

CHAPTER TWO  
FROM ARAMEA TO AMERICA:  
ADAPTATIONS OF HEBREW SCRIPT

In this chapter I present an overview of the development of the Hebrew writing system, followed by a survey of language families with attested Hebrew-letter texts. While I aim to provide a broader and more inclusive overview of Hebraicization than has been available previously, I do not make any claim to comprehensiveness.

1. FROM HEBREW TO JEWISH WRITING

Nothing is known of Hebraic writing before the Israelites emerged in the land of Canaan and "borrowed the art of writing" from the local inhabitants in the twelfth or eleventh century BCE (Naveh 1982: 65). In the earliest known Hebrew inscription, the Gezer calendar,<sup>1</sup> the writing resembles that of tenth-century Phoenician inscriptions from Byblos, and features no specifically Hebrew characters. Indeed, the Phoenician influence was so dominant that neither the Hebrews nor the Aramaeans ever innovated new characters to represent consonant phonemes that did not exist in Phoenician.

The first distinctive features of Hebrew writing are actually to be found in ninth-century inscriptions in Moabite, a Canaanite dialect related to Hebrew. According to Naveh (1982), these adaptations of the contemporary Hebrew script represent the first stage of the Hebrew scribal tradition. Despite dialectal differences between the spoken Hebrew of Judah (the

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<sup>1</sup> Naveh notes that although the calendar can be dated to the late tenth century, the language of this inscription "does not have any lexical or grammatical features that preclude the possibility of its being Phoenician" (1982: 76).

southern kingdom) and Israel (the northern kingdom), the same script was used in both kingdoms, as well as by the Moabites and Edomites to write their own kindred languages while under the rule of Israel and Judah. It appears that there were no local variants of this script, nor was there a distinct non-cursive lapidary style, due perhaps to the lack of a widespread custom in Hebrew society of erecting royal stelae or offering votive inscriptions to the deity (Naveh 1982: 69).

Naveh describes the development of Hebrew script through the seventh century BCE as "a single, conservative, national tradition of writing" (1982: 78). However, the destruction of the First Temple in the early sixth century and the subsequent exile of most of the educated class to Babylonia resulted in a major shift in Hebraic writing. By this period, Aramaic had replaced Akkadian as the everyday language in Babylonia, and it would gain even greater prestige and wider usage when it was elevated to one of the four official languages of the Persian Empire (along with Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian). Over the succeeding centuries, use of the "native" Hebrew script became more and more restricted, its latest known use being on the coins of Bar-Kokhba in the second century CE.<sup>2</sup> From the late third century BCE onwards, the Jews – now comprising a sizeable number if not a majority of Aramaic speakers – wrote in a script derived from Aramaic writing. It is the characters of this script, also known in paleographical circles as "the Jewish script," that evolved into what is now commonly referred to as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These are shown in the middle line of table 2-1, with their equivalents in the pre-Aramaicized native Hebrew script (generally

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<sup>2</sup> Although the native Hebrew script persisted among the Sadducean sect in the Second Temple period, it seems that it was ultimately rejected in favour of the adapted Aramaic script because it came to be identified with the Samaritans (Yardeni 1997: 44).

referred to as "paleo-Hebrew") in the line above, and the transliterations traditionally used in Semitic philology<sup>3</sup> below:

**Table 2-1. *The Paleo-Hebrew and "Jewish" scripts***

פ	צ	כ	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
׀	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
ʔ	b	g	d	h	w	z	ḥ	ṭ	y	k	l	m	n	s	ˁ	p	ṣ	q	r	š/ś	t

Naveh (1982: 112) emphasizes the extraordinariness of this shift: "the Jews, a conservative nation which adhered strictly to its traditional values, abandoned their own script in favour of a foreign one." Even the Babylonian Talmud (the wide-ranging compilation of Rabbinic explicating Jewish law and ritual, dated to ca. 500 CE), comments on the graphical shift, referring to the newer script as *Ashurit* 'Assyrian':

Originally the Torah was given to Israel in Hebrew characters and in the sacred [Hebrew] language; later, in the times of Ezra, the Torah was given in *Ashurit* script and Aramaic language. [Finally,] they selected for Israel the *Ashurit* script and Hebrew language, leaving the Hebrew characters and Aramaic language for the *hedyototh*<sup>4</sup> (Sanhedrin 21b).

<sup>3</sup> Several of the transliteration characters differ from the corresponding symbols used in the IPA, as shown in the table below. Unless referring specifically to a spoken form, however, I have preferred the traditional symbols in this study.

***Transliteration vs. IPA symbols***

	ʔ	ḥ	ˁ	ṭ	ṣ	ś	ś
<b>IPA</b>	ʔ	ħ	ʕ	ṭ̣	ʦ̣	ʃ	ʦ̣

<sup>4</sup> The passage goes on to cite R. Hisda's explanation that the *hedyototh* refers to the "Cutheans," that is, the Samaritans. As G. Rendsburg (p.c.) has pointed out to me, this term derives from Gk. ἄστυγοι, the ultimate source of Eng. *idiot*.

Relative to the later adaptations of this script to languages beyond Hebrew and Aramaic, the shift was a relatively simple one: the scripts were genealogically related and could be substituted directly letter-for-letter. Their relatively easy co-existence is illustrated in some of the Dead Sea scrolls (ca. first century BCE), whose scribes generally wrote using the newer Hebrew script but still wrote the tetragrammaton in native Hebrew characters. Nevertheless, the shift from paleo-Hebrew writing to the Aramaic-derived script does represent the only time that Jews would use a borrowed script to produce original writing in the Hebrew language.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. EVOLUTION OF JEWISH WRITING

Once Hebrew was no longer the sole Jewish vernacular, the need arose to write other vernaculars in an identifiably Jewish way – in other words, to "Hebraicize" them. Before this practice would mature, however, the Hebrew language and its writing system underwent a number of changes that would strongly inform the way in which its readers and writers interacted with its alphabet. Below I outline the major grapho-phonological changes that affected the Jewish variant of Aramaic writing that has come to be known as Hebrew script.

### 2.1. Graphical change: final forms

In Semitic scripts that evolved from a cursive tradition, such as the Nabataean script (and its descendant, the Arabic script), almost every letter has a different form for medial and final position. The Jewish script, by

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<sup>5</sup> Of course it was far from the only time that Hebrew texts would be written in a "non-native" script: as Wellisch (1978) argues, the very origins of Western transliteration practice can be found in non-Jewish attempts to render the text of the Bible in other scripts and languages.

contrast, which developed from an Aramaic book-hand, has only five differentiated final forms, as shown in the table below:

**Table 2-2. Final forms**

Non-final	כ	מ	נ	פ	צ
Final	ך	ם	ן	ף	ץ
Letter name	<i>kaf</i>	<i>mem</i>	<i>nun</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>şade</i>

Although these five final forms have traditionally been treated as something to be learned in addition to the basic set of twenty-two Hebrew letters, they in fact more closely resemble the original graphemes, and it is the medial forms that represent the innovated characters. Naveh (1982: 172) describes their origin:

In the Persian period, *kaf*, *mem*, *nun*, *pe* and *şade* were written with long downstrokes. With time, these downstrokes began to shorten and to curve toward the next letter in the work, eventually evolving into the medial forms. However, at the end of a word, the writer slowed down, and did not curve the downstroke of the last letter, so that the long downstrokes survived in final forms.

The account varies slightly in the case of medial *mem*. What is worth noting in relation to Hebraicization is that all later adaptations of Hebrew script deploy the final forms to some degree, though on occasion the medial forms do occur in final position. The paleographer's rule of thumb: the longer the text, the greater the consistency in the use of the final forms. It is not surprising, then, to see medial forms used in final position in the marginal and intralinear glosses of medieval Biblical texts. The following are some of the German

terms in the trilingual (Hebrew-French-German) Leipzig glossary (Bannit 1995), each of which contains a medial form used "incorrectly":

**Table 2-3. Leipzig glosses with non-final forms in final position**

בֹּן אֹנְגֵמֶה	bon ong <sup>e</sup> m <sup>a</sup> h	'from sorrow'
מִיטְזוּלְבוּר בֹּל ווִירְפּ	mitzulbur bol verk	'all in silver'
בֹּן בַּאדוּמ	bon badum	'of a thread'
וּנ' זי לִישׁוּנְ אִין	un' zi lešun in	'and they left him'
וּוּלְפ	volf	'wolf'
בִּיטוּר לִיפּ	biṭur lip	'bitter soul'
דוּן קְרִיעַ	dun kreṣ	'à l'enceinte'

It would actually become standard practice in modern Yiddish orthography to use a non-final פּ to spell word-final /p/ (e.g. קאָפּ *kop* 'head', קאַרפּ *karp* 'carp').<sup>6</sup> However, in no tradition of Hebrew-letter writing have the final forms been used in any position but at the ends of words.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2. Orthographic change: *Matres lectionis* 'mothers of reading'

Although the original Phoenician script was a purely consonantal writing system, by the Punic era (after the fall of Carthage in the second century BCE) several letters were being used to represent vowels in that language. This practice in fact dates as far back as the thirteenth century BCE, when North Canaanites in Ugarit used their letter *yod* in certain limited instances to represent /i/ (Naveh 1982: 183). Even the very earliest inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic show at least some use of a set of letters

<sup>6</sup> The final form is maintained for word-final /f/, e.g. טיף *tif* 'deep', וואָלף *volf* 'wolf'. The equivalent issue does not arise for word-final /k/, since ק *q* is used in all positions.

<sup>7</sup> A French-language handbook for Yiddish speakers (Bibliothèque Médem 15237; see § 3.3 below) contains the only exceptions to this rule that I have yet encountered.

to indicate vowels, usually in final position. These letters became known in the Hebrew grammatical tradition as **אמות קריאה** (ModHeb. *emot kria*), the 'mothers of reading':

**Table 2-4. *Matres lectionis***<sup>8</sup>

Letter	ה	ו	י
Transliteration	<i>h</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>y</i>
Vocalic value	a e	o u	e i

The current distribution of the *matres* in the Biblical Hebrew canon became (relatively) fixed during the first and second centuries CE. In Modern Hebrew, the constant need for innovated spellings of borrowed and newly-coined words has made it conventional in unvocalized writing to represent most non-low vowels with a *mater* (װ for /i/, ן for /u/ and /o/) but to spell /a/ and /e/ only in final position, and almost exclusively with ה *h*.<sup>9</sup> In the intervening millennium and a half, nearly all adaptations of Hebrew script for languages beyond Hebrew have made use to some extent of these vowel-letters – that is to say, *no Hebraicized orthography ever reverted to a purely consonantal system of writing*.

<sup>8</sup> The letter א ׁ, which comes to play a vital role as a vowel letter in adaptations of the script beyond the Hebrew canon, is not included in this table since it was only rarely used as a *mater lectionis* in Hebrew writing of the day.

<sup>9</sup> As a window onto at least one writer's practice, an Israeli guidebook to Paris that I picked up while living in France offers נאר דה־מונפרנס <gar d<sup>e</sup>h-monp<sup>a</sup>rn<sup>s</sup>> *Gare de Montparnasse* but נאר סנט־לאזאר <gar s<sup>e</sup>nt-lazar> *Gare St. Lazare*, along with museums whose names range from a *mater*-less בלזק <b<sup>l</sup>z<sup>a</sup>k> *Balzac* to a fully-vocalized מארמרוטאן <marmotan> *Marmotin*, with דלקרוואה <d<sup>l</sup>k<sup>r</sup>uah> *Delacroix* and קרנבלה <k<sup>a</sup>rn<sup>a</sup>b<sup>a</sup>l<sup>e</sup>h> *Carnavalet* in between. For the treatment of this issue in the Hebrew Language Academy see Weinberg (1985).

### 2.3. Phonological change: spirantization (*begad-kefat*)

A different kind of change affected the Hebrew language more broadly through the Second Temple period (second half of the first millennium BCE). Six of its consonant phonemes, namely the non-emphatic stops, developed fricative allophones in postvocalic environments; the immediate effect in relation to the written language was that the corresponding graphemes now had two realizations:

**Table 2-5. *Begad-kefat* letters**

Letter	ב	ג	ד	כ	פ	ת
Stop	b	g	d	k	p	t
Spirant	v	ɣ	ð	x	f	θ

This phonological change (also referred to in Hebrew grammar using the acronym formed by the implicated letters, *begad-kefat*) did not affect the contemporary writing system per se.<sup>10</sup> It was, however, to have a major impact on post-native traditions of Hebrew pronunciation and, of course, on later adaptations of the script.

