# 2. קיבלא Bowls

This chapter aims to outline the corpus of קיבלא bowls, which are the focus of this study. First, several criteria for the selection of קיבלא bowls will be discussed. In so doing, this chapter will also demonstrate the necessity to broaden the selection criteria proposed by previous research, e.g., in Levene 2011. Second, all relevant bowls will be presented according to the institution in which they are housed. Due to the fact that the preservation status of some bowls does not allow their inclusion within the present study, it will be necessary to evaluate whether a bowl can be included here or not. Last, possible meanings of the term קיבלא and its cognates will be investigated. This portion of the chapter will examine the use of the term and its cognates not only in Jewish Babylonian and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, but also in other Aramaic dialects such as Syriac and Mandaic, as well as in other Semitic languages.

## 2.1. What Is a קיבלא Bowl?

Although the first קיבלא bowl, VA 2416, was already published by Wohlstein 1894, it was Levene 2011 who identified קיבלא bowls as a specific subgroup of incantation bowl texts in his study of five selected bowl texts from the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. Presenting the main characteristics of קיבלא bowls, Levene 2011, p. 219 wrote:

The most obvious connection between all the bowls in this group of five from Berlin is the fact that all define themselves as being a qyblʾ (קיבלא)—in this particular group of texts meaning that they are a kind of counter-charm. Thus they are all intended to return adverse magical actions to their origin—in these cases identified specifically as individuals who are personally named.

Levene 2011, p. 219 further underlined that קיבלא bowls also share “a number of common
characteristics that pertain to their literary content and peculiarities of physical form that go beyond the simple fact that they are all earthenware bowls.” Regarding the literary content of קיבלא bowl texts, Levene 2011 demonstrated, based on his case study with the bowls from the Vorderasiatisches Museum, that they seem to share a common Vorlage. He also pointed out that most קיבלא bowls display bitumen markings on their rim or on the outside of the bowl. In his subsequent study, dedicated to incantation bowl texts he identified as “aggressive,”[[1]](#footnote-1) Levene 2013 published additional קיבלא bowl texts from the Vorderasiatisches Museums as well as an emended edition of an earlier publication on קיבלא bowl texts from the British Museum collection.

However, research conducted for the present study has shown that a coherent corpus cannot be formed by including only those bowls which describe themselves as קיבלא bowls and also share a specific physical appearance, featuring bitumen markings on their outside and rim, and which seem to have been lashed and bitumened together in pairs (Levene 2011, p. 225). It is necessary to broaden the inclusion criteria due to the fact that it has become obvious that there are, on the one hand, also קיבלא bowls that do not feature bitumen markings,[[2]](#footnote-2) and, on the other, bowls displaying bitumen markings that do not explicitly identify themselves as קיבלא bowls. Interestingly, these bowls seem to share many structural and formulaic features with bowls that do describe themselves in this way. Therefore, all bowls that either describe themselves as קיבלא bowls or display bitumen markings on their rim, and contain a text written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic have been included in the corpus on which the present study is based.

## 2.2. קיבלא Bowls in Museum Collections

The bowls on which the corpus of the present study is based belong exclusively to museums, namely the collections of the British Museum, the Vorderasiatisches Museum, the State Hermitage Museum, and the National Archeological Museum in Athens. However, as a comparandum, incantation bowl texts from other museums as well as bowls from private collections, e.g., from the Wolfe Family Collection in Jerusalem and the Schøyen collection, will be adduced.

Due to the fact that this study aims to analyze both the linguistic and the literary features of the selected incantation texts, only those קיבלא bowls that are not severely damaged and are mostly legible will be analyzed in depth. Nevertheless, all known קיבלא bowls, as well as bowls displaying the specific קיבלא form of bitumen markings without mentioning the term itself, are briefly described below in order to provide a comprehensive overview of this specific sub-genre of aggressive magic bowls.

With regard both to self-designation and physical appearance, there are twenty-five bowls, known so far, that could be subsumed under the category of קיבלא bowls. Twelve of them define themselves explicitly as קיבלא bowls, whereas the other thirteen bowls only feature the special קיבלא form.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Bowl**  | **קיבלא form with**  | **Self-designation**  | **Bitumen**  |
| BM 91771  |  | הדין קיבלא | yes |
| BM 91767 |  | הדין קיבלא | no |
| BM 91763 |  | הדין קיבלא | yes |
| VA 2484  | VA 2509 | דין קיבלא  | yes |
| VA 2509 | VA 2484 | דין קיבלא | yes |
| VA 2423 | VA 2416 | הדין קיבלא | yes |
| VA 2416 | VA 2423 | הדין קיבלא | yes |
| VA 2434 | VA 2424 | הדין קיבלא | yes |
| VA 2424 | VA 2434 | הדין קיבלא | yes |
| VA 2452 |  | קיבלא דנן | no |
| Tyszkiewicz Bowl |  | הדין קיבלא | unsure |
| S-445 |  | הדין קיבלה | no |
| VA 2414 | VA 2426 | no self-designation | yes |
| VA 2426 | VA 2414 | הדין )אסותא נטרתא וחתמתא( | yes |
| VA 2437 |  | badly faded, unsure | yes |
| VA 2436 | VA 2446 | fragementary; unsure  | yes |
| VA 2446 | VA 2436 | badly faded, unsure | yes |
| VA 2496 | VA 2575 | no self-designation | yes |
| VA 2575 | VA 2496 | no self-designation | yes |
| VA 3381 | VA 3382 | no self-designation | yes |
| VA 3382 | VA 3381  | no self-designation | yes |
| VA Bab. 2782 | VA Bab. 2834 | no self-designation | yes |
| VA Bab. 2834 | VA Bab. 2782 | no self-designation | yes |
| VA Bab. 2820 |  | ]הד[ין קבלא | no |
| NAM 6964 |  | הדן קמיעה  | yes |

Unfortunately, the Tyszkiewicz bowl, published by Lacau 1894, must be excluded from the present study owing to the fact that its current location is unknown. Without critical re-edition, the text cannot be used. Accordingly, the present corpus consists of twelve bowls. Three of them are part of the collection of the British Museum, seven are preserved in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, one is in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, and one is in the National Archeological Museum in Athens.

### 2.2.1. קיבלא Bowls in the Collection of the British Museum in London

The provenance of the three קיבלא bowls BM 91771, BM 91767, and BM 91763 from the British Museum is unknown.[[3]](#footnote-3) Although BM 91771 and BM 91763, both displaying bitumen markings, share the same client, מחלפא בר בתשיתין, and the same antagonist, מרזוטרא בר אוכמאי, whom they also share with BM 91767, and were apparently written by the same scribe, it is unlikely that they were part of the same קיבלא bowl pair because, placed rim to rim, they do not seem to fit very well, even though both bowls have a diameter of 15.0 cm (Segal 2000, p. 195). Therefore, it is more likely that BM 91771 and BM 91763 have been part of two separate קיבלא bowl pairs, whereas it is uncertain whether BM 91767 was part of a קיבלא bowl pair, because of the lack of any bitumen markings.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Bowl**  | **Measurements (diameter x depths) in cm[[4]](#footnote-4)**  | **Bowl type**  |
| BM 91771 | 15.0 x 5.8  | hemispherical  |
| BM 91767 | 18.2 x 5.8  | hemispherical  |
| BM 91763  | 15.0 x 5.3 | hemispherical  |

All three קיבלא bowls from the British Museum are included in the corpus of the present study.

