

# Diversity in Numbers: A Linguistic Analysis of Numerals in Maskilic Hebrew<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article constitutes the first linguistic analysis of Maskilic Hebrew numerals. While it is commonly believed that Maskilic Hebrew exhibited a normative grammatical structure based largely on the biblical standard, examination of Maskilic texts reveals a much more diverse reality including elements of Biblical, Rabbinic, Medieval, and later Hebrew, as well as Yiddish and German, a reflection of the authors' rich linguistic background. The article explores the intriguing ways in which these different elements manifest themselves in Maskilic Hebrew numeral morphosyntax and usage. It analyses the key features of the numeral system drawing on examples from prominent Maskilic Hebrew texts of various fiction and nonfiction genres. These features include the avoidance of the dual in favour of the plural with the numeral 'two' (e.g. שתי שנים 'two years'); word order with basic and compound numerals (e.g. שלשה ימים vs. ימים שלשה 'three days'; עשרים וחמש vs. חמש ועשרים 'twenty five'); equalization of polar agreement (e.g. ארבע נסיכים 'four princes' and ששה ספינות 'six ships'); the use of the absolute and construct forms with numerals (e.g. החמשה ירחים 'the five months'); the use of ordinals to indicate hours (e.g. בשעה הרביעית 'at four o'clock'); and the use of the German ordinal markers טען- and דען- to indicate dates (e.g. ביום 20 טען סעפטעמבער 'on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September'). The article provides a diachronic perspective on these Maskilic Hebrew features

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by examining their relationship with earlier forms of the language as well as with Modern Hebrew.

## Introduction

The Haskalah gave rise to a new stage in the development of Hebrew characterized by a flourishing press; a rich literary culture which saw the emergence of original and translated prose fiction including novels, short stories, and novellas, as well as drama and poetry; and an extensive library of popular scientific writings. Maskilic Hebrew is significant from a linguistic point of view for two major reasons: first, it represents a vast and vibrant yet understudied stratum of the language the analysis of which can enrich our understanding of Hebrew in the Ashkenazic Diaspora. Second, Maskilic Hebrew was a direct forerunner of, and played a distinctive role in the emergence of, Modern (Israeli) Hebrew; as such, an enhanced understanding of Maskilic Hebrew can contribute to a clearer picture of the modern language's early development.

The Maskilim sought to use the Hebrew Bible as a declared model for their new literary genres. The Maskilic philosophy included an expressed antipathy towards postbiblical forms of Hebrew, which were generally viewed as grammatically flawed and corrupt;<sup>2</sup> in addition, the Maskilic authors typically associated these forms of Hebrew with

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<sup>2</sup> E. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982), pp. 183-189; A. Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (trans. J. Elwolde; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 267-268; I. Eldar, ממנדלסון עד מנדלי: בדרך לעברית

the Yiddish vernacular, which they commonly held in extremely low esteem.<sup>3</sup> However, this ideological position is at odds with the fact that the Maskilic authors were commonly steeped in postbiblical Hebrew language and literature from their yeshivah training, and spoke Yiddish as their mother tongue. Moreover, they had often studied German language and literature, and aimed to emulate German literary and cultural norms in their own Hebrew writing. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that examination of Maskilic writing reveals a much more complex picture than the expressed desire to compose texts based on the biblical standard; Maskilic Hebrew texts actually exhibit a variety of diverse elements – including Biblical, Rabbinic, Medieval, and later Hebrew, as well as Yiddish and German – that reflect the authors’ vast linguistic heritage, while nonetheless combining to form a cohesive structure.

One area of Maskilic writing where this variegated linguistic context is reflected in a number of noteworthy ways is the morphology, syntax, and use of numerals. Diachronically, numerals in Hebrew are a particularly instructive area to examine because of their complex morphosyntax. While numerals in Biblical, Rabbinic, and Modern Hebrew have been subjected to linguistic examination,<sup>4</sup> Maskilic Hebrew lacks such analysis. Thorough analysis

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החדשה (From Mendelssohn to Mendele: the emergence of modern literary Hebrew; Jerusalem: Carmel, 2014), pp. 10, 54.

<sup>3</sup> D. Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 1–66.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Shvitiel, “Numerals: Pre-Modern Hebrew,” in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (ed. Geoffrey Khan et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 2:898–903. In subsequent references: A. Shvitiel, “Numerals;” S. Weitzmann, “The Shifting Syntax of Numerals in Biblical Hebrew: A Reassessment,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 55 (1996): 177–185. In

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subsequent references: S. Weitzmann, “The Shifting Syntax of Numerals;” S. Sharvit, “המספר המונה בלשון חכמים: התרופפות ההתאם במין” (Cardinal number in Rabbinic Hebrew: The weakening of gender correlation), in *מחקרים בלשון העברית: ספר זיכרון לאליעזר רובינשטיין* (Studies in the Hebrew language: Memorial volume for Eliezer Rubinstein; ed. A. Dotan and A. Tal; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1995), pp. 49–63. In subsequent references: S. Sharvit, “Cardinal Number in Rabbinic Hebrew;” S. Bolozky and A. F. Haydar, “Colloquial Gender Neutralization in the Numeral Systems of Modern Hebrew and Lebanese Arabic,” *Al-Arabiyya* 19 (1986): 19–28. In subsequent references: S. Bolozky and A. F. Haydar, “Colloquial Gender Neutralization;” D. Ravid, “Neutralization of Gender Distinctions in Modern Hebrew Numerals,” *Language Variation and Change* 7 (1995): 79–100. In subsequent references: D. Ravid, “Neutralization of Gender Distinctions;” I. Meir, “זכר ונקבה” (The vulnerability of gender markings in Modern Hebrew numbers), *Balshanut Ivrit* 55 (2005): 31–42. In subsequent references: I. Meir, “The Vulnerability of Gender Markings;” I. Meir, “The Role of Prosody in Morphological Change: The Case of Hebrew Bound Numerals,” *Language Variation and Change* 20 (2008): 1–25. In subsequent references: I. Meir, “The Role of Prosody;” E. Gonen and D. Rubinstein, “Gender Neutralization in Hebrew: The Case of the Numerals in Colloquial Hebrew,” *Brill’s Journal of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics* 7 (2015): 1–29. In subsequent references: E. Gonen and D. Rubinstein, “Gender Neutralization in Hebrew;” E. Gonen, “שינוי לשוני פעיל ומבדל בעברית הישראלית: שם המספר כמקרה מבחן” (Language change in Israeli Hebrew), *Balshanut Ivrit* 71 (2017): 17–34. In subsequent references: E. Gonen, “Language Change.”

of Maskilic Hebrew numerals can shed much-needed light on the relationship between Maskilic Hebrew and other forms of the language, providing us with a clearer picture of the historical development of Hebrew and, more broadly, a case study which can serve as a constructive point of comparison for Semitic numeral morphosyntax. The purpose of this article is thus to provide the first analysis of the range of characteristic features of Maskilic Hebrew numerals, as well as to consider the influences that led to their emergence and the ways in which they relate to other (earlier and later) varieties of Hebrew. Numerals also illustrate wider trends in Maskilic Hebrew grammar, such as the interplay of different strata of Hebrew within the authors' writing, as well as their other linguistic influences (Yiddish, German, and sometimes Russian).

In this article, we shall examine the six key features of Maskilic numeral morphosyntax and usage, namely: the avoidance of the dual form, word order with basic and compound numerals, gender agreement, the use of the absolute and construct states, the expression of hours of the day, and the representation of ordinal numerals in dates. All of the issues to be discussed are widespread and representative features of Maskilic Hebrew. Our analysis is based on examination of prosaic texts composed between the 1780s and 1880s by 21 prominent Maskilic authors. The texts include popular science volumes on topics such as nature, geography, natural history, astronomy, and medicine, as well as novels and short stories. Certain extracts by various anonymous authors from the widely-circulated Maskilic periodicals *HaMaggid*, *HaMelits*, *HaTsefirah*, and *Ivri Anokhi* were used for the analysis as well.

