English Abstracts

Language Traditions

Ilan Eldar

Pronunciation Traditions of Hebrew

When applied to Hebrew as a language employed as the language of
prayer as well as that of reading the Bible and post-biblical texts of
religious and ceremonial importance, the term "pronunciation tradition"
or "reading tradition" refers to the phonological and morphological
information passed down through the generations, both orally and in
writing. It is used as the source of the correct reading of the holy texts as
used by people of a particular country or community.

   The first part of the present article examines the phonological
characteristics of the ancient pronunciation traditions reflected by the
various Hebrew vocalization systems, i.e. the Tiberian, the Palestinian
and the Babylonian. Two interrelated subjects are discussed here in further
detail — a sorting out of the various vocalization sub-systems employed in
the Palestinian variety and the stages of development of the application of
the Palestinian pronunciation.

   In the second part an attempt is made to characterize the splitting off of
Hebrew as a reading language both in terms of geographical differentiation
(Babylon as against Palestine) and in terms of historical development
(Biblical language as against Mishnaic language).

In the third part the branching off of the various Hebrew pronunciations in the diaspora following the transmission of the main centres of Jewish population at the end of the Gaonic period from the Eastern countries to the Western ones (i.e. Europe and North Africa) is discussed.

In the last part the relationship between the living reading traditions employed by contemporary Jewish communities and the pronunciations map of the Jewish dispersion during the Middle Ages (as described in the third part of the present article) is discussed.

Chanoch Gamliel

The Verb-System in an Old Yemenite Manuscript

Two main methods are used in the research of Mishnaic Hebrew — the study of old manuscripts and the study of living traditions of various communities. In spite of the great gap of time between the manuscripts (mostly from the second half of the Middle Ages) and the living traditions (which were recorded only in our century), these two sources complement each other, and they are the basic material for research.

This paper describes the verb-system in an old Mishnaic Hebrew manuscript from Yemen and compares it with the Yemenite living tradition, which has been thoroughly described by several scholars. The manuscript is Seder Moed with Rambam's commentary (ed. Y.L. Nahum, Holon, 1976), and it is from the 16th century (at latest).

Our conclusion from the comparison between the manuscript and the living tradition is that the verb-system in both sources is much the same; not only in its main features, but also with regard to specific details. This shows the great stability of the living tradition.

Amos Dodi

A Morphological Study of Verba Primae
'Alef in Targum Onqelos

The discovery of Geniza fragments with Babylonian punctuation necessitated a new investigation into the language of Targum Onqelos from various angles. The aims of this research are to discover the Babylonian characteristics of Targum Onqelos. These are based on the manuscripts with superlinear punctuation which reflect the oldest layer of the Babylonian tradition. In this study the inflecton of I-' roots is described from a comparative morphological point of view. The inflection of I-' roots is connected with the pronunciation or the elision of 'alef in various positions.

In the suffix conjugation, 'alef generally has *patah* in an open syllable at the beginning of a word instead of the expected *shewa* as it appears in the younger mss. with Babylonian punctuation. 'Alef also has *patah* when a prefixed word having a *shewa* precedes a word beginning with 'alef, namely וֹא דָא, אָ.

The preformative vowel of the prefix conjugation and of the infinitive is /e/ (יֵ), e.g. תֵּיכוֹל, לְמֵיכַל etc. The vowels of the second radical in final closed syllable are: /o/ (/u/ in pausal position), /a/, /e/. The vowel /o/ of the second radical is preserved in the patterns which have an object pronoun of the third plural person suffix. This feature appears when the base form does not have a final morpheme "-ūn" after the stem, e.g. תֵּיכוֹלִינוּן.

The preformative of 'af'el is ' in the suffix conjugation, imperative and infinitive. The prefix vowel is generally /o/ (וֹ), like the vowel in I y/w

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roots. But in the patterns derived from אמ"ן, the preformative is h and the prefix vowel is /e/ (מְהֵימָׁן, יְהֵימְנוּן, וִהֵימִין).

In 'itpaʿel, the first radical ' is generally written after the preformative. The vowel of the second radical in the prefix conjugation is /i/ in pausal forms, /e/ in non-pausal forms.

Mordechay Mishor

Ashkenazi Traditions — Toward a Method of Research

The aim of this article is to discover a suitable way to begin systematic research on Ashkenazi traditions of Mishnaic Hebrew.