### 2.2.2. קיבלא Bowls in the Collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin

#### 2.2.2.1. Bowls explicitly defining themselves as קיבלא bowls

Within the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, there are seven bowls explicitly defining themselves as קיבלא bowls. Six of them could be assembled into קיבלא bowl pairs whereas the counterpart of VA 2452 could not be detected:

1. VA 2484 and VA 2509
2. VA 2423 and VA 2416
3. VA 2434 and VA 2424

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Bowl**  | **Measurements (diameter x depths) in cm[[5]](#footnote-5)** | **Bowl type**  |
| VA 2484 | 14.3 x 5.3[[6]](#footnote-6) | hemispherical |
| VA 2509 | 15.0 x 3.5[[7]](#footnote-7)  | hemispherical |
| VA 2423 | 17.5 x 4.5[[8]](#footnote-8) | hemispherical |
| VA 2416 | 18.0 x 4.5[[9]](#footnote-9)  | hemispherical |
| VA 2434 | 15.5 x 4.3[[10]](#footnote-10) | hemispherical |
| VA 2424 | 14.5 x 3.5[[11]](#footnote-11)  | hemispherical |
| VA 2452 | 14.5 x 5.2[[12]](#footnote-12)  | hemispherical |

Although the exact provenance of the bowls within the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin is mainly unknown, and although it is a reasonable conjecture that they do not come from controlled archeological excavations, it is possible to detect the source from where they entered the museum’s collection. The origin of bowls VA 2484 and VA 2509 can be traced to the Maimon Collection (Bhayro et al. 2018), whose origin is unfortunately also unknown today.[[13]](#footnote-13) The other bowls defining themselves explicitly as קיבלא bowls were purchased in Baghdad during the expedition of 1886/7 and later presented to the Vorderasiatisches Museum by the German philanthrope, collector, and benefactor James Simon (Bhayro et al. 2018, p. 1).

All bowls explicitly defining themselves as קיבלא bowls from the Vorderasiatisches Museum will be included in the corpus of the present study. Although details of these bowls will be given in chapter 3 of the present thesis, a short overview of their provenance and conservation status will be offered here.

##### VA 2484 and VA 2509

It is most likely that VA 2484 and VA 2509 formed a קיבלא bowl pair, because they were not only written for the same client, שילתא בת אימי, apparently by the same hand, but also display both bitumen markings on the rim. VA 2484 is only partly preserved (Bhayro et al. 2018, p. 106) and consists of five larger fragments. Similarly, VA 2509 is only partly preseved and consists of four fragments (Levene 2013, p. 30).

##### VA 2423 and VA 2416

VA 2423 and VA 2416, too, were apparently written for the same client, אבא בר ברכיתאי, by the same hand and display corresponding bitumen markings. According to Levene 2013, p. 36, it is plausible that the scribe of this קיבלא bowl pair and the pair VA 2484 and VA 24509 were identical. This question will be addressed in chapter 3, when the bowls will be discussed in detail. Despite three minor fragments, VA 2423 is already fully preserved. VA 2416 is broken, but fully preserved.

##### VA 2434 and VA 2424

It is most likely that VA 2434 and VA 2424 formed a קיבלא bowl pair because they were not only written for the same client, בטיא בר מחלפתא , apparently by the same hand, but also display both bitumen markings on the rim and on the bottom. VA 2424 is completely preserved, whereas VA 2434 is almost complete, but broken.

##### VA 2452

The incantation bowl VA 2452 was described by Bhayro et al. 2018, 101f., but will be edited within the present thesis for the first time. Although this bowl does describe itself explicitly as a קיבלא bowl, neither a corresponding bowl nor any bitumen markings are known.

#### 2.2.2.2. Bowls displaying the קיבלא form without mentioning the term

Twelve bowls within the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum do not define themselves explicitly as קיבלא bowls, but do, with the exception of VA Bab.2820, display the special קיבלא form, featuring both bitumen markings and, other than VA 2436, VA 2437, VA 2446,[[14]](#footnote-14) and VA Bab.2820, an identified counterpart. Besides the display of bitumen marking and the fact that they were most likely used in pairs, the main reason to consider these twelve bowls here is that they either describe their purpose as returning magical acts to their original sender, e. g. VA2496, or feature special formulae otherwise used only within the קיבלא bowl incantation texts, e. g. VA Bab.2820.

The following pairs could be identified:

1. VA 2414 and VA 2426
2. VA 2496 and VA 2575
3. VA 3381 and VA 3382
4. VA Bab. 2782 and VA Bab. 2834

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bowl  | Measurements (diameter x depths) in cm[[15]](#footnote-15) | Bowl type  |
| VA 2414 | 12.6 x 7.7  | flat based  |
| VA 2426 | 12.3 x 5.5  | flat based  |
| VA 2437 | 17.5 x 5.0  | hemispherical  |
| VA 2436 | 15.1 x 6.9  | hemispherical  |
| VA 2446 | 14.3 x 5.6  | hemispherical  |
| VA 2496 | 12.5 x 5.7  | hemispherical  |
| VA 2575 | 12.2 x 5.0  | hemispherical  |
| VA 3381 | 18.0 x 7.2  | hemispherical  |
| VA 3382 | 18.0 x 7.1  | hemispherical  |
| VA Bab. 2782 | 15.5 x 5.0  | hemispherical  |
| VA Bab. 2834 | 15.5 x 6.5  | hemispherical  |
| VA Bab. 2820 | Fragment  | hemispherical  |

Five of the twelve bowls not defining themselves explicitly as קיבלא bowls (VA 2414, VA 2426, VA 2437, VA 2436 and VA 2446) were purchased during the Babylonian expedition in Baghdad and offered to the museum by James Simon. VA 2496 could be traced to the Maimon Collection, whereas the origin of VA 2575 could not be evaluated due to the fact that the log image is not available. Nevertheless, due to the fact that VA 2496 and VA 2575 form a קיבלא bowl pair, VA 2575 is assumed to originate from the Maimon Collection as well. Bowls VA 3381 and VA 3382 were purchased from the Paris-based antiquity dealer Élias Géjou. Three bowls of this group came from a controlled archeological dig during the Babylonian expedition: VA Bab.2782 and VA Bab. 2834 from Tell Amran, and VA Bab. 2820 from Tell Babil.

