

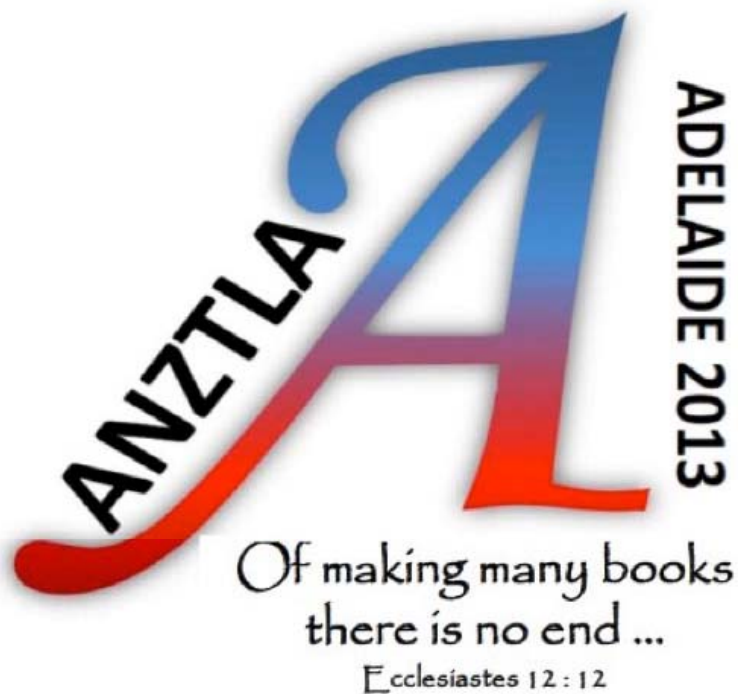


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AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Let my People Know!

Towards a Revolution in the Teaching of the Hebrew Bible



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4 July 2013 *seek* LIGHT

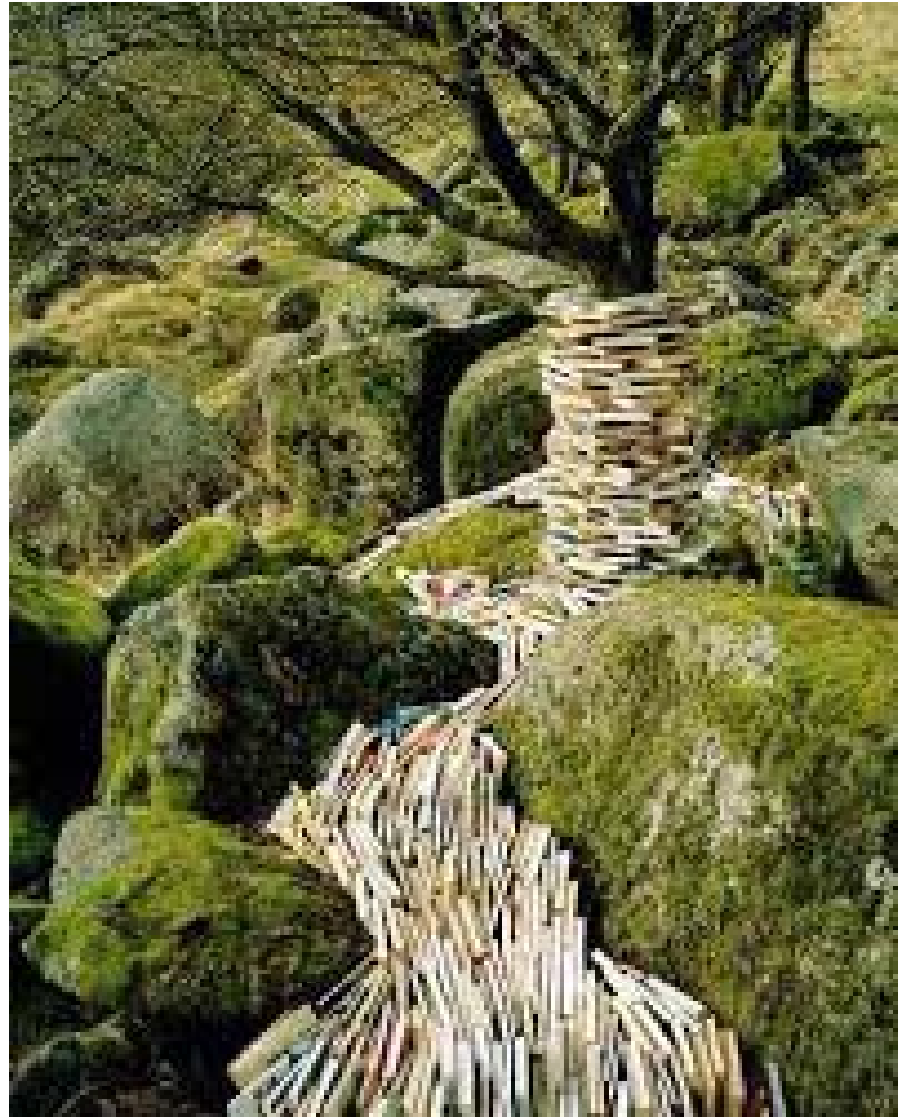


THE UNIVERSITY
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Ngadlu tampendi Kurna meyunna yerta mattanya Womma Tarndanyako

[ngadlu thampintheta garna miyurna yarta mathanya wama tharndanyaku]

We recognize (that) Kurna people are the land-owners and custodians of the Adelaide Plains.







וַיִּתֵּר מִהֶמָּה בְּנֵי הַזֵּהָר
עֲשׂוֹת סְפָרִים הַרְבֵּה אֵין קֵץ
וְלִהְיֵה הַרְבֵּה יְגַעַת בְּשׂוֹר

(קהלת י"ב י"ב)

And further, by these, my son, be admonished:
of making many books [there is] no end;
and much study [is] a weariness of the flesh.

(Ecclesiastes 12 : 12)



Meaning (1)?

- **There are millions of books written on the Bible and religion, billions on all subjects.**



The Supermarket between Harvard and MIT, Cambridge Massachusetts USA



Meaning (2)?

- Does the Biblical verse suggest that books written on any subject other than God's wisdom will only proliferate the uselessness of man's thinking?





I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy.

**My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, navigation, Commerce and Agriculture,
in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelaine.**

John Adams (second President of the United States in 1797–1801) to Abigail Adams
[post 12 May 1780]
Adams Family Correspondence, 3:342



**Given that today is 4 July,
Here are relevant words of
two Americans:**



On Children / *Khalil Gibran*

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's
longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong
not to you.

You may give them your love but not your
thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their
souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of
tomorrow,

which you cannot visit, not even in your
dreams.





*Marianna, Khalil's Sister
(Painting by Khalil Gibran)*

You may strive to be like them,
but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries
with yesterday.

You are the **bows** from which your
children as living **arrows** are sent
forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the
path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand
be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that
flies, so He loves also the bow that is
stable.

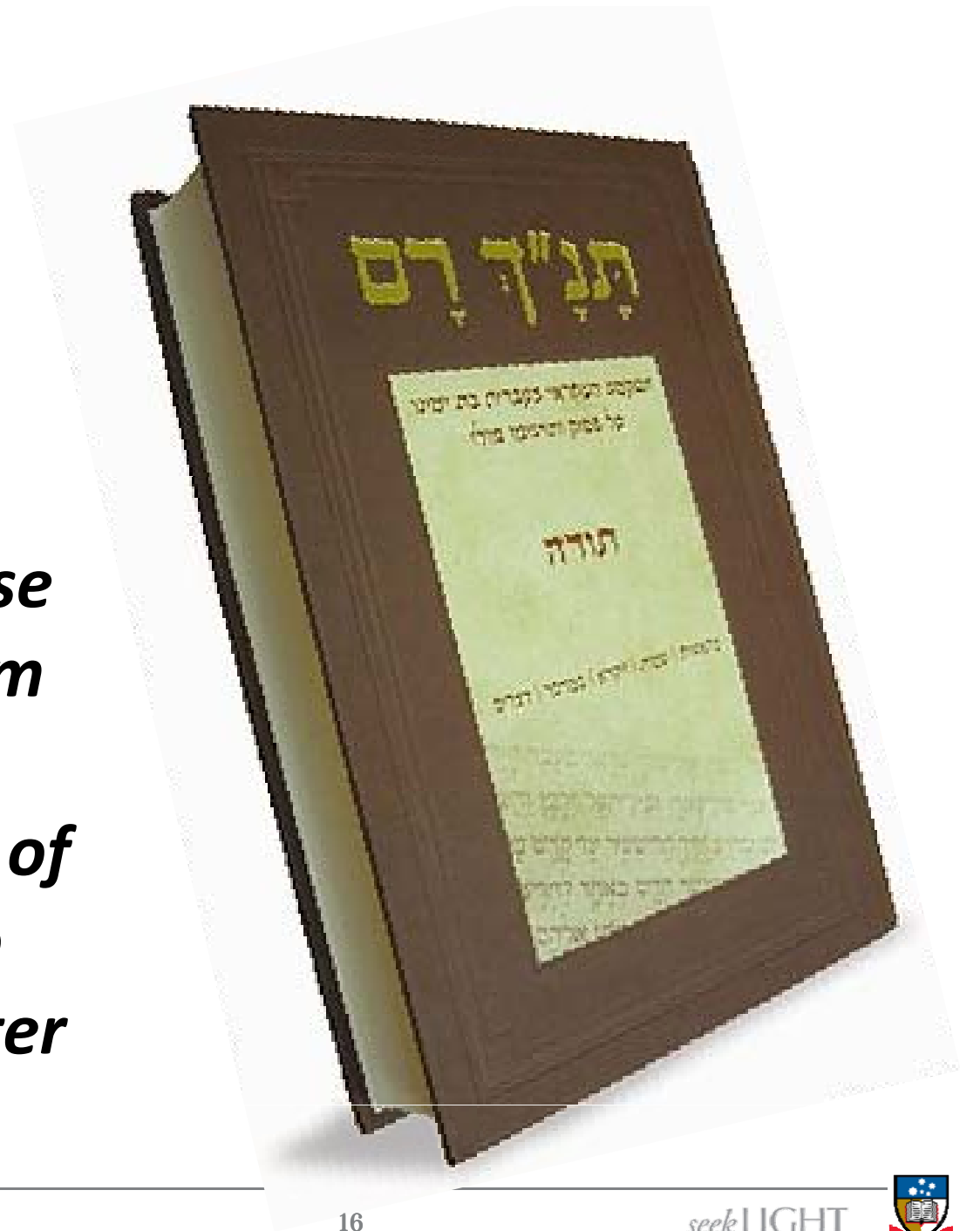
The main controversial question
of today's lecture:

**Does the Hebrew Bible
need to be translated into
Israeli (Revived Hebrew)?**



***The Hebrew Bible
ought to be
taught in Israel
like a foreign
language.***

***In this lecture I endorse
Tanakh RAM, Avraham
Ahuvia's recently-
published translation of
the Hebrew Bible into
what I call high-register
'Israeli'.***



כט 15-21: לבן מבטיח להשיא את רחל ליעקב

20. ויאמר לבן ליעקב הכי אהבי אותה ונעבדתני חנם הנידה לי מה' ששכרתה:
21. אמר לבן ליעקב: "אמנם אתה קרוב משפחה, אך בכל זאת אינך צריך לעבד אצלי חנם; אמר לי מה המשיקרת שאתה מבקש."
22. וילבן היו שתי בנות; שם הגדולה לאה ושם הקטנה רחל:
23. ועני לאה רבות ורחל היתה ישתתאר ויפת טראה:
24. ויאהב יעקב את רחל ויאמר אנכרדך שבע שנים כרחל בתך הקטנה:
25. ויאמר לבן טוב תהי אתה לך סתתי אתה לאיש אתר שבה עשרי:
26. ונעבד יעקב כרחל שבע שנים והיו בעיניו כגמים אחרים באהבתו אתה:
27. ויאמר יעקב אל לבן הבנה אתר אשתי כי קלאו ימי ואבואה אליה:
28. אמר לבן את קל אנשי הסוסים ועיש משתה:
29. והי קערב ויחא את לאה בתו ויבא אתה אליו ויבא אליה:
30. אמר לבן את קל אנשי הסוסים למשתה שעשה:
31. וקערב לקח לבן את לאה בתו, והביא אותה אל יעקב, ויעבד יעקב אתה.

כט 22-30: יעקב נישא גם את לאה וגם את רחל

32. אמר לבן את קל אנשי הסוסים למשתה שעשה:
33. וקערב לקח לבן את לאה בתו, והביא אותה אל יעקב, ויעבד יעקב אתה.

מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים

יִסְדַּתְּ עִז

(תהלים ח' ג')

Out of the mouth of babes and
sucklings hast Thou founded strength

I suppose the process of acceptance will pass through the usual four stages:

- 1. This is worthless nonsense.**
- 2. This is an interesting, but perverse, point of view.**
- 3. This is true, but quite unimportant.**
- 4. I always said so.**

John Burdon Sanderson
Haldane (1963: 464)

If you talk to a man in a language he understands,

that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language,

that goes to his heart. (Nelson Mandela)

- In 1996 President Ezer Weizman visited the University of Cambridge to familiarize himself with the famous collection of medieval Jewish manuscripts known as the Cairo Genizah.
- He was introduced to the Regius Professor of Hebrew. Hearing 'Hebrew', the friendly president clapped the don on the shoulder and asked *ma nishma*, the common Israeli 'what's up?' greeting, which is, in fact, a loan translation of the Yiddish phrase *vos hert zikh*, usually pronounced *vsertsekh* and literally meaning 'what's heard?'.



- To Weizman's astonishment, the distinguished Hebrew professor did not have the faintest clue whatsoever about what the president 'wanted from his life'.
- As an expert of the Old Testament, he wondered whether Weizman was alluding to Deuteronomy 6:4: 'Shema` Yisra`el' (Hear, O Israel).
- Knowing neither Yiddish
- Russian (chto slyshno)
- Polish (co slychać),
- nor Romanian (ce se aude) –
- let alone Israeli (a.k.a. 'Modern Hebrew') –
- the Cantabrigian don had no chance whatsoever of guessing the actual meaning of this beautiful, economical expression.



- Edward Ullendorff, who passed away in 2011, claimed that Isaiah could have easily understood Israeli.
- I propose that his statement is false – unless of course he referred to Isaiah Leibowitz, yet another prophet.
- To begin with, Isaiah the Biblical would have found it extremely difficult to even decode the European pronunciation of Israeli speakers.
- But the more important – and much less hypothetical – question is: Do Israelis understand Isaiah?



- Israelis not only do not understand the Hebrew Bible, but much worse: they misunderstand it without even realising it!
- By and large, Israeli speakers are the worst students in advanced studies of the Bible.
- I love both Hebrew and Israeli, and in the last 20 years I have argued that the Hebrew Bible ought to be translated into the contemporary language of Israel. Against this background, I was delighted to hear about the recent publication of 'Tanakh RAM'.



- Tanakh RAM is the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Israeli. It is the result of four-year hard work by the impressively-experienced Bible teacher Avraham Ahuvia, as well as the insightful publisher Rafi Moses, acronymized in the biblionym RAM.
- Each page in Tanakh RAM has two columns: On the right side appears the Hebrew text and on the left side the translation into Israeli.
- The Israeli translation includes two advantages vis-à-vis the original text: punctuation such as commas, and division into sections with an appropriate title.



- Moses contacted Ahuvia in 1999 and the latter completed the work in 2004. Initially, in June 2008, RAM Publishing House (owned by Moses) and Rekhes Publishing House published 14 booklets for primary pupils and high school students.
- The booklets included specific Biblical chapters according to the national syllabus.
- In 2010, 2011 and 2012, RAM and Yediot Akharonot publishing houses produced the translation of the Torah, Former Prophets and Latter Prophets respectively.



- Harsh opposition has followed. Zvi Zameret, till July 2011 head of Israel Education Ministry's pedagogical council, defined Tanach RAM as 'a disaster of Biblical proportions'.
- Although he admits that 'the Bible teaching situation is deteriorating alarmingly', he focused on financial excuses and declared in a 2011 interview in Haaretz that 'there's an unequivocal order to schools not to use Tanakh RAM.
- We see this rewriting of the Bible as one of the greatest disasters to Bible studies'. Disturbingly, Zameret cited former Education Ministry Director General Shimshon Shoshani as saying 'bring me principals [whose schools use Tanakh RAM] and we'll hang them in the city square!' (sic).



- Unlike the Hebrew myth that Zameret obviously adheres to, the Israeli language is a fascinating and multifaceted 120 year-old Semito-European hybrid language.
- It is mosaic rather than only Mosaic. Its grammar is based not only on 'sleeping beauty' Hebrew, but simultaneously also on Yiddish, the revivalists' mother tongue, as well as on a plethora of other languages spoken by the founders of Israeli, e.g. Polish, Russian, German, Ladino and Arabic.