The writer proposes to begin by making an exhaustive analysis of a short corpus, according to one tradition, on the basis of the material recorded by the Hebrew University Language Traditions Project (*HULTP*), and of "vulgar" vocalized prints of the Mishna, i.e. those which have not been emended by grammarians.

In this article an experiment has been made in this direction. The corpus chosen was the tractate Pea 1–3, according to the Lithuanian oral tradition. The main basis is the tape No. 107/לח of the *HULTP*; the reading has been transcribed phonetically (the transcription is based on work done by the writer as a student [in 1967]). Parallel to the oral material, a printed version of the Mishna with a Yiddish translation ("עברי-טייטש") was utilized. Both the oral and printed versions were compared to other material, as well as to each other. This secondary material comprises other printed versions, Hebrew loan-words in Yiddish, the "pre-Ashkenazi" tradition, etc.

Jewish Languages

Yitzhak Avishur

"Difficult Words" in Saadia's Translation to the Torah and Modern Translations in the Orient

In order to clarify the textual status of difficult words and their meaning in R. Saadia Gaon's translation, we must utilize all the information to be found: (a) in mss. of R. Saadia's translation; (b) in mss. of the recensions of Saadia's translation — Karaite, Samaritan, Christian, and especially Rabbinic; (c) in the new translations in Judaeo-Arabic in the East and in North Africa, where a considerable deposit of R. Saadia's translations may be found.

The clarification of the text and significance of those words is not only valuable in itself — it has repercussions for understanding the way copyists, revisers, and translators work and the way of dealing with difficult words in particular and with R. Saadia's translation in general.

The manner in which the copyists and revisers of R. Saadia's translation work can be seen in the textual variants and in the errors. The manner in which they deal with these problems is not described explicitly but must be inferred from the translation. The exception to this rule is the translation of R. Issachar Alsusani where the manner of dealing with the difficulties is spelled out. In the Hebrew introduction to his Arabic translation, Alsusani noted some of the difficult words when he wrote:

It contains some words which require explanation for children, for example his rendering of תדשא הארץ דשא תכלא אלארץ כלא ועלטה אלגׄלמה ותרדמה סבאתה וסנורים אל שבכרה וכתונת תונייה ומעיל ממטר ותועפות ראם ארק אלרים and many similar cases too numerous to mention. And whoever knows how to read the translation in Hebrew, he reads these words by rote (lit. he was taught by his teachers) without understanding what they mean; and even his teacher doesn't understand them...

Alsusani chose to illustrate the difficult words with seven examples, and we should assume that he chose the most difficult cases. At the beginning he noted that children do not understand these words and so they require explanation. However, later on it emerges that all the readers of the *Šarḥ* read them by rote without comprehension as they were taught by their teacher. He goes on to observe that even Rabbis who studied the *Šarḥ* do not understand what they are saying.

No one disagrees that difficult words do exist in R. Saadia's translation. However, the difficulties were not felt to the same degree everywhere, and Alsusani's generalization cannot be considered valid for each and every locality. It seems that what proved difficult for Alsusani and the teachers who taught him the *Šarḥ* was not considered a difficulty elsewhere, and what was incomprehensible in one dialect was easily understood in another dialect of Judaeo-Arabic.

In the following I will discuss the words listed by Alsusani in order to establish their textual status and their meaning in R. Saadia's translation, as well as their evolution in the revisions of R. Saadia's translation and in other translations.

I have divided these words into two groups:
(1) Words which have become corrupted in the process of transmission (אלגׄלמה, אלשבכרה);
(2) Words whose meanings were forgotten (ממטר, ארק אלרים, כלא, סבאתה, תונייה).

To these I shall add an appendix on a particularly difficult word, מטרון, which R. Saadia uses to render the Hebrew שפיפון (Gen. 49 : 17).

Moshe Bar-Asher

Some Aspects in the Study of the Hebrew Component in Eastern and Western Neo-Judeo-Arabic

The fundamental stage in the study of the Hebrew component in Jewish languages is to gather and describe the material within each language and each dialect. Once this description of the data is complete, the Hebrew elements must be analysed from a number of different viewpoints. The aspects covered by the present paper are as follows:

Neologisms. Here one must identify Hebrew words that have been newly formed within Jewish languages, classify them by type and estimate their frequency. One out of many possible examples is the word שֶׁפַח *šefaḥ*, which means "slave" in the language of the Jews of Djerba and is a back-formation from the feminine שִׁפְחָה *šifḥah* "maidservant".