##### VA 2414 and VA 2426

It is most likely that VA 2414 and VA 2426 formed a קיבלא bowl pair because they were not only written for the same client, אחתאדאבה בת אמא, apparently by the same hand, but also display both bitumen markings on the rim and correspondingly placed small holes in order to tie the bowls together using a string (Ford and Levene 2012). Although these bowls have been published by Wohlstein 1894[[16]](#footnote-16), they have been widely neglected by the scientific community until their re-edition by Ford and Levene 2012. VA 2414 is an incantation against evil spirits, sending the spirits to attack gazelles, wild asses, and maggots rather than the client.[[17]](#footnote-17) VA 2426 is an incantation for healing and protection from various evil forces. Both bowls feature a small circle in the center and a bigger circle at the rim enclosing the incantation text.

##### VA 2436

Although VA 2436 is only fragmentarily preserved and the inscription is mainly effaced, only the final lines being legible, the bitumen on the rim of the bowl is clearly traceable, making it quite likely that it was glued together with another bowl in order to for~~o~~m a קיבלא bowl pair. The personal name מחלפא בר בתשיתי is to a great extent legible. VA 2436 has not been published so far, but is mentioned by Bhayro et al. 2018, p. 93.

##### VA 2437

Due to its bad physical condition – although the bowl is almost complete, it is broken and plainly faded – it is only possible to decipher a small part of the incantation, which seems to have been composed for protection, e. g. against the Yaror demon. The reason to include the bowl here is the fact that there are traces of bitumen on its rim. VA 2436 has not been published so far, but is mentioned by Bhayro et al. 2018, 93f.

##### VA 2446

VA 2246 is broken but almost completely preserved, with the exception of two small missing fragments. Unfortunately, the inner half of the bowl is nearly completely faded, but the outer lines can be deciphered. Both the client (זיפתי בר רביתא) and the antagonist (שישין בת אסמנדוך) are mentioned within this part of the incantation. The incantation is enclosed with a circle. There are clear bitumen markings on the rim.

##### VA 2496 and VA 2575

Although the name of the antagonist is not mentioned, it is nearly undoubtable that VA 2496 and VA 2575, published by Levene 2013, formed a קיבלא bowl pair for several reasons: First, both bowls were apparently written by the same scribe for the same client (דדנודך בת בורזאי ומיתקרי קאקי) and share nearly the exact same physical appearance. Secondly, VA 2496 and VA 2575 feature bitumen markings that fit perfectly together. According to Levene 2013, p. 62, the bitumen seems to have been applied only on the rim while the bowls “were sitting one upon the other, VA.2496 having been on the top and VA.2475 at the bottom.” Thirdly, the purpose of the incantation is to send evil forces that attacked the client back to those who sent them. Fourthly and most importantly, the incantation texts of VA 2496 and VA 2575 are – beside some slight variations in spelling and the fact that VA 2496 features seventeen lines, while VA 2575 has only fifteen – exact duplicates.

##### VA 3381 and VA 3382

Written by the same scribe for the same clients, a family consisting of a father, a mother, and their two children (כספי בר קאקי ולזיקוי בת דידוך אינתיה ולכודכוד ולמרגניתא בני זיקוי), VA 3381 was produced for protection, and VA 3382 not only to protect but also to return curses to unnamed adversaries. Both bowls feature bitumen markings on the rim and two small holes on opposite sides which were probably used to tie the two bowls together in order to form a קיבלא bowl pair. The incantation text of VA 3381 is enclosed by a circle and its final formula is marked by an overline. In the center, there is a small circle with a cross inside. Each quadrant is marked by the magic name יה. Similarly, the incantation of VA 3382 is enclosed by a circle and displays a small circle with a cross in the center, but the quadrants are left blank. Interestingly, the beginning of the incantation text of VA 3381 is a parallel to AIT 12. VA 3381 and VA 3382 have been published by Levene 2013 and mentioned by Bhayro et al. 2018.

##### VA Bab.2782 and VA Bab.2834

Neither VA Bab.2782 nor VA Bab.2834 has been published so far, but they are both mentioned in the catalogue of Bhayro et al. 2018. Supposing thatבר בהמנדוך בראגושנז (VA Bab.2782) and בראנגשנז בר בתיא (VA Bab.2834) are identical, with בתיא being the Jewish name of the client’s mother and בהמנדוך her Persian name, the two bowls share the same client. Regardless of this question, both bowls display bitumen markings on the rim and on the apex of the convex side,[[18]](#footnote-18) making the evidence to consider them a קיבלא bowl pair relatively strong. Both bowls are only fragmentarily preserved, approximately up to three quarters, but legible. The incantation text of VA Bab.2782 seems to be composed for popularity and success in business, but also displays some exorcistic features, whereas VA Bab.2834 displays an incantation which aims to protect the clients from evil forces and to send back the evil sorceries to person who originally performed them.[[19]](#footnote-19)

##### VA Bab.2820

Although consisting only of a medium sized fragment, VA Bab.2820 must be included within the list of קיבלא bowls due to its self-reference at the beginning of line two. The fragment has not been published so far, but is mentioned by Bhayro et al. 2018.

### 2.2.3. A קיבלא Bowl in the Collection of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg

Although eight of the eleven incantation bowls housed in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg formerly belonged to the collection of Nikolay Likhachyov, the provenance of S-445 is unknown (Fain et al. 2016). Before its transfer to St. Petersburg, the bowl belonged to the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bowl  | Measurements (diameter x depths) in cm[[20]](#footnote-20)  |
| S-445 | 16.5 x 5.5  |

### 2.2.4. A קיבלא Bowl in the Collection of the National Archeological Museum in Athens

Although NAM 6469 does not define itself as a קיבלא bowl, but as הדן קמיעה, it must be undoubtedly include in the present corpus because of the following two observations: NAM 6469 does, on the one hand, display clear bitumen markings on its rim that even dropped in the interior of the bowl, wherefore some letters cannot be read and must be restored. On the other hand, there are striking textual parallels between NAM 6469 and the קיבלא bowls BM 91763, published by Segal 2000 and Levene 2013, VA 2509, also published by Levene 2013, and the hitherto unpublished incantation bowl VA 2444. NAM 6469 is published here for the first time. The exact physical description of the bowl and an indication of its measurements remain for a later publication. [[21]](#footnote-22)

## 2.3. The Meaning of the Term קיבלא and Its Cognates

Since the first publication of a קיבלא bowl by Wohlstein 1894 (VA 2416), there has been some uncertainty about the exact meaning of the term קיבלא. Wohlstein translated the term קיבלא using the German word “Mittel” which could be translated to English as *medium* or *instrument*, contrasting the term קיבלא with אסותא, the term written in VA 2422, which he had published the year before (Wohlstein 1893), using the translation “Heilmittel”, the German word for *remedy.* He hypothesized that the term אסותא is used if the purpose of the incantation is to cure a corporal illness, קיבלא in all other cases: “Der Ausdruck אסותא ‘Heilmittel’ kann nur da angewandt werden, wo das Mittel, gleichviel welcher Art es ist, zur Beseitigung und Heilung einer Krankheit dienen soll, wenn diese auch als Folge dämonischer Einwirkung betrachtet wird. In der erstgenannten Inschrift handelt es sich um einen Menschen, der mit Aussatz und Brandwunden behaftet ist, weshalb das anzuwendende Mittel mit Recht אסותא genannt wird. In dem Falle jedoch, in welchem nicht eine offenkundige, ihrem Wesen nach erkannte Krankheit vorliegt, und man deshalb den Leidenden ausschliesslich als Opfer dämonischer Einflüsse betrachtet, wird das Wort קיבלא gebraucht” (Wohlstein 1894, p. 19). More than a century later, with a far larger corpus of incantation bowls accessible, it might be useful to reconsider the meaning of the term קיבלא.