### 2.4. More graphical change: *niqqud* 'pointing'

Although Hebrew continued to serve Jews as a vernacular in the period following the sixth-century BCE Babylonian exile, it ceased to be learned as a native language by ca. 250 CE and, in a manner of speaking, "died out." Yet it

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<sup>10</sup> Nor should it have been expected to. Written English is notorious among standardized orthographies for not reflecting phonological change, be it flapping, voicing assimilation, velar softening, etc. In fact, a more apt comparison would be a subset of spirantization as it applies to <b>, <d>, and <g> in Modern Spanish orthography. Earlier in history, of course, changes of this kind in Latin phonology did come to be reflected in the very spellings that distinguish some Spanish words containing <b>, <d>, or <g> from their Latin etyma (e.g. VITA vs. *vida*).

very much persisted as a second or non-native language in virtually all Jewish communities, where it continued to be read and recited in the sacred texts, a practice that endures right up to the present.<sup>11</sup> As an inevitable result, however, its pronunciation among different communities became influenced by the vernacular(s) of those communities. Since the orthography of the sacred texts did not indicate all of the phonological details required for them to be pronounced correctly (that is to say, as they were presumed to have been in Biblical times), several communities were compelled to devise systems of diacritics that could be added for this purpose – without altering any of the existing text, which was prohibited. Of the three known systems, only the ninth-century *Tiberian* system remains in widespread use, and is detailed below.<sup>12</sup>

#### 2.4.1. Full Vocalization<sup>13</sup>

Given its origins as a consonantal Semitic script, the most important innovation of the Tiberian system was to institute a complex set of diacritics (mostly dots and dashes) to indicate various vowel distinctions. They are given below based on their usual phonetic realization in Modern Israeli Hebrew (מ serves here as the consonant required to bear the *niqqud*):

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<sup>11</sup> The only exception to this rule is Ethiopian Jewry, where Ge'ez was used for liturgical purposes (G. Rendsburg, p.c.).

<sup>12</sup> Along with the linguistically-instructive diacritics described below, the Tiberians devised an even more complex system of signs to indicate the stress and musical motif associated with individual words in the recitation of canonical texts. These signs, however, have never been deployed in any adaptation of the script (or even in non-canonical Hebrew texts), since they serve no orthographical or strictly linguistic purpose, and so are not discussed here.

<sup>13</sup> Strictly speaking, this term can refer to any orthographic method of indicating vowel phonemes, in this case either using diacritics or writing vowel letters. Nevertheless, since there is no mature Hebraicized writing system that does *not* make use of vowel letters, I will use it with specific reference to "pointing," i.e. vowels indicated with *niqqud*.

**Table 2-6. Tiberian vocalization used in Hebraicization**

	a	e	i	o	u	ə/∅ <sup>14</sup>
supra-linear				וּ		
intra-linear				וּו <sup>15</sup>	וּוּ	
sub-linear	וּ וּ וּ	וּ וּ וּ	וּ		וּ וּ	וּ

This system, which was rigorously preserved in canonical Hebrew texts and is still fully deployed in liturgical, poetical, and pedagogical writing, was also adopted to varying degrees by writers who adapted Hebrew script to write other languages. It tended to be used most consistently in writing associated with a religious context: biblical glosses, ritual prescriptions, etc. In the one present-day Hebraicized orthography, Modern Yiddish, only a small set of the diacritics is used in lexical items of non-Hebrew origin: װ and ױ denote /a/ and /o/ respectively, while וּ and וּ occur occasionally to denote /u/ and /i/ respectively.<sup>16</sup> Combinations of unpointed *matres lectionis* serve to spell the rest of the vowels in most Hebraicized orthographies.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In Modern Hebrew the "null" value of this vowel indicates that the consonant is either syllable-final or part of an onset cluster.

<sup>15</sup> The וּ that follows the consonant is in practice obligatory for the intra-linear vowels; in fact, only the vowels borne by וּ may appear graphically in word-final position, with other word-final vowels followed by a "supporting" װ, ױ, or וּ (if none was already present for an historical /ʔ/, /h/ or /y/).

<sup>16</sup> In fact the וּ grapheme competes with װ, which is preferred in some Yiddish traditions because it avoids three consecutive *vavs* in the spelling of a /vu/ syllable, e.g. װוּוּ 'where'.

<sup>17</sup> Yiddish remains the one innovator in the respect, having graphemicized װ, historically a voiced pharyngeal fricative but often equivalent to װ (as [ʔ] or ∅) in the pronunciation of medieval European Jews (and in Modern Hebrew), as the letter representing /e/ in non-Hebrew words. It does, however, compete in early writing with וּ, and continues to alternate in the practice of some writers with (װ)ױ.

There remains some debate amongst scholars as to the exact phonetic values indicated by the Tiberian vocalization system. What is most important to note here is that this system, too, evolved amongst communities using different vernacular languages, so that the values associated with each of the signs varied as well. When it came time to apply Tiberian pointing to spelling the vowels of a language other than Hebrew, this variation played a large role, as the examples in section 3 below will illustrate.

#### 2.4.2. *Sub-phonemics: consonant allophony*

While the vowel diacritics served in many cases to disambiguate the pronunciation of certain homographs by providing phonemic information, there was another pair of diacritics devised to indicate the wholly predictable stop/spirant distinctions. In fact, rather than instituting only one sign to indicate one of the allophones, the Tiberians adopted a unique diacritic for each variant:

**Table 2-7. *dagesh* 'emphasis' = stop<sup>18</sup>**

בּ	גּ	דּ	כּ	פּ	תּ
b	g	d	k	p	t

**Table 2-8. *rafeh* 'weakness' = spirant**

בַּ	גַּ	דַּ	כַּ	פַּ	תַּ
v	ɣ	ð	x	f	θ

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<sup>18</sup> The *dagesh* is also used with most other consonants to indicate gemination, be it lexical or grammatically derived.

Note that although the occurrence of stop-versus-spirant is predictable in Hebrew words, it may not be so when these letters serve to spell the consonant phonemes of other languages. Once again, however, the extent to which these diacritics are deployed in adaptations of Hebrew script varies. In Yiddish writing, for example, some writers use the *rafeh* to indicate the spirant, while others follow the Hebrew system, leaving the spirants bare and marking the stops with a *dagesh*.<sup>19</sup> And just to make life easier, some writers dispense with indicating the distinction altogether. Moreover, the *dagesh* is on rare occasion used in Hebraicized writing to indicate the non-stop variant, e.g. JPg. לְבַרְאן *l<sup>a</sup>b:<sup>a</sup>ran* '(will) wash' (ModPg. *lavaram*) in the Bodleian Passover text (chapter 6 § 2) – in essence (if not an outright error), serving to indicate simply that the letter is not to be assigned its default stop value.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.5. Cursive scripts

The basic form of the modern Hebrew script is usually referred to (in English) as "square" Hebrew, reflecting the fact that it developed, as noted above, from an official Aramaic book-hand. Although its form has varied slightly among the many scribal traditions of post-Biblical Hebrew, it has remained remarkably consistent and recognizable over the centuries. Nevertheless, there have been several cursive scripts based on the book-hand that developed in various periods and places, two of which retain a modern use.

<sup>19</sup> The *Forverts* newspaper, the only Yiddish-language weekly still published in America, uses both strategies and only leaves the relevant letters bare in Hebrew words

<sup>20</sup> The *rafeh* is also on occasion used against its prescribed value to indicate a stop, e.g. פֿיליָאַרָא <filyara> and פֿילאַאַרָא <filaara> 'will take' (ModPg. *pilhara*), both of which occur on the same folio of the Brotherton Passover text (see chapter 6 § 3). The use of *rafeh* in this text in fact seems to be rather indiscriminate, occurring on many a ך *d* as well as ך ם *ʔ* and ך ה *h* in the Portuguese passages.

Originally devised in Italy, the most widespread of the medieval cursive scripts is a Sephardic one that came to be known as *Rashi* script, named for the renowned twelfth-century French Biblical exegete. Although there is no evidence that Rashi himself used the script, it has been used consistently to print his commentaries, which traditionally have been included in most printed Hebrew editions of the Bible and the Talmud.

**Table 2-9. Sephardic "Rashi" cursive**

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
									ך	ם	ן				ץ	י					
ʰ	b	g	d	h	w	z	ħ	ṭ	y	k	l	m	n	s	ˢ	p	ʂ	q	r	ʂ/ś	t

The other major cursive script is a derivative of an Ashkenazi cursive, which began to evolve in Central and Eastern Europe in the sixteenth or seventeenth century. This is the script that remains in use as the normal longhand for writing Modern Hebrew (shown here with Modern Israeli Hebrew phonetic values):

**Table 2-10. Ashkenazic cursive**

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
									ך	ם	ן				ץ	י					
ʰ	b	g	d	h	v	z	x	t	y	k	l	m	n	s	ʰ	p	ts	k	r	ʃ	t
∅	v								x					∅	f					s	

Of the two, only the former Italian-derived cursive would find extensive use (from an early date) in texts written in languages other than Hebrew; in fact it

was maintained as the preferred typeface for printed Judeo-Spanish<sup>21</sup> until the re-Romanization of its writing system in the twentieth century.

These, then, are the historical variations that influenced Hebrew writing, and consequently informed the nature of Hebraicization and the many ways in which Hebrew script was adapted to write material in languages beyond Hebrew. The next section presents a survey of most of the linguistic contexts in which the letters of the Hebrew alphabet served to write other Jewish vernaculars.

### 3. THE ADAPTATIONS

In his survey of Hebraicization through the years, Wellisch (1978) organizes his discussion by focusing on (1) Hebrew in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora, (2) Yiddish, and (3) Ladino (Judeo-Spanish). In a sub-section on "Hebraification<sup>22</sup> of other languages," he includes the following:

- Judeo-Arabic
- Judeo-Persian
- Judeo-French
- Judeo-Provençal
- Judeo-Italian
- Judeo-Greek
- Judeo-Tat
- Karaite Turkic

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<sup>21</sup> Judeo-Spanish writers further developed a distinctive longhand known as *solitreo*, which is still in use among some Turkish Jews (Varol 1998).

<sup>22</sup> I have chosen the term *Hebraicization* rather than Wellisch's *Hebraification* because, based on its etymological components (the verbal suffix *-ify*, ultimately derived from Latin *FACERE* 'make'), the latter implies that the language written in Hebrew script has been "made Hebrew" in some aspect beyond the letters of its alphabet. And as argued in the previous chapter, this risks a serious misconception of the process involved in adapting the script.

Based on my own research into languages that have been written using Hebrew script, this is a curiously incomplete cast of characters. Although he makes no claim to comprehensiveness, Wellisch does omit at least three attested traditions: Judeo-Portuguese (the subject of this study), Judeo-Catalan (attested by a small number of medieval texts; see Wexler 1989), and Aramaic. The omission of this last one is especially noteworthy, since Jewish Aramaic represents not only the earliest adaptation of "the Jewish script" to a language other than Hebrew – that is, as a re-adaptation of Aramaic script using the conventions instituted to write Hebrew – but also one of the few Hebraicized traditions whose texts continue to serve an active role in Jewish communities<sup>23</sup> (primarily liturgical). Wellisch's hierarchy also places Judeo-Arabic as merely one among the minor "other" languages, even though it probably represents the most expansive pre-Yiddish Hebraicization in terms of sheer volume of writing.

More significant from a linguistic perspective, however, is that in his grouping of three traditions separate from the rest, Wellisch ignores an important distinction that he himself takes pain to emphasize throughout his book, and one to which I have sought to adhere. He conflates the very different natures of the two basic environments discussed in chapter 1 in which linguistic material may be adapted to fit the characters of a given script:

- a. loanwords (cf. chapter 1 § 3.1) or ad-hoc nativizations (cf. chapter 1 § 3.2) within a given matrix
- b. stand-alone adaptations (cf. chapter 1 § 3.3, 3.4) that yield a new writing system, what Wellisch calls the "conversion" of scripts

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<sup>23</sup> In addition, there remains a modern Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialect spoken among Jews from Kurdistan (see § 3.1.1 below).

In the context of Hebraicization these can each be elaborated further:

- a'. *transcription*, where the goal is to represent the spoken form of items from languages other than Hebrew using conventions of Hebrew orthography
- b'. *transliteration*, where the goal is to adapt the (conventional) values of Hebrew letters for use as orthographic system in writing a language other than Hebrew

Since my goal has been to focus on wholesale adaptations of the second kind, I have largely ignored transcriptions of type (a) within particular traditions, unless they serve the goal of illustrating aspects of a particular Hebraicization, or in cases where the only Hebraicized material I have found is embedded within the matrix of a Hebrew- or Yiddish-language study. Items of type (a) can in fact be found in throughout modern printed literature: in the press, tourist guidebooks, language-learning materials, etc. Hence they are more usefully studied in relation to Modern Hebrew or Yiddish writing per se, rather than as illustrations of Hebraicization. Nevertheless, some instances of type (a) may be mentioned to illustrate particular points in specific traditions.

