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**The Hebrew Language in the Polish Lands
at the Turn of 18th Century
(A Case Study of the Manuscript of the
“Memoirs of Dov Ber of Bolechów”)**

Abstract

The Hebrew language of Dov Ber is an important source for the study of the development of the Hebrew language in general, especially in the Polish lands. Dov Ber of Bolechów (1723–1805) has written his memoirs in Hebrew in the time when this language was regarded as a dead language. It was only a century, after Dov Ber’s memoirs had been written, that Eliezer Ben-Yehuda revived the Hebrew language by using it in everyday life. The author of the manuscript, who had a traditional Jewish education, knew the languages of the *Bible* and the *Mishnah*. The Biblical Hebrew was the main lexicographical basis for him and he extended it by way of borrowings from other languages, for the most part from Polish (often via Yiddish) and from Yiddish. He also used the Post-Biblical Hebrew language, first of all the Mishnaic language, which introduces three tenses in lieu of two aspects of the Biblical language. The Hebrew language used by Dov Ber is an intermediate stage between the language of the *Bible* and that of the *Mishnah*, on which he based himself, and the spoken Hebrew revived towards the close of the 19th century.

The European Enlightenment aroused in the followers of Judaism the awareness that the Hebrew language declined. Like other nations among which they lived, the Jews wanted to speak and write in their own tongue. This could specially be seen in Berlin, where a new movement of the Jewish Enlightenment, the *Haskalah*, emerged. The writings of the Berlin forerunners of the *Haskalah* of the last quarter of the 18th century,

that is to say from the time when the *Memoirs of Dov Ber of Bolechów* were written, evidence that they wanted to revive the Hebrew language. This was a part of their more general endeavours to revive the Jewish nation, its culture, and religion. Some of them even put forward the ideas of revival of the Hebrew tongue, which was to occur only one hundred years later.

The forerunners of the Berlin Haskalah pointed to various causes of the decline of the Hebrew language. They hold that these causes can be found primarily in the Diaspora and in the usage of the Yiddish language towards which they took a negative attitude. They criticized those rabbis who, trying to separate Judaism from lay teachings, distracted the nation from the Hebrew language and its culture.¹ They believed in the revival of the holy language, which, as a divine language, was perfect. They argued that it was the imperfection of man that led to the decline of this language.² According to Schnaber, the absence of tenses in the Biblical language, which has aspects only, points to the superiority of Hebrew, its perfection (for example, it is not limited to three tenses) and purity. Schnaber proposes a “new holy language”. Mendelssohn explains that the holiness of the language consists in that the Bible and the Decalogue were written in this language and that God used this language when he spoke to the patriarchs and prophets.³ N. Wessely holds that the “holiness” of the Hebrew language consists in its exceptionality, otherness and value, and, first of all, in its purity. It is, however, difficult to establish whether Wessely was for the secularization of the Hebrew language or not. The majority of the Berlin maskilim was exclusively for the Biblical Hebrew, and only some of them would also like to use the Mishnaic language.⁴ Some researchers are liberal towards the innovation in Hebrew; for example, Satanov proposes the formation of neologisms to update the Biblical vocabulary. The maskilim, who wanted to distinguish their Hebrew language, have created an elevated, florid style, which is often fairly unnatural.

“The Memoirs of Dov Ber of Bolechów” are an important source for the study of the development of the Hebrew language in general, especially in the Polish lands. Their author used the holy language to present everyday life and to describe lay matters. He purposely used the Biblical language to present the history of his generation. This manner of writing corresponds with the spiritual current arising at that time among the Jews. This was the beginning of the *Haskalah* in which the Hebrew language permitted the use of the entire sensual sphere. In every language words denoting human actions, feelings and thoughts are ageing and losing with time their picturesque and emotional value and, finally, they go out of use. This phenomenon has a particular dimension in the Hebrew language, which was not spoken for at least sixteen centuries (some hold that for almost two thousand four hundred years). It is assumed that in the 3rd century

¹ Cf. M. Pelli, *The Attitude of the First Maskilim toward the Hebrew Language*, Beer Sheva 1972, p. 6.

² This is the opinion of J. Ben Zeev and S. Papenheim, the writers and grammarians of the Enlightenment era. Quoted after M. Pelli, op. cit., p. 8.

³ Cf. M. Pelli, op. cit., p. 9.

⁴ E.g. S. Papenheim, I. Satanov and Ch. Keslin of Berlin.

Hebrew stopped being used as a spoken language and disappeared from everyday life, although there are researchers who support the hypothesis that people stopped speaking Hebrew as early as about the year 500 B.C. However, the Hebrew language did not disappear completely; it became the religious and literary language of Judaism. The religious poetry was written in it. Although it was not used as a spoken language but solely as the language of science and literature, some scholars tried to speak it. It was not until the close of the 19th century that Hebrew was revived as a spoken language. The first man to use it – in 1881 – as everyday language was Eliezer Perelman (1858–1922), better known as Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Zionist ideas have also exerted a considerable influence upon the resuscitation of the Hebrew language.