- Notwithstanding, Israel's Education Ministry axiomatically assumes that Israeli is simply an organic evolution of Hebrew and that the Bible is thus written in the very same language - albeit in a higher register, of course - spoken by Israeli pupils at primary and secondary schools.
- Needless to say, the publishers of Hartom-Cassuto and other volumes providing numerous glosses to the unfathomable Biblical verses, have benefited immensely from such conservatism, which might be related to self-righteousness, hubris or simply blindness on behalf of Israel's educational system.



- How many Israelis can really fathom 'tohu wavohu' or 'tehom' (Genesis 1:2), the Israeli misleading, wrong senses being 'mess' and 'abyss' respectively?
- Most Israelis understand yeled sha`ashu`im' (Jeremiah 31:19, King James 20) as 'playboy' rather than 'pleasant, beloved child'.
- 'Ba'u banim `ad mashber' (Isaiah 37:3) is interpreted by Israelis as 'children arrived at a crisis' rather than as 'children arrived at the mouth of the womb, to be born'.
- "Adam le`amal yullad' (Job 5:7) is taken to mean 'man was born to do productive work' rather than 'mischief' or 'trouble' - this sentence stands as an accusation of the inherent wickedness of mankind.



- Who knows what 'egla meshulleshet' (Genesis 15:9) is?: a triangular heifer? three calves? a third heifer? a cow weighing three weight units? a three-legged heifer?
- If you studied the RAM Bible, you would know because its translation into Israeli is as egla bat shalosh ('an heifer of three years old', see also the King James Version, which is often more accessible to Israelis than the Hebrew Bible itself).



- Tanakh RAM fulfills the mission of 'red 'el ha'am' not only in its Hebrew meaning (Go down to the people) but also – more importantly – in its Yiddish meaning ('red' meaning 'speak!', as opposed to its colourful communist sense).
- Ahuvia's translation is most useful and dignified. Given its high register, however, I predict that the future promises consequent translations into more colloquial forms of Israeli, a beautifully multi-layered and intricately multi-sourced language, of which to be proud.



"The Bible is the closest book to Israeli youth."

(David Ben-Gurion, 1957)

אין ספר כל כך קרוב לנוער בארץ – כספר התנ"ך.

A quote from a letter by David Ben-Gurion to Professor Nathan
Rotenstreich, 28 March 1957, – see Shapira (2005, p. 133).



- As Nietzsche once said:

Alle Dinge, die lange leben, werden allmählich so mit Vernunft durchtränkt, dass ihre Abkunft aus der Unvernunft dadurch unwahrscheinlich wird. Klingt nicht fast jede genaue Geschichte einer Entstehung für das Gefühl paradox und frevelhaft?(Nietzsche 1881: Book I: Section 1, cf. 1971: V:i:15)

“Whatever lives for a long time is gradually so saturated with reason, that its irrational origins become improbable. Does not almost every accurate history of the origin of something sounds paradoxical and sacrilegious to our feelings?”



Biblical Hebrew and the Israeli Language

- I maintain that there is a substantial connection between understanding – or rather not understanding or misunderstanding – the Hebrew language, and the low point reached by Bible Studies today.
- Bible teaching in Israel relies on the premise that the ancient Biblical language and the mother tongue of most Israelis is one and the same. Almost all relevant linguistic studies aim to substantiate this thesis. Analysis shows that this theory is manifested in two ways:



- On the one hand, some studies celebrate the "resurrection of Hebrew", which they presume to have occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. They praise the pioneering and important enterprise of Eliezer Ben–Yehuda, which is generally described as a heroic miracle that brought about the revival of Hebrew speech. In this context, the language spoken in modern Israel is perceived to be the language of the Bible resurrected from the dead, much like the dry bones that Ezekiel saw in his vision, or the famous Sleeping Beauty, awakening from 1750 years of sleep.



- On the other hand, different studies tackle that alleged miracle by presenting an alternative theory. This theory holds that "the revival of Hebrew" did not take place at all: Hebrew had not died, but rather maintained its consecutive existence from the Biblical period onwards until the modern era.



- Aviezer Ravitzky, a prominent scholar of Jewish philosophy, compared the relationship between Classical Greek and Modern Greek to the relationship between Biblical and contemporary Hebrew. Ravitzky argued that, whereas Greek is characterized by an unbridgeable gap between these two languages, Hebrew users do not face such a chasm:

Modern Greek, for example, boasts many similarities to its ancestor, yet a speaker of the current language must struggle to read ancient texts. The Modern Hebrew speaker, however, moves smoothly through the Bible. (Ravitzky, 2000, pp. 13-14)



- A similar view was expressed in an introduction to a linguistic discussion held some 30 years ago:

If you give an Israeli child a piece of Hebrew-engraved pottery thousands of years old, he would probably read the engraved writing without difficulty and would understand its content to some extent. This remarkable fact is held by many as conclusive evidence testifying to the unique qualities of Hebrew and to the difference between Hebrew and other languages. (Kasher et al. 1980 p. 107)



- We cannot discuss here the multifarious ideas raised by that discourse. Let us, however, refer to an honest and courageous confession by Joseph Klausner (1957):
- While mourning the death of his mother, Klausner tried to read the Book of Job. He did not hesitate to admit the enormous difficulty that confronted him: "Instead of **reading** the Book of Job, I had to **study** it" (ibid., p. 36, emphasis in original).
- He found that the only solution was to read it in its French translation. He described his experience as follows: "The **language** was simple and intelligible, so that I could direct my thinking to the **idea**, admire the lofty arguments, and find solace in my grief" (ibid. emphasis in original).



- The Book of Job is indeed one of the most intricate, as well as the most obscure books of the Bible. Nevertheless, numerous chapters of the Torah, as well as chapters of prophecy, include verses that are as difficult to comprehend. The following verses appear in the Torah, in the books of the Prophets and in the Ketuvim. The school curriculum includes the following chapters which, like Job, should be thoroughly studied in order to meet the demands of the Bible Bagrut examination:

- "ולא-תחניפו את-הארץ אשר אתם בה כי הדם הוא יחניף את-הארץ ולאֶרֶץ לא-יִכַּפֵּר לְדָם אֲשֶׁר שִׁפְּךָ-בָּהּ כִּי-אִם בְּדָם שִׁפְּכוּ" (במדבר לה, לג)
- "וקטר מחמץ תודה וקראו נדבות השמיעו כי כן אהבתם בני ישראל נאם אדני." (עמוס ד, ה)
- "והילילו שירות היכל ביום ההוא נאם אדני רב הפגר בכל-מקום השליה הס" (עמוס ח, ג)
- "נשקד על פשעי בידו ושתרגו עלו על-צוארי הכשיל כחי נתנני אדני בידי לא-אוכל קום; סלה כל-אבירי אדני בקרבי קרא עלי מועד לשבר בחורי גת דרך אדני לבתולת בת-יהודה" (איכה א, יד-טו).



Careful scrutiny of these verses reveals that they are unfathomable to the average native Israeli speaker.



*Ignorance is like a very delicate exotic fruit. Touch it and the bloom is gone.
(The Importance of Being Earnest, Oscar Wilde)*

) ונתתי את שמיכם כברזל ואת ארצכם כנחשה [wənátat'ti ʔet šəme'k^hem kabbar'zel wə'ʔet ʔarsə'k^hem kannəhu'jã]

Consider the sentence written beneath a portrait of a pilot standing in front of a jet fighter, in a recruitment poster hanging in some Israeli air force bases: ונתתי את שמיכם כברזל ואת ארצכם כנחשה. The Hebrew pronunciation was [wənátat'ti ʔet šəme'k^hem kabbar'zel wə'ʔet ʔarsə'k^hem kannəhu'jã] but in Israeli it would be pronounced *venatáti et shmeykhém kebarzél veét artsekhém kenekhushá / kenekhóshet*. The literal meaning of this high-register sentence is 'I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper', implying that the Israeli Air Force makes the skies as impenetrable as iron to its enemies. But the use of Leviticus 26:19 as a recruitment slogan is remarkable considering its original meaning:

And if, for all that, you do not obey Me, I will go on to discipline you sevenfold for your sins, and I will break your proud glory. I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper, so that your strength will be spent to no purpose. Your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

(Leviticus 26:18-20)



- The biblical context is explicitly negative: the iron sky a sign of drought, the copper land an indication of barrenness – whilst the air force poster suggests military power and fortitude. Clearly, the appropriation of the biblical verse involves a shift in the original meaning. Be that as it may, this shift may simply be due to the graphic designer’s ignorance of the verse’s original meaning and while ignorance is a cultural force in its own right, it is not one of the manipulative forces treated in this paper. But it *is* relevant to Gershom Scholem’s letter to Franz Rosenzweig.



- Israeli, which somewhat misleadingly is also known as “Modern Hebrew”, is a fascinating and multifaceted 120 year-old Semito-European hybrid language.
- It is **m**osaic rather than **M**osaic *tout court*. Its grammar is based not only on “sleeping beauty” – or “walking dead” – Hebrew, but simultaneously also on Yiddish, the revivalists’ *máme loshn* (mother tongue), as well as on a plethora of other languages spoken by the founders of Israeli, e.g. Polish, Russian, German, Ladino and Arabic (see Zuckermann, 2008, p. 27).



- Hebrew persisted as a very important literary, cultural and liturgical language over the centuries and greatly influenced Israeli.
- The inherent fallacy characteristic of the studies discussed above lies therefore in their over-emphasis on the Semitic elements of Israeli, namely its core-morphology and very basic vocabulary.
- These studies overlook the important principle suggested by Bialik and quoted at the beginning of this section. Bialik believed that the essence of a language is determined not only by its "volume", i.e. vocabulary, but equally by the possible "combinations" of the same words, namely the way they are used.



- Furthermore, the most important tool in analyzing Israeli is the Congruence Principle: If a linguistic feature exists in more than one contributing language (i.e., there is congruence, or overlapping), it is more likely to persist in the emerging, target language.
- This is a radical principle since it contradicts the Stammbaum (family tree) tool in historical linguistics. According to the family tree, each language has only one parent.
- But Israeli is a hybrid language, both Semitic and Indo-European. Both Hebrew and Yiddish act as its primary contributors, accompanied by an array of secondary contributors: Arabic, Russian, Polish, German, Judaeo-Spanish (“Ladino”), English and so on.



- At this point, the Congruence Principle becomes useful. By acknowledging the possibility of overlapping, multiple contributors, it weakens the family tree tool, and casts light on the complex genesis of Israeli.
- Thus any linguistic feature of Israeli should be explained in the light of all the languages that have contributed to it. Israeli is not only multi-layered and multi-registered, but also multi-sourced (draws from many different languages).
- The Zionist enterprise has consciously revived an ancient language that died as a mother tongue in the second century CE. Some 1750 years later it was brought back to life by charismatic saviours who resurrected that dead skeleton while energizing it – often inadvertently – with their own vigorous mother tongues.



Seven Jews have changed the world:

- **Moses**
- **Jesus**
- **Marx**
- **Freud**
- **Sapir**
- **Zuckerberg**
- **Einstein**



Edward Sapir (1884–1939)
Linguist and anthropologist

IDEOLOGY AND HYBRIDITY:

The Hebrew Revival:

British actor Stephen Fry interviewing Prof. Ghil'ad Zuckermann.

(BBC, 7.5 minutes)

<http://vimeo.com/channels/357807/44019045>





★ CHOICE

Fry's Planet Word

BBC2, 9pm

identity, in the second instalment of

Barnsley native Ian McMillan, who muses on the way in which local environment can influence our pronunciation. In Ireland he learns how television soap operas are keeping the Irish language alive among its 60,000 speakers. He also asks how

DRAMA
Don't
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The Relative Success of Language Reclamation

The success of language revival is relative.

(No language reclamation can be fully successful.)

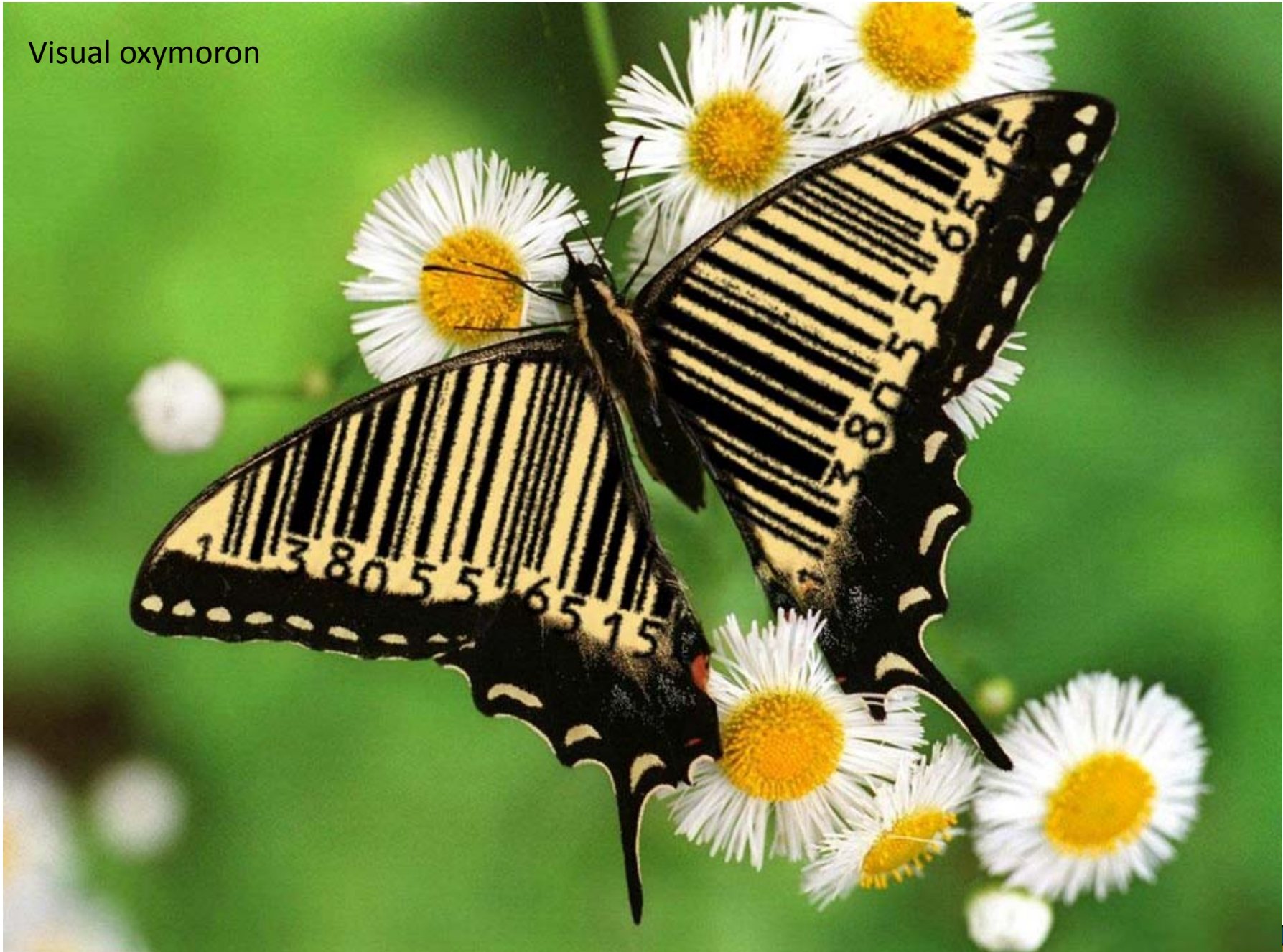
‘Not that there’s anything wrong with that!’

(Jerry Seinfeld)

**Better a dirty, injured
butterfly that is alive
than
a perfectly-beautiful butterfly
stuck on the wall.**

**An alive Barngarla Aboriginal language, albeit
hybridic, mixed and cross-fertilized, is better than
an authentic, pure, perfect Barngarla that is dead.**

Visual oxymoron



Demystifying the Hebrew Revival 1:

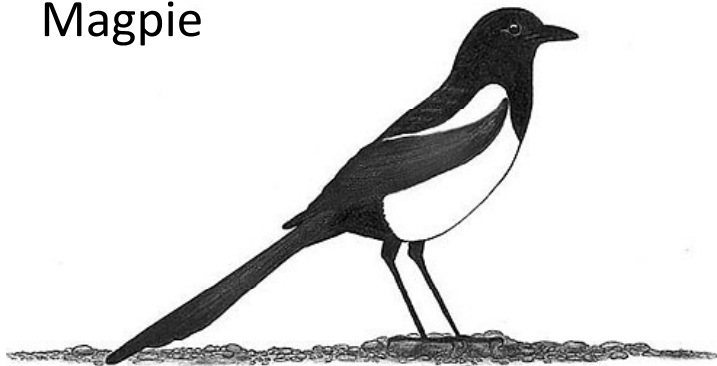
In reality, Revived Hebrew is a hybrid language!

