

The continuing waves of immigration did not upset the balance, first because many pioneers coming from Europe acquired the language in the new Hebrew schools and Zionist youth movements that emerged there; second, because of the powerful pressure the established ideological society exerted on all immigrant waves; and above all, because it is relatively simple to adapt to a language of an existing society, as in all countries of immigration.

The youngsters who carried out the revolution were a generation unto themselves. As a small, select kernel of stubborn, inspired, self-made men and women, they knew their own importance, unique in history. They shook off the established leadership of their own parties in Diaspora and, with time, took over the world Zionist organizations. Neither would they easily transfer the reins of revolution to the next generation. The power in Eretz-Israel, the leadership of all parties and institutions, was in the hands of those "converts to Hebrew," like Berl Katznelson and David Ben-Gurion; Israeli-born and Hebrew-educated young people had no access to power. It is only the generation that emerged as young officers in the War of Independence, that provided a second echelon of a new leadership (Yigal Alon, Yitzhak Rabin, Moshe Dayan). To this day, most ministers in the Israeli governments are not Israeli-born. That may not be a language problem per se, but it certainly reflects something about the semiotics of culture.

Ashkenazi or Sephardi Dialect?

The rejection of the Diaspora and the "shtetl" world of their parents made the Ashkenazi revivers of the language choose what they thought was the "Sephardi" dialect for the new, spoken Hebrew. That was such a radical social and ideological decision that it needs further clarification.

In English and other languages, speech patterns have changed in the course of history, and only much later did the spelling stabilize; in Hebrew, the opposite was true: the sanctified spelling of the Bible was preserved in its minutest details throughout the ages, but different dialects, developed by Jews in distant lands and under very different foreign influences, gave rise to several different pronunciations of the same spellings.

Ashkenazi Hebrew pronunciation was formed in Central and Eastern Europe some time after the thirteenth century, then branched out into several dialects and survived in Orthodox communities until the present. This was the Hebrew language that had brought the Zionist immigrants to Eretz-Israel. Once here, they threw out even the Hebrew of their childhood, repressed whatever their memories could express in it, and chose a fundamentally different, foreign accent. Ben-Yehuda and the first Hebrew speakers in Jerusalem had compelling social reasons: the established Jewish community in Jerusalem was Sephardi, it carried the respect of the glorious Spanish Jewry, and the title "Pure Sephardi" (*Sfaradi tahor*) had an aristocratic ring to it. A similar connotation carried over to the language, as is indicated by the name of the society, *safa brura*, meaning "clear," "precise," or select language. Hebrew was not used in the daily affairs of the Sephardi community, except for precise reading of holy texts, hence the vowels were not changed and the words not contracted, as in the living language, Yiddish. Thus the Sephardi pronunciation sounded more prestigious than that of the Ashkenazi Orthodox Jews of the "Old Yishuv" in Jerusalem (who excommunicated Ben-Yehuda twice). It was also part of his romantic attraction for things Oriental.

There were also "scientific" justifications for the choice of the Sephardi pronun-

ciation. For example, the blurring of the distinction between the Biblical vowels *patah* and *kamatz* (and reading both as *a*) can be found in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Bible) and hence in European transcriptions of Biblical names (e.g., *David* rather than the Ashkenazi *Dovid*). The Biblical distinction between *milra* and *mil'eyl* (the place of stress on the ultimate and the penultimate syllable, respectively) was known to the Hebrew grammarians of the Vilna Enlightenment, Ben-Ze'ev and Adam Ha-Cohen Levinson (following the tradition of Hebrew and Christian medieval grammarians). This distinction favored the ultimate stress on most words, as performed in the "Sephardi" accent of the Near East. More important, it is indicated in the accent marks of the Bible, and a fundamentalist return had to consider it. But Biblical fundamentalism could also have claimed that the precise distinction of vowels in the Bible was better preserved by Ashkenazi and not by Sephardi Hebrew and that it was the Ashkenazim and the Yemenites who maintained the distinction between *patah* (*a*) and *kamatz* (*o*) and between the hard *tav* (*t*) and the soft *tav* (*s*).⁶²

Yehoash, who was impressed by the natural language of the young people who learned their Hebrew in the new, "national" schools, describes the effort and artificiality of the speech of the adults, even those who knew Hebrew well:

As for the language itself, that's half the grief. But the Sephardi accent... A pious Jew told me with a sigh that he tried over and over again to pray in the *Sephardi accent* but his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth and he didn't understand the "meaning of the words"... Since then, he decided that, in the street, he would do as they did in the street but, in the synagogue, give him the old accent of Shnipishok! [A Jewish suburb of Vilna] (Yehoash 1917, 1:161)

When the immigrants of the Second Aliya arrived in Eretz-Israel, the so-called "Sephardi" pronunciation was already a *fait accompli*; the rural school in the agricultural settlements introduced the study of Hebrew and instruction of other disciplines in Hebrew, and the authority of the sages of Jerusalem was decisive for the few Hebrew teachers. But this was a grammar school that did not teach literature and did not even suspect that a great Hebrew poetry in the Ashkenazi dialect had emerged in Europe at that same time and had, indeed, influenced a new wave of Zionist immigrants.

Parents vehemently opposed the Sephardi dialect, strange to their ears, their prayers, and their understanding of Hebrew, but the few nationalist Hebrew teachers felt superior and imposed their will in the schools. The Teachers' Assembly in 1903, organized and influenced by Menakhem Usishkin (an activist characterized by his virulent hatred of Yiddish), who arrived specially from Odessa, decided on the Sephardi pronunciation for the new language. The teachers' orga-

62. Indeed, the Nobel Prize-winning Hebrew novelist Agnon, who never fully learned to speak in the Sephardi accent, regretted that the Yemenite pronunciation was not accepted; he apparently did not dare to mention the Ashkenazi.

nization was the major vehicle for teaching the young generation Hebrew and played a decisive role in implementing the accent. But they compromised too: the handwriting they selected was Ashkenazi!—Unlike speech that had to be invented, handwriting was inherited for generations, and that was, apparently, too hard to change, even for devoted teachers.

Thus the last gasp of the First Aliya determined the language of the Second. It was a fluke of history, the last collective effort of those few who, in principle, spoke the language and hardly knew the new Hebrew poetry that flourished in Diaspora, the teachers (and even that effort was organized from the outside). Indeed, the Second Aliya starts officially in December 1903, with the arrival of the refugees from the Homel Self-Defense. But it began in earnest only after the failure of the Russian Revolution and the mass emigration of Jews from Russia, in 1906, and was enhanced around 1910, when some of the intelligentsia of the Second Aliya arrived. The ideological, labor wing of the Second Aliya did not think about educating children until after World War I—and then it would be too late to change the language. And the immigrants to the cities surrendered their understanding to that of the established new school.⁶³

But, outside of this historical accident, there were strong social and ideological motivations in favor of the "Sephardi" dialect. For one, accepting the "Sephardi" dialect was eventually important for the melting pot of Jewish tribes in Israel; it was designed to bring the Sephardi Jews closer to the new Ashkenazi establishment, and the other tribes would follow suit. The Jerusalem propagators of the language, Ben-Yehuda and David Yelin (who intermarried with a Sephardi family), had the socialization with Sephardim in mind; and they did influence the teachers and the normative Language Committee. But this argument was irrelevant at the time of the formation of a Hebrew-speaking society in the lowland of Palestine. The labor movement and the settlers of Tel Aviv were absorbed in their own Russian-derived, intensively pursued, and "superior" world of ideas; they did not even see the Yemenites with their distinct accent and paid little attention to the Galitsyaner S. Y. Agnon (until their own Brenner discovered him).

Not less important: accepting the "Sephardi" accent helped overcome the boundaries between the various Ashkenazi subdialects, which provided a linguistic garb to the animosities, mutual contempt, and even hatred between Jewish ethnic groups that had lived for centuries in different territories: the *Litvaks*, *Poylishe*, *Galitsyaner*, *Romanians*, *Russians*, and *Yekes* (German Jews). Shlomo Tsemakh describes his first attempts to speak Hebrew:

63. As a matter of fact, we don't know much about the actual pronunciation of Hebrew by people who learned their first Hebrew in the Ashkenazi accent. Agnon, who arrived with the Second Aliya, preserved Ashkenazi features in his speech to his last day; and so did many members of his generation. In the old kibbutzim, you could still hear Ashkenazi traces in a general "Sephardi" stress-pattern: **oMARTsi** rather than the contemporary Israeli **aMARTi**.

