EARLY MODERN CHRISTIAN HEBREW

A HITHERTO OVERLOOKED VARIETY OF MEDIEVAL HEBREW

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Hebrew Carmina Gratulatoria of the Hungarian Peregrines in the 17th century (K-125486) PI: József Zsengellér
There are many ways of writing the history of a language. One is to describe in detail the changes throughout its existence which affected its sounds, script and spelling, grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Another is to relate the history of its literature and to characterize the language of the most important works in each period. Or we may follow the contacts the language had with other languages, be it those of geographical neighbours or languages of civilization or religion, and note the influence each of these exerted upon the language with which we deal. Contrariwise, we could observe how our language influenced others, the interest it aroused, and enumerate the outstanding scholars who studied it and the results of their researches. The Hebrew language has been treated, though not exhaustively, in all the ways mentioned.

This little book adopts a different way. It endeavours to outline the links and relations between the Hebrew language and the Jewish people at various periods and to estimate the influence of changes in Jewish social life upon the use and character of the language and the services which it performed for the people in varying circumstances. The tendency of this

The traditional narrative

- The history of a language = the history of a people.
- Hence, the history of Hebrew = the history of the Jewish people.

Overview of this talk

1. Introduction of the project
   “Hebrew Carmina Gratulatoria of the Hungarian Peregrines in the 17th century”

2. Some samples

3. “Early modern Christian Hebrew”
   as a special case of Medieval Hebrew?
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Student mobility in the early modern period

- **Peregrines**, such as Hungarian Calvinist students (e.g., of theology) studying at Dutch and German protestant universities in the 17th century.

- NRDI project (PI: József Zsengellér) 2017-2021, focusing on their Hebrew.

Relief of a Hungarian “peregrine”. Academy Building, Utrecht University.
Peregrines

17\textsuperscript{th} c.: typically from Calvinist regions in Eastern Hungary to major Protestant universities.

Provenance of the material in our corpus thus far.
Gratulatory poems (*carmina*)

- Open lectures, public defenses and viva proceedings (*disputa*), accompanied by poems, written by fellow students (or by professors).
- Welcoming the event, commenting on the works presented + entertainment.
- Written in various languages: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, but also Dutch, Hungarian, etc. (Postma 1995: at least 15 languages in Franeker).
- Published in print together with thesis, lecture, etc.

Our project: Hungarian authors, Hungarian addresses.
What can we learn from studying these poems?

Questions to be answered include:

• What level of linguistic competence could students achieve?
• Was their knowledge of Hebrew confined to Masoretic Biblical Hebrew?
• Or were they familiar with latter stages of the Hebrew language, as well?
• Was there transfer from mother tongue / from dominant second language?
• How do they fit into contemporaneous Hebrew / European poetry?
• What features characterize the *carmina gratulatoria* as a literary genre?
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Dissertation of Nicolaus Apati, Ungarus à Debrecen Abrahamus Elzevier, 1686
Poem from 1653 by Pál Diószegi Kalmár (1628/9-1663) to Michael G. Báthory (1631-1669)

RMK III. 1840
Poem from 1653 by Pál Diószegi Kalmár
(1628/9-1663) to Michael G. Báthory (1631-1669)

לאיש חכם לרשיע
מייאל בתורי
יית אליחם דעת לעשת כל בתבונה

מיתן אדם ירחיב רעים
ובחייו ינתן טובים

לשלום [לאחשיב] ליו שלום
ל Gods המלך מי ינון

שומר פניו והשומע
מעזר ובא תפשו

לא נשמה את בנפל איבך
ובכשל לא יבלב

Károli Gáspár University
of the Reformed Church in Hungary

PROJECT
FINANCED FROM
THE NRDI FUND
MOMENTUM OF INNOVATION
Poem from 1653 by Pál Diószegi Kalmár (1663) to Michael G. Báthory (1631-1669)

לכיש חכם לער
מייאל בתורי
יתן אלהיםikut לעשיט הכל תשובה

Prov. 18:16:
מתי אדם ירחב עים
ｗבחיים יתן טובים
וניתנו לפני חכמים
שאת פנים רעש לא טוב
למוט צדיק אל תיאורב
כיצוהים קורב

Prov. 18:5:
שאת פנים-רעש לא-טוב
למוט צדיק במשפע

Prov. 8:35:
כפי ומיאי ומיא תימים
יְנָךְ רַבּוֹ הָיוֹת:

Prov. 24:17:
בכשל צדיק אל-Traversal
בכשלו אל-ג'ל-לבר:
Poem from 1700 by Paulus A. Gyöngyosi to Stephanus Helmeczi in Franeker
Poem from 1700 by Paulus A. Gyöngyösi

to Stephanus Helmeczi in Franeker

Words known only from postbiblical sources:

בלוזמא, פזמון
(Jastrow: ‘drinking of spiced wines’)


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Poem from 1692 by Josephus Csuzi to Stephanus T. M. Vasarhelyyi in Franeker

RMK III. 3728
Poem from 1692 by Josephus Csuzi to Stephanus T. M. Vasarhelyi

Postbiblical syntax:

Biblical background text is Psalm 2:4:

יְשָבָב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יְשָׁחֵק אֵדֹנִי לְﬠַג־לֶָֽמוֹ׃

He that sitteth in heaven laugheth, the Lord hath them in derision. (JPA)

the Messiah-King

Unexpected dagesh in ב, ג, ו and Why?

5452 = 1692
Reconstructing pronunciation

- *Stephanus Becskehazi* to *Stephanus Szekelyhidi* in 1651 (RMNY III 2356)

Jevarek leka Elohim,
Makor kol tow milshamaim:
Asher leshan kedosim bechokma
Lomed atta lenaphšeka,
Jitten hu fékvi, šhellemalakim.
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Early Modern Christian Hebrew as a case of Medieval Hebrew?

**Medieval Jewish Hebrew**
- Second Language Acquisition only
  - Very early and intensive acquisition
- Heavy training on Torah, *then* NaKh, + heavy training on postbiblical Hebrew
- Written modality, incl. reading up
  - Oral modality??
- Inference from L1? (+ from Aramaic?)

**Medieval Christian Hebrew**
- Second Language Acquisition only
  - Late and not so intensive acquisition
- Heavy training on Old Testament, e.g., Mishlei + some postbiblical influence?
- Written modality, incl. reading up
  - Oral modality ????
- Inference from L1 + Latin, Greek etc.?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medieval Jewish Hebrew</th>
<th>Medieval Christian Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Sampling bias:</em> the best texts from the best rabbis are best known to us.</td>
<td>• <em>Sampling bias:</em> currently working on a random sample of possibly mediocre students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Aiming at an ideal and unknown audience, with whom Hebrew is the only shared lang.</td>
<td>• Aiming at specific peers with shared languages and past experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>Lg. choice:</em> Hebrew as language of the Jews, past (biblical and rabbinic) and present.</td>
<td>• <em>Lg. choice:</em> Hebrew as language of the Jews (<em>‘sido nyelv’</em>), past (biblical times) and present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Hebrew as the language of revelation.</td>
<td>+ Hebrew as the language of creation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
A final note

• Please bear in mind that this is still work in progress.

• Any feedback or suggestion is welcome!
Thank you for your attention!

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