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## 1. Avoidance of dual

Biblical Hebrew possesses a specific dual form which is used with time words, e.g. לָחֶם 'bread for two days' (Exod 16:29), שְׁנַתַּיִם אַחַר הַמַּבּוּל 'two years after the flood' (Gen 11:10) and numerals denoting precisely two, e.g. אֶלֶף מֵאָתַיִם חֲמֵשִׁים וְאַרְבָּעָה 'one thousand two hundred and fifty-four' (Ezra 2:7), אֲלָפִים סוּסִים 'two thousand horses' (2 Kings 18:23), in addition to words denoting paired body parts, e.g. פְּקוּדָה אֲזָנַיִם 'with open ears' (Is 42:20). These dual forms are likewise employed in Rabbinic Hebrew, e.g. בֶּן שְׁנַתַּיִם 'a boy of two years' (*b. Rosh* 10a), though that form of the language also exhibits a tendency to use expressions consisting of the numeral שְׁנַיִם 'two' in conjunction with a plural noun, e.g. שְׁנֵי יָמִים 'two days' (*m. Zav.* 1:2), שְׁנֵי אֲלָפִים שָׁנָה 'two thousand years' (*t. Sot.* 4:3).

Despite the Maskilic Hebrew authors' explicit preference for biblical forms and eschewal of the postbiblical strata of the language, in actual practice they deviate from biblical precedent in this case with their almost exclusive avoidance of the dual form in conjunction with time words and numerals. This is illustrated in the following examples, in which they invariably employ a form of the numeral 'two' with a plural noun denoting a time word:

(1)

ובכל שתי שעות

and every two hours<sup>5</sup>

(2)

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<sup>5</sup> D. Gordon, ספר דרכי הרפואה (*Approaches to medicine*; Lyck: Rudolf Siebert, 1870), 1:67. In subsequent references: D. Gordon, *Approaches*.

הירח נסתר בכל חודש שני ימים

the moon is hidden for two days every month<sup>6</sup>

(3)

לשבת בציון שתי שבועות

to dwell in Zion for two weeks<sup>7</sup>

(4)

לתקופת שתי שנים

for the period of two years<sup>8</sup>

The same tendency can be observed with numerals denoting two, as in the next set of examples:

(5)

עוד שתי מאות וששים קופים

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<sup>6</sup> M. Yuval, לימודי הטבע (Natural science; Czernowitz: Peter and Johann Eckhardt, 1836), p.

17b. In subsequent references: M. Yuval, *Natural Science*.

<sup>7</sup> A. Mapu, אהבת ציון (The love of Zion; Vilna: Romm, 1853), p. 86. In subsequent references:

A. Mapu, *The Love of Zion*.

<sup>8</sup> K. Schulman, מסתרי פריז (The mysteries of Paris; Vilna: Romm, 1857), 1:38. In subsequent

references: K. Schulman, *The Mysteries of Paris*.

260 more monkeys<sup>9</sup>

(6)

באורך שני מאות ווערסט

of a length of 200 versts<sup>10</sup>

(7)

ינתנו לו שני אלפים דאללאר

2000 dollars will be given to him<sup>11</sup>

(8)

בציור אריאן לבד נמצא שני אלפים כוכבים

in the picture of Orion alone there are two thousand stars<sup>12</sup>

The reason for the Maskilic authors' avoidance of the dual with time words and numerals can be partly ascribed to their above-discussed intimate familiarity with Rabbinic Hebrew literature, which overrode the expressed preference for Biblical Hebrew. This might also suggest that, in contrast to some classically biblical constructions which Maskilic authors

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<sup>9</sup> S. Y. Abramovitch, תולדות הטבע (Natural history; Leipzig: C. W. Vollrath, 1862 and 1867), 1:48. In subsequent references: S. Y. Abramovitch, *Natural History*.

<sup>10</sup> *HaMaggid*, 21 Mar. 1866, p. 90.

<sup>11</sup> I. Sperling, במצלות ים (In the depths of the sea; Warsaw: Chayim Kelter, 1876), p. 17. In subsequent references: I. Sperling, *In the Depths of the Sea*.

<sup>12</sup> M. Yuval, *Natural Science*, p. 9.



tended to employ in their writing (e.g. the *waw*-consecutive), the dual form did not consciously strike them as an explicitly biblical form which they should take care to include in their compositions. Moreover, the phenomenon may reflect a degree of influence from their native Yiddish vernacular, which does not have a dual form and would use the numeral צוויי *tsvey* ‘two’ in conjunction with a plural noun to express the types of constructions shown above, e.g. וואָסן צוויי *tsvey vokhn* ‘two weeks’. Besides, the other languages familiar to the Maskilic authors (most typically German, and in the late nineteenth century Russian and Polish) likewise lack a dual form. The same tendency to avoid the dual is attested in the contemporaneous Hasidic Hebrew tale,<sup>13</sup> as well as in the mid-nineteenth-century popular halakhic work *Kitsur Shulḥan Arukh* by Solomon Ganzfried,<sup>14</sup> and in the prominent seventeenth-century historical work *Yeven Meṣula*,<sup>15</sup> which suggests that Maskilic writing was an element of a more widespread Ashkenazic form of Hebrew needing further investigation.

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<sup>13</sup> L. Kahn, *A Grammar of the Eastern European Hasidic Hebrew Tale* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 51–54. In subsequent references: L. Kahn, *A Grammar of the Eastern European Hasidic Hebrew Tale*.

<sup>14</sup> L. Kahn, “The *Kitsur Shulḥan ‘Arukh*, Hasidic Tale, and Maskilic Literature as Exemplars of Ashkenazic Hebrew,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108 (2018): 159–193, at 177–178. In subsequent references: L. Kahn, “The *Kitsur Shulḥan ‘Arukh*.”

<sup>15</sup> L. Kahn, “The Ashkenazic Hebrew of Nathan Nata Hannover’s *Yeven Meṣula* (1653),” in *Studies in Semitic Linguistics and Manuscripts: A Liber Discipulorum in Honour of Professor Geoffrey Khan* (ed. Nadia Vidro et al.; Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2018), pp. 151–180, at pp. 163–164. In subsequent references: L. Kahn, “The Ashkenazic Hebrew of Nathan Nata Hannover.”

It is remarkable that Modern Hebrew inherited the dual forms for time periods, e.g. שנתיים 'two years', שבועיים 'two weeks'<sup>16</sup> and large numerals, e.g. מאתיים 'two-hundred', אלפיים 'two-thousand',<sup>17</sup> while the analytical forms used in Maskilic Hebrew can hardly be found.

## 2. Numeral word order

In the following section we shall examine numeral word order in Maskilic Hebrew, first discussing the position of the head noun and associated basic numerals (2.1) and then the position of the tens and digits in compound numerals (2.2).

### 2.1 Word order with basic numerals

In Biblical Hebrew the numerals 2–10 in noun phrases can appear either prepositively, e.g. וְשְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים 'three sons' (Gen 29:34), or postpositively, e.g. וּבָנֹת שְׁלוֹשׁ 'and three daughters' (1 Chron 25:5). In pre-exilic texts the postpositive order is less common and is usually restricted to lists;<sup>18</sup> it appears more frequently and in a broader range of contexts in

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<sup>16</sup> L. Glinert, *The Grammar of Modern Hebrew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 86. In subsequent references: L. Glinert, *The Grammar of Modern Hebrew*.

<sup>17</sup> L. Glinert, *The Grammar of Modern Hebrew*, pp. 82–83.

<sup>18</sup> W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (ed. Emil Kautzsch; trans. A. E. Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 432. In subsequent references: W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*; P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> reprint with corrections; Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2009), pp. 492–493. In subsequent references: P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*.

later Biblical Hebrew.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, in Rabbinic Hebrew the numerals typically precede the noun.<sup>20</sup>

In Maskilic Hebrew, the numerals most commonly precede the noun, e.g.: שלשה סוסים 'three horses'.<sup>21</sup> However, sometimes the postpositive order is attested, as in the following examples:

(9)

לו אניות שלש קטנות

he has three small ships<sup>22</sup>

(10)

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<sup>19</sup> B. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 278. In subsequent references: B. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*; P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, p. 493; Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 58–60.