All the time, my words were accompanied by mighty waves of laughter rolling out of all mouths. My Hebrew language, this broken language of a Jew from Poland, which makes every U into I, every O into U, every long E into AY, and every long O becomes a prolonged OOO—this distorted language was certainly quite ridiculous. (Tsemakh 1965:80)

In Tsemakh's Polish dialect, the pronunciation was **BUrikh Atu** rather than the Lithuanian **BOrukH Ato**; instead of **eyn** they say **Ayen**, instead of **MElekh** they say **MAYlekh**, and so on. Also characteristic was the complaint about the diphthongs frequent in the Ashkenazi dialect, reminiscent of the sighing "oy" of the Diaspora Jew.

Tsemakh's inferiority complex for his Polish dialect—which in Diaspora was expressed in reverence toward the "pure" and "rational" Litvak Yiddish or Hebrew—was now transferred to the new "Litvaks," to the "pure" Sephardic pronunciation of the language (which he admired even in the speeches of the Ashkenazi teacher Yudelevitsh, delivered "in a beautiful Sephardi accent"). The new dialect would erase all tribal differences between East European Jews.

But the issue goes deeper than that: the basis for this inferiority complex lies, paradoxically, in the very fact that, in Ashkenaz, Hebrew was a semiliving language. Indeed, there were three modes of using Ashkenazi Hebrew (in all its dialects): Ideal, Spoken, and Fluent Ashkenazi.⁶⁴ a) *Ideal Ashkenazi* was reserved for reading the Torah in the synagogue; it consisted in pronouncing precisely every single sign of the canonical vocalization, with a fixed vowel assigned to each diacritic sign. b) *Spoken Ashkenazi* was the Hebrew that merged in Yiddish and hence was used as part of a living language; here, all final syllables lost their specific vowels (for some neutral e) and compounds were contracted into shorter words. Thus, the night-prayer was called *krishme* rather than the Ideal Ashkenazi *kriyas shma* ("calling the shema"); *balebos* rather than *ba'al ha-bayis* (homeowner; boss); and the feminine *baleboste* rather than *ba'alas ha-bayis*. Those who looked at the written words felt that the original sounds were distorted, "swallowed," abused. This, however, is a natural process in all living languages: French has, similarly, lost the last syllables in its verb declensions (still preserved in spelling); English can be seen as having "perverted" the German disyllabic **Na-me** into a monosyllabic **name** (pronounced **neym**), or **lachen** into **laugh** (**laf**). c) *Fluent Ashkenazi* was the way authentic Hebrew texts were pronounced in study and argument, mostly under the influence of Spoken Ashkenazi—and this was the dominant way of pronouncing and hearing Hebrew. And on top of this, the Yiddish dialect distinctions were superimposed on all three ways of pronunciation.

From the position of a fundamentalist return to the written, pure and precise,

64. I described the three modes in *The Meaning of Yiddish* (1990a:55–57) under the labels "Ideal," "Merged," and "Practical Ashkenazi Hebrew."

Biblical language, this seemed a perversion, reflecting the perverse, sloppy, irrational behavior of Diaspora Jews. Even worse, the spelling of Hebrew in Rabbinic and Hasidic writings was influenced by this semispoken language and often disregarded Hebrew grammar.⁶⁵ Also, the gender of Hebrew words was often changed, under the influence of the spoken language, where Hebrew was part of Yiddish. The *Haskala* writers viciously parodied this style (notably, in Yosef Perl's anti-Hasidic satire, *Megale Tmirin*) and saw in it the deterioration of the Holy Tongue rather than the evolution of a living language and its dialects. The Zionist movement inherited this revulsion toward Rabbinic and Hasidic Hebrew, especially in its wish to skip two thousand years of history and return to the wholesome Bible.

The stereotype, first formulated most harshly by Moses Mendelssohn, that Yiddish was a perverted language (as compared to literary northern German), reflecting the perversion of the soul of the Diaspora Jew, was as relevant for Ashkenazi Hebrew (as compared to the written Bible). The revulsion from this dialect, therefore, is a recoil from Diaspora existence, from the Yiddish language—the mother tongue, intimate and hated at the same time, from their parents' home in the *shtetl*, corroded by idleness and Jewish trading, and from the world of prayer, steeped in the scholastic and irrelevant study of Talmud, and the irrational and primitive behavior of the Hasidim. The decision in favor of the Sephardi dialect was part of the ideological package the individual forced on his life. It seemed that the Sephardi dialect would free them from all those ugly sounds and dialectal discrepancies. Since its language was not spoken, it mirrored precisely the written words, clearly pronouncing especially the last syllable, now stressed, which was so contorted in Ashkenazi. In short, it was easier to learn a new language, beautiful and dignified, than to correct their own constructed, "cockney" Hebrew. But that move was aided by various ideologies.

Like other proponents of Hebrew, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, born in a small town in Lithuania, first abandoned Yiddish for Russian culture and even Russian nationalism and Slavophile ideology (influenced by the wave of Russian patriotism during the Russian war against Turkey in 1877–78, defending the Slavs in Bulgaria). Then he went to Paris, where he met a Russian named Tshashnikov, who encouraged him in the idea of Jewish national revival:

I happened upon a "Goyish head," a man with a simple mind, a natural man, who saw things in the world as they were and not through broken and perverted light beams, the way things looked to the crooked brains in the over-clever head of the Diaspora Jew. (Ben-Yehuda 1986:66)

65. For example, the suffixes pronounced in Israeli Hebrew as **at**, **ut**, **ot** (feminine genitive, collective noun, feminine plural, respectively) and in Ideal Ashkenazi as **as**, **us**, **oys**, were all conflated into the same **-es**. In spelling, they were often confused and interchangeable.

Under the influence of this idealized Russian, Ben-Yehuda shifted his nationalist fervor from Russian to Hebrew. He had no respect for the Hebrew of the Ashkenazi religious world but, on the contrary, was impressed by anyone who spoke with a hint of a Sephardi accent: the writer Yehiel-Mikhel Pines, who came from Jerusalem to Paris; Getzl Zelikovitsh (later a Yiddish poet and professor of Semitics in Philadelphia), who brought it from his travels in the East; the Jews whom Ben-Yehuda encountered during his own sojourn in Algiers; and, later, the people of the Sephardic cultural milieu which he knew during his long years in Jerusalem. In his memoirs, he describes his shock when he and his wife first came to Jerusalem and were invited to the home of the editor of a Hebrew newspaper, *Havatsalet*: they spoke Yiddish there and Ben-Yehuda's wife was asked to cover her head with a kerchief—and there she was, a “young woman who just came from Europe where she was exposed to a *free life* and had very nice brown hair” (Ben-Yehuda 1986:90; emphases mine—B.H.). The opposition is: European culture and individual dignity versus the “Diaspora” (i.e., Ashkenazi) restricted Jewish world. Ben-Yehuda also aspires to edit a “Hebrew political national [i.e., secular] newspaper, in the European meaning of those words” (90). But he finds the ideal of beauty in the Eastern world. Even on the ship to Eretz-Israel, he is impressed by the Arab passengers: “Tall, strong men [. . .] I sensed that they felt themselves citizens of that land,” while “I come to that land as a stranger, a foreigner” (84). The admiration for the East also included Sephardi Jews:

Most of the people of the old Yishuv [i.e., the Orthodox Ashkenazim] were not natural human beings, leading natural lives, making a living like everybody else. Only the Sephardi community [. . .] was more or less a natural community, for most of them were simple people, uneducated, supporting themselves with crafts and simple work. (95)

And he goes on:

Why should I deny it? It is a better, much nicer impression that was made on me by the Sephardim. Most of them were dignified, handsome, all were splendid in their Oriental clothing, their manner respectable, their behavior pleasant, almost all of them spoke Hebrew with the owner of *Havatsalet*, and their language was fluent, natural, rich in words, rich in fixed idioms of speech, and the dialect was so original, so *sweet and Oriental!* (97; my emphasis—B.H.)

Clearly, the language was part of a total package in which the Ashkenazim were on the negative pole, as he said explicitly:

The Ashkenazi visitors of all classes all had a Diaspora countenance. Only the older ones [. . .] were already a bit “assimilated” into the Sephardim and looked a bit like them. [. . .] And the Diaspora stamp was a bit wiped off their faces too. (97)

In another place, he gets excited:

How much the Sephardi Jews love cleanliness and how strict they are about it even in the secret places, the most private rooms. [. . .] And all household and cooking utensils were truly sparkling with cleanliness. (106)

Ben-Yehuda is aware of his one-sided value judgment: “I mentioned this detail here incidentally *because it is one of the reasons that influenced me later in my relationship toward Sephardim and Ashkenazim*” (107; my emphasis—B.H.).

