HISTORY

OF THE

YIDDISH

LANGUAGE

VOLUME 1

MAX WEINREICH

Edited by
Paul Glasser
Translated by
Shlomo Noble
with the assistance of Joshua A. Fishman

through studying the stock languages we occasionally understand Yiddish developments even when the studied facts in themselves are not the same. Frequently the spoken Yiddish of the author or recorder is apparent beneath the garb of medieval and later Hebrew texts. The study of other languages, even fairly remote from Yiddish, helps explain processes that have taken place in Yiddish. Through pointing up in a concrete manner the impact of the factor of Jewishness, of wandering, we are able to see what linguistic material could have been available in a given time and place to the linguistic group. From the details we induce a rule, and from the rules we can make deductions concerning other doubtful details.

The more findings of diverse kinds we can confront, and the more linguistic facts that tie in with extralinguistic ones, the more the fundamental lines become clarified. Many knotty matters still remain, and skeptics may anticipate the fact that some dark corners of the linguistic past will possibly never be illumined. But through a comprehensive view of the great mass of trees in one forest there rises an overall picture of the development that in the course of many centuries has brought us to the present stage of the Yiddish language (10.1 ff.).

Yiddish in the Framework of Other Jewish Languages; Ashkenaz in the Framework of Jewish Communities

2.1 The rise of Ashkenaz signalizes, along with the rise of Sepharad, the beginning of the European period in Jewish history. There had been Jews in Europe earlier, and after that conspicuous Jewish communities still remained in Asia and Africa. But on the eve of the year 1000 the center of gravity of the Jewish people began to pass over to Europe and it remained there for over a thousand years. The holocaust of World War II and subsequent events led to a new constellation: the establishment of the State of Israel, the concentration of over one-half of the Jewish people in the Americas. The new developments are still vague. But however they shape up, the one thousand to eleven hundred years of Europe-centered Jewishness will have left a permanent, indelible stamp on Jewish history.

In drawing the framework of Yiddish and of Ashkenaz in the general Jewish world it is irrelevant to seek new, hitherto unknown facts. It is a matter of "seeing together" (1.11.1) and "seeing apart" more or less known facts in order to map the Jewish cultural-historical condition that led to the rise of Ashkenaz. Our direct interest is in the period from about 900 to 1200.

The Jewish people were then divided into culture areas. Some of these remained in history with the traditional Jewish names: Sepharad, Ashkenaz, and others. Each culture area is also characterized by a specific linguistic condition. A brief list of the culture areas follows:

1. Loter, which gradually expanded and became Ashkenaz.

2. West of Ashkenaz was Zarfat (2.17 ff.). This is frequently identified with France, and in modern Hebrew this is actually the accepted name of the country; but in the Middle Ages Zarfat meant only northern France, and we shall subsequently see (2.21 ff.) how important it is to remember this difference.

3. Southern France, known among Jews as Provense; the relationship to the non-Jewish concept of Provence will later become clear.

4. Further south, on the Spanish Peninsula, was Sepharad, including Spain, Catalonia, and Portugal (2.20).

5. East of Ashkenaz was Knaan, land of the Slavs (2.13 ff.). It will be seen that eventually there were two discrete Knaanic culture areas, west Knaan and east Knaan.

6. Northern and central Italy is another culture area (2.18 ff.).

7. Southern Italy belonged to that culture area which was known among Jews as Yavan (2.12 ff.), including the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor, and the Greek Islands.

8. All of northern Africa, Palestine, Babylonia, and the Arabian Peninsula down to Yemen were one large culture area. It may be called Ishmael, which is the traditional Jewish name for Mohammedans; this will clarify at once that the reference is to the Jewish area in the Arab culture sphere (2.11 ff.).

9. East of Yavan and Asia we single out the Targumic culture area (2.8), in the corner where Iraq, Turkey, and Iran meet today.
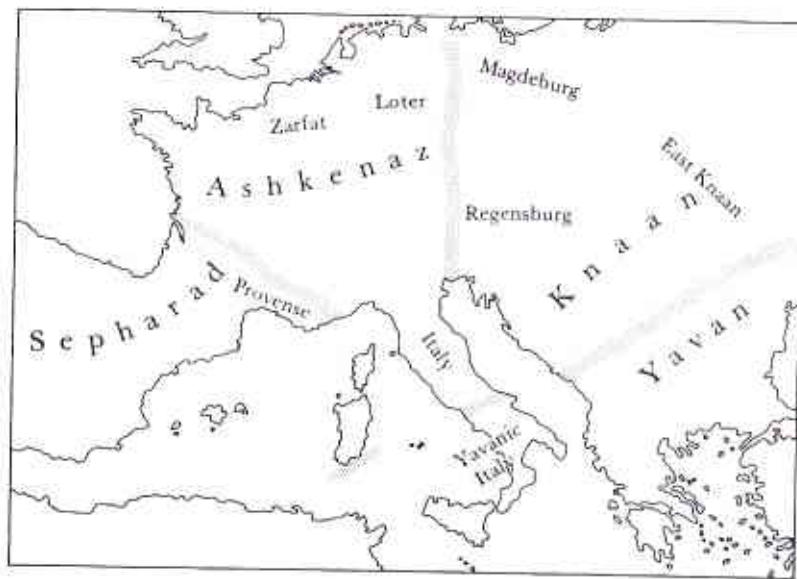

Fig. 3. Jewish culture areas in Europe, 900–1200.

10. Furthest east is the culture area which may be best designated by the traditional Jewish name *Paras-umaday* (Persia and Media) (2.9 ff.).

This is the total of Jewish culture areas in the period of ± 900 ± 1200; figure 3 shows the Jewish map of that time.

The Yiddish language, born and developed in the area of Loter-Ashkenaz, is the theme of this whole book; the other Jewish languages and their culture areas are discussed in this chapter.

Even after the first hasty review, there remains no doubt that the Jewish culture areas were bound up with general historical developments. Zarfat vis-à-vis Provense is a reflection of the two Frances in the European Middle Ages (2.21.1); Loter is bound up with Lorraine (6.3.1); Knaan, in its relation to Ashkenaz, reminds us of the relationship of the Slavic world to the Germans. But it is also evident, and later on it will become more evident, that the Jewish circumstances were not mechanical copies of the general circumstances. Not only Jewish history, but "Jewish geography" too, is a separate topic, which occasionally coincides with general geography, but more frequently does not (6.5). Ashkenaz and Zarfat, as seen above, are not the same as Germany and France; a Litvak is not necessarily from the territory known today as Lithuania; he may also be from Vitebsk or Mogilev. Hence the conclusion that Jewish culture areas cannot have such sharply delimited boundary lines as sovereign states; so too in the case of chronology it is safer to add ca. or ±, for it is a question of historical processes, not of changes resulting from an exactly datable diplomatic pact. And on the other hand we must conclude that the areas are sufficiently defined and the processes deep enough to be considered real geographical-historical magnitudes. One has to learn to see Jewish developments from within, not through the glasses of a quasi-"universal" history that overlooks Jewish peculiarities.

Presently another question arises: if Jewishness varies considerably in area and in time, where is the golden link of one Jewishness through the generations? In the consciousness of successive generations of Jews, Jewishness is assuredly one. Ashkenaz, for instance, in its vertical legitimation (3.6.1) relied basically on the Gaonic period, and the Gaonim on the talmudic sages, and the Talmud stems directly from the Mishna and from the Written Law. Everywhere among Jews we encounter essentially the same "preestate," the same basic concepts of Torah, charity and mores. Rabbinic literature is so sparing in cultural historical information, for it proceeds on the assumption that a Jew is a Jew—his vernacular, his attire, his furniture were of no interest. Today these features *are* of interest. Let us therefore not be likened to that anthropologist who went to study a Melanesian tribe and came back with the following report: Each inhabitant there, man or woman, has

two eyes, two ears, a nose, and a mouth with teeth. At times, to be sure, we want to hear that all men were created in His image and in His likeness, but when we already know this we want to find out wherein individuals and collectives differ. For the philosophically oriented student the most important thing is the permanence within the change; for the historically oriented student the change within the permanent is equally important.

2.1.1 To the extent that the facts in the framework have substantially changed in the past seven or eight hundred years, we shall introduce in outline new details in discussing the different languages. But where do the facts sketched above derive from? Neither Ashkenaz nor the contemporary extra-Ashkenazic communities fell from the skies; there was an antecedent in Jewish history. The initial pattern of more than one language and more than one community is even older than the Jewish Diaspora, and this antecedent helped shape not only Ashkenaz and Yiddish, as seen above, but all other Jewish culture areas and their languages. We must dig down to the roots.

The great divide is not the loss of the territorial base following the Destruction of the Second Temple. Long, long ago the material bases of Jewish existence (territory and statehood) began to be permeated with elements of spirituality. In analyzing the history of Hebrew (2.5 ff.) we shall see that multifacetedness in Jewishness began as far back as the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century b.c.e. and has remained ever since: the Babylonian Exile removed a considerable part of the Jewish people outside the boundaries of Palestine. When Cyrus permitted the rebuilding of the Temple, not all the exiles returned from Babylonia. Subsequently, in the time of the Second Commonwealth, there sprang up Hellenistic Jewry with its center in Alexandria, and at the time of the Destruction of the Second Temple Josephus Flavius wrote the often-quoted sentence:

> . . . for there is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come, and by which our fasts and lighting up lamps, and many of our prohibitions as to our foods, are not observed (New York, 1924, Havercamp translation, World Library Edition, vol. 10).