### **3.1. Semitic**

#### *3.1.1. Aramaic*

During the last half of the first millennium BCE and during the first few centuries CE, Aramaic emerged as a lingua franca in the Near East. It was, for example, one of the four official languages of the Achaemenid Empire of ancient Persia (539-333 BCE), along with Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian. The Jews were not immune to this development, and over the course of time more and more Jews began to use Aramaic – first in Babylonia and other

eastern communities, and eventually in the land of Israel as well. This development resulted eventually in Hebrew dying out as a native, spoken language ca. 300 CE.

While Hebrew continued to be used for liturgical purposes, Aramaic was its rival even in this arena. For example, during the post-biblical period, various prayers were composed in Aramaic, translations into Aramaic of the various biblical books (known as *Targumin*) were produced, and most importantly large chunks of the two *Talmudim* (the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud) were written in Aramaic. In all of these instances, Aramaic was written in the Jewish, i.e. "Hebrew," script. With the decline of Jewish population centers in the Middle East through the second millennium it too declined in use, though spoken dialects (Jewish and non-Jewish) have survived.<sup>24</sup>

The first – though not, chronologically speaking, earliest – appearance of Aramaic in the Jewish literary canon occurs in chapter 31 of the book of Genesis (31: 47), where Laban is said to use an Aramaic name for what Jacob calls גלעד *gal'ed*:

- (1) וַיִּקְרָא לוֹ לָבָן יָגָר שְׂהַדוּתָא  
wayiqərā' lō lābān yəgar sāhadūtā  
'Laban called it **Jegar Sahadutha**'

---

<sup>24</sup> Rather than the decline of Jewish communities in the Middle East, what more specifically led to the decline of Aramaic was the replacement of Aramaic (in some cases rapid, in other cases gradual) by Arabic after the Muslim conquest of 630-640 CE. This left only the Jews of Kurdistan speaking Aramaic into the twentieth century, and now that all of them have moved (mainly to Israel, some to the U.S.), it is doubtful that any Jews will speak Aramaic as a native language within another generation or so (it continues, however, to be used among various Christian communities throughout the Middle East, most prominently in Kurdistan, and by Mandeans in Iraq and Iran).

These words probably represent the first deliberate representation of non-Hebrew items in the Old Testament. As a closely-related Semitic language, the biblical writers (or codifiers/scribes, at any rate) appear to have had little difficulty in adapting the conventions of Hebrew orthography – itself based on an adaptation of Aramaic script – to Aramaic language. In fact, the ninth-century Tiberian Masoretes, whose orthography constitutes canonical Hebrew spelling, made no special provisions to distinguish material in Aramaic from Hebrew, treating their writing systems as one and the same. Thus canonical Jewish Aramaic writing is, in a strictly graphical sense, identical to Hebrew, in that the inventory of letters and diacritics, and their grapho-tactic deployment, are one and the same. This is further illustrated in the example below, the opening line from the *kaddish* (Aramaic קדיש *qad:īš* 'holy'), part of the daily synagogue prayers (first mentioned in the sixth century CE but composed, or perhaps compiled, earlier):

- (2) יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא  
 yitgad:al vəyitqad:as šəməh rab:a  
 'May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified'

In this sample, Judeo-Aramaic presents some orthographic patterns not commonly found in Hebrew spelling, such as the ה<sup>h</sup> in the word for 'name'. Nevertheless, the Masoretes' orthography allowed for such "extensions" of the system, and as such they set the precedent for the flexibility of canonical Hebrew spelling to be adapted to less easily-integrated items.



the cognate letters of Arabic script, *alif*,  $\text{ا}$  *wāw*, and  $\text{و}$  *yāʾ*, occurring only to spell phonemically long vowels. In addition, to spell sounds that are entirely unknown in Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic mimics the use of the superscribed diacritic in Arabic script that modifies the reading of certain letters, placing a similar dot over the cognate Hebrew letters (in the example above  $\text{ד}$  *d* and  $\text{ש}$  *š*, in imitation of  $\text{د}$  *dāl* and  $\text{ش}$  *šād* respectively) – even if the normal Hebrew realization of the unaugmented letter differs from that in (classical) Arabic.

More modern Judeo-Arabic writing, though reduced in scope, shows the same characteristics, such as the following excerpt from a modern folk-tale used in a Judeo-Arabic course I attended in France:

- (4) **מעשה פי ואחד חסיד אלדי כאן יצללי פי אלטריק**  
**m<sup>c</sup>šh** fy w<sup>h</sup>hd ḥsyd <sup>ʾ</sup>ldy k<sup>ʾ</sup>n yšlly fy <sup>ʾ</sup>ltryq  
 '(a) **tale** of one **righteous man** who was praying'

The words in bold are Hebrew-language items borrowed wholesale into the text: the first is a term introducing a story, which is used this way in Hebrew and other Jewish language traditions, while the second is the name used originally (in Rabbinic literature) to refer to an individual who maintains a higher standard of moral and religious observance. As is conventional in Hebraicized orthographies, both Hebrew words appear with no alteration, even though their pronunciation or cognate forms in Arabic might demand otherwise.

*Interlude: Judeo-Arabo-Spanish*

As a transition to the next most important language family for which the Hebrew script has been adapted, below are selections from a fifteenth-century Arabic-Spanish glossary (Sheynin 1982):.

**Table 2-11. *Hebraicized Arabic-Spanish glossary***

גִּרְבַּנְסִים	אלחומץ		וֵיבֵס	אלביץ	
g <sup>i</sup> rb <sup>a</sup> ns <sup>a</sup> s	alhums	'chick pea'	web <sup>a</sup> s	albeṣ	'egg(s)'
מְנִסָּאָה	אלתפאח		אָוָה	אלמא	
m <sup>i</sup> nsan <sup>a</sup> h	altpah	'apple'	aw <sup>a</sup> h	alma	'water'
לְתִשָּׁה	אללבן		בְּאֵרוֹ	אלכלב	
l <sup>t</sup> s <sup>e</sup> h	all <sup>a</sup> bn	'milk'	beru	alk <sup>a</sup> lb	'dog'
כְּבִיסָה	אלראס		אֵוֵרוֹ	אלדהב	
k <sup>a</sup> bes <sup>a</sup> h	alras	'head'	uru	ald <sup>a</sup> hb	'gold'
אָגוֹ	אלתום		אֵוֵמְרִי	אלרגל	
aḡu	altum	'garlic'	umre	alr <sup>a</sup> gl	'man'

That this is the work of a Jewish arabophone (perhaps providing a glossary to a colleague for travel to a Spanish-speaking region) is evidenced by the fact that the Arabic terms are presented unpointed and with only long vowels overtly spelled, suggesting the conventionality of this orthography to the reader. By contrast, the Spanish glosses have "helpful" pronunciation hints indicated by some often inaccurate *niqqud*. The use of ב *b* rather than פ *p* in *beru* is further evidence of an Arabic matrix (which lacks /p/), as is the use of ו *w* rather than ג *g* to spell something approximating [ɣ] in *awah*. For its part, the *dagesh* in the initial ג of *girbansas* would appear to be entirely unnecessary, given that an initial /g/ in Spanish is unlikely to be realized differently, unless one considers that standard Arabic has no /g/: the unadorned cognate Arabic letter  $\text{ح}$  *ḥā* normally represents the pharyngeal /ħ/, while the affricate /dʒ/ is

represented by ם  $\check{g}\bar{m}$ , that is, the same grapheme with an intralinear diacritic. In a similar fashion, the diacritic superscribed on the ם in  $a\check{g}u$  is likely an imitation of the Arabic spelling of /x/ with ם  $h\bar{a}$ ?

## 3.2. Romance

### 3.2.1. Spanish

As noted in the previous chapter, *Al-Andalus* (Islamic Spain) offers a rarely-witnessed graphical melting pot: the writing system of one religious group (Jews) could serve to write the three languages (Hebrew, Arabic, and Romance) used by that group, while these three scripts could each be used by members of the three religious communities to write the varieties of single language (Ibero-Romance). After their expulsion from Spain in 1492, Romance-speaking Jewish communities flourished in Italy, the Balkans, and the Ottoman Empire, where Hebrew publishing also thrived from the middle of the sixteenth century until the First World War. Smaller communities (with correspondingly smaller written/printed outputs) could also be found in Northern Europe, as well as in several Spanish and Portuguese overseas colonies, including those in the New World (Levi 2002).

The earliest examples of Romance-language writing in Hebrew script occur in Andalusian *muwaššahat* – poems written in Arabic or Hebrew with final couplets (known as *haraġat*) that were written in colloquial Arabic or Romance, such as the following twelfth-century excerpts from the poems of Yehuda ha-Levi, the Toledo native who also wrote the *Book of the Kuzari* (see § 3.1.2; the translations below follow Stern 1974, though the Romanizations are my own):

(5) a.

דש כנר מו סדילה בניד / תן בונה אלבשאה  
כם ראייה דשול אשיר / אן ואד אלחנארה

d<sup>ɛ</sup>s k<sup>ɑ</sup>nd<sup>o</sup> m<sup>ɛ</sup>u ɕ<sup>i</sup>dell<sup>o</sup>h b<sup>ɛ</sup>nid / t<sup>ɑ</sup>n bon<sup>ɑ</sup>h  
alb<sup>i</sup>ʂ ar<sup>ɑ</sup>h  
k<sup>o</sup>m<sup>o</sup> ray<sup>o</sup>h d<sup>ɛ</sup>sol esid / en wad alħ<sup>i</sup>gar<sup>ɑ</sup>h

'As soon as Cidello comes, such good news  
He appears like a ray of sunshine in  
Guadalajara'

b.

באן סירי באן / אלקרדאש תנתבאן  
דשת אלזמאן / בן פליו דבן אלדיאן

ben ɕidi ben / elk<sup>ɛ</sup>r<sup>i</sup>d<sup>o</sup>es t<sup>ɑ</sup>nt<sup>ɑ</sup>ben<sup>i</sup>  
d<sup>ɛ</sup>st<sup>ɛ</sup> alz<sup>ɑ</sup>men<sup>i</sup> / b<sup>ɛ</sup>n f<sup>ɪ</sup>lio d<sup>ɛ</sup>b<sup>ɛ</sup>n ald<sup>ɑ</sup>yen<sup>i</sup>

'Come, my lord, come. Beloved, why do you  
absent yourself so long?  
Straightaway, come, O son of Aben al-  
Dayyeni'

It is rather surprising to learn that until Samuel Stern published his editions of some of these poems and their vernacular couplets in 1948, it was not known that these otherwise indecipherable lines of poetry were written in a Romance language – and on orthographic grounds it is not difficult to see why, given the combined effect of idiosyncratic word division (רשול <dʂwl> *de.sol*, תנתבאן <tntb<sup>ɔ</sup>n> *tanta.ben*) and few overt vowels (e.g. כם <km> *komo*, כנר <knd> *kuando*), not to mention those that differ from their conventional usage in later Hebraicizations (e.g. באן <b<sup>ɔ</sup>n> *ben*, ראייה <r<sup>ɔ</sup>yh> *rayo*). In most respects, in fact, these early attempts to adapt Hebrew script to a Romance language remain very much tied to the graphic conventions of Hebrew writing itself, which would become less and less prominent as the system matured over the next several centuries (Minervini 1999). By the time printed texts begin to appear in the Sephardic diaspora of the sixteenth century, a full-fledged orthography has emerged, as shown in the following opening lines of the book of Deuteronomy from the 1547 Constantinople Bible (Recuero 1988):



comprising the Judeo-French vocabulary... are unknown in normal Old French texts." The following is a selection from Darmsteter (1907):

**Table 2-12. Selected Rashi glosses**

*Pointed:*

אֹרְיִנָּא	ovr <sup>a</sup> ynə	'(large) works'
אֲנִנְדְרִיר	any <sup>a</sup> ndrer	'give birth'
וּוֹשְׁטְרֵקְבֵיץ	vostr <sup>o</sup> č <sup>o</sup> bēs	'your chiefs'
אֵאֲנִבְרָצִית	eənbraʒit	'and was seized'
הֵרְבִירֵיִרְיָאָה	herbery <sup>o</sup> riəh	'he will remain by me'

*Unpointed:*

יִימֵנֵט	yuyym <sup>a</sup> nt	'verdict'
שׁוּהֵיִדְמֵנֵט	soheyd <sup>e</sup> m <sup>a</sup> nt	'wish'
קֵאֲנִדִּילִשְׂאֵרִינֵעַ	kandilsarine	'when they strayed'

Most of these glosses appear in multiple forms (with and without *niqqud*) across the numerous manuscripts of Rashi's commentaries – none of which are in Rashi's own hand. Those that are vocalized are very often "overpointed," i.e. the *niqqud* precedes a *mater lectionis* and so is not strictly necessary (some instances of *rafeh* and *dagesh* seem similarly superfluous). Curiously, though, despite the fact that ם and ם are generally used as full-fledged vowel letters for various non-low vowels, when /a/ is indicated it is usually spelled only with diacritics, rather than with ם, which more frequently serves as final /ə/ (often with the corresponding *niqqud* below it). The glosses do show some orthographic innovations, such as rendering the affricates [tʃ] and [tʃ] with (ם)ם and ף-plus-hacek respectively, as well as the occasional adoption of ם<sup>c</sup> as a vowel letter and the use of double-*vav* to indicate the consonantal realization of ם *w* as [v]. Other patterns, however, are typical of

early (Romance) adaptations of the script in their imitation of Hebrew-language writing, such as the use of ת *t* and ה *h*, along with the less-than-consistent word division.