Although Ben-Yehuda knows “that, scientifically, there is no true or false pronunciation” (205), he assumes that “the dialect used among western [i.e., European] Jews is from a late period, from the time of the spoilage and distortion of the language” (212), and he fights for “the Oriental dialect”: “It is the dialect of the Hebrew language that is alive in Eretz-Israel, and everyone who heard it spoken by the new generation is stunned by its beauty” (212). But the admiration combines beauty and strength:

[because we lost the Oriental ring of the letters *tet, ayin, kuf,*] we deprive our language of its force and power by the contempt we have for the emphatic consonants, and because of that, the whole language is soft, weak, without the special strength the emphatic consonant gives to the word. (203)

Despite the acceptance of the Sephardi accent in the schools, Ben-Yehuda understands its superficial nature and the prevailing general tone of the Ashkenazi heritage; he fears that we may be too late: there are already thousands of children speaking Hebrew, and their language is “so un-Oriental, so lacking in the ring and force of an Oriental Semitic language!” (204). Indeed, when the new Language Committee begins to work again in 1911 and sees its main task as coining new words, they decide to appoint among its members persons “whose knowledge of both languages, Hebrew and Arabic, is beyond any doubt.” In the *Foundations* of the new Language Committee, written by Ben-Yehuda, presented by David Yelin, and accepted by the Committee (published in 1912), the first paragraph defines “The Function of the Committee” in two points:

- 1) to prepare the Hebrew language for use as a spoken language in all matters of life [. . .]
- 2) to preserve the Oriental quality of the language [. . .] (Academy 1970:31)

The conclusion is: to demand the study of pronunciation in special classes and by a teacher of the Arabic [sic!⁶⁶] language. In 1915, the Hebrew Language Committee in Jerusalem decided

to compel all schools in Eretz-Israel to appoint a special teacher for pronunciation and to select for this position in particular one of the sages of Aleppo [that is, not a trained teacher, nor a member of the Ashkenazi community to which the children in the new settlements belonged, but a Syrian Jew whose native language is Arabic!—B.H.]. (207)

66. Reuven Sivan, the editor of this text, assumes that there must be a mistake here and that he meant to say “Hebrew,” but there is no evidence for this conjecture, and why would one have to stress that the Hebrew teacher must be the one to teach Hebrew pronunciation?

(The "Sephardi" dialect that was chosen was essentially the dialect of the Jews of Syria; Aleppo, or Haleb, in Northern Syria had an influential Jewish community.) Ben-Yehuda, who was opposed to absorbing words into the new Hebrew from any non-Semitic languages, thought it advisable *to use all the roots of Arabic to enrich the Hebrew language*. Since Ben-Yehuda and David Yelin had influence on the few Hebrew teachers, the Sephardi accent was, basically, accepted, but the Oriental nature of pronunciation he dreamed of was contrary to the whole mentality and intonations of the new immigrants, and never took root.

On the contrary, the ultranationalist and gifted poet and writer Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, in his book *Hebrew Pronunciation* (still trying to mold the pronunciation of the new language in 1930!), opposed the Arabic pronunciation and claimed that our ancestors did not speak with an "Arabic accent" either. Canaan, he argued, was teeming with races, including the "remnants of the nations of Europe and Anatolia," that is, *Aryans* (sic!), all of whom were swallowed up within Judea and Israel:

Thus the Hebrew was formed as a Mediterranean man, in whose blood and soul several aspirations and several flavors of the nations of the North and of the West were blended. [. . .] To set the rules for the pronunciation of the renewed Hebrew, if we must seek points of support in other languages, let us look for them not in Arabic but in Western languages, especially in those which were born or developed on the shores of the Mediterranean. I am sure, for example, that the general impression of the sound, the "prosody" of ancient Hebrew was much more similar to that of Greece and Rome than to Arabic. (Jabotinsky 1930:6-8)

And he adds:

I admit openly and confess that the guiding "taste" for the outline proposed in this manual is a European taste and not an "Oriental" one. In my proposals, the reader will find a clear tendency to get rid of all those sounds which have no basis in the phonetics of Western languages—to bring our pronunciation as close as possible to the concept of the beauty of sound prevalent in Europe: that concept of beauty, that musical yardstick according to which, for example, the Italian language is considered "beautiful" and the Chinese language is not. I chose this yardstick, first of all, because we are Europeans and our musical taste is European, the taste of Rubinstein and Mendelssohn and Bizet. But also from the objective side of the problem I am sure, for reasons I explained above, that the pronunciation proposed in this book is truly closer to the "correct" pronunciation, to the ancient sound of our language as spoken by our ancient forefathers than is the pronunciation that imitates the Arabic gutturals; let alone the slovenly pronunciation, lacking any line or rule or taste, with which we jargoned [i.e., Yiddishized] our speech and defiled our language, one of the most splendid and noble languages in the world, to the point of a noise without variation or character. (9; my emphasis—B.H.)

Thus, Jabotinsky too preached the renewal of pronunciation as part of the ideological and emotional package; but, according to him, "beauty" is exemplified not by Arabic but by Italian, and Yiddish (which he himself used in political speeches

and articles) is even uglier than Arabic. He even ingeniously finds a similarity in the ideal language English: "A furtive *patah*, for example,⁶⁷ is a characteristic quality of English pronunciation: *pair, deer, door, poor*, pronounced **peyah, deyah, doah, poah** [sic!]" (7).

Although, in his opinion too, it is impossible to guess the sounds of the Hebrew pronunciation in the time of our forefathers, Jabotinsky has no doubt that

one thing is clear—their pronunciation was marked by an outstanding precision. They did not speak hastily, they did not swallow syllables, did not confuse vowels—in short, they did not know the sloppy way of speaking that is heard now in our streets. (3)

The hatred for Yiddish stands out:

First of all, we have to avoid the Yiddish **ch**, which is like the hoarse cough of someone with a throat disease. Even the German **ch** in the word *doch* is too guttural. *We should learn from those Jews of Russia who speak without a Yiddish accent* the proper pronunciation of the Russian letter X. (My emphasis—B.H.)

Thus the Russian writer Jabotinsky, himself a native of the Yiddish-speaking city Odessa, barely one generation out of the "ghetto." Like the teachers of modern Yiddish secular schools in the cities of Diaspora, he too regarded the singsong of the provincial Jew as something melodramatic and harmful. And what venom permeates his words, ostensibly written as a scientific, medical recipe:

Do not sing while you speak. This ugliness is infinitely worse than every other defect I have mentioned and, regrettably, it is taking root in our life. Both the school and the stage are guilty: the first, out of sloppiness, the latter, out of an intention to "revive" for us the ghetto and its whining. *The tune of the ghetto* is ugly not only because of its weeping tone which stirs unpleasant memories in us: it is also ugly objectively, ugly in the scientific sense—ugly as all superfluous or exaggerated efforts. [. . .] That sick frenzy, which we also suffer from in our social life, is also the result of the Diaspora—an abundance of forces with no field and no outlet for the repressed storm except to explode in a bowl of soup—the "singsong" of ghetto speech is nothing but an echo of this national disease. The exercise that helps against the disease is very simple: exercising monotony—"monotony" in the scientific sense of the word, that is, lack of all vacillation in intonation. (37-38; my emphasis—B.H.)

In the debate over the dialect among the teachers in Rishon Le-Tsiyon in 1892, someone brought up the advantage of hearing Hebrew from parents and in the synagogue, in the Ashkenazi dialect, and the danger that if the school introduces the Sephardi dialect, the student's "mind will be confused." Y. Grazovski (Gur) responded:

67. As in the Hebrew letters *ayn* and *het* at the end of a word, which acquire an additional a vowel after a previous vowel: *reah, koah, luah*, etc.

It is better for the children not to understand the mistakes of their fathers, who read without preserving the vocalization and not correctly. Let the child talk in a correct Sephardi accent, let him get used to that, and there is no damage if he does not understand his father's dialect. (Karmi 1986:80; my emphasis—B.H.)

Thus, the second dissociation from the past was supported by education. Indeed, the religious "old *Yishuv*" and the parents of schoolchildren in the settlements fought against spoken Hebrew, the national school, and the Sephardi accent, all of which seemed to undermine the religious tradition. Mrs. Pukhatshevski from Rishon Le-Tsiyon told proudly of a demonstration in Jerusalem organized by two wagonfuls of settlers from Rishon, headed by the teacher David Yudelevitsh, and speaking Hebrew aloud in the street; the Jews in Jerusalem said: "Look, *goyim* speak Hebrew!" (by *goyim* they meant secular heretics). She tells the story as evidence of the miracle of living Hebrew speech but does not recognize the religious scorn for the national movement.