The complete collapse of political independence and the victory of Christianity in the Roman Empire further intensified the process of dispersion, and the Diaspora became almost identical with the then-accessible world. Around the middle of the first millennium after the Destruction of the Second Temple, Jews dwelt from Persia and Babylonia to the Atlantic, from the outskirts of the Sahara to the Middle

Rhine. The pattern was set in Jewish history which we now know from so many individual cases: the pattern of transplantation. A Jewish community sends forth a shoot to a new place; there it digs in, takes root, and thrives. The storm shakes and breaks off branches, but the tree remains a tree; it retains its individuality. If later an ax cuts down the tree and it is uprooted, the former shoot has already become a substitute stem and, perhaps, a full stem in its own right.

In the first half of the seventh century the star of the Arabs rose, and with an unbelievably rapid pace this people, heretofore practically unknown, occupied the proscenium of history. Country after country succumbed to their blows until the caliphate extended in Asia from the Indus to the Arabian Gulf, in Africa from the Nile to the Atlantic. In 711 the conquerors crossed the straits to Europe and established an Arab reign on the Spanish Peninsula that lasted many centuries; the last Arab bastion fell as late as 1492. Through the Arab conquest an iron curtain descended that divided the world into a Mohammedan and a Christian sphere or, in other terms, into an Arabic and a Greco-Latin sphere. Despite internal conflicts among the Arabs themselves, contacts hitherto nonexistent came into being, on the Mohammedan side of the curtain.

2.1.2 Conversely, the connections of Christian southern and western Europe with the East by way of the Mediterranean were severed. As far back as the middle of the ninth century an Arab geographer told of Jewish merchants, the so-called Radhanites, who journeyed from the West to the Middle East and back, sometimes by sea and sometimes by land. There had to be commerce, for each side needed the commodities that the other had, and the Jews were apparently cut out for the function of intermediaries. The Syrians, earlier the principal carriers of distant trade, now became Mohammedans and no longer welcome in Christian Europe. Conversely, the potential role of the Jews increased. True enough, they were looked at askance both in the Christian and in the Mohammedan worlds, but they also had the great advantage of being neither Christian nor Mohammedan.

Perforce the land routes came more and more to the fore. Even when there was no full-fledged war, the sea was in the hands of the Arab fleets; they would capture the ships, seize the merchandise, sell the captives into slavery.

There were no dugout, built-up highways like ours in the Middle Ages; mostly there were strips of land cut through the woods, passable by carts. Only after taking this into consideration may we say that there were two major avenues of European long-distance trade.

One led through Byzantium. And even the newly risen empire of Charlemagne and his successor (6.3.1, 6.5.1), though hostile to Byzan-

tium, could not overcome geographical realities and had to resort to the Byzantine road. From Cologne and Mainz, the way was up the Rhine, over an Alpine pass to northwestern Italy, then east and over the northern Adriatic Sea to Dalmatia, across the Balkan Peninsula to Constantinople, across the Bosporus to Asia Minor and to Syria. There one came to the boundary between the Byzantine Empire and the Bagdad Caliphate.

A second main road from the Middle Rhine ran more to the north. From Mainz a turn was made into the Main and there, by water, or through the valley along the water, toward Prague. Thence the road led through Red Russia (in modern terms: eastern Galicia and western Volhynia) to Kiev, and further along the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea into the Middle East.

The two major roads could be combined. Going up the Rhine one could pass the Main and stay on the major river for another two hundred kilometers to the south. Here one was fairly close to the sources of the Danube, and one could go as far as Regensburg along that river. Here the road forked: one could continue along the Danube (or by way of the Danube) until one joined the previously indicated road to Byzantium, or go from Regensburg to Prague and there take the road to the Caspian Sea.

Mountains and valleys, seas and rivers are immutable; therefore the communications paths seem permanent at first. But purely geographical factors are modified by major historic events: the rise of the Arabs, the Crusades, the Mongol invasion. The geographical-historical givens here presented map out the broad lines of Jewish history in the European Middle Ages.

2.2 The Arab conquests not only created new power relations that changed the political and economic condition of the Jews, but also led to a new location of Jewish spiritual forces. At stake were the very supply lines of Jewishness. The first source of Jewishness itself and of legitimate authority in Jewishness (3.6 ff.) for the entire Diaspora was, of course, Palestine. This remained so symbolically after the Second Destruction of the Second Temple. But in the first centuries after the Catastrophe Palestine sank to a position second to the Jewish community in Babylonia, and when Bagdad became the capital of the caliphate, Palestine was completely thrust into a position of provincialism. Louis Ginzburg could afford to say that the Babylonian Talmud vanquished the Palestinian with the power of the Arab sword. Because of the preponderance of the caliphs, the Babylonian yeshivas rose to primacy in scholarship and authority, and in later years Babylonia claimed its Jewishness to be more authentic, for the country was never under the rule of the cross. On the wings of Arab expansion the Babylonian version of Jewish-

ness spread into Egypt, thence to Kairouan (7.7) and Fez in the western part of North Africa, and ultimately to Lucena, Seville, and Toledo on the Spanish Peninsula. The furthest direct emanation of the Babylonian Jewish influence to the north was in Provense, which was a satellite of Sepharad (2.22). Beyond that, the way was blocked.

Jews in Italy and further north in western Europe were also in need of guidance and legitimation from the East (how else could they "reorient" themselves in the new conditions of life?). A modicum of influence penetrated from Kairwan into southern Italy by way of Sicily, but it was insufficient. Direct communication with the East was much more difficult, for Italy and central Europe were outside the Arab communication network. Of necessity one had to resort to the newly opened land routes—either through Constantinople and Asia Minor, or through Kiev to the Caspian Sea.

Here a rule in Jewish history becomes manifest that may be called the law of equilibrium—a direct refutation of the theory of the independence in earlier years (when?) of Jewish spiritual life from external influence. On the contrary, today an individual or a group is freer with respect to communication, for the world's roads are generally open and one can choose the desired one. The further in the past, the smaller the number of communication lines open to the Jews; and if a line was cut, the Jews too had no choice but to wait for the opening of a new passage. This is a situation which must be kept well in mind. Furthermore, where there are no direct data on Jews, Jewish historical processes may sometimes be deduced from an analysis of general ones.

We must not understand this in the sense that Jews sat with folded hands and waited for "someone" to present them with new means of communication. It is quite conceivable that Jews frequently paved a new way, in the sense of using it first. There is more than ample proof that Jewish initiative in the Middle Ages was no less than in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jews played a conspicuous role in the international trade with the East, and it is most likely that they were not only cotravelers on the new roads but also coinitiators in paving them. One thing stood the Jewish merchant in good stead, in which respect no Persian, Syrian, Armenian, or Frank could compare with him. Wherever he came, he found "Our brethren the sons of Israel," with whom he could communicate—if not in his daily idiom, then in a tortured Hebrew (4.5). From Loter to Persia the Jewish land merchant found support among other Jews.

2.3 The direct conclusion that thrusts itself upon us is that there was no Jewish history independent of general history in the Middle Ages. And why only in the Middle Ages? It is necessary to go back even before the Babylonian Exile (2.1.1). Jewish involvement in general history

is as old as the existence of Jews as a people. Assyria swallowed the ten tribes, the first Judean kingdom was crushed between Babylonia and Egypt, the Second Commonwealth was destroyed by the Roman Empire. The sentence about independence must be expanded: there is no country or people that "forges its own fate." There would have been no France and Frenchmen had there been no Roman expansion, which brought Latin to Gaul. The history of England would have been different and English would have remained a purely Germanic language had the Normans not invaded from France in 1066. The Russian governmental structure was recast by the Mongol invasion and Slavic Russian assumed a new aspect under the influence of coterritorial Tatar and Finnish. The same applies to the Arab expansion. The people of Spain, Christian in culture and Romance in language, bear to this day an Arab stamp. Byzantium, bordering directly on Arab lands in the East, was also affected by them. Even the rise of the Carolingian Empire was in large measure a result of the new conditions in the South and in the East: "Without Mohammed there would have been no Charlemagne." Some may be of the opinion that this dictum of the famous Belgian historian Pirenne is too sharp in formulation; at any rate, it reflects the nature of the historical development.

If cardinal processes in European history were determined largely by "external" factors, small wonder then that these same factors also steered Jewish history in new directions.

But the Jewish merchants carried with them not only furs, silk, and spices, but also books and responsa. General socioeconomic history can instruct us on the objects and the routes of international commerce; concerning the specific Jewish cargo we must inquire from Jewish history. Jewish writings of the Middle Ages tell us little about trade and a good deal about Halakah. Even the private letters written by Jewish merchants en route (several such letters from the eleventh and later centuries have been preserved in the Cairo Genizah) were not confined solely to business and family matters; frequently part of the letter deals with a scholarly matter that is a combination of business and scholarship. And if in respect to business, it may be said that the Jewishness of the merchant was an external factor, the Torah element, in its widest sense, is something specifically Jewish. Linking our discussion with what we have said above about equilibrium (2.2), we must add now that although Jewish wayfarers traveled the same routes as others did, they frequently carried a unique cargo.