A more extended sample of Hebrew-letter French writing from somewhat later reveals, among other increased consistency, a more balanced use of vowel letters and diacritics, as in the following example of thirteenth-century para-liturgical poetry (Blondheim 1926):

- (7) לֹשׁ אַנְפִּנֶן שִׁי אֶקְרִישׁ קוּמָא אִיטִילֶשׁ דּוּ צִיִּיל פְּלוֹשׁ נָא שְׂיִינֶט מַאל מִנִּין  
Lus an<sup>a</sup>nʃ si akresə kome eteləs do ʃiel plus nə səy<sup>a</sup>nt mal m<sup>3</sup>neʃ  
'Your offspring will grow like the stars in the sky [and] no longer be troubled.'

Although the writer here does make some use of diacritics on final-position consonants to indicate an open syllable, the use of **ʃ** <sup>3</sup> for low vowels, as well as to bear the diacritic for non-low initial vowels, has clearly become conventional.

### 3.2.2.1. Language-learning handbooks

In addition to considering how Jewish writers through the ages have deployed the Hebrew alphabet in the service of texts aimed at a presumably experienced reading audience, the French context offers the opportunity to examine how more recent adaptations of Hebrew as a matrix script have served the purposes of those for whom the target language is new. This context, most typically that of language-learning materials, is a pedagogical one where the adaptation process has been performed by the writer in a very explicit and deliberate way. Based on my brief research into this locus of script adaptation, the phenomenon runs the gamut from transcriptions intended as

"purely phonetic" (that is with no conventional matrix orthography serving as a conditioning element) to others that are more dependent on the conventions of an established matrix orthography – not unlike what we would expect to find in a range of, for example, Hebrew-language handbooks produced for readers of different Roman-letter languages. For the present purposes, I offer samples of two early twentieth-century manuals targeted at Jewish learners of French.

The first one, published in Constantine (Algeria) in 1908, is entitled *מעטהאָדע דער פראנצעזיש אָהנע לעהרער צו שפרעכען* (*Met<sup>h</sup>ode der frantseziš o<sup>h</sup>ne le<sup>h</sup>rer tsu šprexen*, 'A Teacher-less System to Speak French', currently held at the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris). As a subtitle not included on the Hebrew-letter side indicates, it is intended "à l'usage des israélites allemands, autrichiens, hongrois, roumains, russes" [for the use of German, Austrian, Hungarian, Romanian, and Russian Jews]. What distinguishes this handbook is that its matrix is not Yiddish but German, which is made clear through (1) lexical, (2) phonological, and (3) orthographic features in its title: (1) the use of the verb *šprexen* 'speak' rather than Yiddish רעדן *redn*; (2) the /e/ vowel in *frantseziš* 'French', where the diphthong /oj/ would be expected, along with the final vowels, deleted in Yiddish, of *met<sup>h</sup>ode* and *o<sup>h</sup>ne*; (3) the use of silent ה *h*, which was introduced into Yiddish orthography in the eighteenth century in imitation of New High German writing but fell out of general usage soon thereafter (Kerler 1999: 151).

As a writing system, the transcription used to convey French pronunciation in a pedagogically functional way bears little resemblance to any Hebrew-letter orthography then in use. Not that it necessarily should, since an introductory guide to spoken French is not the venue for an

orthography proper. Still, the writer seems to have relied very little on any of the conventions that Hebrew or Yiddish orthography had developed (assuming, quite safely, that he was familiar with one or both of them), let alone does his system reflect anything of the medieval tradition of Hebraicized French writing.

This apparent lack of conventionality is most clearly illustrated in the system of vowel transcription. Modern French does present a challenge to the humble set of four *matres lectionis*, with at least a dozen vowel phonemes, including several that are nasalized. Eschewing the lexical/etymological information contained in the Roman-letter spelling of French, however, the writer of the *Met<sup>h</sup>ode* sought to give every phonologically unique vowel its own graphic form, without resorting to the importation of a non-Hebraic diacritic, nor to aping the etymological Roman-letter convention of a following *n* to indicate nasalized vowels.<sup>25</sup> The result is a bevy of homographs (words in parentheses are not given in the manual itself):

**Table 2-13. Hebraicized French homographs**

אָ	ã	<i>an, on, en</i>	'year, we/one, in'
אָד	dã	<i>dans, dent, (don)</i>	'in, tooth, (gift)'
אָדאָ	sã	<i>son, cent, (sang)</i>	'his/her, hundred, (blood)'
אָנאָ	nø/no	<i>ne, nos</i>	'not, our'
אָר	lœr/lœr	<i>leur, l'heure, l'or</i>	'their, the hour, the gold'
אָפּ	pø/po	<i>peu, peut, peau, pot</i>	'few, can (v.), skin, pot'

<sup>25</sup> Modern Hebrew and Modern Yiddish transcriptions of French words certainly do ape the Roman-letter convention in this respect. The choice of אָ as an all-purpose nasal vowel (see table 2-14) may seem odd to readers familiar with these modern orthographies. Yet it may be less than arbitrary, given that both Morag (1971) and Ornan (1971) note that some Dutch and Italian communities may realize אָ as [ɲ] in their traditional Hebrew pronunciation, a phenomenon that also surfaces in forms such as the name of the twentieth-century Yiddish poet יעקב גלאטשטיין *Yankev Glatshteyn* ('Jacob Glatstein').

Given the conventions of earlier Judeo-Romance writing, this orthography presents several grapho-tactic problems. For instance, using a single vocalized letter to represent a non-bound morpheme (i.e. a word) is unprecedented in my experience of Hebraicized writing systems. Furthermore, the placement of the *niqqud* is inconsistent: the rhyming pair *nos/pot*, for example, has the *qames* indicating /o/ under the first or second letter, making it unclear just which digraph stands for the vowel phoneme.

The second French learner's handbook, *ייד אין פראנקרייך yid in frankrayx* '[A] Jew in France' (Bibliothèque Médem ms. 15237) has a more clearly-targeted Yiddish-reading audience, and the transcription used here yields forms that at least superficially resemble Yiddish words in their graphic structure. Still, several features do set its adaptation of Hebrew script apart. First and foremost, this manual is the only Hebraicized text of any kind I have yet encountered where the final form of a Hebrew letter may be followed by another letter, in this case, where *nun* is followed by *yud* to indicate a word-final /ן/:

- (8)
- |          |                |          |
|----------|----------------|----------|
| סינײ     | <i>signe</i>   | 'sign'   |
| פענײ     | <i>peigne</i>  | 'comb'   |
| פאָלאַנײ | <i>pologne</i> | 'Poland' |

The unconventionality of this spelling could be construed as a largely cosmetic issue, since the ןי <ny> digraph does have firm precedent in earlier Judeo-Romance writing. Still, it is surprising to find a writer who would flout a grapho-tactic convention of Hebrew script so basic and consistently-practiced,

particularly in longer phrases where the not-quite-final form occurs within a single phonological unit:

- (9) קאָם דאָן זען זשאַרדאַן מירוועיה  
*comme dans un jardin merveilleux*  
 'as in a wonderful garden'

In this case, the writer has used the final-form ך in what appears on paper as a single word but which is actually composed of two, with the "real" final consonant of the first word (spelled <s> in Roman script and normally silent, but surfacing as [z] in *liaison* before a vowel) resyllabified as the onset of the second word. Note that in both (8) and (9), the writer still adds a diacritic to the final-form *nun* as if to acknowledge his unconventional usage (using a single device to indicate the palatal quality and syllable boundary, where it nonetheless retains an aura of finalness).

The writer of this handbook does divulge his technique for rendering at least some of the French vowels in Hebrew script. Yet unlike the writer of the *Met<sup>h</sup>ode* above, he bases it firmly on orthographic grounds, i.e. a mapping of Roman to Hebrew graphs:

**Table 2-14. Vowel transliteration**

é	è	ê	ai
עה	ע	עע	אָ

This system instills its own confusion, replacing the three-letter imperfect inflection *-ais*, for example, with a singled pointed אָ, while rendering the ubiquitous <é> with a digraph. Rather than a profusion of homographs, then,

the result is unique spellings for a number of homophones such as the following, which attempt to mimic the etymologically-based Roman-letter spellings:

- (10) עהטא *étais* 'was'  
עהטהע *été* 'been'

As a final observation, it is interesting that the writer provides some reasonably accurate transcriptions for some very literary verb forms, which are unlikely to come up in casual conversation, let alone the brief exchanges sustained by a language learner:

- (11) איל-זאיר טאי *ils eurent eu* (past anterior)  
קאיל זאיסס *qu'ils eussent* (imperfect subjunctive)

The words are divided graphically to highlight syllabic units (*liaison* serving the French preference for an onset "at all costs"), but in keeping with the "orthographic analogy" position of this transcriber, apostrophes are added to indicate the morpheme boundaries that may be obscured in speech by *liaison* or by contraction (only one of which, 'ק, corresponds to Roman-letter usage). Also worth noting is the use of doubled letters in imitation of the Roman-letter orthography, even though the principle of the doubled the Roman letter (<ss> ≠ [z]) is carried by the normal reading of the single Hebrew letter – not to mention the rarity of doubled letters in Hebrew-language writing.

### 3.2.2.2. Bilingual dictionaries

A more modern example of a pedagogically-motivated adaptation of Hebrew script for French pays strange heed to the conventions of the target and matrix orthographies. The French half of a 1971 pocket dictionary (printed in Tel Aviv) provides a transcription in which, at first blush, phonetics generally trumps phonemics or morphemics: a single <s> is always † z, /s/ is always ֶ, silent consonants disappear, no graphic distinction is made in Hebrew script for final <é> vs. <er>, etc. There is nonetheless an odd combination of flouting, upholding, and elaborating the available conventions, illustrated by the entries below:<sup>26</sup>

**Table 2-15. Hebrew-French dictionary entries**

הַ	<sup>h</sup> e	<i>haie</i>	'hedge'
הוֹפֶּ	<sup>h</sup> o-fe	<i>haut-fait</i>	'act of bravery'
אֹנֹר	on:œr	<i>honneur</i>	'honour'
הִסֵּ	<sup>h</sup> is:e	<i>hisser</i>	'hoist'
הוֹאֵ	<sup>h</sup> uoyo	<i>hoyau</i>	'hoe'
יְיִטִּיֶּמ	<sup>y</sup> uityem	<i>huitième</i>	'eighth'
אֲנֹבֶּל	œ <sup>n</sup> bl	<i>humble</i>	'humble'
אִנְטֵנְדִּי	inatā <sup>n</sup> d <sup>y</sup> u	<i>inattendu</i>	'unexpected'

The first striking feature of this system is the imported *tréma* (dieresis), in this case over ֶ, which, although rare in adaptations of the script, is not very distant graphically from the supralinear left-edged ֶ in Tiberian *niqqud* that indicates /o/ (cf. chapter 8 § 2.4). As the all-too-brief guide at the front of the

<sup>26</sup> My Romanizations in the second column are meant as quasi-phonetic transcriptions. The superscripts refer to Hebrew consonants that do not strictly contribute to indicating the pronunciation of the word, but that may be present because of their analogues in the Roman-letter spelling, or else to serve a diacritic function, or in order to satisfy a convention of Hebrew grapho-tactics. Each of these is discussed below.

dictionary states, it is used here to indicate a sound "like *ö* in German." Oddly, however, to indicate the high front rounded vowel that is also spelled with a dieresis in German, this system employs a digraph יי that, while logical from a linguistic point of view (י *y* as a diacritic for "front" on high back rounded ו [u]), may be liable to misinterpretation by the average Hebrew reader.