<sup>20</sup> M. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 194. In subsequent references: M. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew*; M. Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew* (trans. John Elwolde; Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 86. In subsequent references: M. Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*.

<sup>21</sup> S. Y. Abramovitch, *Natural History*, 1:413.

<sup>22</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *מציאת הארץ החדשה* (Discovery of the New World; Altona, 1807), p. 14.

חלקו מחקרי הטבע את מין האדם למחלקות חמש שונות זו מזו

biologists have divided the human species into five distinct groups<sup>23</sup>

(11)

לפעמים עד עבור ימים שלשה וארבעה

sometimes until three or four days had passed<sup>24</sup>

This postpositive order appears only infrequently in Maskilic texts, but, as the above examples show, it is used productively, as opposed to simply appearing in citations of biblical verses. In this respect the authors appear to have been following the biblical model rather than the rabbinic one, in that they employ the postpositive word order in addition to the prepositive one. On the rare occasions when they employ it, they do so in the same types of contexts as the more common prepositive order, as in Late Biblical Hebrew, rather than reserving it for lists as in pre-exilic biblical texts. It is possible that they perceived the postpositive order as a tool for the elevated style in order to give their writing a biblical flavour (not distinguishing between the pre-exilic and post-exilic usages noted by modern biblical grammarians) and therefore selected it occasionally, but did not use it often because it was not as natural to them as the prepositive order (which is not only the norm in Rabbinic Hebrew but is also more common in the biblical text itself, as well as being the sole possible order in their native Yiddish and in other languages with which they might have been

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<sup>23</sup> J. Schönhak, תולדות הארץ (Natural history; Warsaw: H. Bomberg, 1841), 1:2. In subsequent references: J. Schönhak, *Natural History*.

<sup>24</sup> M. Studentzky, ארחות חיים (Ways of life; Warsaw, 1853), p. 244.

familiar). This combination of textual and vernacular influences in favour of the prepositive order may have led to the further marginalization and eventual disappearance of the postpositive order in revernacularized Modern Hebrew. This is part of a wider trend whereby the range of morphosyntactic possibilities for numerals is more restricted in Modern Hebrew than in its Maskilic antecedent.

## 2.2 Word order with compound numerals

In Biblical Hebrew, there are two syntactic constructions denoting compound numerals, a) with the tens first followed by the digits, e.g. *שָׁנָה הָיָה בְּמֶלְכּוֹ וְהָיָה עֶשְׂרִים וְחָמֵשׁ* ‘he was twenty-five years old when he began to reign’ (2 Kings 14:2), and b) with the digits first followed by the tens, e.g. *מִבֶּן חָמֵשׁ וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְיָמָיו* ‘from twenty-five years old and upward’ (Num 8:24).<sup>25</sup> The former is more commonly attested in the pre-exilic books and the latter in the post-exilic books, though the difference may not be purely an issue of diachronic development.<sup>26</sup> In Rabbinic Hebrew both of these same constructions are possible,<sup>27</sup> e.g. *עַד שְׁלֹשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם* ‘up to twenty-three days’ (*b. Nid 27a*). Likewise, various Medieval Hebrew texts exhibit the same mix of these two different options, e.g. *שְׁלֹשִׁים וְשָׁלוֹשׁ שָׁנָה* ‘thirty-three years’<sup>28</sup> vs. *עַד שְׁתַּיִם* ‘until she becomes thirty-five years old’.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See A. Shvitiel, “Numerals,” p. 899 for further discussion of word order in Biblical Hebrew numerals.

<sup>26</sup> S. Weitzmann, “The Shifting Syntax of Numerals.”

<sup>27</sup> A. Shvitiel, “Numerals,” 901.

<sup>28</sup> Rashi to Lev 26:35.

<sup>29</sup> *Mishneh Torah* 2:4.

The Maskilic authors continue in this tradition by employing the same two different constructions in the case of compound numerals, as shown in the following sets of examples.

Tens first	Digits first
<p>(12)</p> <p>המה <b>עשרים וחמש</b> במספר</p> <p>there were twenty-five of them<sup>30</sup></p>	<p>(13)</p> <p>גבוה <b>כחמש ועשרים</b> עד שלושים אמות</p> <p>he is about twenty-five to thirty cubits tall<sup>31</sup></p>
<p>(14)</p> <p><b>חמשים וחמש</b> פרסה</p> <p>fifty-five parasangs<sup>32</sup></p>	<p>(15)</p> <p><b>שמונה ועשרים</b> שנה</p> <p>twenty-eight years<sup>33</sup></p>
<p>(16)</p> <p><b>ששים ושש</b> יסודות</p> <p>sixty-six principles<sup>34</sup></p>	<p>(17)</p> <p><b>כששה ועשרים</b> מינים</p>

<sup>30</sup> B. Lindau, ראשית למודים (A primer on learning; Berlin: Hēvrat Hīnuḵh Ne‘arim, 1788 and Dessau: Christoph Schlieder, 1810), 1:148a. In subsequent references: B. Lindau, *A Primer on Learning*.

<sup>31</sup> B. Lindau, *A Primer on Learning*, 1:69a.

<sup>32</sup> M. A. Ginzburg, תולדות בני האדם (History of humankind; Vilna: B. Ratenberg, 1835), 1:55. In subsequent references: M. A. Ginzburg, *History of Humankind*.

<sup>33</sup> M. A. Ginzburg, *History of Humankind*, 1:75.

<sup>34</sup> A. Porjes, תורת החיים (Physiology; Vienna: G. Brag, 1875), p. 430. In subsequent references: A. Porjes, *Physiology*.

<p>(18)</p> <p>עשרים ושש רגל</p> <p>twenty-six feet<sup>36</sup></p> <p>(20)</p> <p>ארבעים ושמונה צלעות</p> <p>forty-eight sides<sup>38</sup></p> <p>(22)</p> <p>עשרים ושלוש שנה</p> <p>twenty-three years<sup>40</sup></p>	<p>about twenty-six species<sup>35</sup></p> <p>(19)</p> <p>אחד ועשרים שבועות</p> <p>twenty-one weeks<sup>37</sup></p> <p>(21)</p> <p>שבעה ועשרים יום</p> <p>twenty-eight days<sup>39</sup></p> <p>(23)</p> <p>בן שלש ועשרים שנה</p> <p>twenty-three years old<sup>41</sup></p>
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Both constructions appear frequently in the Maskilic Hebrew corpus, and are employed interchangeably; this is illustrated in the above sets of examples, in which both variants

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<sup>35</sup> J. Schönhak, *Natural History*, p. 144.

<sup>36</sup> S. Y. Abramovitch, *Natural History*, 1:505.

<sup>37</sup> S. Y. Abramovitch, *Natural History*, 1:32.

<sup>38</sup> J. Syrkin, המינירולוגיה או מערכת הדומם (Inanimate nature or mineralogy; Leipzig: Heinrich Hunger, 1869), p. 28. In subsequent references: J. Syrkin, *Inanimate Nature*.

<sup>39</sup> A. Mapu. *The Love of Zion*, p. 134.

<sup>40</sup> P. Smolenskin, התועה בדרכי החיים (The wanderer on the paths of life; Vienna, 1870), 2:173.

In subsequent references: P. Smolenskin, *The Wanderer*.

<sup>41</sup> P. Smolenskin, *The Wanderer*, 2:141.

frequently appear in the writing of the same author. However, the former (with the tens first) seems to be used somewhat more commonly. The Maskilic authors' slight preference for the construction with the tens first may have had some impact on the development of Modern Hebrew, which employs it exclusively and does not use the construction with the digits first. Once again, we can observe here the reduction of syntactic possibilities in Modern Hebrew vis-à-vis its Maskilic predecessor.