The Jews are not just a number of scattered individuals. They entered history as a group. Individual Jews are members of this group. Jewish history is part of general history, but not a copy of it. Some historic storms are different: the Reformation did not affect Jews

directly; on the other hand only distant reverberations of the Sabbatean movement reached the outer world. Only in the glittering interplay of autonomy and involvement can we grasp the reality of Jewish history.

A Jewish culture item must be defined as an intersection of two lines. Just as a geographic point is located by longitude and latitude, so a Jewish culture item is simultaneously on a vertical line that represents Jewish tradition and on a horizontal line representing the non-Jewish ambience. A Jewish culture item is a compromise formation (3.2.1).

In accord with this system of coordinates of specific needs and general possibilities, the arrangement of Jewish culture forces in the Middle Ages is distributed. The results of the relocation brought about by the Arabs are manifest in the culture conditions of the Jews to date. Due to the powerful division into Mohammedan and Christian there arose new territorial variants or culture areas in Jewishness for the recognition and comprehension of which a Jewish culture morphology is needed. At times the differences are so striking that there is the temptation to follow the historians of other cultures and to denote successive stages by number: Jewishness I (up to the Babylonian Exile)—territorial concentration, national independence; Jewishness II (up to the Destruction of the Second Temple)—the penetration of spirituality into a politically motivated system; and Jewishness III (after the Destruction of the Second Temple)—spirituality as the ideal basis of existence, however pervaded by materiality that stems from the nature of man and society. But the comprehension of a fundamental fact revolts against such an externally justified conception (2.1); in the feeling of Jews at all times and in all places the oneness of the Jews was never sundered. Therefore it seems more appropriate and more in consonance with historical truth to consider the culture areas as variants of a culture supersystem; we are dealing with subcultures of one Jewish culture.

2.4 With respect to one manifestation, this diversity in oneness is frequently mentioned in Jewish scholarship: the division into various versions (occasionally the expression *customs* is used) in the liturgy and in the practial application of the Law. Zunz, a founder of modern Jewish scholarship, one hundred years ago drew the major lines accepted to date. "About 980 the holiday prayers of Egypt, Andalusia, France, as far as the *piyut* was concerned, could no longer be identical and since the 11th century the variation in the versions becomes historically increasingly obvious." Elbogen's well-known book about the liturgy differentiates the following customs in Europe: Ashkenaz (in two variants, the territories are divided by the Elbe), Italy (in the sources "the customs of the sons of Rome" or "the customs of the Loazim" or "the Italian custom"), Byzantium ("the custom of Romania" or "the custom of the land of Yavan"), and Sepharad. After the Spanish-Portuguese

Expulsion, the custom of Sepharad spread to various communities in western Europe and around the whole Mediterranean Sea. Originally the Babylonian custom prevailed exclusively in the Middle East, but on the strength of Maimonides the Sephardic custom penetrated as far as Yemen.

One illustration will suffice for the variation in customs within the framework of the several versions. The Destruction of the Temple affected all Jews and the ninth of Av is a universal day of mourning, but all Jews except the Sephardim recite the lamentations composed by Elazar Kalir around 800; among the Sephardic Jews there is no trace of these lamentations. In the practical application of the Law these variations are no less striking, beginning with the attitude toward the *herem* of Rabbi Gershom. To this day the Sephardic marriage contracts contain the stipulation (generally only a fossilized juridical formula, essentially superfluous) that the husband may not marry a second wife while the first is alive.

The existence of different pronunciations in reading Hebrew is generally well known, but until quite recently (and among the public at large to this day) interest was concentrated on which pronunciation was the "correct" one, the Sephardic or Ashkenazic, and correct meant "genuine," that is closer to the oldest, the original pronunciation of Hebrew (7.4). On the eve of World War I Idelsohn described the pronunciations current in Yemen, Persia, Dagestan, Babylonia, Samaria, Syria, and Morocco, in addition to the Sephardic and Ashkenazic pronunciations and their subdivisions. Although many details in his description are subject to question, he did lift the subject from the normation sphere of right versus wrong and thus laid the foundation for an understanding of the various pronunciations in the context of the relevant Jewish subcultures.

Scholars have also dealt with the various Jewish languages, the number of which exceeds ten; above all, there is interest in the study of Dzhudezmo (2.22 ff.) and western Loez (2.17 ff.). A bibliography of writings about Jewish languages exclusive of Hebrew would comprise several thousand items—and that not including Yiddish; more has been written about Yiddish alone than about all other Jewish languages together.

Regrettably, however, there is no coordination of the known facts on the various communities, hence the generalizations made cannot be sufficiently weighty. There is need of a systematic research program. A set of questions should be formulated under a uniform point of view concerning both material and spiritual matters. For the establishment of the proper perspectives a maximum penetration into the past is necessary. The inquiry should probe size of population, calculated or esti-

mated with some justification; classification according to occupation at various times and in various places; degree of contact with the non-Jewish environment among the various categories of the Jewish population; sources of authority derived from antecedent centers (Babylonia vis-à-vis Palestine); intensity of talmudic study and the influence of talmudic study among wide strata of the Jewish population; effect of simultaneous mass expulsions as against repeated shifts in the course of a longer period; differences in interpretation of laws and customs; differences in liturgy and in the practical application of the Law; various kinds of Hebrew and various literary forms among different communities. It can easily be seen that various scholarly disciplines will have to contribute both materials and methods to a Jewish culture morphology which is in the forefront of desiderata of a synthesizing Jewish scholarship.

Since Ashkenaz has been studied more than any other Jewish culture area and Yiddish more than any other Jewish language, the questions and the methodological instruments will have to come largely from these.

The survey in the present chapter focuses on the language factor among Jews and arrives at certain formulations about Jewish interlinguistics (2.25); culture areas are involved when directly relevant to the matter of language.

2.5 The beginnings of Hebrew among the Jews are obscure. What we know about the entry of the Children of Israel into Palestine leads to the belief that originally the arrivals spoke another variant of Semitic and that the later Hebrew was already a fusion language of several Semitic formations. Hebrew was very close to the neighboring Semitic languages, as the research of the past half-century has clearly indicated. The literature of Ras Shamra, north of Palestine, manifests remarkable similarities to certain parts of the Bible.

The name *ivrit* (Hebrew) is not in the Bible. Traditionally, *sefat knaan* (the language of Canaan) in Isaiah 19:18 is rendered *Hebrew*; in 2 Kings 18:26 and in Nehemiah 13:24 Hebrew is referred to as *yehudit*. The name *ivrit* appears first in the Mishna, that is, as late as the second half of the Second Commonwealth. *Ivrit* comes from the sentence in Joshua 24:2, *beever hanahar yashvu avotekhem* (beyond the River your fathers dwelt). Still younger is the name *leshon kodesh* (Loshn-koydesh) the language of holiness, derived from the Talmud and the Midrash and reflecting totally new sociolinguistic conditions (2.7); this name is dominant in the entire later tradition, particularly the Ashkenazic.

All in all, the language of the Bible is mentioned therein only a few times. As long as the Hebrew language was the only one among the people, there was presumably no great need for naming it. The need of a fixed name crystallized only in the competition with a second perma-

nent language among Jews, that is, when Aramaic became established (2.8). Hebrew ceased being the only language among Jews as a result of the Babylonian Exile (586–516 B.C.E.). Formally the Babylonian Exile lasted only seventy years—"formally," for not all exiles returned to Palestine with Ezra—but the effect of the Babylonian Exile on Jewish history never ceased. Possibly because Babylonian was also a Semitic language, hence close in structure to the Hebrew that was brought along, and perhaps for extralinguistic reasons, the exiles in Babylonia adopted (with modifications that only specialists can try to ascertain) Babylonian, one of the variants of the Aramaic language. Toward the end of the sixth century B.C.E. Aramaic appeared in Palestine too, and thus began the decline of Hebrew as a spoken language. The later the period examined, the more the problem confronting linguistics is not the amount of Aramaic that penetrated but the amount of Hebrew that survived in the mouths of the people. Later parts of the Bible (for example, Daniel, which presumably went through its final redaction in the second century B.C.E.) are in Aramaic, and this is one of the many proofs of how strong its position was by then.

The infiltration of Aramaic to Palestine has not yet been synthesized by the specialists, although many detailed studies have appeared in the last decades. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, Abraham Geiger maintained that the decline of Hebrew as a spoken language began when the Babylonian repatriates arrived in Palestine in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, and was rapid. A later generation of scholars, including Nöldeke, Schürer, and Brockelmann, were no longer so categorical about the time, but they too maintained that in the last centuries up to the Destruction of the Second Temple Hebrew was a "dying" language. They adduced proof not only from the fact that Aramaic penetrated the Bible, but also from the style of the later parts of the Bible that are in Hebrew. On the other hand there are statements in the Mishna and in the Gemara that suggest that Hebrew was still spoken, to a certain extent, for a long time; on this basis such scholars as Ben-Yehuda, father of the Renaissance of Hebrew, concluded that at least part of the population in Palestine spoke Hebrew as late as the fourth century C.E.

