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Jews and the Language of Eastern Slavs

ALEXANDER KULIK

INTRODUCTION

THE BEGINNINGS OF JEWISH PRESENCE in Eastern Europe are among the most enigmatic and underexplored pages in the history of the region. The dating and localization of Jewish presence, as well as the origin and cultural characteristics of the Jewish population residing among the Slavs in the Middle Ages, are among the issues which have become a subject of tense discussion and widely diverging evaluations, often connected to extra-academic ideological agendas. The question of the spoken language of the Jews inhabiting Slavic lands during the Middle Ages is unresolved. Did all or most of these Jews speak languages of their former lands (such as German, Turkic, or Greek), did they speak local Slavic vernaculars? Or did they, perhaps, speak some Judeo-Slavic vernacular(s), which later became extinct? If the last two suggestions appear plausible, then was the Jews' experience limited to oral usage, or can we also expect to find written evidence of Slavic literacy among medieval Jews? What impact could such literacy on the part of the Jews have had on the literary production and intellectual horizons of Slavs? Or could it even have impacted East Slavic cultural contacts with Latin Europe, in which Slavic-literate Jews may have been involved?

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The significance of these questions reaches far beyond the concerns of one or two particular disciplines. As we will see, certain Slavic forms reconstructed from their Hebrew contexts may provide the earliest attestation of important linguistic data relevant for Slavic historical linguistics. An attempt to reconstruct certain isolated elements of a hypothetical Judeo-Slavic vernacular may be of interest for the study of Jewish languages. Seen in historical perspective, the existence of an East Slavic-speaking Jewry may provide an additional argument in favor of the existence of pre-Ashkenazic Jewish communities in the region. The problems I raise here are also significant for an understanding of cultural processes, where Jews and Slavs may have shared a grounding not only in terms of geographic territory, legal administration, interethnic politics and interconfessional polemics; they may have also literally had a *language in common*. How else can we explain the unique phenomenon of early Hebrew-Slavic translations? What was their *Sitz im Leben* and target audience? Should we extrapolate Jewish cultural isolationism as this is known from the late medieval and modern periods to the earlier Middle Ages, or was the situation different then? Should the early history of Eastern European Jewry be regarded as a sequel to the German Jewish story, or as an independent Slavic Jewish narrative? All these wider historical questions must be reexamined as soon as we clarify the linguistic situation of Eastern European Jewry in the Middle Ages.

SLAVIC THEORY

The idea that the Jewish population of early Eastern Europe¹ was Slavic-speaking before it was assimilated by German-speaking Ashkenazic migrants was first put forth in 1865 by Harkavi.² The concept became popular with some Jewish scholars, especially those who, like Harkavi himself,³ were interested in proving Jewish autochthonism in Russia and Poland.⁴ Dubnow, a proponent of Jewish cultural autonomy, argued

1. By “Eastern Europe” I mean here the area more or less identical to the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in its prime.

2. Avraam Ja. Garkavi, *Ob jazyke Evreev, žvžib v drevnee vremja na Rusi i o slovjanskib slova, vstrečaemyh u evrejskib pisatelej* (St. Petersburg, 1865); Abraham J. Harkavi, *Ha-Yehudim u-sefat ha-Slavim* (Wilna, 1867).

3. On Harkavi’s political agenda, see Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language* (New Haven, Conn., 2008), 1:A75.

4. See Sergej A. Beršadskij, *Russko-evrejskij arhiv: Dokumenty i materialy dlja istorii evreev v Rossii* (St. Peterburg, 1882–1903); Róża Centnerszwerowa, *O języku żydów w Polsce, na Litwie i Rusi: Szkic dziejowy* (Warsaw, 1907); Boris Rubstein, “The Former Language of the Jews in Russian Lands” (Yiddish), *Der Pinkes* 1 (1913): 21–35; Rubstein, *Di ansbteyung un antwicklung fun der yidisber sprach* (Warsaw, 1922), 69–114; Majer Bałaban, *Z historii Żydów w Polsce: Szkice i studia*

against the view propounded by Harkavi,⁵ but the discussion dealt in fact only with the period from the sixteenth century on, for which time span Dubnow succeeded in showing that Yiddish was the main spoken language if not for all, then at least for most East European Jews. And even for this late period, Dubnow admitted a small percentage of Slavic-speakers among the Jews of Eastern Europe. His debate with Harkavi was really about relative numbers. What is more important is that it focused on the factors responsible for the use of Slavic among the Jews: arguing whether the phenomenon was a result of late assimilation or early legacy.⁶ Harkavi's so-called Slavic theory⁷ did not receive anything approaching proper or consistent treatment in linguistic research. Harkavi was not a Slavist and did not pinpoint the dialectal identity of diverse pieces of Slavic material in his research. Much later, the prominent linguists Jakobson and Halle promised a joint monograph on this topic, to which they attributed a great deal of significance, but in the end published only fragmentary studies.⁸ An important contribution to the subject was made by students of Yiddish and other Jewish languages. Thus Weinreich was the first to propose a systematic formulation not only of the

(Warsaw, 1920), 22–31; Ignacy Schiper, "The Beginnings of *loshn ashkenaz* in the Light of Onomastic Studies" (Yiddish), *Yidishe filologye* 1 (1924–26): 272–87; James Lurie, "To the Question of What Language the Jews Had in Slavic Lands" (Yiddish), *Tseitsbrift* 2–3 (1928): 747–48.

5. Semen M. Dubnow, "Razgovornyj jazyk i narodnaja literatura pol'skopolitovskih evreev v XVI i pervoj polovine XVII veka," *Evrejskaja Starina* 1 (1909): 7–40.

