Israeli, Jewish, Mizraḥi or Traditional? On the nature of the Hebrew of Israel's periphery

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ABSTRACT   This article deals with the sociolect of native Hebrew speakers, born in Israel, whose (distant) origin is in the Jewish communities of the Arab east and west. The article reviews several terms that have been used to refer to this sociolect but argues that none of these terms accurately describes either the sociolect or its speakers. Since the majority of the Israelis who speak this sociolect are traditional (*masoratiyim*) in terms of their religious identity, I propose to refer to this sociolect as Traditional-Mizrahi Hebrew, which occupies an intermediate place between 'Jewish Hebrew' and 'Israeli Hebrew'. This term has the advantage of accurately reflecting the contemporary Israeli reality. The second part of the article provides detailed evidence for the suitability of this term. It reviews various linguistic characteristics of this sociolect that reflect its affinity to the Jewish tradition as it is perceived by the Jewish communities of the Muslim countries.

T HE MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES that took place in the Jewish world from the late nineteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century brought about a drastic decline of the Jewish languages in the land of Israel. The establishment of the state, and the mass immigration to Israel and all that it entailed, including the acquisition of Hebrew, led to the near-extinction of the immigrants' mother tongues, which were gradually abandoned by veteran immigrants and their families. Jewish society in Israel was thus transformed, in a swift and comprehensive process, from a multilingual society into a largely monolingual one.[1]

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1. U. Schmelz and R. Bachi, 'Hebrew as the Everyday Language of the Jews in Israel: A Statistical Appraisal', *Leshonenu* 37 (1973), pp. 50–68 (in Hebrew); B. Spolsky and E. Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel: Policy, Ideology and Practice* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999); E. Shohamy and B. Spolsky, 'From Monolingual to Multilingual? Educational Language Policy in Israel', *Teʿuda* 18 (2002), pp. 115–28 (in Hebrew).

Naturally, as in every process of replacement and conquest, here too the establishment of hegemony by one language (in this case, Hebrew) and the decline of others (in this case, Jewish languages) left their mark on the newly dominant language (Modern Hebrew), and the results of the contact between the languages is evident in a variety of domains. However, except in the case of Yiddish, linguistic research has done little to explore the influence of these Jewish vernaculars on the development of contemporary Hebrew,[2] although this interlingual contact provides a new perspective on the consolidation of the language.

In this study I will attempt to characterize the particular 'shade' of Hebrew spoken by some native speakers, Israelis for whom Hebrew is their sole mother tongue. They are characterized by their ethnic background (going back some seven decades), their social status and their places of residence. I am referring to second-, third- and fourth-generation descendants of immigrants from the Muslim east and the Maghreb. These Israelis, descended from immigrants most of whom came to Israel during the first years of the state's existence (in the early 1950s), constitute a sizable portion of Israel's Jewish population.[3] A significant portion of them live in the Israeli periphery: in development towns, small towns and moshavim in Israel's north and south, or in urban neighbourhoods that in the past were called 'distressed neighbourhoods'.[4] They are, for the most part, well integrated in Israeli society, studying in state educational institutions, serving in the army, and not at all isolated ideologically.[5] Nonetheless, the language spoken by many of them has unique characteristics that are not part of the 'standard' Hebrew vernacular. These

2. See criticism by O. Schwarzwald, 'The Components of the Modern Hebrew Lexicon: The Influence of Hebrew Classical Sources, Jewish Languages and other Foreign Languages on Modern Hebrew', *Hebrew Linguistics* 39 (1995), p. 83 (in Hebrew); M. Bar-Asher, 'The Place of Aramaic in Modern Hebrew', in Y. Blau (ed.), *Evolution and Renewal: Trends in the Development of the Hebrew Language*, *A Special Volume on the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of Va'ad ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1996), p. 15; Y. Henshke, 'The Contribution of the Hebrew Component in Judeo-Languages to the Revival of Spoken Hebrew', *Revue des Études Juives* 172 (2013), p. 171.

3. The article does not deal with the Ethiopian and Russian immigrants to Israel, who arrived later and constitute a very different case.

4. These Israelis are not uniform in their socio-economic status, but, since they are largely concentrated in certain towns and neighbourhoods, they preserve the culture of their communities of origin to a relatively high degree. That is, their culture is largely continuous with the religious culture of the original immigrants.

5. E. Ben-Rafael, *Language, Identity and Social Division: The Case of Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 98–9.

include prominent phonological features of intonation and pronunciation,[6] as well as lexical and phraseological features– that is, unusual borrowed words or expressions.[7] In addition, their speech is characterized by differences of semantics and syntax,[8] that is, non-standard meanings or syntactic constructions, which are not as transparent to an outsider.[9]

Outsiders hearing this Hebrew often judge it as 'ineloquent' or 'improper'.[10] Terms applied to it in common parlance, in the media, and even in scholarly and literary writing include such judgemental descriptions as 'poor Hebrew', 'corrupt Hebrew', 'low speech', 'the language of uneducated Israelis', 'the language of the socioeconomically disadvantaged', 'the speech of southerners', 'the speech of *freḥot*' (a term for showy, low-class women of Middle Eastern background), *Ashdodit* (Hebrew spoken in Ashdod, a southern city where many speakers of this vernacular live), *Aravravit* (an amalgam of the words 'Arabic' and 'Hebrew'), and so on.

The reality described above is reflected, for example, in an interview with Yael Gal, a successful interior architect who grew up in southern Israel but now lives in a prestigious area of Tel Aviv and belongs to a very

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6. H. Blanc, 'An Excerpt of Israeli Hebrew Speech', *Leshonenu* 21 (1957), pp. 33–9 (in Hebrew); idem, 'Israeli Hebrew Texts', in H. Rosen (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology and Linguistics: In Honor of H.J. Polotsky* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1964), pp. 123–52; S. Morag, 'Some Notes on the Vowel System of Spoken Hebrew', *Leshonenu* 37 (1973), pp. 206–7 (in Hebrew); O. Schwarzwald, *Grammar and Reality in the Hebrew Verb* (in Hebrew; Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), pp. 78–87; Y. Bentolila, *The Sociophonology of Hebrew as Spoken in a Rural Settlement of Moroccan Jews in the Negev* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1984); idem, 'The Pharyngeal Phonemes as Sociolinguistic Variables', *Eshel Beer-Sheva* 3 (1986), pp. 353–71 (in Hebrew); E. Peleg, 'The Simplification of the Diphthong ei in Israeli Hebrew: A Process of Phonological Change Reflecting Social Processes', *Hebrew, A Living Language* 1 (1992), pp. 141–52 (in Hebrew); Y. Matras and L. Schiff, 'Spoken Israeli Hebrew Revisited: Structures and Variation', *Studia Semitica: Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement* 16 (2005), pp. 153–6; Y. Henshke, 'The Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel: Origins and Development', *Israel Studies Journal* 20 (2015), pp. 163–82.

