

CONTEMPORARY ASHKENAZIC HEBREW: THE GRAMMATICAL PROFILE OF AN OVERLOOKED TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY VARIETY¹

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Abstract

Ashkenazic Hebrew is a unique language variety with a centuries-long history of written use among Central and Eastern European Jews. It has distinct phonological and grammatical features attested in texts composed by Ashkenazic Jews (e.g. adherents of the Hasidic and Maskilic movements) in Europe prior to the twentieth century. While Ashkenazic Hebrew is commonly believed to have been replaced by Israeli Hebrew in the twentieth century, this traditional written variety of the language actually continues to thrive in contemporary Diaspora Haredi (strictly Orthodox) communities, chiefly the Hasidic centres of New York, London, Montreal and Antwerp. This fascinating and understudied form of Hebrew is used widely and productively in the composition of a rich variety of original documents for a Hasidic audience (about e.g. Covid transmission, United States educational stipulations, Zoom schooling, lockdown rules, etc.). In this article we demonstrate that contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew has many shared orthographic, phonological, grammatical and lexical features with its Eastern European antecedent. These include: orthography of loanwords based on Yiddish conventions (e.g. חולי הקוראָנאַ *xóylay ha-koróna* ‘those ill with coronavirus’); morphology of plural loan nouns (באַקאָלעגאַס *be-kólēgēs* ‘in colleges’, *האַפּראָגראַמען* *ha-programmen* ‘the programmes’); retention of the definite article with inseparable prepositions (בֵּהַשְׁכִּינָה *be-ha-šxine* ‘in the neighbourhood’);

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infinitives construct of I-*yod* roots following the Mishnaic model (לידע *láy-da* ‘to know’, לילך *láy-lex* ‘to go’); infinitives construct with subject suffix (באומר *be-ómroy* ‘when he said’); *hinne* with infinitives (הננו בזה להדגיש *híneni be-ze luhádgiš* ‘we hereby would like to emphasize’); and omission of the accusative marker (קראתי המילים *krúsi ha-mílim* ‘I read the words’). This article contributes to the wider study of language vitality and use in contemporary Hasidic communities, as well as to our understanding of the diversity of twenty-first century Hebrew.

1. Introduction

This article aims to demonstrate that Ashkenazic Hebrew is used productively in contemporary Diaspora Haredi (strictly Orthodox) communities for creating new texts from a wide range of genres, and that it has its own distinctive linguistic features. These features differ strikingly from those of contemporary Israeli Hebrew, while instead resembling earlier written Ashkenazic Hebrew composed in Eastern Europe between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries. The common perception is that Ashkenazic Hebrew ceased to be a productive written idiom with the destruction of the Eastern European Jewish communities in the Holocaust, the severe oppression of Hebrew in the Soviet Union and the rise of Israeli Hebrew in Palestine, and that in the twenty-first century the only scanty remnants of this once flourishing Diaspora variety of the language can be found in the sound of a Hebrew service in a Haredi synagogue. However, investigation of the rich variety of Hebrew texts composed in contemporary Haredi communities outside of Israel reveals that the highly distinctive Ashkenazic variety of the language continues to thrive as a productive written idiom to this day. In this article we will show that today’s Ashkenazic Hebrew preserves not only the pronunciation of earlier Eastern European Hebrew, but also a long list of orthographic, morphological, syntactic and lexical features which distinguish it significantly from Israeli Hebrew and support our assertion that it is a distinct variety of Diaspora Hebrew worthy of recognition in its own right.

1.1 Background: Historical Ashkenazic Hebrew

The term Ashkenazic Hebrew is usually applied to a particular historical variety of the language used in Central and Eastern Europe throughout the medieval, early modern and modern periods until the early twentieth century. There is evidence that Ashkenazic Hebrew first began to display its own distinct phonological features as early

as the twelfth to thirteenth centuries (Eldar 2013). Indeed, its specific pronunciation is usually the main feature associated with Ashkenazic Hebrew, though scholars have also recognized that it exhibits a number of distinctive orthographic, morphological, syntactic and lexical traits (Katz 1993: 46). Some of these traits are unique to Ashkenazic Hebrew, while others are attested in previous historical strata of the language (Biblical, Mishnaic and/or Medieval) but the specific ways that they are combined in Ashkenazic Hebrew is exclusive to this variety. The distinctive grammatical composition of Ashkenazic Hebrew from the first half of the second millennium CE is extremely understudied, with the exception of an investigation of the tense and mood system in the thirteenth-century Ashkenazic work *Sefer Hasidim* (Rabin 1965); however, we have descriptions of aspects of Ashkenazic Hebrew grammar from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century (Patterson 1962; Betzer 2001; Kahn 2009, 2015, 2018a, 2018b; Betzer 2010; Glinert 2013; Akun and Dubnov 2016; Yampolskaya 2017; Kahn and Yampolskaya 2019 and forthcoming).

Ashkenazic Hebrew in Central and Eastern Europe was a written and recited medium, not a vernacular. It always coexisted in a diglossic relationship with Yiddish, the spoken language of Ashkenazic Jewry from the medieval period onwards. This was an extremely long-term and stable case of diglossia. In addition to this internal Jewish diglossia, Jews spoke and wrote non-Jewish languages with varying levels of proficiency, e.g. Slavic languages such as Polish and Ukrainian. This language situation is commonly referred to as internal diglossia and external bilingualism (Fishman 1967). Within the internal Jewish diglossic framework, up until the late nineteenth century Ashkenazic Hebrew was typically used for high-register written genres such as historical narratives, *pinkasim* (community record books), Responsa literature, Jewish legal writing and sermons, as well as for some slightly less formal genres such as business and private correspondence. Beginning in the late eighteenth century and expanding considerably over the course of the nineteenth century, Ashkenazic Hebrew also became the vehicle of two new trends in Hebrew writing, namely Maskilic (Jewish Enlightenment) and Hasidic literature (Kahn 2009, 2015; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). The former, which grew into an extensive library over the course of the nineteenth century, encompassed a wide variety of genres such as popular science and history, prose fiction, drama, biographies and other non-fiction, as well as a thriving press. The latter was the product of Hasidism, a Jewish spiritual movement that arose in the late eighteenth century in an area corresponding to present-day Ukraine

and became widespread among Eastern European Jews over the course of the nineteenth century. The Hasidic movement centred around the figure of the rebbe, a charismatic spiritual leader, and his followers, who formed courts and later dynasties. Hasidism developed a significant written Hebrew corpus in the second half of the nineteenth century, consisting of hagiographic literature telling the stories of the lives and works of the rebbes. In addition, Hasidic writers continued to compose more traditional types of Hebrew texts such as sermons and letters. All of these different types of Ashkenazic Hebrew writings (Hasidic, Maskilic and other) continued to be composed in Eastern Europe up until the early twentieth century, in some cases until the 1930s (to be discussed further below).

While Ashkenazic Hebrew in Central and Eastern Europe was not a vernacular, it nevertheless had a pronunciation tradition as it was used orally on a daily basis in a variety of settings. Oral use of Hebrew included the recitation of prayers from the *siddur* (Jewish prayer book for daily and Sabbath use) and education (the recitation of the Torah or Pentateuch, Mishna and other Jewish texts). Moreover, even when reading privately to oneself, the tradition among Ashkenazic Jews was to murmur the words aloud to oneself rather than reading silently (unlike e.g. English, Russian, Israeli Hebrew, etc.). The pronunciation tradition for Ashkenazic Hebrew consisted of a number of distinguishing features. With respect to vowels, these include a distinction between *qameṣ* and *pataḥ* (with the former pronounced as *o/u* and the latter as *a*), a distinction between *šere* and *segol* (with the former pronounced as *ey/ay* and the latter as *e*), pronunciation of stressed *holem* as *oy/ey* and pronunciation of *shureq* as *i* (in the areas of Eastern Europe corresponding to present-day Poland and Hungary). With respect to consonants, a distinction was made between *taw* with *dagesh*, which was pronounced as *t*, and *taw* without *dagesh*, which was pronounced as *s*. In general, the Ashkenazic Hebrew phonological repertoire corresponded to that of Yiddish dialects, i.e. the former did not possess any phonemes (such as the pharyngeals) that were lacking from the latter. See Katz (1993), Eldar (2013) and Glinert (2013) for more detailed discussions of Ashkenazic Hebrew pronunciation traditions.

In addition to its own phonology, Ashkenazic Hebrew also had its own distinctive grammatical characteristics which distinguish it from other types of Diaspora Hebrew and from the canonical (biblical and rabbinic) varieties of the language. Some characteristic features of Eastern European Ashkenazic Hebrew include the spelling of loanwords and proper nouns based on the Yiddish orthographic model,

e.g. with *ayin* for *e*; retention of the definite article with inseparable prepositions; definiteness discord in noun-adjective phrases; definite construct nouns; non-standard noun gender; widespread use of the *nitpa'el* in addition to the *hitpa'el*; I-*nun* and I-*yod* infinitives construct based on the Mishnaic Hebrew model; infinitives construct without the *lamed* prefix and with a subject suffix; *wayyiqtol* for past narrative and frequent omission of the accusative particle **אֵת** *'et* (pronounced as *es* in Ashkenazic Hebrew). See Kahn (2015) and Kahn and Yampolskaya (forthcoming) for detailed analysis of these and other features of Ashkenazic Hebrew as attested in Hasidic and Maskilic textual corpora respectively.

A number of factors beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the middle of the twentieth century led to the breakdown of the traditional Hebrew and Yiddish diglossic system in Eastern European Jewish communities. One was the emergence of early Zionist groups in the late nineteenth century, which resulted in the large-scale immigration of Jews away from Eastern Europe to Ottoman and later Mandate Palestine and led to the advent of Israeli Hebrew, which became the main vernacular of the Yishuv and later the State of Israel. While Israeli Hebrew, particularly in its early decades, contains some elements that seem to have been inherited from Ashkenazic Hebrew (Reshef 2020), it is a separate stratum of Hebrew that differs markedly from the Diaspora variety outlined above. Another major factor contributing to the disintegration of the traditional diglossic system was the concurrent rise of the Yiddishist movement in Eastern Europe which grew to prominence in the inter-war period, whereby Yiddish-speaking Jews abandoned Hebrew in favour of Yiddish as their main language of writing (sometimes alongside a majority language such as Polish or Russian) (Harshav 1990). A third, and cataclysmic, factor was the Holocaust, which led to the decimation of the majority of Ashkenazic Jews and the geographic dispersal of the survivors, who resettled in various parts of the globe and largely adopted the local majority languages of their new homes (English, French, Israeli Hebrew, etc.) for writing. Concurrently, the brutal suppression of Hebrew in the Soviet Union resulted in a shift away from the traditional written use of the language in that country from the early twentieth century onwards (Blium 1996). Thus, by the mid-twentieth century, the traditional productive use of Ashkenazic Hebrew as a written vehicle had experienced a severe decline, and in most Ashkenazic Jewish communities it continued to be maintained primarily as a pronunciation style rather than a medium of composition (Glinert 2013).

1.2 *Contemporary (Twenty-First-Century) Ashkenazic Hebrew*

1.2.1 *Demographic Distribution of Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew*

Despite the breakdown of the traditional Eastern European Hebrew–Yiddish diglossic system in the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries and the emergence of Israeli Hebrew in the early twentieth century, Ashkenazic Hebrew did not cease to be employed. Rather, just as Yiddish was maintained as a spoken language among Haredi Jews, so too did traditional Hebrew continue to be employed in the new Haredi population centres that formed predominantly in the post-Holocaust era in the New York area in the United States, Jerusalem and Bnei Brak in Israel, London’s Stamford Hill neighbourhood and Manchester in the United Kingdom, the Montreal area in Canada and Antwerp in Belgium. In these areas, in addition to the traditional internal Hebrew–Yiddish diglossic system, Haredi speakers also typically acquire some ability (ranging from very basic skills to fluency) in the dominant co-territorial language of the state in which they live (English in the UK, USA and Canada, French and/or Flemish in Belgium and standard Israeli Hebrew in Israel).

There are no precise figures available for the number of Haredi Jews worldwide, but the vast majority of the Haredi population is comprised of followers of the Hasidic movement, and there are an estimated 750,000 Hasidic Jews worldwide (Biale et al. 2018). The Hasidic community is composed of a number of different affiliations grouped around the central authority figure of the rebbe; most Hasidic groups are named after an Eastern European location where they were originally founded. Common Hasidic affiliations include Belz, Bobov, Chabad, Ger, Karlin, Satmar, Tosh, Vizhnitz and others. Hasidic communities are characterized by very tight-knit social organization and a rigidly structured educational system in which traditional (non-Israeli) Hebrew plays a central role (see section 1.2.2 for further discussion of the Hasidic educational system).

This study focuses on the Ashkenazic Hebrew produced by Hasidic Jews rather than non-Hasidic Haredim. This is because, as mentioned above, Haredi Jews who are not Hasidic comprise a relatively small percentage of the overall Haredi population, and they are also less likely to use Ashkenazic Hebrew productively (tending to write instead in the dominant co-territorial language). Similarly, for the purposes of this research we have deliberately excluded materials

produced by Hasidim in Israel. This is because Ashkenazic Hebrew in Israel is heavily intermingled with Israeli Hebrew; while collecting materials for our corpus, we observed that from a linguistic point of view Haredi materials produced in Israel typically closely resemble those composed in Israeli Hebrew by non-Haredi authors. As such, in Israel the characteristic features of historical Ashkenazic Hebrew are diluted. While the Hebrew produced by Israeli Haredim is a topic worthy of study in its own right (see Assouline 2013a, 2013b), it is thus outside the scope of the present article. Likewise, we have not included the Hebrew produced by contemporary Sephardic Diaspora communities because this is a different topic that requires its own research.

1.2.2 *Use of Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew*

Like its Eastern European antecedent, contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew exists in a relationship of internal diglossia with Yiddish, the traditional Ashkenazic vernacular. Yiddish is used as a language of speech and for many low-prestige, informal and popular written texts, while Hebrew is used exclusively as a written and recited language rather than a vernacular, and is typically reserved for more intellectual, formal, official and elite contexts. In many cases, these boundaries are somewhat blurred, as Hebrew and Yiddish can both be used within the same text (to be discussed further in section 1.2.2).

There is a strongly gendered aspect to Ashkenazic Hebrew, as it is primarily restricted to male acquisition and use. Girls and women learn enough Hebrew to be able to read (but not necessarily understand) the *siddur* (daily and Sabbath prayer book) and *mahzor* (holiday prayer book), as well as some portions of the Hebrew Bible, but do not typically develop the ability to write productively in Ashkenazic Hebrew; therefore, girls will not form the focus of this study. By contrast, boys are trained extensively and rigorously in Hebrew (and Aramaic) texts, starting with the Torah when they begin cheyder,² then continuing on to the Mishnah and Talmud, followed by medieval and early modern legal and exegetical commentaries on these earlier texts (e.g. by Rashi, Maimonides, Naḥmanides, Joseph Caro³ and the Maharsha⁴), as well as Hasidic literature and commentaries from the eighteenth century to the present day. These texts are

² The traditional Ashkenazic primary-level school for boys, which they start at the age of 3 or 4.

³ Author of the legal code *Šulḥan Aruk*.

⁴ Shmuel Eidels (1555–1631), a prominent rabbi and Talmudist.

written in a wide range of historical strata of Hebrew, namely Biblical Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, various forms of Medieval Hebrew and early modern and modern Ashkenazic Hebrew. No linguistic distinction is made between these different historical strata within this educational system, as they are all grouped together under the traditional label *lošn koydeš* ‘the holy tongue’ (see Weinreich 2008, 1: 247-314 for discussion). Language acquisition is a side effect of studying holy texts rather than a goal in its own right. Aramaic is acquired in a similar fashion, by means of reading and translating texts (primarily the Babylonian Talmud) into the vernacular (typically Yiddish), and is thus regarded as a component of *lošn koydeš* as well. In Hasidic circles, nineteenth-century Hasidic Hebrew texts such as hagiographic tales are also read. Hebrew and Aramaic are both read according to the traditional Ashkenazic pronunciation (see Katz 1993 for discussion). By the time boys have been in yeshiva⁵ for a few years (i.e. around the age of 16 or 17), they are normally intimately familiar with a wide variety of Hebrew and Aramaic texts from different periods. Outside of yeshiva, boys also encounter texts written in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew, such as *paškeviln* and *moydoes* (community polemics and notices, to be discussed in section 1.3.1).