6. On this, see Weinreich, *History*, 88.

7. This was also known as the "Canaanic theory." "Canaan," associated in its original biblical context with slavery (see Gen 9.25), became a regular denomination for the Slavic lands and languages in the Hebrew usage of the early Middle Ages, at the same time when the term *slavus* became a replacement for *servus* in Latin Europe (while in the Arab world, the word *ṣaqlab* [pl. *ṣaqliba*] became widespread for "slave"), thus reflecting early medieval *realia*—the quantity of Slav slaves on the Mediterranean markets; see Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, "The Term Canaan in Medieval Hebrew," in *For Max Weinreich on his Seventieth Birthday* (The Hague, 1964), 147–72, reprinted in Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings* (The Hague, 1971–85), 6:858–86 (the further references are to the latter edition).

8. This monograph in preparation was announced in Jakobson and Halle, "Term," 886. Cf. two more publications by Jakobson: "Řeč a písemnictví českých židů v době přemyslovské," in *Kulturní sborník ROK*, ed. L. Matějka (New York, 1957), 35–46; and, "Iz razyskanij nad staročesškimi glossami v srednevekovykh evrejskikh pamjatnikah," *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 7 (1985): 45–46. For more literature, see below, section 1.4.

idea of the existence of a Slavic-speaking Jewry but also of the hypothesis of a particular Judeo-Slavic language. This idea was later developed by Wexler.⁹

WEST VS. EAST SLAVIC

The most basic problem hindering the development of this field, and one which I would like to address here, was a failure to differentiate among Slavic materials of different provenance. This involves, first of all, demarcating West and East Slavic data. The use of Western Slavic languages among Jews in Western Slavia and Eastern Germany is more fully documented than its counterpart for the East Slavic.¹⁰ The differentiation between Western and Eastern Slavic materials is especially needed if we do not simply accept the Germano-centric “Western theory” which assumes that the Jewish population of the East Slavic lands is a result of German Jewish colonization caused by persecution or as part of the more general phenomenon of German *Ostiedlung* (settlement of the East) via West Slavic lands.¹¹ In this framework, all East Slavic features should be dismissed as either late or nonexistent; as we will see, such an approach often contradicts the evidence.¹² However, if we do assume a Jewish presence in East Slavic territories in the pre-Lithuanian period (tenth to thirteenth centuries), before any attested migration from the West took place, indications of specific cultural characteristics of the East Slavic Jewish population become especially instructive. More on this below.

The reasons for the failure to pinpoint the dialectal identity of early

9. Max Weinreich, “Yiddish, Knaanic, Slavic: The Basic Relationships,” in *For Roman Jakobson: Essays on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday, 11 October 1956* (The Hague, 1956), 622–32; Weinreich, *History*, 79–91 and A64–80; Paul Wexler, *Explorations in Judeo-Slavic Linguistics* (Leiden, 1987). See also the most recent important work in this field: Cyril Aslanov, “Izmenenie jazykovoĭ identičnosti evreev Vostočnoj Evropy: k voprosu o formirovanii vostočnogo idiša,” in *Istorija evrejskogo naroda v Rossii: ot drevnosti do rannego novogo vremeni*, ed. A. Kulik (Moscow, 2009), 398–417.

10. Weinreich, *History*, 81–82; Wexler, *Explorations*, 81–96, 151–68.

11. See Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland* (Philadelphia, 1973), 22–32; Michael Toch, “Jewish Migrations to, within and from Medieval Germany,” in *Le migrazioni in Europa: Sec. XIII–XVIII*, ed. S. Cavaciocchi (Florence, 1994), 639–52. These theories are undergoing revision by S. Stampfer in his paper in progress, “Violence and the Coming of Ashkenazi Jews to Eastern Europe.”

12. Such disregard for anything contradicting the “Western theory” was typical of the rather influential works by Weinryb (see, e.g., Bernard D. Weinryb, “The Beginnings of East European Jewry in Legend and Historiography,” in *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman*, ed. M. Ben-Horin et al. [Leiden, 1962], 445–502, 482–84).

Jewish Slavic materials may range from historians' linguistic unawareness or their uncritical admission of the "Western theory" to a lack of sufficient linguistic grounds for such a differentiation in the extant sources. Thus, the data from Yiddish as a rule support neither chronological nor geographical identification of presumed early Slavicisms. This is due to the fact that in extant Yiddish we only encounter the result of the fusion of diverse linguistic components attested in the sources which date from centuries later than the period in question. General historical considerations usually prompted researchers to consider all early Slavic data of unclear provenance as Western, while specifically East Slavic forms were hardly ever identified.¹³ Following the same pattern, Slavic glosses in medieval Hebrew literature, which incontestably belong to the early stratum of the material, were all declared by Jakobson and Halle to be Western, even specifically Czech. There was no detailed treatment of all the sources provided in support of this declaration. Jakobson's and Halle's presumed authority, as well as a dearth of Slavic linguists qualified to access medieval rabbinic texts, hindered the reexamination of this issue. In general, it should be noted that the problem was approached by historians and linguists separately; the lack of an integrative historico-philological view of the issue played its role. The topic under discussion seems the most appropriate object for a composite historico-philological approach, when linguistic data should be studied against a historical background, so that a more nuanced sense of the historical subject may be achieved by grounding it in a linguistic analysis.