But, out of great concern for the correct pronunciation of the future farmers, the connection was also broken with the new Hebrew poetry, whose flourishing was no less miraculous than the revival of the spoken language, even though it happened in Europe.

Secular Hebrew poetry grew in the soil of Hebrew study in the religious society, against which all Hebrew poets rebelled in their youth. At the base of his poetic language, a poet will use his most intimate vocabulary as he heard and absorbed it in childhood, with all emotions and connotations attached to it and in the multidirectional context of texts and images it evokes. This is especially true for a language remembered from childhood and youth, when they were immersed in it for long days, year after year, and not heard in the adult milieu. Hence, in spite of the knowledge of grammar that claimed a different, "correct" (as Bialik later admitted) pronunciation, Hebrew poetry accepted the intimate, Ashkenazi pronunciation of their childhood and created many variations of musical meters and sound patterns in it, both in original poetry and in translations. With the change of pronunciation, all this poetry of the Renaissance Period, in fact, has been lost as rhythmic texts. From the point of view of Hebrew poetry, this was the second language revolution, a tragic one. If Bialik's poetry is taught today in Israeli schools, it is not taught as poetry that activates the reader's sense of rhythm, but rather as a bundle of well-known ideas, a reconstructed biography, or a texture of devices and figures.

Many poets were opposed to the "Sephardi" shift and felt that the musicality of the Ashkenazi pronunciation, with its many vowels and diphthongs and its flexible and balanced stress position, was lost in Israeli Hebrew. But Hebrew poetry was not in Eretz-Israel when the decision was made (by such estranged and pro-Oriental zealots as Ben-Yehuda or coarse agitators as Usishkin). Bialik was the idolized "National Poet" and had an immense influence on his readers around the world; Hebrew literature in Europe educated the generations of immi-

grants, but did not understand or believe in the importance of the dialect revolution that occurred in the "primitive" *Yishuv*. Most of them did not believe in the language revival altogether, in its feasibility, or in the cultural level of the Palestine Jewish peasants.

With the exception of Brener, most important Hebrew writers settled in Eretz-Israel only after the Bolshevik government banned Hebrew in Russia in 1921, and many went first to Western Europe and came back even later. Thus a new alienation between literature and living speech was artificially created—and this was the very literature that developed the language to an extent that it could be activated in speech! The poet and critic Ya'akov Fikhman, for example, tried to oppose the shift to the Sephardi accent in poetry up until the mid-1930s; the master lyricist Ya'akov Shteynberg wrote poetry in Ashkenazi Hebrew to his dying day (1947); Tshernikhovski compromised, wrote declarative poems and ballads in Sephardi Hebrew and went on writing many of his important works in Ashkenazi Hebrew; even Shlonski and Uri-Tsvi Grinberg, the avant-garde poets of the pioneers, persisted in writing in the Ashkenazi accent in Eretz-Israel until 1928—an accent their readers did not speak. The poetess Rachel, however, who did not know Hebrew from religious education, wrote in the simple, new Hebrew spoken around her, combined with words from the Bible she read in the "Sephardi" accent. And there were a few other poets like that. One of them, Tsvi Shats, who founded a Zionist commune with Trumpeldor back in Russia and was later killed by Arabs along with Y. H. Brener in Jaffa in May 1921, wrote an essay entitled "The Exile of our Classical Poetry," in which he posed the problem sharply:

The main reason why [Hebrew] poetry cannot be absorbed among us is its foreign accent. With all its beauty and depth, it will not make our heart beat because it is not molded from the coarse clods of our life or from the harsh or joyous tones of our life, which vibrate on our lips every day [. . .] Its value is like that of poetry written in a foreign language. (Shats 1919:24; my emphasis—B.H.; see his essay in this volume)

But he admires the poets of the Revival Period and concludes: "*May we wish that Shneur, Tshernikhovski, and Bialik be translated into our pronunciation!*"—a wish unfulfilled to this day (my emphasis—B.H.).

This is the perspective: our language is pioneering, coarse, strong, masculine—like the "masculine" rhyme imposed by the Sephardi accent as opposed to the soft, "feminine" rhyme dominant in Ashkenazi poetry (as in Italian). There is no better example of that than the harsh, emphatic stress on the ends of words which Ben-Gurion emphasized with great energy as if he had to overcome an opposing tendency.⁶⁸

The "Sephardi" accent quickly spread all over the Diaspora, especially in Zionist-influenced Hebrew schools. It represented the challenge of secular nationalism

68. In Ben-Gurion's pronunciation, paradoxically, even though a strong stress falls on the last syllable, the last vowel seems to be contracted, even swallowed, as in the Yiddish of his native central Poland: **poalM vekhayaLM, beyaMM truFM Ele** (but there the last syllable is not stressed!).

to the religious tradition. Those were schools that had to break away from the religious world steeped in Ashkenazi reading of the Holy Tongue. But the Ashkenazi accent fights for its position to this day and is clearly the only legitimate accent in the eyes of many Orthodox Jews in Diaspora, as can be seen from the English transliterations of Hebrew words in newspaper advertisements by Orthodox groups, including the Lubavitcher Rebbe in the *New York Times*, or from his long lectures, delivered in Yiddish with some 80% Hebrew words pronounced in his ultra-Lithuanian Ashkenazi dialect. A typical case was in interwar Vilna, "Jerusalem of Lithuania," where a compromise among the secular Hebraists was made: elementary school in Ashkenazi (called, accordingly, **beySEYfer aMOmi**) and Gymnasium in "Sephardi" (hence called **tarBUT**—and not **TARbes**).

But here comes the surprise: *the Hebrew finally accepted as the basic language in Eretz-Israel is not Sephardi Hebrew at all, but rather the lowest common denominator between the two main dialects, Sephardi and Ashkenazi.*

The group that established Hebrew speech in social cells were young Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, from a Yiddish background, who went through processes of restraint (Jabotinsky's plea for "monotone") and aestheticization. This group accepted the Sephardi accent in principle, without having much contact with Hebrew-speaking Sephardim, but filtered it through its previous linguistic habits. Indeed, it was a harsh passage, as to a completely new language, when a person who read or wrote Hebrew had to give up **KEYses** or **KOYsoys** ("glasses" or "goblets") and say **koSOT**; the stress is reversed, the vowels reduced and changed, and the soft **s** at the end turns in Israeli Hebrew into a hard **t**. The harshness of the language was felt in the strongly accented endings of most words, mostly on closed syllables.

Indeed, the entire system of sounds shifted, yet ultimately, both **s** and **t**—that is, familiar sounds—remained in the language (with many more **t**'s than before). As the linguist Haim Blanc showed, in *Israeli Hebrew*, not a single sound was added which was not in Yiddish, except one—the glottal stop—which is not a consonant requiring pronunciation but a zero sound, a pause before a vowel: the Israeli speaker distinguishes between **lir'OT** ("to see") and **liROT** ("to shoot"), **mar'A** ("mirror") and **maRA** ("gall bladder"), **TSA'ar** ("grief") and **TSAR** ("tsar"), **me'IL** ("coat") and **MIL** ("mile"). The Ashkenazi dialect made no distinctions here and pronounced both words in each pair as its second member in our list (many Ashkenazi Jews, including Prime Minister Shamir, cannot pronounce the zero consonant and still use the short form in both cases). As Haim Blanc demonstrated in the 1960s, high-school graduates of Oriental origin speak like Ashkenazi high-school graduates, disregarding the Arabic gutturals and other consonantal distinctions. In recent years, perhaps a stratum of Oriental Jews who pronounce the guttural **het** and even **ayin** has been added; as for all other consonants, the Ashkenazi filter succeeded among all educated people.

With the vowels, however, it was the "Sephardi" filter that succeeded in Israeli

Hebrew. All Biblical vocalizations are pronounced with only five basic vowels—**a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**—instead of the eight vowels and diphthongs in Ashkenazi, the ten vowel-signs in the canonical Bible (or the seventeen differently pronounced vowels in the Random House English Dictionary).⁶⁹ Ashkenazi speakers accepted this minimal, "Sephardi" norm, partly out of hatred for the diphthongs **ay**, **oy**, **ey**, which symbolized Diaspora whining (**oy vey**, **ay-ay-ay**, **oy-oy-oy**), partly to create a more dry, matter-of-fact, rational, and "monotonous" intonation, and especially because they accepted the authority of the Sephardic "pure" language without a second thought. As a result of this extreme reduction, in Israeli Hebrew about half of the vowels in an average text are **a**; for example, what is pronounced **khaZoke** (**a-O-e**) in Ashkenazi becomes **khazaKA** (**a-a-A**) in Sephardi Hebrew. Simplicity has been achieved, but what is lost is the rich variety, that "culture of language" which accustoms the speaker to subtleties of nuance and serves as a base for poetic musicality. Even worse, the majority of the nation, including many of its poets, does not know how to write correctly the vocalization marks, indispensable in Bible and in poetry, because the vowel distinctions, preserved in Ashkenazi Hebrew, have been erased from Israeli speech. (Most publishers employ a specialist "vocalizer" (*nakdan*) who can place the vowels in poetic texts or in children's books.)