Although Segal 2000 translated the term קיבלא explicitly as *counter-charm* in his edition of the British museum bowls, it should be noted, as already pointed out by Levene 2011, 2013 that its basic meaning is *charm*, the translation given by Sokoloff 2002, p. 1009, or more precisely *charm (against a demon)* as the recently published bowl S-445 from the State Hermitage Museum (Fain et al. 2016) shows, which does not indicate any adversary within the incantation text.[[22]](#footnote-23)

### 2.3.1. The Term קיבלא in Talmudic Manuscripts

Textual evidence from Talmudic manuscripts points also to “charm” as the appropriate of the term for קיבלא. In several places within the Babylonian Talmud, there is a reference to שידא בית הכסא, the demon who is supposed to live in the bathroom,[[23]](#footnote-24) and there are various suggestions as to how one could be saved from this demon, e. g. in Shab 67a[[24]](#footnote-25) or in Git 70a[[25]](#footnote-26). In Ber 62a[[26]](#footnote-27) there is a discussion about the appropriate behavior during the use of the bathroom. Quoting Rabbi Tanchum bar Chanilai, the three main dangers of the bathroom (snakes, scorpions and demons) and the idea of preventing them from attacking by acting modestly are repeated in Ber 62a,[[27]](#footnote-28) before the story of a particular bathroom in Tiberias is narrated, in which the term קיבלא/ [[28]](#footnote-29)קבלהis used:[[29]](#footnote-30)

ההוא בית הכסא דהוה בטבריא כי הוו עיילי ביה בי תרי אפי' ביממא מתזקי רבי אמי ורבי אסי הוו עיילי ביה חד וחד לחודיה ולא מתזקי אמרי להו רבנן לא מסתפיתו אמרי להו אנן קבלה גמירינן קבלה דבית הכסא צניעותא ושתיקותא קבלה דיסורי שתיקותא ומבעי רחמי
Ber 62 a

*There was a particular bathroom in Tiberias, where, when two would enter, even during the day, they would be harmed. (When) Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi would each enter alone, they would not be harmed. The sages said to them: “Are you not afraid?”. They said to them: “We have learnt a קבלה. The קבלה of the bathroom is modesty and silence. The קבלה of suffering is silence and prayer.*

Traditionally, in this passage, the term קבלה is translated as *tradition*[[30]](#footnote-31), following the commentary of Rashi, who explained קבלה as מסורת ומנהג שקבלנו מרבותינו בבית הכסא (“rhe tradition and the custom that we received from our sages in the bathroom”), by vocalizing the word as קַבָּלָא.

Nevertheless, the wording of some Talmudic manuscripts suggests that the defectively written word קבלה should not be read as קַבָּלָא, but as קִיבְלָא due to the fact that there is a *mater lectionis* indicating undoubtedly the reading קִיבְלָא.

One of these manuscripts[[31]](#footnote-32) is Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366) from the Bodleian Library.[[32]](#footnote-33) Although the story after the quotation of Rabbi Tanchum ben Chanilai is slightly different,[[33]](#footnote-34) the textual comparison suggest that the reading should be indeed קִיבְלָא: [[34]](#footnote-35)

**הנהו בתי כסאתא דהוו בנהרדעא דכי** עיילי **בהו תרי אפי' ביימא** **הוו** **מיתזקי** **ור'** אמי **ור'** אסי הוו עיילי **בהו** **כל** חד וחד לחודיה **אפי' בליליא** ולא מיתזקי **אמרו** להו רבנן לא **מיסתפיתו** אמרו להן אנן **קיבלי** **גמרינן** **קיבלא דבי'** הכסא **שתיקותא** **צניעותע** **אמרה ליה אימיה לרמי בר חמא איעול בהדך לבית הכסא אמ׳ לה קיבלא קא גמירנא ומאי היא קיבל׳ דבית הכסא שתיקותא צניעותא קיבלא דבית אסירי** שתיקותא **ומיבעי** רחמי

Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366), Ber 62a

*There was a particular bathroom in Nehardea, where, when two would enter, even during the day, they would be harmed. (When) Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi would each enter alone, even during the night, they would not be harmed. The sages said to them: “Are you not afraid?”. They said to them: “We have learnt* קיבלי*. The*קיבלא *of the bathroom: Silence is modesty.” His mother said to Rami bar Hama: “I will enter with you the bathroom.” He said to her: “I have learnt a* קיבלא*.” “What is it?” “The* קיבלא *for the bathroom: Silence is modesty. The* קיבלא *of the prison is silence and prayer.”*

In addition to the use of the mater lectionis within Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366), the comparison of the two textual variants shows some other significant differences: Onthe one hand, the question לא מיסתפיתו, traditionally answered by אנן קבלה גמירינן, is answered in a slightly different way by אנן קיבלי גמרינן, using the plural instead of the singular. On the other hand, the present codex features a small additional passage narrating the story of Rami bar Hama and his mother. Within this passage the term קיבלא is used three times, each time written with a *mater lectionis* indicating the vocalization קִיבְלָא.

Aside from Oxford Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366), several other textual witnesses portend to read קִיבְלָא instead of קַבָּלָא, namely two manuscripts, Munich Cod. Hebr. 95[[35]](#footnote-36) or Paris 671[[36]](#footnote-37), which will be carefully examined below, and one Genizah fragment, CUL: T-S F(2.)109[[37]](#footnote-38).[[38]](#footnote-39)

Munich Cod. Hebr. 95 displays two spelling variants for the term קיבלא.[[39]](#footnote-40) First, קיבלא with mater lectionis is used, whereas, subsequently, the term קבלא *without mater lectionis* is used. This and, furthermore, the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic ending א- instead of the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic or Hebrew ending ה- indicates, that the reading קִיבְלָא was intended and not the Hebraized קַבָּלָא.