The only other direction the transcriber gives about his technique is in relation to the spelling of nasal vowels: אֵ is אֵת הַלָּשׁוֹן *ot ha-lašon* 'the tongue sign', i.e. consonantal [n], while final ן or ן *sans niqqud* is אֵת הָאֵף *ot ha-ʿaf* 'the nose sign', i.e. the equivalent of a single post-vocalic <n> or <m> in Roman-letter French. The *dagesh* is also put to somewhat novel use, as an indicator of orthographic doubling in the Roman-letter spelling (except for <ll> /ʎ/, which is usually not rendered by any ל at all). Other graphic conventions of Hebrew are simply flouted: *niqqud* on final letters,<sup>27</sup> non-final forms in final position (presumably to bear the *niqqud*), monosyllabic words rendered as a single letter, as well as phono- and grapho-tactically bad clusters (not tolerated by Roman-letter French either, as the persistence of *e-muet* would attest). And yet the adaptation seems to make an attempt at distinguishing *h-muet* (<h> in Latin-origin words) from *h-aspiré* (<h> in loanwords, usually from Germanic) – despite their identical realization as Ø – at the expense of phonetic transparency. Initial ה thus emerges as a "silent letter" in this adaptation of Hebrew script, providing etymological more often than phonetic cues, but doing neither in a truly consistent fashion.

<sup>27</sup> In canonical Hebrew spelling this occurs in the lexicon only in combinations of the Tiberian short /a/ and a glottal or pharyngeal consonant, א -<sup>2</sup>a, ה -ha, ח -ah and ע -a<sup>c</sup> (as well as in the grammatical inflections ה -ka, ה -ha, ו -Vh, ת -ta and ת -Vt). As noted in § 2, absolute-final vowels must be borne by a *mater lectionis*. Nevertheless, my impression based on bilingual dictionaries and other modern pedagogical materials is that *niqqud* on letters in final position has become normal practice in "transcriptionese," as though this written dialect specifically does *not* require that forms follow standard Hebrew grapho-tactics.

As long as native Yiddish and Hebrew speakers continue to learn other languages, there will be innumerable manuals of this kind, perfect analogues to the foreign-language handbooks produced in others literate cultures. What remains to be examined is how other traditions of Hebraicization may have served as matrices in the language-learning materials that predate the rise of printed Yiddish or the revival of native Hebrew in the late nineteenth century – especially in light of the peculiar nature of the adaptation in these twentieth-century examples.

### 3.2.3. *Italian*

Many of the Jews expelled from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century settled in Italy, establishing Castilian-speaking communities and, by the middle of the sixteenth century, founding major centers of Hebrew writing and printing, most notably at Ferrara. Even before the arrival of these Spanish émigrés, however, native Jews had adapted Hebrew script for the purpose of writing Italian, producing in particular a large number of Italian translations and adaptations of biblical and liturgical texts. The following are the opening lines from the *Alfabetin*, which is based on an alphabetically-arranged Judeo-Aramaic poem (known as a *Piyyut*) and which forms part of the prayer service recited by some Italian Jews on the festival of *Shavuot* (Gelman 2000):

- (12) אִישֵׁי מֹשֶׁה דִּלְוֹמוֹנְטִי אֶלְפּוֹפּוּלוּ  
אִדִּיִּסִי E šeçi Mošeh də.lu.monti a.lu.populu  
e.diçi  
אִדִּיִּסִי אֶפְרִיִּסִימְטִי אִרְיִצִּיטְטִי ad.içi apreçim<sup>a</sup>ti e.rišit<sup>a</sup>ti  
לִּדְרִיִּצִּי קוֹנְמַנְדִּימִינְטִי li.deše kunm<sup>a</sup>nd<sup>a</sup>menti  
'And Moses descended from the mountain  
to the people and said  
to them: "Approach and recite  
the Ten Commandments." '

One of the most intriguing bodies of writing, however, is the bilingual poetry of Italian Jews, such as the following sixteenth-century excerpt from Shmuel da Castiglione (De Benedetti-Stow 1980; Hebrew-language passages are italicized and given in standard Italian spelling):

- (13) שְׁמַעְתִּי תְלוֹנוֹת / דִּי קוּוִיסְטִי פִימִינְאִצִּי *Ho udito le querele / di kueçti feminaše*  
עֲלֵי מְקוֹנְנוֹת / אִי מִי פֶאֶנּוּ גְרָאן מִינְאִצִּי *Su me fan lamentele / e mi fano gran  
mināše*  
אִי ווֹלִינּוּ קִי אִיאוּ סְטְרָאִצָּא / אֵת דְּבָרֵי *E voleno ke io straša / le paról della  
הַשִּׁירָה canzone*  
צַעֲקוֹת מְרָה / דִּי קָאמִין ווִילְנִיאָה *E amaramente gridano / di kamin  
vil<sup>a</sup>niah*  
'I have listened to the cries of those  
women  
Over me they lament / and against me  
they threaten  
And they wanted me to tear / the words  
of the song  
and harshly they cry / of those who love  
villany'

Despite the juxtaposition of Hebrew language material, the writing system in evidence here is very much an autonomous one, with no *niqqud* used and the *matres lectionis* fully deployed as vowel-letters. Note also that while letters that are doubled in the Roman-letter orthography are not imitated in the Hebraicized forms – a single **ş** ş, for instance, covers the ground of both <cc> and <zz> (representing modern [tʃ] and [ts]/[dz] respectively) – the writer

does make use of a trigraph קוו *qwv* for the labiovelar segment spelled <qu> in Roman script, even though double-וו serves elsewhere to represent /v/, suggesting perhaps that *v* and *u* were not necessarily distinct entities in this writer's mind.

### 3.2.3. *Provençal*

The Jewish dialect of Provençal largely disappeared by the twentieth century,<sup>28</sup> and its most extensive attestation is actually found in a Roman-letter play and other "comic" texts written by non-Jews.<sup>29</sup> There are no post-medieval texts written in Provençal using Hebrew script either (if in fact the phenomenon survived the medieval period). What does exist, however, are several medieval manuscripts, such as an early fourteenth-century Hebrew-Provençal dictionary (Aslanov 2001). Since isolated words may not present the same need for an orthography with its own conventions as does more extended writing, it is not surprising that many of the entries in this dictionary illustrate a lingering adherence to Hebrew-language spelling conventions:

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<sup>28</sup> Jochowitz (1978: 69) reported that to the best of his knowledge there was only one person alive at the time who remembered hearing Judeo-Provençal spoken.

<sup>29</sup> Zajkowski (1948: 32-36) does discuss a comedy from 1820 apparently written by a Jewish lawyer from Montpellier whose wife hailed from the Comtat-Venaissin region.

**Table 2-16. *Hebraic patterns in Judeo-Provençal***

• <i>agglutination of prepositions</i>	אקאפדאל akapdal	<i>a capdal</i>	'in capital ' (Heb. בְּרֹאשׁוֹ bə.rošo)
• <i>implicit vowels</i>	בלשטיממנט bl <sup>a</sup> stem <sup>a</sup> m <sup>e</sup> nt	<i>blastemamen</i>	'blaspheme'
• <i>use of כ vs. ק (see ch.3 § 2.1.2)</i>	כוליאנדרי koliandre	<i>coliandre</i>	'coriander' <sup>30</sup>
• <i>initial ה</i>	הוגא huğa	<i>hucha</i>	'clamour'
• <i>final ה without preceding א</i>	אשפנייה espany <sup>a</sup> h	<i>Espanha</i>	'Spain'
• <i>double-וו as CV syllable</i>	וורי vori	<i>vorì</i>	'ivory horns'

Other entries, however, do show innovations introduced in the service of spelling Provençal words, strategies that are relatively rare in Romance-language adaptations of Hebrew script and certainly not in step with Hebrew writing itself:

**Table 2-17. *Rarer adaptations in Judeo-Provençal writing***

• ד as /z/	נודידא nudeda	<i>nudeza</i>	'nudity'
• ב as semi-vowel	טבנא tebne	<i>tèune</i>	'fine, thin'
• <i>doubled consonants</i>	שיררה serr <sup>a</sup> h	<i>serra</i>	'saw'

Although the precedent for using ד to spell an fricative dates back to Hebrew spirantization (see § 2.3), this is the only use of it that I have encountered to

<sup>30</sup> Aslanov (2001: 23) suggests that the choice of כ here could be influenced by the presence of the Aramaic and Arabic cognates (כוסברתא *kwsbrt<sup>a</sup>* and כוסבור *kwsbwr* respectively) cited earlier in the entry.

represent more specifically the alveolar fricative<sup>31</sup> – unless it is better viewed as a hypercorrection (to restore the stop in the suffix). The use of **ב** to indicate the semivowel in **טבנא** *teune* 'thin' < TENUÉ could also be construed as a hypercorrect spelling, not unlike the <l> in OIt. *colse* 'things' < CAUSAS or *repolsar* 'rest' < RE+PAUSARE (Dye 2000: 139).

There are also longer texts, including an original para-liturgical composition based on the Book of Esther, composed in the fourteenth century.<sup>32</sup>

- (14) a. מון רומאן ווייל אקומנשאר    mon roman veil akom<sup>e</sup>nsar  
 אל פאייג די נבוכדניצר...    al fayg de *nbwkdnyšr*...  
 'My story will begin  
 with the tale of Nebuchadnezzor'
- b. שיגון קי דניאל נוש אקונטאט    segon ke daniel nos a.kontat  
 אנבוקאדנזור וינק דוולונטא    a.n<sup>e</sup>bokadn<sup>e</sup>zor venk d<sup>e</sup>volonta  
 'According to what Daniel has told us  
 To Nebuchadnezzor he came willingly'

Already noticeable in the extract above is the lack of *niqqud* and the use of an overt letter for nearly every vowel. In addition, the above lines contain a curious variation in the spelling of King Nebuchadnezzor's name. Although Neubauer & Meyer (1892) stick to a single spelling <Nabocadnessar> in their transliteration, the first occurrence **נבוכדניצר** *nbwkdnyšr* actually leaves the name intact in its unvocalized biblical spelling, while the second occurrence

<sup>31</sup> It is not, of course, without precedent in Roman-letter writing. Prior to the advent of vernacular spellings that laid bare some of the phonological innovation in Romance, many a Latin <D> might well have been read as [d̥] (later to deaffricate to [ʒ]) in certain environments, just as modern Québécois French speakers do. A medieval Provençal reader may well have realized some conservatively-spelled instances of <t> or <d> as [z].

<sup>32</sup> Although first edited and published by Neubauer & Meyer (1892), this text was the subject of a relatively recent doctoral dissertation (Silberstein 1973), one of the few non-Castilian Judeo-Romance texts to be studied so thoroughly.

writes it according to the conventions of the Hebraicized orthography, נבוקאדנזור *n<sup>e</sup>bukadn<sup>e</sup>zor*. Along with three overt vowel-letters, there are two consonant changes (כ *k* → ק *q*, צ *ṣ* → ז *z*) that substitute the letter more typically used in Romance-language adaptations of Hebrew script for two letters generally restricted to words of Hebrew-Aramaic origin. This fourteenth-century Provençal example is reminiscent not only of similar variant pairs in Hebrew-letter Portuguese of the same era (see chapter 3), but also of a phenomenon found in the modern Yiddish press (see § 3.9.1).

### 3.2.5. Portuguese

As the main topic of this study, Hebraicized Portuguese is discussed in greater depth beginning in the next chapter. For the moment it should be noted that most of the extant Jewish Portuguese writing was produced by the Northern European descendants of émigrés who left Portugal after the 1497 expulsion/conversion, where it is always written in Roman script.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, pre-1497 Jewish Portuguese writing, consisting of the texts in this dissertation and a handful of others,<sup>34</sup> is written exclusively in Hebrew script. The one exception I have encountered to the lack of post-1497 Hebraicized Portuguese is a language handbook, published in Warsaw in 1929, for speakers of Yiddish to learn Portuguese entitled פאָרטוגעזיש-יידישער לערנבוך *portugeziš-yidišer lernbux* 'Portuguese-Yiddish Handbook' (Paris, Bibliothèque

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<sup>33</sup> No spoken dialect has survived to the present day, except perhaps in peculiarities of the language spoken by the descendants of *Marranos*, the "New Christians" who continued to practice elements of Judaism in secret (see Wexler 1982, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> A second Bodleian astrological text, smaller than the one presented in chapter five, has been extensively studied by Hilty (1957-58, 1982), although no edition has appeared. In addition, Sharon (2002) cites two further manuscripts: a medical treatise of ophthalmology from 1300 (located at the Biblioteca Publica Municipal in Porto, Portugal), and a treatise of medical astrology from the fifteenth century that contains a part in Portuguese (located at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York). I have not accessed either of these.