Hybrid Vigour / *Non ho studiato ornitologia!*
A phoenixcuckoo cross with some magpie characteristics

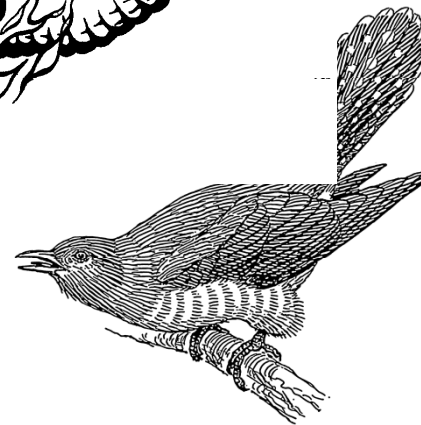
Phoenix



Magpie



Cuckoo





A reclaimed language as a
pheonicuckoo cross with some
magpie characteristics

The relationship between Hybridity and Diversity

Hybridization results in new diversity!

Demystifying the Hebrew Revival 2:

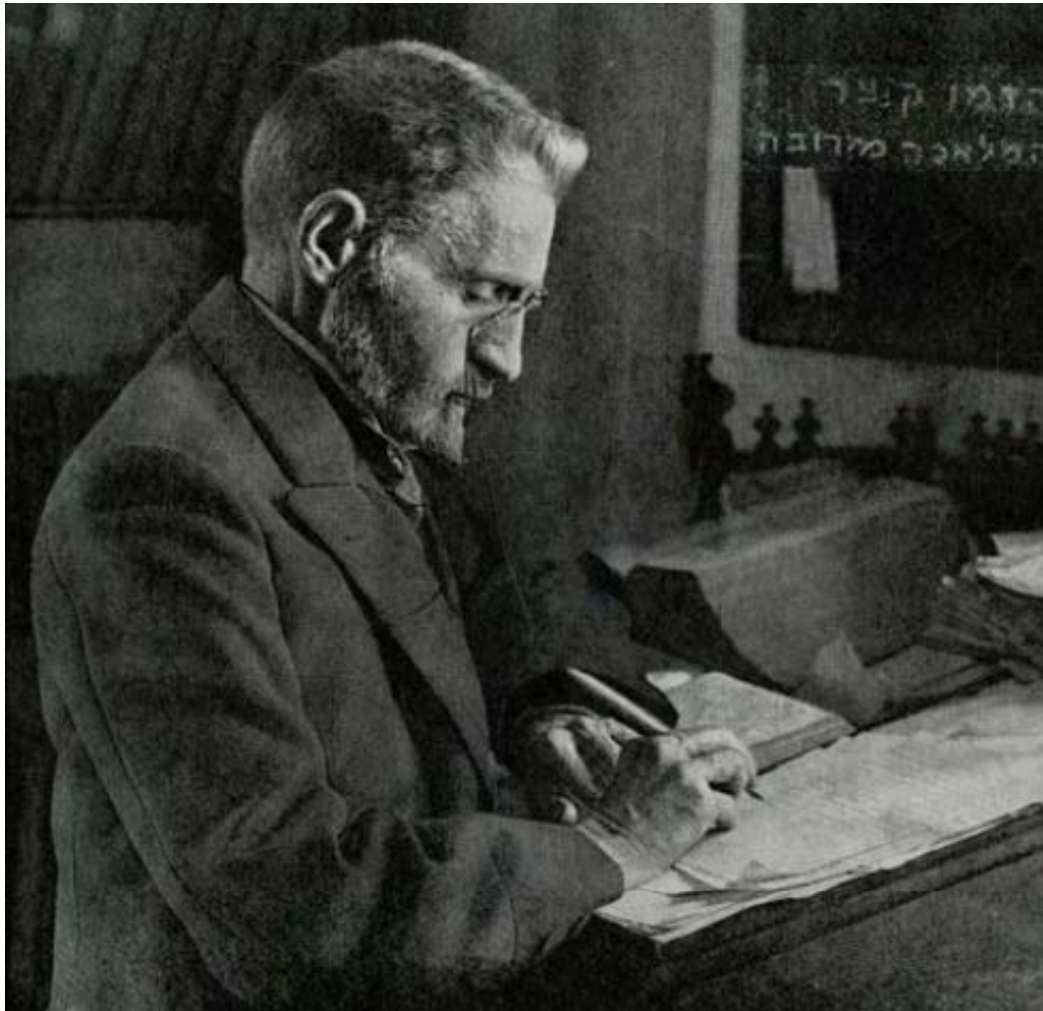
In reality, the revivalists were a small, unsupported group!

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Controversially attributed to Margaret Mead
(controversial American cultural anthropologist, 1901-1978)

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda,
the main Hebrew revivalist



Eliezer Ben-Yehuda
the grandson



- Let us begin with several examples that demonstrate the common misreading of Biblical expressions by Israelis (cf. Zuckermann, 2008, p. 65):
 - **A.** Most Israelis understand “yéled sha‘ashu‘ím” (Jeremiah 31:19) as “playboy” rather than “pleasant child”.
 - **B.** Bá’u baním ‘ad mashbér” (Isaiah 37:3) is interpreted by Israelis as “children arrived at a crisis” rather than as “children arrived at the mouth of the womb, to be born”.
 - **C.** "Kol ha’anashim hayod‘im ki meqaṭrot neshehem le’elohim ’aḥerim" (Jeremiah 44: 15) is understood by some Israelis as ‘all the men who know that their wives *are complaining* to other gods’ rather than ‘all the men who knew that their wives *had burned incense* unto other gods’.



- Israelis might understand the most general meaning of “bereshit- bara ’elohim ’et hashamayim we’et ha’arets” (Genesis 1:1: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth) but very few would be able to explain the construct-state *nomen regens* (nismákh) *bereshit-*: in the beginning of what?
- And how many Israelis could fathom the sequence of time in this sentence: were heaven and earth created at the same time? Is it, therefore, possible that the expression ‘the heaven and the earth’ here refers to the cosmos or world in general? Almost all Israelis do not understand "Heaven and Earth" in its original meaning, which is “cosmos” or “world”.
- This is a Hebrew merismus which is not common in Israeli, a means to refer to an object by specifying its two ends



- How many Israelis can really fathom “tohu wavohu” or “təhom” (Genesis 1:2)?
- The Israeli senses are “mess, chaos” and “abyss” respectively, but a more reliable interpretation of these terms is "desolate and empty" and “water” respectively.
- The problem seems to be that some alleged Bible experts tend to read the text anachronistically, as if it were composed in their Israeli language.



There are hundreds of examples of words that are frequently misunderstood, and we must keep in mind that the Bible contains only 8000 different words. Let us look at some more examples:

- חָסֵר-לֵב (pronounced in Israeli as *khasár lev*) (a few references to the book of Proverbs) is "stupid", not "cruel" – since in Hebrew the heart is where thoughts are placed, not feelings.
- דַּעָה (pronounced in Israeli as *deá*) (e.g. Isaiah 11:9) is objective, not subjective knowledge.
- בֹּטְנִים (pronounced in Israeli as *botním*) (Genesis 43:11) is a type of fruit, but certainly not the Israeli peanut.
- צֶלֶל (pronounced in Israeli as *tslil*) (Judges 7:13) is “bread” rather than “sound”.



- נִיחֹחַ (pronounced in Israeli as *nikhóakh*) (e.g Exodus 29:18) is "giving pleasure" rather than "good smell".
- יִרְקָרֵק (pronounced in Israeli as *yerakrák*) (Leviticus 13:49) is not "weak green" but rather "strong green".
- יוֹצֵא צָבָא (pronounced in Israeli as *yotsé tsavá*) (Chronicles II 25:5) has not yet joined the army.
- לְרַב אֶחָיו (pronounced in Israeli as *leróv ekháv*) (Esther 10:3) means "to his many brothers" rather than "to most of his brothers".
- פְּחָם (pronounced in Israeli as *pekhám*) (e.g. Isaiah 54:16) is "fire, heat" rather than "coal".



- Therefore we should not be surprised when we encounter in a northern Israeli kibbutz a sign saying כִּי-אָדָם לְעֵמָל יוּלָד *‘ādām lə‘āmāl yullād* (Job 5: 7).
- This is interpreted by Israelis as “man was born to do productive work” rather than “man was born to do mischief”.
- This Biblical sentence stands as an accusation of the inherent wickedness of mankind.



- In many cases there is a process of specification: a general meaning in Hebrew becomes a specific meaning in Israeli.

For example, Biblical Hebrew

- עֲגָה (pronounced in Israeli as *ugá*) (Kings I 17:13) is any kind of pastry, not necessarily a sweet one as in Israeli;
- דֶּשֶׁה (*déshe*) (e.g. Genesis 1:11) is “Herbaceous plant” rather than “grass”;
- תִּנְשֵׁמֶת (*tinshémet*) (e.g. Leviticus 11:18) is “bird” rather than “owl”; לִרְקוֹד
- (*lirkód*) means “hop, jump” rather than “dance”.



- Most importantly, however, the available examples are far from being only lexical: Israelis are incapable of recognizing moods and aspects in the Bible.
- For example, נַפְיְלָה גּוֹרְלוֹת *nappíla goralót* “let us cast lots” (Jonah 1:7) was thought by some Israelis we have examined to be rhetorical future rather than cohortative, the latter apparent, for example, in Israeli ‘yefutar asad’ (may Assad be fired!).



- Despite 11 years of Biblical training, Israeli-speakers fail to internalize that whereas in Israeli there is a past-present-future *tense* distinction, in Biblical Hebrew there is a perfect/imperfect *aspect* distinction.
- They still understand the perfect aspect (e.g. 'amar “said” as in “I will have said...””) as if it were past tense. The imperfect aspect (e.g. yomar “would/will say” as in “I thought I would say...””) is misunderstood as the future tense.



- In reality, a Biblical verb in the perfect aspect – which Israelis take to be past tense – can refer to a completed action in the future – cf., *mutatis mutandis*, the Israeli colloquial question “záznu?” (literally “have we gone/moved?”), which can be used instead of “yala bay”, i.e. “let’s go”.
- Tironut (IDF recruit training) commanders sometimes issue orders in a *sadaút* session (“fieldcraft”, etymologically unrelated to *sadism*): “od khamésh dakót hayítem kan!” (Within five minutes you will have been here), *hayítem* being in Israeli grammatically past but actually referring in this specific colloquial case to an action in the future.
- In the Hebrew Bible, *heyitém* refers **regularly** – not only colloquially – to an action that has been completed, regardless of whether or not it is in the past or future – hence the term “aspect” rather than “tense”. Such a Biblical mindset is in harsh contradistinction to the *Weltanschauung* of the *Homo sapiens sapiens israelicus vulgaris* and to the way Israelis read the Bible.



- The order of words in a sentence is also completely different in Biblical Hebrew than it is in Israeli. Ask Israelis what “avaním shaḥaqú máyim” (Job 14:19) means and they will tell you that the stones eroded the water.
- On second thought, they might guess that semantically it would make more sense that the water eroded the stones.
- Yet such an Object-Verb-Subject constituent-order is ungrammatical in Israeli.
- Standard canonical order in an Israeli sentence, as well as in sentences in Indo-European languages is Subject-Verb-Object.
- This order is different from the common order in Biblical Hebrew, and in other Semitic languages.
- The common order in these languages would usually be Verb-Subject-Object. A standard Biblical verse is written in the form: וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה “And spoke the Lord unto Moses”.



- Linguists utilize advanced scientific means, such as
 - (1) inspecting the way Biblical expressions function in various other contexts and figuring out their meaning accordingly;
 - (2) comparing Biblical chapters to legal documents and other texts that were composed in Biblical times;
 - (3) comparing a Biblical text to its earliest translations prepared by scholars proficient in Biblical Hebrew. These measures provide a more reliable linguistic understanding of Biblical language than that acquired by laymen.



For a different lecture:

פסח

Does not mean Pass Over but rather Divine protection.



Russell Hoban (children's writer, 1925-2011 – cf. Haffenden 1985: 138):

Language is an archaeological vehicle, full of the remnants of dead and living pasts, lost and buried civilizations and technologies.

The language we speak is a whole

palimpsest of human effort and history.

Concluding Remarks

Pope John Paul II visiting Israel

Ben-Gurion's wish

Amos Oz on Menachem Begin



1. CONFESSION ON THE SUBJECT OF OUR LANGUAGE

(Bekanntnis über unsere Sprache)

A Letter by Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenzweig,

26 December 1926

- This country is a volcano. It houses language. One speaks here of many things that could make us fail. One speaks more than ever today about the Arabs.
- But more uncanny than the Arab people [*unheimlicher als das arabische Volk*] another threat confronts us that is a *necessary* consequence [*mit Notwendigkeit*] of the Zionist undertaking: What about the ‘actualization [*Aktualisierung*]’ of Hebrew? Must not this abyss of a sacred language handed down to our children break out again? Truly, no one knows what is being done here.
- One believes that language has been secularized, that its apocalyptic thorn has been pulled out [*ihr den apokalyptischen Stachel ausgezogen zu haben*]. But this is surely not true.



- The secularization of language is only a *façon de parler*, a ready-made phrase. It is absolutely impossible to empty out words filled to bursting, unless one does so at the expense of language itself.
- The ghostly Volapük spoken here in the streets points precisely to the expressionless linguistic world in which the ‘secularization’ of language could alone be possible. If we transmit to our children the language that has been transmitted to us, if we – the generation of the transition [das Geschlecht des Übergangs] – resuscitate the language of the ancient books so that it can reveal itself anew to them, must then not the religious violence of the language one day break out against those who speak it [gegen ihre Sprecher ausbrechen]?



- And on the day this eruption occurs, which generation will suffer its effects [und welches Geschlecht wird dieser Ausbruch finden]? We do live inside this language, above an abyss, almost all of us with the certainty of the blind. But when our sight is restored, we or those who come after us, must we not fall to the bottom of this abyss? And no one knows whether the sacrifice of individuals who will be annihilated in this abyss will suffice to close it.



IDEOLOGICAL SECULARIZATION IN ISRAELI

DEIFYING Zionism (The Nation/State as the New God)



משכן [miʃkán] → *mishkán*

Biblical Hebrew משכן [miʃkán] means ‘dwelling-place’ and ‘Tabernacle of the Congregation’ (where Moses kept the Ark in the wilderness), ‘inner sanctum’ (known as אהל מועד [ʾohel moʿed]).

Israeli *mishkán* is ‘a building for a specific purpose’, e.g. משכן האומנויות *mishkán aomanuyót* ‘the Arts Centre’, משכן הכנסת *mishkán aknéset* ‘the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) building’.

Translating *mishkán aknéset* as ‘The Knesset Building’ (as in the official Knesset website) is lacking. The word *mishkán* is **loaded with holiness** and **evokes sanctity**, as if MKs (Members of Knesset, i.e. MPs) were at the very least angels or seraphs.



But manipulative secularization is the topic for another lecture...

Thank you.



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Concluding Remarks

- In 1953, Bible teacher Meir Bloch wrote: "The Bible is not appreciated by Israeli youth. They never study it or read it for their own pleasure.
- At most they deal with it in order to pass the Bagrút (matriculation) examinations. This state of affairs requires discussion: What is the origin of that crisis? And what might be the way to remedy the situation? "(Shapira, 2005, p. 114).
- Bloch raised several more questions which can and indeed should be discussed in any gathering of present-day Bible teachers: "Which ideas and principles form the foundation of Biblical teaching so far? What might be the reasons for that failure? What is the state of the profession today? ... Which way shall we turn?" (ibid.)



- These honest and painful questions attest that Bible studies have been in a state of continuous failure for decades. Even if the Ministry of Education calls attention to a deterioration in Bible teaching due to budget cuts, we ought to admit that there has never been a golden age for Bible studies at Israeli schools.
- From the fin-de-siècle days of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's son Itamar Ben-Avi till the twenty-first century, the mother tongue of Israeli children is **Israeli**, and not Hebrew. Consequently, Israeli children lack the skills required to understand the Bible effortlessly. It is essential to take full measures to help them do so.



- A consideration of David Ben-Gurion's assertion that "there is not even one Hebrew book...that is so close, intimate to the youth as the Bible" (p. 134) raises a suspicion that these remarks, as well as the epigraph of this article, were written under the influence of his famous "Tanachomania" (p. 122).
- Shapira (2005) cited this expression, which was used by Ben-Gurion's friends. She used it to describe their efforts to "enhance the status of the Bible while expressing contempt and complete disapproval toward other components of Jewish-Israeli culture" (p. 22.)