Boys are not typically exposed to Israeli Hebrew within the framework of this traditional educational model. Indeed, while no distinction is made between the different historical strata of Hebrew, Israeli Hebrew is clearly distinguished and is referred to by the separate label of *ivrit* (pronounced in Modern Israeli phonology), which literally means ‘Hebrew’ in that language but is used specifically to denote only the contemporary vernacularized variety that serves as the official language of the State of Israel. Attitudes to Israeli Hebrew vary among the different Hasidic groups, with some anti-Zionist groups such as Satmar strictly opposed to its use (Glinert and Shilhav 1991; Reiser 2020), while other, more pro-Zionist, groups such as Ger are in favour of it. Nevertheless, it is not studied as part of the traditional cheyder and yeshiva system, though in some cases girls may learn it to some extent in certain Hasidic educational settings.

With respect to pronunciation, contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew closely mirrors its Eastern European antecedents (as discussed above in section 1.1). As in the case of historical Ashkenazic Hebrew, contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew is not a vernacular, but is nevertheless used in a variety of oral contexts on a daily basis, ranging from the

⁵ The traditional Ashkenazic educational establishment for boys aged 13 and over, where the primary focus of study is the Talmud and its commentaries.

recitation of Jewish texts and prayers to educational settings and private reading. Moreover, many Hasidic males are unfamiliar with Israeli Hebrew pronunciation, and Ashkenazic Hebrew pronunciation is the only one that they are able to produce, even when asked to read aloud a text written in Israeli Hebrew. There is a clear awareness among Hasidim that *ivrit* and *lošn koydeš* are different, with the former used primarily in secular contexts while the latter is to be found in Hasidic genres and settings.

While older boys and men have passive (reading/reciting) knowledge of all different historical varieties of Hebrew (Biblical, Rabbinic, Medieval) and do not distinguish between them from a linguistic point of view, when composing texts productively in Hebrew, they employ the Ashkenazic Hebrew variety. Boys begin composing their own texts in Ashkenazic Hebrew in their teenage years, in yeshiva, when they might make notes in Hebrew of their teacher's lectures (which are themselves delivered in a mix of *lošn koydeš* and Yiddish), as well as writing timetables, diary entries and personal letters in Ashkenazic Hebrew. The use of the Ashkenazic variety of the language as opposed to e.g. the biblical or mishnaic stratum does not seem to be a conscious choice, but rather is shaped by the model of Ashkenazic texts from the modern and contemporary periods, which are the types of writing that most closely resemble the sorts of texts that a twenty-first-century individual would need to compose (i.e. writings about personal and communal matters, as opposed to e.g. medieval legal commentaries). Indeed, boys are not trained specifically to write in Hebrew, but acquire this skill as a by-product of their yeshiva education. Within this framework, writers of Ashkenazic Hebrew may use expressions and constructions from different historical strata of Hebrew, and include Aramaic elements, particularly in writing relating to Jewish legal discussions.

Thus, Ashkenazic Hebrew is used mostly by teenage boys and adult men who are highly educated according to the traditional Hasidic model. It is regarded as a marker of masculine prestige, signifying intellectual prowess and a high level of education, which are greatly esteemed in Hasidic society. Use of Hebrew is regarded as an important symbol of male initiation into adulthood and into the higher echelons of Hasidic society; writing in Yiddish or in the majority language of the country (in most cases, English) is seen as lower in prestige and associated with women, children and less educated men. This perception has historical precedent: in Eastern Europe, Hebrew was traditionally seen as the high-prestige written language composed by men of elevated societal and scholarly standing, whereas

the Yiddish vernacular was associated with women and uneducated men (Shandler 2020: 59–70). Productive use of Ashkenazic Hebrew among adults in the twenty-first-century Diaspora is a sign of belonging to a Hasidic elite; for example, a man who left yeshiva ten years previously and has worked in a grocery store since then, loses his active skills in Ashkenazic Hebrew and will be much less likely to produce texts in the language than a man who went on to become a rabbi, *dayan* (judge on a rabbinical court) or communal leader. Outside of scholarly and elite circles, men are less likely to use Ashkenazic Hebrew as a language of composition, but they are still exposed to it in writing (e.g. in the form of community edicts and announcements, pamphlets and books; see section 1.3.1 for discussion of the different types of Ashkenazic Hebrew textual genres). In their own writing, they typically use Yiddish and/or the co-territorial dominant language (e.g. English).

1.3 Sources, Methodology and Article Structure

1.3.1 Sources

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew is the vehicle of a wide range of written texts which can be divided into a number of different genres. One of the most prominent genres of texts consists of *paškeviln* (singular *paškevil*), printed broadsides appearing on public walls that are typically produced by rabbinic authorities and contain instructions, prohibitions, warnings and guidelines for the community. For example, recent *paškeviln* produced in London's Stamford Hill have covered topics such as coronavirus restrictions, a decree against use of the UK Government's anti-radicalization Prevent policy within Haredi education (see Figure 1) and statements opposing the construction of an *eruv*⁶ in the area. See Dolev (2005) and Levin and Treleven (2021) for further information about *paškeviln*. Another genre consists of *moydoes* (singular *moydoe*), various types of community announcements, e.g. private and commercial advertisements, and community health information (such as the coronavirus advice shown in Figure 2). There are also book-length works written in Ashkenazic Hebrew; these include historical narratives (such as the biography of the Rebbe of the Tosh Hasidic dynasty shown in Figure 3), as well as ethical and legal writings. Another widespread genre

⁶ An *eruv* (plural *eruvim*) is a physical boundary demarcating a specific geographical area as a private domain under Jewish law. Within an *eruv*, observant Jews are permitted to carry objects outside their homes on the Sabbath.

of Ashkenazic Hebrew writing consists of *kuntreysim* (singular *kuntres*), booklets and pamphlets devoted to a particular topic (such as an analysis of how the ‘Common Core’ curriculum for primary and secondary education in the United States affects the Haredi community, shown in Figure 4). There are also community newsletters, which often contain writings in both Hebrew and Yiddish, and include official announcements (e.g. by the UOHC,⁷ the UK Haredi rabbinical authority), advertisements and upcoming community events. An example of this type of text is *Kol Mevasr*⁸, the three-page Stamford Hill weekly community newsletter (Figure 5). Finally, there is private, unpublished writing in Ashkenazic Hebrew, consisting of diaries, letters and lesson notes (e.g. a page from the diary of a yeshiva student shown in Figure 6).

1.3.2 Methodology

This article is based on two central research questions. The first is to ascertain the extent to which contemporary (twenty-first century) Ashkenazic Hebrew is distinct from contemporary Israeli Hebrew. The second is to determine the extent to which contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew resembles its historical Eastern European counterpart. In order to answer these questions, we undertook an analysis of the characteristic orthographic, morphological and syntactic features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew.

Our analysis is based on a corpus of forty texts spanning all of the textual genres discussed in the previous section. The bulk of our corpus is made up of texts from the two most populous Hasidic centres outside of Israel, namely the New York area (including Monsey as well as various neighbourhoods in Brooklyn such as Williamsburg and Borough Park) and London’s Stamford Hill. We have also included one text each from Montreal and Antwerp. The Montreal-area Hasidic community is very much influenced by its larger New York counterpart, and most of the written documents in circulation in the Montreal area come from New York; as such, the body of Ashkenazic Hebrew texts actually produced in Montreal is quite small. The Antwerp Hasidic community is much smaller than those of the New York area and London, and likewise produces much fewer Ashkenazic Hebrew texts. In the remainder of this article, sources cited are listed

⁷ Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations.

⁸ *Kol Mevasr* is the official Roman-script title for קול מבשר. The spelling reflects a widespread phenomenon in Ashkenazic Hebrew, whereby unstressed vowels are often omitted in pronunciation; see 1.3.2.

בסדר

מודעה ואזהרה

היות שהתפרסם במחננו קריאה להתלמד קודם מיוחד על ענין פרעוונע'ט דיוט'י ולקבל על זה תעודה מאת העקני' קאנסר'ל, וכתוב שם בפירוש שהכוונה בזה ללמד המורות שלנו אך לחנך את הילדים הרכים, "לבנות את הפנימויות שלהם על פי דרכי ושיטות הגויים", וכמו שנקרא בלשונם וועליל'ם בעיס'ר עדיוקע'ש'ן Values-based education רח'ל, שזה ימעט החשש שהילדים יתחנכו לעקסטרעמזיר'ם.

והמסוון בשיעורים האלו הוא לקרב את בנותינו המתחמים לדרך הגוים במעשה וזריגשה, ולהרגלם לקרירות בודישקייט, ולפנטע בשלימות והמימות האמונה וזוהי הכונה להרחיקם מעקסטרעמזיר'ם, להרחיקם מראת חנא ח'ו, וידוע שמרן דחזון איש זי"ע פסק שקייירות אין יידישקייט' הוא ביהרג ולא יעבור (עיי אגרות חורא חלק ג מסכת ס"א).

דין בעלי שיעורים אלה הוא כדין מסית ומדיח

שעל זה אמרה התורה לא תאבה ולא תשמע וכו' וכו' המשה לאוין דאורייתא (עיי פרש"י דברים יג' ז' ועיי ברמב"ם בפי"ה מהל ע"ז), ודבר פשוט שאסור לילך לשם.

אשר על כן הננו בזה להודיע בשער בת רבים שדבר זה הוא בניגוד גמור לדרך התורה ואין למחנכות בנותינו להשתתף בקורסען כאלו לשמוע עניני ודרכי חינוך הגוים שהם היפר תורתנו הק' כפי המסורה לנו מדור דור.

ויחדר שלא נבוש ולא נכשל לעולם ועד, ושומר ישראל ישמור את שארית ישראל.

וע"ז באע"ה חז"ם ז"ם ב' לסדר תרומה תש"פ לפ"ק, פה לאנדאן יצ"ו		
אליקים שלעזינגער ראש ישיבת חרפה	אליעזר יו"ט ליפא הכהן ברזין רב ק"ק מישראל ומ"יין התאקד"ח	יעקב דוד דאטב רב דביהמ"ד תהלות יואל
נפתלי אלימלך דוד לייזער אב"ד פשעווארסק	ברוך חנא גרינפעלד שליט"א דומ"ץ בדתאחסי"ת ור"ט באבוב 45	משה יצחק לונצער ראש ישיבת מנחם
אליעזר מרדכי שטארנבערג דומ"ץ סאטמאר ומ"יין התאקד"ח	נפתלי פנחס ענגלענדער מ"יין התאקד"ח	חוקאל שרנא פיערמאן מ"יין
	יעקב יהושע זנתן בראנדער ראש כולל לחרפה	

מתפרסם לאור האסיפה שמתקיים היום ג' תרומה בהאפיס של חברת אינטערנלינק

Figure 1. *Paškevil* criticizing the UK government's anti-radicalization Prevent policy (Stamford Hill, London, 2020; hereafter referred to as SH14).



בית דין צדק דהתאחדות קהילות החרדים

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במ"ד. יום ב' ויק"ם כ"א אדר תש"פ לפ"ק

ונשמרתם מאוד לנפשותיכם!

בהמשך לאסיפת הרבנים שהתקיים היום יחד עם הרופאים וחברת הצלה, הגנו להודיע להציבור את ההחלטות דלהלן:

א. כל מי שיש לו חום למעלה מ 37.8 או שיש לו שיעול תמידי (NEW CONSISTENT COUGH), מחוייב על פי דין תורה לישב בביתו שבועה ימים ולא יצא לבית מדרש או לשום מקום שנמצאים שם אנשים, ויתפלל ביחידות בביתו, שעל פי דעת הרופאים הוא מסכן נפשות רח"ל. אם יש לו בני בית, על כולם לישאר בבית למשך ארבעה עשר יום - מיום תחילת החולי. כמ"כ לא ישלחו את בניהם ובנותיהם למוסדות התורה וכדו' למשך הי"ד יום.

ב. כל מי שיש לו מערכת חיסונית נמוכה (WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEM) כמו מחלה הידועה וקראנם וכו' חייבים לשמור על עצמם מאוד ולא יבאו במגע עם אנשים ככל האפשר. העסקנים הקימו מספר מיוחד לעצות והדרכה בענינים אלו:

COMMUNITY ADVICE LINE: 020 33 22 8384

ג. אנשים מבוטרים מגיל שבעים ומעלה, נשים מעוברות וכן אנשים עם בעיות רפואיות (UNDERLYING HEALTH) וכו' צריכים למעט ככל האפשר ללכת במקומות ציבורים כדי לשמור על עצמם ורשאים להתפלל בביתם.

ד. חוקם על ידי הבד"ץ ועד מיוחד המורכב מרופאים ורבנים שיעדכן את הציבור מפעם לפעם כאם ישנתה המצב.

ואנו תפלה להש"ת אמן ה' הושיעה נא שהבריאים לא יחלו והחולים ירפאו במרה בריפואה שלימה כן הסמים בתוך שאר חולי ישראל, ונזכה לזוג את תג המצות בריעות כשסוה ובטוב לב. וע"ז באע"ה"ו יום כ"א אדר תש"פ לפ"ק

IMPORTANT ADVICE - (TRANSLATION)

- 17th March 2020
Following a meeting earlier today by the Rabbinate with doctors and community rabonim, we urge the tzibur as follows:
- 1) Anyone who develops a fever above 37.8 C or a new continuous cough, must isolate themselves at home for seven days and not attend any public spaces including shul but daven at home. On doctors' advice, not doing so would be putting other lives at risk. Where there is family, the isolation period is extended to fourteen days for the entire family and children should not attend schools etc.
 - 2) Anyone with a weakened immune system such as Crohn's disease, Cancer etc. (a comprehensive list is available) are at increased risk and must protect themselves accordingly. They should avoid all but essential contact with other people. A community advice line is available for additional advice and information:
Community Advice Line: 020 3322 8384
 - 3) Persons aged 70 and over, expectant mothers and anyone with a chronic health condition, should for their own benefit, self-isolate and minimise all but essential exposure to the wider public (and could daven at home).
 - 4) The Rabbinate has commissioned a committee, comprised of doctors and rabonim, who will inform the tzibur of any future development.
- May Hashem watch over all of us and may we be zoche to a kusheran and freilichen Pesach.

Figure 2. Moydoe discussing Covid-19 related instructions with English translation (Stamford Hill, London, 2020; hereafter referred to as SH15).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jss/article/6/7/1/199/6535844 by University College London user on 07 March 2022



Figure 3. A recent biography of the Toshi Hasidic rebbe (New York, 2016; hereafter referred to as NY02).



Figure 4. A pamphlet on issues in Haredi education
(New York, 2020; hereafter referred to as NY13).

אל סעך די יודישע חקיקים והדפוסים
תושבי סטמפסארד הולל שיחון סטרא נססו הרוב ימודך

אך העיקר חסר מן הספר,
וחסר מאתנו דבר אשר הצורך בזה הוא
פני כמה וכמה משאר צרכי הסכנות,
הלא הוא **"חברת הצלה"**
אנשי הרפואה של שכונתי האינם יהודים
עובדים במתי מעט ולאט, ברשותם נמצאים
מספר בודד של אמבולאנס'ן אשר גם הם
נמצאים עס'י רוב מתוך לשונותנו ואינם
יכולים לבוא לעזרתנו בעת הצורך.
והנה בעת ב"ד מייסדים ומכוננים אנו **"חברת הצלה"** מיוחד למען שכונתנו,

ובעת הזאת פונים אנו אליכם:
אנא! חוסו עלינו, חוסו על עוללנו וספנו, רוסו על בראותנו ועל נפשנו. **אנא מכם**
הטו שכם אחד ובואו לעזרתנו בסכומים גדולים עצומים, בכדי שנוכל לאסוף
סכום גדול נאד ולרכוש **"אמבולאנס"** עם כל צרכי הרפואה הנדרשים לכך.

בשכר זה יעזור הש"ת שיזכה כארא
לכל השפעות טובות, והבריאים יתמזו
בבריאותם כבירות נושא ונהורא טעלי,
פרנסה ונחת דקדושה, ויסיר מעלינו ומעל
כל עמך ישראל כל מיני חולי וכל מיני מוות, וכס'ם.