Thus, *Israeli Hebrew combines the range of Ashkenazi consonants and Sephardi vowels—the minimal range in each case.*

A similar process took place with stress. The so-called "Sephardi" stress is totally artificial and was never used in this form in a living, spoken language. In terms of rhythmic balance in long words, the predominant Biblical stress on the end of the word was possible when, in the middle of the word, there was a rhythmic variation of another kind, namely of long and short syllables. Indeed, that variation between long and short—rather than the end-stress—became the basis of the meters of Hebrew poetry in medieval Spain. The great linguist Roman Jakobson defined a general rule for all languages: when the distinction in length of vowels in a language disappears, the stress shifts from the margins toward the middle of the word. But in Hebrew pronunciation, the distinction between short and long vowels disappeared in all dialects, under the influence of other languages, at a time when the language was not spoken and natural processes could not take place. In Ashkenazi Hebrew, perhaps because of its strong integration in the spoken Yiddish, such a shift of stress to the penultimate syllable did occur. But in the artificial, "Sephardi" (actually, Syrian) reading of Hebrew, the rigorous stress on the ultimate syllable was preserved—which is not characteristic at all of the living language Ladino or in Sephardic ballads. As a result, a "Sephardi" stress often comes at the end of a long word of three or even five syllables,

69. Naturally, when two vowel signs, or a vowel followed by the consonant **y**, come together, a diphthong is created, but for every single sign there is only a single vowel; and the combined diphthongs are a small minority in the language.

with no rhythmic balance in the middle, and must be strongly emphasized in pronunciation, to carry the whole word.

The living Israeli language accepted that artificial norm for traditional word patterns but balanced it by profusely extending the groups of words with penultimate stress: proper names, emotional and slang expressions, and foreign loanwords. Most proper names are simply pronounced with penultimate stress, even if the nominal pattern is end-stressed: **DAvid**, **SARA**, **meNAkhem**, **MEir**, even **Itamar**—though by the Bible they should be stressed on the final syllable. In the use of non-Hebrew words, Israeli Hebrew adopted the Yiddish model, which absorbs most of the international words with a penultimate stress and in the feminine gender: **gymNASya**, **traGEDya**, **koMEDya**, **filharMONit**, **simFONya** (though the major foreign language influencing Hebrew today, English, often stresses the third-to-last syllable: **TRAgedy**, **COMedy**, **SYMphony**). That same model which originated in Eastern Europe is also applied to words borrowed directly from Western languages: **teleVlzya**, **kaSEta**, **eksistentsiaLIsm** (though in French, the accent is on the last syllable: **existentialISME**, and in English on the fourth from the end: **exisTENTialism**); and such adjectives as: **baNAlI**, **reAlI**, **elemTARI**, **popuLARI** (all different from their English counterpart: **BANal**, **POPular**, **eleMENTary**). However, in foreign words that get in Yiddish (as in German) the stress on the ultimate syllable, the stress shifted in Hebrew to the third from the end, as in Russian: **poLItika**, **FIZika**, **MUZika**, **uniVERsita**, a stress position otherwise almost unknown in Hebrew.

This pattern may have come from the language habits of the East European immigrants. But then this became the productive mode of accepting foreign words in Hebrew. Since most of these penultimately stressed words end in **a** and are therefore automatically feminine, the proportion of feminine nouns in the language—otherwise a minority of nouns—is considerably enlarged. Furthermore, such nouns are coordinated with their adjectives and verbs, which all become feminine and penultimately stressed too. Poetry and songs also soften the language and tend to rhyme with alternating masculine and feminine rhymes; hence, the large number of nouns in the feminine gender in poetry and song, which enable a penultimate stress: **oMERet-khoZERet**, **oHEvet-nilHEVet**, **simloTEya-hish-taGEya**, and so on. Feminine patterns are also popular in neologisms, such as **taYEset**, **raKEvet**, **matKONet**, **mishMERet** (squadron, train, recipe, shift). And, in addition, an emotive emphasis may draw the stress of a word toward its beginning. Thus the impression of the language as a whole is tipped against the Sephardi final stress.

This is not just a phonetic issue, it gives a specific character to Israeli speech and its speakers. And beyond that, *this is the basic mode of the whole revival in Eretz-Israel*: an ideological decision and a drastic imposition of a new model of behavior, radically different from the Diaspora past, is accompanied by a *subtext of old behavior*, which reemerges with time: the Jew comes out from under the Hebrew.

Remarks on the Nature of Israeli Hebrew

An analysis of Israeli Hebrew in a broad cultural perspective—including the language of literature, journalism, and science—still awaits detailed research and comprehensive models. I will sketch here a few general ideas, as hypotheses for further discussion.

Opposition to the Diaspora was initially expressed, as in other countries of immigration, in changing last names (see Toury 1990) and preferring new first names. The names of central Biblical figures, popular in Yiddish, seemed too Jewish and fell into disfavor (though some still gave such names after their grandfathers); those include the names of the fathers of the nation and its prophets: Moshe, Avraham, Sara, Dvora, Rivka, Yitshak, Yirmiyahu, Yeshayahu, Yehezkiel, also the non-Biblical Hayim. Instead, some preferred “meaningful” names (*Zohar*, *Rina*, *Tikva*, *Geula*, i.e., “Light,” “Joy,” “Hope,” “Redemption”) or names from nature (*Ilan*, *Ayala*, *Rakefet*, *Narkis*—“Tree,” “Deer,” “Cyclamen,” “Narcissus”) or “Biblical” names that are not typically Jewish, that is, of unfavorable Biblical characters that were not widespread in European Jewry (*Boaz*, *Ehud*, *Yoav*). A well-known Israeli writer, born Monyek Thilimzoger (literally, “Psalm Reciter”), arrived in Israel at age 15 without his parents from the impending Holocaust in Poland; his name was changed in the youth colony Ben-Shemen to *Moshe Shaoni* (from “watch” or “clock”; apparently, *thilim*, “psalms,” seemed too religious, and *zoger*, Germanized to *zager*, was misunderstood as *zayer*, “watch”); but becoming a real Israeli, he disliked “Moshe” and realizing the artificial nature of his new last name, changed his name again to *Dan Ben-Amotz* (for a long time, he did not reveal in his biographies that he was not a native-born Sabra, until he told the story himself, in his fifties).

Hebrew words identified with Yiddish words were also rejected. The Israeli says *Yareakh* (moon) and not *levana*, as in Yiddishi *tsibur* (the public), not *olam*; *me'unyan* (interested), not *ba'alan*; *rotse* (want), not *hafets*; *yimama* (a 24-hour day), not *me'et-le'et*; *ta'anug* (pleasure), not *mekhaye*; *mikhya* (sustenance), not

khiyuna; *adam* (man), not *yehudi*; *isha* (woman), not *yehudiya*; *menahel* or *akhrayi* (person in charge), not *ba'al-ha-bayit* (boss; though this too is used in slang); *more* (teacher), not *melamed*; *totsa'a* (result), not *po'el-yotsey*; *le-hashpiya* (to influence), not *lifol*; *bekhayay* (my word!), not *bene'emanut*; *sofer* (writer), not *ba'al-mekhaber*; *petsa* (wound), not *maka*; *shoded* (robber), not *gazlan*; *khabibi* (term of endearment), not *rotseakh*; *rehkilit* (gossip), not *leshon-ha-ra*; *ivrit* (Hebrew), not *leshon-kodesh*; *goy* (Gentile), not *arel*; *beit-kvarot* (cemetery), not *beit-olam*.