Interestingly, the tens-first variant is not attested in Yiddish, in which compound numerals take the form of ten + digit (e.g. *פֿינף און צוואַנציק* *finf un tsvontsik* 'twenty-five' (lit. 'five-and-twenty')). This discrepancy between the Yiddish form and the slightly preferred Maskilic Hebrew form, which emerged as the sole Modern Hebrew form, could be rooted in the fact that in the early period of revernacularization there was a tendency consciously to avoid Hebrew forms that were perceived as resembling Yiddish and instead to select alternatives that lacked such associations.<sup>42</sup> Another possible explanation is the influence of Russian, with which many early speakers of Modern Hebrew were familiar (particularly in the period of the Second Aliyah), as the same word order is found in complex numerals in that language.

### 3. Gender agreement

Maskilic Hebrew gender agreement with numerals frequently follows the precedent of the canonical forms of Hebrew, which exhibit gender polarity in numerals three to nineteen, whereby the long form of numerals, ending in *ִּ*-, appears in conjunction with masculine nouns, while the short form appears in conjunction with feminine nouns. This phenomenon is

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<sup>42</sup> B. Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 167–169.



a standard feature of Semitic languages.<sup>43</sup> However, Maskilic Hebrew has a noteworthy characteristic that differs from these earlier standards, namely a tendency towards equalization of polar agreement (to be discussed in 3.1), which is even more noticeable with nouns denoting measurements (to be discussed in 3.2).

### 3.1 Equalization of polar agreement

The Maskilic tendency towards equalization of polar agreement can be seen in the following examples, which contain short-form numerals in conjunction with masculine nouns:

(24)

ארבע נסיכים

four princes<sup>44</sup>

(25)

ארבע מכתביך היקרים

your four precious letters<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See R. Hetzron, “Agaw Numerals and Incongruence in Semitic,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 12 (1967): 169–197, for a discussion of the development of gender polarity in Semitic.

<sup>44</sup> S. Bloch, *Paths of the World*, p. 27a.

<sup>45</sup> M. A. Ginzburg, מכתבי סוחרים: קריית ספר (Kiryat sefer: Merchants’ letters; Vilna: B. Ratenberg, 1935), p. 88. In subsequent references: M. A. Ginzburg, *Kiryat Sefer*.

(26)

שלש או ארבע ילדים יפים

three or four beautiful children<sup>46</sup>

(27)

שלש ענינים

three issues<sup>47</sup>

(28)

שבע נקבים חלולים

seven hollow orifices<sup>48</sup>

The converse element of this phenomenon, whereby feminine nouns appear in conjunction with long-form numerals, is equally commonly attested. This tendency is illustrated below:

(29)

ששה צלעות

six ribs<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> J. Schönhak, *Natural History*, p. 27.

<sup>47</sup> N. Krochmal, מורה נבוכי הזמן (Guide for the perplexed of the time; Lemberg: Josef Schneider, 1851), p. 245. In subsequent references: N. Krochmal, *Guide for the Perplexed*.

<sup>48</sup> B. Lindau, *A Primer on Learning*, 1:53b.

<sup>49</sup> J. Syrkin, *Inanimate Nature*, p. 5.

(30)

ששה ספינות

six ships<sup>50</sup>

(31)

שבעה גבעות

seven hills<sup>51</sup>

(32)

תשעה ועשרים אניות

twenty-nine boats<sup>52</sup>

(33)

לשלשה עשר מדות שונות

for thirteen different traits<sup>53</sup>

In another major variety of nineteenth-century Hebrew, the language of the Hasidic tales, the long-form numerals are used almost exclusively with nouns of both genders, while the short-

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<sup>50</sup> S. Bloch, *Paths of the World*, p. 12b.

<sup>51</sup> N. Sokolow, מצוקי ארץ או יסודי ידיעת הגעאגראפיע הטבעית (Pillars of the earth or basic course in natural geography; Warsaw: Goldman, 1878), p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> *HaMaggid*, 12 Apr. 1857, p. 138.

<sup>53</sup> M. Lefin, ספר חשבון הנפש (Accounts of the soul; Vilna: Menahem Man ve-Simha Zemel, 1844), p. 16.

form numerals are restricted to a very small group of feminine nouns, suggesting that the language was undergoing a process of neutralization with respect to numerals.<sup>54</sup> The same tendency can also be observed in the seventeenth-century text *Yeven Meşula*,<sup>55</sup> indicating that there may have been a more widespread Ashkenazic Hebrew diachronic drive towards neutralization of polar agreement, with a preference for the long forms with nouns of both genders.

The Maskilic approach to numeral gender differs from this Ashkenazic background in that Maskilic Hebrew regularly employs both long- and short-form numerals with nouns, rather than favouring only the long forms. This discrepancy is likely due to the influence of Maskilic language ideology on their compositions: as mentioned above, Maskilic authors typically placed an emphasis on normative Biblical Hebrew grammar, in which there is a clear dichotomy between the long and short forms, with both forms regularly used. Thus, it is likely that the Maskilim strove to differentiate their writing stylistically from that of Hasidic and other non-Maskilic Ashkenazic texts by making conscious use of both forms. However, the Maskilic usage differs from the biblical model in that it displays a clear tendency towards equalization of polar gender agreement. This may suggest that the use of the two forms itself was more important or salient to the Maskilic authors than the rules of polar agreement governing them. It is possible that this trend was supported by the existence of a marginal phenomenon in Biblical Hebrew whereby a long-form numeral is found with a feminine noun, e.g. וְקָרְאוּ לְשָׁלֹשׁ אֲחֵיותֵיהֶם אֲחֵיותֵיהֶם ‘and they would invite their three sisters’ (Job 1:4), and vice-versa, e.g. כְּמִשְׁלֹשׁ חֳדָשִׁים ‘about three months later’ (Gen 38: 24); though these very

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<sup>54</sup> L. Kahn, *A Grammar of the Eastern European Hasidic Hebrew Tale*, pp. 137–139.

<sup>55</sup> L. Kahn, “The Ashkenazic Hebrew of Nathan Nata Hannover,” p. 162.

rare cases may be scribal errors.<sup>56</sup> Numeral gender in Rabbinic Hebrew exhibits a degree of flexibility compared with Biblical Hebrew, with long-form numerals sometimes attested in conjunction with feminine nouns, e.g. חמשה בנות ‘five maidens’ (*m. Qidd.* 52a).<sup>57</sup> This tendency may have exerted some influence on the Maskilic drive towards equalization, though the Rabbinic phenomenon is much less pervasive than the Maskilic one. A similar phenomenon of partial equalization of long- and short-form numerals to that found in Maskilic Hebrew is attested in the writings of the Ashkenazic community leader Joseph Rivlin in nineteenth-century Jerusalem,<sup>58</sup> suggesting that this trend towards equalization, alongside neutralization, might be a more widespread element of Ashkenazic Hebrew, though the extent of the influence of normative grammatical ideology on Rivlin and the relationship between his writing and that of the Maskilic authors requires further research.

While the Maskilic trend towards equalization of polar agreement does not have a parallel in Modern Hebrew, the latter exhibits a related phenomenon of neutralization in the

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<sup>56</sup> W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, p. 289; P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, p. 297; see also O. (Rodrigue) Schwarzwald, “בין לשון המקרא ללשון מינו” (Between Biblical and Modern Hebrew), *HaIvrit* 58 (2009–2010): 203–220, at 217.

<sup>57</sup> S. Sharvit, “Cardinal Number in Rabbinic Hebrew,” p. 60.