- Shapira further explained how Ben-Gurion's attitude toward the Bible evolved. His thesis was that the status of the people of Israel as "the people of the book, the people of the prophets" (Shapira, 1997, p. 230) was the source of their spiritual distinctiveness, which was the key to their mysterious survival throughout thousands of years of exile. Ben-Gurion even attributed the victory in the War of Independence (1948-1949) to the power of Biblical prophetic spirit (ibid.).
- Shapira explained that there was a correlation between conquering the land during the War of Independence and Ben-Gurion's attitude towards the Bible on the one hand, and his underestimation of Jewish heritage in the Diaspora on the other (cf. negation of Diaspora and religion in Yadin and Zuckermann 2010).



- Shapira's study shows that, after the war, Ben-Gurion began to argue that the Bible could only be understood by Israelis who lived in the land of the Bible and were proficient in its language (ibid., p. 233).
- He maintained that the stories of the patriarchs and kings had "more topicality, they are closer and more instructive and full of sap that is essential for the generation which is born, raised and living in the country" (p. 235).
- He added that "human and social values, which we favour, were articulated in the highest intensity by the prophets. They comprise Jewish redemption as well as universal human salvation" (ibid.)



- These quotations provide some explanation for those ostensibly naive phrases cited above.
- Evidently Ben-Gurion's comments do not necessarily reflect an acquaintance with youngsters who are fluent in Biblical language.
- To be more precise, they manifest his vision, as well as his belief, that these young people, who were struggling for the foundation of Israel, were in fact exemplifying Biblical values and reliving the lives of the patriarchs. Ben-Gurion's vision symbolized a quantum leap in space and time, skipping thousands of years of Jewish survival in exile, and on these grounds he was heavily criticized.
- Two of his harshest critics were the writer Haim Hazaz, and the philosopher Nathan Rotenstreich (pp. 235-240).



- However, in light of the fact that nowadays typical Israeli children have no interest in the Bible, we cannot ignore Ben-Gurion's sentiment that this book can actually find a way into the hearts of the youth and enrich their world.
- When Ben-Gurion was asked which three books he would choose to save if the world were destroyed, he mentioned the Bible, Plato and Buddha (p. 238).
- Elsewhere (in a letter to S. Yizhar) he mentioned Socrates, "the great teacher of Plato".
- Disappointed by his discussions with those allegedly smart Athenians, Socrates dedicated his life to conversations with Athenian youth.
- He aimed to stimulate their analytical thinking and never regretted his choice, although he paid for it with his own life.



- That concern for education and for the optimal development of young people which was Socrates', as well as Ben-Gurion's, major concern must preoccupy contemporary educational leadership too. It is also clear that the difficulties in teaching the Bible and the Hebrew language are interrelated. As explained above, Israeli differs from Hebrew in its lexis (vocabulary), syntax, tenses/aspects, semantics, phonetics and phonology, discourse etc. The differences are fundamental and the two are genetically different. Linguistic research proves the existence of a linguistic barrier that makes it impossible to read the Bible in a direct and immediate manner. Bible teachers must therefore take into account that the Bible is by no means written in the native tongue of their Israeli pupils.



- Modern linguistics holds that the language acquisition mechanisms used in learning mother tongues are different from those used to acquire other languages (cf. Chomsky, 1957).
- Recent cognitive neuropsychological research (Ibrahim, 2009) provides additional scientific support for this theory, while adding an important dimension.
- It shows that mother tongue usage activates different brain centers than those active whilst using languages that were acquired by other means.
- Neuropsychologist Rafiq Ibrahim (2010) examined this issue while trying to determine the cause of the repeated failure of Arab students in matriculation exams in Arabic language and literature.



- His research discovered that students understand literary Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, as a foreign language.
- It is their second or third language, Vernacular Arabic (e.g. Palestinian/Israeli Arabic) being their mother tongue, followed by the Israeli language to which they are exposed to from childhood.
- However, so far these findings have not been acknowledged, let alone taken into consideration, when determining pedagogical methods and student assessment techniques.
- Despite the refusal of Arab educationalists to accept these findings, Ibrahim and his colleagues at Haifa University are developing new curricula that will qualify Arab students to comprehend their classic culture.



- Jewish Israelis ought to adopt and implement this pedagogical lesson as well.
- Israel's Education Ministry should attempt to free itself from the **imprisoning purism prism**, which might be somewhat related to self-righteousness, hubris or simply conservatism or blindness.
- We should revise the way we teach the Hebrew Bible and treat it as foreign language classes – just like Latin, employing the most advanced alternative applied linguistics methods of second language teaching, which can be both joyful and memorable.
- Such a measure has the potential to reduce Israeli pupils' disdain for Bible lessons, as well as to attract more secular Jews to Biblical scholarship.
- In fact, established Biblical scholars would benefit from such a move immensely.



- Rachel Halabe (2008) drew attention to the fact that while new methodologies, programmes and a great variety of learning aids are employed in teaching modern foreign languages, ancient languages are still taught by "scholars of history or theology who are not trained in foreign language pedagogy" (ibid.).
- Recently, Magnes Press published Halabe's (2011) three-volume textbook aimed at teaching Biblical Hebrew to native English speakers.
- Halabe (2010) thoroughly explained the differences between Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew, especially with regard to tenses, aspects and the way verbs are used. However, on p. 27 she wrongly claimed that native "Hebrew" speakers could usually understand it intuitively.
- We propose here not to discriminate against Israeli pupils and deprive them of their prerogative to learn the language of their ancestors.



- Knowledge of the ancient layers of Israeli culture, its literature and philosophy, is important not only for strengthening Jewish identity and expanding the horizons of the public living in Israel.
- Public debates about religion, culture and civilization are common in Israel, across all social sectors. Such a controversy took place recently, concerning different versions of the "Yizkor" prayer in the military memorial ceremonies.
- The debate arose following the incumbent Chief of Staff's directive that the binding version will be "May God remember" and not "May the people of Israel remember." Journalist Amos Harel (2011) referred to it as follows:

This seemingly uncared-for question continues to disturb and excite bereaved parents, religious and secular people, as well as the military rabbinate. The opening words of "Yizkor" have great symbolic value, but the different versions probably reflect the deliberations of the army itself, in a period of complex social changes.



- It is astonishing, yet emblematic, that a semi-intellectual newspaper like *Haaretz* would report that the different versions reflect the deliberations of the army.
- The journalist's account strikingly lacks any awareness of the historical, linguistic and cultural background of this prayer and of its previous formulae.
- Due to lack of space we cannot elaborate on this issue but we shall only note that Berl Katznelson set the wording "May the people of *Israel* remember" working from a medieval prayer that stated "May *God* remember".
- This change was made deliberately, and was motivated by a conscious desire to make Israel and not God, an object of collective worship (cf. Yadin and Zuckermann 2010).
- Even if the *Haaretz* military correspondent was unaware of this chain of events, he understood that the question of wording is only "seemingly" uncared for, and that it continues to disturb and excite different groups in Israeli society.



- Understanding the religious and historical heritage that is part-and-parcel of Israeli's daily vocabulary will help to deal with Israel's complex moral and cultural issues. This dispute demonstrates that Gershom Scholem's 1926 prediction is occasionally coming true. He argued that the spiritual meaning of Hebrew words would not just vanish, but that their loaded religious meaning would continue to echo through secular use.



- Having taken all this on board, we are obliged to give Israeli youth a proper historical, literary and linguistic education. Only genuine understanding of our religious-cultural tradition can provide us with the appropriate tools for dealing with the cultural crises that periodically divide Israeli society. Only by taking this route can we avoid the escalation of false, superficial and superfluous arguments. Only then will we succeed in using these crises as means for cultural renaissance.



- As to the future of Bible teaching in Israel, it would be in its best interests to rise above the ideology and self-righteousness characteristic of the Ministry of Education, which still advocates that Israelis speak the language of the Bible. The Bible ought to be taught as a foreign language, or at the least, it should be kept in mind that its language is different from the language which we speak.

***To the Israeli Bible teacher let us say:
"Let my people know!"***





The most complex Chinese character I have ever encountered, pronounced *biáng*, referring to a specific kind of noodles; Xi'an, China, 12 May 2012

Shift Happens!

Latin *Bulgarus* 'Bulgarian' > French *bougre* 'Bulgarian, heretic' (11th century) > English *bugger*



I may be wrong
But I am certain!



I disapprove of what you
say, but I will defend to the
death your right to say it.

Evelyn Beatrice Hall
p. 199, of her 1906 book
The Friends of Voltaire





Language, Culture, Religion and
Nationhood DEIFYING Zionism and DEFYING Religion:
Ideological Secularization of Hebrew Terms within Israeli



Israeli soldiers at Jerusalem's Western (Wailing) Wall shortly after its capture during the Six-Day War, 1967

- ***The greatest virtue of a new word is that it is not new.***

(Yechiel Michal Pines,
1893)

VS

- ***It is absolutely impossible to empty out words filled to bursting, unless one does so at the expense of language itself.***
(Gershom Scholem,
26 December 1926)

1. CONFESSION ON THE SUBJECT OF OUR LANGUAGE

(Bekanntnis über unsere Sprache)

A Letter by Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenzweig, 26 December 1926

- This country is a volcano. It houses language. One speaks here of many things that could make us fail. One speaks more than ever today about the Arabs.
- But more uncanny than the Arab people [*unheimlicher als das arabische Volk*] another threat confronts us that is a *necessary* consequence [*mit Notwendigkeit*] of the Zionist undertaking: What about the ‘actualization [*Aktualisierung*]’ of Hebrew? Must not this abyss of a sacred language handed down to our children break out again? Truly, no one knows what is being done here.
- One believes that language has been secularized, that its apocalyptic thorn has been pulled out [*ihr den apokalyptischen Stachel ausgezogen zu haben*]. But this is surely not true.



- The secularization of language is only a *façon de parler*, a ready-made phrase. It is absolutely impossible to empty out words filled to bursting, unless one does so at the expense of language itself.
- The ghostly Volapük spoken here in the streets points precisely to the expressionless linguistic world in which the ‘secularization’ of language could alone be possible. If we transmit to our children the language that has been transmitted to us, if we – the generation of the transition [das Geschlecht des Übergangs] – resuscitate the language of the ancient books so that it can reveal itself anew to them, must then not the religious violence of the language one day break out against those who speak it [gegen ihre Sprecher ausbrechen]?



- And on the day this eruption occurs, which generation will suffer its effects [und welches Geschlecht wird dieser Ausbruch finden]? We do live inside this language, above an abyss, almost all of us with the certainty of the blind. But when our sight is restored, we or those who come after us, must we not fall to the bottom of this abyss? And no one knows whether the sacrifice of individuals who will be annihilated in this abyss will suffice to close it.



- The creators of this new linguistic movement believed blindly, and stubbornly, in the miraculous power of the language, and this was their good fortune.
- For no one clear-sighted would have mustered the demonic courage to revive a language there where only an Esperanto could emerge. They walk, and walk still today, spellbound [*gebannt*] above the abyss.
- The abyss was silent and they have delivered the ancient names and seals over to the youth. We sometimes shudder when, out of the thoughtless conversation, a word from the religious sphere terrifies us, just there where it was perhaps intended to comfort. Hebrew is pregnant with catastrophes.



- It cannot and will not remain in its current state. Our children no longer have another language, and it is only too true to say that they, and they alone, will pay for the encounter which we have initiated without asking, without even asking ourselves.
- If and when the language turns against its speakers – it already does so for certain moments in our lifetime, and these are difficult to forget, stigmatizing moments in which the daring lack of measure of our undertaking reveals itself to us – will we then have a youth capable of withstanding the uprising of a sacred language?



- Language is Name [*Sprache ist Namen*]. In the names, the power of language is enclosed; in them, its abyss is sealed. After invoking the ancient names daily, we can no longer hold off their power. Called awake, they will appear since we have invoked them with great violence. Truly, we speak in rudiments; we truly speak a ghostly language [*wir freilich sprechen eine gespenstische Sprache*]: the names haunt our sentences. One or another plays with them in writings and newspapers, lying to themselves or to God that this means nothing, and often, out of the ghostly shame of our language, the power of the sacred speaks out. For the names have their own life – had they not, woe to our children, who would be hopelessly abandoned to the void.



- Each word which is not newly created but taken from the ‘good old’ treasure is full to bursting. A generation that takes upon itself the most fruitful in our sacred traditions – our language – cannot live, were it to wish it a thousandfold, without tradition.
- The moment the *power* stored at the bottom of the language *deploys itself*, the moment the ‘said [*das Gesprochene*]’, the content of language, assumes its form anew, then the sacred tradition will again confront our people as a decisive sign of the only available choice: to submit or to go under.
- In a language where he is invoked back to a thousandfold into our life, God will not stay silent. But this inescapable revolution of the language, in which the voice will be heard again, is the sole object of which nothing is said in this country.
- Those who called the Hebrew language back to life did not believe in the judgment that was thus conjured upon us. May the carelessness, which has led us to this apocalyptic path, not bring about our ruin [*Möge uns dann nicht der Leichtsinn, der uns auf diesem apokalyptischen Weg geleitet, zum Verderb werden*].

Jerusalem, 7 Tevet 5687
Gerhard Scholem

(Translation by Anidjar, see Derrida 2002: 226-7)



2. NON-POLITICAL SECULARIZATION IN ISRAELI

Shift happens!



2.1 Phono-semantic matching (PSM)

PSM is a **multi-sourced neologism** that preserves both the meaning and the approximate sound of the parallel expression in the source-language, using *pre-existent* target-language words or roots (cf. Zuckermann 2003, 2004). Consider the following secularizing PSMs:

(1) יובל [jo'b^hel] → *yovél*

Israeli יובל *yovél* is an ‘incestuous PSM’ introducing a new sense:

Biblical Hebrew

יובל [jo'b^hel] ‘ram’ (cf. יבל √jbl ‘(to) lead’) > whole-for-part synecdoche (a type of metonymy) > ‘ram’s horn, *shofar*’ > ‘fiftieth anniversary (after seven cycles of years of *shemittah*)’ >

Greek *iōbēlos* > *iōbēlaîos* >

PSM₁ (with Latin *iubilare* ‘shout for joy’ or Latin *iubilum* ‘wild cry’) >

Latin *iubilæus* (and not **iobelæus*) >>>

French *jubilé*, Spanish *jubileo*, Italian *giubileo*, Russian юбилей *yubilěi*, Polish *jubileusz*, German *Jubiläum*, Yiddish יוביליי *yubiléy*, English *jubilee* >

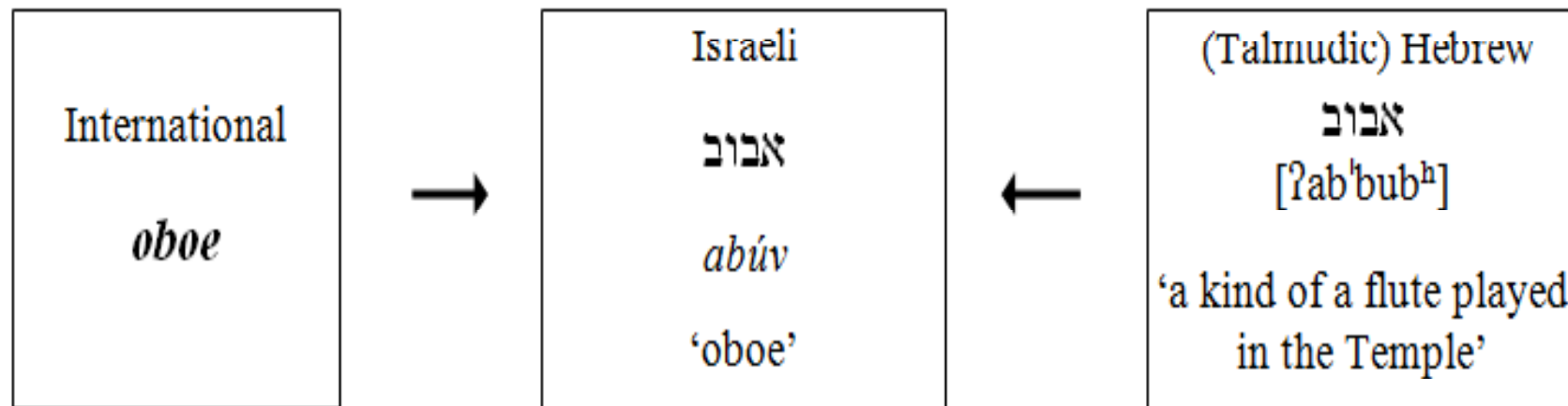
PSM₂ (with Biblical Hebrew יובל [jo'b^hel] ‘fiftieth anniversary (after seven cycles of years of *shemittah*)’) >

Israeli יובל *yovél* ‘(happy) anniversary, celebration’



(2) אבוב [ʔab'bub^h] → *abúv*

Consider the following ‘specificizing PSM’, a special sub-category of *PSM* that introduces a *new sense*, consisting of the specification of the initially *vague* meaning of a *pre-existent* target-language word, so it becomes limited to the *specific* meaning of the matched source-language word:



2.2 Calquing (cf. Hebrew *shalom-leshalém* >> Latin *pax-pacare* >>> English *peace-pay*)

(3) קורבן [qor'bân] → *korbán*

The European word for 'sacrifice' was transformed over time from a cultic term to a word designating the forfeiture of something highly valued for the sake of a still greater – though not necessarily religious – cause. Paralleling the semantic shift in European languages, the same dynamic is evident in קורבן [qor'bân]: Biblical Hebrew [qor'bân] 'sacrifice' takes on in Israeli the non-cultic meaning of today's 'sacrifice'.