2.5.1 In the course of the last decades, historians and linguists have garnered so many new facts that there should no longer be any need to infer the general from isolated details. We may well look forward to an authority to review the entire material and uncover the sociolinguistic and linguistic overall picture. Even now three basic conclusions are evident:

1. The expansion of Aramaic did not affect only Jews, although in the introduction of the language into Palestine the Babylonian repatriates

must have played a conspicuous role. Aramaic in Palestine is one chapter in the astonishing spread of the Middle East. In various countries Aramaic became firmly established among nations that had formerly spoken other languages and remained sedentary. In the Persian Empire of the Achaemenians—the first representative of this dynasty being Cyrus—Aramaic became the official documentary language, and the empire extended, as recorded in the Book of Esther, from Hodu (India) to Cush (Abyssinia). With such supralocal recording functions, Aramaic lasted some thousand years throughout the Middle East. Aramaic was not displaced by Arabic until approximately the middle of the seventh century, after the Arab conquest.

2. Linguistic assimilation is not a single occurrence and does not proceed monotonically. Even when a language eventually ceases to be spoken, as was the case of Hebrew in the Second Commonwealth, the process may last hundreds of years. Hence the seeming contradictoriness of the evidence: various facts occurred in various relations and these relations must be understood. Therefore those who do not ask in general "till when was Hebrew spoken" are quite right. Depending on who, where, and under what circumstances, we have to allow for differences of several hundred years.

3. One must not simplify situations in such a manner that among some segments of the population (be it in a village, an out-of-the-way city, or a family) there was either Hebrew without Aramaic or Aramaic without Hebrew. For centuries a condition of coterritorial multilingualism existed, and to some extent nearly every individual knew both languages. With some, Hebrew was still the spontaneous language (4.3) in the family and among neighbors, although one could also communicate somehow in Aramaic. With others, Aramaic had already become the everyday language (or the easiest and most frequently used language), but Hebrew was still in use, not only in prayer, but also in communicating with the elderly, with villagers, and so on. Dialogues in which one party spoke Hebrew and the other Aramaic and in which communication was successful were a daily occurrence.

Until the systematic coordination of factual evidence with modern sociolinguistic methodology leads to more precise conclusions, we may grasp the accessible facts along the above-delineated lines.

2.5.2 Aramaic did not become the native language of the Jews in Palestine overnight. The first who adopted Aramaic were probably the upper classes and then the general population of the larger urban locations. Unmediated Hebrew, we may assume, lasted longest among those groups that had little contact with strangers: the elderly, women of the lower strata, villagers in remote districts. Needless to say, this residual language was not the Hebrew of the Bible. Large parts of the

Bible are written in a highly cultivated language, masterfully stylized — the rank and file never spoke this way. Those parts of the Bible that strike us as colloquial may also possess acrolectal elements (1.6.6 ff.). But even if this is not so, the major part of the Bible is much older than the few centuries up to and after the Destruction of the Second Temple that are of concern here. We may therefore be sure that to the women and common people of the end of the Second Commonwealth, although they spoke Hebrew, the language of the biblical texts (*leshon torah* [the language of the Law] or *leshon hamikra* [the language of Scripture] as it was then called) sounded exaltedly stylized, archaic, and at times incomprehensible in form, words, and constructions.

The scholars (*talmide hakhamim*) were among the higher strata who adopted Aramaic as a spoken language relatively early; then they were called just *hakhamim* (sages). The Mishna and the Gemara cite several dialogues in which ordinary women speak Hebrew and the scholar answers in Aramaic. But we also encounter the expression *leshon hakhamim* (the language of the sages) in the sources of the period; this calls for an explanation. From the way the expression is used it is clear that Aramaic was not meant, but rather some variant of Hebrew. Apparently, the reference was to the Hebrew in which the Mishna and other monuments of the Mishna period were written; it should be borne in mind that elements of this Mishnaic Hebrew may also appear in the last books of the Bible, for the redaction of these books took place rather late (3.8.1.1). As a rule the sages understood the language of the older parts of the Bible quite well (with the exception of a few words that had become entirely obsolete), and had the sages taken pains they could have reshaped the biblical Hebrew so as to use it in their study. But they set out on a different road. Instead of clinging to a written language of a past period, which in its own day had been "artificial," they created a new acrolectal language, precise in rendering thought and describing objects. The frequently cited saying of Rabbi Yohanan (third century c.e.) asserts with good linguistic insight that "the language of the Torah is apart and the language of the sages is apart."

Out of what materials did the masters of language of the Mishna period build the rejuvenated superposed language or acrolect? Undoubtedly it drew on the still-spoken, or until recently spoken, everyday Hebrew in form and vocabulary, and we have data on the scholars' search for information among "the simple folk" concerning the names of certain objects or the meaning of certain words. Another component was linguistic material taken over directly from Aramaic (for example, *ela* [but], *afilu* [even], or the plural ending -*in* instead of -*im*); a third source, Hebraized Aramaisms or coinages out of Hebrew material in Aramaic patterns (for example, after Aramaic *milta* [word] was coined

the Hebrew *milah* instead of the biblical *davar*, which meant both 'word' and 'thing'; *bet hakneset* [synagogue] was coined on the paradigm of *be knishta*; 2.8.1).

The original function of the language of the sages was apparently just what the name suggests: to serve in study at school. To the extent that the deliberations in the process of study were fixed in writing, this language of study became a written language. There are documents in the language of the sages in which the modern student detects, on the basis of the Aramaisms, that the spoken language of the recorders was Aramaic, but the recording was in Hebrew since this was the language of writing (4.4). We see that when Yiddish arose, internal bilingualism was a long-established pattern among Jews, and later Jewish authors in Europe have more than once compared the relationship between Hebrew and the spoken language to the prefiguration of Hebrew-Aramaic (4.6 ff.).

Did the language of the sages become — if not with all scholars, at least with some — more or less also a normal or native language? Possibly so, but this would have to be established by proofs that are directly concerned with the linguistic reality of that period. However, the various statements in the Talmud on language and bilingualism must not be taken at face value, if only because they are frequently contradictory. These are opinions on the language problem that stand in need of interpretation.

2.6 A cornerstone in our understanding of the situation is the fact that in the late Second Commonwealth period and after the Destruction of the Temple "multilingualism" for the Jews in Palestine meant trilingualism, not bilingualism. Besides Hebrew and Aramaic there was also Greek, and quite prominently at that.

After Alexander the Great (350–323) the Hellenistic culture currents washed away many non-Greek peoples in the territories of Asia Minor and North Africa and also penetrated into Palestine. Greek linguistic influences have been found in the Book of Daniel, and in other later biblical books (Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) marks of the Greek spirit are allegedly discerned. This was no invasion that comes and goes. Greek influences continued for centuries after the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 65 c.e.

Although the literature on Jewish Hellenism is very extensive and although first-rate scholars have dealt with the subject, the scope and character of Greek linguistic expansion in Palestine has not yet been convincingly presented (in the Diaspora the situation is more lucid). Undoubtedly, many Jews knew Greek, but what is very many in proportion to the total population? We do not have to ask this concerning Aramaic; it had become the spoken language of the people. Surely

there were Jews whose unmediated daily language was Greek. But how large was their number and what stratum of the population was this? Hellenization, including language, began with the aristocracy; strange as this may be, even after the anti-Hellenistic uprising of the Hasmoneans, the local government of Judea remained in the hands of the extreme Hellenized elements. Who went with them? Saul Lieberman pointed out in connection with this problem that as a rule the middle class tends to follow the aristocracy and the lower classes tend to follow the middle class; this must also have been the order of Aramaization. But several things must be considered in connection with language shift. First, language adoption is not merely a matter of imitation for the sake of prestige, but also to some extent a matter of actual necessity—and necessity is not the same for all classes; hence a mechanical sequence cannot always be applied. Concerning Gamaliel, scholar and president of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem in the last century before the Destruction of the Second Temple, the Talmud tells that there were a thousand pupils in his house, "five hundred studied Torah and five hundred Greek wisdom." They were permitted to study Greek "because they were associated with the ruling house." Whether these numbers are exact or merely a hint that there was an even division, we are concerned here with a limited number of families that had, or could have had, relations with the organs of the occupying power. The further from the apex of the social pyramid and the closer to the base, the greater the inertia with respect to cultural innovations. Differences in the degree of adoption may be conditioned on ideological differences, and we cannot say that in matters of ideology the lower class blindly follows the upper.

Even if contemporary sources provided no hints, we would have to conclude by analogy with better-explored situations of multilingualism that the expression "Greek was spoken in Palestine" has to be qualified according to social networks. In Herod's court Greek was possibly the only language; Aramaic was used by the simple person who had no aspirations to be considered among the "better people," and to such a primitive soul even the courtiers condescended and communicated with him in his primitive language, Aramaic. Further down the line usage probably depended on location. In the outlying districts, where Hebrew was still spoken, and in the villages, where Aramaic was already spoken, Jews lived a lifetime and learned no more than a few casually acquired Greek words. In urban centers many more Jews understood Greek and could also more or less use it to communicate. Characteristically, there are at least twenty-five Aramaic proverbs in the Talmud and Mishna that can be traced back to Greek prototypes. In the most Hellenized urban centers there were apparently Jews who employed Greek as their workaday medium; this brought that language to the very thres-

hold of the liturgy. Explaining the lection of the Torah to the audience was so important that Greek translations of parts of the Bible had been made before the appearance of the Septuagint (2.6.1, 2.7.1). More than that, it is reported that in Caesarea, ostensibly a stronghold of Hellenism, a processional prayer for rain was conducted in Greek. There is even attestation that in Caesarea the Shema was recited in Greek. (These facts are from the third and fourth centuries C.E.)