<sup>58</sup> Y. Wertheimer, 1975. ל בדיקת טקסטים עבריים מן המאה הי"ט: לרגל עיון בלשונם של יוסף ריבלין ומ"ל (On the study of 19th-century Hebrew: Based on an analysis of the language of Yosef Rivlin and M. L. Lilienblum), in מחקרים בתולדות היישוב (Vatiquin: Studies on the history of the yishuv, ed. H. Z. Hirschberg; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1975), pp. 149–161, at p. 157.

colloquial registers whereby the short form of numerals tends to be employed in conjunction with both masculine and feminine nouns.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.2 Gender equalization with measurement nouns

As mentioned above, this tendency towards equalization of polar agreement is particularly frequently attested in the case of nouns denoting units of measurement, i.e. distance and weight; currency; and large numerals. In most cases the nouns in question appear in the singular, reflecting a more widespread convention in different historical strata of Hebrew whereby frequently counted nouns are commonly found in the singular in conjunction with numerals.<sup>60</sup> This is shown in the following examples, which contain masculine nouns denoting distances and weights in conjunction with short-form numerals:

(34)

כשלש ווערסט

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<sup>59</sup> S. Bolozky and A. F. Haydar, “Colloquial Gender Neutralization,” I. Meir, “The Vulnerability of Gender Markings,” D. Ravid, “Neutralization of Gender Distinctions.”

<sup>60</sup> See Y. Neumann, “Redundancy,” in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (ed. Geoffrey Khan et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 3:334–337. Interestingly, in this respect the Maskilic Hebrew usage is much closer to colloquial Modern Hebrew than to either Biblical or Rabbinic Hebrew: in the earlier strata of the language, frequently counted nouns commonly appear in the singular only with numerals higher than ten, whereas in Maskilic Hebrew and colloquial Modern Hebrew they often appear in the singular with numerals from two to ten as well.

about three versts<sup>61</sup>

(35)

כתשע מיל מאדעסא

about nine miles from Odessa<sup>62</sup>

(36)

הנער הזה מגביה עשר צענטנער

this lad can lift ten centners<sup>63</sup>

(37)

ממשקל עשר ליטרות ומגובה עשר מעטער

ten pounds in weight and ten meters high<sup>64</sup>

The same tendency can be observed in the following phrases, which contain masculine nouns denoting currencies in conjunction with short-form numerals:

(38)

הוא לערך ארבע פראנק וחצי

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<sup>61</sup> *HaMelits*, 26 Sept. 1882, p. 733.

<sup>62</sup> *HaMelits*, 26 Dec. 1867, p. 368.

<sup>63</sup> A. Porjes, *Physiology*, p. 603.

<sup>64</sup> A. Porjes, *Physiology*, p. 605.

which is about four and a half francs<sup>65</sup>

(39)

**חמש רוי"ב מחיר כל פתקא**

five roubles is the price of each note<sup>66</sup>

(40)

לשלם קנס עשר מארק

to pay a penalty of ten marks<sup>67</sup>

(41)

וימכרום לאחדים בערך שלש – חמש רייט

and they sold them to some people for about three to five reichstalers<sup>68</sup>

(42)

וישאלנה מחיר החדר לחדש וכאשר אמרה לו חמש זהובים לחדש, כן, חמש או אולי שש

she asked about the price for the room per month, and she said him five guilders per month,

yes, five or maybe six<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *HaMaggid*, 25 Aug. 1887, p. 263.

<sup>66</sup> *HaMelits*, 18 July 1867, p. 199.

<sup>67</sup> *HaTsefirah*, 19 Mar. 1888, p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> J. Schönhak, *Natural History*, p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> P. Smolenskin, גאון ושבר, (Pride and fall; Vienna, 1873–1874), p. 193. In subsequent references: P. Smolenskin, *Pride and Fall*.



Finally, the following examples illustrate masculine nouns denoting large numerals (thousand, million, etc.) in conjunction with short-form numerals:

(43)

בעד חמש מיליאן ליווער

for five million livres<sup>70</sup>

(44)

בקש אשר תנתן הלוואה את יושבי העיר סך שש מיליאן כסף

he asked the citizens of the town to be given a loan of six million<sup>71</sup>

(45)

לשלוש אלפים נפשות עניים

to three thousand poor people<sup>72</sup>

While most nouns denoting measurements, currencies, and large numerals are masculine, there is also a small group of feminine nouns in these categories, and these frequently appear in conjunction with long-form numerals. Although these nouns are small in quantity, they are very commonly used in Maskilic texts. The following examples illustrate the use of these feminine nouns with long-form numerals:

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<sup>70</sup> B. Lindau, *A Primer on Learning*, 1:119a.

<sup>71</sup> *HaMaggid*, 26 Mar. 1879, p. 99.

<sup>72</sup> *HaMaggid*, 25 Aug. 1887, p. 262.

(46)

אחרי אשר חפרו שלשה אמות בערך

after they had dug about three cubits<sup>73</sup>

(47)

בעד כל נפש תשעה וארבעים ליטרות שטערלינג

forty-nine pounds sterling for each soul<sup>74</sup>

(48)

ביום א' שבוע העבר נפתחה מסלת הברזל מפה לביאליסטאק, הוא מרחק חמשה ועשרים פרסאות

last week on Sunday a railway from here to Bialystok was opened; it is a distance of twenty-five parasangs<sup>75</sup>

(49)

בעד תשעה אגורות נחשת

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<sup>73</sup> *HaMelits*, 31 Jan. 1867, p. 18.

<sup>74</sup> *HaMaggid*, 12 Apr. 1857, p. 138. Note that there is a similar masculine noun, 'pound', which is also used in Maskilic Hebrew, but that cannot be the form appearing in this example because it refers exclusively to weights, never to currencies, and has the plural form ליטרים. In Maskilic Hebrew the noun 'pound' (referring to currency or weight) is always treated as feminine, with the plural form consistently attested as ליטרות/ליטראות.

<sup>75</sup> *HaTsefirah*, 29 May 1862, p. 1.

for nine copper coins<sup>76</sup>

Within this group of feminine nouns, the numeral מאה 'hundred' stands out, as it is surprisingly frequently attested in conjunction with long forms of numerals, in almost half of the cases attested in the corpus. This phenomenon is illustrated below:

(50)

עד שעלה לערך שלשה מאות ר"ב

until it reached the value of three hundred roubles<sup>77</sup>

(51)

הכסף הנאסף עולה לסך חמשה מאות ר"ט

the collected money adds up to five hundred reichstalers<sup>78</sup>

(52)

מסביב גופו שני מאות עגילים

there are two hundred rings around his body<sup>79</sup>

(53)

בגובה ט' אלה ששה מאות רגל

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<sup>76</sup> *HaTsefirah*, 22 June 1880, p. 183.

<sup>77</sup> *HaMelits*, 28 Nov. 1882, p. 348.

<sup>78</sup> *HaMaggid*, 1 Mar. 1876, p. 73.

<sup>79</sup> J. Schönhak, *Natural History*, p. 208.

9600 feet high<sup>80</sup>

The fact that the Maskilic authors had a particular proclivity to employ long- and short-form numerals with both masculine and feminine nouns in the specific semantic categories of distances and weights; currencies; and large numerals is striking because there exists a very close parallel in colloquial Modern Hebrew, whereby the use of short-form numerals with both masculine and feminine nouns belonging to precisely these same semantic categories has been noted.<sup>81</sup> As in the Maskilic texts, the Modern Hebrew nouns in question typically appear in the singular.<sup>82</sup> The only difference between the (written) Maskilic Hebrew and (colloquial) Modern Hebrew phenomena is that the latter is a case of neutralization, whereby the short forms are used with masculine nouns but not vice versa, whereas Maskilic Hebrew exhibits a twofold tendency towards equalization, whereby long-form numerals are used with feminine nouns and short-form numerals are used with masculine ones. Indeed, it is possible that the colloquial Modern Hebrew tendency towards neutralization is directly linked to the earlier Maskilic (and more broadly, Ashkenazic) Hebrew phenomena of neutralization and equalization, as the fact that these different strata of the language all exhibit striking divergences from the normative system of polar agreement suggests that this system was never fully operative among users of Hebrew either before or after the revernacularization.<sup>83</sup>

#### 4. Numerals and the construct state

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<sup>80</sup> M. Yuval, *Natural Science*, p. 67b.