2.3 Semantic shifting: temple utensils

There is a large group of words that have undergone semantic secularization, but their new meaning is so closely associated with the old that the shift does not reflect cultural tensions beyond secularization as such. Consider the Temple utensils, many of which mean kitchen utensils in Israeli:

- (4) Biblical Hebrew כִּיּוֹר [kij'jor] is 'a pot used for cooking in Temple contexts' (see 1 Kings 7:30,38,42) or 'the Temple/Tabernacle laver' (Exodus 30:18,28). In Israeli, these meanings are for all practical purposes abolished: *kyor* means 'a sink'.
- (5) Biblical Hebrew קַעֲרָה [qəʔá'rá] 'a dish found regularly in Temple context (Exodus 25:29, Numbers 7:13, 19, 25, 31, 37) → Israeli *keará* 'a kitchen bowl'.
- (6) Biblical Hebrew כַּף [kap^h] 'ritual pan vessel' (Exodus 25:29, 37:16; Numbers 4:7,15) → Israeli *kaf* 'tablespoon'.
- (7) Biblical Hebrew מַחֲבַת [mahă'b^hat] 'pan used in baking the priestly grain offerings' (Leviticus 2:5, 6:14, 7:9) → Israeli *makhvát* '(frying) pan, griddle'.
- (8) Biblical Hebrew מַזְלֵג [maz'leg] 'a sacrificial implement for picking up meat' (1 Samuel 2:13) → Israeli *mazlég* 'fork'.



3. IDEOLOGICAL SECULARIZATION IN ISRAELI

3.1 *DEIFYING Zionism (The Nation/State as the New God)*



(9) משכן [miʃkán] → *mishkán*

Biblical Hebrew משכן [miʃkán] means ‘dwelling-place’ and ‘Tabernacle of the Congregation’ (where Moses kept the Ark in the wilderness), ‘inner sanctum’ (known as אהל מועד [ʾohel moʿed]).

Israeli *mishkán* is ‘a building for a specific purpose’, e.g. משכן האומנויות *mishkán aomanuyót* ‘the Arts Centre’, משכן הכנסת *mishkán aknéset* ‘the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) building’.

Translating *mishkán aknéset* as ‘The Knesset Building’ (as in the official Knesset website) is lacking. The word *mishkán* is **loaded with holiness** and **evokes sanctity**, as if MKs (Members of Knesset, i.e. MPs) were at the very least angels or seraphs.



(10) היכל [he'k^hál] → *eykhál*

Biblical Hebrew היכל [he'k^hál] ‘palace’ refers to ‘The Temple’. Medieval Hebrew היכל [he'k^hál] is ‘the Ark of Law (in the synagogue)’.

Israeli היכל *eykhál* is ‘a building for a specific purpose’, e.g. היכל התרבות *ekhál atarbút*, lit. ‘*ekhál* (of) the culture’ (cf. German *Kulturpalast*), i.e. ‘Mann Auditorium’ in Tel Aviv; היכל הכנסת *ekhál aknéset*, a word some (including the famous poet Natan Alterman) use to refer to the ‘Knesset Hall’.



(11) כנסת [kə'neset] → *knéset*

Mishnaic Hebrew כנסת ישראל [kə'neset jisrá'el] refers to ‘the Jewish people as a collective’, ‘the community of Israel’ – see Song of Songs Rabba 1:4. In Kabbalah literature, [kə'neset jisrá'el] is one of the standard appellations of the tenth divine emanation, also known as שכינה [ʃkɪ'ná].

In Israeli, however, the phrase takes on a national, political meaning: ‘Israeli Parliament, the Knesset’.



(12) עבודה [ʔäb^ho'dâ] → *avodá*

Biblical Hebrew [ʔäb^ho'dâ] has both a religious and a secular sense, referring to ‘work’ or ‘labour’, as well as to ‘ritual and cultic worship’. Examples of the former are the activity of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt (Exodus 2:23) and the labour imposed by the Persian satrap on the Jews (Nehemiah 5:18). Examples of the latter are the phrases עבודת המשכן [ʔäb^ho'dât hammif'kân] ‘the cultic service of the Tabernacle’ (Numbers 3:7, cf. Exodus 39:32), עבודת הקודש [ʔäb^ho'dât haq'qodeš] ‘cultic worship’ (Exodus 36:3) and עבודת יהוה [ʔäb^ho'dât JHWH] ‘the worship of the Lord’ (Numbers 8:11). The same two meanings carry into Mishnaic Hebrew, but the second becomes the more dominant, as evidenced, for example, by the tractate עבודה זרה [ʔäb^ho'dâ zâ'râ], lit. ‘foreign worship’, i.e. ‘idolatry’.

In Israeli, the cultic meaning is replaced by ‘labour’ in the positive sense that this term carried in the labour movement. Consequently, one finds the decidedly non-cultic מפלגת העבודה *mifléget aavodá* ‘the Labour Party’ and תנועת העבודה *tnuát aavodá* ‘the Labour Movement’.



(13) מִלוֹאִים [millu'ʔim] → מִלוֹאִים *milu'im*

Biblical Hebrew מִלוֹאִים [millu'ʔim] refers to ‘the days following the dedication of the Tabernacle but prior to the priests’ inauguration’ – see Leviticus 8:33:

וּמִפְתַּח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצֵאוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים עַד יוֹם מִלֹּאֵת יְמֵי מִלְּאִיְכֶם

You shall not go outside the entrance of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the day that your period of ordination [millu'ʔim] is completed’

The term also appears as modifying the sacrifices offered as part of the inauguration ritual: ‘the ram of ordination [millu'ʔim]’ (Leviticus 8:22) and ‘the bread that is in the basket of ordination’ (Leviticus 8:31).

The precise meaning of [millu'ʔim] in this context is a matter of controversy among Bible scholars, but the root מלא $\sqrt{mlʔ}$ means 'fill' and it is this meaning that generates the Israeli appropriation of the word to refer to 'supplemental / reserve military service'. Thus, one's days of *milu'im* are no longer served at the Tabernacle but in reserve duty.

Note that the [millu'ʔim] section in Leviticus is at the meeting of two portions:

- (a) צו [sʔaw] (named after its opening verse: 'The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Command [sʔaw] Aaron and his sons...' (Leviticus 6:1-2)
- (b) שמיני [ʃəmi'ni] (named after its opening verse: 'On the eighth [ʃəmi'ni] day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons...' (Leviticus 9:1)

In Israeli, צו שמונה *tsav shmóne* 'Ordinance 8' is the document informing one of upcoming (often emergency) reserve service, i.e. of *milu'im*. But this is mere serendipity!



- In these examples, secularization is presented as superseding/supersession. For example, priestly service gives way to reserve duty (*miluím*).
- Though the modern concepts replace the ancient, they do so as heirs that are still somehow anchored in the Old Testament or the Mishnah, or at least as ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ outgrowths of earlier Jewish strata.
- This sense of a natural – almost inevitable – development is itself an expression of the ideological hegemony of Zionism. It is certainly true that the ultra-orthodox community has waged a fierce polemic against these semantic innovations (cf. Be’er 2003).



- But for Israeli speakers the radical nature of the semantic change is no longer visible.
- The new meanings do not represent an antagonistic or revolutionary break with their ancient predecessors.
- The potentially problematic return to the religious strata of Hebrew is overcome by assimilating the pre-modern meanings into Israeli, subsuming the earlier under the later.



3.1.1 Allusion

Allusion to religious concepts is a very effective rhetorical device, often used by politicians. Consider

- George W. Bush's use of *axis of evil*
- Osama Bin Laden's use of *crusade*

Through allusion, in which the new meaning is heir to the older, while at the same time displacing it, socialist Zionists shrewdly draw on earlier linguistic strata without legitimizing the exilic and religious sensibilities they encode. Consider the following:



(14) מי ימלל גבורות יהוה [mi jəmal'lel gəb^hu'rot JHWH] → מי ימלל גבורות ישראל *mi yemalél gvurót israél*

Consider the shift from the religious cry of the Psalmist (Psalms 106:2) מי ימלל גבורות יהוה [mi jəmal'lel gəb^hu'rot JHWH] ‘Who can tell the mighty acts of the Lord’ to the lyrics of Menashe Rabina’s popular Hanukkah song: מי ימלל גבורות ישראל *mi yemalél gvurót israél* ‘Who can tell the mighty acts of Israel’. By replacing ‘the mighty acts of the Lord’ with ‘the mighty acts of Israel’, the songwriter is consciously seeking to shift the focus from the worship of the divine to the worship of the national collective.



- This model of appropriation of classical Hebrew sources bespeaks a Zionist ambivalence toward earlier strata of Hebrew. The clear allusion to the words of the Psalmist indicates an explicit desire to link the nationalist song to an ancient poetic model. At the same time, the allusion to Psalm 106:2 involves an important shift: praise of God is replaced by the glorification of the nation of Israel. Indeed, the allusion serves to highlight the place of Israel – that is, of the nationalist ideal – as heir to the religious ideal regnant in the Psalms.



(15) יזכור אלהים [jiz'kor ?elo'him] → יזכור עם ישראל *izkór am israél*

The standard memorial ceremony of the Israel Defence Forces (and other state institutions) opens with the words יזכור עם ישראל *izkór am israél* ‘Let **the People of Israel** remember’ – followed by an exaltation of the fallen soldiers. This formula, which was composed by the Zionist leader Berl Katzenelson, is actually based on the Medieval *Yizkor* liturgy, that opens יזכור אלהים [jiz'kor ?elo'him] ‘Let the **Lord** remember’ – often followed by a description of religious martyrs.² Thus, the LORD is replaced by ISRAEL.



3.2 DEFYING Religion (the other side of the coinage)

(16) בלורית [bəlo'rit] → *blorit*

In delineating the borders between the Jew and the non-Jew in Roman Palestine, rabbinic literature often draws the line at any action that could involve participation in idolatrous practices. It is generally permitted to trade with pagans, but not immediately prior to pagan holidays lest the Jew's money fund the idolatrous practices; it is generally permitted to purchase food from a pagan, though not wine that could be used for pagan libations; and so on.

Interestingly, this distinction is also found in the realm of coiffure: A barber is, as a rule, permitted to cut the hair of a pagan, but there is one exception (Mishnah Avoda Zara 3.6):

A Jew who is cutting the hair of a pagan, as soon as he reaches the [bəlo'rit] he drops his hands.

According to Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah: The Book of Knowledge* (see Hyamson 1965: 78b), [bəlo'rit] refers to the following haircut:

‘And I have set you apart from the nations’ (Leviticus 20:26): He shall not put on a garment like that specially worn by them, nor let the lock of his hair grow in the way they do. Thus, he shall not cut the hair of the head at the sides, leaving the hair in the center untouched as they do – this is called [bəlo'rit].

Thus, Mishnaic Hebrew [bəlo'rit] is ‘Mohawk’, a hairstyle in which the scalp is shaved except for an upright strip of hair that runs across the crown of the head from the forehead to the nape of the neck. But the precise definition is less important than its function as a distinctive marker of the pagan. Consider the following drashot (interpretations):

‘Or has any God ventured to go and take for himself one nation (‘ל [goj]) from the midst of another nation (‘ל [goj])’ (Deuteronomy 4:34): Both these and those were uncircumcised; the Egyptians grew [bəlo'rit] and the Israelites grew [bəlo'rit]; those wore garments of mingled fabric and these wore garments of mingled fabric.

(*Leviticus Rabba* 23.2, see Slotki 1977: 292)



In describing Israel's exodus from Egypt, Deuteronomy speaks of the departure of 'one nation from the midst of another nation', using the word גוי [goj] for Israel and Egypt alike. The linguistic equation of Israel and Egypt suggests to the interpreter that the Israelites had lost their distinctive identity and adopted that of their hosts. To prove the point, the interpreter cites a number of characteristics which are normally associated with the pagans but which have been adopted by the Israelites: both are uncircumcised, both wear garments of mingled fabric, and both have grown a [bəlo'rit].

Similarly:

These things are prohibited because they savour of heathen practices [the way of the Emorites]: to trim the front of the hair and to grow a [bəlo'rit].

(Deuteronomy Rabbah 2.18, see Rabinowitz 1977: 44)



Intriguingly, in Israeli not only does בלורית *blorit* lose its meaning as the marker of the pagan as opposed to the Jew, but it also becomes one of the defining characteristics of the Sabra,³ the ‘new Jew’, characterized by ‘forelock, hair above the forehead’.

Thus, in Naomi Shemer’s classic song about two young men from the same village, who march through life in parallel until one is killed in battle:

אנחנו שנינו מאותו הכפר, אותה קומה, אותה בלורית שיער



We are both from the same village, the same height, the same *blorit* of hair

Israeli *blorit* also appears in Hayim Guri's poem 'Camaraderie' (הרעות *areút*), a paean to the fallen fighters of the *Palmach* brigade:

ונזכור את כולם, את יפי הבלורית והתואר

We shall remember them all, they of the beautiful *blorit* and countenance

And similarly in Haim Hefer's portrait of the *Palmach* fighter Dudu, who is also fated to die:

היתה לו בלורית מקורזלת שיער, היתה לו בת צחוק בעיניים

He had a curly *blorit*, he had laughing eyes

Almog (2003) characterizes *blorit* as the hairstyle of the mythical Sabra. Here we come to the ultimate ideological secularization: the Mishnaic marker of otherness is appropriated by the Sabra warrior. Is the 'new Jew' ultimately a pagan?



(17) תרבות [tar'but] → *tarbút*

A biblical *hapax legomenon*, [tar'but] appears in Numbers 32:14 in the phrase תרבות אנשים חטאים [tar'but ʔánáʃim hatʔáʕim] ‘a *breed* of sinful men’, with the root רבה \sqrt{rbh} being understood as referring to the group that was ‘raised’ in a certain manner. In Rabbinic literature it appears almost exclusively in the phrase תרבות רעה [tar'but ráʕá] ‘bad rearing/education’ (e.g. Mishnah Niddah 10.8, Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 15a). In Israeli, the valence of *tarbút* changes and it becomes ‘culture’ in the sense of *Bildung*.



(18) תל אביב [tel ʔāb^hib^h] → *tel aviv*

It is often said that the name *Tel-Aviv*, currently understood as ‘hill:CONSTRUCT-STATE spring’, i.e. ‘Hill of Spring’, is a juxtaposition of the old (the ancient *tel* ‘mound, ruins’) with the new (*aviv* ‘spring’ – cf. Amharic *Āddīs Ābebā*, lit. ‘new flower’), an allusion to Benjamin Ze'ev (Theodor) Herzl's (founder of modern political Zionism) utopian *Altneuland*, which was translated as *Tel-Aviv* by Nahum Sokolov. Both Sokolov's translation and the choice of this name for the ‘first Hebrew city’ are striking in light of the name's biblical precedent. It appears in the Old Testament only once, in Ezekiel 3:15. Ezekiel, who prophesied in Babylon after the fall of the first temple, has just heard God's call to speak to Israel, and a mighty wind (or spirit) carries him away:

And I came to the exile, to Tel Aviv [ʔel haggō'lā tel ʔāb^hib^h] those who settled by the river Chebar [kə'b^hār]...⁴

The precise meaning of this transvaluation seems to be that Zionism would take an explicitly exilic location [haggō'lā tel ʔāb^hib^h] ‘the exile, Tel Aviv’ and turn it into the centre of Jewish national revival, forcefully reversing the biblical association of Tel Aviv with exile.



3.2.1 Ameliorative recycling of biblical names: using deep-rooted Hebrew forms ignoring their original negative associations

Extreme amelioration is also apparent in Zionist re-appropriation of anthroponyms of biblical figures that are disparaged by the Old Testament or later rabbinic tradition.

(19) רחבעם [rəḥab^hʿā̄m] → *rekhavám*

Consider רחבעם [rəḥab^hʿā̄m] ‘Rehoboam’, Solomon’s son, best known for his draconian taxes and impositions on the populace:

אבי יסר אתכם בשוטים ואני איסר אתכם בעקרבים

My father flogged you with whips, but I will flog you with scorpions (I Kings 12:14)

Indeed, these policies (at least according to the biblical narrative) contributed to the split of Israel into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judea in the south. For obvious reasons, Rehavam has not been a popular name in traditional Jewish circles, but it has enjoyed a renaissance as a name for Israeli boys – cf. Rehavam Zeevi (nicknamed Gandhi – because on one occasion he looked like Mahatma Gandhi, not because of his politics) (1926-2001), an Israeli general, politician and historian who founded the right-wing nationalist Moledet party.