Médem 1523), presumably aimed at Jews emigrating from Europe to Brazil. Although the body of the text is written in Yiddish and the Portuguese is usually presented in Roman script, some individual words are given in Hebraicized form:

**Table 2-18. Portuguese learner's manual**

פאַסעאַר	<i>passear</i>	'take a walk'	אַסיניאַר	<i>asignar</i>	'assign'
פאַססאַראַ	<i>passaro</i>	'bird'	אַסיסטיר	<i>assistir</i>	'help'
פּעללע	<i>pelle</i>	'skin'	גאַליניאַ	<i>gallinha</i>	'chicken'
וואַררער	<i>varrer</i>	'sweep'	סעראַר	<i>cerrar</i>	'close'
קאַרריזשאַ	<i>corrijo</i>	'I correct'	קאָריזשיר	<i>corrigir</i>	'correct'

Not surprisingly, the spelling of vowels here is distinctly Yiddish-like, with װ serving for /e/ and the diacritics under ם following Yiddish orthography. Nor does the transliterator forego phonetic transparency for the sake of orthographic similarity, as the same װװ *zš* digraph is used to indicate /ʒ/ in *corrijo* and *corrigir*, despite being spelled by different singleton letters in Roman script. He does, however, imitate the doubled consonants of the Roman-letter spelling (doubled consonants occur in Yiddish orthography only at morpheme boundaries). He also imports one device foreign to the Hebraic matrix but for a purpose not commonly found in mature orthographies, namely the apostrophe, using it to indicate stress position (though its placement on one side or the other of the accented vowel would seem to be haphazard).

### 3.2.6. Romanian

An early Jewish presence in Romania is attested by tombstones dating from the time of the Roman province of Dacia (Barnavi et al. 2002). Yet the later, more numerous Romanian Jewish population was almost entirely Yiddish- or Judeo-Spanish-speaking until the second half of the nineteenth century, with the result that there is relatively little indigenous Romanian-language writing in Hebrew script. The following examples, taken from a Yiddish-language study of the Jewish press in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Romania (Tambor 1977), are typical of the Romanian-language titles of Yiddish and Hebrew newspapers:

(15)	וויאצא עוורעאסקע	מאַנטשיטאַרול עוורעו
	<i>viașa evreaske</i>	<i>montșitorul evreu</i>
	<i>Viața Evreiască</i>	<i>Muncitorul Evreu</i>
	'Jewish Life'	'The Jewish Worker'

The Yiddish matrix is unmistakable: װ<sup>c</sup> spells /e/, װ-plus-*niqqud* (rather than װ) spells /o/, double-װ spells /v/. The only sequence not typically represented in Yiddish spelling, /eu/, is simply spelled with the two corresponding vowel letters, װ and װ. Interestingly, the writer also seems to take advantage of a southeastern dialect feature of Yiddish, where standard /o/ (spelled װ) often shifted to /u/, so that װ can correspond to what is spelled with <u> in the Roman-letter orthography.

#### *Interlude: Latin*

Although the first Jewish communities under Roman rule were Hebrew-, Aramaic-, and Greek-speaking, based on the later flourishing of

Judeo-Romance languages there is no doubt that Jews in Latin-speaking regions did adopt the imperial idiom. The Jerusalem Talmud (compiled in the first half of the first millennium CE), for that matter, recognizes a role for Latin in Jewish life: "Four languages are of value: Greek for song, Latin for war, Aramaic for dirges, and Hebrew for speaking" (Sotah 7:2, 30a., cited in Spolsky 1985). What does not appear to have persisted – if it existed at all – is a tradition of writing Vulgar or even Imperial Latin in Hebrew script. Even Blondheim (1925), in his seminal work on the possible Judeo-Latin precursors to later Judeo-Romance, does not offer any such forms beyond personal names.

For evidence of direct Jewish engagement in Latin-language culture we have to jump ahead several centuries to medieval Spain, where multilingual Jews were actively involved in translating scientific, grammatical, and philosophical texts from Arabic into Hebrew and Latin, most notably at the school of Toledo. Yet based on the extant record there appear to be very few instances of Latin-language material written in Hebrew script beyond isolated or compiled glosses. The reason may be straightforward: Jews who were not involved in translation simply had little reason to learn and thus to write medieval Latin.<sup>35</sup>

The table below contains plant names written in Latin from a medieval herbarium (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale ms. Hébr. 1199). Of the more than

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<sup>35</sup> The text presented in chapter 5 features quotations attributed to Aristotle in what appears to be Hebraicized Latin (these are collected at the end of the commentary in that chapter). Although the individual words contain what looks like plausible Latin morphology, at the syntactic level the quotations are largely nonsensical. While this may reflect rather poorly on the scribe's (and perhaps the author's) knowledge of authentic Latin prose, it nonetheless reveals a certain level of prestige associated with Latin writing.

120 full-page illustrations labelled in Hebrew-letter Latin, only a fraction are also accompanied by a Roman-letter caption:<sup>36</sup>

**Table 2-19. Hebrew- and Roman-letter herbarium captions**

ריגולאצ'יא	rigolaṣia	<i>ligaritia</i>	'Licorice'
אריסטולג'יאה	aristolgiaḥ	<i>aristolochia</i>	'Dutchman's Pipe'
אונגלא קוולינא	ongla k <sup>a</sup> v <sup>a</sup> lina	<i>ognia cauallina</i>	'Onion'
קונטולירא מינור	kontolira minor	<i>chonsolida minor</i>	'Larkspur'
קונטולירא מינור	kontolira m <sup>a</sup> yor	<i>chonsolida magior</i>	'Larkspur'
נשטורצ'יאום אגרישטו	n <sup>a</sup> šturṣium agrišto	<i>nastritium</i>	'Forget-me-not'

Unlike the Iberian peninsula, Romance-language adaptations of Hebrew script in France and Italy make wide use of צ ם to render a variety of sibilants and dental affricates, and this practice carried over to the spelling of Latin words themselves. The Roman-letter captions clearly point to the text (or its writer, at any rate) as originating in Italy, as do some of the Hebraicized spellings, e.g. the hypercorrect ל in אונגלא *ongla* 'onion' (<gl> being associated with palatal /ʎ/ in Italian orthography).

### 3.3. Greek

The Greek language entered Jewish life as Hellenistic culture spread throughout the Mediterranean and Near East, emerging second only to Aramaic as the major vernacular of Jewish communities through the first millennium CE. Not surprisingly, given its scope and stature, there is a strong Greek influence on the Rabbinic writings of this period such as those in the

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<sup>36</sup> I am indebted to the individual seated next to me in the Oriental Manuscripts Reading Room of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris) in the summer of 2001, who was able to identify many of the herbs and flowers based on the accompanying illustrations. The manuscript contains a further ten pages of Hebrew-language writing, each paragraph headed by a Hebraicized Latin term vocalized with *niqqud*.

Talmud, which contains as many as one thousand Greek loanwords (some borrowed via Latin). Beyond the names and loanwords from non-Semitic languages such as Persian that occur in the Bible, this corpus represents the first substantial body of linguistic material to make use of Hebrew script in writing material from a non-Semitic language. Below is a small sample of Greek loanwords that occur in Hebrew (Sperber 1984):

**Table 2-20. Greek loanwords in Hebrew**

• modern retentions			
□□□□□		כרטיס	
xartês		<i>kartís</i>	
'record'		'card'	
• doublets			
□□□□□□□		סטיונר	סנדטור
stationar		<i>stationar</i>	<i>sandator</i>
		'police officer'	'executioner'
• "conscious" Hebraization			
□□□□□□□		חלף סידרה	
klepsydra		<i>ḥalaf sidra</i>	
		'water-clock'	

The first word is one of the many Rabbinic-era borrowings that have survived into Modern Hebrew without any specialized meaning. In the second instance, the Greek loanword yielded two Hebrew words, each reflecting a different degree of integration. The third term is a Hebrew coinage whose meaning is that of the Greek source but which uses native elements to imitate the form of the Greek word.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> This practice was not restricted to Hebrew writers of Talmudic era. In the early days of Modern Hebrew language planning, several such terms were suggested (though ultimately rejected), e.g. חולירע [xolira] (lit. 'evil illness') for *cholera*, דלוגרב [dilugrav] (lit. 'great leap') for *telegraph*, or פרטיכל [pratekol] (lit. 'all details') for *protocol*.

As the expanse of Greek diminished in its post-imperial era, so too did it diminish as a spoken and written language for Jewish communities beyond southeastern Europe. Yet Jews in the Byzantine sphere continued to speak and write a form of Greek, producing biblical translations, commentaries, and sundry other texts in Hebrew script. The following are vernacular rubrics in a Greek *maḥzor* from the Cairo *Genizah*, the unusually well-preserved trove of documents and sacred texts held in a synagogue attic there but fully accessed only at the end of the nineteenth century (de Lange 1996):

- (16) קפלי אפרי פיקרידין קפיטרי קדידי אולוש קטראודו אנאו אפכרישטיאש  
 k<sup>e</sup>f<sup>a</sup>li ap<sup>e</sup>ri pikridin k<sup>a</sup>pitari k<sup>a</sup>didi olos k<sup>a</sup>troudo anao efl<sup>a</sup>ristias  
 'And again he takes bitter herb and unleavened bread and he gives to  
 everybody and they eat it without a blessing'.

As expected in this liturgical context, the text is at least partially vocalized with *niqqud*, and the influence of the dominant orthography is evident in the use of overt vowel letters, as well as diacritics to indicate alternate readings of those consonants that Masoretic Hebrew deemed orthographically modifiable. What is especially noteworthy here is the use of the *rafeh* and *dagesh* on different occurrences of the same letter, in this case ט *d*.

### 3.4. Slavic

A Jewish presence in Northeastern Europe may date from as early as the first centuries of the Christian era, and the conversion of the Khazar ruling class to Judaism beginning in the eighth century probably attests to the presence of Jewish communities in Russia as a branch of Byzantine Jewry (Barnavi et al. 2002). The earliest linguistic attestation of Jewish life in Slavic-

speaking lands come from coins with Hebrew inscriptions minted in twelfth-century Poland. Yet despite the large amount of material written by Jews in Slavic languages (presumably beginning with Slavic-language glosses in Hebrew manuscripts), I have found relatively few examples of extended writing in Hebrew-letter Slavic languages.<sup>38</sup> The modern Hebrew and Yiddish press no doubt includes material from the Russian, Polish, and other Slavic languages of its readers and topics, but as I noted at the beginning of this section, these are more of interest in the context of Hebrew or Yiddish writing itself. Nevertheless, as a brief and less-than-common sample I offer the following Bulgarian book/journal titles:

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| (17) | ביולטין נה ייברסקי וסטײ<br>byultin n <sup>ah</sup> yebreski v <sup>e</sup> sti<br>'Bulletin of Jewish News' | אנטולוגייה נה ייברסקיטה סלובה<br>antologi <sup>ah</sup> n <sup>ah</sup> yebreskit <sup>ah</sup> slob <sup>ah</sup><br>'Anthology of Hebrew Words' |
|------|---|---|

These short examples show the influence of a particular matrix, i.e. Modern Hebrew (as opposed to Yiddish) spelling conventions, such as the consistent use of ה *h* for word-final /a/, as well as the single ם for consonantal /v/. Yet the influence of centuries of Hebrew script adaptation may be evidenced in the now-conventional use of ט *t*, the historically emphatic dental stop, as the "default" dental, along with ק *q*, the historically emphatic uvular stop, as the default velar (cf. chapter 3 § 2.1.2).

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<sup>38</sup> This may have something to do with recent attempts to revise the standard history of Eastern European Jewry, whereby the earlier Byzantine community was allegedly replaced by eastward migration from Germanic territories.

