

JEWISH ENGLISH

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It is basic to human social organization that whenever people are closely associated they develop special linguistic forms (planned innovations), special forms develop (unplanned innovations), or both. These forms, as well as the entire systems of which they are a part, have functional and symbolic uses.¹

A JL is a lect used by Jews and which provides an adequate organization of their Jewish experience. Yiddish and Judezmo, for example, are JLs because they express their Jewish users' experiences adequately, but Korean and Icelandic, as they exist today, would not be suitable for Jews with a significant Jewish experience. A JL is sometimes defined as a "lect with a Hebrew-Aramic component," but although such a component is characteristic of many JLs, not all lects which we want to call JLs have such a component (for example, certain varieties of JE, although they have items of *ultimate* HA origin, do not have items of *immediate* HA origin, hence do not have a HA component). A HA component is thus common, but not essential. Nor is use of the Jewish alphabet essential (though it is common too); JE, for example, has usually been written in the English alphabet.

This article is concerned with a cluster of lects whose common characteristics are: (1) their chief component is English, (2) they are used by Jews, and (3) each lect is an adequate expression of its users' Jewish experiences. Because of (3), then, these lects differ in various ways from non-JLs.

2. *Name*

Jewish English is the collective name for all lects meeting the foregoing

three requirements. The word *collective* is important because JE (like Yahudic) consists of lects not all of which can be taken back to a single protolect; rather, JE has many origins and has existed in many varieties. Indeed, it is impossible to write a single phonology or a single grammar of JE (even for any given time). One could not write a complete dictionary of it either, though a contrastive dictionary (listing only lexemes and senses absent or not normally or often used in non-JE) is feasible, especially if synchronic.

A major convenience of the name *Jewish English* is that it allows us to delimit a certain number of lects which can profitably be studied as a group. *Black English*, *Romani English*, and similar glottonyms offer the same advantage. The present article is concerned mostly with the lexicon since this is where the author has done most of his research till now. It should not be inferred, however, that JE differs from non-JE only in vocabulary (though some varieties of JE do differ only in this way). For most JE lects, there are phonological, grammatical, stylistic, and paralinguistic differences as well. Naturally, not every utterance by a Jew is necessarily an instance of JE, though it stands to reason that Jews whose *entire* life output of utterances has been only in non-JE must be Jews in name only.

Most laypeople who hear or see the term *Jewish English* think of Eastern Ashkenazic English, that is, JE whose substratum is Eastern Yiddish (just as when most laypeople hear or see the word *Yiddish* they think of Eastern Yiddish). Although it is true that EAE is now the majority variety of JE (hence lay identification of the two [and, for the same reason, of EY and Yiddish]) and that most other varieties of JE are now obsolescent (so that in time EAE and JE will probably become virtually coterminous), there have been other varieties of JE, some of which are still used and lexical items from a few of which will in all probability continue to be used in the future. In any case, a nuanced terminology is needed (Gold in press).

The major communal division in JE is between Ashkenazic and non-Ashkenazic varieties, the major non-Ashkenazic variety being Sefardic English. AE is divided into EAE (defined above) and WAE (whose prelects are Western Yiddish, Western Ashkenazic German, and Western Ashkenazic Dutch). There is a newer Sefardic English, whose users were born or descend from people born in the Ottoman Empire and its successor states, as well as an older Sefardic English, whose users are of other origins. There is spatial variation in JE (as between British Eastern Ashkenazic English and American Eastern Ashkenazic English), chronological variation (as between older and newer American JE), doctrinal variation (as between Orthodox and non-Orthodox JE or between Con-

¹ The following abbreviations are used in this article: *AAE* 'American Ashkenazic English', *AE* 'Ashkenazic English', *AEAE* 'American Eastern Ashkenazic English', *AJE* 'American Jewish English', *AWAE* 'American Western Ashkenazic English', *BAE* 'British Ashkenazic English', *BJE* 'British Jewish English', *AEA* 'Eastern Ashkenazic English', *EY* 'Eastern Yiddish', *HA* 'Hebrew-Aramic', *JE* 'Jewish English', *JL* 'Jewish lect / language', *WAE* 'Western Ashkenazic English' and *WY* 'Western Yiddish'.

servative and Reform JE), and stylistic variation (as between formal and nonformal varieties). All of these (and other) parameters often intersect, so that JE consists of at least several dozen varieties. Were there space, I would try to describe at least the most important ones.

3. *Why Jewish Varieties of English*

The reasons why there are Jewish varieties of English are the same as for many other JLS. Without trying to rank the factors in order of importance (though they could certainly be so arranged, in different ways, with respect to specific varieties of JE), we find, firstly, the need to express Jewish experience (for example, only Jews, or mostly Jews, find occasion to speak of *Shabes clocks*, *yortsayt calendars*, *going on aliya*, *Stars of David*, *Sabbath candles*, *sitting shive*, *yortsayt lamps* [also called *memorial candles* in a more elevated style], *mandl bread*, *egg kikkleh*, *matse-meal*, *meldados*, *bedecking the bride*, and *the Gentlemen of the Mahamad*). To the extent that non-Jews have need for such lexemes, they will pass into non-JE (of those given in the previous sentence, perhaps only *Star of David* and *go on aliya* are recognized by today's average educated non-Jewish anglophone) or non-Jews will find other ways of expressing themselves. By the same token, certain users of JE lect *x* recognize (or use) varying portions of JE lect *y*: few non-Sefaradim can tell a *meldado* from a *mahamad* and few Jews other than Western Ashkenazim would know what to reply to "Have you already geomered?"