Most of the Hebrew expressions in Yiddish came from post-Biblical strata of Hebrew and were rejected in Eretz-Israel either because of the tendency to get away from both the world of religion and that of Yiddish or because of a more precise differentiation between synonyms (for example, *olam* in contemporary Hebrew means "world" and cannot also denote "the public"). A contemporary Israeli reader is not likely to understand precisely the language of Brener or Agnon—the preceding generation of Hebrew literature—especially when a Yiddish phrase or idiom stands behind the Hebrew sentence.⁷⁰

The fate of Aramaic is a separate case. In the Religious Polysystem and in the world of Yiddish, Aramaic was part of the "Holy Tongue." In the Traditional Library, there were pure Aramaic texts (the *Kaddish*, parts of *Gemara*, *Akdamuth Milin*, *Had Gadia*, and the classical book of the Kabbala, the *Zohar*). Yet the active "Holy Tongue," the language of writing, was primarily Hebrew: the syntax was Hebrew, and the framework of discourse was Hebrew. Aramaic was not fused into the Holy Tongue but was *embedded* in it: Aramaic texts embedded in the Hebrew Library, and Aramaic phrases embedded in a Hebrew text.⁷¹ With the revival of Hebrew literature in Diaspora, Aramaic received a special position and an important stylistic function; in Yehuda Leyb Gordon and Mendele Moykher Sforim, it signaled living speech, that is, Yiddish. Berditshevski, in an affectionate essay, wrote: "We do not have one literary language but two, [. . .] two nations bickering in your belly, [. . .] Hebrew and Aramaic. [. . .] the Hebrew language loves the sublime. [. . .] And the Aramaic language [. . .] is a language of the sharp proverb and morality, [. . .] the language of the humility in your heart, the language of religion, the language of the Jews" (Berditshevski 1987:101). In his stories, Brener embedded many Aramaic phrases, sometimes coined by himself, intermingled with International, non-Hebrew words.

But the Hebrew purists also fought against Aramaic. Klauzner claimed that *casus belli* is permissible in Hebrew but not *sadna d'area* ("human nature is the same everywhere"). Uri-Tsvi Grinberg, of the other camp, called his journal *Sadna D'Area* (published in 1925 in Eretz-Israel). Those who came from the yeshiva or from Yiddish loved Aramaic. But victory in the struggle went to the purist Klauzner: some Aramaic spellings were Hebraized and only a few overtly Aramaic

70. See examples in my Hebrew essay, Harshav 1990b.

71. Of course, the ancient influence of Aramaic on Hebrew itself is a different matter. "Hebrew" includes here whatever was absorbed by it in the texts of the Library: Greek, Arabic, Latin, Aramaic.

expressions remained in the Israeli literary language, seasoning it like Latin expressions in English, such as *sui generis* or *casus belli*, which have not been fused into the language but signal the technical use of a learned language. It seems that the Hebrew speaker wants one, recognizable Hebrew language, and if some foreign language is quoted in it, it had better be a language he knows. The religious connection between the two is meaningless to him today.

The new Hebrew language had to define its boundaries against both Yiddish and the Holy Tongue, though it drew on the resources of both. Thus, expressions from the world of religion and Talmud and translations of Yiddish proverbs and idioms were often rejected when recognized. Nevertheless, after all the purges of the purists, Yiddish ways of expression have penetrated Israeli idiomatic speech and Israeli slang (Yiddish itself derived many of those from Talmudic as well as European sources). Vast layers of Yiddish subtext underlay the ostensibly archaic, "Holy-Tongue" Hebrew of Agnon. It is interesting that also distinctly Biblical elements were exposed as naive and outmoded. Thus the three basic European modes of time, reflected in three tenses of the verb, were accepted; and the Biblical reversal of future into past, abolished. Despite the veneration of the Bible and its endless study in schools and adult circles (including Ben-Gurion's Bible Circle), the language of the Bible is markedly not Israeli Hebrew—and is kept apart. Though many know large portions of the Bible by heart (having studied it for ten or twelve years), the use of a Biblical phrase in Israeli Hebrew has the function of a quotation from another language. Thus, the return to the Land of the Bible and to the Language of the Bible involved a national and social ideology formulated in the language of European thought, and included a rejection of the innocent world of Mapu's "Love of Zion."

In sum, every stratum of language that is too reminiscent of one of the religious texts—Mishna, Talmud, Torah, or Prophets—is rejected in the Israeli base language and may be used in literature as a stylistic device (as we said earlier, the vocabulary of all those texts is an open store for modern Hebrew).

The result of these tendencies is that, from the perspective of the Hebrew sources, the Israeli language is a fusion language. It uses a certain range of language options from the past, on condition that the words or idioms are context-free, do not demand expertise in their sources, and do not mark the text as a mosaic of styles. From the point of view of the language user, a radical reversal occurred: in the past, there was a library of texts, from which the individual could draw words and phrases; now, there is a fused "repertory" of the living language, an active vocabulary and word-combinations employed in the base language or in specific idiolects and genres of discourse, irrespective of their origins. This "living" vocabulary may be used by anyone, irrespective of whether or not he is a "native" speaker.

In morphology and basic syntax, most of the forms were determined unequivocally, and most do prefer Biblical to Mishnaic forms. The real revolution took place in semantics and macrosyntax. The structure of the complex sentence and

the paragraph follow the constraints and licenses developed in the logical writing, political commentary, and belles-lettres of Europe and America (although not all the long-winding, complicated periodic sentences of German or Russian were absorbed into Hebrew). The revival of the Hebrew language began from this world and attempted to match it with Hebrew expressions, rather than the opposite. It is not a case of speakers who grew up in Hebrew and had to expand their horizons but of people who learned Hebrew in the religious library of their childhood, then discovered the modern world and were absorbed by its ideologies, which had an overwhelming explanatory power—provided to them in Yiddish and other languages—and from here they went back to find Hebrew words for the new needs. Hence, it was relatively easy for Israel to become a modern nation. Instead of a base of Biblical Hebrew or Rabbinic Hebrew, which would have slowly grown and absorbed concepts from outside, *a European base was formed within modern Hebrew which observed selected Hebrew rules of morphology and absorbed concepts and expressions from all directions: from the international vocabulary and from the Hebrew library as well.*

Most of the words in an Israeli Hebrew text—a journalistic, scientific, or literary text—are new words, in form or meaning. It is precisely the indefatigable effort of the purists to substitute “Hebrew” or Hebrew-shaped words for foreign words that has filled the Israeli language with an international world of concepts, disguised in Semitic garb. *The law of style* encourages the “seasoning” of texts with words and expressions deviant from the medium, including words from foreign languages, original innovations, and non-Israeli collocations from Hebrew sources. This law also includes the rules of “good taste,” which does not allow such “seasoning” to go beyond a certain limit, so as not to damage its status of an *embedded minority*. Hence, it is precisely the processes of change of non-Hebrew words into Hebrew or Hebrew-looking roots that made room for the introduction of new foreign words and translations of new concepts. As a result, Hebrew is a Semitic language only in the genetic and etymological sense, concerning only basic vocabulary and morphology. From every other perspective, it is an ally of the modern European languages.

Here, for example, is the opening of an editorial in the Israeli newspaper, *Ha-Aretz* of Friday, October 27, 1989:

The Missile Race

One of the television networks in the United States, NBC, has broadcast information stating that a missile built jointly by Israelis and South Africans was launched on the fifth of July from a certain place in South Africa, to a distance of fifteen hundred kilometers toward a group of islands in the direction of Antarctica.

Our broadcast network reported that the Prime Minister “denied reports” on the aforementioned subject, while the Minister of Defense confined himself to stating the standard version that Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the area. The Minister of Trade and Industry could say that the cabinet discussed nuclear weapons and came to a decision on the subject under discussion.

יום ו', כ"ח בתשרי התש"נ
27 באוקטובר 1989

הארץ

מערכת, הנהלה, מודעות, הפצה ומנויים: תל אביב, רחוב ולמן שוקן 21, סל' 5121212
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מירוץ הטילים

אחת מרשתות הטלוויזיה בארצות הברית, "אן-בייס", פירסמה ידיעה לפיה טיל שנבנה במשותף על ידי ישראלים ודרום-אפריקאים, שוגר בחמישה לילי ממקום מסוים ברדום-אפריקה למרחק של אלף וחמש מאות קילומטרים בכיוון קבוצת איים השוכנים כדרך לאנטרקטיקה.

רשות השידור שלנו מסרה כי ראש הממשלה "הכחיש ריווחים" על הנושא הנ"ל, בעוד ששר הביטחון הגביל את עצמו להשמעת הגרסה השגרית כי ישראל לא תהיה הראשונה שתכניס נשק גרעיני לאזור. שר התעשייה והמסחר ירע לספר כי הקבינט רן בחימוש גרעיני וקיבל החלטות בנידון.