<sup>81</sup> E. Gonen and D. Rubinstein, “Gender Neutralization in Hebrew,” pp. 16–20.

<sup>82</sup> E. Gonen and D. Rubinstein, “Gender Neutralization in Hebrew,” p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> See E. Gonen, “Language Change,” for a detailed discussion of this view.

Maskilic Hebrew exhibits a number of noteworthy features regarding the construct state with numerals, namely the use of the construct with basic numerals (4.1) and the use of the absolute form instead of the construct in definite noun phrases (4.2).

#### 4.1 Numerals three to ten in the construct state

In Biblical Hebrew the numerals three to ten in the prepositive position can appear in the construct state as well as in the absolute, e.g. *שְׁלֹשָׁת יָמִים* ‘three days’ (2 Sam 24:13). The use of the construct may indicate that the numbered item is regarded as a block or group.<sup>84</sup> In Rabbinic Hebrew the absolute form is more common, but the construct is sometimes attested, particularly with measures,<sup>85</sup> e.g. *חֲמִשָּׁת כּוּרִין* ‘five cors’ (*t. Eruv. 2:9*).

Numerals three to ten in Maskilic Hebrew frequently appear in the absolute state in conjunction with nouns, e.g. *שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים* ‘three years’,<sup>86</sup> but they are also commonly attested in the construct state, e.g.:

(54)

*שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעוּלוֹת*

three actions<sup>87</sup>

(55)

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<sup>84</sup> B. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 278; P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, p. 493.

<sup>85</sup> M. Pérez Fernández, *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, p. 86.

<sup>86</sup> M. A. Ginzburg, *History of Humankind*, 1:233.

<sup>87</sup> N. Krochmal, *Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 53.

שלשת שנים

three years<sup>88</sup>

(56)

עשרת בתים

ten houses<sup>89</sup>

(57)

שמונת ימים

eight days<sup>90</sup>

(58)

ששת רגלים

six legs<sup>91</sup>

This Maskilic usage seems to resemble the biblical model more than the rabbinic one, as construct numerals are commonly attested in this type of context and are used in conjunction with nouns from a wide variety of semantic fields, rather than being primarily restricted to measures. The Maskilic use of these construct forms is productive: most of the phrases in the examples above are unattested in the Hebrew Bible or in rabbinic literature. As in the case of

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<sup>88</sup> A. Mapu, *The Love of Zion*, p. 13.

<sup>89</sup> S. Bloch, *Paths of the World*, p. 104b.

<sup>90</sup> D. Gordon, *Approaches*, p. 115.

<sup>91</sup> B. Lindau, *A Primer on Learning*, 1:59a.

word order discussed in section 2 above, Maskilic Hebrew exhibits a greater range of syntactic variants than Modern Hebrew, in which the construct form is not used with indefinite head nouns.

#### 4.2 Absolute form in construct position

When a definite noun phrase in Maskilic Hebrew appears with one of the numerals from three to ten, the numeral may be in the construct state, e.g. שמונת השעות ‘the eight hours’.<sup>92</sup> This follows the precedent of earlier forms of Hebrew dating back to the biblical stratum<sup>93</sup> and is also standard in Modern Hebrew.<sup>94</sup> However, on many occasions the numeral appears in the absolute form instead of the construct. (This can be detected only in the case of the long-form numerals, because in unpointed texts the short-form numerals look the same in both the absolute and construct.) The phenomenon is attested in three variations. In the first, the definite article prefixed to the following noun (as standard in construct chains), e.g.:

(59)

שלשה החטפים

the three reduced vowels<sup>95</sup>

(60)

והביאה אליו את שלשה ילדיה

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<sup>92</sup> P. Smolenskin, *Pride and Fall*, p. 96.

<sup>93</sup> P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, p. 493.

<sup>94</sup> L. Glinert, *The Grammar of Modern Hebrew*, p. 80.

<sup>95</sup> N. Wessely, שירי תפארת (Songs of glory; Berlin: Ḥevrat Ḥinukh Ne‘arim, 1789), p. 21.

and she brought to him three children of hers<sup>96</sup>

(61)

ארבעה השליטים האלה

these four rulers<sup>97</sup>

(62)

חמשה המקומות המשוונים

the five strange places<sup>98</sup>

(63)

שבעה הדורות

the seven generations<sup>99</sup>

In the second variation, which is also very widely attested, the definite article is placed on the numeral rather than on the associated noun, e.g.:

(64)

כל השלשה משקלים

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<sup>96</sup> S. Y. Abramovitch, *Natural History*, 1:341.

<sup>97</sup> M. A. Ginzburg, *History of Humankind*, 1:277.

<sup>98</sup> M. Yuval, *Natural Science*, p. 27a.

<sup>99</sup> N. Krochmal, *Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 189.



all three of the weights<sup>100</sup>

(65)

החמשה ירחים

the five months<sup>101</sup>

(66)

והנה החמשה כוכבים

and here are the five stars<sup>102</sup>

(67)

הששה סידרי משנה

the six orders of the Mishnah<sup>103</sup>

(68)

התשעה דורות

the nine generations<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> B. Lindau, *A Primer on Learning*, 2:39a.

<sup>101</sup> M. Yuval, *Natural Science*, p. 18b.

<sup>102</sup> N. Krochmal, *Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 278.

<sup>103</sup> *HaMaggid*, 5 May 1857, p. 81.

<sup>104</sup> J. Schönhak, *Natural History*, p. 278.

Finally, there is a third variant whereby both the first and the second noun are prefixed by the definite article. This type of doubly definite construction is only rarely attested, e.g.:

(69)

כל הארבע התכונות

all the four features<sup>105</sup>

(70)

הששה החלקים

the six parts<sup>106</sup>

The above examples point to a high degree of flexibility in the Maskilic use of the absolute and construct form of numerals.<sup>107</sup> This flexibility may have emerged on analogy with the interchangeable nature of the absolute and construct forms in indefinite numeral phrases discussed in 4.1. Flexibility seems to be a key feature of the morphosyntax of Maskilic Hebrew numerals, as has been shown in sections 2 and 3. There is also some precedent for

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<sup>105</sup> N. Krochmal, *Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 287.

<sup>106</sup> J. Ben Zeev, תלמוד לשון עברי (Grammar of the Hebrew language; Breslau, 1796), p. 15.

<sup>107</sup> The three possible placements of the definite article in the above examples likewise reflect a high level of flexibility on the part of the authors. This is a feature of the syntax of the construct chain more generally in Maskilic Hebrew, as well as in other forms of contemporaneous and earlier Ashkenazic Hebrew; see L. Kahn, “The *Kitsur Shulḥan ‘Arukh*,” pp. 157–160 and “The Ashkenazic Hebrew of Nathan Nata Hannover,” pp. 173–176.

the use of the absolute numeral in definite noun phrases in earlier forms of Hebrew: in Biblical Hebrew there are some similar cases, e.g. בְּשָׁלֹשׁ הַגִּבּוֹרִים ‘the three warriors’ (2 Sam 23:22), though the construct is more typically employed in these types of phrases.<sup>108</sup> It is unclear how much influence these relatively rare cases had on Maskilic writing, in which the absolute form is quite frequently used in definite noun phrases. A more likely direct influence is the writings of medieval and early modern Jewish commentators such as Isaac Abarbanel, Abraham Ibn Ezra, David Qimhi, and Moses Alshekh, who employ the same type of construction, e.g. הַתְּשֵׁעָה אָחִים ‘the nine brothers’,<sup>109</sup> and whose writings were popular among Maskilim. The Maskilic use of this type of construction may have been reinforced by the fact that the authors’ native Yiddish only has one form of numerals, with no equivalent to the construct state. Interestingly, the same construction is also found in colloquial Modern Hebrew.<sup>110</sup>

##### 5. Expression of times of day with ordinal numerals<sup>111</sup>

In Maskilic Hebrew the time of day (e.g. ‘four o’clock’, ‘six p.m.’, etc.) is expressed exclusively by means of ordinal numbers. This type of construction is extremely common in

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<sup>108</sup> B. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 277.