7. Y. Henshke, 'Sara Shilo's "No Gnomes Will Appear": A Linguistic Analysis', *Hebrew Studies* 54 (2013), pp. 267–75; idem, 'On the Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel: A Socio-Lexical Consideration of the Hebrew of Israelis of North African Origin', *Journal of Jewish Languages* 2 (2013), pp. 207–27; idem, 'The Judeo-Arabic Origins of Modern Israeli Idioms and Proverbs', in M. Bar-Asher and S.D. Fraade (eds), *Studies in the History and Culture of North African Jewry 2* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 75–84.

8. Henshke, 'Sara Shilo's '"No Gnomes Will Appear", pp. 265–72, 275–83; idem, 'The Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel'.

9. It should be noted that the precise degree to which these characteristics are discernible differs from place to place and from speaker to speaker; nevertheless, taken together they create a clear distinction between the language of this speech community and Standard Modern Hebrew.

10. This is apparently the basis for the many movies, television series, plays, etc., that exaggerate the distinct features of this vernacular, focus on it as characteristic of a particular ethnic community, and ridicule it.

well-established economic stratum. Gal, speaking casually, provides evidence for this sociolinguistic distinction and refers to it in describing her social mobility:[11]

> Even before that, she needed to *rid herself of Be'er Sheva*. She describes how she decided *to get rid of her Be'er Sheva accent* and how at first *she spoke slowly in order to pronounce the words differently*. 'At first it was all strange to me, I didn't believe that I would feel at home here. … *There were words I didn't know and I had to learn basic things*. … But I used to sit with a dictionary … Today I can *maneuver between both worlds*, but it took me a lot of time not to feel panicked or frightened about [my] *Be'er Sheva accent*. Once I started to get it, no one could stop me'.[12]

Examples of this Hebrew can be heard on the Israeli street at any given moment. Any encounter in a neighbourhood, on a bus, at the supermarket, or even in a college or university, not to mention family celebrations, can yield examples of this variance. Reality TV shows, which have proliferated and which bring together Israelis of various social strata, provide plentiful examples as well.[13] In the past few years, I have devoted several studies to this linguistic distinctiveness, in which I pointed to its sources in spoken Judeo-Arabic.[14]

This vernacular is thus not simply a debased or incorrect form of the language, since Judeo-Arabic, whose influence on the speakers of this Hebrew is still evident, is the primary source of its unique semantic and syntactic features. Even so, from the beginning there arose the question of how to define and characterize this language, and even what to call it.[15] That question is the focus of this study.

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11. The interview appeared in the Israeli daily *Haaretz* (May 2013) in connection with her participation in the televised Israeli reality series *Me'usharot*. I am grateful to Dr Einat Gonen for the reference.

12. www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/television/.premium-1.2008790, accessed 13 February 2017 (my emphases).

13. Such as the Israeli version of *Big Brother* and *The Race to the Million*.

14. See Y. Henshke, 'The Contribution of the Hebrew Component', pp. 169–87; idem, 'Sara Shilo's "No Gnomes Will Appear"'; idem, 'On the Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel'; idem, 'The Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel'; idem, 'The Judeo-Arabic Origins'. It should be noted that the Jewish-Arabic dialects spoken by the various Jewish communities differ from one another, but they have a broad common denominator that had an impact on the Hebrew of the periphery. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the Jewish Arabic of North Africa (especially Morocco) had the greatest influence on this Hebrew, presumably because its speakers are relatively numerous and are mostly concentrated in specific areas.

15. Similar deliberations about what to call Israelis whose parents came from the Muslim east and the Maghreb are found elsewhere in the literature. See N. Berg, 'Sephardi Writing: From the

The term '(Hebrew of) emigrants from Muslim countries', used in a variety of fields, including thought and culture, literature, history, music, social sciences and education, must be rejected because of its clumsiness, its outdated nature, and most of all its irrelevance.[16] After all, the identity and language of an Israeli child or adult in the twenty-first century are not anchored in the religion or culture of Islam that dominated the country from which his parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents came, a religion and culture with which he himself has little contact.[17]

Another possible term is 'the language of the Sephardi Jews'. The term 'Sepharadim' has been common in rabbinic legal literature for centuries, especially in the context of the distinction between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. It has also long been part of Modern Hebrew, both spoken and written,[18] including academic literature.[19] However, though it has cultural depth and is directed at the heritage of Sephardi communities in the Diaspora,[20] today this term is outdated, because over the years the 'Ashkenazi versus Sephardi'

Margins to the Mainstream', in A. Mintz (ed.), *The Boom in Contemporary Israeli Fiction* (Hanover NH: Brandeis University Press, 1997), p. 115; see also the clear expression of the problem in H. Pedaya, 'Švirat Tsurot – An Interview with Haviva Pedaya by Daliah Markowitz', *Hakivun Mizrah* 9 (2005), p. 7 (in Hebrew); B.H. Hary, *Translating Religion: Linguistic Analysis of Judeo–Arabic Sacred Texts from Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 30–32.

16. On thought and culture, see e.g. M. Zohori, A. Tartakower, M. Zand and A. Haim (eds), *Hebrew Thought in the Islamic Countries* (Jerusalem: World Hebrew Union, 1981). On literature, see e.g. C. Abraham-Eitan, *The Dual Roots of Hebrew Poets from Arab Countries (1950–1997)* (in Hebrew; M.A. thesis, Bar Ilan University, 1998); on history, see e.g. S. Ettinger (ed.), *History of the Jews in the Islamic Countries*, 3 vols (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1981–86). On music, see e.g. I. Perlson, *The Musical Institutions of the Emigrants from the Islamic Countries during the First Years of the State of Israel* (in Hebrew; M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2000). On education, see e.g. Y. Hasin, 'Juvenile Delinquency in Israel: Objective Distress and Subjective Distress among the Immigrants from the Islamic Lands to Israel', *Mifgash LeAvoda Hinuchit-Sotsialit* 2 (1992), pp. 62–73 (in Hebrew).

17. However, for an argument in favour of the term 'emigrants from Muslim countries', see M. Buzaglo, 'Mizraḥiness, Masortiyut, Melting Pot: A Philosophical-Political Study', in Z. Harvey, G. Hazan-Rokem, H. Saadon and A. Shiloah (eds), *Zion and Zionism among Sephardic and Eastern Jews* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim, 2002), p. 623.

18. E.g. 'Sephardi girls' (www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4158689,00.html, accessed 13 February 2017), 'a Sephardi young man' (www.yeshiva.org.il/ask/?id=8529, accessed 13 February 2017), the 'Sephardi rite' in prayer, 'Sephardi custom', 'Sephardi sages', and the official name of the Shas party: 'Sephardi Keepers of the Torah'.

