

Yiddish

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Jewish Languages

Definition

- A set of languages that developed in various Jewish communities around the world
→ in Europe, West Asia, and North Africa
- addition of Hebrew words and phrases

Jewish Languages

- many Jewish languages retain vocabulary and linguistic structures long after they have been lost or changed in later forms of the language from which they descended
- Formation of a variety of languages specific to the Jewish community
 - Most notable: Yiddish (from German) and Ladino (from Spain)

Jewish Languages: Ladino

also Judaeo-Spanish

- Romance language derived from Old Spain
- Influenced by Hebrew and Aramaic + Arabic, Turkish and other languages
- Grammatical structure close to that of Spanish
- In serious danger of language extinction

Jewish Languages: Yiddish

International language of the Ashkenazic Jews
spoken since the Middle Ages

- Hybrid language:
 - Mostly German in its linguistic structure and vocabulary
 - Written in Hebrew characters
 - Originally, certain Hebrew words were added to German
 - Later, Slavic words were added

Jewish Languages: Yiddish

- historically: originated in the Rhineland cities of Germany in the early Middle Ages
- first recognizable texts date from 14th century
- (over the next few centuries) Yiddish spread all over Europe

Jewish Languages: Yiddish

- Today: 85% German, 10% Hebrew, 5% Slavic, with traces of Romanian and French
- 2 major dialects:
 - Eastern Yiddish (includes Poland, White Russia, Ukraine, Romania and the Baltic States, esp. Lithuania)
 - Western Yiddish: languages which are used in the Netherlands, Alsace, Switzerland and Germany

Jewish Languages: Eastern Yiddish

the branch almost exclusively encountered in the contemporary speech community

Three major dialects

- Northeastern (*NEY* or *Litvish*)
- Centraleastern (CEY or *Poylish*)
- Southeastern (SEY or *Ukrainish*)

Jewish Languages: Eastern Yiddish

- In the middle of the 15th: the then-existing Western dialect of Yiddish was the standard
 - Western Yiddish dialect had begun to decline
 - Eastern Yiddish flourished with its three dialects
 - SEY seemed to dominate
- BUT: NEY was the dialect spoken by scholars and teachers → became Standard Yiddish

Standardization of Yiddish

Late 19th to mid 20th century

- the number of Jews speaking Yiddish increased greatly
 - Newspapers
 - Journals
 - Drama
- migration of Eastern Europe Jews, Yiddish spread to almost every corner of the world

Standardization of Yiddish

- Centre of migration after WWI was the US
- 1925 teachers and scholars established the Jewish Scientific Institute YIVO
- NEY was selected to be the standard → SELECTION
- YIVO standardized and unified the use of the Yiddish language
- 1930's: YIVO developed the original standard convention for transcription of Yiddish texts written in Hebrew characters → CODIFICATION

Standardization of Yiddish

- At this time Yiddish literature and theatre began to flourish
- Yiddish newspapers and journals

Impact of Yiddish culture on these regions

→ The Autonomous Oblast

- theatre troupe, streets named after prominent Yiddish authors

→ Galician SSR and Belorussian SSR

- one of the official languages, public educational system based on the Yiddish language

→ EXPANSION

Standardization of Yiddish

- East-Central and Eastern Europe remained the heartland of Yiddish until the Holocaust
- No limitation of the Yiddish Language in some regions
→ ACCEPTANCE

Standardization of Yiddish: Decline

A result of the history of the Jews

- Holocaust and the Stalinist purges which suppressed Yiddish cultural life
- six million European Jews who died in the Holocaust comprised the majority of the world's Yiddish speakers

Standardization of Yiddish: Decline

- the largest Yiddish-speaking communities are found among first-generation Jewish immigrants in North as well as South America and in Israel
- They were taught the local vernaculars, not Yiddish

→ Dead tongue???

Yiddish Today

- Yiddish is spoken by about 4 million Jews, located primarily in Argentina, Canada, France, Israel, Mexico, Romania, and the United States
- revitalization efforts are on the rise
- Yiddish courses are offered at European, North American, and Israeli universities
- degree programs in Yiddish linguistics are offered

Yiddish Today

- common Yiddish words can be found in English today
 - Yiddish has attained official recognition as a minority language only in Moldova, the Netherlands and Sweden
 - In Israel, Yiddish is a second language to Hebrew
- Still accepted today

The Yiddish Alphabet

- Written in the Hebrew alphabet
- Consists of 22 letters
 - Five of these letters have special final forms, called Sofit forms, used only at the end of a word
- Hebrew is an abjad, having letters only for consonants; Yiddish is not
- Read from right to left
- In words of more than one syllable the accent usually falls on the next-to-the-last syllable
 - ah-LEE-yeh
 - pahs-KOOD-neh