<sup>109</sup> A. Ibn Ezra to Gen 37:25.

<sup>110</sup> I. Meir, *The Role of Prosody*,” p. 22, footnote 5.

<sup>111</sup> The authors gratefully acknowledge Keren Dubnov for originally noticing this phenomenon in early twentieth-century Hebrew (as presented at the NAPH international conference at Ben Gurion University in 2014). We would also like to express our gratitude to Sacha Stern for his numerous helpful and insightful comments on this section.

texts from the Late (Russian) Haskalah (1850s–1880s), as illustrated in the following examples:

(71)

הפעמון הגדול השמיע שעה השלישית

the large bell tolled three o'clock<sup>112</sup>

(72)

בשעה הרביעית אחרי חצות היום

at four o'clock in the afternoon<sup>113</sup>

(73)

בשעה החמישית בבוקר

at five o'clock in the morning<sup>114</sup>

(74)

בשעה הששית או השביעית אחר הצהרים

at six or seven in the evening<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> I. Sperling, *In the Depths of the Sea*, p. 16.

<sup>113</sup> P. Smolenskin, *The Wanderer*, p. 12; M. Lilienblum, הטאות נעורים (Sins of youth; Vienna, 1876), 1:102.

<sup>114</sup> S. Y. Abramovitch, *Natural History*, 1:479.

<sup>115</sup> K. Schulman, *The Mysteries of Paris*, p. 87.

(75)

עד השעה השמינית בערב

until eight o'clock in the evening<sup>116</sup>

The use of this construction (שעה 'hour' plus an ordinal numeral) to express hours of the day is attested in previous forms of Hebrew dating back to the Palestinian Talmud. The Talmudic method of timekeeping, called 'seasonal hours', is a system whereby the length of each hour varies depending on the time of year. This system is based on the Roman method of timekeeping, with 'the first hour' corresponding to dawn, 'the third hour' corresponding to nine a.m., and 'the sixth hour' corresponding to noon.<sup>117</sup> This method of timekeeping was maintained among the Jews for many centuries, and remained in use in the Ottoman Empire, including in the Hebrew texts composed there, until the early twentieth century.<sup>118</sup> By contrast, in Europe outside of the Ottoman Empire a system evolved whereby timekeeping began at midnight, with twelve corresponding to noon. Maskilic Hebrew writers employed the Talmudic construction with reference not to seasonal hours but rather to this European system; e.g. the expression בשעה השישית 'at the sixth hour' is used in the sense of 'at six o'clock (a.m. or p.m.)', rather than in the sense of 'midday' as in the Talmudic system. This usage exemplifies a wider Maskilic trend whereby patterns and constructions from the canonical strata of Hebrew are employed with a new meaning rooted in the authors' Central

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<sup>116</sup> S. Y. Abramovitch, *Natural History*, 2:399.

<sup>117</sup> For details see L. Schmitz, *Hora: A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (ed. William Smith; London: John Murray, 1875), p. 614.

<sup>118</sup> Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

and Eastern European cultural and linguistic setting. The same type of practice can be observed in Maskilic Hebrew strategies for developing neologisms based on biblical vocabulary in collocations calqued from European languages.<sup>119</sup>

In contrast to many other Maskilic Hebrew grammatical phenomena lacking direct precedent in the canonical forms of Hebrew, this construction does not have a parallel in Yiddish or in German. This is particularly noteworthy not only because one might expect the Maskilic authors' vernacular to have exerted the greatest influence in the expression of an everyday concept such as timekeeping, but also because German constituted a major literary and cultural model for them. It is possible that the Maskilic usage is the continuation of an older Hebrew convention that had emerged in the medieval or early modern period, but further research is needed in order to ascertain the extent to which this is true. It is also relevant to note that nineteenth-century Russian had a similar system of timekeeping using ordinal numerals, e.g. 'three p.m.' was expressed as в третьем часу (по полудни) 'at the third hour (in the afternoon)'.<sup>120</sup> The Russian construction may have informed the Maskilic

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<sup>119</sup> See D. Patterson, "Some Linguistic Aspects of the Nineteenth-Century Hebrew Novel," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962): 309–324, at 318–321; M. Agmon-Fruchtman and I. Allon, פרקים בתולדות הלשון העברית, החטיבה השלישית: החטיבה המודרנית, יחידה 8: החייאת העברית (History of the Hebrew language: The modern division, unit 8: The revival of Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Open University, 1994), pp. 22–23; L. Kahn, "Maskilic Hebrew," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (ed. Geoffrey Khan et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 2:581–585 for discussion of Maskilic Hebrew strategies for creating vocabulary.

<sup>120</sup> This construction existed in the Russian language during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Later it underwent a semantic shift and in the twentieth century the meaning of в третьем часу became 'shortly after two', rather than 'at three o'clock.'

usage to some extent, even if the latter can ultimately be traced to a medieval or early modern Hebrew practice. The possibility of Russian influence is supported by the fact that the Maskilic construction is attested only rarely in texts of the Early (Berlin) Haskalah and Middle (Galician) Haskalah, but is a very frequent feature in texts of the Late (Russian) Haskalah, by authors among whom knowledge of Russian was widespread.

The Maskilic authors employ this form consistently, to the exclusion of the construction בשעה 'at the hour of...' followed by a short-form cardinal numeral, as in Modern Hebrew. The Modern Hebrew construction does not seem to have come into use before the 1920s,<sup>121</sup> but after its first appearances it seems to have quickly replaced its Maskilic predecessor. The shift to this new Hebrew construction in early twentieth-century Palestine marks a striking divergence from the older tradition of using ordinal numerals in timekeeping. However, some Jews there currently use the Talmudic construction in spoken Hebrew with the same time reference as the Maskilic authors did, e.g. בשעה השלישית 'in the third hour' in the sense of 'three o'clock'.<sup>122</sup> The extent to which this expression is used in Modern Hebrew among Haredi Jews is a separate topic for future research.

## 6. Expression of ordinal numerals in dates

A final noteworthy feature of Maskilic numerals is a group of four interrelated constructions to indicate month dates which are borrowed directly from contemporaneous German-language usage. These constructions are extremely widespread in the Maskilic Hebrew press, as they are in the German-language press of the same period. The first of the

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<sup>121</sup> This is based on analysis of the corpora *Maagarim* and *Historical Jewish Press*.

<sup>122</sup> We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our consultant Eli Benedict for this information.

three variants is the German definite article *den* (masculine singular accusative), as in the following examples:

(76)

אינדיען. קלקוטא דען 15. אקטאבער. היה זה הגיעו לפה שמועות נוראות

India. Calcutta, the 15<sup>th</sup> of October: terrible news reached us<sup>123</sup>

(77)

שטוטטגארד דען 24. סעפטעמבר. היום שעה 4 אחר חצות בא הדרת הקיסר מלך רוסיה

Stuttgart, the 24<sup>th</sup> of September. Today at four o'clock at noon His Majesty the Tsar of Russia came<sup>124</sup>

The second is an Arabic numeral followed by a German ordinal suffix *-ten*, sometimes with a dash between the numeral and the suffix, e.g.:

(78)

מערעץ (פלך ווילנא), 3-טען מאי. ימים רבים נשכחה עירנו

Merkinė [district of Vilna], the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May. For many days, our town was forgotten<sup>125</sup>

(79)

שנה ראשונה עד 1 טען יולי

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<sup>123</sup> *HaMaggid*, 30 Oct. 1857, p. 178.

<sup>124</sup> *HaMaggid*, 9 Oct. 1857, p. 167.