A second reason is the influence of other languages. People, as they get older, find it ever harder to acquire a native grasp of another language, hence features of other languages one knows may influence the newly acquired one. One may be conscious or not of these influences, try or not try to remove them, and succeed or fail in trying to remove them. In certain cases, one may consciously try to *retain* features from other languages (see the quotation from Breslauer 1973 below) in order to impart a more Jewish character to the newly acquired language. Languages which continue to be used in one way or another after another language has been acquired are archistratal languages. For many Jewish groups in anglophone countries, HA is an archistratal language (though for others it plays little or no role whatsoever); for a smaller number of groups, Yiddish and HA are archistratal languages; and for an even smaller number, Yiddish but not HA is an archistratal language. Archistratal languages continue to be potential sources of influence on the English of Jews, whereas prelanguages, by definition, cease being sources of new influences as soon as they are no longer passively known (passive knowledge almost always lingers on for a while after active knowledge has ceased).

The influence of an archistratal language may or may not be present in the speech of those (whether Jewish or not) for whom it is only a prelanguage or for whom it has never been even a prelanguage. For example, *They're oyver-bott* 'They're senile' contains a word (variously pronounced) which only Eastern-Yiddish-speaking Jews may use in English; one might hear it, on occasion, from people whose parents knew Yiddish but who themselves do not (i.e., from those who are the first generation for whom Yiddish is a prelanguage), but one does not find it in the English of *their* children, and certainly not in the English of non-Eastern-Ashkenazic Jews or non-Jews. On the other hand, American Western Ashkenazic English *kosher* (with [ow]) has been adopted not only by Eastern Ashkenazim, but also by Sefaradim (despite the efforts of a few patriotic Sefardic Jews to popularize *kasher*), and by growing numbers of non-Jews in the United States to the point that the word should at least be recognized by the average educated speaker of American English. In Britain there has been a different development: Northeastern-Yiddish-origin *kosher* (with [ɔ]) has become universal in BAE, has been adopted by virtually all Sefardic Jews (again, a few patriots hold out for *kasher*), and is known to growing numbers of non-Jews, though proportionally fewer than those Americans who know *kosher*. To round out the picture, let it be added that in Argentine Jewish English it is the Southern Yiddish form which has become universal (spelled *cúsher* in Spanish) and for today's Jewish French there is more than one form (see *Jewish Language Review* 2 [1982]: 164).

Each item of JE therefore has a certain currency from the individual, generational, chronological, geographical, Jewish communal, and non-Jewish viewpoints. For example, *laugh with lizards* 'laugh with tears' is only a sporadic idiolectalism in the English of certain native speakers of Eastern Yiddish, whereas *paintner* 'painter', *carpintner* 'carpenter' and *lightning* 'lighting' (as in *lightning the candles*) were common in the English of EY-speakers who went to the United States between c1880 and c1940 (they can sometimes be heard even today). These three pronunciations, however, are not found beyond the immigrant generation, except, perhaps, if contact with non-JE is weak or absent entirely. Needless to say, others do not pick up these usages.

There are patterns which are quite regular though ephemeral and others which are just as regular but seemingly permanent. For example, pronunciation of English *circle*, *nervous*, *first*, *third*, etc. with Yiddish-origin /oj/ (conventionally represented in English by *oy*), quite common in certain varieties of immigrant EAE (e.g., in New York City, but not, apparently, in Montreal), does not survive in the speech of those who know English well, whereas an AE pattern which is universal and shows every

sign of becoming permanent is encapsulated in the following rule: to integrate Yiddish verbs in AE, drop the Yiddish infinitive ending (in any of its allomorphic shapes: *-n*, *-en*, or *-e-en*). Thus, Yiddish *bentshn*, *shlep'n*, *shepn*, *kvetshn*, *kveln*, *dav(e)nen*, and *paskenen* become AE *bentsh*, *shlep*, *shep* (as in *shep nakhes*), *kvetsh*, *kvel*, *davn*, and *paskn* (as in *paskn a shayle*).

As an example of chronological change we may take *go on aliya* (used in American JE in the 1940s and 1950s) / *come on aliya* (used by anglophones in the Land of Israel at about the same time) vs. current JE (both in the Land of Israel and elsewhere) *make aliya*. The change began, it seems, in the 1960s (can anyone supply frequencies?) and for reasons unknown. Today, only *make aliya* is used. An instance of spatial variation has already been given (current AJE and BJE pronunciations of *kosher*) and here is another one: both AAE and BAE now use Western- and Northeastern Yiddish-origin *frum* as an adjective applied to a devout Jew (AAE also has the pejorative noun-adjective *frummy*), but the two differ when a more formal, less "Jewish" variant is needed: BAE uses *particular* (e.g., "My parents are very particular") and AAE (as AJE in general) has *observant* and *religious*. These words, of course, have other, general English meanings, which Jews use too.

One of the many communal differences in AE can be seen in WAE *omer* 'count the forty-nine days from the second day of Passover to the Feast of Weeks' (e.g., *Have you already geomered?* or *Did you omer today?*, the former retaining Yiddish and German *ge-*) vs. EAE *tseyl sfire*, *tseyl*, *count sfire* 'idem'. This difference reflects an analogous one in Yiddish: WY *ömern* vs. EY *tseyn sfire* (the two verbs have thus been integrated according to the rule given above; *tseyl* is a shortening of *tseyl sfire* and *count sfire* is a partial loan translation).

