **מפני היד השלוחה** **שנשתלחה במקדשך** was replaced by **שנשתלחה במקדשך**.

3. There is a clear tendency among the rabbis also to make use of verses outside of their plain meaning (peshat), for example: in Tosefta Yadayim (4,16) the verse **כי אם גלה סודו לעבדיו הנביאים** “...without having revealed his purpose to his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). There is a hint here that the word **נביאים**, prophets, was understood as “sages, rabbis,” or, for example, the word **פרה**, “cow,” as meaning “woman” (cf. J.T. Beytsa, II:9).

Finally, it should be noted that in all the matters discussed the Talmudic sources make no distinction between Tannaim and Ammoraim or between Palestinian or Babylonian sages. At a superficial view it can already be determined that the Jerusalem Talmud makes less use of Biblical rhetoric than does the Babylonian Talmud.