(20) עמרי [ʕom'ri] → *omri*

The example of ‘Omri is even more dramatic. A king of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Book of Kings recounts that “Omri did what was displeasing to the Lord; he was worse than all who preceded him’ (1 Kings 16:25), a damning appraisal by all accounts. Nonetheless, some Israeli speakers have chosen to name their sons Omri, cf. Omri Sharon (1964-), the son of the former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and himself a former member of the Likud party in the Knesset.



(21) ענת [ʔă'nát] → *anát*

Hebrew ענת [ʔă'nát] “Anat’ was a bloodthirsty Canaanite goddess who slew her enemies and made herself a belt of their heads and hands. The great popularity of Anat as an Israeli girl’s name is undoubtedly not in the spirit of the Old Testament.

Names such as Rehavam, Omri and Anat represent a cultural appropriation of biblical names that baldly undermines their (often explicit) biblical axiology. The names maintain a vaguely biblical – and thus authentic, desirable – sense (*Sinn*), but lose their biblical reference (*Bedeutung*). The material is biblical but the connotations are not.



- A similar phenomenon is the return of Canaanite divinities such as *Yam* (popular among kibbutz children), *Shákhar* and *Réshef* as first names for Israeli children.
- To be sure, there is no cultural appropriation intended here, no conscious desire to reclaim a Canaanite identity.
- Still, the renewal of these names – meaning ‘sea’, ‘dawn’ and ‘flame’ respectively – may be a reflection of a deep affinity between the explicit identification of nature and the divine in Canaanite mythology, on the one hand, and the nature-worship that is part of the more Romantic strains of Jewish nationalism, on the other.



4. IGNORANCE?

Ignorance is like a very delicate exotic fruit. Touch it and the bloom is gone.
(*The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde)

(22) ונתתי את שמיכם כברזל ואת ארצכם כנחשה [wənátatti ʔet ʃəme'k^hem kabbar'zel wə'ʔet ʔars'ə'k^hem kannəhu'ʃã]

Consider the sentence written beneath a portrait of a pilot standing in front of a jet fighter, in a recruitment poster hanging in some Israeli air force bases: ונתתי את שמיכם כברזל ואת ארצכם כנחשה. The Hebrew pronunciation was [wənátatti ʔet ʃəme'k^hem kabbar'zel wə'ʔet ʔars'ə'k^hem kannəhu'ʃã] but in Israeli it would be pronounced *venatáti et shmeykhém kebarzél veét artsekhém kenekhushá / kenekhóshet*. The literal meaning of this high-register sentence is ‘I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper’, implying that the Israeli Air Force makes the skies as impenetrable as iron to its enemies. But the use of Leviticus 26:19 as a recruitment slogan is remarkable considering its original meaning:

And if, for all that, you do not obey Me, I will go on to discipline you sevenfold for your sins, and I will break your proud glory. I will make your skies like iron and your earth like copper, so that your strength will be spent to no purpose. Your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

(*Leviticus 26:18-20*)



- The biblical context is explicitly negative: the iron sky a sign of drought, the copper land an indication of barrenness – whilst the air force poster suggests military power and fortitude. Clearly, the appropriation of the biblical verse involves a shift in the original meaning. Be that as it may, this shift may simply be due to the graphic designer’s ignorance of the verse’s original meaning and while ignorance is a cultural force in its own right, it is not one of the manipulative forces treated in this paper. But it *is* relevant to Gershom Scholem’s letter to Franz Rosenzweig.



5. THE MUTUAL INTELLIGIBILITY MYTH (*‘El original es infiel a la traducción’*)

‘Modern Greek, for example, boasts many similarities to its ancestor, yet a speaker of the current language must struggle to read ancient texts. The modern Hebrew speaker, however, moves smoothly through the Bible.’

(Ravitzky 2000: 13-14)

Frequently, new research emerges allegedly demonstrating how ‘bad’ Israelis are at reading comprehension *vis-à-vis* pupils in other countries. I wonder whether these exams test reading comprehension in **Hebrew** rather than in **Israeli**. The former might be a second language for Israelis. The Mutual Intelligibility Myth posits that Israeli is Hebrew because an Israeli speaker can understand Hebrew. Edward Ullendorff (pc) has claimed that the biblical Isaiah could have understood Israeli. I am not convinced that this would have been the case. The reason Israelis can be expected to understand the book of Isaiah – albeit with difficulties – is because they study the Hebrew Bible at school for eleven years, rather than because it is familiar to them from their daily conversation. Furthermore, **Israelis read the Hebrew Bible as if it were Israeli and often therefore misunderstand it.**



- (23) When an Israeli reads **שעשעים ילד** *yéled sha‘ashu‘im* in Jeremiah 31:19 (King James 20), s/he does not understand it as ‘pleasant child’ but rather as ‘playboy’.
- (24) **באו בנים עד משבר** *Ba’u banim ‘ad mashber* in Isaiah 37:3 is interpreted by Israelis as ‘children arrived at a crisis’ rather than as ‘children arrived at the mouth of the womb, to be born’.
- (25) **אדם לעמל יולד** *ʔādām ləʕāmāl yullād* (Job 5:6-7) is interpreted by Israelis as ‘man was born to do productive work’ rather than ‘man was born to do mischief’. This Biblical sentence stands as an accusation of the inherent wickedness of mankind.

Most importantly, the available examples are far from being only lexical (as in the above *faux amis*). **Israelis are usually incapable of recognizing moods and aspects in the Bible. Whereas in Biblical Hebrew there is a perfect/imperfect *aspect* distinction, in Israeli there is a past-present-future *tense* distinction.**



- (26) Ask an Israeli what אבנים שחקו מים *'abanim shaḥaḳu mayim* (Job 14:19) means and s/he will most likely tell you that the stones eroded the water. Of course, on second thought, s/he would guess that semantically this is impossible and that it must be the water which eroded the stones. But such an Object-Verb-Subject(A) constituent order is impossible in Israeli.
- (27) נפילה גורלות *nappila goralot* 'let us cast lots' (Jonah 1:7) is thought to be rhetorical future rather than cohortative.

By and large, Israelis are the worst students in *advanced* studies of the Bible, although almost all Israelis would disagree with this statement of mine. Try to tell Israel's Ministry of Education that **the Hebrew Bible should be translated into Israeli!** ☺ (It is actually happening – see *Tanakh RAM* in Zuckermann 2010.)



- Yet, Israeli children are told that the Old Testament was written in their mother tongue. In other words, in Israeli primary schools, Hebrew and the mother tongue are, axiomatically, the very same.
- One cannot therefore expect Israelis easily to accept the idea that the two languages might be genetically different. In English terms, it is as if someone were to try to tell a native English-speaker that his/her mother tongue is not the same as Shakespeare's.
- The difference is that between Shakespeare and the current native speaker of English there has been a continuous chain of native speakers. Between the biblical Isaiah and contemporary Israelis there has been no such chain, while the Jews have had many mother tongues other than Hebrew.



Examples from the Mishnah:

(28) פרס [pə'rās] → *pras*

Israeli פרס *pras* means ‘prize’ (cf. *Milón leMunekháy haHitamlút, Dictionary of Gymnastics Terms*, 1937: 49, Item 625), nativizing the internationalism *prize* – cf. Russian приз *priz* [pris] ‘prize’, German *Preis* ‘prize, price’, English *prize* (cf. *price*) and Yiddish פריז *priz* ‘prize’.⁶ Originally, Mishnaic Hebrew פרס [pə'rās] meant ‘half a loaf’ – cf. Mishnah Kritot 3:3. Consequently it referred to ‘payment, reward’ – שלא על מנת לקבל פרס [ʃel'lo ʔal mənát ləqab'bel pə'rās] ‘not motivated by the wish to get a reward/payment’ (Mishnah Avot 1:3). The latter expression is currently understood by many native Israeli-speakers I have studied as meaning ‘not motivated by the wish to receive a prize’. Their belief that Mishnaic Hebrew פרס meant ‘prize’ is thus no more than the etymological truth turned upside down. **Cf. the 1999 advertisement (in the UK) for Toblerone chocolate (which ‘inspires the world’), which showed a photo of pyramids in Egypt, asking: ‘Ancient Tobleronism?’**



(29) תחתונים [tahto'nim] → *takhtonim*

In a number of instances the theological sense of a word is done away with by turning the word into a colloquial term. Thus Mishnaic Hebrew תחתונים [tahto'nim] designates the material world, literally 'those below', as opposed to the heavenly or supernal world, the latter being the עליונים [ʔeljo'nim]. Genesis Rabba, for example, discusses at length whether, in the process of creation, God first created the [ʔeljo'nim], the supernal world, and then the [tahto'nim], the material world, or vice versa (Bereshit Rabba section 2; vol. 1, p. 15 in the Theodor-Albeck edition).

In Israeli, however, *takhtonim* means 'underwear, underpants' ('those below'). This is a marked re-semanticization inasmuch as one would expect the word for 'underwears' to be in the dual form, in analogy with מכנסים *mikhnasáim* 'trousers, pants'. The semantic shift is particularly jarring considering that the term is perhaps best known from a midrashic statement that played an important role in later Hasidic thought, namely that the divine presence originally resided in the material world (but took refuge in the heavens after Adam's sin): עיקר שכינה בתחתונים: 'originally the Divine Presence resided in the lower realm,' i.e. in the [tahto'nim]. Few Israelis would guess this meaning.



An internet search of the Hebrew phrase קרע את התחתונים Israeli *kará et atakhtoním* ‘tore [or: parted] the *takhtoním*’ will yield two types of sites:

(a) religious sites discussing Rashi’s statement (commentary on Deuteronomy 4:35):

When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah, He opened for them the seven heavens. And just as he tore [or: split] the upper regions [ʔeljo'nim], so too he tore [or: parted] the lower regions [tahto'nim].

(b) Israeli erotica or pornography sites, where *takhtoním* appears in its Israeli sense.

- *The juxtaposition of the religious and the pornographic websites on the result page represents a striking manifestation of the distance this word has traversed, and of the willingness of Israeli to thumb its nose at the values of earlier strata of Hebrew.*



6. THE POLITICAL (AB)USE OF AMBIGUITY

Many people deny that there has ever been an ideological secularization within the Israeli language, failing to see the difference between *mishkán* ‘Knesset-building’ (§3.1) and *kyor* ‘sink’ (§2.3). Modus tollendo tollens, I would refer these skeptics to משפט עברי *mishpát ivrí* – lit. ‘Hebrew Law’, referring to the Jewish Law (an academic jurisprudence discipline) – a term selected by Israeli academics after long deliberations attempting to come up with a signifier eviscerated of religious connotations, as opposed to משפט יהודי *mishpát yeudí* ‘Jewish Law’ or הלכה *alakhá* ‘Halakha’.



Ironically, the very same people who reject the notion of ideological – occasionally manipulative – secularization and argue that Israelis can easily understand Hebrew, often abuse the vagueness or ambiguity resulting from secularization. They nourish gray areas of mutual intelligibility as a means of getting out of a legal or political quagmire. Consider the beginning of the concluding sentence of Israel's Declaration of Independence, construed to pacify both the religious and secular:

מתוך בטחון בצור ישראל הננו חותמים בהתיימת ידינו לעדות על הכרזה זו, במושב מועצת המדינה הזמנית, על אדמת המולדת, בעיר תל-אביב, היום הזה, ערב שבת, ה' אייר תש"ח, 14 במאי 1948.

mitókh bitakhón betsúr israél...

Placing our *trust* in the *almighty* / Placing our *security* in the *rock of Israel*,
we affix our signatures to this proclamation at this session of the Provisional Council of State,
on the soil of the homeland, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this Sabbath Eve, the 5th day of Iyar,
5708 (14 May 1948)



(30) בטהון [bitʿāḥon] → *bitakhón*

Biblical Hebrew בטהון [bitʿāḥon] means ‘trust, faith (in God)’. The semantic range of its root בטה $\sqrt{btʿh}$ is not limited to ‘trust/faith in God’ but this is certainly one of its main meanings. Indeed, in many instances the biblical text promotes faith or trust in God over earthly persons or institutions. The psalmist exhorts ‘O Israel, trust in the Lord! He is their (*sic*) help and shield’ (Psalms 115:9). Isaiah teaches ‘Trust in the Lord for ever and ever’ (Isaiah 24:4). The phrase ‘Happy is the man who trusts in You’ (Psalms 84:13) is incorporated into the *Havdalah* liturgy. The question of earthly versus divine trust indeed comes to the fore in the nominal form בטהון [bitʿāḥon]. When Hezekiah King of Judah (8th century BC) rebels against Senacherib, the latter sends an emissary, Rabshakeh, to convince the Jerusalemites to lay down their arms. Rabshakeh sends the following question to Hezekiah: מה הבטחון הזה אשר בטחת [bitʿāḥon] you have?’ (Isaiah 36:4), then asserts the futility of claiming ‘we are relying [bāʿāḥnu] on the Lord our God’ (Isaiah 36:7). But of course the [bitʿāḥon] was not misplaced, as God does turn back the Assyrians and Hezekiah remains on the throne.



In later strata of literary Hebrew, the specific sense ‘faith in God’ is the dominant, almost exclusive meaning. Thus, Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (11th century AD) devotes a chapter in his ethical treatise *The Improvement of the Moral Qualities (tikkun middot hannefesh)* in Yehudah Ibn Tibbon’s translation of the moral attribute [bit^qā^hon]. The opening statement of the chapter is ‘This is the exalted trait by which an individual comports himself according to his faith in God and his reliance on Him’.

In Israeli, however, בטחון *bitakhón* no longer derives from God but rather from military power. The word means ‘military power’ as in the phrase מערכת הביטחון *maarékhēt abitakhón* ‘the military’ and כוחות הביטחון *kokhót abitakhón* ‘the security forces’, while the minister charged with the army and other security forces is שר הביטחון *sar abitakhón* ‘Minister of Defence (literally: security)’. Did Amir Peretz, *sar abitakhón* (Israeli Defence Minister) during the 2006 Lebanon War, pray to God before the war?...



7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Israeli society is riven. Ironically, as well as being a highly symbolic common language, Israeli has come to highlight the very absence of a unitary civic culture among citizens who seem increasingly to share only their language (and enemies). The nexus which allegedly binds all Israelis together is an illusion. The existing continuum between the ultra-orthodox and the ultra-secular does not mitigate the divide, and mutual hostility is apparent in the two camps.

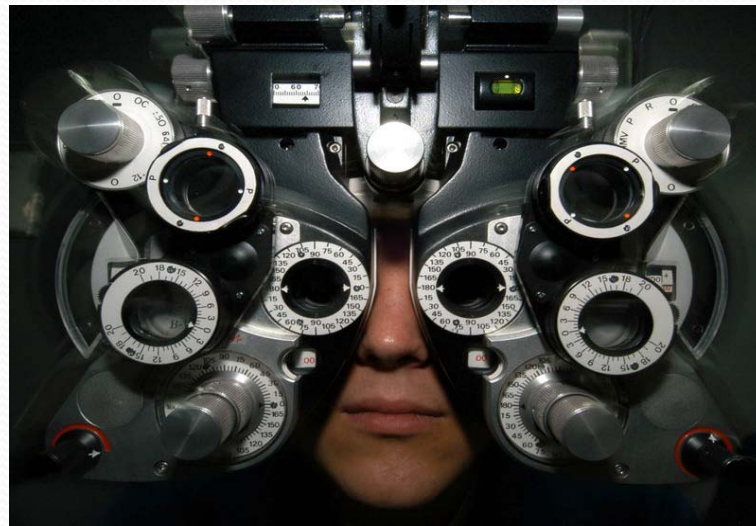
In line with the prediction made by the Kabbalah-scholar Gershom Scholem in his letter to Franz Rosenzweig, some ultra-orthodox Jews have tried to launch a ‘lexical vendetta’: using secularized terms like ‘dormant agents’, as a shortcut to religious concepts, thus trying to convince secular Jews to go back to their religious roots (cf. Walzer 1965 and Ravitzky 1993).

The study of Israeli cultural linguistics and socio-philology may cast light on the dynamics between language, religion and identity in a land where fierce military battles with external enemies are accompanied by internal *Kulturkämpfe*.



Lexical Terrorism

How language is used to demonize people
and create the concept of 'the Other'





Language is a guide to social reality.

(Edward Sapir 1949: 162)

The apparent identity of what appear to be cultural units – human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems, social organizations – are maintained only through *constitutive repression*, an active process of *exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization*. A phenomenon maintains its identity in semiotic systems only if other units are represented as foreign or ‘*other*’ through a hierarchical dualism in which the first is ‘*privileged*’ or favored while the other is *deprivileged* or devalued in some way.