Hence, an attempt at historical contextualization combined with a reassessment of early linguistic data is a long overdue, as well as the only possible way to deal with the problem. For this purpose, I suggest examining separately all the available evidence, historical and linguistic alike, which pertains to the East Slavic ("Old Russian") language used by Jews in the pre-Lithuanian and early Lithuanian period (tenth to thirteenth centuries).¹⁴

JEWES IN MEDIEVAL EASTERN SLAVIA

Beyond linguistic data, what do we know of Jews in the East Slavic lands (Rus')? Most of the evidence indicating the existence of a Jewish population in Eastern Europe prior to the mass migration from Ashkenaz

13. See Wexler, *Explorations*, 155, 169–70, 184–88.

14. Periodization of this kind seems more appropriate for our discussion than the more conventional approach focused on the Mongol conquest, considering that almost no traces remain of Jewish presence in Eastern Rus' under the Mongols.

originates from territories inhabited by Eastern Slavs, specifically, from the southwestern principalities of Rus'. Here a Jewish presence is attested as early as the tenth century and must go back to the Jewish settlement in the cities of western Khazaria (such as possibly Samvatas-Kiev and Tmutorokan') that is in the territory of Rus' prior to its political formation. Beginning with the Mongol Conquest in the 1240s, evidence of the presence of Jews in Rus' becomes restricted to the territory of Galicia-Volhynia, which suffered less than other areas from the invasion.¹⁵ The Galician-Volhynian lands were annexed to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and subsequently became an integral part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. By the mid-fourteenth century, the age of the separate existence of the Jews of Rus' had come to an end, at least politically, and possibly also culturally; a process of their acculturation began among the bearers of Ashkenazic culture who were arriving in Poland and Lithuania from the West. Thus, long before the divisions of Poland in the eighteenth century and the beginning of a new era in the history of the descendants of the Jews of Rus', there was in the region a Jewish population with a uniform Ashkenazic culture, which retained barely any trace of the unique tradition of its pre-Ashkenazic ancestors.

Radical evaluations are not uncommon in the research done on this pre-Ashkenazic Jewish population of early Rus'. They range from hypercritical attempts to deny the fact of such a population's existence¹⁶ to unjustified exaggerations of its size and importance in the later formation of Eastern European Jewry.¹⁷ None of these radical opinions is corroborated by the sources in our possession. As I have tried to show in my earlier work, the scant sources available to us, even though they do not enable us so much as to estimate the size of this community, are characterized by a high "representativeness" of the evidence—they pertain to nearly all aspects of Jewish life. The presence of Jews in medieval Rus' is

15. See Alexander Kulik, "The Earliest Evidence on the Jewish Presence in Western Rus'," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 27.1–4 (2004–05 [2009]): 13–24.

16. Weinryb, "Beginnings"; Leonid S. Chekin, "The Role of Jews in Early Russian Civilization in the Light of a New Discovery and New Controversies," *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 17.4 (1990): 379–94; Chekin, "K analizu upominanij o evrejah v drevnerusskoj literature XI–XII vekov," *Slavjanovedenie* 3 (1994): 34–42.

17. Omeljan Pritsak, "The Pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe in Relation to the Khazars, the Rus' and the Lithuanians," in *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*, ed. P. J. Potichnyj and H. Aster (Edmonton, 1988), 3–21.

reflected in accounts of wide-ranging and balanced dissemination, diverse occupations that are characteristic of the period, citations of communal structure, institutions, and functions, as well as certain types of cultural activity and contacts with the local gentile environment. The continuity of the evidence of Jewish life in this territory, over which sovereignty changed, and the lack of data on persecution or economic distress, may also be indicative of Jewish settlement continuity in the region. This is the case for the entire region at least until the Mongol conquest, and, in the Western principalities annexed by Lithuania, after the conquest as well.¹⁸

The question arises, what language or languages could these Jews master? This question is also connected to the problem of the origins of these communities and the languages of their “old countries.” We know nothing about German in use by Jews in these territories during this period and have only fragmental and vague indications of their knowledge of Greek and Turkic.¹⁹ The evidence of the Jews’ knowledge of East Slavic is, by contrast, incomparably richer.

1. East Slavic-Speaking Jews in the Middle Ages

The evidence on medieval Jews mastering, to some extent or another, East Slavic speech can be divided into (a) scant direct pieces of evidence explicitly referring to Rus’ or its cities and showing cases of Slavic Jewish onomastics in Rus’ (from the tenth century on), Jewish East Slavic monolingualism (eleventh century), and Jews mastering East Slavic obscene speech (thirteenth century) (sections 1.1–3 below), and (b) more abundant, but less distinct historically, the linguistic data of the Slavic glosses in Hebrew literature from the same period (eleventh–thirteenth centuries) (section 1.4).

1.1. East Slavic Jewish Personal Names

Slavic Jewish onomastics are abundantly represented in Lithuanian Rus’ beginning in the late Middle Ages. For 1486, we have Lithuanian Jews named *Glukhoj*, *Kravchik*, *Momotlivyj*, *Riabchik*, *Samotyka*, *Zubets*, and so on; for 1566, *Borodavka*, *Broda*, *Brova*, *Kislo*, *Kon’*, *Koza*, *Kozak*, *Lisa*, *Prorok*,

18. See Alexander Kulik, “Jews of Medieval Russia: To the Research Methodology” (Hebrew), *Pe’amim* 111/112 (2007): 185–208.

19. For an attempt to assemble the traces of the Judeo-Greek origins of East Slavic Jewry, see Alexander Kulik, “Judeo-Greek Legacy in Medieval Rus’,” *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 39.1 (2008): 51–64. Turkic names were identified by Pritsak in the “Kievan Letter” of the tenth century.

