

English Abstracts

Nahem Ilan and Na'im Dahan

“Ten Things Were Created at Twilight on the Eve of the First Sabbath”: from Partial *Midrashim* to an Oral Maghrebian Folktale

A long homiletic interpretation in North-African Judeo-Arabic of the mishnah in *Avot*, beginning with the words “Ten things were created at twilight on the eve of the first Sabbath”, was printed in the book *Arba'ah Gevi'im*. The editor called it *Sharḥ* (translation). This article concerns the character of the book and its various editions, the quality of the *sharḥ*, the custom of reading it, how it was created and disseminated among the communities of North Africa, and its educational function. An annotated Hebrew translation of the *sharḥ* is also included. The *sharḥ* is placed in its broad cultural context and documents a lost custom.

The expanded *sharḥ* in its present form is a new text, evidently dating from the nineteenth century. It is clearly based on the Babylonian Talmud and Rashi's commentary to the Talmud and to the Torah, the *Midrashei Rabbah* to the Torah, particularly on *Midrash Tanhuma* in its accepted version, and on *Yalqut Shim'oni*.

The text should be regarded as a folktale. Even if the novelty seems to be mainly of form and not content, the new form itself brings about changes in content that appears familiar. In fact every text needs to be interpreted not only by itself, but also (and perhaps primarily) in its

context. The fragments of *midrashim* on which the expanded *sharḥ* is based crystallized partially out of exegetical linguistic difficulties. Others are derived from general exegetical tendencies, unrelated to concrete linguistic context, but rather to a general homiletic approach. In the expanded *sharḥ* these fragments were linked into one continuous chain, providing a rich and variegated picture of each of the “ten things” discussed in the *sharḥ*, unlike any that existed previously.

However the novel form is not all. There are also differences of content, which are a product of the target audience or audiences and the way in which the text is expressed. All of these are notable characteristics of the folktale. To begin with, the book *Arba‘ah Gev‘im* was intended for a defined audience – the men who attend the synagogue, including some whose Jewish education was minimal and who were not scholars. Testimony from Tiberias from the 1930’s indicates that it was also read to women, who listened attentively.

The expanded *sharḥ* was intended to encourage the readers and listeners to behave morally and responsibly, as befits people living in a world ruled by God, who rules it with absolute righteousness and justice towards his creatures, often tempered with mercy. The *sharḥ* does not present its message in an abstract, expository manner, but in a dramatic, narrative way, based mainly on the Bible and *midrashim*. Consequently it is suitable for all the levels of the public – men and women, scholars and laymen, old and young.

Moshe Bar-Asher

Ancient and Late Phenomena in the Hebrew Linguistic Tradition of Jews in Southwestern France

The article explores four linguistic phenomena in the Hebrew tradition of the Jewish communities in Southwestern France by tracing these communities over a period of three hundred and fifty years (1650–2000),

and at times by investigating attestations dating hundreds of years before 1650 as well, especially from Medieval Spain.

For the purpose of the investigation dozens of documents originally written in Hebrew or documents written in Spanish and French but incorporating Hebrew elements are examined.

a. The *ay* diphthong and its transformations in the linguistic tradition of Jews in Southwestern France: we have found evidence of the pronunciation *ayi* as well as *aye* or *a'e* alongside the common *ay* pronunciation. Evidence of these pronunciations is found in ancient documents, especially from Italian communities.

b. Syncopation of final consonants such as *talet* > *tale*: this phenomenon is evident especially from when these communities still spoke Spanish, although it has several traces in the French-speaking era as well. The roots of this phenomenon stem from the time when these communities lived in Spain.

c. Loss of gemination: under Spanish influence gemination was lost in the Hebrew linguistic tradition of the Jewish communities in Southwestern France. They used to pronounce a word like *שַׁבָּת* as *sabat*. The word was pronounced *šabat* without gemination also during the French era. Even when they wrote two letters instead of the geminated consonant (for instance *šabbat*) this did not indicate that the consonant had been geminated. Nevertheless, there are signs of geminate *r* under the influence of Spanish since Spanish recognizes two phonemes: both *r* and *rr*. Yet, in order to indicate the gemination of this consonant, it was written three times, e.g., *rrrachang* (= *רַשְׁרַח*).

d. The French era witnessed the creation of a new phenomenon, namely, that words accentuated with penultimate stress in Hebrew lost their final syllable. For example, *léxem*/*לֶחֶם* was pronounced *lex* and *páxad*/*פָּחַד* was pronounced *pax*. The fact that only ultimate stress is used in French brought about the omission of the final non-accentuated syllable in Hebrew words.