If we consider the revival of the Hebrew language in two aspects: of language (as the skills of forming correct texts from the stock of words) and of speech (realization of those skills), we will see how significant a role was played by the pioneers of the *Haskalah* in Hebrew language formation. Dov Ber's attempts were not exceptional. He reports that when he lived at Tyśmienica he met there a group of young men, who set the knowledge of the Hebrew language as the main goal for themselves. One of them, whose name was Joseph, son of Jacob Koppel, was a great expert in this subject.⁵ If we take into account trade relations of the Galician Jews with the Western communities, for example those of Wrocław, Leipzig, Paris or Amsterdam, we can clearly see the road of flow of thoughts, ideas and spiritual currents.

The striving to use exclusively the Biblical language – which has a historical background – can be observed in the period preceding the Jewish Enlightenment. It was only the *Haskalah* that created an excellent harmony between its needs and the kind of language it used. However, the use of the Hebrew language, and in principle the use of the Biblical Hebrew only, was fraught with serious difficulties. One of them was the fact that the stock of Biblical words did not always suffice to define events brought by everyday life. It was also too poor to describe historical events. People tried to find the way to cope with this task. One of them was the use of languages which were spoken in the immediate neighbourhood – in the case of Dov Ber it was also the Polish language. When the author of the memoirs faced difficulties, he usually made use of the Polish language (sometimes indirectly via Yiddish) or of Yiddish. He also used borrowings from other languages, for example from Latin; these were mostly Latin words or the Latin used in eighteenth-century Polish language.

When we read the “Memoirs of R. Dov of Bolechów”, we can come to the conclusion that the Hebrew language in the Polish lands in the 18th century entirely sufficed for the expression of all the needs of life. The case of Dov Ber makes us realize that as early as the mid-18th century there were other *maskilim* who shared his ideas at Bolechów, Tyśmienica (e.g. Joseph, son of Jacob Koppel), Brody and other localities in the Polish lands who strove to acquire general knowledge (not only Jewish) and the knowledge of the contemporary Hebrew literature (and not only rabbinical). We know the first *maskilim*

⁵ Cf. manuscript, p. 41B.

who were Dov Ber's contemporaries and who paved the way for the ideas of the *Haskalah*, although they themselves did not break with the Jewish tradition or religion. These were for example: rabbi Israel Zamość, master of Moses Mendelssohn and author of the books on sciences, natural sciences and philosophy; Abraham Uziel, social activist and physician of Brody, who completed his studies in Germany; Mendel Satanower, author of the popular books on natural sciences, who tried to translate the Hebrew Bible into spoken language; or Elias, son of Pinchas of Vilnius, who was born in Lvov, author of the well-known book *Sefer haberit* ("The Book of the Covenant"), a compendium of knowledge which was published in 1797.

At the beginning of the 19th century East Galicia came to be one of the more important centres of the *Haskalah*⁶ it gave birth to such great thinkers as the philosopher Nachman Krochmal (1785–1840), poet Shlomo Yehuda Rapaport (1790–1867), Joseph Perl (1773–1839, or Isaac Erter (1791–1851), who assembled many disciples and sympathizers. *Haskalah* in East Galicia is a remarkable chapter in the history of spiritual life of the Jewish nation.

No doubt, the movement owes much to the strivings which preceded it in the time of Dov Ber of Bolechów, whose literary and popularizing activity testifies to the beginnings of the revival of the Hebrew language in the Polish lands.

Dov Ber of Bolechów set a difficult task for himself: he wanted to write his memoirs in Hebrew in the time when this language was regarded as a dead language. It was only a century later, after Dov Ber's memoirs had been written, that Eliezer Ben-Yehuda revived the Hebrew language by using it in everyday life. The author of the manuscript, who had a traditional Jewish education, knew the languages of the *Bible* and the *Mishnah*. The Biblical Hebrew was the main lexicographical basis for him and he extended it by way of borrowing from other languages, mostly Polish (often via Yiddish) and Yiddish. He also used the Post-Biblical Hebrew language, first of all the Mishnaic language, which introduces three tenses in lieu of two aspects of the Biblical language. The Hebrew language used by Dov Ber is an intermediate stage between the language of the *Bible* and that of the *Mishnah*, on which he based himself, and the spoken Hebrew revived at the turn of the 19th century. The morphology of his language, just as the morphology of the present-day language, is based on the Biblical Hebrew, but we can also find in it the elements of the Mishnaic morphology. As regards syntax, he preserved the features of the Biblical and Post-Biblical language, chiefly of the Mishnaic language. Like in the present-day language, in Dov Ber's language the features of the Mishnaic syntax are prevalent. However, his language includes the elements of the Biblical syntax, which can hardly be found in the Hebrew language of today.