### 3.5. Persian

Tradition traces the Jewish communities of Persia (centered in modern Iran) as far back as the Assyrian deportation of the Israelites from Samaria in the eighth century BCE and the Babylonian deportation of the Judeans from Jerusalem and its environs in the sixth century BCE. The earliest record of their presence, however, is the activity of Jewish leaders such as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. As part of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, these communities were probably Aramaic-speaking, though by the end of the first millennium CE there were Persian-speaking Jewish settlements from the Caucasus to Western China.

The first textual evidence of Jewish linguistic activity in Persian dates from the fourteenth century, in the form of biblical translations (see Paper 1978). Later Judeo-Persian writing includes more secular literature, such as works by the fourteenth-century poet Maulānā Shāhīn. The following is an excerpt from a later manuscript of one of Shāhīn's lesser-known epics, *King Kišvar* (Asmussen 1973):

(18) כה כשוור בוד שאה רום רא נאם / בודי הפצד הזארש תרך סרכש  
המה בא אסב ובא שמשיר תרכש

kh kšwvr bwd š<sup>3</sup>h rwm r<sup>3</sup> n<sup>3</sup>m / bwdy hfšd hz<sup>3</sup>rš trk srkš /  
h<sup>3</sup>mh b<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup>sb wb<sup>3</sup> šmšyr trkš

'Kišvar was the name of the King of Byzantium / He had seven hundred thousand wild Turks, all with horses and with swords [and] quivers'.

Just as Arabic-letter Persian orthography adopts some of the principles of Arabic writing (e.g. only long vowels overtly indicated), so does Hebrew-letter Persian tend to mimic those conventions. As in Judeo-Arabic, the Hebraicized Persian orthography also augments with diacritics the Hebrew

letters that are cognate to those that are augmented with a diacritic in Arabic script. Yet Judeo-Persian also fuses Persian-language adaptations of Arabic script into unique conventions, e.g. using  $\aleph g$  in imitation of  $\text{گ}$  *tšé* or  $\text{گ}$  *gâf*, the Persian adaptations of Arabic *ġim* and *kaf* (Modern Farsi forms are given in transcription):

(19)	גאר	ġ <sup>o</sup> r	ʃahār	'four'
	גרך	ġrk	ʃarx	'wheel'
	גהאן	ġh <sup>o</sup> n	ǰahān	'world'
	מגרי	mrġy	morq	'bird'

In other respects, however, the Hebraicized Persian does rely on the cognate relationships of Arabic and Hebrew letters, using consonants that are usually rejected in European-language adaptations (notably כ *k* and ת *t*, as well as ה *h* and ע <sup>c</sup>), and often foregoing diacritics and overt vowel letters:

(20)	גר	gr	zar	'gold'
	שכר	škr	ʃekar	'sugar'
	חרף	ħrp	harf	'letters'
	ניסת	nyst	nist	'is not'
	פנמ	pngm	pandom	'fifth'

### 3.6. Turkish

Before the rise of the Ottoman Empire, Jews in what is now Turkey were speakers of either Greek (known as *Romaniot*) or Arabic (*Mustarabs*). Upon their expulsion from Spain, Iberian Jews were invited by the Sultan to settle in Ottoman territory. These new immigrants were speakers of Ibero-Romance languages, and their numbers eventually overwhelmed the

indigenous Ottoman Jews over the course of the sixteenth century, resulting in an Ottoman Jewish population whose linguistic profile was markedly hispanic. Beginning in the nineteenth century, through the educational reforms of the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle, many Ottoman Jews began to learn French as a principal second language.<sup>39</sup>

Given that the Sultan's invitation was in large part commercially motivated, it is difficult to imagine that many Ottoman Jews did not acquire at least some "survival" Turkish (although the lack of a centralizing, nationalizing impulse in the Ottoman Empire may have meant that learning Turkish was little more than a utilitarian affair). Yet to my knowledge no robust tradition of Hebraicized Turkish writing ever developed. One of the rare examples I have found is an Ottoman chronicle written in Hebrew script (Bodleian Ms. Heb. e 63; Marazzi 1980), an excerpt of which is given below:

(21) f. 106 r.

אולקי תאריך אלי עטמאנדור וגאיירי ענאיב חיקאייטלירדור קים איללרו  
זמאנדה ואקיע

ʔwlqy tʔryk ʔly ʕwʔmʔndwr wgʔyyry ʕgʔyyb hyqʔyytlyrdwr qym ʔyllrw  
zmʔndh wʔqy<sup>c</sup>

*evvelki tarih âl-i Osman vegayri acayip hikâyet-? kim ileri zaman -dh vaki*

'First date the Ottoman Empire and another strange story who before time event'.

### 3.7. Georgian

Notwithstanding the question of the medieval Khazar conversion to Judaism, a Jewish presence in the Caucasus region probably dates from

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<sup>39</sup> Varol (2003) notes that in present-day Turkey, women are much more likely than men to be active users of French. Nevertheless, there are numerous attestations of – and consequent mocking reactions to – the high prestige that French attained among Turkish Jews, e.g. the farcically Gallicized Judeo-Spanish speech of the suitor Musiú Ĵac in the play *Peche Friyo* (Varol, p.c.).

around the third century CE, based on tombstones bearing inscriptions that are not in Hebrew or Aramaic. Although these tombstones also feature the occasional Georgian name (usually of Persian origin), the only examples of Hebraicized Georgian writing that I have encountered first-hand are found in a modern study of an early-medieval Hebrew manuscript (Lerner 2003), which contains names such as the following:

- (22)
- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| פחוווי           | <i>P'xovi</i>      |
| מְטָקוּרִי       | <i>Mtkvari</i>     |
| מרוּוּלִי        | <i>Mroweli</i>     |
| תּוֹפְצָג        | <i>T'avp'ač'ag</i> |
| אַגְרִיס צַעֲלִי | <i>Egris Cqali</i> |

Despite the Hebrew-language matrix of the study in which these names appear, it is difficult to detect any specific Modern Hebrew influence in their spellings, apart from the use of letters such as ף and ץ that are often avoided in Hebraicized orthographies. Indeed, the vowel-less origins of Hebrew script are put to good use in the transcription of a language that clearly enjoys its consonant clusters. Yet quite contrary to most Hebraicized orthographies, this adaptation tolerates the use of double-וו for CV and VC sequences,<sup>40</sup> as well as three consecutive ו (although the *niqqud*, which is conventionally used in such transcriptions, mitigates the three-in-a-row effect).

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<sup>40</sup> Modern Hebrew orthography itself tolerates this usage in the spelling of a small number of words, e.g. עוון *avon* 'sin', כיוון *kivun* 'direction', as well as in some loanwords, e.g. וודו 'voodoo', וודקה 'vodka'.

### 3.8. East Asia

Jews probably first arrived in China along with other merchants on the Silk Road perhaps as early as the second century BC. The earliest textual evidence of a Jewish community there, however, comes in the form of an eighth-century business letter written in Hebraicized Persian. Although there are no extant documents (to my knowledge) written by Jews in Hebrew-letter Chinese, community registers in Hebrew do record the names of individuals from the only substantial Chinese Jewish community, that of Kaifeng (Leslie 1972: 123):

- (23)    גו גו דו    gw gw dw    *Change Chii-te*  
          גין פוא    gyn pw<sup>3</sup>    *Chin Fu*  
          גין שום    gyn šwm    *Chin Shou*

In addition, a Jesuit visitor to Kaifeng in 1721 transcribed the following Hebrew blessing from one of the community's prayer books, along with his own Romanized rendering of the local Jews' Hebrew pronunciation (Leslie 1972: 120):

- |               |            |           |               |        |           |
|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------|--------|-----------|
| (24)          | וְעַד      | רְעָרָם   | מְרָהוּתָ     | שֵׁם   | בְּרוּךְ  |
|               | vauite     | rearoam   | marehunthu    | scheam | Poroke    |
|               | 'and ever' | 'forever' | 'His kingdom' | 'name' | 'blessed' |
| <i>ModHeb</i> | [vaʔed]    | [leʔolam] | [malxuto]     | [ʃem]  | [barux]   |

The most immediately striking feature in this extract is the confusion of ל *l* and ר *r* in the third and fourth words, which are properly spelled מלכותו <młkwtw> and לעולם <l<sup>c</sup>włm> respectively. Though it does not attest to an adaptation of Hebrew script for a language other than Hebrew, this is my first

encounter with a Jewish community's traditional Hebrew pronunciation interfering in the canonical written form (in this case, probably in the absence of "official" texts).

### 3.9. Germanic

#### 3.9.1. Yiddish

More Jews have probably spoken Yiddish than any other vernacular. In terms of Hebraicization, however, Yiddish is distinguished as the only language other than Hebrew to continue making exclusive<sup>41</sup> use of Hebrew script. Concerted attempts to standardize the writing system began in the late nineteenth century and continued after World War II, but having never ascended to national-language status there has never been a single standard or convention by which non-Yiddish words are rendered in Yiddish orthography. The successive adaptations of Hebrew script that constitute the development of Yiddish writing have been relatively well documented and are beyond the scope of this study. What is worth noting are the innovations that are unique to Yiddish among adaptations of Hebrew script, several of which I have mentioned elsewhere:

- ץ<sup>c</sup> as a vowel letter in addition to the canonical four *matres lectionis*
- standardized use of non-final פ for /p/ in final position
- semi-standardized subset of *niqqud*
- semi-institutionalized innovation of a longhand grapheme for /v/

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<sup>41</sup> This, of course, ignores pedagogical texts aimed at Yiddish-language learners, which may be Romanized or otherwise converted to the learners' normal scripts, as well as Roman-letter electronic environments such as e-mail (cf. chapter 8).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these innovations are found less often in the earliest "standard" (i.e. Eastern) Yiddish writing, as illustrated in the excerpt below from an edition of *Tikuney tshuve erets Tsvi* 'Responsa of the Promised Land', published in Cracow in 1666 (Kerler 1999, whose transcription I have adapted):

(25) אבר זיא מוז צילן וויא פֿיל די טעג      ob<sup>o</sup>r zi' muz ts<sup>e</sup>yln vi' fil di tæg  
 אן טרעפֿין פֿון שבתות און יומים      on trefən fun šabōsəs (*šbtwt*) un  
 טובים      yontōyvem (*ywmym tōbym*)  
 אז זי האט ניש גפֿסט      az zi hōt nit g<sup>o</sup>f<sup>st</sup>

'However, she has to count how many Sabbath and holy days altogether she did not fast'.

Note the overall lack of *niqqud*, the occasional use of non-final letter forms in final position (און *un* 'and') and the absence of ע from one of its typical modern roles in the initial syllable of past participles with *ge-* (גפֿסט *gefast* 'fasted' for modern געפֿאסט). Among the other features typical of early Yiddish that were ironed out in the later orthography are the *shtumer-*א 'silent aleph' in final position (e.g. זיא *zi* 'she', וויא *vi* 'how') and the use of י as the vowel letter in unaccented syllables (e.g. טרעפֿין *trefen* for modern טרעפֿן).