In sum: we have attempted to classify the linguistic phenomena in chronological order – those that arose in a period of relative antiquity as opposed to the phenomenon of final syllable omission, which occurred only in the period when French was spoken.

Amos Dodi

The Weak Verbs in Post-Biblical Aramaic in Pre-Expulsion Sefardic *Maḥzorim*

This article deals mainly with Babylonian Aramaic, describing the formation of Aramaic weak verbs in the reading traditions of the Jews in Spain, Provence, Portugal, and North Africa. Our research is based on 30 manuscripts of vocalized prayer-books from the 13th to the 15th century.

The study of the verbs in Talmudic texts found in Sefardic *maḥzorim* broadens our knowledge of the grammar of Babylonian Aramaic. Our research reveals some weak verb forms with parallel examples in the following sources: Geniza fragments of the Babylonian Talmud, post-Talmudic sources, and Babylonian Aramaic of the Yemenite tradition. However, in post-Talmudic texts some forms were found to be typical of Targumic Aramaic, while others were typical of Babylonian Aramaic.

Hanna Kahan-Edelman

prepared for publication by Mordechai Mishor

The Hebrew Component in the Languages of the Youth Movements in the Diaspora

Besides the Hebrew lexicon existing in Jewish vernaculars, a considerable number of Hebrew words and expressions are found in modern Jewish frameworks where the normal non-Jewish language of the

country is used. The writer conducted fieldwork in 1971 on the “Dror” movement in Buenos Aires. Most of the members of the movement had no Jewish education other than that they received in the movement, and no Jewish language was spoken in their homes. More than 200 words and expressions were attested. A technical, linguistic analysis was made. Despite some convergences with Jewish vernaculars, the present lexicon shows a different selection of pertinent concepts (including, for instance, scouting terms), and a high predisposition to Israeli Hebrew influence.

Ofer Livne-Kafri

A Note on Coptic and Judeo-Arabic on the Basis of a Bilingual Manuscript to the Pentateuch

This note suggests that the study of Christian-Arabic texts from Egypt in the light of Coptic might contribute to the understanding of certain phenomena in Judeo-Arabic in particular, and to Middle-Arabic in general. The writer presents some preliminary suggestions. The base text is the bilingual Coptic-Arabic version of the Pentateuch of MS Paris Copt. 1. This bilingual version evidences a need among the Copts in a time of linguistic transition for an Arabic translation alongside the traditional Coptic text. The Arabic version reveals the translator’s knowledge of the grammar of Classical Arabic, different phenomena of Middle Arabic, influences of Coptic (and of the Septuagint through Coptic), and most probably an acquaintance with Arabic translations of the Pentateuch translated directly from the Hebrew.

Tamar Zewi

Syntactic Questions in Sa'adia Gaon's Translation of the Pentateuch

The paper presents the contribution of the study of Sa'adia's translation to a better understanding of several Biblical Hebrew syntactic patterns, the characteristics of Sa'adia's Arabic according to the varied versions of its translation, and general syntactic topics. Regarding its contribution to the study of Biblical Hebrew, the paper demonstrates and discusses translation patterns for nominal clauses and structures containing a passive whose subject is initiated by an object preposition. As for its contribution to the study of Sa'adia's Arabic, the paper discusses nominal clause patterns and relative clauses. As to general syntactic questions, the paper deals with the possibility that a prepositional phrase functions as a subject. The discussion is based on two major printed versions, that of Derenbourg and of Hasid.