Clearly, the Hebrew text can say the same thing and in the same way as the English text (and vice versa). The excerpt includes:

1. International words: *kilometer, television, Antarctica, July, cabinet, Africa, NBC.*
2. New Hebrew words for international terms: *race, [television] networks, missile, launched, report, nuclear weapons, Minister of Trade and Industry, area (in the sense of geographical area), the United States.*
3. Phrases that represent Euro-American concepts: "*has broadcast information stating that,*" "*a certain place,*" "*standard version,*" "*denied reports,*" "*nuclear weapons*" "*fifth of July,*" "*Israel will not be the first,*" "*confined himself to stating the standard version.*"

In this editorial, there are almost no older Hebrew words with their old meanings.

4. The microsyntax, concerning contiguous words, or immediate constituents, is essentially Hebrew: the coordination of verb and noun; the use of the

definite article, prepositions, and connectives; the genitive phrases. Yet, the macrosyntax is European: the sentence in the first paragraph accumulates five stages of states of affairs, which could not be done in the syntax of traditional texts.

Despite all that, as a result of the renewal of the language, the roots of most of the words are Hebrew or quasi-Hebrew. Thus, new concepts and the European macrosyntax were absorbed as part of the base language of Israeli Hebrew, which is open to absorbing new material just as the entire culture of Israel is open to the changing world.

This was the real achievement of the revival of the language: the creation of a language to absorb the culture and civilization of the Western World on the basis of the forms of words in traditional Hebrew. It was accomplished by Hebrew literature, Hebrew journalism, the secular Hebrew high school, and the Hebrew labor movement.

Principles of the Revolution: A Retrospective Summary

Now we may disentangle the twin strains, the social and the linguistic, and observe that the revival of the Hebrew language was accomplished in two different large moves, one linguistic and one social:

1. *The revival of the language itself*, that is, the transformation of a language of a library of religious texts into a comprehensive, modern language.
2. *The transformation of a nuclear society to a new base language, Hebrew.*

These two moves were interdependent but not overlapping. They are, indeed, two diachronic processes, or *intertwined systems*, hence both repeatedly mirroring each other and asymmetrical.

1. *The first move, the revival of the Hebrew language*, was a long-range process, beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century (with earlier antecedents) and continuing uninterrupted to this very day. It was a cumulative, evolutionary process, with three distinct stages:
 - a. The revival of "Hebrew literature" in the broad sense, that is, the extension of a religious language into the secular, representational, and aesthetic domains—which took place in Europe, especially from the end of the nineteenth century.
 - b. The transformation of Hebrew from an embedded language into the base language of a minority society, which has to cover all areas of life and imagination encountered by that society, including daily affairs, social-political relations, and the imaginative world of their reading habits—this took place in Eretz-Israel just before and after World War I.
 - c. The transformation of Hebrew into the language of a State, responsible for the linguistic base of all the institutions and systems of a modern State—this took place with the establishment of the State of Israel.
2. *The second move, the transformation of Hebrew into the base language of a society*, began as the result of a unique historical junction of three social-

cultural polysystems that intersected in the consciousness of the members of one generation:

- the Jewish Religious Polysystem;
- the Secular Hebrew Polysystem evolving in Diaspora;
- the emergence of new social cells in the “social desert” of Eretz-Israel.

This was a revolutionary event, concentrated in a short time, with three stages:

- a. In the period 1881–1904, the method of teaching “Hebrew in Hebrew” was introduced; teachers and students could speak Hebrew on occasion; but perhaps only a few individuals actually turned it into their base language.
- b. In the period 1906–1913, two forms emerged: i) *social cells* whose group life aspired to be conducted in Hebrew (groups of laborers and schoolchildren); ii) *institutional frameworks* formally conducted in Hebrew (the first Hebrew city and Hebrew schools).
- c. At the beginning of the British Mandate (1918), Hebrew leaped from those spotty small cells into a *network of institutions encompassing all of Palestine*; this occurred as the result of the political and educational autonomy granted the *Yishuv*, the recognition of Hebrew as an official language in Palestine,⁷² the freedom of movement between all parts of the country, the mass immigration of the Third Aliya, and the establishment of the Labor Federation, Histadrut, as a full, nationwide, secular polysystem.

It must be noted that there was no complete overlap between the two moves, the linguistic and the social, as is natural with twin systems. Not everything achieved in the first move, in written Hebrew, was absorbed as an active asset into the life of the Hebrew society. And vice versa, the extent of the openness of the Hebrew base in society (e.g., the Yiddish idioms and jokes of Eshkol and Sapir, or the English phrases embedded in the conversation of educated Israelis today) did not pass into written Hebrew (outside of reported speech in realistic fiction or reportage in popular newspapers).

Thus, a full-fledged Secular Hebrew Polysystem was created which transformed Hebrew into the base language of the entire “Hebrew” *Yishuv* (however, most of the adult population still spoke Yiddish and other languages at home). But before 1948 that was not yet the base language of the entire “Jewish” population in Eretz-Israel since the orthodox “old *Yishuv*” still conducted its study of Hebrew texts and all of its life in Yiddish. Nor was it the language of the Zionist establishment in the rest of the world, where Hebrew still served as “a ceremonial language”

72. For the first time in history did Hebrew appear on official stamps, though in the lowest place of the trilingual stamp and with the name in Hebrew: *Palestina* (A”Y). The British government would not allow the full Hebrew name of the country; the compromise A”Y was an acronym for *Eretz-Israel* and was read by Jews as the Yiddish interjection for trouble: *ay-ay-ay*.

(in Usishkin’s 1928 description), used to open meetings, while the language of the Zionist Congress up to the time of the Holocaust was the so-called “Congress Deutsch,” that is, Germanized Yiddish. Even the new secular Hebrew schools in Diaspora that introduced “Sephardi” Hebrew were embedded within another base language of society in which the children spoke at home and in the outside world (or two languages: e.g., Yiddish at home, Russian or Polish in frames of the State).

Ultimately, a new Hebrew language arose which is the *base language* of the society, the individual, and the text:

The base language of a society means that social and cultural frameworks are conducted primarily in that language but that other languages may be embedded in it (like conferences in English at the Hebrew University).

The base language of an individual is not necessarily his mother tongue: Berl Katznelson, David Ben-Gurion, Natan Zach, Yehuda Amichai, Dan Ben-Amotz, Lea Goldberg, Dan Pagis, Shimon Peres, and many others, whose basic language of thought and expression is Hebrew, were not born into that language. Nor is it necessarily the only intellectual language of an individual: many Israelis read literature and scientific and technical texts in non-Hebrew languages, but the base language of their lives and consciousness is still Hebrew.

Nevertheless, one distinguishing characteristic of the base language of a normal culture is that there is a generation that was born into that language in which they achieved their early socialization and which is their exclusive or primary language. Since the revival of Hebrew achieved that goal, the status of the language in Israeli society is secure.

The base language of the text means a language in which the framework of the text is presented and in which most of its sentences are formulated, even though, on this basis, there can be various kinds of embedded material. Such a structure enables the dynamic development of the Hebrew language because the ever-growing base absorbs new materials—both from the world at large and from Hebrew sources as well—and assimilates them into tomorrow’s Hebrew base.

These three—the base language of the society, the individual, and the text—are interdependent: without many individuals whose base language is Hebrew, no language of a Hebrew society could function; and vice versa, without a living society in Hebrew, a Hebrew-speaking individual is nothing but a curiosity or a Don Quixote (or a “Ben-Yehuda”). Also, without the continuous development of a rich language of texts, there is not a full life either for the individual or for the society in our complex world (unless they preserve their language as a “tribal tongue” as many African nations do, and require another language, e.g., English, for cultural life); and vice versa, without a society living in this language, the world of texts has no foundation, as Hebrew and Yiddish literature in Diaspora died out.

The connection between the three intertwined systems is circular. Hence the difficulty of the revival of the language was inherent in the need to break into the

circle and establish its three interdependent areas almost at the same time. Hebrew literature had prepared the first move (in the expansion of the written language); Zionism opened a territory for a society formed in the new language; and the ideological emphasis in the life of the individual turned his third language into his base language: the combination of these factors enabled the revolution in all three dimensions. As soon as such a three-dimensional and circularly interdependent network was established in principle—even though the language was at first poor—it could be filled with ever more material in all three dimensions. The integration of these three enabled the uninterrupted absorption of groups of population and of world concepts, assimilating them into a living Hebrew culture.