The text of the manuscript is written in italics, that is in a variety of the Hebrew writing the beginnings of which date back to the 2nd century B.C. The italics (cursive form of the Old Aramaic script) are used in the present-day Hebrew language as a handwriting, apart from the so-called square script, which is used as print today. The square writing

⁶ This topic is discussed, for example, by Janine Strauss, *La Haskala*, in: "Tsafon, revue d'études juives du Nord" 5, 1991, pp. 51–61.

is derived from the Canaanite through the Aramaic variety disseminated in the Assyrian Empire (hence its other name: Assyrian writing). The Judaic variety of this writing was shaped in the 3rd century B.C. One of the forms of this writing, chosen around the year 100 A.D. to write sacred books, was called the square writing. Traditionally, this writing was used over the centuries to write down the Biblical and religious texts of Judaism. It has also been used today for this purpose. Dov Ber uses this writing to mark the new paragraph in the first word of the line.

As a rule, in italics no vocalization is used, and this rule is generally followed by Dov Ber. In order, however, to make the consonantal text legible, for the notation of some vowels he uses several consonants which play the role of semi-consonants (or semi-vowels), or the so-called *matres lectionis*. In Dov Ber's language the system of notation of *matres lectionis* is extremely inconsistent. א as the *mater lectionis* was used by Dov Ber to notate almost all the vowels. Most often he uses this consonant in loanwords, sometimes he puts the *patah* underneath it, at other times he puts the *qamats*, like in the Yiddish spelling. The influence of the Yiddish language can be clearly seen in the manner of notation of loanwords by Dov Ber.

He writes the vowel "u", whether *shuruq* or *qubuts*, at will – sometimes with a ו and at other times without ו. Today, in the non-vocalized texts ו is always used, with few exceptions.

Similarly, the vowel "o" in the present-day non-vocalized text is always written as ו, with few exceptions, such as כל – "everything" or חכמה – "wisdom". Dov Ber uses both notations.

The notation of the vowel "i" looks much better in Dov Ber's language. In many cases he uses י, as if in the next syllable there was no resting *shwa* (that is in accordance with the rules of the present-day language, which were inexistent at that time). This is most often done in the perfect forms of the *piel* conjugation and in the nouns formed from this conjugation (Hebrew: *shem ha-pe'ula*): ביארחי (45B, XVI; 94B, XIV), וניצל (45B, XVI), וצייה (46B, XVI; 57A, XX; 91B, XII; 93B, XIII), צייה (66B, XI), סיפר (88A, XVI) and חילוף (44B, VII).

He is also consistent in that he does not write י if it is followed by the resting *shwa*. Yet we do find some instances of deviation from this rule, for example ניתן (27A, XI). The correctness of Dov Ber's notation of this vowel is owed to his intuition as a linguist and not to the rules which were unknown at that time.⁷

Quite often, in the last syllable of the word מרתק Dov Ber writes the vowel *tsere* by use of י, which is inconsistent with currently binding rules of the non-vocalized notation. Dov Ber's major mistake is his notation of this noun using י in the plural, where vocalization shortens and becomes a short vowel *shwa*.

⁷ The Committee of the Hebrew Language, the first institution established to promote and regulate the development of the Hebrew language, was founded in 1890, one hundred years after Dov Ber wrote his memoirs. By virtue of the resolution passed by the Knesset in 1953 it was transformed into the Academy of Hebrew Language.

Consonantal ך, whether it occurs in the middle of the word or not, is distinguished by Dov Ber only occasionally from *mater lectionis*, and it is usually done in the loanwords taken chiefly from Polish. In addition to the notation of *matres lectionis*, Dov Ber often uses a full vocalization in loanwords, especially in proper names.

In the Post-Biblical Hebrew language abbreviations are used quite often, which is also characteristic of Dov Ber's language. To abbreviate one word in the present-day Hebrew language the sign *geresh* ' is used, which is put after the last consonant of the abbreviation. Compound words are abbreviated using the sign *gershaim* ". This sign is placed, before the last consonant of the abbreviation. In the Hebrew language of today, like in European languages, abbreviations may be marked by dots, for example: תבת דאר – ת.ד., but it is better to use the *gershaim* "ת.ד. Dov Ber does not use dots to mark the abbreviations but only the *geresh* or *gershaim*. He is often inconsistent in his usage of abbreviations. The most frequent mistake made here is the abbreviation of the word רב written by the use of *gershaim* "ר. Dates are written in a consistent way, although there are also exceptions made by him. A completely exceptional (*hapax legomenon*) notation in the text of the memoirs is that of the date according to the Gregorian calendar. At times, Dov Ber's abbreviations cannot be read, for example בר"א – בן רב א' – "son of Reb A. (E.)". We do not know what name starting with א the author of the manuscript meant: Abraham, Eliezer, Aaron or yet some other. Characteristically, Dov Ber often abbreviates the word endings, that is he puts *geresh* or *gershaim* in lieu of the last syllable or consonant, for example אדומי" (27B, XV; 91B, IX) or זה" (23A, XV; 79B, V).

Out of the diacritic marks Dov Ber sometimes uses a weak *dagesh* to emphasize the explosive pronunciation of consonants from the group of the so-called *begadkefat* and *rafe* if he wants to point to the fricatives. This is done chiefly to indicate the pronunciation of loanwords. However, he does not use the strong *dagesh*, that is to say he does not point to the gemination of consonants, for example הפודאנים (*ha-podanim*) – "subjects", p. 22B, III.