Gabriel M. Rosenbaum

Spoken Jewish Arabic in Modern Egypt: Hebrew and Non-Standard Components

The Arabic spoken by the Jews of Egypt in the twentieth century has been considered by dialectologists of Arabic as scarcely different from the dialects of non-Jews, as opposed to several non-Egyptian Judeo-Arabic

dialects which have definite characteristics of their own. This study demonstrates that the Arabic spoken by the Jews of Egypt, although not differing greatly from the Arabic spoken by non-Jews (Muslims and Copts), does contain numerous phonetic, morphological and lexical elements which do not exist in the non-Jewish dialects.

These differences justify defining the dialect spoken by the Jews of Egypt as “Spoken Jewish Egyptian Arabic”, a dialect which has to date received relatively little attention. Research on this dialect has so far concentrated mostly on an examination of written texts containing elements of Colloquial Arabic (usually combined with Standard Arabic), with only negligible efforts being made to work with informants speaking this dialect.

Some of the differences between the language of the Jews and that of the non-Jews are constant and do not depend on the communicative circumstances, while others appear only when Jews communicate among themselves. The constant differences are to be found mostly in the morphology, while those that appear in communication among Jews are mostly lexical as well as phonetic (as a result of the penetration of non-Arabic consonants into the lexicon). When Jews communicate with non-Jews they usually tend to refrain from using lexical elements which they identify as belonging to the lexicon of their special language (except in distinctly Jewish neighborhoods, in which the Jewish Egyptian dialect is used also when speaking with non-Jews, and except for those components of the lexicon which serve as a secret language).

The Jews of Egypt were not a homogeneous group. The two largest groups were the Rabbanite Jews, who were the majority, and the Karaite Jews. The Rabbanite group was composed of many sub-groups originating in different geographical and ethnic backgrounds, from east and west. A large part of the lexicon is common to both Rabbanite and Karaite Jews, but each group also uses lexical items that are uniquely its own.

The phonetic realization of the Arabic dialect by the Jews is to a large extent identical to that of the non-Jews. Those phonetic differences that do exist are mostly the result of the introduction of non-Arabic constituents into the spoken language.

Most of the morphological features that are typical of the Jews of Egypt have been described in the works of Haim Blanc. My findings confirm Blanc's description and conclusions, adding some more features to his.

The most prominent unique feature in the dialect of the Jews of Egypt, one that is described here in detail, is the lexicon. It contains words that are used only by Jews as well as words used by both Jews and non-Jews, but which in the language of the Jews have a different, or an additional meaning. The main body of vocabulary used exclusively by Jews consists of words of Hebrew origin, at times with modifications in either form or meaning. Other, more limited, foreign components come from Aramaic and some European languages, particularly French and Italian. An additional important component of the vocabulary of the Jews is Arabic words which are used in meanings different from in the non-Jewish language. It should be pointed out that, as happens also in other Judeo-Arabic dialects, Hebrew and other components are combined with the components of the local standard dialect resulting in combinations that are unique to Judeo-Arabic, even when their constituents are mostly Arabic. The creativity of the lexicon of Jewish Egyptian Arabic is mainly manifested in the invention of mixed expressions containing both Hebrew and non-Hebrew, usually Arabic, components. The morphological and syntactic structures of such expressions are those of Egyptian Arabic.

The lexicon of Spoken Jewish Egyptian Arabic includes, as do the lexicons of other Jewish languages, many words and expressions dealing with Jewish life, religious and secular, official and popular. This lexicon testifies, on the one hand, to the mutual cultural and linguistic ties among the Jewish communities of the Orient and, on the other hand, to its unique and independent nature when compared to the lexicons of other Jewish dialects. I hope that a comprehensive description of this dialect and its lexicon, on which I am working at the moment, will provide a more complete picture of Spoken Jewish Egyptian Arabic and the culture which it reflects.