צוגאב די שיינע אהדות גריסן
אז מענטשן האבן איניגען די שוכנים,
מיט אהיים ברענגן פון אפיס ענגען קאפיס,
פאר אלע שוכנים,
איז שיין צו זעהן ווי געשעפט
אייגענטומער למשל גראסעריס וכדו'
האבן אינון זייער קאוסטומער'ס
און גרייטן אן קאפיס
צו קענען פארטיילען
פאר די וואס קומען
איינקויפן ביי זיי לכ' שב"ק,
~ לכו והתפרנסו זו מזו ~
קומענדיגע וואך בעז'ה וועט קול מבשר
מפרסם זיין א ליסטע פון די אלע
געשעפטן וואס טאגן אליינס די קאפיס,
הפט אריין
מיטן נאמען פון אייער געשעפט
מיד וואלן עס קענען מפרסם זיין
פארן ציבור.
הצלה רבה וכוט"ס

Y17 G31 ©'20 Address: KOL MEVASR, 60 Cranwich Rd. N16 5JN HSBC A/c Name Kol Mevasr Sort Code 40 06 25 A/c No. 61569767

Figure 5. An extract from the weekly community newsletter *Kol Mevasr* from Stamford Hill (hereafter referred to as SH19).

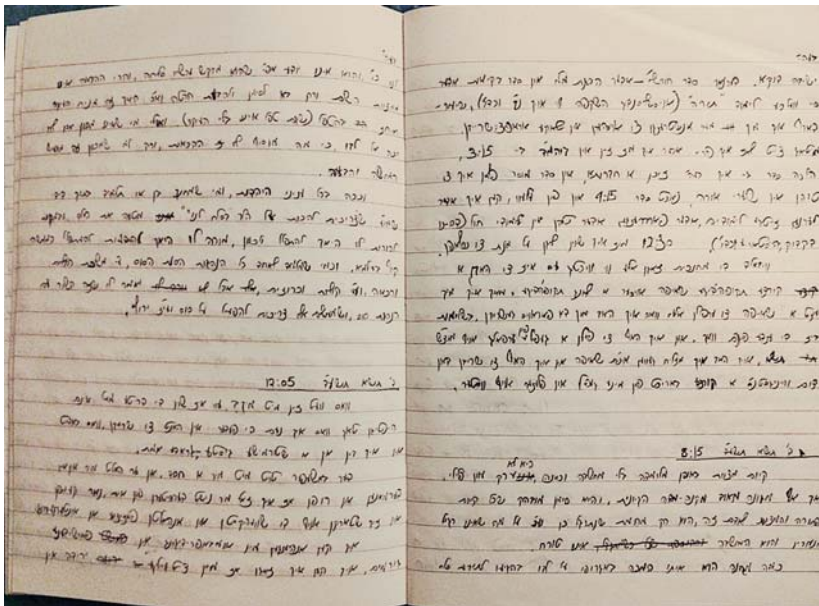


Figure 6. Excerpt of a yeshiva student's personal diary in Ashkenazic Hebrew and Yiddish (hereafter referred to as SH02)

by a geographical code (SH for Stamford Hill and NY for New York) followed by a number. The full title of each coded text is listed in the bibliography of primary sources at the end of the article.

We have chosen to include in our analysis features which appear on multiple occasions in a variety of texts from different locations and which can be regarded as characteristic of the language of these texts, rather than as exceptional or one-off mistakes. We have omitted any features which are attested rarely (i.e. they are employed only in one or two texts, or only in the writing of a single author).

When transcribing examples, we have modified the *JSS* transcription system for Israeli Hebrew so that it better represents Ashkenazic phonology. With respect to vowels, these modifications consist of transcribing *gameš* as *u* or *o* (instead of *a*), *šureq* and *qibbuš* as *i* (instead of *u*), distinguishing between *šere* (usually pronounced as *ay*) and *seghol* (usually pronounced as *e*) and transcribing *holem* as *oy* in certain positions. In addition, we have marked stressed syllables with an acute accent over the vowel, as stress placement in Ashkenazic Hebrew differs from that in Israeli Hebrew. Finally, in Ashkenazic Hebrew unstressed vowels are often omitted, and this phonological feature is reflected in our transcription; for instance, in example (1) below the word תִּזְכֹּר is transcribed as *oysn*, to reflect the fact that the unstressed *gameš* is not pronounced.

With respect to consonants, we have transcribed spirantized *taw* as *s* instead of *t*, because this is how it is pronounced in Ashkenazic Hebrew. We have transcribed both ט and unspirantized ת as *t*; unspirantized כ and ק as *k*; and spirantized כ and ת as *x*, as there is no phonological distinction between the constituents of these pairs in Ashkenazic Hebrew. Similarly, our transcription does not include representation of consanantal א ' or of ע ' , as these are both silent in Ashkenazic Hebrew.

The Ashkenazic transcriptions represented in the examples are based on recordings made by a Stamford Hill native from a Satmar background who acquired Ashkenazic Hebrew within the context of the traditional educational system described above. These transcriptions reflect the most widespread contemporary Hasidic phonological norm, which goes back to Polish-Hungarian Ashkenazic Hebrew (see Katz 1993 and Glinert 2013 for more detailed discussions of historical Ashkenazic Hebrew phonology). An in-depth analysis of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew phonology is beyond the scope of this article and deserves its own separate research.

1.3.3 Article Structure

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the distinctive orthographic features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew, including the spelling of loanwords and internationalisms; specific uses of traditional Hebrew orthographic symbols (*geršayim* and *gereš*); use of double consonants in the spelling of loanwords and place names; and use of *yod* before 1CS and 1CP possessive suffixes with singular nouns.

Section 3 covers the characteristic features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew nominal morphology, i.e. the retention of the definite article following inseparable prepositions; definiteness discord in noun-adjective phrases; issues relating to construct chains; and the morphology of loanwords in the plural.

Section 4 discusses the major features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew verbal morphology and syntax, including participles with the *nun* plural ending; the use of the *nitpael*; infinitives construct of I-*nun* and I-*yod* roots based on the Rabbinic Hebrew model; infinitives construct without *lamed* and with a subject suffix in temporal constructions; the particle *hinne* followed by an infinitive construct; and the use of the *yiqtol* in habitual present contexts.

Section 5 examines characteristic features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew particles, including the interchangeable use of the complementizers כִּי *ki*, שֶׁ- *še-* and (י)ד *d(i)*, and the frequent omission of the accusative marker תּא *es* (= Israeli Hebrew 'et).

Section 6 explores the lexical composition of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew, examining its Aramaic, Yiddish and English components in turn.

Section 7 offers some concluding thoughts on Ashkenazic Hebrew in the twenty-first century and its relationship to earlier Eastern European Hebrew as well as to Israeli Hebrew.

2. Orthography

One of the most immediately striking areas in which contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew differs from Israeli Hebrew while resembling earlier Eastern European varieties of the language is its orthography. This will be discussed in 2.1 (Yiddish-based spelling of loanwords, internationalisms and toponyms), 2.2 (use of the *geršayim* symbol), 2.3 (use of the *gereš* symbol), 2.4 (double consonants in loanwords and toponyms) and 2.5 (*yod* before 1CS and 1CP possessive suffixes on singular nouns).

2.1 *Yiddish-Based Spelling of Loanwords, Internationalisms and Toponyms*

In contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew, loanwords, internationalisms and toponyms are spelt according to an orthographic convention based on Yiddish. This convention includes a number of features that distinguish it from most other varieties of Hebrew, including Israeli Hebrew. These features consist of the use of *alef* to represent the vowel *o* as well as the vowel *a*, *ayin* to represent the vowel *e* and *alef* to represent the vowel *a* at the end of words (alongside *ayin*, which can also be employed in this position⁹). These types of spelling can be seen in the following examples, which contain a) words borrowed from English, such as הַעֲדוּקַעֲשָׁאן דַעפֿ"ט *hu-ēḡukeyšn dep[artmen]t* ‘the Education Dept.’; b) international neologisms, such as קאַראַנאַ *korona* ‘corona[virus]’; c) words borrowed from Yiddish, such as רַעקאַרדירונג *rekordirung* ‘recording’ and d) toponyms, e.g. טאַטענאַהאַם *totnem* ‘Tottenham’¹⁰.

Examples (1)–(5) illustrate the use of *alef* representing the vowel *o*. Note that in (3), the *waw* following the *alef* is used to represent *u*, the second part of the diphthong *ou*; this reflects the underlying English pronunciation of the word *telephone*, on which the term in this text is based.

- (1) אוּתן¹¹ הַדְּבָרִים שֶׁמִּקְבְּלִין עַל עֲצָמָם בְּהַפְּרָאגְרָאם שֶׁל הַ"וּי. פִּי. קֵעִי"
 óysn ha-dvúrim še-mekáblin al ášmom be-ha-prográm
 šel-ha-yú-pt-kéy
 ‘the same topics which they accept upon themselves in the
 UPK¹² programme’ (NY09: 4)

⁹ Note that the use of *alef* marking word-final *a*, *e* or schwa is typical of pre-twentieth- and early twentieth-century Yiddish, as well as of contemporary Hasidic Yiddish; by contrast, contemporary secular Yiddish uses *ayin* exclusively in this position, in accordance with the YIVO orthography that was developed in the 1920s and 1930s, and subsequently became the standard Yiddish spelling system used outside of strictly Orthodox circles throughout the world (see Kuznitz 2010).

¹⁰ A borough of northeast London which includes Stamford Hill. Note that the Hebrew-script spelling reflects the standard English spelling, not the standard pronunciation.

¹¹ Note the use of the 3FP marker in conjunction with a masculine plural noun. The topic of noun gender in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew is beyond the scope of this article and will be the subject of future research.

¹² UPK (Universal pre-K) refers to state government-funded preschool programmes in the United States.

- (2) הר' חיים דוד צוויבעל [...] באינטערוויו ב"קול מבשר" (מתוך רעקארדירונג)
ha-ráv xáyim dúvid şvíbl [...] be-intervyu be-kól mevásr me-tóx rekordírunq
 'Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwibel [...] in an interview with *Kol Mevasr* (from a recording)' (NY11: 6)
- (3) סדרנו לע"ע טעלעפאון ליין מיוחדת
sidárni le-áys-átu télefoun láyn miyixéydes
 'currently we have arranged a special telephone line' (SH11)
- (4) אל מעלת כבוד תושבי שכונתנו שכונת טאטענהאם
el máles kvóyd tóyšvay šxinosáyini šxínes tótnem
 'to the esteemed residents of our neighbourhood, Tottenham' (SH10)
- (5) סטעמפאר-הילל [...] ירדה מכבודה, כגאלדערס גרין היינו, וכהענדאן דמינו
stémfíd híl [...] yórdu mi-xvóydo ke-gólders grin huyíni, i-xe-héndn demíni
 'Stamford Hill [...] has lost its honour; we have become like Golders Green, and we resemble Hendon'¹³ (SH03)

Examples (6)–(11) illustrate the use of *ayin* representing the vowel *e* (as well as some more instances of *alef* representing *o*).

- (6) בקריאת ענגליש
be-kriás éngliš
 'during the English reading' (NY09: 2)
- (7) ובכן העדיוקעשאן דעפ"ט של העיר ניו יורק
i-ve-xáyñ hu-éğukéyšñ depártment šel hu-ír nyu-yórk
 'so the Education Department of the city of New York' (NY09: 2)

¹³ Golders Green and Hendon are two neighbourhoods in Northwest London with large Jewish populations (though less Hasidic than Stamford Hill).

- (8) לימוד סעקולארי [דברים בלתי דתיים]
límed sekyulári [dvúrim bílti dúsim]
 ‘secular study [non-religious subjects]’ (NY09: 10)
- (9) הר' חיים דוד צוויבעל [...] באינטערוויו ב"קול מבשר" (מתוך רעקארדינג)
há-rav xáyim dúvid şvíbl [...] be-intervyu be-kól mevásr (me-tóx rekórding)
 ‘rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwibel [...] in an interview with *Kol Mevasr* (from a recording)’ (NY11: 6)
- (10) אפשר לשלוח אימעיל ל- [...] [אפער לי-şlójex ímeyl le- [...]]
éşer li-şlójex ímeyl le- [...]
 ‘you can send an email to [...]’ (SH11)
- (11) תושבי שכונת קענווי איילענד
tóşvay šxínás kénvi áylend
 ‘residents of the neighbourhood of Canvey Island’¹⁴ (SH19: 3)

Examples (12)–(13) illustrate the use of word-final *a* represented by *alef*.

- (12) לאור המצב של חולי הקאראנא
lo-ór ha-máşev šel xóylay ha-koróna
 ‘in the light of the condition of the coronavirus patients’ (SH12)
- (13) לימודים על קולטור והסטאריי"א, ע"י חומר דתי
lemídim al kultúr ve-histórie al yedáy xóymer dúsi
 ‘study of culture and history by means of religious materials’
 (NY09: 9)

The incorporation of international neologisms and lexical items from the dominant co-territorial language spelt according to Yiddish orthographic conventions is widespread in pre-twentieth-century Ashkenazic Hebrew, including Hasidic literature (Kahn 2015: 29–31) and Maskilic writing (Yampolskaya 2017; Kahn and Yampolskaya

¹⁴ An island within the Thames Estuary in the English county of Essex, about 60 km east of London, which has recently become home to a community of Hasidic Jews who relocated from Stamford Hill.

forthcoming). This precisely mirrors the contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew system presented above. By contrast, the twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew adherence to Yiddish orthographic norms for loanwords and toponyms differs strikingly from Israeli Hebrew, in which such lexical items are spelt according to a very different convention whereby *waw* serves to denote the vowel *o*, *ayin* is not used to denote the vowel *e* and *he* is systematically used instead of *alef* to denote the vowel *a* at the end of words (see Dan 2013 for discussion of the transcription of loanwords and toponyms in Israeli Hebrew). For example, the Israeli Hebrew spelling of the internationalism meaning ‘history’ is היסטוריה *historya*, with *waw* denoting the vowel *o* and *he* marking the word-final vowel *a*; this can be contrasted with the contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew spelling היסטארייא *historya*,¹⁵ with *alef* denoting the vowel *o* as well as the word-final vowel *a*. Similarly, the Israeli Hebrew spelling of the English borrowing ‘email’ is אימייל *imeyl*, with the diphthong *ey* represented by double *yod*, in contrast to the contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew spelling אימעיל *imeyl*, with the diphthong represented by *ayin* plus *yod*. The Israeli Hebrew spelling of the internationalism ‘corona[virus]’ is קורונה *qorona*, with the *o* vowels represented by *waw* and the final *a* represented by *he*, in contrast to Ashkenazic Hebrew קאראנא *korona*, wherein the *o* vowels and the final *a* vowel are all represented by *alef*.

2.2 Use of *Geršayim*

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew texts frequently employ the *geršayim* symbol ״ before the last letter of a loanword or neologism in order to mark it out as linguistically or culturally foreign. The following examples illustrate this convention in twenty-first-century Hasidic texts. In some cases, the words in question have to do with technology (internet, smartphone, mobile phone, etc.), as in (14)–(20). In other cases, the words refer to institutions, organizations and initiatives of the dominant (non-Jewish) society or government, e.g. the local London council mentioned in (16). Sometimes the word may simply denote a new concept which is perceived as foreign because it does not come from within the Hasidic community, e.g. the internationalism ווירוס *virus* ‘virus’ (referring to Covid-19) in example (15), and the Yiddish noun מאסק״ע *maske* ‘mask’ in example 18, used in the very new context of Covid-19 safety measures.

¹⁵ See the next section for discussion of the use of the *geršayim* symbol (״).

- (14) ההשתמשות בכלי הטעכנאלאגי"ע של האינטערנע"ט או סמארטפאון¹⁶
ha-heštámšes be-xláy ha-texnológie šel ha-internet oy smártfoun
 'the usage of the technological devices of the Internet or smartphone' (SH09)
- (15) המצב בנוגע למגפת הוירוס
ha-mášev be-negáye le-megáfes ha-váyres
 'the situation regarding the epidemic of the virus' (A1)
- (16) העסקנים משתדלים אצל הקאונסיל לקבל רשיון להעמיד צוה"פ בהרחבות
hu-askúnim meštádlim aysl ha-kóunsil le-kábl rešóyn le-hámid šíres ha-péysex be-a-rexóyves
 'the rabbis are in negotiations with the Council to obtain the consent for the erection of the *eruv* in the streets' (SH13)
- (17) והרבה מהם גם עלו בידם להספיק מאביל"ס כשרים ומהודרים לתלמידים
ve-hárbe mi-hém gam úli be-yúdem le-háspik móbayls kšáyrim i-mbedúrim le-talmídím
 'and many of them even managed to supply to the students kosher and luxurious mobile phones' (SH09)
- (18) להזהר להשים מאסק"ע
le-bezúher le-húsem máske
 'to take care to wear a mask' (SH16)
- (19) קורס מיוחד על ענין פרעווענ"ט דיוט"י
kúrs meyíxed al ínyn prevént dyúti
 'a special course on Prevent Duty' (SH14)
- (20) כמו שנקרא בלשונם וועליו"ס בעיס"ד עדיוקעיש"ן
kmóy še-nikru be-lšóynom vélyus béysd ežukéyšn
 'as it is called in their language, Values-Based Education' (SH14)

¹⁶ Sic, with unexpected *yod*.