<sup>125</sup> *HaTsefirah*, 20 May 1887, p. 103.



first year before the 1<sup>st</sup> of July<sup>126</sup>

(80)

ביום **10 טען** לחודש העבר **נאוועמבער** קראו ראשי וויען לששון ולשמחה

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of the previous month, November, the leaders of Vienna called for rejoicing and merriment<sup>127</sup>

In some cases, the authors instead employ the German ordinal suffix *-sten*, which is used in German following the numerals *zwanzig* ‘twenty’ and *dreißig* ‘thirty’. This suffix is selected in Maskilic Hebrew in the same contexts, despite the fact that the underlying German phonological reasons for employing the variant do not exist in Hebrew.

(81)

ביום **22 סטען אקטאבער** 867 הובאו ברומא ששים אנשים בבית כלא

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October [1]867 sixty people were taken to prison<sup>128</sup>

Finally, the authors may employ a combination of both *den* preceding the numeral and *ten* following it, e.g.:

(82)

נסעו כבוד המלך והמלכה על המסילת ברזל – אייזענבאהן – לעיר בראמבערג ולנו שם, **דען 3 טען זעפטעמבער**

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<sup>126</sup> *HaMaggid*, 28 June 1882, p. 206.

<sup>127</sup> *HaMaggid*, 24 Jan. 1877, p. 31.

<sup>128</sup> *Ivri Anokhi*, 23 July 1869, p. 329.

The king and queen travelled on the railway (Eisenbahn) to the town of Bromberg and lodged there, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September<sup>129</sup>

(83)

מאחנאווקע. דען 15 טען יאָני. נוצר פיו שומר נפשו פשק שפתיו מחתה לו

Makhnivka. The 15<sup>th</sup> of June. He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life; but for him that openeth wide his lips there shall be ruin [Prov 13:3]<sup>130</sup>

(84)

קארעץ. דען 19 טען אפריל 1864. שלום לך ידידי ויקירי

Korets. The 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1864. Greetings my dear friend<sup>131</sup>

Comparison with the German press of the same period illustrates the use of these constructions:

(85)

Hamburg, **den 21. Dec.** Da in einigen Zeitungen von der...

Hamburg, the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. As in certain newspapers of the...<sup>132</sup>

(86)

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<sup>129</sup> B. Lindau, *A Primer on Learning*, 2:17–18.

<sup>130</sup> *HaMelits*, 28 July 1864, p. 437.

<sup>131</sup> *HaMelits*, 19 May 1864, p. 277.

<sup>132</sup> *Augsburgische Ordinari Postzeitung*, 15 May 1770, p. 3.

vom **12 ten Januar** 1831 Seite 25., **13ten Januar** 1832 Seite 32., und **22 ten Januar**  
from the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1831, page 25, the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1832, page 32, and the 22<sup>th</sup> of  
January<sup>133</sup>

(87)

Montags, **den 27sten August** 1810

Monday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1810<sup>134</sup>

(88)

**Den 4ten Mai** 1830 erhielt ich unwürdiger einen Ruf zum Dienst bei der Mission in  
Suriname

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1830 I, unworthy one, received a call to serve at the mission in Suriname<sup>135</sup>

It is unclear whether the Maskilic authors and readers would actually have pronounced these German elements, or simply read them silently in the way that punctuation and dashes are used in many languages. It seems most likely to us that they were intended to serve purely as visual symbols rather than as real pronounceable words in the Hebrew language, since they do not fit in with Hebrew morphosyntax and do not correspond to any Hebrew prefixes or suffixes. This view is perhaps supported by the fact that the authors often additionally used a dot to the right of the Arabic numeral as a further marker of its ordinal

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<sup>133</sup> *Amts-Blatt der Königlichen Preussischen Regierung zu Königsberg*, 29 Jan. 1834, p. 22.

<sup>134</sup> *Gemeinnütziges Justiz- und Polizeiblatt der Teutschen*, 27 Aug. 1810, pp. 545–546.

<sup>135</sup> *Nachrichten aus der Brüder-Gemeine*, 1845, 5:781.

nature – see e.g. examples (76) and (77) – just as was the convention in the German press in that period (and indeed up to the present day). The Maskilic practice can be equated with the common convention in the Modern Hebrew press of writing ‘03/10/2020’, but reading it out loud as השלושה באוקטובר אלפיים ועשרים ‘the third of October, twenty-twenty’. The use of these symbols reflects the high esteem in which Maskilic authors regarded German literary and journalistic style, and the extent to which they used it as a model for their own writing.

## **Conclusion**

This article has shown that Maskilic Hebrew numeral morphosyntax and usage represent a diverse mix of influences, reflecting the authors’ complex sociolinguistic circumstances. Despite their avowed goal of creating a new literature based on biblical norms, the only elements of their numeral usage that can be traced directly to Biblical Hebrew are their utilization of the construct form of numerals in indefinite noun phrases and of flexible word order in complex numerals, and indeed these practices are not restricted to the Hebrew Bible but are also attested in postbiblical sources. Moreover, even when the Maskilic authors employ numeral forms and constructions attested in Biblical Hebrew (such as the absolute form of numerals in definite noun phrases), they often use them in innovative and productive ways rather than following the biblical convention.

In two other cases, i.e. the avoidance of the dual form, the use of the absolute form instead of the construct, and the expression of hours with ordinal numerals, the direct inspiration for the Maskilic Hebrew usage does not seem to be the Bible, but rather rabbinic or medieval literature. In all three instances the use of the Rabbinic or Medieval Hebrew form was reinforced or influenced by the authors’ contemporary Eastern European linguistic setting. The proclivity to avoid the dual and the use of the absolute form instead of the construct were likely to have been compounded by analogy with the authors’ native Yiddish.

Perhaps more strikingly, the Maskilic use of the rabbinic ordinal construction in timekeeping is overlaid with a meaning found in nineteenth-century Russian, with which the authors of the Late (Russian) Haskalah were typically familiar.

Gender agreement is a rare area in which Maskilic numeral morphosyntax differs markedly from other varieties of Ashkenazic Hebrew. In contrast to these varieties, which express a preference for the long forms of numerals with nouns of both genders, Maskilic Hebrew typically exhibits both the long and short forms of numerals. In many cases Maskilic usage follows the classical rules of polar agreement, but it also frequently differs from this earlier precedent because it shows a clear tendency towards equalization of polar agreement, particularly with measurement words.

There is also a clearly German-inspired feature, i.e. the use of German-based definite articles and ordinal suffixes in dates. This reflects the fact that Maskilic authors sought to model the way they presented news items on the style of the German press. This exemplifies the prominence of the German cultural and literary sphere as a factor shaping Maskilic writing and its perceived importance in the Maskilic drive to modernize and westernize Hebrew.

Our analysis has also shown that in many respects, the Maskilic Hebrew use of numerals differs from that of Modern Hebrew. This is evidenced by Maskilic phenomena such as flexible word order with basic numerals, the use of construct numerals in indefinite noun phrases, the avoidance of the dual, the expression of hours with ordinals, the use of German elements in dates, and equalization of polar agreement. In such cases, Maskilic Hebrew generally possesses a greater range of possible forms and exhibits more flexibility of usage than Modern Hebrew. However, Maskilic and Modern Hebrew resemble each other in that both have a distinct way of treating gender agreement in measurement words. Similarly, Maskilic and colloquial Modern Hebrew share a tendency to employ singular nouns with

numerals between two and ten. Moreover, the slight Maskilic Hebrew preference for a tens-first order in compound numerals may have contributed to the exclusive selection of this word order in Modern Hebrew.

Through the lens of the specific topic of numeral morphosyntax and usage, we can observe a number of broader trends characteristic of Maskilic Hebrew. First, it is clear that Maskilic Hebrew relies on the rich and multi-layered Hebrew textual tradition including writings from the rabbinic, medieval, and early modern periods in addition to the Hebrew Bible. Second, their writing also reflects the fact that they were the product of a common Ashkenazic Hebrew heritage, despite their desire to distance themselves from it. Finally, their language embodies their intention to transform Hebrew into what they regarded as an enlightened vehicle of cutting-edge European Jewish culture, though many of their innovations did not survive into the modern stratum of the language.