Remarks Toward a Theory of Social Revolution

An explanation of the revival of the Hebrew language allows us to draw some fundamental conclusions about the processes of change initiated in society:

1. The transformation of an idea into the reality of social life is like the transition from a line to a three-dimensional sphere. An idea is a logical, linear content, formulated in language. Its realization, however, fills the multidimensional texture of the entire society. In such a transition, we can distinguish four stages: *formulation*, *rhetoric*, *realization*, *acceptance* (which also act in combination and not necessarily in this order). In the formulation of the idea, various arguments and schools of thought take part, resulting in a gradual clarification and development of the idea. Rhetoric is the ensemble of arguments, models, propaganda, and emotional influences on the public. Personal realization, like that of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, is a change in the life of the individual for the sake of implementing the idea. But it is only the social acceptance of the idea and of its realization that can guarantee its embodiment in a society.

Because the life of a society is multidimensional, the realization of an idea cannot be put into effect without a cluster of additional ideas that aspire to encompass many aspects of life. The revival of the Hebrew language was not identical with Zionism—there were Hebrew writers who were not Zionists and Zionists who did not live in Hebrew—and yet only in the cluster of Zionist realization could the language also be revived. Yet such “Zionist” clusters were very different with different persons, generations, and ideologies.

2. Revolutionary innovation does not appear *ex nihilo*. On all levels, it is founded on a two-stage *reversal of relations*: a) the development of a new element embedded within the old society; b) the reversal of the *embedded*

into the new *framework* or the new *base*. The Hebrew language that was rejuvenated in writing but still embedded in the cultural life of the society in Diaspora turned into the base language of the new society. In the life of the individual, knowledge of Hebrew, embedded in his intellectual world as a third language, turned into the base language of his life. In the schools in Eretz-Israel around the turn of the century, Hebrew, just one of the languages studied (along with French, Arabic, and Turkish), turned into the framework language of education and ultimately into its base language.

Examples of such a process can be found in all of modern culture. For example, free verse emerged in France as one option, embedded in the poetics of Symbolist poetry; later, the relation was reversed and free verse became the base of Modernist poetry in Europe and around the world.

3. In terms of the social carrier of the revolution, we can distinguish two steps:
 - a. The creation of a small nucleus that implements the new concept in a clear form. The nucleus is voluntary and activates self-control. It has two advantages: on the one hand, it constitutes a society in miniature and, on the other, it is small enough to realize the idea in its perfect and controlled form. Such nuclei were the groups of laborers, the *Gymnasya Hertseliya*, and even the entire city of Tel Aviv.
 - b. A historical change or shock from the outside which enables such a peripheral nucleus to move to the center of culture. Thus, for example, Expressionism was created in Germany or Futurism in Russia among small groups of radical artists and poets before World War I and moved to the center of the cultural stage after the shock of the war. The BILU group (only thirteen of whom arrived in Palestine) was organized in Russia before the pogroms of 1881, but only in their wake did it become central to creating the First Zionist Aliya, followed by a larger immigrant wave. The workers' movement of the Second Aliya included just several hundred people, but only after World War I was their ethos taken up by thousands and placed in the center of society.

In the Hebrew labor movement and in the youth movements established by it, there was an awareness of being an avant-garde, the "vanguard preceding an army." In this, there were two intellectual influences: 1) the idea of the holy Jewish community of Safed in the time of Lurianic Kabbala in the sixteenth century believing that a small community of saintly people can bring about a cosmic upheaval. This idea, though watered down, influenced Hasidism in Eastern Europe. The Hebrew labor movement imbibed the atmosphere of Hasidism, in the notions of a voluntary sect and of collective excitement and dancing, and in the role of the "Rebbe" in it (Katznelson, Tabenkin, Ya'ari). 2) Lenin's idea of the small and disciplined nucleus as the seed of the future revolution, an idea

based on a profound distrust of the masses and democracy.⁷³ The notion is that a small, dedicated minority willing to sacrifice must retreat from the majority of the nation to create a new image of life which is the only solution for the entire nation (and which the nation will ultimately accept). Not just in politics but in culture too this elitist notion may be extremely influential—for example, the role of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, who retreated to England and changed the notion of poetry in America. For twenty-five years, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda had little following, but the kernel, the principle of reviving Hebrew, was there; then the revolutionary situation, which swept up Jewish youth after the Revolution of 1905, instantly ignited the fires of Hebrew in Eretz-Israel and in Diaspora. Now a new kernel was established, the Hebrew-speaking cells of the Second Aliya—to be picked up by an even bigger revolutionary wave after the Balfour Declaration, the Russian Revolutions of 1917, and the pogroms of 1919, in the Third Aliya.

4. A key characteristic of the creation of such nuclei is a severance from the chain of the past: a biological, geographical, cultural, and/or ideological severance. A small group of Russian revolutionaries in Switzerland or Jews in Palestine, for example, distant from the masses of their people; the establishment of a Hebrew "national" (i.e., secular) school on the background of a religious society that did not have schools in the modern sense at all and especially not in Hebrew; or the creation of collective cells of young laborers without the generations of fathers and grandfathers.

Hebrew literature in Eretz-Israel also crystallized in two such severing waves: 1) The literary avant-garde of the 1920s (Shlonski, Uri-Tsvi Grinberg, Almi, Talpir, Shteynman) suited the avant-garde self-perception of the pioneer *Yishuv* and was embraced by it; it did not grow out of the Hebrew literature that preceded it ("the generation of Bialik") but started all over again under the influence of the avant-garde of Russian and German literature. 2) The *Palmakh*, select paramilitary units, made up of youngsters who were born or grew up in Eretz-Israel, and trained in kibbutzim in the 1940s, was a society separated from its parents in the city (who themselves were the masters of the first separation). They created a "native" Israeli life-style and literature, which did not know about Jewish life in Diaspora one generation earlier (their parents hardly told them of their own childhood). Their "Bible" was *Panfilov's Men* (the Hebrew translation of Alexandr Bek's Russian novel *The Volokolamsk Road*, describing the heroism of the defenders of Moscow in 1941); that is, they were influenced by Russian heroic Socialist

73. For Lenin's influence on Borochov, see Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics* (1981). There was a cognate imagery too: Lenin's Bolshevik newspaper was called the *Spark* and carried the slogan *From the spark, a fire will be ignited*; Bialik's famous poem, "I Didn't Get the Light for Free," talked of the lonely spark in his poetry that will ignite a fire in the people; and Hana Senesh's widely sung poem said, *Happy the match that ignited a fire*.

Realism rather than by the earlier Hebrew avant-garde of Shteynman or Berditshovski. These were new beginnings, from ground zero, introduced into the continuous history of Hebrew literature only in retrospect.

Indeed, the history of Western culture—particularly in the revolutionary and radical period of the last hundred and twenty years—proceeds in fits and starts, and it is only later that old elements are absorbed again, consciously or in the subtext, and the new is “domesticated” into the old history.

5. The new development is neither linear nor continuous. It takes place on several parallel lines, which begin at different times and in various areas of life, under the influence of a single idea; some of those lines fail and some are renewed and succeed. Such lines of change may include individuals, schools, ideologies, newspaper, and organizations. Ben-Yehuda was the first visible propagandist who launched the idea of the revival of Hebrew and started the momentum of creating new words in all areas of life. He had almost no social influence. But two lines of development inspired by him—the innovation of words and the Hebrew Language Committee—continue to operate to this day, although not in the center but at the periphery of the life of the language.

Schools in the agricultural settlements realized the idea of teaching “Hebrew in Hebrew,” but this line also died out and did not lead to the creation of a society living in Hebrew. It was only the new line, the social cells of the Second Aliya, that actualized Hebrew speech in a social framework. The urban *Gimnasya* and the education in the schools of the labor movement were, again, genuine new beginnings and not continuations of education in the agricultural settlements (just as kibbutz agriculture was not a continuation of the private agricultural settlements but rather emerged in opposition to them). Only in a continuous historical tale can we narrate all these lines as following one another.

But we must not forget the Diaspora. Parallel to the “Precise Language” Society of Ben-Yehuda and his friends in Jerusalem, similar societies arose and Hebrew education emerged throughout the Diaspora: their number was small in terms of the Diaspora but was quite large when compared with all the Hebrew speakers in Eretz-Israel. After World War I, in the wake of the Balfour Declaration on the one hand and the rights granted at Versailles to minorities in Europe on the other—and under the inspiration of the myth of the revival of the Hebrew language in Eretz-Israel—a network of Hebrew schools, gymnasia, teachers’ colleges, and Zionist youth movements arose in Diaspora. From all these parallel lines, there was a constant stream of people to Eretz-Israel, which reinforced the Hebrew project. This multilinear effort not only revived the language but also spread it throughout the society, supported by the political establishment of the voluntary *Yishuv* and later of the obligatory Hebrew State.

PART III

Sources on the Hebrew Language Revival

Translated from Hebrew by Barbara Harshav