This use of *geršayim* before the final consonant of a loanword to single it out as a borrowing is also characteristic of pre-twentieth-century Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe: it is attested in both Hasidic literature (Kahn 2015: 34) and in Maskilic writing (Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). This Eastern European convention is itself based on a much older tradition, dating back to the medieval period. Conversely, the use of *geršayim* in this way to mark loanwords is not a feature of Israeli Hebrew orthography.

Note that the use of *geršayim* in these contexts, though widespread, is not totally consistent. In some cases, a loanword in these categories may appear without *geršayim*, as in examples (21)–(23). The word in example (14) is the same as the one in example (22), but one appears with *geršayim* and the other without.

- (21) העובדים של הסקול
hu-óvdim šel ha-skúl
 ‘the employees of the school’ (NY09: 10)
- (22) בענין טאכנעלאגיע
be-ínyen texnológie
 ‘on the matter of technology’ (NY10)
- (23) בעלי הסמארטפאן
báalay ha-smártfoun
 ‘the owners of smartphones’ (SH03)

2.3 Use of Gereš

A common feature of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew writing is the *gereš* symbol ‘, which is used to mark abbreviations, as in examples (24)–(28). It is particularly commonly attested with the adverb אפילו *afile* ‘even’, as in example (24), with various forms of the verb ה.י.ה. *b.y.h.* ‘be’, as in example (25) and with various forms of the verb ה.י.ה. *x.y.h.* ‘live’, as in example (28). In many cases only the last letter of the word is abbreviated, as in example (27), but sometimes two or more letters may be replaced by *gereš*, as in example (26).

- (24) ואפי' אם צריך להתפלל בביתו ביחידות
ve-afile im šúrex lehis pálel be-báysoy be-yexides
 ‘and even when [we] have to pray in His [G-d’s] house individually’ (SH09)

- (25) גם בנו רבינו הקדוש ז"ל הי' דבוק בכל נימי לבו
gám bnóy rabáyini ha-kúdeš zixróyno le-vróxo hóyu dúvek be-xól nímay líboy
 'his son a holy rabbi, blessed be his memory, was also devoted with every fibre of his soul' (NY01: 179)
- (26) ושתה בצמא את דבריו הק'
ve-šúsu be-šúmu es dvúrev ha-kdóyšim
 'and he eagerly hung on (lit. drank thirstily) his holy words' (NY01: 180)
- (27) ברצון ובכפי'
be-rúšn i-ve-kfíye
 'willingly and forcibly' (NY07)
- (28) התלמידים והתלמידות שיחי' יתקשרו רק ע"י הקאנפערענט"ס קאל"ס
 המאושרים מטעם המוסדות
ha-talmidim ve-ha-talmides še-yíxvi yiskášri rák al yedáy ha-kónfenenš kóls ha-meyšúrim me-táam ha-móysdes
 'male and female students, may they have long life, should connect only those conference calls that are established on behalf of Haredi organizations' (SH12)
- Gereš* can also be used like italics in English to single out a word as a borrowing, as in example (29), or to mark a plural suffix at the end of a loanword, as in (30).
- (29) להמשיך לימודים הגבוהים ב'קאלידזש'
le-hámšix lemídim ha-gvóyhim be-kóliḡ
 'to continue higher education at a college' (NY11: 6)
- (30) הוחלט [...] שהתלמידים והתלמידות לא יביאו משלוח מנות לרבותם
 ולהטיטשער'ס בעצם יום הפורים
híxlet [...] še-ha-talmidim ve-ha-talmides loy yuvíi mišlówex múnes le-rabóysom i-le-ha-tíčers be-éysem yom ha-pírim
 'it has been decided [...] that the male and female students must not take Purim presents to their rebbes¹⁷ and to the teachers on the day of Purim itself' (SH18)

¹⁷ Boys' teachers in cheyder.

Gereš was widely used for the abbreviation of numerous lexemes in previous strata of Hebrew, including Ashkenazic varieties such as Maskilic and Hasidic Hebrew (Kahn 2015: 15–16; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). By contrast, in Israeli Hebrew its use is limited to a short list of words (see Rubín 2013a), and most of these are different from the ones found in our Ashkenazic Hebrew corpus. This feature thus seems to be a remnant of a widespread historical tradition, which is used much more extensively in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew than in Israeli Hebrew.

2.4 *Yod before 1CS and 1CP Possessive Suffixes on Singular Nouns*

A common feature of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew texts is the use of the *mater lectionis yod* in conjunction with the 1CS and 1CP possessive suffixes on singular nouns, as illustrated in examples (31)–(43).

- (31) עסקני עירינו
askúnay iráyni
 ‘*askonim*¹⁸ of our city’ (NY14)
- (32) זה חובתינו על פי תורה
zé xoyvusáyni al pí tóyro
 ‘this is our duty according to Torah’ (NY14)
- (33) כל בני קהלתנו
kól bnáy kehelusáyni
 ‘all members of our community’ (SH05)
- (34) ועדיין חקוק בלבבינו
va-adáyn xókek be-luvváyni
 ‘and it is still engraved in our heart’ (SH07)

¹⁸ This is a Hebrew term for powerful and influential people who have prominent positions within the communal organisations of Haredi society; it is broadly equivalent to the Yiddish term and can be loosely equated with the English colloquial terms ‘bigshots’ or ‘movers and shakers’.

- (35) **לדאבונינו**
le-dovoynáni
 'to our regret' (SH09)
- (36) **מורינו ורבינו הרבי רבי אלימלך**
moráyni ve-rabáyni ha-rébe reb elimáylex
 'our teacher and our rabbi, Rabbi Elimelekh' (NY04)
- (37) **בית מדרשינו**
báys medrešáyni
 'our study house' (NY04)
- (38) **עירוב בשכונתינו**
áyrev be-šxinósáyni
 'an *eruv* in our neighbourhood' (SH02)
- (39) **קול זעקת זקני רבני עירינו**
kól zákes zékny rabúnay iráyni
 'the sound of the cries of the elders among the rabbis of our city'
 (SH03)
- (40) **כבר נתפרסם דעתינו**
kvar nespársem datáyni
 'our opinion has already been published' (SH16)
- (41) **כבוד תורתנו הקדושה**
kvód toyresáyni ha-kdóyšé
 'the honour of our holy Torah' (NY06)
- (42) **בקשתינו שטוחה אל גבאי ועסקני בתי מדרשינו**
bakošesáyni šetíxe al gabúay ve-askúnay bútay medrašáyni
 'our request is extended to the wardens and *askonim* of our study houses' (SH17)
- (43) **והיא מבטחינו האמיתי**
ve-hí mavtexáyni hu-amíti
 'and it is our true haven' (SH04)

This orthographic convention is considered to be non-standard from the perspective of the canonical varieties of Hebrew as well as Israeli Hebrew. However, the same phenomenon is widely attested in Hasidic Hebrew literature from nineteenth-century Eastern Europe (Kahn 2015: 21). This orthographic convention is likely to be based on analogy with the canonical spelling of plural nouns with the 1CS or 1CP possessive suffix, e.g. קהילותינו *kehilusáyni* ‘our communities’, מלכינו *malkáyni* ‘our kings’, ערינו *uráyni* ‘our cities’. This in turn is a reflection of the fact that the final syllable of both singular and plural nouns with a 1CS or 1CP possessive suffix contain a stressed *šere*, which is pronounced as *ey* or *ay* according to Ashkenazic Hebrew phonology (Glinert 2013). The identical pronunciation of the singular and plural suffixed nouns has resulted in a tendency to spell both types the same way. This tendency may have been reinforced by the fact that some of these individual singular forms occasionally appear with the *yod* in the Mishnah, Talmud and/or certain Hebrew texts from the medieval and early modern periods. For example, the form עירינו *iráyni* ‘our city’ which is shown in examples (31) and (39), is attested in *Teshuvot Maharshal* 14:1, a compendium of Jewish legal decisions by the well-known sixteenth-century Ashkenazic legal authority Solomon Luria, while the form לבבינו *levuváyni* ‘our heart’ is attested in the Jerusalem Talmud *Berakhot* 33a.

3. Nominal Morphology and Syntax

3.1 Retention of Definite Article with Inseparable Prepositions

In contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew the definite article is typically retained when following an inseparable preposition (-ב *b-*, -ל *l-*, -כ *k-*). This phenomenon is attested very widely throughout our entire corpus and is not conditioned by any particular phonological factors (e.g. it is found with nouns beginning with all types of different consonants and vowels), and is employed with Hebrew lexical items as well as borrowings from Yiddish and English. Indeed, this phenomenon can be regarded as one of the most striking and immediately visible aspects of Ashkenazic Hebrew grammar, as examples (44)–(59) illustrate. It is important to note that users of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew typically pronounce the definite article when reading texts out loud, which supports our claim that this is an intrinsic part of the grammatical system rather than simply an orthographic curiosity. The pronunciation of the definite article in such contexts

can be seen in the transcription of examples (44)–(57). Only occasionally in fast speech is the preposition + definite article combination contracted so that the *he* is elided, as in examples (58)–(59).

- (44) **הננו בזה להדגיש ולעורר להציבור**
hineni be-zé lu-hádgiš i-le-óyrer le-ha-šiber
 ‘we wish to inform the public’ (SH12)
- (45) **להעמיד צוה"פ בהרחובות**
le-háamid šires ha-péysex be-ho-rexóyves
 ‘to erect the *eruv* in the streets’ (SH13)
- (46) **לקבל ידיעות חדשות בהענין**
le-kábl yedies xadúšes be-hu-ínyen
 ‘to receive news on the issue’ (SH11)
- (47) **הרחובות הנכללים בהעירוב**
ha-rexóyves ha-nexlúlim be-hu-áyrev
 ‘the streets included in the *eruv*’ (SH10)
- (48) **ראוי בכל ערב שבת להתקשר להטעלעפאון של הוועד**
rúi be-xól éyrev šábes le-hiskášer le-ha-télefoun šel ha-váad
 ‘it is desirable to call the Council with the telephone [number] each Friday evening’ (SH10)
- (49) **מצאנו לנכון לפרסם להציבור**
mešúnu le-nóxn le-fársem le-ha-šiber
 ‘we found to be right to inform the public’ (SH06)
- (50) **בהודעות הראשונות**
be-ha-hoydúyes ho-rešóynes
 ‘in the first reports’ (SH03)
- (51) **להרבניים הראשיים**
le-ha-rabúnim ho-rúšim
 ‘to the major rabbis’ (SH03)

- (52) **להגאון הקדוש**
le-ha-gúen ha-kúdeš
 ‘to the holy Gaon’ (NY01: 2)
- (53) **פתיחת חנות גדולה בהשכונה עם מחירים זולים**
psíxes xanís gedóyle be-ha-šxíne im mexírim zílím
 ‘the opening of a large store in the neighbourhood with cheap prices’ (NY03)
- (54) **אין להיכנס כאן בביהמ"ד ובהחצר**
áyn le-bekúnes kun be-báys ha-médreš ve-be-ha-xúšer
 ‘it’s forbidden to enter the study house and the courtyard’ (NY04)
- (55) **להרבנים הגאונים**
la-ha-rabúnem ha-geóynem
 ‘to the rabbis, the great sages’ (NY09: 1)
- (56) **להיו. פי. קעי**
le-ha-yú-pí-kéy
 ‘for the UPK’ (NY09: 2)
- (57) **בהחלקים של הבנין**
be-ha-xalúkim šel ha-bínyen
 ‘in the parts of the building’ (NY09: 9)
- (58) **שבהמסודות**
še-ba-móysdes
 ‘that in institutions’ (NY11: 6)
- (59) **בהקאנפערענט"ס קא"ל**
ba-kónferenš kol
 ‘in the conference call’ (SH12)

The retention of the definite article following inseparable prepositions is not a common feature of Biblical, Rabbinic or Medieval Hebrew. There is a handful of examples of the phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible, but it is extremely marginal (Jouïon and Muraoka

2006: 104), as it is in the Mishnah, Talmuds and midrashim (Betzer 2001: 86). However, it is widely attested in Eastern European Ashkenazic Hebrew, including Responsa literature (Betzer 2001: 86), historiographical narrative (Kahn 2018a: 154–5) and Maskilic, Hasidic and other writings from the nineteenth century (Kahn 2018b: 164–5). As such, this type of construction can be viewed as another example of twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew which constitutes a direct linguistic development from its Eastern European predecessor. Similarly, this feature is attested in Hebrew documents composed in Mandate Palestine during the 1920s (Reshef 2016: 198–9, 208–9), suggesting that it had been inherited from the same Eastern European source, but it later fell out of use and is no longer a feature of Israeli Hebrew. This highlights the grammatical divergence between the variety of the language that developed in twentieth-century Palestine and Israel on the one hand, and the Ashkenazic variety that developed in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century in the Diaspora on the other.

3.2 *Definiteness Discord in Noun-Adjective Phrases*

Definiteness discord in noun-adjective phrases, whereby the head noun is indefinite but the associated adjective takes the definite article, is a widespread feature of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew. This type of construction can be divided into two main categories. The first, shown in examples (60)–(67), consists of noun phrases that are semantically definite despite the fact that only the attributive adjective bears the definite article, instead of both the noun and the adjective, which is the norm in most other types of Hebrew. This type of noun phrase is often comprised of technical terminology denoting specific concepts that can be regarded as a single unit (like ‘the Modern Age’ or ‘Higher Education’ in English), though sometimes the conceptual unit is not clearly defined, as in example (60).

(60) לדאבונינו רבים נכשלו באיסור הוצאה החמורה

le-davenáyni rábim níxšli be-íser hoyšúe ha-xamíre

‘to our regret, many failed to follow the serious prohibition against carrying [objects out of the *eruv*]’ (SH03)

(61) על סף זמן החדש הבעל"ט הגענו

al sáf zmán ha-xúdeš ha-b-úlayni le-tóyve hegáni

‘we have reached the end of the modern age that comes upon us for good’ (SH09)

- (62) אחרי כבוד הראוי
áxray kvóyd hu-rúí
 ‘with greatest respect’ (SH11)
- (63) מי יסד אופן לימוד המינימאלי של “כתב ולשון וחשבון”?
mí yúsad óyfn límed ha-minimáli šel ksáv ve-lúšn ve-xěšbm
 ‘who established the method of primary education of “writing, language and arithmetic”?’ (NY11: 5)
- (64) בתי ספר הציבוריים (Public Schools)
bútay sáyfer ha-šibírim
 ‘public schools (Public Schools)’ (NY11: 8)
- (65) מיום ג’ של שבוע הבא
mi-yóym gímel šel švte ha-bú
 ‘from Tuesday of next week’ (SH17)
- (66) אחרי בחור הראשון אשר כבר השכים ללמוד
áxray búxer hu-ríšn ášer kvar híškem li-lmóyd
 ‘after the first yeshiva boy, who had already arisen early to study’ (NY02: 35)
- (67) כל מי שיש לו [...] מחלה הידועה
kól mi še-yěš loy [...] máxle ha-yedie
 ‘anyone who has cancer (lit: the known illness)’ (SH15)

This type of construction has limited precedent in the canonical strata of Hebrew. It is attested only rarely in Biblical Hebrew (Waltke and O’Connor 1990: 260; Williams 2007: 31), so much so that in some cases the phenomenon may simply be ascribed to error (Rubin 2013b). It appears somewhat more frequently in rabbinic writing (Sarfatti 1989: 161–5; Pat-El 2009: 35–6; Shivtiel 2013) and in medieval and early modern Responsa literature (Betzer 2001: 90). This specific type of construction, in which the noun phrase consists of a technical term or label, has been noted as a category of definiteness discord in Rabbinic Hebrew (Segal 1927: 183; Pérez Fernández 1999: 27). Furthermore, Rubin (2013b) notes that some of the nouns in question may be interpreted as proper, e.g. אדם הראשון *’adam*

ha-rišon ‘the first man’, כהן הגדול *kohen hag-gadol* ‘the high priest’, which would explain the lack of definite article. The contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew use of this type of construction does not seem to be based directly on the biblical and rabbinic phenomena because the contemporary use is very productive and is attested in all kinds of unprecedented collocations, rather than consisting of quotations from biblical or rabbinic sources. The same type of definiteness discord exhibited in twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew texts is extremely productive and widespread in earlier Eastern European Hebrew texts, including Hasidic narrative literature (Kahn 2015: 85–7) and Maskilic Hebrew writings (Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). As in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew, in these earlier varieties of the language the construction seems to be used primarily to label specific concepts, such as דת הקאטאליט *das ha-qaṭules* ‘the Catholic religion’. The similarity in productivity and meaning suggests that this syntactic feature was inherited from Eastern European Hebrew into contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew. By contrast, this type of construction is not an element of Israeli Hebrew, in which it would be regarded as a mistake.