One of the weakest points of Dov Ber's language is the punctuation, which considerably impedes the proper reading of the text of the memoirs. The author of the manuscript uses commas and full stops quite freely. He does not distinguish the dialogues in the text of the manuscript at all. He does not use quotation marks, and he puts a colon in the meaning of the Biblical *sof pasuq* , placing it at the end of the paragraph. In the Bible, this sign is used at the end of each verse. Dov Ber does not use any other punctuation marks. Thus, it may be difficult to fix the utterances in the text. The problem is even more complicated when there are quotations in the utterances involved.

As for as the d.p. is concerned, D.B. uses the Biblical forms of the demonstrative pronoun. However, the form זו – "this" (fem.) seems to be Mishnaic (73A, XVIII), although this form of the singular of the feminine gender can also be found sometimes in the Biblical texts. In the text of the memoirs we can find another Mishnaic form of the demonstrative pronoun אלו – "these" (67A, XIX). Quite often, Dov Ber does not observe the rule of placing the demonstrative pronoun after the word which it defines, for example זה הנער – "this young man" (88B, IV).

Due to the lack of vocalization in the text of the manuscript it is difficult to say whether the use of the defining pronoun is correct or incorrect. One can only say that Dov Ber often omits this pronoun or puts it in the wrong place. The author of the manuscript sometimes does not observe the rule of the syncope ה of the determinative after the consonants כ, ב, ל, for example בהשדות (60A, VII). A frequent phenomenon in Dov Ber's language is the lack of agreement in respect of definiteness in the compound words of the following type:

- noun + demonstrative pronoun, e.g. החסד זה (78B, XII),
- noun + noun, e.g. ערלים הגולנים (72B, XVIII),
- gerund + gerund, e.g. המחלק ומסלק (78B, II).

In the text of the memoirs one can also very often find an incorrectly defined compound of two names occurring in the close syntactical relation, which is very characteristic of the Semitic languages and which expresses most often the collocation called *status constructus* in which the defining word of the second element defines the whole compound. Dov Ber often erroneously defines the first element of the compound, for example: הזוף מלח (73A, V), הכלי קודש (73B, X), "הכלי ק" (73B, XI), הבעלי עגלות (74A, IV), הסדר תפילה (88A, XII).

Dov Ber's definition of the conjunction גם – "also, as well" – הגם (22B, I; 39A, IX and 48A, XVI) is exceptional and unprecedented. We may suppose that this is the way the author of the manuscript tried to form the Hebrew result conjunction on the model of the Polish "toteż"⁸ ("which is why").

As a relative pronoun Dov Ber uses the particle ש, which displaced the Biblical אשר. For example, on page 39A alone we can find this particle in several places, used in the present-day Hebrew language as a relative pronoun שרצה שאלמד (VI), שילמד (VIII), שלא (XII), שנסע... שהיו (XV).

Characteristically, in his language Dov Ber confuses the grammatical gender and number. Most frequently, Dov Ber uses the word חביות – "barrels" instead of חבית – "barrel", e.g. חביות אחת (22B, IX). Elsewhere, we can find בית ישן... ובנה בה – "an old house... and he built in it" (fem.) instead of בו – "in it" (masc. – 22B, XXIII).

The morpheme of the plural of the feminine gender in Biblical Hebrew and in present-day language is the ending -ים. In Dov Ber's language, just as in the language of the Mishnah, one can often find – instead of this ending – the Aramaic ending -ין, for example שותפין – "partners" (71B, XIII). The author usually adds this ending to the words borrowed from other languages.

In addition to the above-mentioned synthetic way of expression of the collocation, the only one used in the Biblical language and called *status constructus*, due to the status of subordination of the first element of the compound, in the Post-Biblical language already since the time of the Mishnah there has been a new way of expressing the collocation consisting in the joining of two names in the normal form (*status absolutus*) by means of the preposition של used as a possessive particle. This analytical form, which often occurs in present-day language, can be found in the text of the memoirs. של in conjunction

⁸ Cf. the Old Polish "to też" (therefore), *Słownik języka polskiego* (Dictionary of the Polish Language) by Maurycy Orgelbrand, Vilnius 1861.

with the suffigated personal pronoun forms the possessive pronoun, a rule which occurs also in Dov Ber's language, for example *את הסוס שלי* – "of my horse" (95A, XVI). Dov Ber, however, often does not define the noun preceding the possessive pronoun. This is incorrect but characteristic of his language, for example *שותפים שלי* – "my partners" (84A, XVII). In Dov Ber's language one can also find a pleonastic construction, which is very characteristic of a proper present-day Hebrew language consisting in that the first element preceding the preposition occurs in *status pronominalis*; in other words it forms *status constructus* with the suffigated possessive pronoun, for example *אביו של המלך* – lit. "his father of the king" (35B, X).