Špak, *Sirota*, and others.²⁰ Some of these forms can only be East Slavic. There is also abundant evidence dating from the modern period, especially of female onomastics.²¹ For earlier times, however, all we have is limited to a couple of names of the elders of the Kievan community, which appear in the “Kievan Letter” of the tenth century.²² Since the names are given in Hebrew consonant writing, their vowel pronunciation remains conjectural, allowing for different interpretations. All in all, *interpretatio slavica* for two of these names seems more convincing than other options. I mean Gostiata (ГОСТАТА) for “*Gosttʹ*, son of *Kybr* the priest” (נוסטטא בֶּר כִּיבֶר כְּדוּ; line 26)²³ and Kupin (КОУПИНЪ) for “*Kopyn*, son of Joseph” (קופין בֶּר יוֹסֵף; line 28)²⁴ as suggested by Torpusman instead of the complicated conjectures by Pritsak, reconstructing here Greek *Kostas* (ΚΩΣΤΑΣ) and Bulgarian *Kuban*, respectively.²⁵ The case of “Judah called *Swrtb*” (יהודה המכונה סורטה; line 27), where Orel suggested reading the nickname as *Sirota* (СИРОТА) instead of **Säwarta*, “belonging to the tribe of *Säwär*,” as had been suggested by Pritsak,²⁶ is less obvious and involves emending

20. Beršadskij, *Russko-evrejskij arhiv*, 1.9:10, 2.218; Beršadskij, *Litovskie evrei* (St. Peterburg, 1883), 395; Alexander Beider, *A Dictionary of Ashkenazic Given Names: Their Origins, Structure, Pronunciation, and Migrations* (Bergenfield, N.J., 2001), 35–36, 189–204. See also a recent study by Čirūnaitė, based on the materials adduced by Beršadskij (Jūratė Čirūnaitė, “The Naming of Jews in 15th-Century Slavonic Documents of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” [Lithuanian], *Lituanistica* 55 [2009]: 127–32).

21. Cf. Garkavi, *Ob jazyke*, 19–20.

22. The letter of introduction given to Jacob ben Hanukkah by the elders of the Kievan community in order to assist him in his fundraising trip is dated by Golb and Pritsak to the tenth century (MS Cambridge, T-S 12.122; published in Norman Golb and Omeljan Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century* [Ithaca, N.Y., 1982], 3–95); cf. Marcel Erdal, “The Khazar Language,” in *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives. Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium*, ed. P. B. Golden et al. (Leiden, 2007), 75–108.

23. The form attested also in the thirteenth century. Czech sources (Beda Dudík, *Forschungen in Schweden für Mährens Geschichte* [Brünn, 1852], 414, 416, quoted in Beider, *Dictionary*, 35).

24. Cf. thirteenth- and fourteenth- c. Northern French forms like קופין, *Copin*, *Copyn* (Simon Seror, *Les noms des Juifs de France au Moyen-Âge* [Paris, 1989], 141; *Germania Judaica. Band II: Von 1258 bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Z. Avneri [Tübingen, 1968], 83, quoted in Beider, *Dictionary*, 191).

25. See Golb and Pritsak, *Khazarian Hebrew Documents*, 35–39; Abram N. Torpusman, “Antroponimija i mežetničeskie kontakty narodov Vostočnoj Evropy v Srednie veka,” *Imja—ėtnos—istorija* (Moscow, 1989), 48–66; Vladimir Orel, “O slavjanskijh imenah v evrejsko-hazarskom piš’me iz Kievā,” *Paleoslavica* 5 (1997): 335–38. See also Erdal, “Khazar Language,” 96 and 102–3.

26. Orel, “O slavjanskijh.”

a *waw* to a *yod*.²⁷ Even so, the emendation is quite plausible, and the form itself is a well attested Jewish surname since 1566 to our days (see above).

1.2. Jewish East Slavic Monolingualism

One of the earliest attestations of Slavic-speaking Jews has been preserved in the Cairo Geniza. One of the miscellanies found there among a variety of materials, including formulae of bans and a colophon of a Bible copy owner, contains a copy of a circular letter of introduction.²⁸ Just as in the Kievan Letter, and following medieval Hebrew epistolary etiquette, the poetic introduction and conclusion of the letter are longer than its substantial part,²⁹ which reads:

< . . . > Honorable, great and holy communities of the holy nation, the scattered remnant of Jeshurun. < . . . > In addition to sending you our greetings we have to apprise you of the case of Master Anon. son of Anon., who is from the community of Rus' and has been staying with us, the community of Salonica, "the young in the flock,"³⁰ and found his relative Rabbi Anon. coming from Jerusalem, the Holy City, let God establish it forever, *selā*. And his relative had a letter from our lord, his honorable and great holiness, our teacher³¹ Anon. And he described him all the magnificence of the Land of Israel, so that his spirit impelled him also to go and to prostrate himself before the Holy Place. And he requested of us these two lines to be for him a mouth and an advocate before your honorable magnificence, so that you might give him a hand and guide him along the good and safe way from city to city and from [isle] to isle with trustworthy persons, because he knows neither the Holy Tongue nor the Greek, and not Arabic, either,

27. For an alternative Gothic etymology, see Erdal, "Khazar Language."

28. MS Oxford, Bodl. 2862²⁶, fols. 70–74. The fragment was published twice: Arthur Marmorstein, "Nouveaux renseignements sur Tobiya ben Eliézer," *Revue des études juives* 73 (1921): 92–97, 95; Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*, London, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1920–22), 2:192. A partial English translation was provided by Joshua Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire (691–1204)* (Athens, 1939), 171–72.

29. There are even similar rhymed phrases in these two documents. Compare the addresses to Jewish communities: הפוררים בכל פינת / קהילות קדושות / הפוררים בכל פינת in the Kievan Letter and אכן חנה נא / פוררים בכל פינה here.