A third reason for the emergence and development of JE is the unacceptability of certain English items which have un-Jewish connotations. Jews thus prefer *given name* or *first name* and avoid *Christian name* and *baptismal name* in self-reference. The degree of avoidance depends on the extent to which one realizes their un-Jewish connotations and the degree to which one feels they are inappropriate for Jews to use. Thus, certain Jews avoid *BC* and *AD* (using JE *BCE* 'before the Common Era' and *CE* 'Common Era' instead) because these forms are still felt to have Christian connotations, but one has to have special knowledge to know that *at the eleventh hour* is based on the New Testament and that *Touch wood!* / *Knock on wood!* refer to the wood of the Cross, i.e., today these three items are not marked [+ Christian] though they once were.² Certain Jews avoid *Gee!*

² *Touch wood!* (whence Israeli Hebrew *tatsh-vud!*) is British English and *Knock on wood!* is American English. A literal translation of *at the eleventh hour* is occasionally used in Israeli Hebrew (*bashaa haachat-esre*) but only by people who know English at least fairly well.

because they know it is a euphemism for *Jesus!* and many more avoid *the gospel truth*, whose connotations are clear. Many prefer *Shabes* or *Shabat* to *Saturday*, not because they realize the former un-Jewish connections of this word (indeed, no Jews avoid the other general English names of the week) but because *Shabes* and *Shabat* sound more Jewish. Many Jews feel uncomfortable when they find the names of recently deceased Jews followed by a cross in non-Jewish learned publications and the like. As we have seen, JE substitutes for avoided items are either other general English items (*given name*) or JE coinages (*CE* and *BCE*).

Lects may thus be defined negatively as well as positively (similarly: Protestant vs. Catholic English in Ulster / Northern Ireland; and Muslim, Christian, and Druze Arabic in various areas). It goes without saying that Jews do not use ethnophaulisms like *Hebe*, *Mockey*, *Kike*, and *Yid* (though Yiddish has at least five pejorative words for 'Jew' [*yidl*, *yudak*, *yidlik*, *yidl(y)ak*, and *yidltshine*] and Hebrew has at least one [*yehudon*, calqued on Yid. *yidl*]; note too that *Nigger*, though contemptuous in White-to-Black or White-to-White English, is affectionate in Black-to-Black English).

A fourth factor has to do with matrimonial, residential, occupational, and social preferences. To the extent that such preferences lead to denser communication networks between Jews than between Jews and non-Jews, (a) non-JE as a possible corrective to JE will be weaker and (b) Jewish life will probably be more distinctive (hence the first factor will be more important) and the greater the likelihood that archistratal languages will continue in use (= the second factor). Linguistic distinctiveness thus mirrors distinctiveness in other spheres, though the fact that Jews can usually style-shift, with varying degrees of success, allows them to function in more than one setting if they so choose to (sociolinguistics has fortunately exploded the Bloomfieldian myth, popularized by Chomsky, of an "ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community"). One can style-shift in order to be more cryptic (e.g. "Careful! The orl is meynv-kol-diber, so don't daber too loud") or to be less cryptic to users of general English (e.g., "In what shul does your zeydi davn on Shabes?" [a perfectly normal sentence for many speakers of EAE] might become "What synagog does your grandfather attend on Saturdays?" or, in elevated style, "At what synagog does your grandfather worship on the Sabbath?"). JE thus has its own norms of appropriateness ("From this the rebi learns out the din that on Shabes and Yon-tef you need a heter in order to..." is appropriate at Yeshiva University but not at New York City's Temple Emmanuel [a posh Reform temple] or Kehila Kedosha Janina [though an Orthodox synagog, all its members descend from a once Yevanic-speaking community in Greece, hence would not

understand much of AE]). Style-shifting, of course, requires a knowledge of what should be replaced by what (see below on the failure to replace *shisl*); it is easiest to switch at the lexical level, harder at the syntactic level, and hardest at the phonological (especially allophonic) level.

4. The Calibration of Jewish English on Non-Jewish English

General English is the most important determinant of JE and its Jewish determinants vary according to the subject in question. The components drawn from these determinants, as in all JLEs, are fused to varying degrees (it is therefore wrong to call the components "elements"); we find partial translations like *mandl bread*, *egg kikhl*, and *matse meal* (from EY *mandlbroyt*, *eyer-kikhl*, and *matse-mel*), full translations like *need s.th. / s.b. like a hole in the head* (from EY *darfn epes / emetsn vi a lokh in kop*) and *remind oneself* (as in "Yesterday I reminded myself that Wednesday's yon-tef," from EY *dermonen zikh* 'remember, recall'), loans which are either optionally or obligatorily integrated grammatically, like *shtetl* and *nudnik* (the JE plurals are *shtetls* / *shtetlekh* [Yiddish has only the latter, hence the former is a JE innovation] and *nudniks* [Yiddish has only *nudnikes*, hence JE *nudniks* is an innovation]), English words which have acquired special meanings in JE because of like-sounding Yiddish words (e.g., *canary* 'hex', as in *give s.b. a canary* [cf. EY *keynehore* and *gebn emetsn a nehore*] and *bedeck* 'veil', as in *bedeck the bride* [cf. EY *badekn di kale*]), general English words which have become the conventional equivalents of certain Yiddish words, e.g., *affair*, which has acquired the meaning of EY *simkhe* (as in "I'm going to a really big affair next week—my cousins' fortieth wedding anniversary") and *aggravation*, which has acquired the meaning of EY *agmes-nefesh* (as in "Aggravation like this I've never had from them before"), clipped forms (e.g., EY *shlumper* and *byalestoker pletsl* become *shlump* and *byali* in JE, with *shlump* acquiring a new meaning, absent in *shlumper* [interestingly, Hebrew keeps the form and meaning of EY *shlumper*]), Yiddish-origin words with new meanings, e.g., Yiddish *mezuze* refers to something affixed to a doorpost, but its AE reflex, *mezuze*, refers, in addition, to something which some Jews, in imitation of the Christian custom of wearing crosses, hang on a chain around their neck, and there are JE lexemes without etymons in any other language (e.g., *make aliya*, *Jewish star*, and *Hebrew school*). This typology of JE lexemes is by no means exhaustive but even this cursory glance shows us that one cannot often divide JE into neat, unfused elements.