The above applies to Palestine itself. In the Diaspora, Aramaic was much less and Greek much more prevalent. The largest Diaspora community was Egypt, especially Alexandria. Emigration from Palestine to this city began shortly after its establishment by Alexander the Great and continued to the end of the second century; later on, after the Destruction of the Temple, many prisoners of war were brought there. Hellenized Jewish communities (thoroughly Hellenized, as may be deduced from Goodenough's excellent work on Jewish symbols) were also scattered throughout Syria and Asia Minor, on the north shore of the Black Sea and to the west as far as Sicily and in southern Italy up to Rome. It took centuries until the various kinds of Greek among Jews (Yavanic; 2.12.1) were reduced to the Byzantine Empire, that is, to lands where the coterritorial non-Jewish population spoke Greek. For centuries Yavanic persisted, along with a new Jewish language based on Latin (2.14 ff.), even in places where the coterritorial non-Jewish population spoke no Greek.

2.6.1 The designations "Greek among Jews" or "Judeo-Greek" found in the literature are linguistically vague and therefore misleading. Even if we confine ourselves to the hundreds of Greek loanwords in the Mishna and Gemara (here are a number of examples: *avir* [air], *androgenos* [hermaphrodite], *apotropos* [guardian], *apoteki* [pledge], *apikoros* [heretic], *gematria* [computation of the numerical values of the letters of a word], *dugma* [example], *siman* [sign], *Sambatyon* [name of a mythical river], *sandak* [godfather], *Sanhedrin*, *piyut* [liturgic poetry], *pinkas* [ledger]), we must raise the question, were these words incorporated in the spoken Aramaic or were they merely literary borrowings? One answer will most likely not be applicable in all cases.

The linguistic problem becomes still more difficult when dealing not with Greek lexical (and possibly also grammatical-stylistic) effects on Palestinian Jewish Aramaic, but with the Greek spoken among Jews. "Greek" here may mean quite diverse conditions, and at both ends of the transition are the following linguistic formations: 1. A real Greek, as Greeks and many Hellenized non-Greeks used it. There is evidence that the upper strata of society in Palestine mastered the Greek language. The Greek of the Aramaic speakers who adopted their smattering of Greek as an external thing, but from experts, could also have been fairly

correct. 2. A fusion language, the stock of which was mostly Greek, but in which the "mistakes" vis-à-vis standard Greek are not individual, but characteristic of Jews. In other words, the deviations are systemized, and it is therefore necessary to speak of a separate language of Jews, however similar to Greek. We postulate the existence of such a language for the period of the Middle Ages and later and designate it Yavanic (2.12.1). We may posit the hypothesis—and a focused linguistic analysis should test it—that Yavanic goes back in an unbroken transition to the "Greek" that certain groups of Jews spoke at the time of the Second Commonwealth.

The boundaries between these two linguistic formations as theoretically reconstructed under (1) and (2) are not clear; they vary depending on the people to whom one speaks, on the situations in which one speaks, in the function of the utterances, and so on. But the reconstructions are useful as guidelines, and the exact ancient "Greek" evidence from the Jewish sphere should be approached within such a framework. One dare not be satisfied with such labels as "incorrect and vulgar Greek" or "very bad Greek" when one wants to give an idea of the linguistic character of Jewish epigraphy in Palestine or Rome. Not the degree of Greek correctness, but the degree of Jewish independence should be measured. And encountering manifestations of an "Aramaic-Greek jargon," the aim of the linguist most certainly must be to identify the nature of this combination.

The most imposing monument of Jewish Hellenism is the translation of the Scriptures, made around the middle of the third century B.C.E., and ascribed to the seventy scholars (generally designated Septuagint after the Latin word for seventy; another designation is *Targum Hashivim* [*The Translation of the Seventy*]). Three hundred years later, in the first half of the second century C.E., the Septuagint was completely displaced among Jews by a new translation that had the approbation of several celebrities. Traditionally the Septuagint is linked with Alexandria; the new translation was made in Palestine by A'kilos the proselyte (in later Christian Latin sources his name is spelled Aquila).

But one would search in vain for a direct reflection of the spoken Yavanic in Egypt or Palestine in the two monuments.

Aquila translated word for word, manifesting fidelity even to the etymology wherever the slightest possibility presented itself. *Bereshit* he renders *en tē kefalē* (at the head) so as not to lose the meaning of the root *rosh* (head) in *bereshit*. We have here, then, a specialized instruction language and, if anything can be found out from it about the spoken language, it is only by inference.

The Septuagint is not so closely bound to the Hebrew original; hence, although essentially acrolectic in character, it is closer to the spoken

language. Our question, however, is whether there are any Jewish peculiarities in this language. In the nineteenth century the accepted view was that in contrast to classical literary Greek the language of the Septuagint was "Judeo-Greek." This view was superseded by another: that the language was "universal Greek"—still far from the classical Greek, but it was not the Jews who were responsible for the deviations; these merely reflect the standard Greek language of the Hellenistic period, the so-called *koinē*. Lately, there again emerges in the specialized literature the view that the language of the Septuagint has about it a Jewish coloring. But the mere impression will not suffice, for the linguistic demands in evaluating language formations are much stricter today. The essential thing is to find out whether the "Jewish coloring" means only that from the Greek of the translation one can recognize the Hebrew original, in syntax and to some extent in vocabulary, or whether there was a specific Jewish version of the Hellenistic standard language.

The aim of the Septuagint translators was undoubtedly "good" Greek, but did they fully succeed? A separate version in the spoken language is apt to penetrate the written language despite the writer. On the other hand, even if no reflection of a special Jewish spoken language with Greek stock is found in the Septuagint it is still no a priori proof that there was no such language in the third century B.C.E. Mendelssohn's German translation of the Bible two thousand years later was also for Jews and in a non-Jewish language, and yet there is no doubt that Yiddish existed in his time and in his community.

One must apparently begin searching for Jewish peculiarities in the "poor," "incorrect," and "vulgar" Greek of the simple Jews and then attempt to identify similar linguistic items in the Septuagint, in Aquila, in the Greek elements in the Mishna and Gemara, and so on—material that extends over centuries and cannot always be properly dated. The linguist will be aided by the fact that he can search for the common ground in the Jewish peculiarities of this old Jewish Greek and of the Yavanic (2.12–2.12.1) of the Middle Ages and the modern period, and he can also draw on the discoveries of scholarship about the Hellenistic *koinē*, about the language of the New Testament, and about the history of Greek in general.

2.6.2 In a community with competing languages, not only blind "objective" facts are operative in giving up and adopting a language; conscious communal aspirations must also be reckoned with. Rabbi Judah the Prince, the redactor of the Mishna, some hundred years after the Destruction of the Second Temple proclaimed, "Why do we need Aramaic in Palestine? Either Hebrew or Greek." This was no statement of fact, but a subtle programmatic slogan of a communal leader. Of

course an ideologist may also implement his ideas, but conceivably he may also come out with a maximum program, which he cannot implement even in his private life. We can therefore by no means accept (as is often the case) Rabbi Judah's polemical question and answer as univocal proof of the fact that in the second century c.e. Hebrew was the unmediated workaday language of the scholars in Palestine. The statement is clear-cut only in its negation; in its affirmation, a choice is given.

Could Rabbi Judah have thought that as long as it was not Aramaic it did not matter whether his contemporaries used Hebrew throughout or Greek throughout? No, such an assumption is not plausible. The place of Hebrew within the domain of the holy was beyond rivalry. Only the nonholy domain was problematic. Here two rivals competed: Aramaic, long established in the mouths of the people, and Greek, younger and less prevalent among the Jews, but with great external prestige. The women and villagers who still spoke (or could speak) the remnant Hebrew were reliable informants on certain curious words, but Rabbi Judah undoubtedly entertained no illusion concerning his ability to restore Hebrew as the unmediated language of all Jews in Palestine— let alone in the Diaspora.

The formula "either Hebrew or Greek" has therefore to be taken thus: In the sacred sphere Hebrew is valid; in the nonholy sphere Aramaic has to be replaced by Greek, for it is preferable. But the weight of Rabbi Judah's authority notwithstanding (and he was not alone), Aramaic won. "Life was against him."

In the domain of the holy, to the extent that there was room for another language, Aramaic proved stronger than Greek (2.7.1). Since the spoken language was no longer Hebrew, a vehicular language became indispensable, through which the holy should be more accessible to the people (4.4). But the segment of the population that required Greek and Greek alone as a vehicular language (that is, those persons who understood no Aramaic or who understood it insufficiently) was much smaller, at least in Palestine itself. Among those who did not share Rabbi Judah's enthusiasm, the attitude was pragmatic. Greek was used wherever necessary (2.6). Greek was welcome in the exposition of the Law to those who were unfamiliar with the predominant language of instruction, Aramaic (2.6.1). To flavor their words in the course of study some scholars not only interjected Aramaic saws formed after the Greek (2.6) but actual Greek sayings. Those who did so had some knowledge of Greek, and certainly at least some of the students understood these Greek quotations.