19. See, for example, S. Mardyks, *The Nexus between Locus of Control, Psychological Differentiation and Creativity among Sephardi Children and Ashkenazi Children* (in Hebrew; M.A. thesis, University of Haifa, 1979); N. Berg, 'Sepharadi Writing: From the Margins to the Mainstream', in A. Mintz (ed.), *The Boom in Contemporary Israeli Fiction* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England), pp. 114–42.

20. But see Pedaya's and Hary's critique of this term: H. Pedaya, 'Breaking Forms', *Havikun Mizrah* 9 (2004), pp. 7–13 (in Hebrew); Hary, *Translating Religion*, p. 30.

distinction has given way to 'Israeli versus Mizraḥi',[21] Furthermore, use of the term 'Sephardi' for all the Jewish communities of the Muslim east and the Maghreb is diminishing, as the term has come to be applied more strictly to the descendants of the exiles from Spain, and – since the Hebrew word *Sepharad* refers to the country of Spain – to Spaniards in general and not specifically Jews.[22]

This led me to the relatively new term 'Hebrew of Mizraḥi ['Eastern'] Jews'.[23] Although this term too refers to the speakers' roots in earlier generations, it reflects contemporary usage in speech and writing, including in academic literature.[24] Nevertheless, it suffers from factual imprecision. A significant portion of the speakers are not from the eastern but rather the western part of the Muslim world, namely from North Africa (Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria). Another important point to be noted is the demographic changes that have occurred over time. Many of the Israelis considered 'Mizraḥi' are not 'pure Mizraḥi' Jews. The Israeli melting pot has had its effect, and many mixed couples, of one 'Mizraḥi' and one non-'Mizraḥi', have raised new generations whose 'Mizraḥi' identity is largely attenuated or absent.[25]

Furthermore, examining the term 'Mizraḥi' in our context[26] shows that it is a late term, describing not the culture of the communities of origin in the Diaspora but rather a new Israeli sub-identity, with more than a few

21. H. Hever, Y. Shenhav and P. Motzafi-Haller (eds), *Mizraḥim in Israel: A Critical Observation into Israel's Ethnicity* (in Hebrew; Tel-Aviv: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2002), p. 23; Buzaglo, 'Mizraḥiness, Masortiyut, Melting Pot', pp. 626–7.

22. For the sense of 'exiles from Spain and their descendants', see e.g. R. Toeg (ed.), *The Sephardic Jews in Eretz Israel in Changing Times* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Merkaz Dinur, 2000). For the sense of 'Spanish' and 'Spaniard(s)', see e.g. the use of 'Spaniards' and 'Spanish passport' (www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/.premium-1.2239670, accessed 13 February 2017).

23. See Henshke, 'On the Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel'.

24. E.g. 'Mizraḥi food', 'Mizraḥi music', people who are 'Mizraḥim' (www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/501/339.html, accessed 13 February 2017). For scholarly usage, see e.g. Hever et al., *Mizraḥim in Israel*; K. Alon, *A Third Option for Poetry: Studies of Mizraḥi Poetics* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad and the Yehoshua Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts, 2011); Y. Oppenheimer, *From Ben-Gurion Street to Shari al-Rashid: On Mizraḥi Prose* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2014); idem, *Diasporic Mizraḥi Poetry in Israel* (in Hebrew; Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2012).

25. The Arian survey shows that 'The patterns of religious self-definition … of those of mixed parentage (Ashkenazi and Mizraḥi) are more like those of Ashkenazim than of Mizraḥim.' See A. Arian, *A Portrait of Israeli Jews: Beliefs, Observance, and Values of Israeli Jews, 2009* (Survey) (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Guttman Center for Surveys and the Israel Democracy Institute for the AVI CHAI Foundation, 2012), p. 30.

26. Obviously, this is not the place for a comprehensive analysis of the term 'eastern' in its global context.

political and sociological connotations.[27] The term may be appropriate, then, in studies of society, politics and even literature that deal with that cultural encounter. However, it seems to me that an examination of the sociolect under discussion does not necessarily touch on that fraught encounter, and therefore requires a more internally motivated term, based on the intrinsic characteristics of the community in question, rather than on an external perspective that views it from the outside.

Another drawback is that, while the term 'Mizraḥi Hebrew' is intended to describe the language of a large portion of Hebrew speakers in Israel,[28] it is a differentiating and even a marginalizing term, as if to say: there is a normative/standard/general Hebrew, and there is 'Mizraḥi' Hebrew, which is marginal and does not follow the proper norms (this is, in fact, the attitude that this spoken sociolect has often encountered).[29] Finally, 'Mizraḥi', ('Oriental'/'Eastern'), intended to refer to the Near East, can be confused with references to the Far East – India, China, and so on – making the term problematic, especially in translation to English.[30]

After some deliberation, in previous studies I opted for the term 'language of the periphery'.[31] As a result of immigrant absorption policies in the 1950s, the descendants of immigrants from the Muslim east and the Maghreb are largely concentrated in Israel's geographical and social periphery. This means that today these immigrants and their descendants live in cities, towns and moshavim in the north and south of the country and in certain urban enclaves. The expression 'Hebrew of the periphery' is therefore up to date, accurate and appropriate to the current Israeli reality.

However, this term too is imprecise, because this Hebrew is not confined to the periphery. It can also be heard among urban Israelis who do not necessarily fit the definition of 'social periphery', as well as among Hebrew-speaking Jews of North African origin living in Western countries. Moreover, some characteristics of the language of the periphery have long since transcended

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27. Hever et al., *Mizraḥim in Israel*, pp. 15–27; B. Kimmerling, *Immigrants, Settlers, Natives: Israel between Plurality of Cultures and Cultural Wars* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), pp. 282–4; Oppenheimer, *Diasporic Mizraḥi Poetry in Israel*, pp. 6–9.

28. In the 1990s, Jews of the Muslim countries and their descendents constituted 43–45 per cent of Israel's population (E. Ben-Rafael, 'Multiculturalism and Multiligualism in Israel', *Teʿuda* 18 [2002], p. 305 [in Hebrew]).

29. See Henshke, 'Sara Shilo's "No Gnomes Will Appear" '.

30. Hence, in English the term 'Mizraḥi' usually remains untranslated, as in this article.

31. See e.g. Henshke, 'Sara Shilo's "No Gnomes Will Appear" '.

those boundaries and become well integrated into Standard Israeli Hebrew. Even Ashkenazi Israelis are likely to employ peripheral characteristics in their Hebrew freely, regardless of their sectoral or social-stratum affiliation. For example, a native kibbutznik of Ashkenazi origin who today holds a senior academic position told me that, during her army service in Netivot, a development town in the south, she took on morphological and syntactic forms that were in common use there, and they have been part of her Hebrew ever since. Her young daughter, born in Jerusalem, uses them as well, having learned them from her. Examples of this sort abound.