The second category consists of noun phrases comprising a noun followed by a definite adjective or passive participle, whereby the definite article functions as a relative particle introducing a subordinate clause represented by the adjective or participle. This type of construction is illustrated in examples (68)–(71).

- (68) עיקר מטרת הקמת העירוב הוא כדי להקל על התושבים ובפרט על משפחות הברוכות בלע"ה עם ילדים קטנים

*iker matúres hakúmes ha-áyrev hi kedáy le-húkl al ha-tóšvim
i-ve-frát al mešpúxes ha-bríxes blí ayn hó-re im yelúdim ktánim*

‘the main purpose to erect the *eruv* is to lighten [the life] of the citizens and especially of the families that are blessed with small children (no evil eye!)’ (SH10)

- (69) כדי שנוכל לגדל בנינו ודורותינו על דרך המקובלת והסלולה לנו מדרכי אבותינו

*kedáy še-níxl le-gádl benáyni ve-doyresáyni al dérex ha-mekibéyles
va-haslile lúni me-dárkay avesáyni*

‘for us to be able to raise our children and our generations according to the accepted path paved for us by our ancestors’ (NY09: 1)

- (70) אנשים מיוחדים הבקיאים בחוקי הממשלה
anúšim meyxúdim ha-bákim be-xikay ha-memšúle
 ‘special people [who are] experts in the laws of the government’
 (NY09: 2)

- (71) חומר סעקולארי אחרים המיוחדים לילדים
xóymet sekulári axáyrim ha-meyxúdem le-yelúdem
 ‘other secular materials, specific for children’ (NY09: 10)

Similarly, the definite article functioning as a relative marker can be prefixed to a different part of speech, as in example (72), where it precedes the suffixed negator אין *ayn* (= *'en*) ‘there is/are not’.

- (72) אנשי הרפואה של שכינינו האינם יהודים עובדים במתי מעט ולאט
ánšay ho-refie šel šxaynáyni hu-aynem yehídím óyvdím be-msáy
meót i-leát
 ‘the medical staff among our neighbours, who are not Jewish, are working with very small numbers and slowly’ (SH19: 3)

This usage seems to be modelled on the widespread convention dating back to the canonical forms of Hebrew whereby the definite article serves as a relative marker when prefixed to a participle (Pérez Fernández 1999: 26; Rubin 2013b; van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze 2017: 218). The contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew construction diverges from canonical precedent in that it is used with adjectives and even with the negator אין *ayn* (= *'en*). In this respect, our corpus again resembles earlier Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe, where the same phenomenon is widely attested (Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming), while differing markedly from Israeli Hebrew, in which it is unknown.

3.3 Construct Chains

There are a number of characteristic features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew construct chains which differ significantly both from the canonical forms of Hebrew and from Israeli Hebrew, but which resemble Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe. These will be discussed in the following subsections in turn.

3.3.1 Definite Construct Nouns

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew texts contain numerous definite construct chains in which the definite article is prefixed to the

construct noun rather than to the absolute noun. This type of construction is shown in examples (73)–(81).

- (73) **סגירת הבתי חינוך**
sgíras ha-bútay xínex
 ‘closure of the educational institutes’ (SH12)
- (74) **לחתום על המכתב תמיכה**
lá-xtoym al ha-míxtev tmíxe
 ‘to sign the letter of support’ (SH08)
- (75) **לערב את השומרי תורה ומצוות**
le-árev es ha-šóymray tóyre i-míšves
 ‘to embroil those who keep the Torah and Commandments’
 (NY07)
- (76) **הבתי חינוך הדתיים**
ha-bútay xínex ha-dúsim
 ‘the strictly educational establishments’ (NY11: 5)
- (77) **הלימודי חול המינימליים**
ha-lemíday xól ha-minimálim
 ‘the minimum amount of secular studies’ (NY11: 5)
- (78) **אנו מעתיקים הגילוי דעת שפירסם בשער בת רבים**
úni matikim ha-gíliy dáas še-pírsem be-šáar bas rábim
 ‘we are copying the statement that was issued publicly’ (SH06)
- (79) **הבחורי חמד**
ha-baxíray xáymed
 ‘the charming boys’ (NY02: 35)
- (80) **על אודות השאלה הנוגע לכשרות הספרי לימוד**
al óydes ha-šále ha-nigáye le-kášres ha-sfray límed
 ‘regarding the question relating to the *kasbrut* of the textbooks’
 (NY15: 1)

(81)

ההוצאת ספרים בית רחל

ha-boysúes sfúrim bays rúxl

‘the publishing house Bays Ruchel’ (NY15:1)

This type of construction is not typically found in either Biblical or Rabbinic Hebrew, but it is attested in various Medieval Hebrew writings by e.g. Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, David Qimhi and others (Doron and Meir 2015: 292–4). Within the Ashkenazic world, it is attested in medieval and early modern Responsa literature (Betzer 2001: 91) and in the seventeenth-century historical work *Yeven Meşula* (Kahn 2018a: 157–9), as well as in Maskilic and Hasidic writings and in the nineteenth-century popular manual of Jewish law *Kišur Šulḥan Aruk* (Kahn 2018b: 173–4). The widespread nature of this construction in historical Ashkenazic Hebrew may be due to influence from Yiddish (see Kahn 2018b and Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming), though the same phenomenon has been observed in the Hebrew writing of the Ottoman Empire under influence from Judeo-Spanish (Bunis 2013: 59*), which suggests a broader trend towards vernacular influence in Diaspora Hebrew. In contrast to many of the other grammatical phenomena discussed in this article, in this case the same phenomenon is also attested in colloquial Modern Hebrew (Danon 2013; Doron and Meir 2015; Schwarzwald 2017: 566). It seems that in this instance, the Eastern European construction entered into early Israeli Hebrew (as suggested in Reshef 2020: 41) and remained a feature of the colloquial language (while being discouraged by prescriptivists), and concurrently was preserved in Ashkenazic Hebrew in the Diaspora until the present day.

3.3.2 Split Construct Chains

Split construct chains are a relatively common feature of the Ashkenazic Hebrew corpus. In such constructions, a grammatical element (typically the conjunction *waw*) appears between the construct and absolute nouns within a single construct chain. This is illustrated in examples (82)–(89).

(82)

מנהלי ועסקני כל מוסדות התורה

menáhlay ve-askúnay kól móysdes ha-tóyre‘the principals and *askonim* of all the Torah institutions’ (SH09)

(83)

בהורי ואברכי שומרי תורה ומצוות

baxíray ve-avráxay šóymre tóyre i-míşves

‘young unmarried and married yeshiva students, who keep the Torah and Commandments’ (NY07)

- (84) **וביותר צריך להזהר מלסכן חיי ובריאות הזולת**
i-ve-yóyser šúrex le-bezúher mi-le-sákn xáyay i-bries ha-zíles
 ‘and particularly, one must take care not to endanger the life and health of one’s fellow’ (SH16)
- (85) **אל גבאי ועסקני בתי מדרשינו**
el gabúay ve-askúnay bútay medrešáyni
 ‘to the wardens and *askonim* of our study houses’ (SH17)
- (86) **ראשי ומנהלי המוסדות בעירנו**
rúšay i-menálay ha-móysdes be-iráni
 ‘the heads and principals of the institutions in our city’ (SH18)
- (87) **עניני ודרכי חינוך הגוים**
enyúnay ve-dárkay xínex ha-góyim
 ‘the matters and methods of non-Jewish education’ (SH14)
- (88) **למען אחד מחשובי ופארי תושבי עירנו**
le-máan éyxod me-xaštvay i-padyray tóyšvay iráyni
 ‘for one of the most respected and glorious of the residents of our city’ (SH23: 1)
- (89) **הנהלת וחברי הקהלה**
hanhúles ve-xávray ha-kehíle
 ‘the management and members of the community’ (SH19: 1)

Split construct chains are rarely attested in the Hebrew Bible (Joüon-Muraoka 2006: 435; Williams 2007: 8–9) and are occasionally found in medieval Karaite *piyyuṭim* (Rabin 2000: 93), but are much more common in Hasidic and Maskilic literature (Kahn 2015: 65–7; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming), as well as in the *Kišur Šulḥan Aruk* (Kahn 2018b: 176–7). Breuer (2009: 105) notes that the construction is also attested in S. Y. Agnon’s novel *Only Yesterday*, which was published in Palestine in 1945. It is thus possible that, like the definite construct nouns discussed in 3.3.1, this feature was transmitted

from Eastern European Hebrew into the Hebrew used in Palestine in the early decades of the twentieth century. However, split construct chains are not a feature of contemporary Israeli Hebrew. In this respect, twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew resembles its immediate Eastern European predecessor much more closely than it does Israeli Hebrew.

3.3.3. *Abstract Plural Absolute Nouns in Construct Chains*

Twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew writers frequently make use of construct chains in which both the construct and the absolute noun are plural even though the absolute noun denotes an abstract concept, with the whole chain functioning as a compound noun (e.g. **בית מדרש** *bays medreš* ‘study house’). Such constructions refer to the plural of a single entity (e.g. **בתי מדרשים** *batay midrušim* ‘study houses’, rather than ‘houses of studies’). This type of construction is illustrated in examples (90)–(94).

- (90) **ושנוכה כולנו יחד לבריאת השלימות לחזור לבתי כנסיות**
ve-še-nízke kilúni yáxad le-bríes ha-šláymes lá-xzer le-bútay knáyisies
 ‘let us all merit to return to synagogues in full health’ (SH12)
- (91) **עדיין לא זכינו שיפתחו לנו שערי בתי מדרשות**
adáyn loy zixíni še-yíftexi lúni šáaray bútay medrušes
 ‘so far we have not been honoured with [the permission] to open the gates of our study houses’ (SH09)
- (92) **וממנו יראו שאר בתי מדרשים וכן יעשו**
i-miméni yeíri šáar bútay medrušim ve-xáyn yáasi
 ‘and other study houses will see [our deeds] and will do the same’ (NY04)
- (93) **כותבי העתים מפרסמים הענין בשפת אידיש**
kóysvay hu-itim mefársemem hu-ínyan be-sfás ídiš
 ‘the newspaper writers publish the matter in the Yiddish language’ (NY11: 9)
- (94) **לידע היאך לשחק בבתי תיאטראות**
lá-yda háyex le-sáxek be-bútay teatrúes
 ‘to know how to act in theatres’ (NY08: 1)

This Ashkenazic Hebrew convention is based on the model of Rabbinic Hebrew (Segal 1927: 187; Pérez Fernández 1999: 70), as opposed to Biblical Hebrew, in which abstract absolute nouns in plural construct chains typically appear in the singular (Pérez Fernández 1999: 70). The Rabbinic Hebrew model is attested in medieval and early modern Responsa literature (Betzer 2001: 92) and is also widespread in Hasidic and Maskilic literature (Kahn 2015: 68–9; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). Israeli Hebrew follows the biblical model instead of the rabbinic one (Segal 1927: 187, Pérez Fernández 1999: 70) and thus differs from contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew.

3.4 Plurals of Loanwords

There are numerous loanwords in the contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew corpus, typically deriving from Yiddish and English (see sections 5.2 and 5.3). These loanwords can take several different plural endings, usually in keeping with the plural form used in the language from which they were borrowed. These different borrowed plural endings are discussed in this section.

Many Yiddish loanwords appear in the plural with the Germanic suffix ן *-n* or its variant ען *-en* (which appears in certain phonological environments), as in examples (95)–(101). These lexical items can all clearly be identified as Yiddish borrowings even though many of them have identical-sounding counterparts in English (e.g. Yiddish **פראגראם** *program* vs. English *programme*, Yiddish **דאקומענט** *dokument* vs. English *document*, Yiddish **סימבאל** *simbol* vs. English *symbol*) because the plural ending ן(ע) *-(e)n* is used with these nouns in Yiddish, but is not employed in English at all. With these loanwords, the Ashkenazic Hebrew authors systematically select the plural suffix associated with that noun in the source language, and as such would never employ the Yiddish plural suffix ן(ע) *-(e)n* in conjunction with an English noun.

(95) **בדבר הפראגראמען הניתנים על ידי הממשלה**

be-dvár ha-programén ha-nitúnem al yedáy ha-memšúle

‘regarding the programs imposed by the authorities’ (NY09: 1)

(96) **צריכים [...] לכסות כל סייג'ס, נעמען, סימבאל'ן**

šrixim [...] le-xáses kól sáyens, néymen, simból'n

‘they have to [...] cover all signs, names, symbols’ (NY09: 9)

- (97) להעלות הסטאנדארטן של ה-UPK
le-háloys ha-standártn šel ha-yú-pí-kéy
 ‘in order to develop the standards of UPK [learning]’ (NY09: 10)
- (98) כל הדאקאמענטן העוסקים בנושא החינוך
kol ha-dokuméntn hu-óyskim be-nóysay ha-xínex
 ‘all the documents dealing with the issue of education’ (NY11: 3)
- (99) הפאליטיקאנען וכותבי העתים
ha-politikánen ve-xóysvay hu-ítim
 ‘the politicians and journalists’ (NY11: 9)
- (100) מספר בודד של אמבולאנסן
míspér bóyded šel ambulánsn
 ‘a small number of ambulances’ (SH19: 3)
- (101) ואין למחנכות בנותינו להשתתף בקורסען כאלו
va-áyn le-mexánxes bnoysáyni le-hištátef be-kúrsn ka-áyli
 ‘and those women who educate our daughters must not participate in such courses’ (SH14)

The plural suffix ם- *-s* is also widely employed, alongside its phonologically conditioned variant עס- *-es*. This suffix is used with loanwords from Yiddish as well as from English, though in our corpus English loanwords are much more commonly attested than Yiddish ones. In English it is of course the primary plural suffix, while in Yiddish it is largely restricted to nouns ending in ע- *-e* (Katz 1987: 54–5). Examples (102)–(106) illustrate the Ashkenazic Hebrew use of these two plural variants¹⁹.

¹⁹ The use of the עס- *-es* variant instead of ם- *-s* is based on the pronunciation of the English source word, i.e. if the English plural is pronounced with a vowel before the consonant (e.g. *colleges*, which is pronounced as /kə:lɪdʒəz/), then this vowel is replicated in the Ashkenazic Hebrew version of the word. Conversely, the spelling of the English consonant suffix is based not on the underlying English pronunciation of the word but rather on its orthography, i.e. the pronunciation is /z/ but the suffix is spelled in Ashkenazic Hebrew with *samekh*, not with *zayin*. This convention may be ascribable to two different underlying factors. First, the *samekh* spelling mirrors English orthography, which always uses *s* rather than *z* as a plural suffix despite the /z/ pronunciation. Second, the use of *samekh* as a plural ending

- (102) קאנפערענט"ס קאל"ס
kónferenš kóls
 'conference calls' (SH12)
- (103) שכרו קאמפאניס של גוים
sóxri kámpanis šel góyim
 'they hired companies run by non-Jews' (NY11: 8)
- (104) צריכים [...] לכסות כל סיינ"ס, נעמע"ן, סימבאל"ן
šeríxim [...] le-xáses kól sáyens, néymen, simbóln
 'they have to [...] cover all signs, names, symbols' (NY09: 9)
- (105) להתקשר בהא"ט ליינ"ס או גרופע"ס שונים אשר אין רוה חכמים נוהה מהם
le-hiskášer be-hót layns oy grúpes šóynim ášer áyn róx xaxúmim nóyx me-hém
 'to connect to hotlines or different groups which have not a drop of wisdom' (SH09)
- (106) בהאי שתא, לא יישלחו "ווען"ס" כמדי שנה לאסוף תרומות ונדבות
be-háy šáte loy yíšlexi véns ke-meday šúne le-éšef trimes i-nedúves
 'this year, vans must not be sent like every year to collect contributions and donations' (SH18)

Note that the same word can appear with both plural suffixes ן(ע)-*-(e)n* and ס(ע)-*-(e)s*, as in examples (107) and (108) respectively, which contain a version of the word for 'colleges' with each plural suffix. The selection of different plural endings is likely ascribable to the fact that this same noun can be used in both Yiddish and English; when used in Yiddish, it commonly takes the ן(ע)-*-(e)n* plural ending (Beinfeld and Bochner 2013: 594).

has historical precedent in Ashkenazic Hebrew dating back to the period before English became a co-territorial language for its users: in Eastern Europe, Ashkenazic Hebrew made frequent use of Yiddish loanwords with the plural ending ס-*-s* or עס-*-es*, which are pronounced as /s/ and not as /z/. (The same pronunciation is found in Ashkenazic Hebrew plural words ending in the suffix ות-*-ot*; these are all realised as /es/).