**הנהו תרי** בית הכסא **דהוו בטביריא דכי** עיילי **בהו** תרי אפי ' ביממא **מיתזקי ר** ' אמי ו**ר'** אסי הוו עיילי

חד **חד** **לחוד[י]ה** ולא **מיתזקי אמרו** להו רבנן **אתו** לא **תוספתו אמרו** להו אנן **קיבלא גמרי אמרה ליה אימיה לרמי בר חמא לא בעית איניש דעייל בהדך לבית** **הכסא א"ל אנא קבלא גמירא ומאיקבלא דבית** הכסא **שתיקותא וצניעותא קבלא דייסורי** שתיקותא ומבעי רחמי

Munich Cod. Hebr. 95, Ber 62a

In the present passage, Paris 671 displays the term קיבלא or its plural קיבלי exclusively with the *mater lectionis*, clearly indicating the reading קִיבְלָא.[[40]](#footnote-41)

**הנהו בתי כסאות דהוו בטברייא דכי עיילי בהו תרי ביממא** הוו **מיתזקי רב** אמי **ורב** אסי הוו **יתבי כל** חד **וחד אפילו בלילייא** ולא **מיתזקי אמרו** להו רבנן **לא מיסתפיתו** **אמ**' להו אנן **קיבלי גמרינן דאמ ' מר קיבלא** דבית הכסא **השתיקותא** **צניעותא אמרה ליה אימיה דרמי בר חמא איעול בהדך לבית הכסא אמ' ליה קיבלא קא גמירא ומאי היא קבלא דבית הכסא** שתיקותא **צניעותא קיבלא דייס**ו**רי שתיקותא מיבעי רחמי**

Paris 671, Ber 62 a

The setting of Ber 62a and the spelling of the term קיבלא within the different textual witnesses supports the contention that the translation *(counter-)charm* is not only adequate, but also compulsory for the term קִיבְלָא in Talmudic literature. Kohut 1891, p. 53 quotes the relevant passage from Ber 62a in his *Aruch Completum* and translates קיבלא using the German word *Gegenmittel*. Furthermore, this conclusion is also supported by the fact that in the פירושים section of אוצר הגאונים (*Gaonic Responsa and Commentaries*: Lewin 1928a, 1928b, 1941a, 1941b), the meaning of the term קיבלא is explained giving the Judeo-Arabic phrase (سِرّ أعمَلُه) סר אעמלה (Lewin 1941a, p. 106), which could be translated as “a secret that I will perform.” Therefore, there are two possible explanations as to how the term קיבלא was understood: On the one hand, it seems reasonable to suppose that this gloss indicates the understanding of קיבלא as an orthographic variant of the Hebrew word קבלה due to the fact that קבלה could be translated not only as *tradition*, but also as *secret magic tradition*. On the other hand, the use of the Judeo-Arabic term סר (سِرّ) is reminiscent of the relatively frequent use of its Aramaic counterpart רזא within magic literature in general and the incantation bowl texts in particular. Interestingly, within in the incantation bowl texts, the term is used as a self-designation, e.g. Moussaief 102:1[[41]](#footnote-42), a counter-charm sending back evil magical acts to the sender, displays the opening formula... מזמן הדין רזא למיפך which is parallel to the traditional קיבלא opening formula הדין קיבלא למיפך. IMJ 80.1.1.:1, also a counter-charm, features רזא רזא דנן לשתוקי ולסכורי פומה.[[42]](#footnote-44)

### 2.3.2. The Term קיבלא and Its Cognates in Aramaic Dialects and Other Semitic Languages[[43]](#footnote-45)

With the slightly different vocalization *qubla*, to which, according to Drower and Macuch 1963, p. 405, the meaning “counter-charm” could be assigned, the term קיבלא is also attested in Mandaic literature,[[44]](#footnote-46) for example in Aspar Malwâšia[[45]](#footnote-47), AM 120:7: *qubila lsharia uldaiuia* (counter-charms against devils and demons), or in another magic codex: DC 46.62:2[[46]](#footnote-48) *qublak mahu hauia* (what is the counter-spell that binds thee?).

Whereas Drower and Macuch 1963 explicitly assign the meaning *counter-charm* to the Mandaic term *qubla*, the more general meaning *charm* is attributed to the Aramaic term קיבלא according to Sokoloff 2002, who assigns the more specific meaning counter-charm to the nominal form קובלנא which is rarely attested, e. g. in San 104b,[[47]](#footnote-49) and whose meaning is not entirely certain.[[48]](#footnote-50) Jastrow 2004, p. 1323 translates the term קובלנא as *formula to ward off danger*, whereas Rashi’s explanation of the passage[[49]](#footnote-51) seems to suggest the meaning *complaint* which is usually assigned to the nominal derivation קבילתא (Sokoloff 2002, p. 978).

The nominal form קבילתא and its Syriac cognate, the noun ܩܒܝܠܬܐ, which could be accordingly translated as *accusation* or *complaint* (Brockelmann and Sokoloff 2009, p. 1309), accentuates the negative undertone shared by the root *qbl*. Although the nominal form ܩܝܒܠܐ, the direct borrowing from Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (van Rompay 1990), could not be found in dictionaries of Classical Syriac (Sokoloff 2002; Payne Smith 1998), it is attested within the Syriac incantation bowl texts, underlying the magical koine, on which the language of the incantation bowls was based, and especially the “termini technici of magic literature” (van Rompay 1990, p. 373).[[50]](#footnote-52)

In Aramaic, there are further derivations from the root קבל that are related with the term קיבלא, e. g. מקבלתא, a term that is only rarely attested, e. g. in the so-called Borsippa bowl (Harviainen 1981). According to Sokoloff 2002, p. 701 מקבלתא could be a *type of demon*, whereas Harviainen 1981, p. 9, commenting on his edition of the bowl, suggests regarding מקבלתא as a synonym of קיבלא. Due to the use of the nominal form in the so-called Borsippa bowl, Harviainen’s explanation of considering the term מקבלתא to be a synonym or variation of קיבלא is very convincing. Further, the term קבלאתא , a hapax from today’s point of view, is attested in BLMJ 03009[[51]](#footnote-53), an incantation displaying a long list of evil magical acts that should be send back to the opponent.[[52]](#footnote-54) Naveh and Shaked 1993, 132f. seem to explain קבלאתא as an elsewhere un-attested plural of the term קיבלא translating it as “charms”, [[53]](#footnote-55) whereas Müller-Kessler 2012 tries to connect both מקבלתא and קבלאתא with a Mandaic preform in order to identify a Mandaic formula.[[54]](#footnote-56)

Whereas it seems reasonable to assign the meaning *(counter-)charm* to the term קיבלא regarding both the incantation bowl texts and texts written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic in general, it should be noticed that the term is also attested in other Aramaic dialects, but with several different meanings. According to Jastrow 2004, it is possible to identify three other homonyms written קיבלא within the Targumic literature and aggadic commentaries. First, the meaning *darkness* or *fog* could be assigned. Secondly, based on the preposition קבל *towards, corresponding to, alongside of, opposite*, קיבלא could be translated as *junction* or *meeting*. Thirdly, the meaning *woe* or *pain*, while rare, is attested within Midrash Rabbah. With regard to the physical appearance or the content of קיבלא bowls, these secondary meanings (from the point of view of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic) should be taken into consideration. Although these secondary meanings are more prominent in western Aramaic dialects, whereas the meaning *(counter-)charm* is attested only in eastern dialects, they may have been known to the practitioners of קיבלא bowl-related rituals. Bearing in mind that all קיבלא bowl texts known so far intend to send back evil magic acts to their original sender, קיבלא in the meaning of *woe* or *pain* could be understood as a *pars pro toto* of the desired result of the entire incantation that should be caused in the body of the opponent. The secondary meanings *darkness*, *meeting* or *junction* could be connected with the physical appearance of קיבלא bowls which tend to have been clued together, using bitumen, rim to rim opposite each other in pairs. From this point of view the space between the bowl pair could be described as darkness and the rims glued together could be identified as the meeting of two incantations.