Another drawback of the term 'Hebrew of the periphery' has to do with its connotations: this too is a differentiating expression that does not do justice to the sociolect under discussion, portraying it as a marginal language whose status is doubtful and which does not deserve a place in the mainstream. This also begs the question of where this imagined 'mainstream' lies, considering that Israelis of 'Mizraḥi' origin constitute about half of Israel's Hebrew-speaking population.[32]

It appears, then, that defining this linguistic distinctiveness in terms of ethnicity in the distant past, which in many cases is no longer relevant, is inappropriate. A geographical-social definition is also inexact. It therefore seems pertinent to shift our focus from processes and events in the past to the current Israeli reality, and seek an appropriate, immanent definition rooted in the present and directed at the linguistic distinctiveness at hand.

Current identity

First, a few words about the attitude of immigrants from the Muslim east and the Maghreb towards Hebrew and Zionism, which may serve to clarify some of the claims below. Historians have noted that these immigrants did not share the aggressive Zionist attitude that characterized Hebrew-speaking circles at the time.[33] Negation of Diaspora life as 'exile', the 'language wars',

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32. See n. 28 above.

33. P. Morag-Talmon, 'The Place of Zionism in the Consciousness of the Safardim in Jerusalem', in R. Toeg (ed.), *The Sephardic Jews in Eretz Israel in Changing Times* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Dinur Center, 2000), pp. 169–79; Y. Tzur, 'Outside of Europe: The Origins of Moroccan Zionism and its Evolution', in G. Allon (ed.), *World Regional Zionism: Geo-Cultural Dimensions*, vol. 2 (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2010), pp. 203–71; H. Saadon, 'Zionism in Tunisia: A Geo-Cultural Examination', in A. Gal (ed.), *World Regional Zionism: Geo-Cultural Dimen-*

and similar ideals of promoting Hebrew as the only national vernacular[34] did not constitute an important part of their culture. Moreover, for most of them, their Zionist worldview and all it entailed was integrally connected to their world of Jewish tradition and religion.[35]

Scholars of sociology,[36] Jewish law (Halacha), Jewish thought[37] and literature[38] have also shown very clearly that the Jewishness of those groups is largely continuous with the identity they brought with them from the Diaspora, a Jewishness that preserves patterns from the past. They perceived their immigration to Israel as an extension of traditional trends and not necessarily as a revolution meant to shake off the past in anticipation of a fundamentally different future.

Therefore it is not surprising to find that adherence to Jewish tradition is a salient characteristic of Jews of 'Mizraḥi' origin in the twentieth century[39]

sions, vol. 2 (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Shazar Center for Jewish History and Ben-Gurion Research Institute, 2010), pp. 273–309.

34. For a detailed description of the public campaign for the promotion of Hebrew, and the opposition to the use of the Jewish languages and foreign languages, see Y. Reshef, 'Hebrew Speech Taking Root during the British Mandate Period', in S. Izre'el (ed.), *The Speech Machine as a Language Teacher: Hebrew Spoken Here* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2012), pp. 143–62.

35. Z. Zohar, 'Zionism and the State of Israel as Viewed by Leading Sephardic-Oriental Rabbis (1948–1967)', in M. Bar-On and Z. Zameret (eds), *On Both Sides of the Bridge: Religion and State in the Early Years of Israel* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2002), pp. 320–49; idem, *The Luminous Face of the East: Studies in the Legal and Religious Thought of Sephardic Rabbis of the Middle East* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001), pp. 285–311; I. Abramsky-Bligh, 'The Zionist Hachshara in Jerba', in Z. Harvey, G. Hazan-Rokem, H. Saadon and A. Shiloah (eds), *Zion and Zionism among Sephardic and Eastern Jews* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Misgav Yerushalayim, 2002), pp. 490–93; S. Bar-Asher, 'A Modern Rabbi and Sage: R. David Danino of Casablanca in the 1930's and 1940s', in M. Orfali and E. Hazan (eds), *Progress and Tradition: Creativity, Leadership and Acculturation Processes among the Jews of North Africa* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and the Aharon and Rachel Dahan Center, 2005), pp. 31–46; E. Ben-Rafael, 'One People? Contemporary Jewish Identities', in E. Ben-Rafael and Y. Sternberg (eds), *World Religions and Multiculturalism: A Dialectic Relation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 305.

36. M. Shokeid, 'New Trends in the Religiosity of Miztahi Jews', in S. Deshen and M. Shokeid (eds), *The Jews of the East* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1984); idem, 'The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews', in C.S. Liebman, M. Shokeid and S. Deshen (eds), *Israeli Judaism: Studies of Israeli Society* (New Brunswick NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 1995), pp. 78–91.

37. Zohar, 'Zionism and the State of Israel'.

38. H. Hever, 'We Have Not Arrived from the Sea: Towards Literary Mizraḥi Geography', in H. Hever, Y. Shenhav and P. Motzafi-Haller (eds), *Mizraḥim in Israel: A Critical Observation into Israel's Ethnicity* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2002), pp. 191–211; Alon, *A Third Option for Poetry*, pp. 18, 23; Oppenheimer, *Diasporic Mizraḥi Poetry in Israel*, pp. 123–30; idem, *From Ben-Gurion Steet to Shri' al-Rashid*, pp. 104–54.

39. Shokeid, 'The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews'; S. Levy, H. Levinson and E. Katz, *Beliefs, Religious Practicing and Social Relations among Israeli Jews* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Guttman Institute for Social Research, 1993), pp. 14–16; idem, *A Portrait of Israeli Jews: Beliefs, Observance, and Values* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Guttman Institute and the Israeli Institute of Democracy, 2000), pp. 99, 141.

and in the first decade of the twenty-first century.[40] A survey conducted in 2009 by Professor Asher Arian of Tel Aviv University found that

> Most Ashkenazim and persons of mixed parentage (67%) are secular, and of these 62% are antireligious; by contrast, most Mizraḥim are Traditional (= *Masorti*), Orthodox, or Haredi (73%). It follows that Mizraḥim define themselves as Traditional more than those of mixed parentage and Ashkenazim do.[41]

It thus emerges that a salient characteristic of those called 'Mizraḥi' is maintenance of tradition. Sociologists have also shown than Israeli traditionalism is centred for the most part in the 'Mizraḥi' population, and is perceived as part of an ethnic identity system.[42] This conclusion is confirmed by an examination of 'Mizraḥi' literature. Oppenheimer,[43] in his study of 'Mizraḥi' prose and poetry, described the linguistic character of 'Mizraḥi' writing, noting that it draws very specifically upon Traditional Jewish Hebrew, since 'for [the authors], Jewish culture does not represent only a religious position … nor a linguistic one … but an ethnic and cultural position'.[44]

At this juncture, it is also pertinent to note the prominence of traditionalism in Israeli ethnic politics and their attendant publicity efforts. For example, the TAMY political party, founded in the 1980s, incorporated a reference to tradition in its official name: Tenu'at Masoret Yisrael (Jewish Tradition Movement). Shas, the Sephardi Ultra-Orthodox party, frequently uses the term as well.[45]

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40. C.S. Liebman and Y. Yadgar, 'Beyond the Religious-Secular Dichotomy', in Z. Gitelman (ed.), *Religion or Ethnicity? Jewish Identities in Evolution* (New Brunswick NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2009), pp. 177–81; Ben-Rafael, 'One People', p. 305.