An aspect of the fusion nature of JE is calibration, which may be conscious or unconscious. As an example of the former we will take various JE sequences containing the words *Chanuka* or *Passover* culled from *The*

Metropolitan Star (issued by B'nai B'rith in New York City), the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, and various other Jewish publications, all from the 1970s: *the Chanuka season*, *Chanuka vacation* ("Chanuka vacation begins on..."), *Chanuka Week* ("We're open late all during Chanuka Week"), *Chanuka party*, *Chanuka ball*, *Chanuka costume party*, *Chanuka dinner-dance*, *Chanuka dinner-dance benefit*, *annual Chanuka luncheon*, *Chanuka pageant*, *Chanuka card*, *Chanuka decorations*, *Chanuka gift*, *Chanuka present*, *the ideal Chanuka gift*, *the perfect gift for Chanuka*, *gift-wrapped for Chanuka*, *gift-wrapped in a beautiful Chanuka wrapping*, *Chanuka decorations*, *Do your Chanuka shopping early*, *Chanuka greetings* ("Sincerest Chanuka Greetings," "Cordial Chanuka Greetings"), *May the Chanuka Festival Bring Abundant Blessings of Health and Happiness to All People of Good Will*, *Chanuka cheer* ("Let's bring Chanuka food and cheer to needy families everywhere"), *Chanuka food baskets* (for the needy), *Dial-A-Chanuka-Story* (available in New York City between December 4 and 12, 1977, if not in other years too), *Chanuka bingo* (? in *The Metropolitan Star* for April 1973, p. 24), *traditional Chanuka latkes with all the trimmings*, *a Passover cruise to the Bahamas*, and *B'nai Brith Passover tour to opulent Israel*.

These expressions tell us something about how the Feast of Lights is celebrated by certain American Jews. In Eastern Ashkenaz (= the Old Country for the great majority of today's American Jews), Chanuka was a minor holiday (not even a festival in the JE sense of this word) with five or six components: candles were kindled; certain prayers were recited in the liturgy; children received modest gifts of candy and small amounts of money; children played games with a special spinning top; latkes were eaten; and special songs may have been sung. Whereas ultra-Orthodox Jews in the United States continue to celebrate the holiday in this way, other Jews, feeling that they must be able to show themselves, their children, and perhaps non-Jews as well that "we too" have a holiday as important as Christmas (which falls at about the same time as Chanuka), have Americanized (?) / Christianized (?) it to varying degrees by partly calibrating it with Christmas. Thus, Chanuka cards = Christmas cards, Chanuka decorations = Christmas decorations, Chanuka gift (which is far more expensive than the candy and few pennies traditionally given) = Christmas gift, etc. *Do your Chanuka shopping early* echoes *Do your Christmas shopping early*, *gift-wrapped for Chanuka* echoes *gift-wrapped for Christmas*, *people of good will* echoes *men of good will*, etc. (*traditional Chanuka latkes with all the trimmings* echoes Thanksgiving: *traditional Thanksgiving turkey with all the trimmings*). Significantly, far fewer innovative expressions with *Passover* were found in these publications: since this is traditionally a major Jewish holiday, it seems that Jews have felt less need to peg it to Easter (which falls at about the same time) than they have the Feast of Lights to Christ-

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mas (though Passover has, nonetheless, been changed in certain ways, to varying degrees, in the United States too).

It is noteworthy that about five November-December issues of *The Jewish Observer* from the 1970s (issued by ultra-Orthodox Jews) contained no innovative expressions referring to the Feast of Lights and the issues appearing before Passover had only the innovative *Passover tour to Israel*, which is Americanized only in form, since Passover is one of the three holidays during which traditional Jews endeavor to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Ultra-Orthodox Jewry, therefore, is far less concerned than certain other Jews about keeping up with the Joneses at Christmas time, though certainly no one will argue against some of the innovations (Chanuka stories, food baskets for the needy, pageants, and greetings). Two other relevant expressions are *Chanuka Club* (coined by non-Jewish bankers to attract Jewish patrons to their Christmas Clubs) and the probably now obsolete *Chanuka bush* (some highly Americanized Jews used to have such bushes, the equivalent of Christmas trees).

The foregoing expressions with *Chanuka* and *Passover* are conscious or semiconscious calibrations. Had one recorded only the single words *Chanuka* and *Passover* from these publications, one could not have read any cultural history into them; it is therefore important to collect units larger than the orthographic word.

Besides (semi)conscious calibrations, there are also unconscious ones in JE. Yiddish *khutspe* 'unmitigated gall, hubris' denotes only a negative quality, but under the influence of general English *nerve*, which has both positive and negative meanings ("Only you would have the nerve to do something like that," for example, can be a compliment or a criticism), AAE *khutspe* has acquired a positive meaning too ("Only you would have the *khutspe* to do something like that" is ambiguous out of context) and it is with both of these meanings that the word has been passing into other varieties of English.

The correct etymological chain for *khutspe* is therefore Hebrew > Yiddish > Ashkenazic English > general English (and one could be even more specific since the stressed vowel of this word shows that Southern Yiddish is irrelevant). At first blush, it seems curious that general English dictionaries, which have for some time been accustomed to using specific glottonyms like *Canadian French*, *Mexican Spanish*, *Brazilian Portuguese*, and *Moroccan Arabic* in their etymologies (and some have begun recognizing *Black English*), almost never specify the variety of Yiddish if relevant and do not recognize at all Jewish English (or whatever variety is relevant) in their etymologies. On second thought, we realize that these omissions are easily explained: English etymologists are unacquainted with Yiddish in its many varieties and there is little if any awareness that Yiddish has

not influenced general English directly, hence they omit the missing link, Jewish English, which has often been the locus where important changes have taken place (see above on the meanings of *khutspe* and below on those of *farblondzhet*). That there is indeed such a link is shown by outer linguistic history too: native and primary Yiddish-speakers have been too strong in their language to modify the meaning of *khutspe* under the influence of *nerve*, but those descendants stronger in English than in Yiddish are precisely the ones who could let the English word influence them. Furthermore, speakers of general English (mostly, if not all, non-Jews) do not have much contact with native and primary Yiddishophones but they are likely to have closer ties with descendants stronger in English than in Yiddish. It is significant that Israeli Hebrew *khutspe* is used only negatively, *nerve* having had (till now at least) no influence here.