The particle *של* introducing the genitive case was formed from the Biblical *אשר ל*. In the Mishna it occurs as a proclitic *שלי* and with the personal pronouns forming possessive pronouns.⁹ In Dov Ber's language we can also observe this proclitic (*hapax legomenon* – 31A, IX). Dov Ber often uses the Aramaic particle introducing the genitive case *ד*, used at times even in the present-day Hebrew language, for example in the phrase *הרב דמתא* – "the Rabbi of the town" or *כשלג דאשתקד* – "like the snows of yester-year". On page 31A Dov Ber enumerates all three of the above-mentioned possibilities of representation of the particle introducing the genitive case:

- Aramaic *ד*: *האב"ד דק"ק לבוב* – "chairman of the court of the Lvov Holy Community" (V)
- Mishnaic proclitic *שלי*: *בנו שלהמלשין* – "son of the informer" (IX)
- present-day self-standing *של*: *אחיו של הקצין* – "brother of the judge" (XIV).

In the sentences where the object is defined, the author of the manuscript often omits the particle *את* which introduces the accusative case, for example: *ור' יעקוב הביא* – "And Reb Jacob brought the letters" (31B, IX).

Dov Ber uses three tenses, which is characteristic of the Neo-Hebrew language (from Mishnaic to the present-day Hebrew): past tense, for example *כתב הרב את האגרת* – "the rabbi wrote a letter" (31B, VII), present tense, for example *אני איני מסכים לפונקט זה* – "I disagree on this point" (75B, XVII) and future tense, for example *ואני אבא אלך* – "I will come to you" (57A, II). However, in addition to the three tenses Dov Ber's language has aspects which occur in the Biblical language, particularly their reflexive forms, so characteristic of the Biblical language, in which they express a kind of time interrelations. For example, on page 31A one can find several forms of the reflexive imperfect tense used in the sense of the past tense: *וידוע לו* – "he announced it to him" (II), *ויאמר לר'* – "he said to the Reb" (VI), *ויאמר ר'* – "Reb said" ((IX–X), *ויאמר הרב לר'* – "the rabbi said to Reb" (XV). On page 70B, XI–XII, we can see the following construction of the sentence: converted imperfect + converted imperfect + converted perfect + converted imperfect, for example *וילך ויבא לעיר החדשה הנ"ל והחזיק בית שמה וישב בה* – "He went and arrived in a new town mentioned above, and he hired a house and settled down in it".

Characteristic of Dov Ber's language is the formation of infinitives, particularly of the verbs *ל"א*. Two models can be distinguished here:

⁹ Cf. M.H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*, Oxford 1927 (reprint 1958), pp. 43–44 and 199–200.

- (1) למצאו (74A, IX; 93A, IX) instead of לקרוא (38A I; 76A, XIII; 77B, VIII), (83A, XIV; 94A, X). Dov Ber forms the *imperectum* of these verbs in a similar manner, for example, אבאו (57A, II)
- (2) (with ת added) למלאות (39A, V) or לקראות (38A, II; 38A, VII; 75A, VIII).

The same verb is sometimes written by the author of the manuscript as לקראו (74A, IX; 93A, IX) and, at other times, as לקראות (38A, II; 38A, VII; 75A, VIII). The doubly weak verb of the type יצא forms the infinitive correctly לצאת. In Dov Ber's language, however, we can find more often the forms of the infinitive taken from the Mishnaic language, for example: ליתן instead of לתת (23A, XIV; 43B, II; 44B, XII; 49A, XII; 50B, VI; 51A, XII; 54A, XVIII; 57A, XX; 57B, IV; 58A, XX; 60A, XVI; 70B, XVII; 73B, XII; 79B, XXI; 83B, X; 87A, XVII; 87B, III; 93B, X; 93B, XIII; 96A, IV – twenty times); לילך instead of ללכת (24B, III; 39B, XIV; 40A, XIV; 55A, IV; 56A, III; 57A, VII and XV; 58B, II; 67B, XIII; 68B, XV; 70B, XV; 81A, XIV; 89A, XI; 89B, XXII; 91A, XV; 92B, XVIII; 93B, VII; 94A, XI – eighteen times); לידע instead of לדעת (39A, IV; 44A, XV; 56A, XI; 59B, XIX; 75A, XIII); ליקח instead of לקחת (80B, XVI; 86B, VII; 87B, V; 93B, XV); לישב instead of לשבת (53B, I; 67A, XI); לירד instead of לרדת (90B, XIV). Except for the Mishnaic forms of the infinitive of the above-mentioned verbs, there are no other forms in Dov Ber's text.

Sometimes Dov Ber uses wrong conjugation. For example, on page 85A, VII we have the following sentence: נשארת בלבוז הרבה ינות “I remained/stayed much wine in Lvov” in which he used the verb in the conjugation *niphal* instead of *hiphil*: השארתי – “I left”. Elsewhere (88B, IV), one can read: כאשר החזיר זה הנער לבית אביו לא רצה להיות סוחר – “When this young man gave back to his father's home, he did not want to be a merchant”. In this sentence, Dov Ber used the verb in the causative conjugation *hiphil* instead of the simple active conjugation *qal*: חזר – “he returned, came back”.