41. Arian, *A Portrait of Israeli Jews*, p. 30.

42. Ben-Rafael, *Language, Identity and Social Division*, p. 97; Y. Yadgar, *Masortim in Israel: Modernity without Secularization* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Shaom Hartman Institute, Faculty of Law, Bar-Ilan University, Keter Books, 2010), pp. 209–34 and elsewhere; idem, *Beyond Secularization: Traditionism and the Critique of Israeli Secularism* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2012), pp. 78, 106–14.

43. Oppenheimer, *From Ben-Gurion Street*, p. 48.

44. See also Oppenheimer, *Diasporic Mizraḥi Poetry in Israel*, pp. 117–22; idem, *From Ben-Gurion Street*, 44–55; Alon, *A Third Option for Poetry,* pp. 62–83.

45. For example, the preface to the Shas Party's Document of Principles states: '[Our political] platform is a way of life anchored in a *tradition* and a *heritage* thousands of years old' (www.shas.org.il/Web/He/About/Platform/Default.aspx, accessed 13 February 2017).

Jewish, Israeli and Traditional

The terms 'Jewish' and 'Israeli' Hebrew as sociolinguistic terms distinguishing two kinds of contemporary Hebrew spoken in Israel were coined by the writer Adam Baruch[46] and gained currency in academic parlance. These concepts seek to characterize Hebrew according to its uses, contents, meanings and social contexts.[47] This dichotomy assumes that Israeli society has two poles, religious and secular, and that the Hebrew one speaks is a function of one's location on the axis between them. For example, analysing Haim Sabato's *Te'um Kavanot* (translated into English as *Adjusting Sights*), Bar-Asher writes that he mixes Israeli and Jewish Hebrew.[48] Bliboim, in a comprehensive article on the language of contemporary Israeli authors, likewise distinguishes between the 'Israeli' Hebrew of Savyon Liebrecht and the 'Jewish' Hebrew of Mira Kedar, Shimon Adaf, Herzl Cohen and Haim Sabato.[49] Oppenheimer emphasizes in his research the Jewish Hebrew common to religious and Mizraḥi writers.[50]

However, I argue that this dichotomous distinction is inadequate and needs to be made sharper and more nuanced. Reading the works of Adaf or Herzl Cohen, mentioned above, or the works of other 'Mizraḥi' authors, one notices that the definition of their language as 'Jewish' is too general. In fact, the attempt to place Kedar, Yonadav Kaploun, Adaf and Cohen in a single category ignores an important component in the language of the last two, namely the 'Mizraḥi'-Jewish component. The Judeo-Arabic that is integrated and melded into the Standard Israeli Hebrew of those books – namely the discourse markers, blessings and curses, fragments of biblical verses, passages of liturgy and liturgical poetry (*piyutim*), and the entire world of associations, and so on – are not just Jewish but very specifically 'Mizraḥi'-Jewish. It seems, therefore, that between the poles of 'Jewish' and 'Israeli' Hebrew there is a third category that overlaps with both.

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46. A. Baruch, *In Good Faith* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Keter, 2001), pp. 21–7.

47. Obviously, the terms 'Jewish' and 'Israeli' have other meanings as well; the meaning noted above is relevant in the context of language.

48. M. Bar-Asher, 'Impressions from Reading Chaim Sabato's Adjusting Sights', *Moznaim* 75 (2001), pp. 23–4 (in Hebrew).

49. R. Bliboim, 'Yehudit and Israelit: A Linguistic-Cultural Study', *Hebrew Linguistics* 66 (2012), pp. 43–61 (in Hebrew).

50. Oppenheimer, *Diasporic Mizraḥi Poetry in Israel*, pp. 117–22; idem, *From Ben-Gurion Street to Shari al-Rashid*, pp. 44–55.

Turning once again to the spoken language, I propose that, due to the present traditional character of 'Mizraḥi' Jews, and due to their conscious effort to maintain their Jewish and ethnic identity,[51] their unique type of Hebrew may be referred to as Ivrit Masoratit ('Traditional Hebrew').[52] In the context of Israeli society, the element of *masoratiyut* (traditionalism) inherently lends the term a 'Mizraḥi' overtone.[53] As shown above, this definition is based on a living contemporary reality that subsumes 'Mizraḥi' identity under the rubric of ethnic traditionalism and includes a significant component of linguistic and cultural continuity.[54] This identity is an Israeli identity, voluntary and not imposed, and the use of this particular vernacular is often voluntary as well, and may vary according to the circumstances of the discourse.

However, given that, unlike the Hebrew term 'Masorati', the English term 'traditional' does not have definite Mizraḥi connotations, I shall refer to this sociolect in English as '*Traditional–Mizraḥi* Hebrew'. This in order to clarify that this language is specific to speakers of Mizraḥi origin, and despite my aforementioned reservations about the term 'Mizraḥi'.

Traditional–Mizraḥi Hebrew

Let me now establish the claim that there is a close connection between the Traditional identity commonly called 'Mizraḥi' and the Hebrew spoken by those whose identity it is. The language of Traditional Israelis has certain identifying characteristics – some associated with the Jewish pole and others with the Mizraḥi-Jewish pole, namely the particular cultural and religious world of the Sephardi communities – which together define a distinct

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51. See Arian's 2012 survey (*A Portrait of Israeli Jews*, pp. 63–4) for evidence of the high ranking of Jewish (and ethnic) identity among 'traditional' Jews.

52. Clearly, the term 'Traditional Hebrew' may have a variety of other meanings and connotations as well. But given that the terms 'Jewish' and 'Israeli' are used, in both academic and general parlance, to denote two kinds of Hebrew spoken in Israel, I wish to paint a more accurate and nuanced picture by adding to this continuum a third category, 'Traditional Hebrew', describing the language of the group I have called traditional Israelis.

53. The Israeli sociolect under discussion clearly reflects a continuity with the religiolect that was current in the communities of origin. On Judeo-Arabic as a religiolect, a dialect reflecting a religious world, see Hary, *Translating Religion*; and B. Hary and M.J. Wein, 'Religiolinguistics: On Jewish-, Christian- and Muslim-Defined Languages', *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 220 (2013), pp. 85–108.