But in Greek there lurked danger for Jewishness; Rabbi Judah the Prince glossed over it, but others did not. "Greek language" was in-

timately linked with "Greek lore," therefore even champions of Greek knew that this was tightrope walking: total Hellenization exposes to the danger of apostasy and denunciation. Hence the ambivalent attitude that manifests itself quite early. When the Tanna Rabbi Joshua (who lived a half-century before Rabbi Judah and had taken a trip to Athens) was asked if one was allowed to teach one's son Greek, he replied: "Let him teach it at a time which is neither day nor night, for it is written [Joshua 1:8], This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shalt meditate therein day and night."

When Greek became increasingly an instrument of Christianity and Christian proselytism, the ideological position of Greek assuredly was not strengthened among Jewish spiritual leaders. Yavanic is different; Yavanic as a matter of fact did survive among Jews in the Yavanic area (2.12).

2.7 Concerning Aramaic there could not have been such misgivings as concerning Greek. In the centuries following the Destruction of the Second Temple Aramaic could no longer be identified, as it once had been (2.5.2), with a predominant non-Jewish culture; consequently it received no support from external factors. Nevertheless, some leaders maintained that Aramaic posed a threat to the exclusive position of Hebrew in the domain of the holy, and in retrospect we see a justification for their apprehension (2.7.1).

The position of the obstinate "Hebraists" can be formulated thus: The Torah is in Hebrew; the prayers are in Hebrew; sacred content calls for a sacred garb. In sum, only Hebrew is the language of the holy. This includes the language of the Mishna; even the remnant of Hebrew among the not yet Aramaized strata contains a touch of the holy—but not Aramaic. Hence the programmatic statements to the effect that to speak *leshon hakodesh* (Hebrew) is a mitzvah: "the children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt because they had not changed their language"; "when a child begins to speak, his father speaks [that is, should speak] to him in Hebrew"; "whoever lives in Palestine and speaks Hebrew is assured of a share in the world to come." There is a legend to the effect that on the day of the completion of the Aramaic translation of the Prophets (known as *Targum Yonatan*) there was an earthquake in Palestine over a radius of four hundred miles. To stress the significance of Hebrew, Aramaic was branded a lay language or the language of the layman—without justification, for in reality Aramaic had a place in the domain of the holy too (2.7.1).

Were there also any ideological "Aramaists"? To Rabbi Yohanan, a disciple of Rabbi Judah, is attributed the saying: "Let not the Aramaic language be insignificant in your eyes, for it is found in the Pentateuch, in the Prophets and in the Hagiographa." Since kinship of nations and

languages in the contemporaneous conception was demonstrated via the genealogies of individuals, the proof in Genesis that Laban the Aramean was a relative of the Patriarch Abraham, Rebecca's brother, and therefore an uncle of the Patriarch Jacob, was undoubtedly of significance. Rab, Judah the Patriarch's famous disciple, said that Adam had spoken Aramaic in the Garden of Eden. A midrash has it that God said to Moses: Like an angel, you shall speak Hebrew, and your brother Aaron the priest shall be a prophet and speak Aramaic. The impression is that this is an attempt of "Aramaists" to legitimize their view of the language problem. But this group could not speak more emphatically, for no one questioned the theoretical primacy of Hebrew vis-à-vis Aramaic (just as later, in the Gaonic period, no one denied the theoretical primacy of Palestine vis-à-vis Babylonia).

Without the aspiration to complete victory, such a victory was unthinkable. But Aramaic did attain coholiness, that is joint sanctity, and remains in this place of honor in the entire subsequent Jewish tradition.

2.7.1 The Aramaic language was elevated mainly by virtue of the elemental force of its being a native language of Jews. To acquire Greek, the majority of Jews had to study it, since it was the sole spoken language of only a comparatively small part of the population and since it was a more cultivated language and the demands of quality were more rigorous. Aramaic one did not have to study; it was acquired naturally. The litigations in the courts were conducted in Aramaic, for the litigants had to understand them. The sages of the Mishna formulated their decisions in Hebrew, but one of the early Tannaim, at the time when the Temple was still in existence, expressed his view on certain matters concerning the dietary laws in Aramaic, apparently because he was testifying before the entire people; and it is recorded in Aramaic in the middle of the Hebrew text. The texts of the engagement contract, the marriage contract, and divorce are in Aramaic.

Thus the Aramaic of the home, the street, and commerce entered the sphere of the holy. An understanding of the biblical text read from the Torah was obligatory; this can be seen in the sixth chapter of Nehemiah, where the matter of understanding is so strongly emphasized. And how can the people understand unless the reading is translated into the vernacular of the people? This became the function of the interpreter, who stood near the reader and interpreted. At first the interpretation had been extemporaneous; later—despite the objection of strict constructionists—written translations were used. Historians do not know when to date the beginning of the institution of the interpreter, but it is very old; it might have been established shortly after the return from the Babylonian exile.

Aramaic also progressively penetrated the House of Study, far beyond

the boundaries of a practical or helpful vehicular language. The verses of the Torah and sections of the Mishna, that is quotations, remained, of course, in the original; but Aramaic became progressively the language of explanation. Hillel's language of instruction was undoubtedly the language of the scholars—he lived at the time of the Second Commonwealth; but he flavored his instruction with Aramaic sayings. A new discussion in the Talmud begins with the formula *Tno rabanan* (the rabbis have taught). The scholarly nomenclature of the period uses the terms *tanna, amora, gemara, maskhta* (tractate), *shakla vetarya* (deliberation), *hishlama* (granted), and so on. Responsa about laws and customs were written in Aramaic at a very early date.

Gradually Aramaic penetrated the prayers also. Strict constructionists were averse to it; "the ministering angels [who present the prayers before the Throne of Glory] know no Aramaic" (4.7.03). As long as the Temple existed, prayers were apparently exclusively in Hebrew; in the Jerusalem Talmud the name for Hebrew is occasionally *lishan bet kudsha* (the language of the Temple), but the individual seemingly found no adequate expression for his individual experiences in the ossified words of the prayers. A compromise was arrived at between the needs of the group, requiring a standardized public liturgy, and the no less legitimate needs of the individual broken heart. To the fixed prayers (which originally ended with the Eighteen Benedictions) the individual was permitted to add the supplication of his own heart. These additions were called *tahanunim* (entreaties); but also the expression *tehina* (supplication), which now is mainly associated with Yiddish (4.6), is found in the Bible several times. Remains of such supplications in the vernacular we have in the Aramaic passages in the Selihot (penitential prayers recited in the period of the High Holidays). Other entreaties were in Hebrew, and consequently became fixed in their form. (In considering the Yiddish *tkhines*, we shall see that they, too, had a tendency to become ossified, in contrast to their original aim; a "mute tongue" apparently requires a model even for the spontaneous outpouring of the heart before God.) Fixed texts of entreaties came into being in the sixth century, after the redaction of the Talmud; others were added in the Gaonic period and still others even later.

In the period of the Mishna, Aramaic also penetrated the very prayers. The Aramaic kernel of the *kaddish* (mourner's prayer), *Yehe shme raba mevarakh lealam uleolme olmaya* (Let his great name be blessed for ever and ever) is mentioned as early as 150 C.E.; and later on, up to the Gaonic period, the prayer Yekum purkan (May salvation come), and Kol nidre (All vows) came into being (though the exact date is not always determinate).

The coholiness of Aramaic was retained long after it had ceased to

be the spoken language of the majority of Jews (2.10). Stress must be placed on "the majority," for with a small group of Jews in Kurdistan the language never died but continues as a native language to date. But it is not on account of this group that the position of Aramaic is so solid in the entire Diaspora. Aramaic remained as an also-holy (and among the Cabalists, as an especially holy) medium among Jewish cultural possessions in all Jewish culture areas. Various *midrashim*, the poem *Akdamut* (beginning), some of Israel Najara's poems (ca. 1600), *Had gadya* (An only kid; fifteenth to sixteenth centuries), *Sifra dizeniuta deyaakov* (first half of the seventeenth century) are merely examples of what made Aramaic representative in the worldwide Jewish balance.

A striking proof of the coholiness of Aramaic is the enactment of *shenayim mikra veehad targum*; the weekly lection of the Scriptures must be twice in the original and once in translation. *Mikra* is the original text of the Bible; *targum* the Aramaic translation. In order to fully understand the reader of the Torah, it was instituted that by way of preparation one must go over the weekly portion in advance three times: twice in the original, in order to memorize, and once in Aramaic, for comprehension. The primacy of Hebrew is here recognized explicitly, but the Aramaic also receives juridical recognition; it, too, became part of the sanctioned procedure. And now the twist that cannot be explained rationally. To Ashkenazim or Sephardim, Aramaic is of no help whatsoever in explaining the sentences of the Bible, for Aramaic is far less understood than Hebrew; in Yiddish *targum-loshn* (Aramaic) is a synonym for unintelligibility; but through the procedure of many centuries the Aramaic translation assumed a coholy character. Therefore the enactment of reading the weekly portion twice in the original and once in Aramaic has retained its validity to date, even in those communities that were not yet in existence when Aramaic was the spoken language of the Jews in Palestine and Babylonia.

