

**Zeev Ben-Hayyim**

## **Response to Comments**

I perceive four criticisms. Each criticism with its response is given below.

*First criticism* — from a purely linguistic aspect it is impossible to speak of one language, but rather languages according to status, level of education, gender, etc. Accordingly, the history of the language of literary prose, of poetry, of historical prose, of liturgy, etc., should be described separately.

*My response* — If we ignore the terminological question, we must make a sharp distinction between two matters: 1) a human communication system built on rules we call grammatical and on vocabulary upon which the grammatical rules are actualized; 2) different possibilities of choice of these rules and vocabulary. We call this style. Style is an integral part of a language and cannot operate on other rules which are not part of a particular language. All the items listed by Prof. Rabin are essentially style, and I would not claim that there exists a stylistic unity in Hebrew throughout its history. In a language as ancient as ours it is doubtful that the idea of presenting the history of style can ever be executed. It remains only to describe the history of a language with its various styles.

*Second criticism* — The relation of the speech language of the writer to the language of writing is not a linguistic but rather a merely sociological criterion. Instead of this criterion it is proposed that the “language consolidations” of Hebrew in different ways “in

different countries," that is, a geographic criterion, be considered as a criterion for periodization. To the best of my knowledge, however, in the complicated history of our language, geography, in itself, is of no help in the etymological-historical clarification of changes. The spoken background of the Hebrew writer serves better for recognizing the real character of written Hebrew.

*Third criticism* — In place of the criterion I proposed, Prof. Rabin proposes the "principal of consolidation" which is, in his view, both linguistic and socio-historical without involving us in the issue of spoken language.

*My response* — The definition of the "consolidation principle" entails the notion of "language norm" and it is assumed that there is a *chronological* sequence of norms. In the "period of diaspora" it is difficult to determine a chronological sequence of norms. In this entire long period different types of Hebrew existed simultaneously with mutual influences.

*Fourth criticism* — Concerning the relationship between written and spoken language there is no division if the spoken language is Semitic or Indo-European.

*My response* — The difference between spoken Semitic (Aramaic or Arabic) and a spoken language different in structure from Hebrew must serve as a point of observation in the history of Hebrew. Aramaic or Arabic, for example, can bring about changes in the verbal system, i.e., the usages of conjugations or displacements from one conjugation to another. An Indo-European language's influence can affect only syntax or phonology, but cannot penetrate the structure of the verb.