30. Jer 49.20 and 50.45.

31. The letter has 'אד' כב' ג'ק'מ' אדונונו כבוד גדולת קדושתו מורנו [or מרנא].

but the people of his native land sp[eak] only the Slavic tongue [lit. “tongue of Canaan”] (fols. 71b–72a)³²

Mann dates the writing to the eleventh century “and probably even earlier.” This paleographic assessment was challenged by Weinryb, who, citing Goitein’s oral evaluation, stated that the time the letter was written “may equally be in the 12th–13th century.”³³ Although Jewish pilgrimage to the Holy Land is well attested both before the Crusades and during the period of Christian domination in Palestine, the absence of Romance languages (לדעו) in the list of languages required for the voyage to Jerusalem may indicate that the journey took place before the capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099.

In 1047, Jewish pilgrims coming from the “Byzantine realm” were seen in Palestine by the Persian traveler Nāṣer-e Khosraw, as he witnesses in his *Book of Travels*.³⁴ In 1028–35, a ransomed Jewish captive from Attaleia made a pilgrimage from Alexandria to Palestine.³⁵ Salonica was also a major center of the messianic enthusiasm following the First Crusade in 1096 and involving attempts of mass Jewish migration to Palestine.³⁶ There is also a vague indication of “Khazarian” Jews possibly joining the movement (the text of the fragment from the letter describing the events of 1096 in Salonica is not fully clear: למקום אלכזרייה והלכו (?) בין כשאמרו שבע עשר קהילות אל מדבר העמים ואין אנו יודעים אם נתוועד עם השבטים אם לא . . . [?] Khazaria and seventeen communities went, as they said, ‘to the desert of the nations’ [Ezek 20.35]. And we do not know if they met the tribes, or not . . .)³⁷

Similarly to our traveler, Christian pilgrims from Rus’ did not limit

32. < . . . > כב' גד' קד' קהילות עם קורש תפוצות שארית ישורון < . . . > אנב שיאות משאות. שלומינו הוצרכנו הודיעכם עסק מ' פל' ב' פל' שחוא מקהל רוסיאה ונתארח אצלנו בקהל סלונקי צעירי הצאן ומצא את קרובו ר' פל' בא מירושלים עיר הקודש א"ם יכוננה עד עולם סלה וביד קרובו היה איגרת מאת אד' כב' ג'ק' מ' פל' וסיפר לו כל הדרת ארץ ישראל ונדבה רוחו אותו ללכת גם הוא להשתחוות אל מקום הקודש וביקש ממנו שתי שורות הללו להיות לו לפה ולמליץ יושר פני כבוד הדרתכם להתיר לו פיסת יד להדריכו בדרך הטוב אל נכון מעיר לעיר ומ[א] אל אי עם אנשים נאמנים כי אנו יודע לא לשון הקודש ולא לשון יווני גם לא ערכי כי אם שפת כנען מד[ברים] אנשי ארץ מולדתו < . . . >.

33. Weinryb, “Beginnings,” 483.

34. Wheeler M. Thackston, *Nāṣer-e Khosraw’s Book of Travels (Safarnama)* (Albany, N.Y., 1986), 21.

35. Mann, *Jews in Egypt*, 2:91.

36. Adolf Neubauer, “Egyptian Fragments,” *JQR* 9 (1897): 26–29; Jacob Mann, “Messianic Movements during the Early Crusader Period” (Hebrew), *Ha-Tekufa* 23 (1924): 243–61, 253–59; Starr, *Jews*, 73–75.

37. Neubauer, “Egyptian Fragments,” 27.

their travels to Athos (also reached via Salonica) or Constantinople but sometimes continued their voyages to Jerusalem. We can learn about this practice from the *Life of St. Theodosius* (written in the late eleventh century), where a group of pilgrims to the Holy Land is mentioned, which the saint wished to join as a youth, and the journey of St. Varlaam to Jerusalem through Constantinople and back. These practices may be reflected in Old Russian iconography.³⁸ The famous pilgrimage made by Abbot Daniel and his companions, of which the abbot left a detailed report, took place later, heading for the young Crusader Kingdom in the years 1106–8.³⁹

Both Byzantium in general and Salonica in particular were common destinations for voyagers from Rus', Jews and Christians, merchants and pilgrims alike.⁴⁰ It was then the city second in its importance in the empire and had a thriving and ancient Jewish community.⁴¹ The fair of St. Demetrius at Salonica had by the eleventh century become a major commercial event for the entire Mediterranean Basin. No other town within the empire held a fair of such dimensions.⁴² In the early twelfth century the Byzantine author of *Timarion*, an anonymous imitation of Lucian's dialogues, mentions "Scythian" guests coming to the feast of St. Demetrius, as well as "merchants from *Euxeinos Pontos* [Black Sea]" and goods typical for Rus' trade (salt fish, caviar, wax, and furs; 53.118–120;

38. Leonid A. Beljaev, "Ierusalimskie motivy v nadgrobijah srednevekovoj Moskvy," in *Ierusalim v ruskoj kul'ture* (Moscow, 1994), 148–53, 151; Anna V. Ryndina, "Drevnerusskie palomničeskie relikvii," in *ibid.*, 48.

39. On pilgrimage from Rus' to Byzantium and Palestine, see Theofanis G. Stavrou and Peter R. Weisensel, *Russian Travelers to the Christian East from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century* (Columbus, Ohio, 1986); Nikolaj I. Prokofjev, *Kniga boženij: Zapiski ruuskib putešestvennikov XI–XV vv.* (Moscow, 1984); George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C., 1984); Majeska, "Russian Pilgrims in Constantinople," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 93–108; Ayse P. Dietrich, "13th–15th Century Russian Accounts of Constantinople and their Value as Historical Sources," *Russian Literature* 60.2 (2006): 227–39.