- (107) חכמת ישראל" שלומדים בקאלעדון למיניהם
xóxmes yisrúľ še-lóymdim be-kóleğñ le-mináyhem
 ‘‘the wisdom of Israel’’ that is studied in various colleges’ (NY13: 4)

- (108) מלחמתו בקאלידושעס
milxámtoy be-kóleğez
 ‘his war against colleges’ (NY11: 6)

Occasionally a different, less widely attested ending can be seen, as in example (109), which exhibits the suffix **ער** *-er*, a Yiddish plural ending. This is found attached to certain Yiddish nouns which take the same suffix in the source language. It is much less common than the plural suffixes **ן(ע)** *-(e)n* and **ס(ע)** *-(e)s*, which are by far the most commonly attested in conjunction with borrowed nouns.

- (109) ללמוד בביכער החדשים
li-lmoyd be-bíxer ha-xadúšim
 ‘to learn with new books’ (NY11: 9)

The contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew use of borrowed plural suffixes has direct precedent in Eastern European Ashkenazic Hebrew (Kahn 2015: 367–78; Yampolskaya 2017: 318–19; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). By contrast, it is not a widespread feature of Israeli Hebrew, which tends to use Hebrew plural suffixes with loanwords.

4. Verbal Morphology and Syntax

4.1 Participles with Nun Plural Ending

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew writers frequently employ the *nun* suffix on masculine plural participles, e.g.:

- (110) כאשר אנו עומדין תוך שנה להסתלקותו
kaášer úni óymden tóx šúne le-histalkísoy
 ‘when we are within a year of his passing away’ (NY02: 21)

- (111) כשמסבבין על הראש את הכסף אומרים
keše-mesávevin al ha-róš es ha-kéyef óymrim
 ‘when one spins the money over one’s head,²⁰ one says ...’ (A01)

²⁰ This is a reference to the custom of *kapores*, spinning a chicken or money over one’s head on the eve of Yom Kippur.

- (112) יש "פראגראמען" כאלו שצריכין לקבל על עצמם הפרדת הדת
מהחינוך
*yeš prográmen ka-áyli še-šríxin le-kábl al ášmom hafrúdes ha-dás
me-ha-xínex*
'there are these programmes according to which one must agree
to accept upon themselves the separation of religion from
education' (NY09: 6)
- (113) יש פראגראם (הנקרא U.P.K.) שמקבלין על עצמם [...] להפריד הדת
מהחינוך
*yeš progróm (ha-níkru yú-pí-kéy) še-mekáblen al ášmom [...]
le-háfríd ha-dás me-ha-xínex*
'there is a programme (called UPK) according to which one
must agree to separate religion from education' (NY09: 6)
- (114) ומספרין התלמידים שלמדו אז אצל רבינו
i-mesáprn ha-talmídím še-lómdi óz áyśl rabáyni
'and the students who studied with our Rebbe at the time tell
... ' (NY02: 34)
- (115) שיטה חדשה מה שהם קורין 'קאמאן קאר'
šite xadúše má še-haym kóyrn kómn kór
'a new method which they call "common core"' (NY08: 2)

The *nun* plural suffix on participles is standard in Rabbinic Hebrew (Geiger 2013a), in contrast to Biblical Hebrew, in which the *mem* suffix is the norm (van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze 2017: 201). Historical Ashkenazic Hebrew tends to employ both the *mem* and *nun* variants on plural participles; the *mem* variant is more commonly attested but the two are employed in free variation (Kahn 2015: 81; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew follows this model, whereby the *mem* variant is more common but both forms can be used interchangeably. By contrast, the use of the *nun* plural suffix is not a feature of Israeli Hebrew, except in certain set *pluralia tantum* lexical items deriving from rabbinic literature (Avioz 2013).

4.2 Nitpael

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew typically employs the *nitpael*, which is traceable to Rabbinic Hebrew, rather than the *hitpael*, which is characteristic of Biblical Hebrew and all but the highest registers of Israeli Hebrew. In our corpus the *nitpael* frequently has a passive or middle sense, as in examples (116)–(122).

- (116) **נתפרסמו ע"י יועד תיקון עירובין**
nispársmi al yedáy váad tíken ayrívín
 'they were published by the *Eruv* Council' (SH03)
- (117) **כעת נתוודע שהעסקנים בעלי הסמארטפון [...] מתכוונים להמשיך עם עוד עירובין**
ka-áys nisváde še-askúním bálay ha-smártfoun [...] miskóyenením le-hámšix im óyd ayrívín
 'now it has become known that the *askonim* who have a smartphone [...] plan to continue with further *eruvim*' (SH03)
- (118) **רבינו ז"ל נתגדל ונתחנך בבית שמגדלין בו תורה וחסידות**
rabáyni zixróyno le-vróxo nisgádel ve-nisxánex be-báys še-megádlín boy tóyre ve-xasídes
 'our rabbi, blessed be his memory, was brought up and educated in a house where Torah and righteousness are cultivated' (NY01: 179)
- (119) **נתעוררתי אודות פראגראם נוסף**
nisoýrárti óydes prográm nóysef
 'I was alerted to an additional programme' (NY09: 1)
- (120) **גופא דעובדא חוה²¹ שנתבקשתי לאחרונה [...] לברר לו אודות הפראגראם**
gífe de-ívde xáve še-nisbakášti le-axróyne [...] le-várer loy óydes ha-prográm
 'the fact of the matter is that I was recently asked to find out about the programme for him' (NY09: 1)

²¹ Sic.

- (121) לפני שמונה עשרה שנה (למספרם June 23 1997) נשתנה החק
li-fnay šmóyne ésre šúne (le-mispúrem ġún tweni 03:rd náyntin
náynti séven) ništáne ha-xók
 ‘eighteen years ago (23 June 1997 in their calendar) the law was
 changed’ (NY09: 3)

- (122) עכשיו נתברר לי ששאלו להגאון ר' דוד פיינשטיין
áxšav nishárer li še-šúáli le-ha-ġúen reb dúvid fáynštayn
 ‘now it has been made known to me that they asked the great
 sage Rabbi Feinstein’ (NY05)

However, the *nitpael* is also often employed in instances where it has an active or reflexive sense rather than a passive or middle one, as in examples (123)–(126).

- (123) המצב גרם שהרבה פרנסות נתמוטטו
ha-mášev ġúrem še-hárbe parnúses nismóyteti
 ‘the situation resulted in many livelihoods collapsing’ (SH09)

- (124) תלית מושב טוב נתישבנו בשכונתנו
thíle l-elekáyni yishbúrex móyšev tóyv nesyašávni be-šxinasáyni
 ‘thank G-d we have settled well in our neighbourhood’ (SH19: 3)

- (125) אף שממילא לא אכלתי מזה, נתיירא מאוד שלא יארע אפילו פעם
 אחת שאוכל זאת
áf še-me-máyle loy oxálti mi-zé, nisyúray meóyd š-lóy yéra afile
páam áxas še-óyxl zóys
 ‘even though I never ate it anyway, he was very concerned that I
 should not end up eating it even once’ (NY02: 43)

- (126) וגם כותב להלן שמעולם נשתמשו עם הביכער שלהם
ve-ġám kóysev le-háln še-meóyloom ništámši im ha-bíxer še-lahém
 ‘and he also writes further down that they always used their
 books’ (NY08: 2)

The *hitpael* is attested only relatively rarely in the corpus. It is not typically found in passive contexts, but can occasionally appear with a middle, reflexive or active meaning, as in example (127). Note that the contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew selection of the *hitpael* is not determined by the existence of a similar form in the Hebrew Bible:

for example, the *hitpa'el* shown in (127) is not attested in Biblical Hebrew and instead is first documented, as a *nitpa'el*, in Rabbinic Hebrew (Even-Shoshan 2003, 1: 69).

- (127) בעת שלמדתי שם, התאכסנתי בבית אחותי
ba-áyš še-lomádeti šóm hisaxsánti be-váyš axóysi
 ‘while I was studying there, I stayed at my sister’s house’ (NY02: 41)

The *nitpa'el* first emerged in Mishnaic Hebrew, replacing the biblical *hitpa'el* (Hilman 2013). It was used throughout the medieval period in writings more closely modelled on the Rabbinic stratum of the language than its biblical predecessor. In Eastern European Hebrew texts from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the *nitpa'el* and *hitpa'el* were both used, in many cases interchangeably, though sometimes the selection of one over the other was lexically determined (with the *nitpa'el* chosen when the root in question was commonly attested in rabbinic sources in that form, while the *hitpa'el* was chosen for roots with a biblical model). See Kahn (2009: 19–22 and 2015: 229–30) for discussion of the use of the *nitpa'el* and *hitpa'el* in Eastern European Maskilic and Hasidic Hebrew, respectively. This Eastern European use of the two variants resembles that of twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew. Conversely, it differs to a noteworthy degree from Israeli Hebrew, in which the *nitpa'el* is not a feature of everyday language but rather is reserved for particularly high-register contexts such as scholarly and legal writing (Coffin and Bolozky 2005: 98). While contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew is solely a written variety and is produced only by a scholarly and communal elite, the situation is different from Israeli Hebrew because *all* documents produced in Ashkenazic Hebrew employ the *nitpa'el* as the default variant, including notices intended for everyone who reads Ashkenazic Hebrew, rather than for colleagues within a particular professional class (e.g. academics or legal specialists). In this respect, contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew follows the rabbinic model much more closely than the biblical model, in contrast to Israeli Hebrew.

4.3 Infinitives Construct following Rabbinic Hebrew Model

There are several ways in which Ashkenazic Hebrew infinitives construct follow the Rabbinic Hebrew model. First, *qal* infinitives construct of I-*yod* and I-*nun* roots typically have the same morphology as in Rabbinic Hebrew, as in examples (128)–(135).

- (128) גם ראוי לכל אחד ליתן צדקה
gám rúi le-xól éyxod lí-tn šdúke
 ‘it is also advisable for everyone to give charity’ (SH20)
- (129) החובה להתחזק בכל מצב ולידע כי ה' אתנו
ha-xóyve le-hisxázek be-xól mášev ve-láy-de ki ha-šém itúni
 ‘the duty is to stay strong whatever the circumstances and to know that the L-RD is with us’ (SH09)
- (130) היה רגיל לילך רגלי מגארליץ לצאנז
hóyu rúgil láy-lex rágli mi-górlis le-šánz
 ‘he used to travel on foot from Gorlice to Sanz’ (NY01: 183)
- (131) באמת לא צריכים לישן בליל יום הקדוש
be-émes loy šríxím lí-šn be-láyl yom ha-kúdeš
 ‘indeed one shouldn’t sleep the night before the holy day’
 (NY01: 184)
- (132) דרכו לילך ולהזיק
dárkoy láy-lex i-leházik
 ‘its nature is to keep causing more damage’ (NY04)
- (133) לילך בדרך אבותינו
láy-lex ba-dérex avoysáyni
 ‘to follow the path of our ancestors’ (NY09: 2)
- (134) שאסור ליקח אותם
še-úser lí-kex óysom
 ‘that are prohibited to take’ (NY09: 2)
- (135) כל מי שיש לו חום [...] מחייב על פי דין תורה לישב בביתו
kól mi še-yěš loy xóym [...] mexíyev al pi dín tóyre láy-šv be-báysoy
 ‘anyone who has a temperature [...] is obligated according to Torah law to stay at home’ (SH15)

This infinitive construct pattern is standard in Rabbinic Hebrew (Pérez Fernández 1999: 145), in contrast to Biblical Hebrew, which

has a different pattern for these roots (e.g. תת *tet* ‘to give’, דעת *da’at* ‘to know’, לכת *leket* ‘to go’, שבת *šebet* ‘to sit’, קחת *qahat* ‘to take’; see van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze 2017: 122, 127). The rabbinic pattern is employed in Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe, in free variation with the biblical one (Kahn 2009: 67–71; Kahn 2015: 243–5). The rabbinic pattern is not a feature of Israeli Hebrew, which exclusively uses the biblical one (Coffin and Bolozky 2005: 65, 67–9). In this respect, as in many others discussed in this article, contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew differs markedly from Israeli Hebrew.

4.4 *Infinitive Construct without Lamed with Subject Suffix*

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew texts are replete with a construction made up of an infinitive construct without *lamed* and with a subject suffix. In most cases, such infinitives are prefixed by inseparable *bet* or *kaf*. The entire construction usually has a temporal meaning of ‘when’ or ‘while’, as in examples (136)–(140).

- (136) הוא מחריב המערכה נגד תוכנית הליבה, באומרו שאם בחו"ל מותר ללמוד לימודי חול, מה נשתנתה בא"י

hi máxriv ha-marúxe néyged tóxnes ha-líbe be-ómroy še-im be-xís le-úreš mitr lí-lmed limíday xol má níštáne be-éreš yisrúl

‘he destroys the campaign against the core program, saying that if in the rest of the world it is permitted to study secular subjects, why Israel shouldn’t follow this’ (NY08: 9)

- (137) הן על הטלאפאן בהיותו בא"י, וזה פא"פ בהיותו כאן

hén al ha-téléfoun be-yóysoy be-éreš yisrúl, ve-ze pé el pé be-yóysoy kán

‘both by phone, when he was in the land of Israel, and face to face, when he was here’ (NY12: 1)

- (138) בעמדנו לקראת ראש חודש אדר [...] הננו יוצאים בזה בקריאה לקהלא קדישא הנכבד

be-ómdayni lí-kras róš xóydeš úder [...] híneni yóyšim be-zé be-kríe le-kehíle kadíše ha-níxbed

‘as we approach the beginning of the month of Adar [...] we hereby announce to the respected holy community’ (SH18)

- (139) בעמדי בזה, אודה את ה' בכל לבב, על שזכיתי להסתופף בצילא
דמהימנותא קדישא

*ba-ómdí be-zé óyde es ha-šém be-xol láyvov, al še-zexísi le-históyfef
be-šile de-mehaymaníse kadše*

‘as I stand here, I thank the L-RD with all my heart that I have
merited to dwell in the shadow of holy faith’ (NY02: 26)

- (140) בהכניסו את בנו לחופה נברכהו במקהלות

be-haxnísoy es bnóy le-xípe nívrexáy be-mikháyles

‘we congratulate him upon his son’s wedding’ (SH21: 3)

This construction can sometimes also have an exegetical meaning of ‘having done’ or ‘by doing’, as in examples (141)–(143).

- (141) היה רבינו ז"ל ממשיך דרכו [...], בהיותו עמוד העולם

*hóyu rabáyni zixróyno le-vróxo mámsšex dárkoy [...], be-heyóysoy
óymed hu-óylem*

‘our rabbi, blessed be his memory, was following his trade, being
a pillar of the world’ (NY01: 179)

- (142) העבירו גזירת שמד נורא על הכלל ישראל, בחוקקם חק לחייב את
בחורי ואברכי שומרי תורה ומצוות לשרת בצבא הציוני

*heevīri gzáyris šmad nóyre al ha-klál yisrúel, be-xókekóm xók
le-xáyev es bexíray ve-avráyxay šóymray tóyre i-míšves le-šáres
be-šúvo ha-šiyóyni*

‘they passed a terrible decree of forced conversion for the Jewish
community by issuing a law obligating young men and yeshiva
students, who keep the Torah and Commandments, to serve in
the Zionist army’ (NY07)

- (143) הרב הנ"ל שליט"א הפציר בי באומרו המתחיל במצוה אומרים לו גמור

*ha-ráv ha-nízker leél šlíte híšfir bi be-ómroy ha-másxl be-míšvo
ómrim loy gemóyr*

‘the above-mentioned rabbi begged me, saying that one who
begins a mitzvah he is told to finish it’ (NY09: 2)

This type of construction is a common feature of Biblical Hebrew (Waltke and O’Connor 1990: 604–5), unlike Rabbinic Hebrew, in which the infinitive is always prefixed by *lamed* and is not used in temporal constructions with subject suffixes (Pérez Fernández 1999:

109–10, 144). The use of this biblical construction is a characteristic element of Eastern European Hebrew, in which it was employed by Hasidic authors (Kahn 2015: 214–15) as well as Maskilic ones (Kahn 2009: 235–40). By contrast, it is not a feature of Israeli Hebrew except in very high-register language (Coffin and Bolozky 2005: 46). While there is thus partial overlap between the contemporary Hasidic usage and that of Israeli Hebrew, the Hasidic usage more closely resembles that of historical Ashkenazic Hebrew because it is attested in all different genres of writing, as it was in historical Ashkenazic Hebrew, rather than in a specific subset, as it is in Israeli Hebrew. While admittedly one could argue that all contemporary Haredi texts written in Hebrew are high register because they are produced only by the elite, the texts that are written in this language are intended to be read by all literate males in the community. This can be contrasted with the Israeli Hebrew usage, which is more restricted to specific genres of texts that are not necessarily designed for a general readership.