2.8 Our discussion up to this point has utilized the term *Aramaic*, for this is the accepted term. But now the time has come to search for a more suitable, linguistically more justified term. It is as if instead of the term *Polish* the term *Slavic* were used. It is not wrong, but it is not sufficiently specific. Aramaic had also been and to some extent remained the language of the non-Jews of Babylonia and Syria; it was also the official government language in the Near East, penetrating even the Bible (2.5.2). Aramaic had also been the language of the Samaritans before they adopted Arabic, or a special kind of Arabic. What sense is there in attaching this label to the linguistic medium of Jews?

Among Jews themselves, Aramaic was not of one cast. In time its history extends over more than two thousand years (hence the term *Gemara language*, occasionally heard, is apt to narrow one's view). Geo-

graphically there is a break between West and East. Socially, the language functioned on various levels—from the purely colloquial to the literary.

The sages of the Mishna and Gemara used *aramit, lashon arami(t)* (Aramaic, Aramaic language) for their eye was focused on internal Jewish relations. They only set off the difference vis-à-vis Hebrew; the non-Jewish Aramaic was of no interest to them nor were they concerned with linguistic accuracy. Similarly, Ashkenazic authors, in the Middle Ages and much later, used *leshon ashkenaz* (literally, the language of Germany) to denote Yiddish; they meant to characterize German Jews vis-à-vis Jews of Spain, Knaan, Yavan, and so on (5.2). All told, it seems, there is one bit of evidence available—and it is not from the talmudic period, but from Hai Gaon (939-1038)—in which a differentiation is made between *lashon arami* (the Aramaic of the Jews) and *lashon kasdi* (the Aramaic of the non-Jews) (2.11).

The view that the fundamental unity of Judaism has a far greater weight in the tradition than does belonging to this or that community must be borne in mind; consequently, language is not central in the traditional system of Jewishness. Apparently out of such an attitude came the dictum *shema bekhol lashon sheata shomea* (the Shema [may be recited] in whatever language one understands).

In a linguistic analysis such laxness in description is unsuitable. Specific situations require specific terms.

Occasionally scholarly writings have the specification Judeo-Aramaic, which is some attainment; but we shall explain (2.10.1) why the entire series of combinations with *Judeo* (Judeo-Greek, Judeo-Arabic, and so on) is unsatisfactory; all Jewish languages, like Jewish subcultures, must be viewed from within. It seems that the most adequate name is *Targumic*, which will be used hereafter, except in quotations. The name is very old, going back to the days of the Second Commonwealth, when the Mishna (*Yadayim* 4, 5) says: "*Targum shebeezra veshebedaniel*" (the *targum* that is in Ezra and Daniel). *Targum* here cannot mean 'translation', for the so-called Aramaic chapters in those books are not translation; they were not Hebrew in the original manuscripts. And this name is in effect to date. The Kurdish Jews on the eve of World War II, numbering nearly twenty thousand people, who speak a kind of Aramaic, refer to their language as *targum*. We may take it upon ourselves and extend the name *Targumic* over the entire area of this language among Jews.

Again one has to be aware of the complicated system of systems that Targumic is. Experts say that the language of the non-Hebrew chapters in Ezra and Daniel is the relatively uniform official Aramaic of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (2.5.1). Is no influence of Hebrew detect-

able? In the language of the Onkelos translation such influence is admittedly felt, and in the posttalmudic Targumic even more.

Eastern Targumic is best represented by the Babylonian Talmud; Persian elements are conspicuous. The main representative in writing of western Targumic is the Palestinian Talmud. But in Palestine itself there were subdivisions. More than once, for instance, the speech of the Galileans is ridiculed. The history of Targumic is long, from the Babylonian Exile to today's Targumic speakers of Kurdistan. There is, moreover, the problem to what extent each monument (or series of monuments) represents the spoken language or is a literary acrolect. Needless to say, the combination of areal, temporal, and cultural problems in Targumic cannot be studied without a close relationship to the diverse variants of non-Jewish Aramaic, but the working hypothesis must be that in the Jewish milieu we have a progressive Judaization of the language that is combined with a constantly growing fusion. Targumic is not ordinary Aramaic, not even a dialect of Aramaic, but a Jewish fusion language containing both a Hebrew and an Aramaic component; then the part of Greek in western Targumic and of Persian in eastern Targumic has to be determined, and above all the degree of internal systematic development in Targumic (or in several varieties of Targumic) itself.

Assuredly the degree of independence of diverse Jewish languages differs, but it is also worthwhile to seek their points of agreement (2.25).

2.8.1 But Hebrew and Targumic were both internal Jewish languages, and the functional dichotomy of sacred language and secular language was, as seen above, from the very beginning polemical (2.7). In effect, the member of the speech community used a Targumic that was on various levels and in various degrees saturated with Hebrew. On the other hand, the language of the sages was Targumized—in vocabulary, morphology, and mostly in the phonic system.

It is that situation of interference which always arises with the rise of internal bilingualism in a speech community (4.1 ff.). From the history of languages we know of conscious efforts to stave off or at least to reduce such interference. But there are no indications of puristic pursuits in the times of the Mishna and Gemara. This also led to a modification in the structure of Hebrew, and *leshon kodesh* (the language of the holy), originally an educative-elevative term to contrast Hebrew with the "profane" Targumic, itself became a merger of Hebrew and Targumic. Given the structural proximity of the two languages (three-consonantal roots, types of verbs, the attachment of pronominal suffixes, and so forth) this was necessarily quite easy. A differentiation remained, however, and even today every literate person knows that the prayer El male rahamim (Lord full of compassion) is in Hebrew and the *kaddish*

(mourner's prayer) is in "Aramaic." The following are pairs—with the first word of Hebrew provenience, the second of Targumic—both valid in Yiddish today—and the list is not exhaustive: *beza* ~ *bea* (egg); *bet-olam* ~ *bet-almin* (cemetery; only the second part of the second compound is of Targumic provenience); *guf* ~ *gufa* (body); *baal-mizva* ~ *bar-mizva*; *hazkara* ~ *azkara* (memorial); *hevra* ~ *havraya, havruta*(fellowship); *hevra kedosha* ~ *hevra kadisha* (holy fellowship; only the second part of the second compound is of Targumic provenience); *yeshiva* ~ *metivta*; *kohen* ~ *kahana*; *maamar* ~ *memra* (word); *masekhet* ~ *masekhta* (tractate); *masa-umatan* ~ *shakla-vetarya* (deliberation); *semikha* ~ *semikhuta* (ordination). Both parts of the doublet occur at times in different phrases, for example, *lehem* (*mekhuser lekhem* [lacking in bread]) ~ *lahma* (*ho lakhmo anyo* [this bread of affliction]); *ad hena* (*mimitsrayim vead heyno* [from Egypt even until now]) ~ *ad kan* (*ad kan omrim beshabes hagodl* [up to here (the Haggadah) is read on the Sabbath preceding Passover]); *ehad* (*keish ekhod* [as one man]) ~ *had* (*khad bedore* [unique]); *lo* (*loy mit an alef** [emphatically no]) ~ *lav* (*lav davke* [not necessarily]); *din* (*les din veles dayen* [there is no law and there is no judge], but *les* is of Targumic provenience) ~ *dina* (*dine demalkhuse dine* [the law of the state is binding]); *afar* (*ofer voeyfer* [dust and ashes]) ~ *afra* (*keafre deare* [as the dust of the earth]); *mila* (*mile bemile* [word for word]) ~ *milta* (*milse dibdikhese* [a witticism]). There are also instances where, in what the tradition calls Loshn-koydesh (the sacred language), there are doublets and both the Hebrew and the Targumic versions are used: *Hakodesh-borekh-hu* ~ *kudshe berikh hu* (God); *Toyre* ~ *oyrayse* (Torah); *aseres hadibres* ~ *asoro divraye* (decalogue); *ayen-hore* ~ *eyne bishe* (evil eye); and so on. Commentators and preachers did not hesitate, when translating by means of an easier synonym, to change from a word of Hebrew to one of Targumic provenience; thus, for instance, the very popular Moses Shertils in his *Lekah tov* (Prague, 1604) glosses *af ki* (how much more) in 1 Samuel 14:30 with *mikol sheken* (all the more so). It is not always clear which version was the primary, but in the case of the expression *ribono shel olam* (Master of the universe) there is no doubt that it is formed on the Targumic prototype *ribono dealma kula* (Master of the entire universe).

There are phrases, sentences, and whole texts where the contemporary observer hesitates to say whether it is Hebraized Targumic or Targumized Hebrew, but at any rate it is Loshn-koydesh.

2.9 As already indicated, we know from the Talmud of the existence of another language that figures in the inventory of Jewish languages.

* In Hebrew there is another word *lo*, with a *waw*, meaning 'to him'; *lo* with an *aleph* is a negation.

It is designated in the Talmud *lashon parsi* (Persian language). Historically *lashon madi* (Median language) would be more precise, for Jews came in contact, at least in early days, more with the northwestern part of the later Persian Empire, which was called Media.