It happens very often that the author of the manuscript does not observe the gender anti-congruence between the noun and the numeral defining this noun. At times Dov Ber uses the syntax of the numeral which is non-existent in the Neo-Hebrew language but which is evidenced in Biblical texts, for example שנים ושבעים אדומים (91B, XI), “מאה ששה ושלושים אדומי” (91B, IX), or חמשה ועשרים (92A, XII).

Inconsistently with Hebrew grammar, Dov Ber often puts the adjective before the noun which it defines. He compares adjectives according to the rules of the Biblical language, for example טובים מאלו – “better than these” (lit. “good”) – 67A, XIX), but he also uses comparative adverbs יותר, ביותר, ביותר, characteristic of the Neo-Hebrew and widely used in the present-day language (e.g. 27A, VI; 75A, I; 80 A, VI).

The use of the Hebrew language and, to be precise, confining oneself to the use of classical Hebrew, caused serious difficulties. One of them was the fact that the stock of Biblical words did not always suffice to describe the events brought by everyday life. Besides, this language was too poor to describe historical events. The authors tried to cope with this task. One way was to make use of the languages which were used in the immediate social setting which, in the case of Dov Ber, was the Polish language (sometimes used indirectly, via Yiddish) and Yiddish. There are also borrowings from

other languages, for example from Latin, but these are for the most part Latin words or phrases used in the Polish language of the 18th century. There are also several words taken from the German language, most likely via Yiddish, for example לאגיר – “lees” or ווערצהויער – “inns”.

The incomparably greater group of loanwords in Dov Ber’s language consists of the Polish borrowings – over 150 words. Usually, Polish loanwords were taken to Hebrew in three ways:¹⁰ (a) the Polish word was taken unchanged and it was transliterated using the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, (b) the Polish word was transliterated into Hebrew by adding the Hebrew translation to the transliteration, most often by the use of היינו – “that is” or או – “i.e.”, as in the case of Dov Ber; (c) the Polish word was translated into Hebrew by forming semantical neologisms. A similar phenomenon concerning the political and administrative vocabulary took place also in other Ashkenasi centres in Europe.¹¹

A detailed analysis of transliteration points out a strong influence of the Yiddish language on the notation of the Polish words written with Hebrew letters, which are also the letters of the Yiddish alphabet. In the word final position one can often find ך of which the Ashkenasic pronunciation corresponds with the Polish “s”, for example, אפרישקת, “opryszki/opryszkowie” (“opryszkes”) – the word borrowed from the Ukrainian, which means “ruffians”, שלשה ראטות – Polish: “trzy raty” (“three installments”), or ע corresponding in pronunciation with the sound “s”, for example סטרסטווע – “starostwe”/“starostwo” (“starosty”, ראטע אחת – “jedna rata” (“one installment”). In the language of Dov Ber we can often find also the Aramaic ending ן, for example זופין – “zupy” (“mines”), קויטין – “kwity” (“receipts”), קארטין – “karty” (“cards”), פרובין – “próby” (“samples”), באלין – “bale” (“logs”). An exception here will be the notation of the word “London”, which is consistent with the Polish spelling לונדין – “Londyn”. It was most often the phonetic notation, for example קאשטעלנאווא לפסקא – “kasztelanowa liwska” (“Liw castellan’s wife”) (after the name of the locality of Liw), where the last word is written down by פ – “f”, and not by ב or ו – “w”, because “w” was voiceless in this word. In Dov Ber’s manuscript we can also observe an orthographical notation, for example ארזאנד – “urząd” (“office”), where the Polish “rz” is rendered by two consonants.

Since trade was Dov Ber’s main occupation, we have the largest number of loanwords in this field: זופניק – “zupnik” (“miner”), זופ – “zupa” (“mine”), פרובין or פרובים – “próby/próbki” (“samples”), קאנטראקט – “kontrakt” (“contract”), קאנטראקטין – “Kontrakty” (“contracts”), the name of the Lvov fair, אנטל or אנטל – “antał”/“beczułka” (“hogsheaf,” “barrel”) – the word borrowed from the Hungarian, מאשלש or מאשלש – “maślacz” (Hung. “maslas”), type of sweet or semi-dry Tokay wine, סוכייאגוד or סוכייאגוד or סוכייאגוד – compound of two Polish words “sucha jagoda” (“dry blueberry”) denoting the type of the Tokay wine made of dried up grapes, דיאמנטיין – “diamenty” (“diamonds”), מטריאל or מטריעת – “materiał/materiały”

¹⁰ On Polish terms in Hebrew documents see, *inter alia*, M. Altbauer, *On the Language of Documents related to the Jewish Self-Government in Poland*, in: *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej* (Jews in the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), pp. 13–22.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