4.5 Particle *hinne* with Infinitive Construct

The particle *hinne* is widely used in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew in conjunction with an infinitive construct prefixed by *lamed* to denote immediate future plans, performative speech acts and intentions. In such contexts, the particle *hinne* is invariably accompanied by a 1CS or 1CP suffix indicating the subject of the action denoted by the infinitive. The adverbial בזה *be-zé* ‘hereby’ often appears in this type of construction, but is not obligatory. Examples (144)–(150) illustrate this type of construction.

- (144) הנני בשורות אלו להביע ברכת מזל טוב חמה
híneni be-šíres áyli le-habíe bírxes mázl tov xáme
 ‘in these lines I would like to express warm congratulations’
 (SH22: 3)
- (145) הנני בזה להודיעכם
híneni be-zé le-hodiáxem
 ‘I hereby inform you’ (SH11)
- (146) הננו בזה להדגיש ולעורר להציבור
híneni be-zé le-hádgiš i-leóyrer le-ha-šíber
 ‘hereby we wish to stress and declare to the public’ (SH12)

- (147) הננו בזה לגלות דעתנו
hineni be-zé le-gáles dasáyni
 ‘we hereby convey our opinion’ (SH06)
- (148) והנני בזה להעלות על הכתב
ve-hineni be-zé le-háles al ha-xsáv
 ‘I hereby put in writing’ (NY09: 1)
- (149) הנני בזה להזמין את כל קרוביי
hineni be-zé le-házmin es kól króyvay
 ‘I hereby invite all my relatives’ (ML1)
- (150) הננו להודיע להציבור את ההחלטות דלהלן
hineni le-hoydía le-ha-šiber es ha-haxlútes de-le-háln
 ‘we would hereby like to inform the public of the following decisions’ (SH15)

This construction is unknown in Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew, and does not seem to be a feature of Medieval Hebrew either (see Kahn 2015: 288). However, it is widely used in Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe, including Maskilic Hebrew (Kahn 2009: 277–9), Hasidic Hebrew and some eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ashkenazic Responsa (Kahn 2015: 288). Conversely, this type of construction is not a feature of Israeli Hebrew. It thus constitutes another instance of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew representing a direct continuation of its Eastern European forerunner.

4.6 Yiqtol

The *yiqtol* can be used in Ashkenazic Hebrew in present tense contexts, as in examples (151)–(155). In many cases it denotes an immediate present action in a performative context, as in (151)–(153). Less frequently, it can also denote a habitual present action, as in (154) and (155).

- (151) בעמדי בזה, אודה את ה' בכל לבב, על שזכיתי לתסתופף בצילא
דמהימנותא קדישא
be-ómdi be-zé óyde es ha-šém be-xol láyvov al še-zexčí le-históyfef
be-šile de-mhaymeníse kadíše
 ‘as I stand here, I thank the L-RD with all my heart that I have merited to dwell in the shadow of holy faith’ (NY02: 26)

- (152) בהכניסו את בנו לחופה נברכהו במקהלות
ba-haxnise es bnóy le-xípe nivrexáy be-mekháyles
 ‘we congratulate him upon his son’s wedding’ (SH21: 3)
- (153) והנה אבקש מחילה ממעכת²²ה
ve-híne evákeš mexíle me-máyles kvóyd terúsoy herúmu
 ‘and I hereby ask forgiveness from you’ (NY15: 5)
- (154) והנה בא לידיעתנו אשר לפעמים יכנסו וישתתפו והקאל”ס אינשי דלא
 מעלי רח”ל
ve-hínay bú le-yidisáyni ášer le-fímim yíxnesi v-ištátfi ve-ha-kols
ínše de-loy mále raxmúno lišlán
 ‘however, it has come to our attention that there are those who
 enter into these calls, making obscene remarks’ (SH12)
- (155) והנה בזכרינו ובהעלות על לבבינו את זיו איקונין הבורע כלפיד אש
 [...] הלא דמוע תדמע עינינו ותאבל נפשנו
ve-hínay be-zoxráyni i-ve-háloys al leveváyni es zív ektínen ha-bóyer
ke-lápid áyš [...] ha-lóy dumie tídma aynáyni ve-téval nafšáyni
 ‘and when we remember and take into our heart the radiance of
 his face, burning like a torch [...], indeed our eye fills with tears
 and we mourn’ (NY02: 13)

The use of the *yiqṭol* in immediate and habitual present contexts is a common feature of Biblical Hebrew (van der Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze 2017: 162). In Rabbinic Hebrew, by contrast, the participle is the main verbal form used in present contexts, including both immediate and habitual ones, and the *yiqṭol* is not employed in such cases (Pérez Fernández 1999: 108; Geiger 2013b). As in other instances discussed in this article, the contemporary Ashkenazic use of the *yiqṭol* in present contexts most closely resembles that found in historical Ashkenazic Hebrew, in which the conjugation can be used to denote immediate and habitual present actions alongside the participle (Kahn 2009: 115–19; Kahn 2015: 161; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). This stands in sharp contrast to Israeli Hebrew, in which the *yiqṭol* is not employed in present tense contexts, but rather is used only for the future tense (Coffin and Bolozky 2005: 38–9).

²² Abbreviation of honorific form of address מעלת כבוד תורתו הרמה (see above for transcription).

5. Particles

5.1 Use of Complementizers כִּי *ki*, -שׁ *še-* and (י)ד *d(i)*

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew employs three different complementizers, כִּי *ki*, -שׁ *še-* and (י)ד *d(i)*, all in the sense of English ‘that’. Each of these three complementizers comes from a different source: כִּי *ki* is traceable to Biblical Hebrew, while -שׁ *še-* is a hallmark of Rabbinic (and Israeli) Hebrew and (י)ד *d(i)* is Aramaic. The three variants are used interchangeably, though כִּי *ki* and -שׁ *še-* are more commonly attested than (י)ד *d(i)*. Examples (156)–(157) illustrate the use of כִּי *ki*.

- (156) גם ידוע כי מרן [...] הפקיד כי בוגרי הבתי חינוך לא יקבלו
"כתב-בגרות"

*gám yedie ki múron [...] hífkid ki bóyged ha-bútay xínex loy
yikábli ksáv bágres*

‘it is also known that the teacher [...] ordered that the graduates should not receive a diploma’ (NY11: 6)

- (157) לדאבונינו אשתקד ראינו כי אירועים גדולים עם הרבה משתתפים גרמא
בניזוקין להתפשטות הווירוס ר"ל

*le-davoynáyni eštáked reini ki eyríim gdóylim im hárbé mištáfim
grúme be-nizúkin le-hispáštes ha-váyres raxmúne lišlán*

‘to our regret, last year we saw that large events with many participants indirectly contributed to the spread of the virus, G-d have mercy on us’ (SH18)

Examples (158)–(159) illustrate the use of -שׁ *še-*:

- (158) הן ידוע מספה"ק שימי הפורים הבעל"ט [...] הם ימים נעלים וקדושים

*hen yedie mi-sfúrim ha-kdóyšim še-yemáy ha-pírim habú eláyni
le-tóyve [...] hem yúmim náalim i-kdóyšim*

‘indeed it is known from the holy books that the days of Purim, which are given to us for joy [...] are exalted and holy days’ (SH18)

- (159) חשבנו שמן הנכון שיחקו הדברים בכתב

xeshávni še-min ha-núxen še-yíxkeki ha-dvúrim be-xsáv

‘we thought that it is right that they should put the regulations into writing’ (NY15: 1)

Examples (160)–(161) illustrate the use of *d(i)* ד(י).

- (160) **עלתה בידינו לברר דאופן הנמוקים [...] אינם שייכים אצל הפראגראם**
ólsu be-yedáyni le-várer de-óysn ha-nemíkim [...] áynem šáyxim
áysl ha-prográm

‘we managed to clarify that these arguments [...] do not apply to the programme’ (NY09)

- (161) **אדמו"ר [...] הורה לכל מוסדותיו הקדושים די בכל אתר ואתר "שלא ליקח ה'פראגראמען"**
ádmer [...] hóyre le-xól mesdóysev ha-kdóyšim di ve-xól asár ve-asár
še-lóy lí-kex ha-prográmen

‘the rabbi instructed to all of his holy institutions that everywhere “one must not accept the programmes”’ (NY09: 7)

The contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew use of *ki* כִּי, *še-* שֶׁ- and *d(i)* ד(י) as complementizers is noteworthy because it represents a fusion of Biblical Hebrew, Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic elements. The use of all three complementizers in free variation is also found in historical Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe, with *d(i)* ד(י) appearing less frequently than the others (Kahn 2015: 301; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). This differs from Israeli Hebrew, in which *še-* שֶׁ- is the only complementizer used in all but the most formal registers of the language, where *ki* כִּי is also found (Nir 2013).

5.2 The Accusative Marker

The accusative marker *es* אֵת (= Israeli Hebrew *ʔet*) is used very inconsistently in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew. While it does appear, it is treated as an optional element and is very frequently omitted, as in examples (162)–(165).

- (162) **קראתי המילים**
krúsi ha-mílim

‘I read the words’ (NY09: 7)

- (163) **יפרידו הדת מהחינוך**
yafrídi ha-dás me-ha-xínex

‘they separate the religion from the education’ (NY09: 3)

- (164) מביא ההוראה שבהמסודות שלנו אין לומדים רק הנ"ל
máyvi ha-hoyrúe še-ba-móysdes še-lúni áyn lómDIM rak ha-nízker leél
 'he gives an instruction that in our institutions we should not
 teach only the above mentioned [subjects]' (NY11: 6)
- (165) כמה ילדים אינם תופסים אופן החשבון [...] וגם כשאינם מבינים יסוד
 הדבר
kámu yelúdem áynem tófsim óyfn ha-xéšbm [...] ve-gám kše-áynom
mevínem yesód ha-dovór
 'some children do not grasp the method of arithmetic [...] and
 moreover, when they do not understand the principle of the
 matter' (NY08: 2)
- The avoidance of the accusative marker is particularly widespread following an infinitive, as in examples (166)–(172). Indeed, את *es* is only rarely attested in such contexts.
- (166) ובמשך כל הדורות מלאו צדיקים אלו את שליחותם להאיר עיני ישראל
i-ve-méyšex kól ha-dóyres móli šadikim áyli es šlixúsem le-háir áyni
yisrúI
 'during all the generations these righteous people fulfilled their
 mission to illuminate the eyes of Jewish people' (NY01: 1)
- (167) עלי האחריות לפרסם האיסור
uláy hu-axráyes le-fársem hu-íser
 'it is my responsibility to publish the ban' (NY09: 2)
- (168) לשכור הפועלים
lí-skoyr ha-poyálim
 'to hire the workers' (NY09: 9)
- (169) אין לו רשות לפרסם החתימה
áyn loy rešís le-fársem ha-xasíme
 'he has no permission to publish the signature' (SH08)
- (170) להקל האפשרות להתקשר לשמוע השיעורים הנלמדים
le-hókayI hu-efšúres le-hiskášer li-šmóye ha-šétrim ha-nelmúdim
 'to facilitate the opportunity to connect [and] to listen to the
 classes taught' (SH09)

- (171) ע"כ רציתי עתה גם לשתף שמחתינו עמך
al káyn rašisi átu gám le-šátef simxusáyini tmxu
 'therefore now I also wanted to share our joyful occasion with
 you' (SH01)

- (172) לקיים דבריו הקדושים
le-káyem dvúrov ha-kdóšim
 'to put his holy words into practice' (SH05)

The frequent omission of the accusative marker in twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew has precedent in earlier forms of Diaspora Hebrew going back to the medieval period, including the eleventh-century commentaries of Rashi, the thirteenth-century Ashkenazic work *Sefer Ḥasidim* and Spanish-Provençal Hebrew prose (see Rosén 1995: 64–6 and Rabin 2000: 117), as well as in Hebrew translations from Arabic (Goshen-Gottstein 2006: 111). The omission of the accusative marker is a prominent feature of Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe (Kahn 2015: 280–1; 2018a: 175–6; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). As in the case of definite construct nouns discussed in section 4.3.1, Reshef (2020: 22–4) has also documented this phenomenon in the Hebrew of Mandatory Palestine, suggesting that it was inherited directly from its Eastern European antecedent. Reshef notes that the strong drive towards standardization of Hebrew in Mandatory Palestine led to the disappearance of this feature and the universal use of את *et* in current Israeli Hebrew. By contrast, the omission of the marker has been maintained in Diaspora Ashkenazic Hebrew until the present day, as our corpus shows.

6. Lexical Components

Twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew contains prominent Aramaic, Yiddish and English lexical components. The following subsections discuss each of these in turn.

6.1 Aramaic Component

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew writers make relatively frequent use of Aramaic nouns and noun phrases (in addition to the Aramaic complementizer (י)ד *d(i)* discussed in 4.1). The Aramaic terms employed in our corpus are usually ultimately traceable to the Talmud, though they are often attested in later Hebrew writings as well.

They usually refer to abstract concepts, and very commonly consist of two-member noun phrases, though sometimes longer phrases may appear, as in example (176). Aramaic lexical items typical of those appearing in the corpus are shown in examples (173)–(176). In keeping with the longstanding Ashkenazic conception of Hebrew and Aramaic as a unified language, *lošn koydeš*, Aramaic words appearing in the corpus are not marked as loanwords by the use of *geršayim* or *gerēš* (see sections 2.2–3).

(173) אביו היה מנהיג ישראל וריש גלותא

úviv hóyu mánhig isrául ve-ráyš gelte

‘his father was a leader of the Jewish people and an exilarch’
(NY01: 1)

(174) קריאת כל הגליון מרישא לסיפא

kries kol ha-gilyon me-ráyše le-sáyfe

‘reading the whole issue from the beginning to the end’ (NY11: 3)

(175) נקדם בברכה מרובה, מזלא טבא, לידידינו חברי קהלתינו

*nekádaym be-vrúxo meribe, mázle túve, l-ididáyni xávray
kebelusáyni*

‘we would like to offer many blessings [and] congratulations to
our friends, members of our community’ (SH19: 1)

(176) בהדרת קודש וברעותא וחדוותא דליבא

be-hádras kóydeš i-ve-reise ve-xédvase de-libe

‘with beauty of holiness and with desire and joy of the heart’
(NY02: 13)

The use of this type of Aramaic lexis (i.e. nouns and noun phrases referring primarily to abstract concepts) is a widespread element of earlier Ashkenazic Hebrew (Kahn 2015: 356–60; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming) but is not typical of Israeli Hebrew with the exception of certain fixed expressions that are commonly restricted to particular registers (Shitrit 2013).

6.2 Yiddish Component

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew texts are replete with Yiddish loanwords, much as their Eastern European Hebrew antecedents were. Yiddish lexical items, like their Aramaic counterparts, are not

marked as borrowings by *geršayim* or *gereš* (see sections 2.2–3) and are freely incorporated into Hebrew grammatical structures. Yiddish vocabulary in our corpus includes traditional Eastern European toponyms – which remain relevant in the contemporary Hasidic world – and words for everyday items and concepts, as well as concepts that are particularly associated with the Ashkenazic Hebrew experience, e.g. יודישקייט *yidiškayt* ‘Jewish tradition’ and יארצייט *yuršat* ‘anniversary of a death’. These types of Yiddish lexical items are illustrated in examples (177)–(184).