Media borders on Assyria, hence the probability that Jewish contacts with the Persian language go back to the Assyrian Exile in the eighth century B.C.E. Proven associations begin at the time Cyrus opened the way for the exiles to return to Palestine; Cyrus himself was a Mede, and he joined Persia and Media into one kingdom. To be sure, centuries pass without documentation, but it is certain that after the establishment of a Jewish community in Persia and in the neighboring lands its existence was not broken.

It is perhaps impossible to describe the linguistic character of *lashon parsi*, that is the specificity of Persian, or "a kind of Persian," among Jews in the biblical and talmudic periods, because of paucity of material. Several Persian administrative terms have found their way into the Book of Esther: *ahashdarpan* (satrap), *ahashtranim* (couriers), and also *dat* (law) which later gained such wide diffusion (*kedas vekadin; kedas moyshe veyisroel* [according to the Jewish law; according to the law of Moses and Israel]). It need not occasion surprise to find words of Persian provenience in the Babylonian Talmud (2.8); for instance, *ganoz* (to conceal), *vered* (a rose), *pardes* (an orchard). At least one loanword is found in Hai Gaon. Slightly more is available on the sociolinguistic condition of *lashon parsi*. Since as early as the talmudic period this language was not only a coterritorial non-Jewish language, but also a language of Jews, it is more reasonable to designate this Jewish variant by its own name, Parsic.

It is characteristic of the force of certain standard situations that they elicit the same effects. We find in the Persian culture sphere almost verbatim expressions that we have described above in connection with linguistic relations in Palestine. The Midrash Bereshit Rabbah says: "Let the Parsic language not be light in your eyes, for God has accorded it honor." Obviously, there was someone who slighted Parsic, although we know not with what language it competed, Hebrew or Targumic. On the other hand we hear in the name of Rabbi Yose an almost exact replica of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (2.6.2): "Of what use is Aramaic in Babylonia? Either Hebrew or Parsic."

Considerably more is known about the derivatives of Parsic in the post-Gaonic period. There is contemporary linguistic material, there is literary material from the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern period, and there are historical data going back beyond this period.

2.9.1 The Jewish culture area in the Persian and near-Persian terri-

tories is bound up with the early stages of Ashkenaz more than it first appears. Following the Arab seizure of the Mediterranean, there grew up a new transcontinental communication system between the Middle East and western Europe; it may be said in a slightly exaggerated generalization that Loter arose as a terminal point in these relations. At the second end of the long road there lived the Jews of the Persian culture sphere (2.1.2).

As far as can be gathered from description (sometimes these are mere notations of travelers of which even the more scientific are unsatisfactory with reference to their perspective), the Jews in the Persian sphere may be divided into three linguistic groups which probably arose from old Parsic.

1. Dzhuhuric: the language of the so-called mountain Jews in southeastern Caucasia, in Azerbaijan and Dagestan. In the scientific literature, we mostly find the term "Judeo-Tatic," to distinguish it from the non-Jewish Tatic dialects of Persian, spoken in Caucasia and in the territory of old Media in contemporary northwestern Iran. There are no indications whether Dzhuhuric is also spoken today in Persian territory. Undoubtedly the bearers of this language came from the south, probably fifteen hundred years ago, and their contacts assuredly extended both south, to their former homes, and northwest, in the direction of Europe.

2. Bokharic: the language of Jews in the former central Asian state of Bokhara, today part of the Uzbek S.S.R. The Persian stock language derives from the Tadzhik dialects in northeastern Persia. Bokharic is close to Dzhidi: we may probably say that we are dealing here with two dialects of the same language.

3. Dzhidi: the language of the Jews in Iran proper. There is more or less information on the local dialects of Teheran, Isfahan, Hamadān, Kāshān. The language of the Jews in Kāshān is described as especially archaic, and the impression is gained that the Persian stock in Dzhidi derives from the southwestern part of the country.

The so-called Judeo-Persian literature comprises a number of Bible translations and commentaries, poems on biblical themes, historical notations, and so on; the oldest extant words date from the fourteenth century. This literature, mostly of a poetic character, has been studied by philologists with Jewish-literary and Iranistic interests, but no one has posed the question of the degree of independence of the examined texts from the contemporary non-Jewish Persian. Nor is there any study on the relation of this older literary language employed by Jewish writers to the contemporary spoken Jewish Bokharic and Dzhidi.

Are there direct linguistic associations between Dzhuhuric, Bokharic, and Dzhidi beyond their common link to Persian? To what degree are

there discoverable threads extending from these three linguistic groups to the ancient Parsic? These questions have not yet been touched by scholarship.

2.10 The sunset of Targumic as the spoken language of a major Jewish community came with the rise of the Arabs (2.1.1). A survey of the linguistic condition of the Jews up to the Arab period is therefore in place.

The frontal attack of Hellenism on Jewish culture failed; but at least it was historical drama on a large scale, and visible signs of Japhet's beauty remained in the tents of Shem, to use a stock phrase so popular in the Haskalah period. Nor will we leave Persian out of consideration in the overall picture of Jewish subcultures, although the phenomenon seems to be marginal in Jewish culture history, locally circumscribed— possibly only because our point of observation is so far from the scene. One does not even note any memorable dramatic conflicts.

Neither Yavanic nor Parsic can compare with Targumic in position among Jews in ancient days. The role of Targumic in Jewish culture history is determined, as seen above, not by the number of Jews speaking that language today or the number who spoke it in the past. Targumic emerged from antiquity as an all-Jewish possession, together with Hebrew and as a part of the holy language. The Bible, the Mishna, the Gemara, the Midrash, the responsa of the Gaonim are all in the holy language. Their content became the unified basis of all Jewish subcultures of the Middle Ages and the modern period, including Ashkenaz. Targumic emerged from antiquity as the second major Jewish language; long after it had ceased being the native language of the majority of Jews, there came into being in Targumic new prayers, Sabbath and holiday songs and poems, cabalistic books. *The Zohar*, the central work of Jewish mysticism, is in Aramaic, not in Hebrew (2.7.1).

2.11 It is generally accepted that Saadia Gaon was the first to write a halakic work in Arabic (on the degree of Judaization of Arabic among Jews; 2.11.1), and this was in the first half of the tenth century. But decades later we find a sentence in Hai Gaon (2.8) to the effect that Targumic is "still" (*"adayin"*) spoken in all smaller places ("*bekhol haayarot*"). This is first-class testimony on internal bilingualism in the Jewish community. Hai Gaon received inquiries on religious matters from Basra in Arabic; he even wrote, according to report, an Arabic book. His "still" and "smaller places" tell us that the victory of "a kind of Arabic" among the Jews was not achieved at a single stroke. Just as in the case of the extinction of Hebrew as an unmediated language (2.5), here too we have to consider a protracted and locally varying process. And the fact that in the small community of Kurdish Jews Targumic has survived as an unmediated language to date (2.8) is proof of this.

"Arabic" as a native tongue among Jews (in 2.11.1 it will become clear why it is more appropriate to speak of a separate Jewish language with Arabic stock, which may be called Yahudic) is current among a much larger group. On the eve of World War II the number of Yahudic speakers was estimated at about seven hundred thousand. Of course, we have no statistics on the Gaonic period, but by no means can the current figure give us any idea of the proportion and the dynamics of Yahudic in former years. By virtue of the Arab conquests, Yahudic was firmly established in Yemen, Babylonia, Palestine, and all of North Africa, from Egypt to the Atlantic; even Sicily and southern Italy, which as a rule should be included in the Yavanic culture area (2.12), were at times considerably influenced by North Africa.

On the Pyrenean Peninsula the Jews were part of the Arabic culture sphere for centuries. The so-called Jewish Golden Period in Spain (2.28) can be understood only in the framework of Arab developments (2.19.8). With the Christian-Spanish reconquest of the peninsula, the Jews gradually emerged from the Arab sphere and a Jewish language with Spanish stock, Dzhudezmo, took root (2.19).

The Jewish linguistic situation in the western part of North Africa is interesting. The first group of exiles, which came from Spain to northern Africa at the end of the fourteenth century, might have spoken partly Dzhudezmo and partly Yahudic (2.19.8.3). Those who arrived in northern Africa after the general expulsion in 1492 spoke only Dzhudezmo. But in the new home (except partly in Morocco) the Sephardim resumed Yahudic, although in the version of their liturgy, in custom, and in their communal organization they have remained apart from the indigenous Arabic Jews to date.

2.11.1 The Jewish-Arabic culture area has been the object of study of not a few scholars, among them some of the highest caliber. By now one would really hope to see synthesizing studies characterizing both what unites all "Arabian Jews" and the variants in this large bloc culturally. Similarly, a comprehensive synthesizing work on the language of the Jews in Arab countries is still lacking. There are competent monographs, although not enough; and even they do not provide a systematic comparison with the coterritorial non-Jewish Arabic.

It is unfortunate that so many students of language speak of just Arabic among Jews, without the qualifying addition of "Jewish." Detailed firsthand studies are available on the language of the Jews in Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Iraq (Bagdad), and elsewhere, and differences vis-à-vis the local non-Jewish Arabic are evident everywhere. The question is whether the distance between the language of the Jews and the non-Jewish correlate is everywhere the same. Then comes the question of how much these Jewish formations have in common besides the Hebrew