54. On the importance of the continuity factor in Jewish languages, see Hary, *Translating Religion*, pp. 29–49.

linguistic space. In other words, the language of these Traditional Israelis has characteristics in common with that of (Ashkenazi) religious Jews, alongside unique features deriving from the Jewish-Arabic language and culture. This particular religious 'aroma' characterizes the group and its language, even though not all the group's members are formally observant. Obviously, the language spoken by this community has additional unique characteristics that transcend this religious-traditional category; however, I shall focus on the religious-traditional aspects, which, I maintain, are among its most important defining features. As mentioned, some of these aspects are shared by Jewish Hebrew while others are unique to Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew. The following are some representative examples. For lack of space, I concentrate here on aspects of vocabulary, semantics, phraseology and phonology, setting aside syntactic aspects.

1. *Invoking the name of God*

Belief in the God of Israel and in divine reward and punishment constitutes the largest common denominator in the identity of Traditional Israelis, and tops the scale of their Jewish identity markers.[55] In this respect they resemble 'religious' Israelis and differ from 'secular' Israelis. It is fair to assume that these beliefs have sociolinguistic manifestations as well.

Indeed, speakers of Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew make widespread use of the terms *a-kadoš barux-u*[56] ('The Holy One, blessed be He') and *aš-šem* (lit. 'The Name') as epithets for God, and in doing so resemble 'religious' Hebrew speakers. Their Hebrew also incorporates traditional Jewish expressions of praise for or invocation of God, such as *barux a-šem* ('praise God'), *yištabaḥ*[57] *šemo* ('may His name be praised'),[58] *a-šem/elohim yišmor* ('God forbid'; lit. 'may God protect'), *a-šem yaʕazor* ('God help [him/her/us...]') – and of course the

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55. Levy et al., *Beliefs, Religious Practicing and Social Relations*, p. 106; idem, *Beliefs, Religious Practicing and Values among Israeli Jews, 2000* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Guttman Institute for Social Research, Israel Democracy Institute, 2002); Arian, *A Portrait of Israeli Jews*, p. 48; Yadgar, *Masortim in Israel*, p. 369.

56. The transcriptions presented here and below represent attested examples uttered by specific speakers, whose pronunciation differs to a certain degree. Some pronounce [h], [ʕ] and [ḥ] while others do not; I transcribed words and expressions as they were pronounced by the informants from whom I heard them.

57. In many cases pronounced with a geminated [b].

58. On the sociolinguistic distinctiveness of this expression, see M. Kedar, *Love, Heaven and Scent of Citrus* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot Press, 2011), p. 67: 'Rotem glanced at him, asking "Wait a second. So I have to thank *yištabaḥ šemo*" (she said in a Moroccan accent).'

expressions *beꜥezrat a-šem* ('with God's help') and *im yirtse a-šem* ('God willing'), which are used in Standard (religious) Israeli Hebrew as well.

Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew also includes Judeo-Arabic expressions invoking the divine, such as *sm-alla*, in the sense of 'may God protect you', and *tbark-əlla*, meaning 'God bless' (akin to the apotropaic Hebrew expression *bli ꜥayn ha-raꜥ*).

2. *The world of the synagogue*

The synagogue is an important part of the world of Traditional Israelis,[59] though they are not uniform in the frequency of their synagogue attendance: some attend only on the main holidays (Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Pesach), while others attend weekly on Shabbat.[60] It therefore comes as no surprise that terms having to do with the synagogue are common in their speech.

(a) The phrase *bet kəneset* ('synagogue') is pronounced with a mobile schwa in their Hebrew, as distinct from the pronunciation in 'Israeli' Hebrew and the Ashkenazi variant of 'Jewish' Hebrew, where the schwa is quiescent: *kneset*.[61]

(b) Similarly, *šaliyaḥ tsibur* ('prayer leader') is pronounced with an /a/ vowel between the first two consonants, rather than *šliyax tsibur*, as in 'Jewish' Hebrew.[62]

(c) An interesting phenomenon is noted regarding the usage of the title 'rabbi'. Whereas Standard Israeli Hebrew uses the form *rav*, Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew frequently uses the variant *ra'bi*. Moreover, this title is often followed by the rabbi's first name (for example, *ra'bi yaꜥakov, ra'bi šlomo*), a practice that does not occur in 'Jewish' Hebrew or in 'Israeli' Hebrew. Thus, the chief rabbi of the town of Netivot may be called *ra'bi pinḥas*, rather than *ha-rav kohen*.[63] Under the influence of 'Israeli' Hebrew, one

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59. S. Deshen, 'The Ethnic Synagogue: Patterns of Religious Change in Israel', in S.N. Eisenstadt and A. Zloczower (eds), *The Integration of Immigrants from Different Countries of Origin in Israel* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1969), pp. 66–73; R. Ben-Eliezer and S. Sharot, *Ethnicity, Religion and Class in Israeli Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 75–86; Ben-Rafael, *Language, Identity and Social Division*; Shokeid, *Israeli Judaism*, pp. 220–24.

60. Levy et al., *Beliefs, Religious Practicing and Social Relations*, p. 47; idem, *Beliefs, Religious Practicing and Values*, pp. 114, 141; Yadgar, *Masortim in Israel*, p. 396.

61. In a scene in the television series ꜥ*Amamiyot* (directed by Zion Naor), a young woman tries to teach her friend not to pronounce the mobile schwa (*kəneset*) which betrays her social identity.

62. Henshke, 'The Contribution of the Hebrew Component', p. 185.

63. Interestingly, this practice has spread to other domains as well. I have noticed that speakers

even encounters such hybrids as *ha-rav yoram* (instead of *ra'bi yoram* or *ha-rav abarjil*, for Rabbi Yoram Abarjil). Another point worth mentioning is the pronunciation of the title *rabi*. Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew sometimes preserves the traditional pronunciation with a central vowel, a geminated consonant, and stress on the second syllable: *rəb'bi*.

(d) The word *ḥazan* ('cantor') is sometimes pronounced as in Judeo-Arabic, with a geminated *z* and a central vowel after the *ḥ*: *ḥəzzan*.

(e) The terms *šaḥarit*, *minḥa*, *ʿarvit* and *musaf* (referring to the three daily prayer services and a fourth 'additional' service on Shabbat and some holidays) are familiar and current. (In 'Israeli' Hebrew, *musaf* refers to a supplement to a daily newspaper or television programme.)

(f) The term *piyutim* ('liturgical poems/songs') is in use, as well as the conjugated verb *mefayet*, which is unknown in 'Israeli' Hebrew and even in Ashkenazi 'Jewish' Hebrew.

(g) Similarly current and familiar are other terms, such as *šabat ḥatan* (the Sabbath when a bridegroom is honoured in the synagogue service) and *ʿaliya la-tora* (being called up to the Torah to recite blessings over a portion of the public lectionary recitation from the Pentateuch).

3. *Shabbat and holidays*

Shabbat and Jewish holidays also constitute an important part of the identity of Traditional Jews.[64] Thus one finds in their Hebrew the following terms:

(a) *šabat* is the common term for Saturday, rather than the term often used in 'Israeli' Hebrew, *sof shavua* ('weekend').

(b) The term *kiduš* in its religious sense (a benediction offered over a cup of wine marking the sanctity of the Shabbat or one of the major festivals) is in frequent use.