Shifts of form and meaning. The investigator must keep track of Hebrew words that have changed their form within Jewish languages. For example, אסרו־חג — *ʔisru-ḥag* has become *sruḥa* in the language of Jews in many parts of North Africa and in the Yemen. Likewise, some words have changed in meaning; for example, the word מַגִּיד — *maggid*, in the language of the Jews in Constantine, Algeria, signifies one who shows a blind man the way.

Traditional Pronunciation of Hebrew. Hebrew elements within Jewish languages extant today may have been adopted centuries ago, and so may embody valuable traditions regarding the pronunciation of Hebrew. For example, the phrase תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים — *tḥiyat hammitim* "resurrection" is pronounced תְּחָיַת המתים — *tḥayat hammitim* in the Arabic dialect of the Jews of Djerba, and this pronunciation agrees exactly with that found in early mss. of the Mishnah and in *piyyuṭim* of about a thousand years ago.

Comparisons between languages or dialects. It is often found that different Jewish languages use the same word with the same significance. For example, כביכול *kaḇyaxol* is an appellation of the Deity both in Yiddish and in the Arabic dialect of the Jews of Morocco. Such striking correspondence points to a common origin. In other cases, however, parallels in usage may have developed independently. A case in point is the word מְעָרָה — *měʕārā(h)*, literally "cave", which came to mean "Jewish cemetery" in Jewish languages both in the Yemen and in Morocco, and alludes to burial customs common to both communities.

Comparisons across time in a given area. It is useful to compare the Hebrew words in the current spoken language of a given Jewish community, with records of the Hebrew written by the rabbis of the same community in past generations. For example, the word פּוֹקֵחַ *pōqēăḥ* in the language of the Jews of Fez in Morocco signifies a Moslem sage, and is a Hebrew calque on the Arabic word *faqīh*. Extant documents show that this word was used by the rabbis of Fez about 300 years ago in their Hebrew correspondence, and thus testify to a long tradition behind the present-day usage.

To summarize: the identification of Hebrew elements in Jewish dialects and languages, and the analysis of this material from various viewpoints, reveal phenomena that hold profound linguistic and sociological significance.

Aharon Maman

On Identifying the Hebrew Element
in Judeo-Maghrebian

The identification of a foreign element in a given language might be a hard
task if they are both cognates, especially when homophonous, such as *st*ᵉ*r*
and *skkin*, which could be considered as Arabic or Hebrew. Scholars who
have dealt with this subject have made use of some linguistic criteria, but
usually identified the Hebrew element intuitively. In this article
methodological criteria that can be used for identification are dealt with.

If there is no proof that in a certain context a word is Hebrew, it should
be understood as Arabic.

The classical criterion for identification, known from other languages,
is the phonological one, e.g. *bixor* is well recognized as Hebrew by its
morpho-phonemic structure (cf. Ar. *bkᵉr*). Leslaw suggested that *gᵉbbᵉl*
would reflect Heb. *qibbel*, but it is doubtful whether Heb. /q/, even in
loan-words, would undergo the sound shift q/k>g, which is only known
from Bedouin Arabic dialects and Maghrebian loan-words from them.
Morphological principles can also be set for the identification. Heb.
yinfṭar, according to some scholars, is arabised, but if so, one should
expect the form *yinfᵉl* i.e. *yinfṭᵉr*, in the same way *yinfqᵉṣ* and the loaned
Hebrew verbs *yindfᵉs* and *yinṭbᵉ'* are inflected. One should conclude then
that we have here a new formation, which consists in inflecting imperfect
forms by adding the preformatives ʔ/y/t/n to the stem used in the perfect,
without altering the vowel structure (cf. also *porex > yporex* in the
Tlemcen [Algeria] dialect). From the plural form one can conclude whether
the singular form is Hebrew or Arabic; however, sometimes this criterion
is not enough and one must use other data, e.g. *tᵉlmid-tlamda* is to be

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considered as a Hebrew pair while *t^elmid-talamid* as an Arabic pair.