Furthermore, the cognate קבלתא “outcry, plaint” (Jastrow 2004, p. 1311) is attested in Targumic Aramaic and might help to understand the underlying meanings of קיבלא. Jastrow gives five instances for קבלתא that will be examined separately in the following paragraph:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Targ. O. Gen. 18,20 | וַאֲמַר יְיָ **קְבֵלַת** דִּסְדוֹם וַעֲמוֹרָה אֲרֵי סְגִיאַת וְחוֹבָתְהוֹן אֲרֵי תְקִיפַת לַחֲדָא: |
| Targ. O. Gen. 18,21  | אִתְגְּלִי כְעַן וְאֶדּוּן הֲכִי **קְבִלְתְּהוֹן** דְּעַלַּת לִקֳדָמַי עֲבָדוּ אֶעְבֵּד עִמְּהוֹן גְּמֵירָא (אִם לָא תָיְבִין) וְאִם תָּיְבִין לָא אֶתְפְּרָע: |
| Targ. O. Ex. 12,22 | אִם עַנָאָה תְעַנֵי יָתֵהּ אֲרֵי אִם מִקְבַל יִקְבֵל קֳדָמַי קַבָּלָא אֱקַבֵּל **קְבִלְתֵּהּ**: |
| Targ. Job. 34,28  | לְאַיְתָאָה עֲלוֹי **קְבַלְתָּא** דְמִסְכְּנָא וְצַעֲקַתְהוֹן דַעֲנִיֵי יִשְׁמַע: |
| Targ. Koh. 7,6 | אֲרוּם כְּקָל קִיבְלַת כּוּבִּין דְּמִתּוֹקְדִין תְּחוֹת דּוּדָא כְּדֵין קָל חוֹכָא דְּשָׁטְיָא אוֹף דֵּין הֲבָלוּ: |

Interestingly, three different Hebrew words are translated by a form derived from the Targumic Aramaic noun קבלתא, namely זעקה, צעקה and סיר:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Targum  | Tanakh  |
| Gen. 18,20 | קְבֵלַת דִּסְדוֹם וַעֲמוֹרָה | זַעֲקַת סְדֹם וַעֲמֹרָה |
| Gen. 18,21 | קְבִלְתְּהוֹן | הַכְּצַעֲקָתָהּ |
| Ex. 12,22 | אֱקַבֵּל קְבִלְתֵּהּ | אִם־צָעֹק יִצְעַק |
| Job. 34,28 | קְבַלְתָּא דְמִסְכְּנָא | צַֽעֲקַת־דָּל |
| Koh. 7,6 | כְּקָל קִיבְלת כּוּבִּין דְּמִתּוֹקְדִין תְּחוֹת דּוּדָא | כְקוֹל הַסִּירִים תַּחַת הַסִּ֔יר |

Whereas both זעקה and צעקה could be translated as “cry out” and do therefore perfectly conform to the suggested meaning of Targumic Aramaic קבלתא, the term סיר stands out. Jastrow 2004 translates קִיבְלת כּוּבִּין as “the plaintive sound of crackling thorns”, thereby trying to combine the primary meaning of קבלתא with the meaning of Hebrew סיר “thorn”. But it seems quite likely that the Targumic Aramaic term קבלתא does not only mean “outcry, plaint”, but also bears the meaning “thorn,” due to the fact that a Syriac cognate also functions as a plant name.[[55]](#footnote-57) Nevertheless, this secondary meaning does not seem relevant for the consideration of the term קיבלא. What does seem relevant for the examination of the word קיבלא is the fact that its cognate קבלתא does designate a type of vocal utterance. This could also be a hint that the term קיבלא, to which previously the meaning “charm” was attributed, does describe primarily a vocal utterance and that the incantations were orally performed.

The Akkadian cognates based on the root *qbl* underline the aggressive undertone: According to Reiner, E., Biggs, R. D. et al. 1982, p. 12 the principle meaning of the Akkadian word *qablu* [entry B] is *battle* or *warfare*. Similarly, Soden 1972, p. 888 translates *qablu(m) II* as “Kampf, Schlacht.” Interestingly, the secondary meaning of *qablu B* is *catastrophe* or *quarrel*: “*ana ḫulluq nišīja qab-la aqbīma* (how could I have ordered such evil in the assembly of the gods) how could I have ordered (such a) catastrophe (referring to the flood) to destroy my people? Gilg. XI,121” (Reiner, E., Biggs, R. D. et al. 1982, p. 15). The Akkadian verbal derivation of the root *qbl*, *qubbulu B* has the corresponding meaning *(to) fight* (Reiner, E., Biggs, R. D. et al. 1982, p. 293).

The preceding considerations regarding the meaning of the term קיבלא within incantation bowl texts, on the one hand, and regarding the semantic field of its cognates, on the other hand, has shown that most nominal formations designate verbal utterances that are directed against some other entity.

### 2.3.3. The Term קיבלא and Its Cognates in the Cairo Genizah Fragments

Within the fragments from the Cairo Genizah, several cognates of the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic term קיבלא can be found. From today’s point of view, at least four fragments from the Cairo Genizah could be identified, namely T.-S. K 1.37, T.-S. K 1.120, T.-S. AS 142.21 and JTSL ENA 38,32.
Each instance will be discussed briefly here.

#### 2.3.3.1 T.-S. K 1.37

T.-S. K 1.37 consists of a double paper folio, that displays Oriental semi-cursive writing on its recto and verso. Based on paleographic concerns, T.-S. K 1.37 can be dated to the 11th century (Schäfer et al. 1994, p. 55) and it seems very probable that the fragment was part of a copy of a magical handbook that can be dated back to Late Antiquity. The text of folio 1 is written entirely in Hebrew, whereas folio 2 displays Hebrew and Aramaic passages as well as some lines in Judeo-Arabic. For the current purpose, only folio 2, displaying erotic magical recipes, is relevant, due to the fact that the term קבלה is used here twice as a heading for a subsequent magical recipe, namely in 2a/12 and 2a/20.

|  |
| --- |
| T.-S. K. 1.37 2a/12 |
| A charm: Write on the skin of a gazelle…  | קבלה כת' בצבי |

|  |
| --- |
| T.-S. K. 1.37 2a/20f  |
| A charm: Speak over… | קבלה אמר על |

The term קבלה seems to be used as a *terminus techicus* for a magical formula that could be either written or spoken. It indicates the beginning of magical instructions. With regards to the erotic magical content, it seems obvious to propose the translation “charm”.