We see a similar, though not identical, case of unconscious calibration in *farblondzhet*. The Yiddish word means only 'lost' in a physical sense (as in *tsrik tsu vegs zenen mir farblondzhet gevorn* 'we got lost on the way back'). If native Yiddish-speakers use this word in English, it is in its Yiddish sense, but among AEAE-speakers who do not know Yiddish (or know it well) the word is being used more and more only in a figurative sense: 'lost, confused, bewildered, mixed-up'. Calibration with English *lost* has led to this semantic innovation: if *farblondzhet* = *lost* (physically) and *lost* is also 'confused, etc.', then *farblondzhet* = *lost* 'confused, etc.'. The differences between this word and *khutspe* are that the latter is passing into non-EA varieties of JE and non-JE whereas *farblondzhet* is limited to the English of Eastern-Yiddishophones and their descendants; and *khutspe* has not lost its Yiddish meaning whereas *farblondzhet* has (though there must have been a time when both cooccurred in EAE); see Gold in press.

5. Awareness of Jewish English

The degree to which Jews and non-Jews recognize features of JE depends, naturally, on their *sprachgefühl* and on the degree to which these features do not conform to non-JE norms. A sensitive non-Jewish linguist like Dwight Bolinger did not realize that *need something / someone like a hole in the head* is of EY origin (see *Jewish Language Review* 2 [1982]: 113), presumably because it consists entirely of general English words arranged according to general English syntax and for an increasing number of anglophones this expression is no longer ethnically marked (just as originally Black English *up-tight*, for instance, is no longer so marked). The chief reason this expression is catching on is that it fills a lexical gap: older English had *need something / someone like a dog does a sidepocket* (Francis Grose's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* [1788] has "to need a wife

as a dog does a side-pocket”), but in today’s general English there is no equivalent.

Ronald Butters, editor of *American Speech* and, like Bolinger, not Jewish, passed “This word is an English creation” in an article submitted to him, even though *creation* ‘coinage’ is a Yiddishism (Yid. *shafung* ‘coinage’ is derived from *shafn* ‘create; coin’). How Jews and non-Jews may react to the same etic phenomena is a vast field on which some research has been done (see, for example, Anisfeld et al. 1962). In Gold 1974 I noted that many varieties of New York City English have either /n/ (often stigmatized as “substandard” there) or /ŋg/ (much less stigmatized) in present participles (where standard English requires /ŋ/), on which the editor of *American Speech* (John Algeo, non-Jewish and not from New York City) commented: “to other persons /n/ seems perfectly standard, albeit informal, but /ŋg/ in participles is very exotic indeed. Autres pays, autres mœurs” (p. 160). Richard E. Wood also expressed surprise at my claim but after meeting some ex-New-York-City Jews at a New Hampshire synagog he wrote me that he had heard this “clicked g” (/ŋg/) from these Jews, “all of whom were certainly educated.” The presence of /ŋg/ in the English of certain Jewish New-York-Cityites is due to Yiddish influence (it is heard in words like *song*, *Long Island*, and *wrongfully* too, indeed wherever standard English has /ŋ/ spelled *ng*) and is not considered odd (it is usually not even noticed by them) because they have sucked it in with their mother’s milk (just as a Southern accent is not noticed in the southern United States and a Yankee accent goes unnoticed in northern states).

Sometimes a JE item may be recognized as not conforming to general English patterns yet is mislabeled. For example, the reviewer of an expensive book complained about someone’s bad English: “Every reader will no doubt locate his own favorite non-sentence from the rich materials provided by [this] article (and for \$42, he should be entitled, as they say in New York” (Miller 1972: 140). Absolute use of *entitled* (without *to* + NP or VP) is of EY origin, namely a nonliteral translation of absolute *hobn a rekht*; it was once limited to EAE but is occasionally found in non-JE too. Since New-York-Cityites one may meet outside the city are often Jews (specifically Eastern Askenazim), Miller mistook a largely EAE usage (not limited to New York City) for a general New York City one.

Both Jewish and non-Jewish misperception is seen in the following incident: around 1962, a New-York-City-born Eastern Ashkenazi whose parents are native Yiddishophones born in the Russian Empire, while a freshman at Georgetown University, asked his non-Jewish roommate (who had never been to New York City and had had little contact with Jews) whether he could borrow a *shisl* so that he could do his laundry.