(“material” or “materials”), זייגערלך – via Yid. “zegarki” (“watches”), טאבאק פושקית, “tabaka puszkowana” (“canned snuff”), קאצין – “koce” (“blankets”) via Yid., (Hebr. term שמיכה – “blanket” occurs in the Bible), דעמבט, “dęby”/“dębowe” (“oaks” or “oaken”), אסיגנציה or אסיגנציע – “asygnacja” (“assignacja”) (Old Pol. “money order”), פארטוך – “fartuch” (“apron”), גאלאנטריע, “galanteria” (“accessories, fancy goods”), יופקה – “jupka” (Old Pol. “skirt”), רעגיסטר, “rejestr” (“register”), ארנדי or ארנדע, “arenda/arendy” (“lease”), בלאסקט or בוטלקע, “butelka/flaszka” (“bottle” or “flask”), בראוואר or בראוור, “browar” (“brewery”), גאטונג, “gatunek” (“quality”), פארטיע יינות, “partia win” (“batch of wines”), רעצעפט, “recepta/przepis” (“prescription, recipe”), קאסע, “kasa” (“cash desk”), קוויט, “kwit” (“receipt”), טבאקריק, “morda/pysk konia” (“horse’s mouth”), דארי, “dary” (“gifts”), פשר, “tabakierki” (“snuff boxes”), קאמפראמית or קאמפראמית beside Talmudic קאנטריבאנט, “kompromis/ugoda” (“compromise, settlement”), שנור, “sznur” (“rope”), “kontrabanda” (“contraband”), אדומים, “czerwone” (“the red” – the name of coins), זלוטע, “złote” (“zlotys”), and פראצענט, “procent” (“percent”). Many borrowings come also from the administrative and political domain: פאוויאד, “powiat” (“district”), זעמיע, “ziemia” (“land”), קופרטה, “koperta” (“envelope”), פרוטוקאל, “protokół” (“protocol”), “inspektor” – ינספעקטור, “prefekt” (“prefect”), פראפעקטש, “superintendent”, סאפריינטנדענט, “administracja” (“administration”), אדמיניסטראציע or אדמיניסטראציע, “kancelaria” (“registry office”), פאדסקארבי, “podskarbi” (“undertreasurer”), סקארבניק, “skarbnik” (“treasurer”), “szlachcic” (“nobleman”), אנשי השלאכטית or אנשי השלאכט, “panowie szlachta” (“gentlemen noblemen”), שלאכטא, “szlachta” (“nobility”), סאנאט, “senat” (“senate”), סיימ קאנוואקאצייני, “Sejm Wielki” (“Great Sejm”), “sejm konwokacyjny” (“convocation sejm”), סיימיק, “sejmiki” (“diets”), קאמאר, “komisarz” (“police commissioner”), דזיעקאן, “dziekan” (“dean”), דירעקטור, “dyrektor” (“director”), בוכהלטר, “rachmistrz” (“actuary”), סענדזיא, “sędzia” (“judge”), ראחמשטר or מיינסטר, “buchalter” (“bookkeeper”), סופליקע, “suplika” (“supplication”), הויבמאן קארינע, “regimentarz” (deputy hetman), רעגיימנטר or רעגיימנטאר, “starostwo” (“starosty”), סטארסטווע, “staroscina” (“starost’s wife”), וואיעוואדע, וואיעוואדע, וואיעוואדע, “wojewoda” (“voivode”), “komplanacja” (“complanation”), ערי גראדס, “miasta grodzkie” (“municipal towns”), פאדדאני, “poddani” (“subjects”), לאוצשי קארוני, “łowczy koronny” (“master of the royal hunt”), עקאמן, “ekonom” (“steward”), קאשטעלאן, “kasztelan” (“castellan”), קאשטעלאנווא, “kasztelanowa” (“castellan’s wife”), כומרי כרמליטר, “księża karmelici” (“Carmelite priests”), ברנרדיני, “bernardyni” (“Bernardines monks”), פראנציסקאני, “franciszkanie” (“Franciscans”), שארזע, “szarża” (“rank/military rank”), דאקטור, “doktor” (“doctor”), פורמאן, “furman” (“wagoner”), בינדר or באדנר, “bednarz” (“cooper”), פאלדשער, “felczer” (“paramedic”), מינץ מיינסטער, “super arbiter” (“umpire”), מינץ מיינסטער, “myncmistrz” (“mintmaster”), פיסר, “pisarz” (“writer”). The typical borrowings from Yiddish in Dov Ber’s language include: טישלך, “stoły” (“tables”), בלעך, “blacha” (“metal plate”), שפילר, “gracze” (“players”), העכט, “synagoga” (“synagogue”), הערינג, “śledź” (“herring”), צוג, “koń pociągowy” (“draft horse”), לייזינג, “pieniądze ze sprzedaży” (“money from sale”). Dow Ber writes down some words in several variants. Sometimes

he uses loanwords even if he knows the Hebrew term, for example קאץ instead of the Biblical שמיכה, דאקטער instead of the Biblical רופא, פורמאן beside בעל עגלה (translation into Polish of the word “bałagufa” (“hackney driver”), כותב and פיסר meaning “clerk”, beside Hebr. סופר meaning “writer”, קאמפראמיט or קאמפראמת, or קאמפראמיס beside פשר Talmudic, גולנים beside אפרישקה, בוטלקע and פלאסקה instead of the Biblical בקבוק. At times, he forms fairly correct grammatical constructions of the *status constructus* type in which the first element is Polish and the second one is Hebrew, for example אנשי השלאהטא – “panowie szlachta” (“gentlemen, noblemen”), אנשי הארזאנד – “urzędnicy” (“clerks”).