A noteworthy aspect of modern Yiddish orthography is the way in which it exploits its dual heritage as, on the one hand, a Germanic-language adaptation of Hebrew script and, on the other, the Jewish language with the highest occurrence of Hebrew-Aramaic lexical items. The effect is illustrated in the following pair of names that appear from time to time in the pages of the *Forverts* newspaper:

(26)	יוסף ליבערמאן	ywsp lyb <sup>c</sup> rm <sup>n</sup>	'Joseph Lieberman'
	דזשאָסטעף סטאַלין	dzš <sup>2</sup> s <sup>c</sup> p st <sup>l</sup> yn	'Joseph Stalin'

The now-weekly *Forverts* is the lone survivor of a formerly thriving American Yiddish press. Most if not all of its present American readership can speak English, and in so doing would likely pronounce the first names of these two political figures identically. Yet the in- and out-group status<sup>42</sup> of these two rather differently-regarded men is indicated quite categorically by the rendering of the American senator's name in the orthographic garb of the biblical Joseph, while the Soviet leader's name receives a distinctly secular transcription – ironically reminiscent of the more systematic de-Hebraification (i.e. secularization) of Yiddish orthography undertaken in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, examples of which are shown below (Estraikh 1999):

(27)	שבת	šbt	שאַבעס	š <sup>2</sup> b <sup>c</sup> s	jabəs	'Sabbath'
	חיה	ħyh	כִּיִּיע	ħyy <sup>c</sup>	xayə	'animal'
	כמעט	km <sup>c</sup> ṭ	קימאַט	qym <sup>2</sup> ṭ	kimət	'almost'

This is actually nothing less than Yiddish orthography as transcription, since the words are spelled syllable-by-syllable with the least ambiguous combinations of letters. This phenomenon is certainly seen from time to time

<sup>42</sup> This effect is also achieved by using the spirant form of כ *k* rather than ח *ħ* for any and all "guttural" fricatives in non-Hebrew vocabulary, even in Arabic words where the sound or letter in question is cognate with ח, e.g. כוסיין <ħwssyyn> *Hussein*, מוכאַמער <mwħ<sup>2</sup>m<sup>c</sup>d> *Muhammed*, פאַטאַך <f<sup>2</sup>t<sup>2</sup>ħ> *Fatah*. Indeed, modern Yiddish orthography makes no special accommodation for Semitic cognates and treats Arabic lexical items exactly like the Hebrew transcriptions in (27) and (28). This can again serve to establish the out-group attitude toward certain names or terms, e.g. *Jihad* or *Jafari* written as דזשיהאַד and דזשאַפאַרי with initial dzš- rather than a cognate גִּגְ-.

in non-Soviet Yiddish, when a writer wants to indicate the pronunciation of Hebrew-language material that might not occur as a normal part of written Yiddish. In the following examples from a recent *Forverts* article, the first line of each pair shows the Hebrew spelling and letter-by-letter transliteration, while the second line gives the (Yiddish) transcription:

- (28) אחרי מות קדושים ḥry mwt qdwšym 'After the Death / Sanctified'<sup>43</sup>  
 אַכאַרײַ מאַט קעדאַשײַם axarei mot kedošim
- עוד לאַ אַבְדָּה תקוּתנו װד lʰ ʔbdh t:qwt:nw 'our hope is still not lost'  
 אָד לאַ אַוּדאַ טיקוואַטײַנו od lo avda tikvateinu

Notice, however, how this use of the Yiddish writing system differs from the French transcriptions in the learners' manuals discussed in § 3.3. Although the matrix of those handbooks is ostensibly Yiddish (or Hebraicized German), it is *not* the normal conventions of Yiddish orthography that most directly inform the transcriptions of French-language material, unlike those in the tables above.

### 3.9.2. German

Comprising a linguistic tradition distinct from Yiddish, many Jews were speakers of standard German or other non-Yiddish German dialects. From about the sixteenth century onward there are prayer books with instructions written in non-Yiddish Hebrew-letter German, along with sundry other texts. In fact, the *Metʰode* French handbook in § 3.2.3 presents most of its matrix

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<sup>43</sup> These are the names of two *parshiyot* '(Torah) sections' that are often read at the same weekly service, such that the corresponding Sabbath is often referred to by their joint name. The expression has gained its own meaning in the sense of "all are holy after death," with the result that one does not speak ill of the dead.

material in a Hebraicized but otherwise standard German of the early twentieth century. The table below illustrates features that imitate Roman-letter German (beyond lexical choice) and that do not occur in later Yiddish writing:

**Table 2-21. *Non-Yiddish patterns in Hebraicized German***

• silent ה	פריהשטיק	frihštik	'breakfast'
	אָהררינג	ohrring	'earring'
• doubled letters not straddling a morpheme boundary	הערר	herr	'sir'
	זאָלל	zoll	'should'
• פפ ( /pf/ > /p/ or /f/ in Yiddish)	פפאָהונע	pfahune	'peacock'
	שטרומפּ	štrumpf	'stocking'
• דט <dt>	שטאָדטראַסקאָללעניום	štradtskollegium	'town council'
	(Yid. שטאָט	štat	city)

### 3.9.3. English

As a Jewish vernacular, Yiddish probably still holds the title for the largest number of speakers at any given moment, if not cumulatively. Given trends both internal and external to world Jewry, however, more Jews may end up speaking English than any other vernacular. And yet outside the state of Israel, where Modern Hebrew orthography provides the obvious framework, there has yet to be anything that approaches a standardized or institutionalized adaptation of Hebrew script for representing the world's most widespread language, despite the abundance of present-day Hebraicized English in, for example, the modern Hebrew and Yiddish press.

The earliest attempts to represent English in Hebrew script appear in Hebrew deeds from medieval England (Davis 1888), terms associated with civic or legal matters:

(29)	אשתרלינש	ešt <sup>e</sup> rliṅš	'sterling'
	פארווישא	paroyṣə	'parish'
	צירוגרייפירש	širogreyfeyr <sup>ə</sup> s	'chirographers'
	אפורטנוצצא	aport <sup>e</sup> nuṣ <sup>ə</sup> ṣə	'appurtenances'

In addition, there is a large number of geographical names that appear in Hebrew script:

(30)	נורג'ניץ	norḡiṣ	'Norwich'
	הונג'ורזא	hunḡurzə	'Hunworth'
	גינצ'יטרא	ginṣeṭrə	'Winchester'
	קנטא'אוביר	konṭaurber	'Canterbury'
	אושנפ'ורט	oš <sup>e</sup> nforṭ	'Oxford'
	אדלמ'טונא	ed <sup>e</sup> lm <sup>e</sup> tonə	'Edmonton'
	לונק'הייא	lunkheyə	'Langehey'
	דור'יים	dureym	'Durham'
	שדל'גטא	s <sup>a</sup> d <sup>e</sup> lg <sup>a</sup> tə	'Saddlegate'
	איור'גיק	ev <sup>e</sup> rgik	'York'
	שוטון שור שורא	šoton sur surə	'Sutton-upon-Sore'
	גוזט'ראות	gzuzṭraut	'Jews' Street'

Like the earliest Romance-language Hebraicizations, the transcription of some forms is often inconsistent and idiosyncratic (given the prevalence of written French in thirteenth-century England, Romance may well be a pertinent "co-

matrix" for these early Hebraicizations of English<sup>44</sup>). The influence of Hebrew orthography itself is still noticeable in the post-consonant final ה *h*, as well as the use of ת *t*, which tends to be dropped in favour of ט *t* in Hebraicizations. Note, however, the absence of other letters such as ץ, which has historically been disfavored in all European adaptations of Hebrew script besides Yiddish, as well as the semi-consistent presence of *matres lectionis* to indicate vowels (though it is not always clear which vowel in particular).

By the end of the nineteenth century, with large numbers of mostly Yiddish-speaking Jews immigrating to North America, the need arose for language-learning materials similar to the French handbooks in § 2.3 targeted to this audience. One such manual offers an especially intriguing window into the use of Hebrew script for writing English. In Alexander Harkavy's (1893) אֲלֶענְדֹרְפִּיס מֵעֵטְהָאָרֶע *Ullendorf's Methode* (Bibliothèque Médem 15245) – note again the un-Yiddish Hebraicized-German title – the author presents a list of words and phrases with the pronunciation in the left column indicated as *rixtig* 'correct' and on the right as *greizig* 'wrong'. These transcriptions are nothing if not amusing as examples of a writer's attempt to represent Jewish immigrant-speak and, in a more general sense, as an adaptation of script whose goal is, in effect, to *mis*-represent speech. The errors that the writer anticipates of his readers are revealing:

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<sup>44</sup> Indeed most of the personal names in these charters are distinctly Gallic (or else Hebraic) in form. Some, however, do show an interesting blend of the two, such as שטייבנא ליובנא האלבשטייר <st̩eib̩nə l̩yub̩nə halb̩st̩eir> *Stephen Le Jouvene Le Arblaster*, where the second *Le* of the Roman-letter equivalent is actually calqued by the Hebrew definite article ה *ha*-.

**Table 2-22. Vowel-related errors in Harkavy (1893)**

• syncope	אי סאָפּאָז ay soppoz	אַספּאָז aspoz	'I suppose'
• mis-syllabification	האָררי אָפּ horri op	האָר יאָפּ hor yop	'hurry up'
• diphthong for monophthong	בענק benk	ביינק beynk	'bank'
• monophthong for diphthong	טשיינדזש tšeyndzš	טשענדזש tšendzš	'change'
	דאַון טאַון dawn tawn	דאַן טאַן dan tan	'downtown'

**Table 2-23. Consonant-related errors in Harkavy (1893)**

• dental fricative simplified	טהיינק יו theynk yu	דיינק יו deynk yu	'thank you'
	טינג thing	טינג ting	'thing'
• cluster simplified	אָל ראַיט ol rayt	אָראַיט orayt	'all right'
• devoicing	אָוו קאָרס ov kowrs	אָפּקאָס ofkos	'of course'
	הוויסקערז hviskerz	וויסקעס viskes	'whiskers'
• /r/ added to codas	אָמברעללע ombrelle	אָמברעלער ombreler	'umbrella'
• /r/ dropped from codas	דראָערז dro-erz	דראָז droz	'drawers'
	גארטער garter	גאטע gate	'garter'
	דזשאָירזי dzšoyrzi	דזשאָויזע dzšoize	'Jersey'

For several of the anticipated errors, however, it is difficult to see what phonetic goal is served by the left-hand *rixtig* transcription, such as the doubled ל in אָמברעללע *umbrella* and its intervening apostrophe. In the case of הוויסקערז *whiskers*, the need to pronounce the /r/ in the final syllable and to avoid devoicing the final constant is shown clearly enough. Yet simply adding ה *h* to the initial double-וו that in the *greizig* form stands for the

incorrect [v] does not successfully suggest the [hw] that the author has presumably intended,<sup>45</sup> because an effective transcription should not behave like a conventional orthography, using one grapheme (in this case a digraph) to represent different phonemes. The transcription of the *th*-initial words seems especially unhelpful, since the *טה-* is simply an orthographic calque of <th->. Replacing the initial *ת* in *דיינק יו* [deɪŋkju] with two letters that represent [t] and [h] respectively as a way to indicate the correct [θ] pronunciation probably requires a good deal more familiarity with the English-language adaptation of Roman script than readers were likely to have.

#### 4. SUMMARY

The foregoing survey vividly illustrates some of the unique aspects of Hebraicized writing discussed in the first chapter. Although originally adapted by Semitic speakers for a Semitic language, it is clear that the original nature of the script has proven no impediment to its later Jewish adapters. Moreover, the retreat of Hebraicization from the modern landscape of writing does not imply that the phenomenon was inherently marginal; it is only in retrospect that the markedness of Hebraicized writing emerges.

It is interesting to note the implicit focus on this adaptation – which, as argued in the previous chapter, is not different in kind from the numerous adaptations of scripts that have made writing itself possible – in a good deal of European anti-Semitic thought of the last millennium. As Gilman (1986)

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<sup>45</sup> Curiously enough, this is precisely the strategy of the Yiddish *Forverts* to spell non-final [w], e.g. *טייוואן* *Taiwan*, *אורוגוויי* *Uruguay*, *אל-זארקאוי* *Al-Zarqawi* – unless, as perhaps is the case for first two words, the double-*וו* indicates the pronunciation *qua* Yiddish with [v] (cf. chapter 8 § 1.2). Modern Hebrew, by contrast, exploits the historical value of a single *ו* to render /w/, for instance in bilingual dictionary transcriptions, e.g. *וּ* <w<sup>u</sup>> *wow*, *וּאוּ* <w<sup>o</sup>> *whoa*, *וּלד'וֹספּ* <w<sup>l</sup>d'w<sup>s</sup>p> *will-o'-the-wisp* (Segal and Dagut 1991).

explains, such writers expressed a belief that Jews could never fully command the language they ostensibly spoke or wrote, and considered the use of the Hebrew alphabet to be both a consequence of this deficiency as well as evidence for the existence of a "hidden language" that purposefully concealed the true expression of "Jewish thought." In reality, of course, writing their language in Hebrew script – particularly for Romance-speaking Jews – was no more marked, devious, or problematic an act than it was to be Jewish itself. Furthermore, as I will argue in the case of Judeo-Portuguese, this act did not in and of itself entail (though it would not exclude the possibility) that the language of composition had any particular Judaic character *beyond the script itself*. Before turning to a more detailed description of the Portuguese adaptation of Hebrew script, then, it is worth recalling the caution by Aslanov (2001: 5):

Il faut se garder de projeter sur la situation linguistique des juiveries médiévales d'Europe occidentale une terminologie et une analyse qui conviennent davantage à la description des judéo-langues parlées dans le Temps [sic] modernes en Europe Orientale, dans les Balkans ou en Asie, après que l'Occident chrétien eut rejeté à la périphérie ou en dehors de son domaine les Juifs qui y avaient vécu des siècles durant.

*One should be wary of projecting onto the linguistic situation of [Jews in] medieval Western Europe that are better suited to the description of Jewish languages spoken in modern times in Eastern Europe a terminology and analysis, in the Balkans, or in Asia, (which emerged) after the Christian West had driven the Jews who had lived there for centuries to the periphery or out of their domains.*