Michael Ryzhik

The Language of the Fragments of the Mishnaic Literature
in the Italian *Mahzor* from Ortona, 1420,
MS Vatican Ebr. 545

The language of the fragments of the Mishnaic literature that are to be found in this *mahzor* is discussed. Some phonological traits (the vowel of the particle ψ , the vocalization of the diphthong *-ay*), morphological (the object suffixes with the feminine participle, the pausal and contextual forms of the *nif'al*, plural forms of the segolate nouns, the absolute forms of the nouns in place of the construct), and the forms of some personal names (נהמיה and חייח) are analyzed. The Mishnaic Hebrew seems to be homogenous in the different parts of the *mahzor* (according to the analyzed traits), but there are some minor differences between different fragments (even between the five chapters of *Pirke Avot* and its so-called sixth chapter). The language of the *mahzor* is very close to the Italian tradition (e.g., to the language of the Mishna MS Paris 328–329), but some traits are common to it and to the Babylonian and Ashkenazic traditions.

Yael Reshef

Between Hebrew and Italian: Derivation Mechanisms in the
Hebrew Component of the Judeo-Italian Dialect of Rome

Among the various dialects of Judeo-Italian, the dialect of Rome is the only regional variation still used to a certain extent in our days. The Hebrew-Aramaic component in this dialect, as in all Jewish languages,

can be divided into three main categories: (1) Hebrew-Aramaic elements used freely in the dialect in their original form; (2) Hebrew-Aramaic elements used exclusively in fixed expressions; (3) new forms created in the dialect from Hebrew-Aramaic bases through Italian means of derivation.

The paper concentrates on the third type of elements and examines the derivation of new forms in the dialect from Hebrew-Aramaic bases. The main categories discussed are: (1) nominal forms created through Italian affixes (e.g., *axlone* 'glutton', from the Hebrew root א-כ-ל 'eat' and the Italian augmentative suffix *-one*); (2) composite nouns (e.g., *perdizemanne* 'waste of time', from the Italian imperative of *perdere* 'lose' and the Hebrew noun *zeman* 'time'); (3) verbal forms created through Italian affixes (e.g., *gannaviare* 'steal', from Hebrew *gannav* 'thief' and the Italian verbal suffix *-are*); (4) verbal forms derived syntactically by an Italian auxiliary verb (e.g., *fare avone* 'to sin', from the Hebrew *avon* 'sin' and the Italian auxiliary verb *fare* 'do'). In addition, the number and gender inflexion of the Hebrew-Aramaic elements used in the dialect is discussed.

The last section of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the Italian influence on the derivation of new forms from Hebrew-Aramaic bases. It is argued that the main motivation for such derivation was the reflection of the semantic structure of Italian, rather than the need to express concepts belonging to the sphere of Jewish life.

Shimon Sharvit

Pronunciation of Some Liturgical Fragments from the Cairo Geniza

Ten liturgical fragments from the Cairo Geniza are published here for the first time accompanied with a study of their spelling and vocalization. Most of them were copied negligently (by boys? as an exercise?). It seems

that they were written orally or from dictation. and not copied from a written text. This can explain the many mistakes and the phonetic spelling. Seven of the fragments are unvocalized, two are vocalized, and one is written in Arabic script. All of them share the peculiar phenomenon of interchange of *qameṣ* and *ḥolam*, which is the main subject of this article. In the unvocalized fragments this interchange is reflected by the spelling: (a) omitting *waw* and (in many cases) using *alef* for the expected *ḥolam*, as in מדה [=מודה], פזמן [=פזמון], במקאמא [=במקומו], אחראן [=אחרון] (b) using *waw* (and sometimes *alef*) for the expected vowel *qameṣ* as in דובר [=דבר], סלחון [=סלחן], נבארך [=נברך], הועלום [=העולם].

In general these fragments are similar to the ten fragments which I have published previously. The main question is, in which of the three known systems of vocalizaion – Tiberian, Palestinian and Babylonian – did this process take place?

In most of the vocalized fragments the interchange of *segol/pataḥ* is also found, and this is known to be an exclusive feature of the Babylonian tradition of pronunciation (there is no *segol* in this system!). However, since the interchange of *qameṣ* and *ḥolam* is unattested in the Babylonian vocalized manuscripts, I am led to assume that these fragments reflect the pronunciation of those possessing a Babylonian background, or at least with some Babylonian substratum, who use the Tiberian vowel system and pronunciation.