- (177) על גבול מדינת אונגארן סמוך לגבול גאליציען
al gvil medines ingern sümex le-gvil gališien
 ‘on the border of the land of Hungary, close to the border with Galicia’ (NY01: 181)
- (178) הלימודי חול בהתסידישע תלמודי תורה
ha-lemiday xol ba-xasidiše talmiday tóyre
 ‘the secular studies in the Hasidic cheyders’ (NY11: 5)
- (179) למשך 50-40 מינוט
le-méjšex fëršik-ffšik²³ minit
 ‘for 40–50 minutes’ (NY09: 3)
- (180) יתקיימו וואלן [...] בעיר וויליאמסבורג
yiskáymi váln [...] be-ír vilyamsburg
 ‘elections will take place [...] in the city of Williamsburg’ (NY14)
- (181) ולהרגילם לקרירות ביודישקייט
i-le-hargilom le-kríres be-yideškayt
 ‘and to get them used to a feeling of coolness towards the Jewish tradition’ (SH14)
- (182) להשתמש בהקאסע של המדינה
le-hištámeš be-ha-káse šel ha-medíne
 ‘to use the State’s funds’ (NY15: 2)

²³ Note that the printed text has Arabic numerals, but that our informant has read them out in Yiddish due to the fact that they appear in conjunction with a Yiddish noun.

- (183) יום היארצייט של הגאון רבי חיים ברייש זצ"ל
yóym ha-yúršat šel ha-gúen reb xáyim bráys̄ záyxr šádik li-vróxe
 ‘the day of the *yortsayt* of the great Rabbi Chaim Breish of
 blessed memory’ (SH23: 2)

- (184) למען השולעס של הגוים
le-mán ha-šúles šel ha-góym
 ‘for the non-Jewish schools’ (NY08: 4)

Sometimes Yiddish elements within the Hebrew text extend to phrases or entire sentences. Some such Yiddish elements comprise original oral remarks made by prominent individuals, which appear alongside their Hebrew translation, as in example (185). This practice of citing remarks in the original Yiddish following a Hebrew translation maintains the much older diglossic model which is also in evidence in nineteenth-century Eastern European Hasidic Hebrew texts (see Kahn 2015: 388–90), and bears witness to the continuing close relationship between Hebrew and Yiddish in Hasidic society, whereby Yiddish is the primary vernacular but Hebrew is the more prestigious written language. As such, it is common more broadly for Yiddish speech to be translated into Hebrew when committed to writing. Again, this practice dates back to Eastern Europe and was widespread in Hasidic communities (see Dvir-Goldberg 2003: 19).

- (185) ענה רבינו: "אין שום פליאה בדבר, עליו נכתב ועליו לא נכתב" (אויף
 עם איז יא אנגעשריבן און אויף עם איז נישט אנגעשריבן)
*úne rabáyni áyn šim plie be-dúver úlov níxtev ve-úlov loy níxtev (of
 ém iz yó úngešribm in of ém iz níšt úngešribm)*
 ‘our rabbi answered: “there is no wonder in this case, it was
 written about him and it wasn’t written about him” (it is really
 written about him and about him it’s not written)’ (NY01: 2)

The use of Yiddish vocabulary to refer to items and concepts relating to everyday life is a characteristic feature of historical Eastern European Hebrew (see Kahn 2015: 367–9; Kahn and Yampolskaya forthcoming). While some Yiddish lexical items are used in Israeli Hebrew, they are typically different from the ones attested in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew (see Farstey 2013).

6.3 English Component

English lexical items are a characteristic feature of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew writing. English borrowings can denote a variety

of different items and concepts relating to life in English-speaking countries. They often denote concepts that derive from, or are perceived to derive from, the wider (non-Jewish) society, such as ‘social distancing’, ‘hotlines’ and ‘conference calls’. Many of the English borrowings are compound nouns or noun-adjective phrases, as in (190)–(192), while others are individual nouns, as in (186)–(189) and still others are adjectives, as in (187). In contrast to Yiddish and Aramaic borrowings, which are not treated graphically as loanwords in contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew, in many cases the English lexical items are marked by *geršayim*, as in (190)–(192) or by *gereš*, as in (188), indicating that they are perceived by the writers to be foreign terms.

- (186) להמשיך לימודים הגבוהים ב'קאלידזש'
le-hámšix lemídím ha-gvóhim be-kóliḡ
 ‘to continue higher education at a college’ (NY11: 6)
- (187) מותרים להשתמש בחומר של מנהגים דתיים [...] כשמוסרים אותם
 באופן של “אבדזשעקטיוו”, כחלק מפראגראם של לימוד סעקולארי
metúrim le-hištámeš be-xóymér šel minhúgim dúsím [...] keše-mósrím óysom be-óyfn šel “obǵéktiv” ke-xáylik me-program šel límed sékyulári
 ‘it’s permissible to use the materials from religious traditions [...], when they are presented in an objective manner as a part of a program of a secular study’ (NY09: 10)
- (188) הוחלט [...] שהתלמידים והתלמידות לא יביאו משלוח מנות לרבנות
 ולהטיטשער'ס בעצם יום הפורים
híxlet [...] še-ha-talmídím ve-ha-talmídes loy yuvíi mišlóyex mínes le-rabóysom i-le-ha-tíčers be-éysem yom ha-pírím
 ‘it has been decided [...] that the male and female students must not take Purim presents to their rebbes²⁴ and to the teachers on the day of Purim itself’ (SH18)
- (189) בהאפיס של חברת אינטערלינק
be-ha-ófis šel xévrás interlink
 ‘at the office of the company Interlink’ (SH14)

²⁴ In this context a rebbe is a boys’ teacher in cheyder.

- (190) להתקשר בהא"ט ליינ"ס או גרופע"ס שונים אשר אין רווח חכמים נוחה מהם

*le-hiskāšer be-hót layms oy grúpes šóynim ášer áyn ríyex
xaxúmim nóyxe me-hém*

'to phone hotlines or different groups which have not a drop of wisdom' (SH09)

- (191) ולהימנע מלילך למקומות ואירועים מבלי שאשע"ל דיסטאנסינג

i-le-hemúne me-láylex le-mekóymes ve-trim me-blí sóušl dístansing

'and to avoid going to places and events without social distancing' (SH16)

- (192) כל הרוצים להשתתף בהקאנפערענט"ס קא"ל

kol ha-róysim le-hištátef ba-kónferenš kól

'everyone who wants to participate in the conference call' (SH12)

The contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew use of English vocabulary follows the models observed in historical Ashkenazic Hebrew from Eastern Europe, which borrowed substantially from the surrounding dominant languages. The only major difference is that for today's New York- and London-based Ashkenazic Hebrew writers, English plays the same role that Slavic languages and German did for their predecessors in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe. While English lexis is likewise a prominent feature of contemporary Israeli Hebrew, the loanwords are typically different (as Israeli Hebrew tends to borrow English slang and vocabulary relating to contemporary secular culture; see Rosenhouse 2013); moreover, Israeli Hebrew follows different orthographic conventions with respect to English loanwords (see section 3.1).

7. Conclusion

As this article has shown, Ashkenazic Hebrew, which existed in Central and Eastern Europe for centuries and can be regarded as an independent variety of the language due to its distinctive orthographic, phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical features, did not cease to be used productively with the largescale migration of Jews away from Eastern Europe and the concurrent revernacularization of Hebrew in Palestine, as is commonly believed. Rather, Ashkenazic

Hebrew has been maintained as a productive language of writing, existing in a diglossic relationship with Yiddish in Haredi (predominantly Hasidic) communities throughout the Diaspora, chiefly in the New York area and London, with smaller communities in the Montreal area and Antwerp. Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew has a similar sociolinguistic context to its Eastern European antecedent: it is a solely written medium that coexists with the spoken language Yiddish. It is almost solely the preserve of men, and it is acquired unevenly among the male population depending on the extent of their education in cheyder and yeshiva. Its productive use in writing is a marker of scholarly prestige among well-educated men with involvement in the community's educational or communal leadership, but it is much more widely read by a larger segment of the male community.

Contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew has many of the same orthographic, phonological, grammatical and lexical features as its Eastern European antecedent. These are widely distributed throughout the language. With respect to orthography, twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew follows the historical Eastern European model of spelling loanwords and proper nouns as in Yiddish, of employing *geršayim* and *gereš* for loanwords and abbreviations and of inserting *yod* before the 1CS and 1CP suffix on singular nouns. With respect to nominal morphology and syntax, characteristic features of twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew include the retention of the definite article with inseparable prepositions, definiteness discord in noun-adjective phrases, definite construct nouns, split construct chains, plural absolute nouns in construct chains and finally Yiddish and English plural suffixes on loanwords. With respect to verbal morphology and syntax, common features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew include participles with a *nun* plural suffix, the widespread use of the *nitpa'el*, *qal* infinitives construct of I-*yod* and I-*nun* roots following the rabbinic model, use of the infinitive construct without *lamed* in temporal constructions following the biblical model, the use of the particle *hinne* with an infinitive construct to denote intentions and the *yiqṭol* in immediate and habitual present contexts. Where particles are concerned, two characteristic features of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew are the interchangeable use of the biblical כִּי *ki*, the rabbinic -שׁ *še-* and the Aramaic (י)ד *d(i)* introducing complement clauses and the tendency not to employ the accusative marker, particularly following infinitives construct. With respect to lexis, contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew is hallmarked by prominent Aramaic, Yiddish and English components.

In almost all of these respects, twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew is identical to its Eastern European predecessor. There are a number of differences between historical Eastern European Ashkenazic Hebrew and the contemporary Diaspora variety, but these are much less significant and less numerous than the similarities. The main grammatical difference between the two varieties is the fact that historical Ashkenazic Hebrew made widespread use of the *wayyiqtol* as a marker of past narrative, whereas twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew does not regularly utilize it. The only other noteworthy difference between the two varieties concerns the lexical input of the co-territorial dominant non-Jewish language: while in Eastern Europe the main co-territorial languages were Slavic, in the twenty-first-century Hasidic population centres outside of Israel the main dominant language is English, and this can be seen in the widespread use of English borrowings in the texts, particularly with reference to concepts and items deriving from the wider non-Jewish culture (such as government bodies, educational policies, etc.).

Conversely, and significantly, contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew differs strikingly from Israeli Hebrew in almost all of these key respects. The only exception to this is the phenomenon of definite construct nouns, a feature which today is found only in colloquial Israeli Hebrew speech, but which has been documented in the language of Mandatory Palestine and which therefore is likely traceable to the same source as that of contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew. This is one of the most noteworthy aspects of our claim regarding the Hasidic variety of the language employed in the Diaspora. Rather than constituting a 'corrupt' or 'ungrammatical' written variety based on Israeli Hebrew, we argue that the clear and pervasive similarities between historical Ashkenazic Hebrew and its contemporary counterpart, when viewed in conjunction with the extreme differences from Israeli Hebrew, point to a very different scenario. Rather than adopting Israeli Hebrew, Hasidic communities which relocated to the new post-War population centres in New York and London (as well as Montreal and Antwerp) maintained the traditional diglossia that had obtained in Eastern Europe, whereby Yiddish was used by the majority of the population and Ashkenazic Hebrew was employed as a largely high-register written language.

Thus, twenty-first-century Ashkenazic Hebrew represents the natural development and continuation of earlier Eastern European Ashkenazic Hebrew, as it never ceased to be employed in this way, and this is reflected in the high degree of linguistic correspondence between the historical and contemporary varieties of the language.

Contact with Israeli Hebrew, by contrast, has been relatively minimal, since Diaspora Hasidic groups have never switched to that language as a community vernacular (despite the fact that individual members of Diaspora communities may have learnt it to some extent in Israel, e.g. if they attended an Israeli yeshiva or married into an Israeli Haredi family). Other sectors of the Ashkenazic population generally made the switch from the traditional Ashkenazic Hebrew/Yiddish diglossia in their new North American or Western European population centres, and now typically write and speak in the dominant co-territorial language while (particularly in the Progressive denominations) reciting liturgy according to the Israeli Hebrew model and possibly studying Israeli Hebrew. By contrast, Hasidic communities never made this switch and have instead maintained traditional Ashkenazic Hebrew. Because their population is of sufficient size to allow for stable transmission from one generation to the next, it continues to thrive well into the twenty-first century. Examination of this unique variety can help to broaden our understanding of the diachronic and synchronic diversity and richness of the Hebrew language.

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Primary Sources

The following is a list and brief descriptions of the contemporary Ashkenazic Hebrew texts comprising our corpus. Where bibliographical details such as publication date and precise place of publication are listed in the texts, we have included them here.

Note the use of these geographical abbreviations:

A = Antwerp

M = Montreal

NY = New York

SH = Stamford Hill, London

- A01 – 1-page letter by Rabbi Aharon Schiff about Covid restrictions in Belgium, March 2020.
- M01 – 1-page announcement of a *vaxnaxt*²⁵ ceremony for a newborn son, 6 September 2020.
- NY01 – *מושיען של ישראל* [The saviour of Israel], by Shlomo Ya'akov Gelbman, Brooklyn, 2007. Biography of the Satmar Rebbe.
- NY02 – *ספר אש קודש* [Holy fire], Brooklyn, 2016. Biography of the rebbe of the Tosh Hasidic dynasty.
- NY03 – 1-page advertisement about a new shop opening, Brooklyn, 2020.
- NY04 – 1-page *paškevil* (see 1.3.1) prohibiting a certain Hebrew publication, Brooklyn, 2020.
- NY05 – 1-page handwritten letter by Rabbi Yosef Meir Kantor, Monsey, undated.
- NY06 – 1-page *paškevil* about a planned protest, Monsey, undated.
- NY07 – 1-page Satmar *paškevil* against Hasidim serving in the Israeli army, 2016.
- NY08 – 15-page *paškevil* opposing the US 'common core curriculum' for K-12 schools, undated.
- NY09 – collection of pamphlets and letters opposing certain obligatory aspects of the US public school curriculum, Brooklyn, 2015.
- NY10 – *אוצרות שיה חיים* [Treasures of speech of life]. Monsey, 2019. Speeches of Rabbi Eliezer Chayim Blum, the rebbe of the Kasho Hasidic dynasty.
- NY11 – 64-page pamphlet opposing the US 'common core curriculum' for K-12 schools, Brooklyn, 24 January 2020.
- NY12 – 4-page letter from Rabbi Asher Anshel Weiss to Rabbi Chayim Avrom Duber Flohr regarding Jewish education in New York, 3 March 2020.
- NY13 – pamphlet opposing the US 'common core curriculum' for K-12 schools and the educational approach of 'critical thinking', 2020.
- NY14 – 1-page Satmar *paškevil* about upcoming elections in Williamsburg, 2020.
- NY15 – 7-page open letter from Rabbi Shaye Weiss about girls' education, Brooklyn, 18 July 2017.
- SH01 – handwritten note on private wedding invitation, 2018.
- SH02 – excerpt from private diary of a yeshiva student, 2013.
- SH03 – 1-page *paškevil* against the *eruv* (see fn. 6) in Stamford Hill, 2020.
- SH04 – 1-page *paškevil* about the closure of cheyders and yeshivas during Covid, 2020.
- SH05 – 1-page official letter against the Stamford Hill *eruv* by Rabbi Burech Halberstam, 12 June 2020.
- SH06 – 1-page *moydoe* (see 1.3.1) against the Stamford Hill *eruv*, 14 July 2014.
- SH07 – 1-page *paškevil* about ex-Hasidim, 24 May 2020.
- SH08 – 1-page letter about Shomrim volunteer safety patrol, 8 May 2020.
- SH09 – 1-page *paškevil* issued by Rabbi M.C.E. Padwa about Covid, 2020.
- SH10 – 1-page *moydoe* about the Stamford Hill *eruv*, 12 June 2020.

²⁵ A ceremony for newborn boys held the night before their circumcision.

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- SH11 – 1-page letter about Covid wedding restrictions with English translation, 18 May 2020.
SH12 – 1-page *moydoe* about the shift of educational programmes to conference calls due to Covid, 13 May 2020.
SH13 – 1-page *moydoe* about Stamford Hill *eruv*, 14 May 2020.
SH14 – 1-page *pashkevil* against the Prevent policy, 25 February 2020.
SH15 – 1-page *moydoe* about Covid restrictions and guidelines, 17 March 2020.
SH16 – 1-page *moydoe* about Covid restrictions and guidelines, 2 February 2021.
SH17 – 1-page *moydoe* about megillah reading at Purim, 10 February 2021.
SH18 – 1-page *moydoe* about Purim Covid guidelines, 11 February 2021.
SH19 – *Kol Mevasr*, 16 May 2020.
SH20 – 1-page *moydoe* announcing a day of prayer for those ill with Covid, 19 March 2020.
SH21 – *Kol Mevasr*, 20 June 2020.
SH22 – *Kol Mevasr*, 12 March 2021.
SH23 – *Kol Mevasr*, 4 June 2020.