(c) A common term for the Day of Atonement is *kipur*, as in Judeo-Arabic, and not only *yom kipur*, as in 'Israeli' Hebrew.[65]

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from the periphery often address me as Dr Yehudit, rather than Dr Henshke.

64. Ben-Rafael and Sharot, *Ethnicity, Religion and Class*, p. 94; Levy et al., *Beliefs, Religious Practicing and Social Relations*, pp. 20, 24–5, 39; Levy et al., *Beliefs, Religious Practicing and Values*, pp. 102–10, 141; Arian, *A Portrait of Israeli Jews*, pp. 42–3; Yadgar, *Masortim in Israel*, pp. 367–9.

65. Y. Henshke, 'The Contribution of the Hebrew Component in Judeo-Languages to the Revival of Spoken Hebrew', *Revue des Études Juives* 172 (2013), pp. 183–4.

(d) *mimuna* is the Judeo-Arabic term for the festival on the day after Passover, observed among North African Jews. It has gained currency in 'Israeli' Hebrew as well.

4. *Jewish personalities and figures*

The names of early rabbis and famous righteous persons are in common use, evoked in fixed traditional formulas and with traditional discourse-purposes, echoing Judeo-Arabic.

(a) The Tanna'im (early Talmudic sages) *rab'bi šim'on* and *rab'bi Meir* (namely, Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai and Rabbi Me'ir Ba'al Han-nes) are evoked, usually as an expression of wonderment or as a call for help, as in Judeo-Arabic. Here, too, the Judeo-Arabic pronunciation of the title *rəbbi* is often heard.

(b) The prominent leaders of the contemporary Abu Hatzera rabbinic family are referred to by the title baba: *baba sali*, *baba l'azar* and *baba barux*, which is used in Judeo-Arabic (although today the names *baba sali* and *baba barux* have percolated into the speech of all Standard Israeli Hebrew speakers).

5. *Other religious concepts and terms*

(a) *tora*. In North Africa, the term *tora*, which originally signified the Pentateuch, broadened its meaning to include all aspects of Judaism. Any of the written Jewish sources of Halacha and Jewish custom, and even the Hebrew language itself, might be referred to as *tora*, and so it is today in the language we are describing.

(b) *hillula*, *zyara* and *tsadik*. Memorial celebrations (*hillula, zyara*) at the tombs of renowned righteous sages (*tsadikim*) are a deeply rooted custom among Jews of the Muslim east and the Maghreb, which continues today in Israel.[66] Thus, *hilula* (sometimes pronounced with penultimate stress (*hi'llula)* as in

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66. A. Weingrod, *The Saint of Beersheba* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1990); E. Ben Ari and Y. Bilu, 'Saints' Sanctuaries in Development Towns: On a Mechanism of Urban Transformation', in C.S. Liebman, M. Shokeid and S. Deshen (eds), *Israeli Judaism: Studies of Israeli Society* (New Brunswick NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 1995), pp. 255–84; Shokeid, 'The Religiosity of Middle Eastern Jews', pp. 227–8; A. Sasson, 'The Contribution of Jews of North African Origin to the Process of Sanctifying Sites and Graves in Israel over the Last Fifty Years', in M. Orfali and E. Hazan (eds), *Progress and Tradition: Creativity, Leadership and Acculturation Processes among the Jews of North Africa* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2005), pp. 267–81.

Judeo-Arabic), the Judeo-Arabic term *zyara* and the Hebrew term *tsadik* (in the sense of a holy man) appear frequently in Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew.

(c) *bet a-ḥayim* (lit. 'house of life' or 'home of the living'), meaning a cemetery, is another Hebrew term that was used in Judeo-Arabic and remains current in the Hebrew of Traditional Israelis. Many of them prefer it over the more common *bet kvarot* (lit. 'house of graves') because of its gentler euphemistic character.

6. *Biblical verses and traditional expressions*

Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew – both spoken[67] and written – is replete with unique Jewish expressions, some in Hebrew and some in Arabic.[68] This was demonstrated by Alon (2011), who pointed out in her excellent analysis that an important component of 'Mizraḥi' poetry is the inclusion of verses, phrases and expressions from classical Hebrew literature in the poets' contemporary Hebrew.[69]

(a) *meḥila* ('forgiveness'/'forgive me'), with a mobile schwa and frequently with a preserved pharyngeal [ḥ], has begun to cross over into Standard Israeli Hebrew, but still preserves its distinctiveness.[70]

(b) *kap'para*, with a geminated [p] and penultimate stress, used as a term of endearment, as in Judeo-Arabic. This new expression, which is an abbreviated form of the Judeo-Arabic expression *mši kəb'bara ʿli-k* ('I will be an expiation for you[r sins]'), has transcended the bounds of Traditional Hebrew and is now current in Standard Israeli Hebrew, where it has also acquired diminutive and jocular variants: *kaparonet*, *kaparoni*, *kaparuli*.

(c) *šmaʿ yisrael*, both in the Jewish sense of the liturgical recitation and as an exclamation or expression of surprise, as in Judeo-Arabic.[71]

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67. Contra Stahl, whose report is erroneous; see A. Stahl, *Language and Thought of Culturally Deprived Children in Israel* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Otzar Hamoreh, 1977), pp. 133–6.

68. For sayings and expressions particular to this sociolect, see Henshke, 'The Mizraḥi Sociolect in Israel'.

69. Alon, *A Third Option for Poetry*, pp. 73–80.

70. See, for example, Mira Kedar (*Parties to a Confidence*, p. 18), who places this expression in the mouth of a generic Israeli but preserves the Mizraḥi-traditionalist cast of the expression by adding parenthetically that he pronounced it 'with an *e* vowel after the *m* and a Yemenite guttural *ḥ*'.

71. This expression has become an identifying characteristic of Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew speakers; see Tom Kashty in the television show *The Race to the Million*.

(d) *en emuna* in the sense in which is was used in Judeo-Arabic: 'There is no trusting [someone]'.[72]

(e) *ben porat yosef* (from Gen. 49:22), used apotropaically, as in Judeo-Arabic, similar in meaning to Hebrew *bli ʿayn ha-raʿ* ('God bless/Heaven forfend').[73]

(f) *ḥazak u-barux* as an expression of congratulations on a job well done, especially in a ritual role in the synagogue, instead of the Ashkenazi Jewish expression *yišar koaḥ*.

(g) *yaʿavdu-xa ʿamim* ('Nations shall serve you', from Gen. 27:29) as an expression of thanks for performing some task for the sake of another, as it was used in Judeo-Arabic.[74]

7. Phonology

An examination of the Jewish component in Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew is not restricted, in my view, to the narrow realm of vocabulary, semantics and phraseology. It should also include other linguistic aspects having to do with traditions of reciting written Hebrew that prevailed in the communities of origin and that continue to be recognizable in the Modern Hebrew of its speakers.[75] Some phonological aspects of Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew can serve as an example.