However, borrowings do not constitute significant part of Dov Ber's Hebrew vocabulary. Beside the repetitions, a little more than one loanword is the average per page of the Hebrew text. Polish influences can also be noticed in the style and syntax, but they are not of importance. Their number is small and they have not been preserved in the Hebrew language, for example האש על הקומן (בוער) – “pali ogień na kominku” (“he lights a fire in the fireplace”), ונתן לה אבי מעות על בשר – “dał jej mój ojciec pieniądze na mięso” (“my father gave her money for the meat”), הזמין אותי על סעודת ברית מילת בנו – “zaprosił mnie na ucztę [z okazji] obrzezania swojego syna” (“he invited me to the feast [on the occasion] of circumcision of his son”). The phrase: שנה טובה על היינות – “dobry rok na wina” (“a good year for wines”) seems to be Polish, too.

Under the influence of the Polish terminology, the Hebrew language of the discussed period was enriched chiefly with semantical neologisms related to the Jewish self-government. The text of the memoirs shows that some words of the Biblical or Post-Biblical language have acquired a new meaning, for example אדון – “pan” (“gentleman”), but also “dziedzic” (“landowner”), זהוב – “złoty” as a name for the coin, and, similarly, אדום – “czerwony” (“the red”). The Polish language, too, took some words pertaining to the Jewish self-government.¹²

The analysis of the language used by Dov Ber places it in the middle between the languages of the *Hasids* and those of the *maskilim*. His language derives from the *Bible*, *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, *Shulkhan Arukh*, rabbinical commentaries and other writings of Post-Biblical literature. He does not care about grammatical rules. He often confuses genders and numbers, and puts the adjective or demonstrative pronoun before the noun they define. He uses the defining pronoun at will, particularly when defining the compounds of the *status constructus* type. He puts the verb in the wrong conjugation, and so on. His carelessness regarding grammatical rules is a characteristic feature of the language of *Hasids*. It is *maskilim* that are puritans, care for the purity of the language and confine themselves to the Bible, which makes their language poorer. One may say that Dov Ber's Hebrew is closer to the language of *Hasids* in respect of the style, while its content nears the language of the *maskilim*. Lexical borrowings taken mainly from the Polish, but also from Yiddish, German and Latin, did not exert major influence upon Dov Ber's Hebrew. When reading the “Memoirs of Dov Ber of Bolechów” we may conclude that

¹² Cf. A. Leszczyński, *Nazewnictwo organów samorządu żydowskiego w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej do 1764 r.* (The Onomastics of the Jewish Self-Government Bodies in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth till 1764), in: *Żydzi w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, pp. 23-33.

the Hebrew language in the Polish lands in the 18th century utterly sufficed to express all the needs of life.

Those passages of the manuscript which give the details of trade transactions are written artlessly and present dry facts. Repetitions of the earlier fragments and lengthy sentences introduce certain monotony to the text. This is due to the unworked punctuation. It is especially clear in those parts of the memoirs in which the author enumerates damages after the fire of Bolechów. The manuscript is incoherent because it consists of six fragments. Sometimes Dov Ber refers to the same plot several times, while at other times the continuity of the plot is interrupted and the author does not finish it despite his earlier promises. The characteristic feature of the memoirs are numerous abbreviations, for example הנ"ל – a. m. – “above-mentioned” (which is used by Dov Ber even several times in one sentence), ז"ל – bl. m. – “of blessed memory” and other abbreviations pertaining to the respected members of the Jewish Community : מו"ה – “our teacher and master”; ר – R. – “Reb”, מוהר"ר – “our teacher and rabbinical master”, and to the community itself ק"ק – “Holy Community”.

However, we can also find fragments of the memoirs which fully deserve the name of a literary work in the full sense of the word, for example the description of bidding farewell to rabbi Yukel Segal. The work is enlivened in the first place by the dialogues between its protagonists and other descriptions of adventures during the expeditions to Hungary to purchase wine or the assault of a band of rufians on Bolechów. The literary value of the memoirs is enhanced by the quotations from the Bible and the Talmud which are part of Dov Ber's narrative.

Not surprisingly, the “Memoirs of Dov Ber of Bolechów” are mentioned in a number of publications concerning the history of Hebrew literature. However, the real value of the memoirs is evidenced by the historical information they contain. The manuscript of Dov Ber of Bolechów is also an important monument of eighteenth-century Hebrew language. Also, it testifies to the status of the Hebrew in the Polish lands towards the end of the 18th century.