#### 2.3.3.2 T.-S. K 1.120

T.-S. K 1.37 consists of one folio that displays writing only on one side. Due to paleographic considerations, the oriental semi-square script can be dated to the 10th century (Schäfer et al. 1997, p. 60). The first part of the text is written in a Hebrew-Aramaic mixed language, whereas the second part should be considered entirely Hebrew. The term קיבלוה is used twice in this fragment as a heading for a subsequent magical recipe, namely in 1a/2 and 1a/10.

|  |
| --- |
| T.-S. K. 1.120 1a/2 |
| A charm: It should be written on… | קיבלוה יוכת על |

|  |
| --- |
| T.-S. K. 1.120 1a/10 |
| A charm: It should be written | קיבלוה יוכת  |

#### 2.3.3.3 T.-S. AS 142.21

The use of the term קבלה in T.-S. AS 142.21, fol. 1b/11 is identical with the use of the term in the two previous fragments. It indicates the beginning of a magical instruction.

#### 2.3.3.4 JTSL ENA 38,32

The term קבלה is also used as a heading for a magical instruction in JTSL ENA 38,32 fol. 14a (Marmorstein 123, p. 87).

|  |
| --- |
| JTSL ENA 38,32 fol. 14a |
| A charm for rage: Write these names…  | קבלה לזעף כתוב אלו השמות |

## 2.4. Conclusions

Within this chapter, it could be demonstrated that the term קיבלא and its cognates are not only used within incantation bowl texts written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, but also as in other text genres written in several Aramaic dialects or Semitic languages. With regard to the findings within the Genizah fragments and in Talmud manuscripts, it seems very probable that the term was used as a *terminus technicus* for a charm. Although the translation *counter-spell* might be appropriate for some incantation bowl texts, it should be mentioned that the term is by no-means restricted to this meaning and that the more neutral term “charm” should be preferred.

