Let It Be

Yehuda Berger (Queries & Comments, BAR 30:04) is correct about the numerous attestations of the word tequ in the Babylonian Talmud to refer to an issue that cannot be decided. But he repeats an old canard when he claims that the word is an acronym for Tishbi yetaretz qusiyot ve-ba’ayot, “the Tishbite (Elijah) will settle [all such] difficulties and problems.” This is the way that later Jews understood the word, but this is not its proper etymology. In fact the word is a perfectly good Aramaic word, derived from the root qwem “stand, arise” (which occurs commonly in Hebrew also). The specific form tequ means “let it stand” in the sense of “let (the matter) remain (unresolved)” (see M. Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic [2002], p. 993). At some point, Jews unfamiliar with the workings of Aramaic grammar no longer understood the form, and thus they created the notion that the word was an acronym.

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