The roommate said he did not understand “those New York City words” (namely *shisl*) and the Jew was suprised to learn that this was not a general English word. Little did either know that *shisl* (which designates a basin for wash) is limited to EAE, i.e., that it is ethnolectally and not topolectally marked. The Jew was suprised to learn that *shisl* was of Yiddish origin, because, as he told me, “it sounds so English.” Indeed, it is phonotactically integrated (cf. *missal*, *whistle*, *thistle*, and, in American English, *missile*), thus containing no non-English phonemes or phoneme sequences, and it is grammatically integrated into EAE too: its plural is *shisls* (with /z/). Had its Yiddish plural (*shislen*) been retained in EAE, it would not be so well integrated grammatically because this no longer productive pattern is now limited, in general English, to *ox*. And it is also easy to see how non-JE did not act as a corrective here: though linguistically sensitive to differences between JE and non-JE, the Jew had never had occasion to speak of such basins outside his home, hence was never corrected before or never heard non-Jews designate the object in question. With its large Jewish population, it is easy for Jews in New York City to maintain dense communication networks with one another (and even advance considerably up to social, economic, and cultural ladders) without much contact, if one so chooses, with non-Jews (far easier, say, than in New Orleans or Honolulu), hence, from the geographic viewpoint, today’s JE is most distinctive, on the whole, in New York City. By the same token, JE influence on non-JE has been heaviest in New York City and even in the *New York Times* one finds EY-origin patterns exemplified by *Great art it isn’t* or *This is coffee!?*.

Many people are unconsciously or semiconsciously aware of JE, specifically EAE (“My neighbors have a Jewish accent”), but it is not a recognized variety of English among laypeople in that it has an established name (*Jewish English* and other glottonyms used in this article are still only part of the linguist’s terminological repertoire), in that its users would spontaneously respond *Jewish English*, etc. in a census or other survey, in that a significant number of its users are proud users, or in that it is taught. Rather, for most laypeople, varieties of JE far from non-JE are seen merely as the result of interference from a prelanguage or archistratal language (“a heavy accent”) and the varieties differing only in vocabulary are considered to be ordinary varieties of English whose special lexical usages are analogous to those which any group (like lawyers, carpenters, or stock brokers) have. The latter opinion is a defensible one.

A public call for the cultivation of JE has been made only once to my knowledge: “The class vocabulary should include words standard in normal Jewish conversation and their use is to be encouraged. Although

students should know how to refer to these items in English, the norm should be *Motzaei Shabbos*—not Saturday night, *daven*—not pray, *bentsch*—not recite *Grace After Meals*, *Yom Tov*—not holiday... Respect should be accorded to the ideal of *sheim shomayim shogur beficho* ‘the name of G-d habitually on your lips’ (as exemplified in *Bereishis* 24:7, 27:21–39:3): *im yirtze Hashem, boruch Hashem, be’ezras Hashem, Ribono Shel Olom* should be encouraged along with such other standard Jewish exclamations as *ni-fla’os haBorei* (wonders of the Creator), *gam zu letovah* (this is also for the better), and *b’li neder* (without promising) whenever they apply... Compositions and reports... can include specific Jewish topics as well as general topics, and in such cases writing with the interpolation of Hebrew words would be encouraged... These and a host of other similar innovations and applications can do much to make the entire day spent in yeshiva of one fabric—Jewish in thought, speech, and deed” (Breslauer 1973: 13–14). These passages elicited one letter to the editor: after agreeing with Breslauer, M. Ferber asked “What about Jewish names? Why should Meir become Michael with the advent of the afternoon [when students turn from Jewish to non-Jewish studies, D.L.G.]? Should Chaya be called Claire just because she is now under the direction of her American History teacher and not her *Chumash* or Jewish History *Moroh*? Bnei Yisroel were redeemed from Egypt, in part, due to their unwillingness to yield their Yiddish names. This was seen as a preservation of their Jewishness” (Ferber 1973).

The foregoing passages are a good example of current Eastern Ashkenazic Orthodox English, of which *The Jewish Observer* is full. This is the variety of JE which is now most different from non-JE. Breslauer takes JE for granted (“words standard in normal Jewish conversation”), which he contrasts with “English” (i.e., non-JE). He follows the custom widespread among religious Jewish anglophones of abbreviating the word *God* (this custom is based on an interpretation of the Third Commandment) and uses one expression of Yiddish and Hebrew origin which could easily pass for general English: *of one fabric* translates Yid. *meor-ekhed* / Heb. *meor echad* (literally ‘of one skin’). The construction *in yeshiva* follows a general English pattern (cf. *in school*), not a Yiddish or Hebrew one (cf. Yid. *in der yeshive*, Heb. *bayshiva*, both with the definite article).

Let us contrast the preceding with two passages from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In 1888, Marcus Jastrow, a founder of Conservative Judaism and fluent in three Jewish languages (Yiddish, Hebrew and Aramaic) wrote that “our religious institutions, our worship, our sacred language, all that distinguishes us from others, these are the tools, the armaments, wherewith we have yet to work [to fulfil Israel’s vision]” (apud Davis 1963: 462–463), thus passing over in silence

the question of a distinctive everyday spoken and written language. Bernard Drachman, another founder, was even more specific fourteen years later: “[Jewish] teachers should be... masters of a pure English” (apud Davis 1963: 248). This attitude was in full accord with a tenet of the Jewish Enlightenment, which held that for nonsacred purposes (e.g., aside from the liturgy), the speech and writing of Jews should be no different from that of non-Jews. Granted that it is merely a convention to prize certain differences and not others (after all, Jews could decide to use only a certain color of toothpaste or never to open umbrellas on Tuesdays), one still cannot prevent the emergence of an at least minimally different JL if Jewish life is to be at least minimally distinctive (see above on *Shabes clock*, etc.). Indeed, Jastrow’s *Sabbath and festivals* is a conventional JE idiom, translating Hebrew *shabatot veyamim tovim* / Yiddish *shabosim un yon-toyvim* (Drachman’s *a pure English* is a Germanism or Yiddishism since these languages, but not English, use the indefinite article here). Although they consciously opposed Yiddish or any other form of “Jewish jargon,” the Enlighteners (whether in Germany, the Netherlands, the United States or elsewhere) implicitly realized that at least some special terminology was needed when they coined such items as *return the Scrolls of the Law to the Holy Ark* and *Feast of Weeks*.