(a) The pharyngeal consonants

As is well known, the traditions of recitation among the Jews of the Muslim east and the Maghreb preserved the pharyngeal consonants [ḥ] and [ʿ], whereas the Ashkenazi tradition lost them. In the early Revival Period of the Hebrew language in Eretz Israel, the issue of pronunciation came up several times, and the Sephardi pronunciation was widely advocated.[76] In 1913, the Language Committee officially endorsed the Sephardi pronunciation, including the pronunciation of the pharyngeal consonants.[77] This decision was

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72. Henshke, 'Sara Shilo's "No Gnomes Will Appear"', p. 275.

73. Henshke, 'The Contribution of the Hebrew Component', pp. 184–5.

74. Henshke, 'Sara Shilo's "No Gnomes Will Appear"'.

75. By 'traditions of pronouncing written Hebrew' I mean the traditions of reciting the Hebrew Bible, the Mishnah, and other sacred writings, passed from generation to generation in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.

76. The term 'Sephardi pronunciation' was used in most of the debates on this issue, as well as in the decision of the Language Committee (*Memoirs of the Language Committee*, 3 vols [in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Vaʿad Halashon Haʿivrit, 1912, 1913, 1929]).

77. *Memoirs of the Language Committee*, 1913, pp. 24–49.

meant to prevent the adoption of the traditional Ashkenazi pronunciation as the Modern Hebrew vernacular. However, the attempt to introduce the pharyngeal consonants into the language of all Hebrew speakers met with limited success. Most Ashkenazi speakers adhered to the pronunciation that did not include pharyngeal consonants. Hence, in detailing the characteristics of Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew, we must examine the status of these consonants, which originate in the speakers' mother tongues.

As a matter of fact, sociolinguistic studies of Modern Hebrew focused from the outset on phonological aspects and distinguished between Israeli and 'Mizraḥi' pronunciation.[78] This distinction was based mainly on the realization of the pharyngeal [ḥ] and [ʿ]. It was observed that the Sephardi-'Mizraḥi' pronunciation gradually lost its prestige, and that Israelis originating in the Muslim east and the Maghreb who wanted to integrate into Israeli society tended to adopt the Ashkenazi pronunciation and drop their pharyngeal consonants.[79] However, as the policy of uniformity and the melting pot lost favour,[80] this trend apparently diminished somewhat. The pharyngeals thus became the most prominent marker of the Traditional variant of Hebrew.[81]

(b) Monophthong [e] vs diphthong [ey]

Unlike the pharyngeal consonants, which are readily discernible to the ear and can be easily discarded in order to adopt an 'Israeli' pronunciation, the variance represented by the diphthong [ey] is less obvious to Israelis. Originally, the Sephardi and Ashkenazi traditions differed very clearly in the pronunciation of the *tsere*, with the Ashkenazi tradition realizing it as the diphthong ([ey] or [ay]) and the Sephardic tradition realizing it as the monophthong [e].[82] However, unlike in the case of the pharyngeal consonants, speakers of Modern Hebrew chose, for various reasons, to adopt

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78. Blanc, 'An Excerpt of Israeli Hebrew Speech'; idem, 'Israeli Hebrew Texts', in H. Rosen (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology and Linguistics: In Honor of H.J. Polotsky* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1964), pp. 123– 52; Morag, 'Some Notes on the Vowel System of Spoken Hebrew', pp. 206–7.

79. Schwarzwald, *Grammar and Reality in the Hebrew Verb*, pp. 84–5; Bentolila, *The Sociophonology of Hebrew*, pp. 353–55.

80. Hever et al., *Mizraḥim in Israel*, pp. 23–4.

81. Bentolila, *The Sociophonology of Hebrew*, pp. 94, 204–28; idem, 'Linguistic Variation across Generations in Israel', in S. Izrael (ed.), *Speaking Hebrew: Studies in the Spoken Language and in Linguistic Variation in Israel* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2002), pp. 133–4, 137–8; Matras and Schiff, 'Spoken Israeli Hebrew Revisited', pp. 149–50, 156–60.

82. G. Khan (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 4 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 863.

the Sephardi pronunciation for the most part.[83] Nevertheless, Peleg[84] found that a difference between Sephardi and Ashkenazi speakers still persists. Examining the realization of the *tsere* in the speech of Israeli teenagers, he found that, though a decline occurred in its realization as a diphthong in the speech of Ashkenazi teens, its realization as a monophthong was a much more prominent characteristic of the speech of Sephardi teens. Today the consistent use of the monophthong remains one of the marked characteristics of Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew, with the word 'which' pronounced *eze* (rather than *eyze*, as many speakers of Standard Israeli Hebrew pronounce it), the word 'fruits' pronounced *perot* (rather than *peyrot*), and the word 'egg' pronounced *betsa* (rather than *beytsa*).

Towards a conclusion

As mentioned, the sociolect described in this article has additional characteristics that transcend the narrow religious-traditional category discussed here. These characteristics, too, have to do with the worldview common to all its speakers, who did not reject the Diaspora and the languages spoken by the Jews there, a worldview that led them to continue using Judeo-Arabic alongside Hebrew for many decades. The results of this linguistic contact are evident in their speech – in its phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and discourse – and clearly distinguish it from both Israeli and Jewish Hebrew. These sociolinguistic aspects are an important part of the many-layered world of Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew, whose traditional aspect is manifest in its continuity with the language and culture of the communities of origin, and in the incorporation of this language and culture into the new world of modern Israel. A full examination of these linguistic aspects, which is beyond the scope of this article, will add a significant layer to the description of the sociolect that was discussed here.

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83. B. Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution: The Modern Jewish Revolution and the Renaissance of the Hebrew Language* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Carmel/Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 2008).
84. E. Peleg, 'The Simplification of the Diphthong ei in Israeli Hebrew: A Process of Phonological Change Reflecting Social Processes', *Hebrew, A Living Language* 1 (1992), pp. 141–52 (in Hebrew).

Conclusion

An examination of contemporary Hebrew must recognize current reality as it is, rather than cleave to outdated concepts that are no longer accurate or relevant. Today's so-called 'Mizraḥi' Jews lean towards traditionalism, specifically the traditionalism of their parents and grandparents. That is their choice. They also seek to maintain their contact with their forefathers' mother tongues; that too is their choice. Others choose, for various reasons, to distance themselves from this tradition and change their speech, and some adjust their speech according to the context, the circumstances and the identity of their interlocutors. Yael Gal, the young woman mentioned above, described this as 'maneuvering between the worlds'. 'Worlds' was her choice of word. The term 'Traditional-Mizraḥi Hebrew', which I propose to adopt, takes an immanent view of this sociolect, delineating a new linguistic space that encompasses the traditional-religious world of the speakers, their present traditional identity, and of course their current Israeli identity.