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1. The question whether or not קיבלא bowl texts should be subsumed under the category of aggressive magic will be addressed in chapter 5 of the present thesis. *[If this is intended for publication, “thesis” should become “study” or “work” or the like.]* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As already mentioned by Levene 2011, 227, BM 91767 does not display any bitumen markings “suggesting that either it was not bitumened to another bowl or that if bitumen had been there it had fallen oﬀ, the
markings having faded or been removed in some way.” Furthermore, it is not possible to evaluate the physical appearance of the Tyszkiewicz bowl due to the fact that it was not described by Lacau 1894 and its current location is unknown. *[The reader has not encountered the Tyszkiewicz bowl yet, so perhaps add “discussed below” or refer to a page number.]* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The numbers used to refer to the bowls today were given to them during “a general numbering of Mesopotamian objects exhibited in the galleries of the then Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities”
(Segal 2000, p. 35) at the end of the 19th century. In literature, these bowls are also known as A039, A040 and A41 *[not A041?]* according to the numbering Segal used in his catalogue, indicating the language of the bowl by the letter A for Aramaic and M for Mandaic. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. According to Segal 2000, 192 f. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. According to Bhayro et al. 2018. The bowl measurements indicated by Bhayro et al. 2018 do, to some extent, differ from those given by Levene 2013. Remeasurements conducted during a research stay at the Vorderasiatisches Museum in 2017, show, on the one hand, that the dimensions given by Bhayro et al. 2018 might be more accurate, but, on the other hand, they do also point to the difficulty of bowl measurement. So far, no standardized method has been proposed. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Levene 2013: 15 cm x 4.5 cm [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Levene 2013: 15.1 cm x 3.5 cm [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Levene 2013: 17.5 cm x 5.5 cm [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Levene 2013: 18.3 cm x 4.2 cm [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Levene 2013: 16.0 cm x 4.5 cm [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Levene 2013: 15.5 cm x 4.5 cm [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. VA 2452 was not published by Levene 2013 and only described by Bhayro et al. 2018. It will be published for the first time within the present thesis. *[See comment at n. 1, above.]* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In total, there are 21 incantation bowls within the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum that are originally from the so-called Maimon Collection ( Bhayro et al. 2018, p. 1), a collection mainly consisting of Neo-Babylonian material (Jursa 1999, p. 6). According to Joachim Marzahn, the former chief curator of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, to whom Jursa 1999 refers, the acquisition documents were destroyed during WW II. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Bhayro et al. 2018, p. 99, hypothesize that VA 2436 and VA 2446 formed a קיבלא bowl pair, which seems unlikely due to the fact that they neither share the same client nor the same antagonist. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. According to Bhayro et al. 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. VA 2414: Wohlstein 1894, pp. 30–34. VA 2426: Wohlstein 1894, pp. 27–30. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. VA 2414,5-7: ועל ארדי בנשבי ועל ססתא בישר דבישר אכלן ובישר שתין ואזלו ופילו על טבי בטורי [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Regarding VA Bab.2834, there is also bitumen inside the bowl that appears to have dripped from the rim, covering some parts of the text. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Interestingly, the incantation text of VA Bab.2834 does also feature a historiola narrating the unsuccessful attempt of evil sorceries to enter the client’s house. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. According to Fain et al. 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Unfortunately, a planned research stay at the National Archaeological Museum in 2019 could not be realized due to the staff shortage in Greek museum, and a later visit was postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. S-445 will be further discussed in chapter 3.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. For more information on the bathroom demon cf. Bamberger 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. לשידא דבית הכסא לימא הכי אקרקפי דארי ואאוסי דגורייתא אשכחתון לשידאי בר שיריקא פנדא במישרא דכרתי חבטיה בלועא דחמרא חטרתיה [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. אמר רבה בר רב הונא בא מן הדרך ושימש מטתו הוויין לו בנים ויתקין תנו רבנן הבא מבית הכסא אל ישמש מטתו עד שישהה שיעור חצי מיל מפני ששד בית הכסא מלוה עמו ואם שימש הוויין לו בנים נכפים [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. In order to identify the underlying meaning of קיבלא, it might be taken into consideration that this episode, narrated in the Bavli, is traditionally placed in Tiberias. Therefore, it could be inferred that the quite unusual term was used to create alienation. However, this does not seem very likely due to the fact that not all available manuscripts locate the *[CONTINUATION MISSING]* [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. אמר רבי תנחום בר חנילאי כל הצנוע בבית הכסא נצול משלשה דברים מן הנחשים ומן העקרבים ומן המזיקין ויש אומרים אף חלומותיו מיושבים עליו [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Regarding the exact meaning of קיבלא, there is no need to consider the variation between word-ending א, representing the Aramaic definite article, and the word-ending ה, representing a Hebraized word-ending, due to the fact that they, being *matres lectiones*, are often interchangeable in Talmudic texts. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. The following passage is quoted according to the Vilna Shas Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. For example, the William Davidson Talmud translates: “The Gemara relates: There was a particular bathroom in the city of Tiberias, where, when two would enter it, even during the day, they would be harmed by demons. When Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi would each enter alone, they were not harmed. The Sages said to them: Aren’t you afraid? Rabbi Ami and Rabbi Asi said to them: We have learned through tradition: The tradition to avoid danger in the bathroom is to conduct oneself with modesty and silence. The tradition to end suffering is with silence and prayer.”*[The online Talmud text on Sefaria is the Koren Noé Talmud, made accessible to the public by a grant from the family of the late Bill Davidson. One could even cite the translator’s name, I believe, by checking the volume in which Ber 62 appears.]* [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Wording and spelling that is not consistent with the traditional Vilna Shas edition is printed in bold, irrespective of whether the inconsistence is based on an orthographic level or the fact that some words are added. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Beside the tractate Berakhot, Ms. Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366) does also contain the order of Moed. Although written in Square Sefardic script, the manuscript itself unites Sefardic with Ashkenazic influences, and was supposedly copied in Northern Spain or in Provence during the 14th or 15th century ( Katz et al. 2017; Sussmann 2012). *[I recommend “MS” in place of “Ms.” for “manuscript,” here and in subsequent footnotes.]* [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. In Oxford Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366) the particular bathroom is not situated in Tiberias, but in Nehardea, transferring the story from Eretz Israel to Mesopotamia. Nehardea, situated at the bank of the river Euphrates, was an important center of Babylonian Judaism and, from the time of the early Amoraim till the end of the Geonic period, one of the Rabbinical academies. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Accessed on December 26, 2018 trough:
<http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx?mishibbur=80001&mm15=0000000000000062XX> [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Ms. Munich 95, written in semi-cursive Askhenazi script, is the only known Talmudic manuscript that contains the entire Babylonian Talmud. According to a colophon, the manuscript was concluded in 1342 (12 Kislev 5103), probably in Northern France ( Katz et al. 2017; Sussmann 2012). *[In the body of the text, you use the term “Babylonian Talmud,” whereas elsewhere in the notes, you use the term “Bavli.” Preference? Is consistency important here?]* [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Only the tractate Berakhot is contained in Ms. Paris 671, a 15th century Eastern Byzantine manuscript (Katz et al. 2017; Sussmann 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Unfortunately, CUL: T-S F(2.)109 is very fragmentary. Hence, it is does not enable us to discuss the entire fragment within this chapter, but one legible sentence, רבנן ואתון לא מיסתפיתון אנן קיבלא דבית הכסא, clearly indicates, due to the *mater lectionis*, that the term was understood as קִיבְלָא. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Due to the fact that, regarding the present passage, Munich Cod. Hebr. 95 and Paris 671 should be considered as the less reliable textual witnesses, in comparison with Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366), and they display some textual *corruptelae*, only the relevant passages will be translated. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Wording and spelling that is not consistent with the traditional Vilna Shas edition is printed in bold. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Wording and spelling that is not consistent with the traditional Vilna Shas edition is printed in bold. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. In his edition of M 102, Levene translates רזא as “spell” (Levene 2013, pp. 108–110). *[Numbers need correction; old n. 43 has been replaced by new n.44, but no 43 remains!]* [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. This bowl is from the collection of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and was published by Naveh and Shaked 1985 and Levene 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
43. The question of whether Mandaic and Syriac should be considered as languages or dialects is difficult to answer. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
44. Due to the fact that the two other possible meanings are *chain* or *fetter(ing)*, the Mandaic word *qubla* seems to combine different meanings of the root *qbl*. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
45. The main subjects of Aspar Malwâšia or the *Book of the Zodiac*, which served the Mandaen priests, are astrology and omens. The edition of Drower 1949, is based on a miscellany of different manuscripts. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
46. This a manuscript from the Drower Collection of Mandaean manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, namely a codex, a modern copy of a book of magic, which was published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1943, pp.149–81. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
47. Ms. Florence 9, an Ashkenazic manuscript, states in San 104b in reference to Lam. I,12: מכאן לקובלנא מן התורה *from this verse is biblical support for a counter-charm* ( Sokolof 2002, p. 989) [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
48. According the CAL entry (accessed on cal.huc.edu on January 10, 2019) the meaning *counter-charm* is a guess by etymology. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
49. מכאן לקובלנא מן התורה - כשאדם מודיע צערו לאחר צריך שיאמר לו לא תבא זאת לך כמו שבאה אלי כי קשה הוא לשמוע שפעמים חוזרת עליו והמקפיד על כך אין בו משום ניחוש. ל"א לקובלנא כשיש לו צרה יודיענה לרבים קובלנא צעקה ל"א נגד דמתרגמינן קבל כאדם שאומר לחברו לא כנגדך אני אומר. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
50. One example can be found in bowl 6, line 10 of Moriggi 2014: ܘܚܬܡܐ ܗܢܐ ܠܐ ܢܬܒܪܘܢ ܘܥܠ ܩܡܥܐ ܘܩܝܒܠܐ ܠܐ ܢܥܝܠܘܢ ‏  *they shall not break this seal nor enter into the amulet and charm*. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
51. This bowl from the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem is also known as N&SH B23 and was published by Naveh and Shaked ***[1985?]*** and Levene 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
52. BLMJ 03009, 3f.:

 וקבלאתא ורוחי בישתא וחומרי זידניתא וכל עישפא וכל לוטתא עישפא צמירא ונידרא וקיריתא ולוטתא ושיקופתא [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
53. The analysis of the relevant text passage, line 5 and 6 of the Borsippa bowl, encourages us to follow the reading of Naveh and Shaked and to consider קבלאתא as an plural of קיבלא elsewhere unattested, using the feminine plural ending -תא, due to the following considerations: On the one hand, within the textual composition of the verse, the noun is used within a string of other nouns whose numerus is undoubtedly plural. On the other hand, all nouns listed here belong to the field of verbal magic utterances. Therefore it is debatable whether one should reconstruct a Mandaic formula that neither belongs to this semantic field nor would be entirely used within the relevant passage. ***[What does “entirely used” mean here? It is unclear to me.]*** [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
54. Based on her reading of the so-called Borsippa bowl, Müller-Kessler 2012, p. 19 suggests interpreting מקבלתא as תקבלתא because “*mem* and *taw* can easily be confused in the Mandaic script and may have caused just such a puzzling spelling.” Accordingly, she considers קבלאתא in BLMJ 03009 to be a corruption of תקבלתא. Further, she interprets תקבלתא as a spelling variant of תקולתא, a nominal form based on the root תקל. However, her interpretations seem unnecessarily complicated. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
55. Cf. cal.huc.edu for the lemma qblˁ, qblˁˀ. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)