(Lawrence E. Cahoone 2003: 11)

El original es infiel a la traducción.

(The original is unfaithful to the translation.)

(Jorge Luis Borges 1943, cf. 1974: 732)

Maximus in minimis.

'PHONO-SEMANTIC MATCHING' (PSM)

- * Etymological nativization in which a foreign lexical item is matched with a phonetically and semantically similar *pre-existent* native word/root;
- * A **multisourced neologism** that preserves both the meaning and the approximate sound of the parallel expression in the source-language, using *pre-existent* target-language words or roots.

Source-Language x 'a' $\rightarrow \rightarrow$ Target-Language (+PSM) y' 'a' $\leftarrow \leftarrow$ Target-Language y 'b'

x is phonetically similar to y , y' is based on y , a' is based on a



[1]

International
rachitis
'rickets'
Russian рахит *rakhít*;
German *Rachitis*;
Modern Latin
rachitis; Greek
ῥαχίτις *rakhítis*

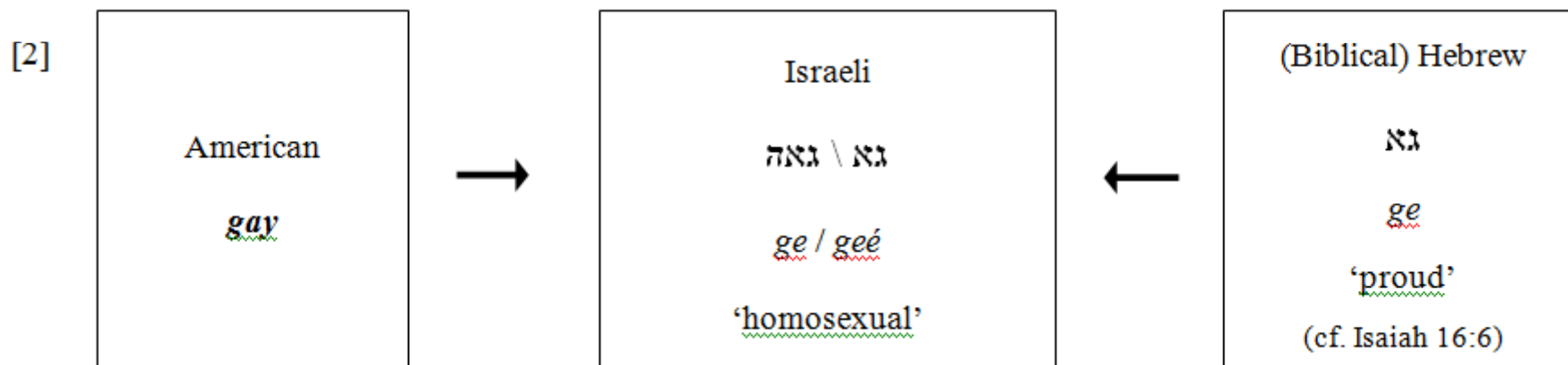


Israeli
רכיט
rakít / rakhít
or
רככת
rakékhet
'rickets'



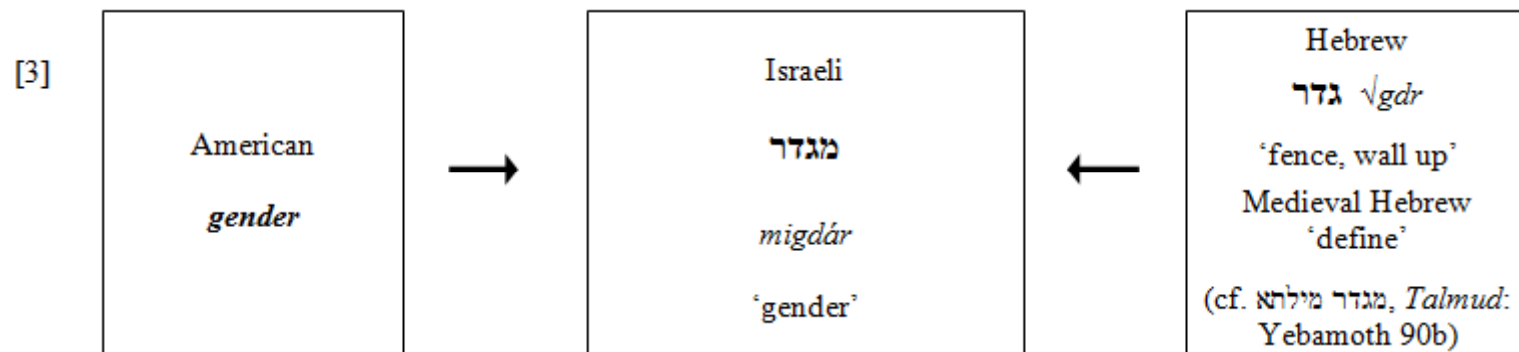
Hebrew
רך
rak
'soft'
cf. רכ"כ *rakak*

‘POLITICALLY CORRECT’ PSM



The Israeli (cf. Zuckermann 2008, misleadingly a.k.a. ‘Modern Hebrew’) word גאה *geé* ‘homosexual’ seems to override Israeli עליץ *aliz* ‘homosexual’, which originally meant ‘gay (merry, cheerful)’ and thus constituted a calque of American *gay*. Note the semantic connection of the literal meaning of גאה ‘proud’ to the use of American *gay pride* to imply an empowered homosexual community. For many lesbian, gay and bisexual native speakers of English, signifiers which include the word *pride* immediately imply gay pride, cf. *pride week* (Israeli שבוע הגאווה *shvúa hagaavá*), *gay pride parade* (cf. Zuckermann 2003).

cf. the *politically incorrect* pun found near a gay cemetery in San Francisco: Yiddish אין דר'ערד *gey in drérd*, lit. ‘Go to earth!’, meaning ‘Go to hell!’, ‘Go to the devil!’, reinterpreted as ‘gay in earth’.



I have heard an Israeli feminist protesting against this neologism claiming that it is politically incorrect as it derives from *gadér* ‘fence’, as if there is a barrier, a *mekhitse*, between boys and girls – just like in an orthodox synagogue. I believe that the neologizers of *migdár* ‘gender’ thought of *lehagdír* ‘define’ rather than of *gadér* ‘fence’ but this of course does not change the negative connotations that a speaker might infer. After all, etymology is often forgotten.

As you know, on 15 January 1999, David Howard, a white aide to Washington DC Mayor Anthony Williams (who happens to be black), used the word *niggardly*, which means ‘ungenerous, stingy’, in a conversation with two colleagues. Eleven days later, he resigned (in Israeli one would say התפטר *hitputár* ‘resign:3sgPAST: COERCIVE/INDUCIVE.hit-a-é- + -u-á-’, i.e. ‘he was forced to resign’, cf. התנדב and התאובד) as rumours were spreading that he had used a racial slur. Speakers linked *niggardly* to the ‘politically incorrect’ *nigger* and *negro*, contemptuous terms for a black person. However, initially, *niggardly* has nothing to do with *nigger*.

- And on the other hand, how many Bulgarians do you know who protest against the sodomite meaning of the word *bugger* in English? *Bugger* originally denoted ‘Bulgarian’ (French *bougre*, Latin *Bulgarus*), referring to a sect of heretics who came from Bulgaria to France in the eleventh century.

→ **Etymythology (synchronic etymology) is often more powerful than real (diachronic) etymology!**



LA PUISSANCE DU VERBE: THE POTENTIAL POWER OF ETYM(YTH)OLOGY

- The story goes that Osama Bin Laden died and went to heaven. He was greeted by George Washington, who slapped him and yelled, ‘How dare you try to destroy the nation I helped conceive!’
- Patrick Henry then approached and punched Osama in the nose. After that, James Madison entered and kicked him in the shin. He was followed by an angry Thomas Jefferson, who whacked Osama over the head with a cane.
- The thrashing continued as John Randolph, James Monroe and sixty-six other early Americans came in and unleashed their anger on the terrorist leader. Suddenly, as Osama lay writhing in unbearable pain, an angel appeared. ‘This is not what you promised me,’ Osama said to the angel. ‘Come on, Osama,’ the angel replied, ‘I told you there would be seventy-two *Virginians* waiting for you in heaven.’



- If this alternative interpretation is true, or rather, if one can convince extremist Muslims that it is true, it has the potential to change the course of history, at least in cases like the story of a Palestinian teenager caught in Israel with his penis wrapped with delicate white cloth just before attempting a suicide-bombing.
- When asked about it, he said that his mother had told him that when he arrives in paradise he would get seventy-two virgins and his penis needed to be ready.



REJECTIVE PSM

- ‘Politically incorrect PSM’; a subversive PSM – produced by members of one religion or national group – which undermines or attacks those of another group, in some cases used for propaganda purposes.
- **Anti-Christian Rejective PSMs Concocted by Jews**
- Consider the following expressions, found in early, uncensored copies of the Babylonian Talmud, Sabbath Tractate, 116a:
 1. און גליון *ʔawen gilyōn* ‘evil revelation-book’
 2. עוון גליון *ʔawōn gilyōn* ‘sin revelation-book’
 3. אבן גליון *ʔeb̄en gilyōn* ‘stone revelation-book’



These terms all refer to the gospels and are adaptations of Greek εὐαγγέλιον *euangélion* (> Latin *euangelium*) ‘gospel’, lit. ‘glad tidings, good news; reward of good tidings, given to the messenger’, from *eû* ‘good’ + *ángelos* ‘messenger, envoy’

(Biblical) Hebrew גיליון *gilyōn/gillāyōn*, which I translate as ‘revelation-book’, generally refers to ‘blank parchment, the margin of scrolls’, ‘writing tablet’ (cf. Syriac גליון *gelayona* ‘volume’). However, the etymon of גיליון is the root גלי (cf. גלה) ‘to uncover, reveal’. Thus, גיליון is a good nativizer of *euangélion* since the latter was associated with Apocalypse (the revelation), cf. Latin *apocalypsis* and Greek ἀποκάλυψις *apokálupsis*, the latter being a noun of action from ἀποκαλύπτειν, the meaning of which is exactly the same ‘to uncover, disclose’ (< ἀπό ‘off’ + καλύπτειν ‘to cover’).



Note the *structural compromise* in the expressions above. For example, און גליין *ʔawən gilyōn* literally means ‘evil of book’ rather than ‘book of evil’. Switching places between the *nomen rectum* and the *nomen regens* – resulting in און גליין **gilyōn ʔawən* ‘book of evil’ – would have been much better semantically but not nearly as good phonetically. A similar ‘poetic licence’ occurs in Maskilic Hebrew עמוד פאר *péeyr ámud* (pronounced in Polish Ashkenazic Hebrew *péayr ámid*), lit. ‘glory of pillar’, an adaptation of European *pyramid*. פאר עמוד **ámud péeyr*, lit. ‘pillar of glory’, would have been much better semantically. (Note, however, the non-Semitic order in some Hebraisms coined within Yiddish, e.g. ישיבה בחור *yeshivə bókhər* ‘Yeshivah student’, cf. Israeli ישיבה בחור *bakhúr yeshivá*.)



Structural compromises as in און גליון *lāwen gilyōn* and פאר עמוד *péeyr ámud* are also apparent in Chinese. Consider Modern Standard Chinese 福特 *fútè* ‘blessing+special’, a domestication of *Ford*, indicating that buying this car is a serendipitous choice. Semantically, 特福 **tèfú* ‘special+blessing’ would have been better. The same applies to Modern Standard Chinese 波音 *bōyīn*, lit. ‘wave+sound’, a domestication of *Boeing*; whereas 音波 **yīnbō* ‘sound wave’ would have been a better semantic match.



Yiddish טום *tum* ‘cathedral’ (cf. Middle High German *tuom*, Modern German *Dom* ‘dome’) was transposed into the following:

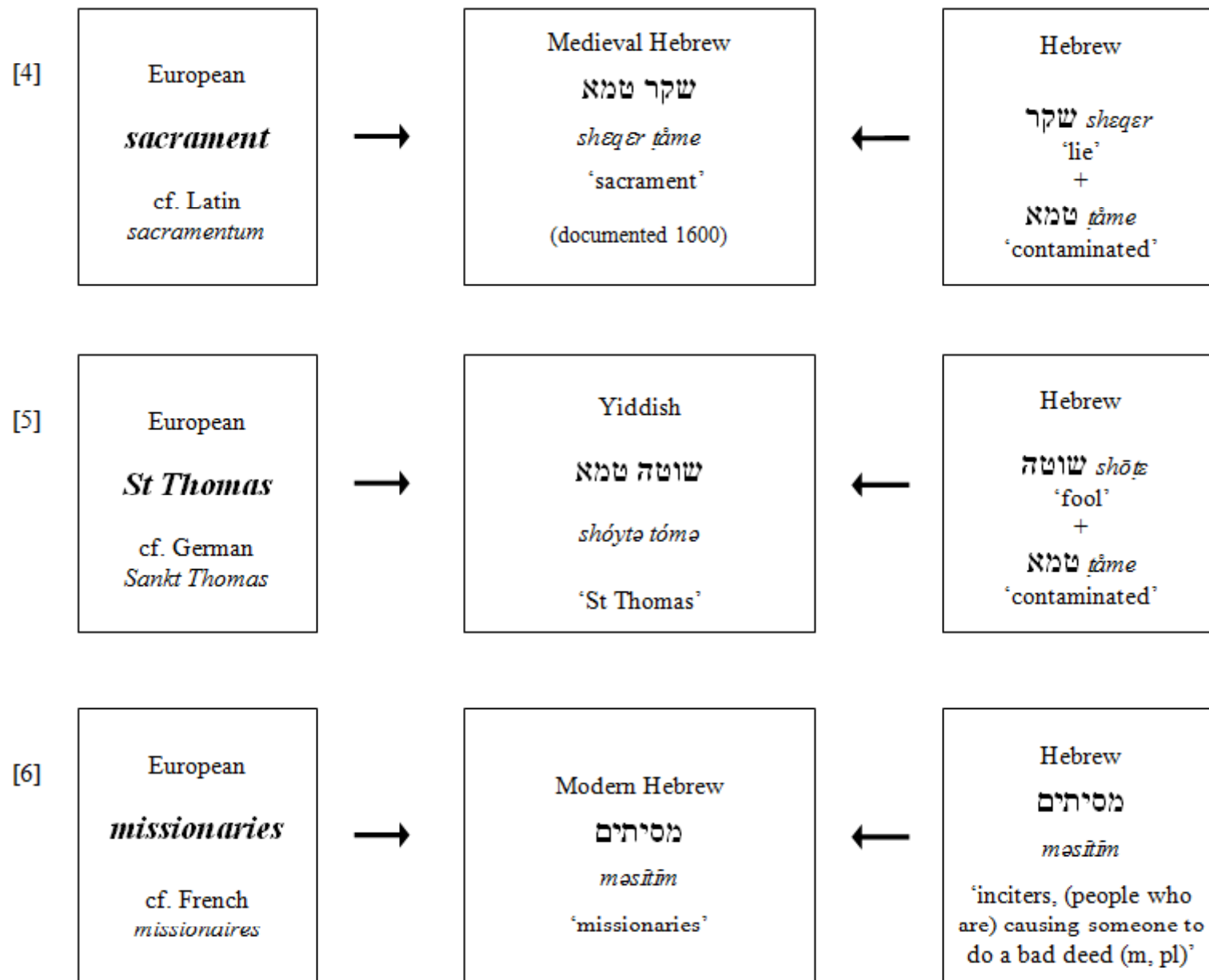
- Medieval Hebrew תהום *təhōm*, lit. ‘abyss’ (documented with the meaning ‘cathedral’ in the late thirteenth century)
- Yiddish טמאה *túmə*, lit. ‘abomination’ (cf. Hebrew טמאה *tumʔā* ‘abomination’)
- Medieval Hebrew טמיון *ṭimyōn*, lit. ‘oblivion’ (cf. Rabbinic Hebrew יצא לטמיון ‘was lost completely, was gone for good’, Medieval Hebrew ירד לטמיון ‘id.’) (documented in Mainz, 1150)