The Yiddish Alphabet

ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	אָ	אַ	אַ	
zayn (z)	melupn vov (u)	vov (u)	hey (h)	daled (d)	giml (g)	bayz (b)	kornets alef (c)	paselch alef (s)	Shtumer alef (silent)
ן	נ	מ	מ	ל	ך	כ	י	י	ט
langer nun (n)	nun (n)	shioe mem (m)	mem (m)	lamed (l)	langer kholef (kh)	kholef (kh)	kholek yud (k)	yud (y)	tee (t)
ש	ר	ק	ץ	צ	ף	פ	ע	ס	
shin (sh)	rayeh (r)	kuf (k)	langer tsadek (ts)	tsadek (ts)	langer fey (f)	fey (f)	pay (p)	ayen (a)	samaleh (s)
Used primarily in Hebrew and Aramaic loan words:					ב	ח	כ	ש	ת
					bof (b)	tof (t)	sin (s)	kof (k)	khee (kh)
Letter Combinations:					וּ	זש	דזש	טש	יּי
					(v)	(zh)	(dzh)	(sh)	(oy)

www.JewFAQ.org



The Yiddish Alphabet



ratner's deiri restoran

barimt far di beste
haymishe
gebeksn

private bolrooms

mir keitern oikh tsu alerlay shmhus un
andere –
plats far 80 biz 800 mentshn.

Yiddish vs. Hebrew

- Yiddish and Hebrew are very different languages.

Similarities:

- Both Yiddish and Hebrew are spoken and written primarily by Jews
- The two languages share the “same” alphabet
- Both languages are read from right to left
- Neither language uses capital letters
- Words shared by both languages (Yiddish having borrowed them from Hebrew) are spelled identically

Yiddish vs. Hebrew

Differences

- Yiddish is a Germanic language, belonging to the Indo-European family of languages, while Hebrew is a Semitic language, belonging to the Afroasiatic family of languages
- Yiddish is what linguists call a "fusion language," meaning that it has integrated within its Germanic structure elements from such diverse languages as Hebrew, Aramaic, Old Italian, Old French, Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian. By contrast, Hebrew consists almost entirely of pure Semitic stock.

Yiddish vs. Hebrew

- Yiddish is spoken chiefly by Jews of East European origin or descent. Hebrew is spoken chiefly by Israeli Jews or Jews of Middle Eastern origin or descent
- In Yiddish, words of more than one syllable are generally stressed on the penultimate (or next-to-the-last) syllable. In Hebrew, words of more than one syllable are generally stressed on the last syllable. For example, Yiddish <SHO-lem>, Hebrew <shah-LOM >.

English Words with Yiddish Origin

- Many Yiddish words have found their way into common English conversation
- Spelling of some of these words may be variable
- some of these words are used in English differently than in Yiddish
- Many terms are used, because there is no English equivalent

English Words with Yiddish Origin

- **shmutz** = Dirt
 - Example: "You have some shmutz on your shirt; brush it off."
- **shmooze** = Having a long, friendly chat
 - Examples: "Come to our party! Eat, drink and shmooze!" or "Our salesman is very good at shmoozing the clients."

English Words with Yiddish Origin

- **bagel** = a ring-shaped bread roll made by boiling then baking the dough
- **fleishig** = made with meat
- **haimish** (also **heimish**) = home-like, friendly, folksy
- **kosher** = conforming to Jewish dietary laws
- **maven** = expert

English Words with Yiddish Origin

- **Mazal Tov** = congratulations!
- **meshuga**, also **meshugge**, **meshugah**, **meshuggah** = crazy
- **mishpocha** = extended family
- **oy** or **oy vey** = interjection of grief, pain, or horror
- **schlep** = to drag or haul (an object); to make a tedious journey

English Words with Yiddish Origin

- **schmo** = a stupid person
- **schnorrer** = beggar
- **shicker** or **shickered** = drunk

Germanic Roots?!

- Some examples which show that many native Yiddish words have close German cognates
- Can you guess what these words/phrases could mean???

Germanic Roots?!

- A biseleh → A very little
- A feier zol im trefen → He should burn up!
(lit., A fire should meet him.)
- A glick hot dich getrofen! → A piece of luck happened to you.
- Bist meshugeh? → Are you crazy?

Germanic Roots?!

- Borviss → Barefoot
- Er hot nit zorg. → He hasn't got a worry.
- Es iz a shandeh far di kinder! → It's a shame for the children!
- Es tut mir vai → It hurts me.

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