A form may be recognized as secondary if it has a primary counterpart (*mkuww^eḥ* < Hebrew *kowaḥ*). In many occurrences other principles, lexical, phrasiological or semantic, must be used (*rassna* is an arabised Hebrew form of *rossana*, *g^ern* is the Arabic equivalent of *qirin qayyimit*, and *'s^er* of *s^ebt l'isr*). Whenever there are synonyms one should check whether one of them is Hebrew Identification should also take into account the occurrence of a word in a Jewish cultural context (*tsi'r* < Heb. *ši'ur*, *ṭbl*). Other principles are presented.

Joseph Chetrit

The Hebrew-Aramaic Component of the Moroccan Judeo-Arabic: the Language of a Muslim Poem Written as Jewish

The goal of this study is to present and comment on an almost unique text written in the 1920's by a Moroccan Muslim poet named 'Omar əS-Sufani. The text presents Jews and their religion in a polemic way, and gives some details about Jewish history, the ceremonies of many Jewish holidays, Jewish behaviour in the synagogue and the relations between Jews and Muslims. All 52 verses of this *qṣida* poem contain a very great number of Hebrew morphemes and phrases dealing with the Jewish culture and behaviour of the Judeo-Arabic speakers in Morocco, in particular the Rabbis and Hebrew scholars. The question is how now does one interpret this strange text and explain the almost correct use of more than one hundred Hebrew items by a Muslim writer in Morocco.

After the presentation of the ten oral and written versions of the poem I have collected and the classification of the Hebrew items of the text, I turn

to text analysis, to linguistics, to sociolinguistics and to pragmatics for constructing a multi-disciplinary analysis of the text and its particular language, and for explaining on the one hand its very rich Hebrew lexicon which refers to Jewish specific features as seen by the Muslim writer and on the other hand the Muslim-Arabic phrasing found normally in the *malḥun* language of the Muslim poetry in Morocco. The concept of "polyphony" (O. Ducrot) is invoked here and serves to show the traditional and ideological ambiguous attitudes of the Muslim scholars towards Judaism and their koranic prejudices against the Jews, and the playing use by the writer of Hebrew component. In the text, the Hebrew items are used like specific and technical Jewish words and for that their semantic values differ from the natural uses of the Judeo-Arabic speakers in Morocco. For all these lexical items, natural meanings and uses found in oral and written Judeo-Arabic texts are supplied with sociolinguistic and pragmatic background in order to compare the artificial or specific use by the writer with the natural and various uses. Hebrew verbs, verb phrases and interesting Jewish formulae used by the poet are particularly analysed and compared with natural uses.

Finally, the consciousness of the Muslim poet of the linguistic variation in the Moroccan Judeo-Arabic as manifested in his whole text and his use of lexical items taken from the *šarḥ* variety and from the secret language variety called by him *lašunija*, serves to illustrate our sociolinguistic analysis of Judeo-Arabic as like as of all Jewish languages.

Ofra Tirosh-Becker

A Characterization of the Judeo-Arabic Language
of Constantine

The Judeo-Arabic language of Constantine (east Algeria) possesses a variety of interesting and unique features, both in the realm of phonetics and in the realm of morphology. Some of these features are due to internal development while others reflect inter-dialectal influences. The present discussion is mainly concerned with the Judeo-Arabic translation (*šarḥ*; pronounced *sərḥ* in Constantine) of the Book of Psalms handed down in Constantine, as it was recorded in writing by Rabbi Yoseph Renassia and as read by informants. This translation was first published in 1920 under the title *Zimrat Eliahu* and was re-issued in 1954 under the title *Zichron Ya'akov* (which includes Rabbi Renassia's own commentary).

The main characteristic of this language, which is conservatism, and other important features, such as "junctionalism" (defined below), are presented through detailed discussion of selected topics.

Conservatism is evident in the consonantal system, which preserves all the Clasical-Arabic consonant phonemes, except for the three inter-dental fricatives (t̲, d̲, ḍ). This stability is exemplified in this paper by the consistent distinction between the sibilants /š/ and /s/ (with minor exceptions) and by the fact that the phoneme /ǧ/ tends to be resistant to dissimilations. Many of the conservative characteristics of the phonetic system (though not all) are common to the language of the *šarḥ* and to the everyday spoken language.

Profound differences, however, exist between these two strata in the field of morphology, where the language of the *šarḥ* is the more conservative. This is shown here by the preservation of the distinct