6. Formal Jewish English

(Semi)conscious calibration on general English is not the only kind of (semi)planned innovation in JE. They have also been efforts, many more in earlier decades than recently, to create a formal variety of JE whose goal was to replace items of Hebrew, Yiddish, Judezmo, etc. origin, which sounded too “ethnic.” The roots of these efforts are in the Jewish Enlightenment in Germany (later imitated in the Netherlands too), where attempts were made to replace Yiddish-origin religious terminology by neologisms forged of German-origin elements, e.g., *Laubhüttenfest* ‘Feast of Weeks’ and *Damenloge* ‘women’s section [of the synagogue]’ (see *Jewish Language Review* 3 for details). Examples of how these efforts were echoed in the United States have been given in the previous paragraph. We also find the adoption of Christian terminology (*a Jewish minister, the Reverend A. P. Mendes, the Reverend ministers Morais and Chumaceiro, publish a ban against...*) as well as a general attempt to coin terms that would be understandable to all (*religious address* or *religious discourse* [= Yid. *droshe* / Heb. *derasha*], *ritual slaughterer, Day of Atonement, Penitential Days*, etc.).

The fate of this terminology has been diverse. In general, to the extent that the speaker or writer is distant from ultra-Orthodox Judaism, it is more frequent, as it is to the extent that a more formal or elevated style

is desired. Some terms sound more formal than others (*Feast of Booths*, to my ear, is more formal than *Day of Atonement*; *skullcap* is more formal than *cantor*) and some sound pretentious or corny (like *ritualarium* [a pseudo-Latinism modeled on *solarium* and *natatorium*], though one might use *ritual pool* or *ritual bath* in formal discourse or in addressing non-Jews [the normal JE term is now Yiddish-origin initially stressed *mikve*]). Some items survive only in print, such as when some Passover Hagodes bid us to *lave*, i.e., 'wash one's hands'. Rabbis speaking "from the podium" at Reform or posh synagogues are often fond of this formal terminology (much like the preference of certain Black preachers and ministers for the orotund and the sesquipedalian). An interesting linguistic change took place at New York City's Shearith Israel (the Sefardic equivalent of the posh Temple Emmanuel) in the 1970s. Since 1907 this synagogue had had a London-born native anglophone rabbi (David De Sola Pool), who, the scion of an old English Sefardic family reared in the stiff tradition of late-Victorian and early-Edwardian middle-class England, insisted on such usages as *the Reverend Dr. De Sola Pool* even since assuming his ministry at Shearith Israel (which had been using such terminology anyway in the nineteenth century). When he gradually retired in the 1970s, his successors were an Eastern Ashkenazic rabbi and the American-born grandson of Sefardic Jews from Rhodes, who (especially the latter) felt uncomfortable with titles like *Senior Minister* and *Minister* (assigned to each of them respectively), as well as *the Reverend...* Today, *Minister* and *Senior Minister* continue to be used in this synagogue's paid advertisements in the *New York Times*, but around 1974, the Minister, officially *the Reverend Angel*, privately asked to be addressed as *Rabbi Angel*.

7. The Written Form of Jewish English

Throughout history, Jews have usually written JEs in a form of the Jewish alphabet (see Gold 1977 and 1981b). However, JE, like other fairly recent JEs (Jewish Spanish [not to be confused with Judezmo], Jewish French [not the same as Zarphatic], etc.) has usually been written in the Roman alphabet. This shows a degree of assimilation. Occasionally, however, most often for cryptic purposes or when the writer, reader or both do not know the Roman alphabet, JE as well as non-JE have been written in a form of the Jewish alphabet, according to the orthography of another JL which reader and writer know. Thus, whereas the Jewish alphabet is unmarked for most JEs, it is marked for JE. More often, and quite commonly in certain JE publications by and for Orthodox Jews and scholarly audiences, as well as in private letters between people knowing the Jewish alphabet, one finds Roman-alphabet texts interspersed with Jewish-al-

phabet forms (see, for example, *The Jewish Observer*, where it is impossible to predict which Yiddish- or HA-origin forms will appear in which alphabet and, if in the Roman alphabet, whether italicized or not).

If the fit between grapheme and (morpho)phoneme were good in English, the spelling of many items specific to JE would be straightforward, but given the many choices which current English orthography frequently offers, it is not surprising that such items have been spelled in a variety of ways, especially since their source languages usually offer several pronunciation choices. There are rational and simple romanizations for English items of Yiddish and Hebrew origin which use fewer than the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet, require no diacritics or other special symbols and which are orthographically biunique: the Yiddish one is the Standardized Yiddish Romanization (formerly called *the YIVO System*), which has also been adopted as the General-Purpose Romanization of the American National Standard Romanization of Yiddish, and the Hebrew one is the General-Purpose Romanization of the American National Standard Romanization of Hebrew (both used in this article except in quotations). They are not intended for items of Hebrew origin which entered English through Bible translations (*leviathan*, *Sabbath*, *cherub*, etc.), but, rather, for recent borrowings from Hebrew and for items from Yiddish. Progress is being made in implementing these standards, for example, it was once common to write "noodnick," "shtettle," "schtetel," etc., but today only *nudnik* and *shtetl* are usual (though pl. *shtetlekh* is often written "shtetlekh"). English dictionaries can help popularize recommended spellings by listing all the forms they wish (thus being descriptive) but giving the full entry only at the recommended form (thus being slightly prescriptive) and referring the user to it at each of the unrecommended forms (e.g., *chutzpah* see *khutspe*).