40. Cf. the evidence on East Slavic merchants in Byzantium in Aleksandr A. Vasiliev, "Economic Relations between Byzantium and Old Russia," *Journal of Economic and Business History* 4 (1931/32): 314–34; Mitrofan V. Levčenko, *Očerki po istorii rusko-vizantijskikh otnoženij* (Moscow, 1966), 551.

41. See Joseph Nehama, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique*, 5 vols (Salonica, 1935–59); Isaac S. Emmanuel, *Histoire des Israélites de Salonique* (Paris, 1936); *Salonica: A Jewish City* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1967).

42. Steven Runciman, "Byzantine Trade and Industry," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. M. Postan et al. (Cambridge, 1987), 132–67, 145.

55.155–57).⁴⁵ If our traveler was initially on a business trip, it is very probable that he visited Salonica between October 20 and the first Monday after St. Demetrius' Day (October 26), the regular dates of the fair.⁴⁴ In the eleventh century, merchants and pilgrims could still go to Byzantium by the Dnieper, and then along the eastern coast of the Black Sea through Varna and Messembria (modern Nesebar), following the route described in detail by Constantine Porphyrogenetus a century earlier in his *On the Administration of the Empire*, written circa the year 950: "The *monoxyla* [dugouts] which come down from outer Rus' to Constantinople are from Novgorod < . . . >, and others from the city of Smolensk and from Teliutza and Chernigov and from Vyshegrad. All these come down the river Dnieper, and are collected together at the city of Kiev, also called Sambatas."⁴⁵ Our traveler moved, as the letter specifies, "from island to island," and indeed, many islands were also regular stopping points for boats making their way from Kiev to Byzantium via the Dnieper according to Constantine: St. Gregory Island (Khortitsa) and St. Aitherios (Berezan') in the mouth of the Dnieper (*ibid.*). The phrase "from island to island" may also refer to the further section of the traveler's route—from Salonica to the Holy Land through the Greek islands (cf. Asher bar Sinai, a student from Rus' studying under the Rosh in Toledo, whose abrupt journey home can be traced through Mallorca and Sicily.)⁴⁶ Alternative routes, like the way from Halich through the Pruth river to the Danube estuary, are attested later.⁴⁷

It should be noted that a very similar circular letter was given (probably in Spain) to a French pilgrim from Rodez. This letter also refers to the traveler's language difficulties:⁴⁸

< . . . > and he came pleading and saying to us, "I was expelled and wandered from my place to yours and . . . in a funny language, and

43. Roberto Romano, *Timarione* (Naples, 1974), 53–59.

44. Runciman, "Byzantine Trade," 145.

45. Gyula Moravcsik and Romilly J. H. Jenkins, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: De Administrando Imperio* (Washington, D.C., 1967), 49–51, 57–63, 167–71.

46. See R. Asher ben Yehiel (Rosh), *Responsa* 51, 2b; R. Jacob ben Asher, *Arba'ah turim, Eben ha-'ezer* 118; cf. Abraham A. Neuman, *The Jews in Spain: Their Social, Political and Cultural Life during the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1942–44), 2:91–92; Israel M. Ta-Shma, "On the History of the Jews in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Poland," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 10 (1997): 287–317, 313–14.

47. Alexander Gieysztor, "Trade and Industry in Eastern Europe before 1200," in *Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, 474–523, 491.

48. MS Oxford, Or. 5544, fol. 1 recto; Mann, *Jews in Egypt*, 2:191, 1:164–65.

you heard my story. By now I did not need a letter, (but) now, brethren, have mercy on me and write for me a letter to be for me a mouth in all the holy communities over the sea, since I will not be able to speak in their languages. And in the Name of the One who makes firm the steps of man [Ps 37.23], my desire is to go to the Land of Israel and to Jerusalem, in order to die there, for the days of my life, which I do not desire (anymore), have tired me” < . . . >⁴⁹

It seems that on his way through Roman language lands, between France and Spain, the pilgrim from Rodez managed to communicate, albeit in a “funny language” (בלעג לשוני). Notice also that the expression “be for me a mouth” (היות לי לפה) from Ex 4.16 is identical to the one in the Salonician letter above.

This letter demonstrates that the Salonician case is not unique and may corroborate the suggestion that our document with omitted names could have served if not as a form (due to the overly specific details it contains), then at least as a model for multiple use. Both French and East Slavic Jewish pilgrims in these two documents are monolingual. They are described as the perfect opposite of the semi-legendary Jewish Radhanites who spoke “Arabic, Persian, Roman, Frankish, Spanish, and Slavic.”⁵⁰ Our traveler does not even know “the Holy Tongue” (at least as a language of oral communication). The problem of Jewish monolingualism was later addressed by the Spanish mystic Abraham Abulafia (1240 to after 1291) in his autobiography:

Being dispersed among many nations and bizarre languages [הלשונוות [המשונים], we forgot our language in its entirety < . . . > and behold, the Jews dwelling among Ishmaelites speak Arabic like them, and those dwelling in the Greek land speak Greek, and in the lands of the Latins [i.e., “Franks” or “Italians”—ארצות הלועזים] they speak the Romance language [לועזית], and the Germans speak German, and the Turks speak Turkic, and so the rest of all of them.

< . . . > ובא מתחנן אומר אלינו הושלכתי ונודדתי ממקומי עד פה אצליכם ובלעג [ג] לשוני 49. . . . עו ושמעתם קורותיי ועד הנה לא הוצרכתי מכחב עתה אתם אחיי חנוני וכתבו לי מכתב הארע לי היות לי לפה [ב] כל הקהלות הקודש שבעבר הים כי לא אבין לדבר בלשונם ובשם מוכן מצעדי נבר חפצי ללכת עד ארץ תש' ועד ירושלים למות שם כי הגיעוני ימים שאין לי חפץ < . . . >

50. Ibn Khordadbeh, *Book of Roads and Kingdoms*; Michael J. de Goeje, *Kitâb al-Masâlik wa'l-Mamâlik (Liber Viarum et Regnorum) auctore Abu'l-Kâsim Obaidallah ibn Abdallah Ibn Khorâdâbbeh et excerpta e Kitâb al-Kharâdj auctore Kodâma ibn Dja'far*, *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum* 6 (Leiden, 1889), 153–54.