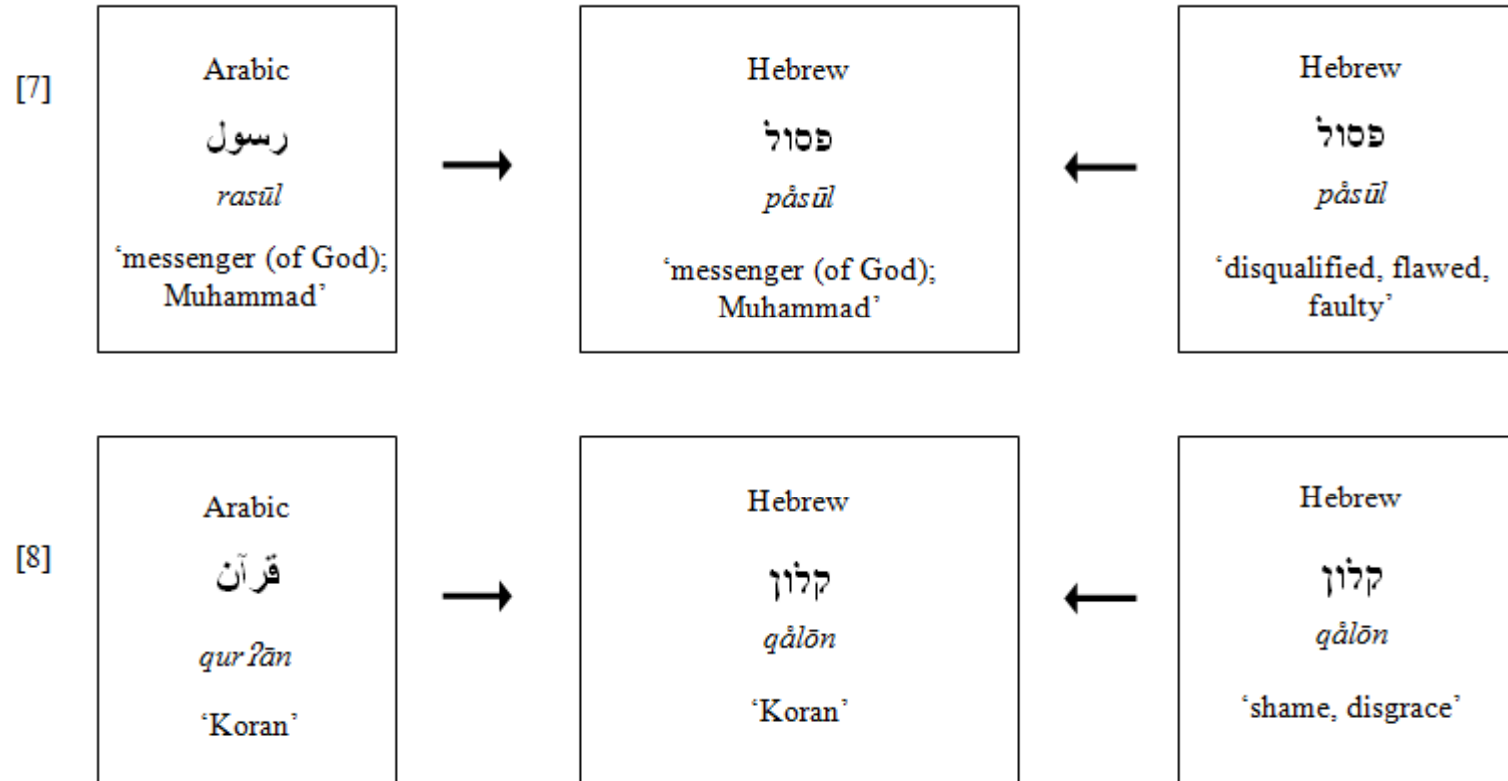
Latin (*dies*) *natalis* (cf. Italian *Natale*, Dialectal Italian *nedal*) ‘Christmas (Day)’ (lit. ‘birthday’) was nativized as the following:

- Medieval Hebrew *נתלה* *nitlê* / *ניתלה* *nītlê*, lit. ‘(being) hanged’, present form of (Biblical) Hebrew *נתלה* *nitlâ* ‘was hanged’. Hebrew *ניתלה* *nītlê* ‘Christmas’ is documented in the writings of Ephraim ben Isaac of Regensburg from the twelfth century and is sometimes written as *ניתל*. There are two possibilities: (1) this PSM simply uses ‘hanged’ to refer to ‘crucified’; (2) this PSM implies that there was a Jewish tradition according to which Jesus was literally hanged, as distinct from crucified; compare this with some medieval traditions holding that Haman (the chief minister of Ahasuerus, as stated in the Book of Esther) was not hanged (on the gallows prepared for Mordecai) but rather was crucified.
- Medieval Hebrew *ניטל* *nittâl*, lit. ‘taken’ (cf. Biblical Hebrew *נטל* *nittal* ‘was taken’), indicating that Jesus was taken from Judaism, see also *הג הניטל* *hag hannittâl*, lit. ‘a holiday of the taken’ or ‘a holiday which was taken’. Modern Hebrew *ניטל* *nitel* referring to ‘Christmas Day’ was used by Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1962: 70). Even-Shoshan (1997: 1150c) and Klein (1987: 414c) claim that the etymon is Latin *natalis* (i.e. *ניטל* is a mere loanword from Latin). They ignore the co-influence of Hebrew *נטל* *nittâl* ‘taken’ or of Yiddish *ניטל* *nítl*, itself a PSM of Hebrew *נטל* *nittâl* ‘taken’, as well as Latin *natalis*.

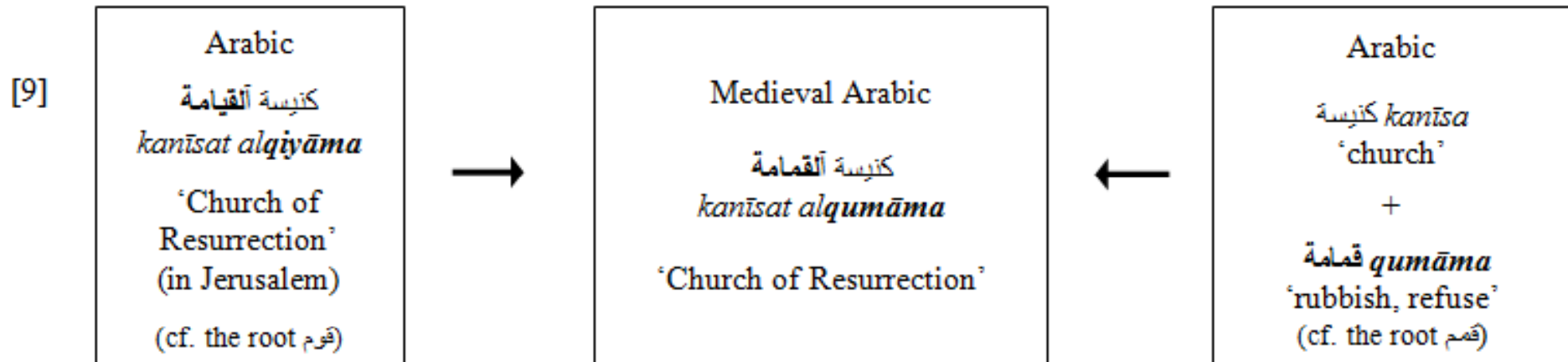




Anti-Muslim Rejective PSMs Concocted by Jews



An Anti-Christian (Intra-Lingual) Rejective PSM Concocted by Muslims



Anti-Jewish Etymology Concocted by ‘Black Jews’

- The rhetoric of the ‘Black Jews’ – who belong to the *Israelite Church of God and Jesus Christ* (formerly known as *The Israeli Church of Universal Practical Knowledge*; Address: 1941 Madison Avenue at 125th St., New York, NY 10035, USA) – contains many subversive etymological manipulations.
- In all their publications, there is an emphasis on the written word, typical of extremists. Each claim is substantiated by references to the Old and New Testaments.
- As I have been particularly interested in their rhetoric, I have observed these Black Jews at one of their main propaganda centres: the intersection of Times Square and 45th Street in New York City.



- They gather there daily in order to persuade African-Americans and Hispanics to join their movement, preaching and distributing leaflets to their target audience (white people are welcome to listen but are not given leaflets).
- The Black Jews believe that they are the real Jews, that Jesus was black and that UFOs are the ‘Chariots of God’.
- They claim that the following are the real twelve tribes of Israel: Juda – the Negroes, Benjamin – West Indians, Levi – Haitians, Simeon – Dominicans, Zebulon – Guatemalans through Panamanians, Ephraim – Puerto Ricans, Manasseh – Cubans, Gad – North American Indians, Reuben – Seminole Indians, Naphtali – Argentinians and Chileans, Asher – Colombians through Uruguayans, and Issachar – Mexicans.



They believe that the Ashkenazic Jews are, in fact, Khazars in origin (i.e. people of Turkic origin who occupied a large part of southern Russia from the eighth century to the eleventh century; cf. similar claims by Koestler 1976 and Wexler 1993). Thus, the main preacher suggested homiletically that the word *Khazar* derived from Hebrew חזיר *hāzīr* ‘pig’ (cf. Yiddish חזיר *kházor*) (obviously, he pronounced both with [k]). In other words, ‘white Jews are no more than pigs’.

On another occasion, the homilist insisted that the word *Jewish* (as used by white Jews) actually derived from *Jew* and *-ish*, the suffix meaning ‘round about’, ‘somewhere near’ (cf. *elevenish*) or ‘approaching the quality of, somewhat’ (cf. *yellowish*). Thus, ‘white Jews are not the real Jews, but are pseudo-Jews’.

Schindler (cf. Steven Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List*, 1993; etymologically ‘shingler’) for the Black Jews is a *swindler*, justifying their belief that ‘the Holocaust is nothing compared to the tragedy of one hundred million black slaves’.



In Bavaria I have heard an etymology that the German word for ‘key’ is *Schlüssel* (cf. *schliessen* ‘to close’), whereas the Hebrew word for ‘key’ is מפתח (Israeli *maftéakh*; deriving from the Hebrew root פתח *p.t.h.* ‘to open’), because ‘the Jews were wandering thieves who *opened* the gates to farms, which had been *locked* by their German owners’.



- Cf. the philological rationalizations that **Friedrich Nietzsche** used to ground his moral theory. For example, in the highly – if perhaps fancifully – etym(yth)ological First Article (Chapters 4-5) of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887) (cf. 1966: ii:774-7), Nietzsche suggests that there is a link between lexical items such as:
 - German *schlecht* ‘bad’ and *schlicht* ‘plain, common’ (cf. 1966: ii:774-5) (Note that in pre-late eighteenth century Yiddish literature, שלעכט *shlekht* meant ‘simple’)
 - Latin *malus* ‘bad’ and Greek *mélas* ‘black’ (ibid.: 776)
 - Gaelic *fin* ‘gentle, fine’ and its earlier form, which meant ‘blond’ (ibid.: 776)
 - Latin *bonus* ‘good’ and *duonus* (< *duo* ‘two’) ‘duellist, fighter’ (cf. *bellum–duellum–duen+lum*) (ibid.: 777)
 - German *gut* ‘good’, *göttlich* ‘god-like’ and *gotisch* ‘Gothic’ (ibid.: 777)



[10]

International
America



Modern Hebrew (jocular)
עמם ריקן
šammâ reqâ ‘America’
cf. the opening page of Gershon
Rosenzweig’s satirical *Massékhet
Amérika (Tractate America)* from the
collection *Talmud Yanka’i* which was
published in Vilna in 1894, cf. Ben-
Yishai (1971: 127), Nissan (ms)



Aramaic
עמם *šammâ* ‘nation’
+
ריקן *reqâ* ‘empty’
cf. עמם פזיזא
šammâ paxizâ ‘hasty nation’
(*Talmud*: Kethuboth 112a),
referring to the Israeli nation

Cf. the ‘politically correct’ Chinese PSM 美国 Mandarin *měiguó*, Cantonese *meiko^k*, lit. ‘beautiful country’, referring to *America*.



MOTIVATIONS FOR REJECTIVE LEXICAL ENGINEERING

1. Othering, defining and securing one's own (positive) identity through (the stigmatization of) the 'Other'.

The 'Other' is what permits us to discover – and even constitute – the 'self'. The self is defined thanks to the mirror reflection that the Other represents. In other words, we define ourselves through the 'Others'.

Instead of the 'thinking I', epitomized in Descartes' (1637) revolutionary phrase *Je pense, donc je suis* (*cogito ergo sum*, 'I am thinking, therefore I exist', a.k.a. 'I think, therefore I am'), Lévinas (1972) begins with an 'ethical I'. According to Lévinas, the self is possible only with its meeting of the Other. (The self is seen and defined thanks to a deep 'shock' which destabilizes one's whole being until one discovers that one is defined as responsible for the Other. This discovery of oneself carries responsibility toward the Other without waiting for reciprocity. Thus the 'Other' constitutes the basis for ethics.)



2. Empowerment, creating a sense of *unity* within a religious/national group
(following othering)
3. Countering a perceived threat from outside one's own religious/national group
(motivating othering)
4. Camouflaging anti-authority comments for survival.
5. Iconicity (the belief that there is something intrinsic about the sound of names), cf.
the use of *Hallelujah* and *Amen* in various languages (cf. Zuckermann 2004).
6. Playfulness, *punning*, *pilpul* (cf. the midrashic tradition of homiletic commentary),
humour at the expense of another, producing a witticism (in both the current and
the earlier contemptuous use of this word itself).
7. Linguistic propensity, e.g. phono-logographic script, script lacking vocalization or
gemination, productive blending word-formation (motivating playfulness).



8. *Apollonianism*, the wish to create order, especially in response to unfamiliar information or experiences (cf. *la tendenza apollinea* ‘the Apollonian tendency’, Pisani 1967: 160).
9. In linguistics, Apollonianism is manifested by a craving for meaningfulness, often expressed by the recalibration of an unfamiliar foreign lexical item with known native element, as in *etymology*. Cf. *Apollinisch* ‘Apollonian’ versus *Dionysisch* ‘Dionysian’ in Nietzsche’s works. *Apollo*, the sun-god of the Greeks and Romans, is symbolic of *reason*, whilst *Dionysus*, the Greek god of wine and fertility of nature, is associated with *wild* religious rites.

Cf. Port Lincoln ‘How much money did you lose?’







- NOTE: One may argue that othering and Apollonianism contradict each other, as othering is defining oneself *vis-à-vis* the other whereas Apollonianism is defining the other by appropriation to one's own *Weltanschauung* and reference-point system.
- I propose two solutions for this alleged paradox. First, complementary distribution: lexical engineering is sometimes the result of othering and other times the result of Apollonianism. Second – and more spectacularly – Apollonianism can be seen as ripples within the ‘tsunami’ of othering. In other words, lexical engineering often encompasses both processes simultaneously.



EFFECTS OF REJECTIVE LEXICAL ENGINEERING

(for discussion)

1. CROSS WORDS, NOT SWORDS; MAKE WORDS, NOT WARS:
neutralization of possible violence among those producing the lexical manipulation
2. *Incitement of violence*

•The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related, that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous; and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.

(Paine 1796: 20)



MULTIPLE CAUSATION OR MULTIPLE ETYMOLOGY?:

ADOPTIVE PSM

(a Tool for Concealing the Influence of Non-Jewish Traditions)

- Eastern Yiddish *חלה* *khálə* (Southeastern Yiddish *khólə*) ‘braided (white) bread loaf (eaten on the Sabbath), *hallah*, *chollah*’ (cf. Western Yiddish *ברכה* *bárxəs* / *bérxəs* ‘id.’ below; Both *khálə* and *bárxəs* are mentioned in the list of lexical isoglosses between Western and Eastern Yiddish by Weinreich 1973: ii:390 and Katz 1983: 1025a) <<<



1. (Biblical) Hebrew חלה *hallā* – cf. Yiddish *khálə*, Southeastern (Ukrainian) Yiddish *khólə*, Israeli *khalá* – ‘dough loaf offered to the priest in the Temple in Jerusalem’ (e.g. Exodus 29:2, 23). I believe that the etymon of Hebrew חלה is the Hebrew root חלל *ḥ.l.l.* ‘hole’. However, Even-Shoshan (1997: 538a) points out that a possible etymon is the Hebrew root חלי *ḥ.l.y.* (cf. חלה *ḥ.l.h.*) ‘sweet’, but note the *dagesh* in the ל of חלה *hallā*, which I analyse as *dagesh compensativum*. The semantic explanation for the use of the root חלל *ḥ.l.l.* might be the fact that the ancient *hallah* had a hole in it, like today’s bagel, so that it could be put in a high place in order to prevent mice and other animals from spoiling it. Biblical Hebrew חלל *ḥ.l.l.* might be related to Akkadian *ellu* ‘pure’ (see *Entsiklopédyā Mikraít*: iii:143), and Biblical Hebrew חלה *hallā* sometimes referred to ‘unleavened bread’ (usually called in Hebrew *mšh*), see Leviticus 8:26, Numbers 6:19. It is important to note that before it gained its current sememe, Yiddish חלה *khálə* referred to the part of the (non-braided) loaf separated out for sacred purposes, a tradition known as מפריש חלה (Israeli *mafrish khalá*) ‘dedication/offering of *hallah*’.

2. Frau **Holle**, a goddess/witch in German folklore, one of whose tasks was to inspect the **braids** of girls during winter (Wexler 1993: 116-7), cf. the German idiom Frau Holle schüttelt die Betten (aus) ‘It is snowing’, ‘The old woman is plucking her geese’.