8. Secondary Literature on Jewish English

Clarence Barnhart, an English lexicographer of many years' experience, has written that "the function of a general reference book is to make available to the general public in understandable language the knowledge upon which scholars and specialists are agreed" (Barnhart 1967: 173) and that "no dictionary should be content to merely abstract secondary sources. There are a great many fields of knowledge. It is very hard to conceive of a dictionary for general use being prepared by a staff inside an office without any special checks of accuracy made by an outside staff" (ibid., p. 180). As far as entries of Jewish interest are concerned, English lexicographers have almost never heeded Barnhart's advice. If they have turned to outside consultants once in a blue moon, it

has usually been to famous historians, who, while they are competent to pass on the definitions of certain entries, are not able to review entire entries. Thus, although *The American College Dictionary* was proud to have such a distinguished scholar as Harry Austryn Wolfson as its consultant on "Judaism" and *The Random House Dictionary* was no less happy to have the no less erudite Louis Finkelstein as its consultant in the same field, the Jewish-interest entries in these works would have been much better had advice been sought from "harmless [though lexicographically far more competent] drudges." It is as if one took the head of the NAACP to be an expert on Black English, the Pope on Latin, and the Dalai Lama on Tibetan.

Compilers of English dictionaries have usually ignored solid scholarship and instead given blind faith to the fantasies of outrageously unprofessional popularizers, who think that a smattering of Yiddish or Hebrew confers expertise in JE linguistics. Disgraceful (though well-intentioned) publications by dilettantes pass for "scholarship" not only among the illiterati but also among those who, like English lexicographers, should know better. Since almost all those who have written on JE have copied from one another uncritically, the big-lie technique has its effect, with error becoming Truth merely by force of repetition. The dosage of misinformation on JE in certain works is so potent that mistakes have acquired a "life" of their own as they are piously transferred from one to another. For example, John Algeo has written me that "the German etymon of Yiddish *shmok* is cited everywhere," thus implying that "everyone" is "agreed" that this word reflects NHG *Schmuck*. That is, "everyone" except Yiddish linguists (see Gold 1982b and 1983b).

The grossness of the misinformation in "authoritative" dictionaries is astounding. For example, the Addenda Section of *Webster's Third* gives as the ultimate origin of English *mevyn* Hebrew *mevi* 'one who brings'. Every schoolchild knows that the ultimate etymon is Hebrew *mevin* 'one who understands' (W3's gloss of *mevi* leaves no doubt that this is not a typo for *mevin*). *The Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English* derives *give a for-instance* from non-existent Yiddish "gebn a tsum-bayshpil" (see *Jewish Language Review* 2 [1982]: 102) and at least two English dictionaries derive the English foodname *derma* from a nonexistent Yiddish "derme" (it is clearly from NHG *Därme*; see Gold 1982a). The *Dictionary of American Regional English*, copying from two of the worst Yiddish popularizers, derives Yiddish *farblondzhen* from German *verblenden* when its [j] (= *dzh*) and thematic *ayen* clearly point away from German and towards Slavic, specifically Polish *blądzić* (see Gold in press). Errors, moreover, are not limited to etymology.

Other major purveyors of misinformation about JE, besides general

English dictionaries, are etymological dictionaries, dictionaries of Jewish-interest lexemes (see Gold in press), general surveys of English (see the Reviews and Notices section of the *Jewish Language Review*), English-language books purporting to give a "taste" of Yiddish or impart its "joys" (see Gold 1969/1970), master's essays and doctoral dissertations, language columns in the popular press, and periodicals like *American Speech*, *Comments on Etymology*, *Maledicta*, and *Verbatim* (see Gold 1982a and 1983a).

Reliable information on JE, though quantitatively still slight, can be found in the *Jewish Language Review*.

9. *The Teaching of Jewish English*

Although JE, in various forms, has long been a medium of instruction (though unacknowledged as such), it has never been a subject of instruction (this is not surprising in view of its largely unrecognized status as a legitimate variety of English, an identity marker, and a necessary component of any anglophone Jewish community). As an object of investigation, it has occupied an important place in the Yiddish Studies Program at the University of Haifa: two of the Program's sixteen courses on various aspects of Jewish intralinguistics given since 1975 have dealt specifically with JE ("The Linguistic History of the Jewish People in English-Speaking Countries [Including the History of English in the Land of Israel]" and "Jewish English") and most of the others have dealt with it tangentially. The Program has a file of written JE; were oral material recorded on tape, the file's value would be enhanced.

10. *Conclusion*

JE and JE studies are slowly following the same road along which Black English and Black English studies are already considerably advanced. Smith (1974) treats the following topics: (a) a failure to notice Black English at all, because linguistic variation along ethnic lines is not considered, (b) dismissal of Black English from serious consideration because it is thought to be a "debased dialect" or because it is "nothing more" than "substandard Southern American English," (c) a more positive attitude whereby Black English is considered to be a legitimate system (with patterns and regularities of its own) rather than a jumble of "errors" or "deviations" from an exonorm, (d) the teaching of Black English, thereby objectifying it and instilling pride in its users, (e) recognition that differences between Black and White English may signal deeper differences of a non-linguistic nature, (f) the need for more data and reanalysis of data already recorded, and (g) the amateurishness of earlier studies.

Jewish English constitutes a huge but virtually unexplored territory (see *Jewish Language Review* 1 [1981]: 79). There is a vast amount of written, spoken, and paralinguistic data to be gathered and studied.³

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³ The present article is a revised and expanded version of the section entitled "Jewish English" in Gold 1981a: 286-289. I have dissociated myself entirely from that article, which contains numerous errors and unsupported (though supportable) claims. According to the editors' instructions, the article was to be written at a level "somewhere between that of the *Atlantic* and the *Scientific American*." Aside from that limitation, the text submitted was reduced by two-thirds, all notes (many of them with data supporting claims made in the body of the article) were omitted, and the editors introduced claims of their own, which I did not approve and with which I disagree. I hope to rewrite the other parts of that article soon.