This testimony about the Jews speaking the language of their dwelling place need not necessarily be interpreted as testifying to their being monolingual, but in continuation Abulafia describes Jewish multilingualism in Sicily as “the great wonder,” an exception rather than the rule:

But it is the great wonder what has happened to the Jews in all of Sicily, who speak not only Latin and Greek, like the Greeks and the Latins dwelling with them, but they have preserved the Arabic that they learned in former times, when the Ishmaelites were dwelling there.⁵¹

Thus, our pilgrim’s monolingualism was not an extraordinary private case but a predicament he shared with other members of his community. This may even follow from the plain meaning of our text: whereas Mar-morstein’s edition of the text has *כי אינו יודע . . . כי אם שפת כנען אשר מדב[ר]ים* — “he knows neither . . . but only the Slavic language spoken by the people of his native land,” Mann corrects the reading to *כי אם שפת כנען מד[ב]רים* — “but the people of his native land speak [only] the Slavic language.” The discrepancy may be significant. While the first reading implies that Slavic is only one of the languages spoken (by Jews?) in Rus’, the second may mean that it is the only or the main language spoken there.

Another interesting parallel to our text is an additional example of East Slavic monolingualism, which obviously was not unique to the Jews: the Annals of Burton report on *archiepiscopus Ruthenius, nomine Petrus*, who took part in the first Council of Lyons (1245), but *neque Latinum neque Graecum neque Hebraicum novit linguam*.⁵² As we learn from what follows, Archbishop Peter had an interpreter with him. But, coming back to our traveler, we may well ask how could he have undertaken his voyage, especially if this was initially supposed to be a business trip, without having a knowledge of languages? It seems that in the eleventh century he could take advantage of a Slavic-speaking continuum stretching from Rus’ to the Balkans with its vast Slavic-speaking population. Even in the region of Salonica (Slavic *Solun’*), the native city of Cyril and Methodius, the founders of literary Slavonic, Slavs probably made up the majority of the population ever since the beginning of the seventh century, preserving their language until later than the date of our letter.⁵³

51. Neuman, *Jews*, 2:300.

52. Henry R. Luard, *Annales de Burton (A.D. 1004–1265)*, Rolls Series 36.1 (London, 1864), 271.

53. As we can learn from the *Miracles of St. Demetrius* and later sources, the city virtually became a Byzantine island surrounded by large-scale Slavic settle-

There were also precedents of non-Jewish merchants from Rus' who, when on a trip and, without knowing the local language, could expect to find interpreters among Slavic slaves *in loco*. Thus, Ibn Khordadbeh in the late ninth century writes about the Norman "Rus" merchants who brought goods from Northern Europe and Northwestern Rus' to Baghdad: "[They] transport beaver hides, the pelts of the black fox and swords from the farthest reaches of the Slavic lands [*ṣaqaliba*] <. . .> to Baghdad. Slavic [*ṣaqlab*] slaves translate for them."⁵⁴ Thus, the omnipresence of Slavic slaves in medieval Europe as well as in the Muslim world may also have provided a factor favorable to the international operations undertaken by Slavic-speaking Jewish merchants.

1.5. Slavic Obscenity and "Hebrew speech"

Isaac from Rus' appears in the work by R. Moses ben Isaac (ben Han-Nessiah) of England. R. Moses composed a grammatical study organized as an alphabetical listing of roots called *Sefer ha-Shoham* (*The Book of the Onyx*).⁵⁵ In the chapter devoted to verbal roots with an initial *yoḏ*, for the entry יבם we read:

— "*Yabam*. Strong [verb]. "Come to your brother's wife and *yabem* her" [Gen 38.8]. R. Isaac of Sernegov told me that in the language of Tiras, which is Rus', sexual intercourse is called *yibum*.⁵⁶ [Thus], "*yabem* her" means "have intercourse with her."⁵⁷

R. Isaac is known in the scholarly literature as "Yitsee of Chernigov." However, this form of his name does not appear in either of the two extant manuscripts of the composition. "Yitsee" must be an erroneous reading of the common abbreviation יצח' as this appears in the Oxford manuscript. The copy from St. Petersburg has it in the nonabbreviated form: יבם חזק בא אל אשת אחיך ויבם אותה אמ' לי הרב ר' יצחק מסרננוב כי בלשון תירס יבם חזק בא אל אשת אחיך ויבם אותה אמ' לי הרב ר' יצחק מסרננוב כי בלשון תירס יבם חזק בא אל אשת אחיך ויבם אותה אמ' לי הרב ר' יצחק מסרננוב כי בלשון תירס הוא רושיאה קורין ליבום בעילה ויבם אותה ובעול אותה (MS St. Petersburg, RNL,

ments; see Dimitri Obolensky, *Byzantium and the Slavs: Collected Studies* (London, 1971), 281–300; John V. A. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1983), 31, 41–42.

54. De Goeje, *Kitâb al-Mawâlik wa'l-Mamâlik*, 154, or Barbier de Meynard, *Le Livre des routes des provinces, par Ibn Khordadbeh* (Paris, 1865), 264.

55. The Hebrew for "onyx" (שדה) is an anagram of the author's name, "Moses" (משח).

56. Lit. "they call sexual intercourse *yibum*."

57. בא אל אשת אחיך ויבם אותה. אמ' לי ה"ר יצח' מסרננוב כי בל' תירס הוא רושיאה קי'. יבם חזק בא אל אשת אחיך ויבם אותה, ויבם אותה ובעול אותה. יבם. חזק בא אל אשת אחיך ויבם אותה. . . . (MS Oxford Bodl. Opp. 152; published in Benjamin Klar, *Sefer ha-shoham* [Jerusalem, 1947], 142).

Evr. II A 34, fol 39v). Thus, a character by the name of “Yitse of Chernigov,” starring even in the titles of encyclopedic entries,⁵⁸ is one of the many erroneous inventions of medieval Judeo-Slavica.

The biblical “Tiras” of Gen 10.3 is also identified with Rus’ in the *Book of Josippon*.⁵⁹ “Sernegov” (with occlusive *g*; on this see 2.2 below) is obviously Chernigov, one of the most powerful cities and principalities of Kievan Rus’. We should note that for a time the princes of Chernigov also ruled the principality of Tmutorokan, located on the coast of Taman Strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, where there may have possibly been a considerable Jewish population, as well.⁶⁰ The Jews of the region are mentioned in *Chronography* by Theophanes under the year 678/9 (6170), who speaks of “Phanagoria and the Jews who live there,”⁶¹ and in *Kitab al-Buldan* of Ibn al-Faqih, who calls one of the towns in the area “Jewish Samkersh.”⁶²

The gloss introduced by R. Isaac is the earliest known attestation of the most fundamental obscene item in either the medieval or the modern Slavic vocabulary. It belongs to the group of tabooed words which in the Middle Ages were closely associated with pagan practices, witchcraft, and non-Christian identities. Using such a word was considered inappropriate for a Christian; a comment to this effect appears as early as in the works of the famous Church writer Cyril of Turov (1130–82). Obscene speech was sometimes referred to as “Jewish.” Among the examples adduced by Uspenskij are “Jewish speech” (ЖИДОВСКОЕ СЛОВО) and “do not speak Jewish, do not swear in foul language” (ПО ЖИДОВСКИМ НЕ

58. Such as in Isaac Broydé, “Itze (Isaac) of Chernigov,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1904), 7:11; A. Drabkin, “Itse (Isaak) iz Chernigova,” in *Evrejskaja enciklopedija* (St. Petersburg, 1904), 8:523.

59. Franciszek Kupfer and Tadeusz Lewicki, *Źródła hebrajskie do dziejów Słowian i niektórych innych ludów środkowej i wschodniej Europy* (Wrocław-Warszawa, 1956), 175.

60. See Avraam Ja. Garkavi, “Evrejskie nadgrobnye pamjatniki, najdennye na Tamanskom poluostrove,” *Evrejskie Zapiski* 5 (1881): 313–18; cf. Daniel Chwolson, *Corpus Inscriptionum Hebraicarum* (St. Petersburg, 1882).

61. Carl de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*. 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883–85), 1:357.

62. Michael J. de Goeje, *Ibn alFakih. Kitab albuldan*, Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum 5 (Leiden, 1885), 271. Cf. סמקריי/סמקריי in King Joseph’s letter from the “Jewish-Khazar correspondence” and סמקריי/סמקריי in Schechter’s text. Cf. also the most recent survey by Jonathan Shepard, “Closer Encounters with the Byzantine World: The Rus at the Straights of Kerch,” in *Pre-Modern Russia and Its World: Essays in Honor of Thomas S. Noonan*, ed. K. L. Reyerson et al. (Wiesbaden, 2006), 15–78.

говорите, матерны не бранитеса).⁶³ The term was probably used as a synonym for “pagan” (but never “Hellenic,” an incomparably more common designation for “pagan” in Church Slavonic literature and dependent on a similar turn of phrase in the New Testament).⁶⁴

1.4. *East Slavic Glosses in Medieval Hebrew Literature*⁶⁵

In addition to these pieces of “direct” evidence on Slavic-speaking Jews from early Eastern Europe, other important data are available, which have not been adequately introduced into the historical discussion.

Medieval Hebrew writings contain many glosses in the languages spoken by their authors, editors, and target audience. These glosses in Old French, German, Italian, Greek, and other languages were meant to clarify rare Hebrew and Aramaic forms. Very often the glosses were written by the original authors of the texts. They were considered such an integral part of the text that they continued to be copied (and later reprinted) consistently even when their readers no longer understood the languages in which they were written. Glosses in Slavic languages were for the first time identified as such by Landau,⁶⁶ assembled by Harkavi,⁶⁷ and further supplemented by Grünwald,⁶⁸ Kupfer and Lewicki.⁶⁹ Jakobson and Halle (hereafter JH) declared the entire corpus of early Slavic glosses found in medieval Hebrew texts to be of West Slavic, specifically, of Czech origin.⁷⁰ If correct, this identification would make the foregoing

63. See Boris A. Uspenskij, “Mifologičeskij aspekt russkoj èkspressivnoj frazeologii,” in Uspenskij, *Izbrannye trudy*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1994), 2:53–128, esp. 60.

64. *Ibid.*, 61. For more evidence of the presence of Jews from Rus’ in England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see below and in my essay “Jews from Rus’ in Medieval England,” *JQR* 102.3 (2012): 371–403.

65. I thank my assistant Uri Mogilevsky, who helped me considerably in assembling collations from the Hebrew works containing Slavic glosses and in clarifying their textual history.

66. In the Prague edition of the Mishnah in 1825–30 (Moshe Landau, *Merape lashon* [Odessa, 1865], 104).

67. *Ob jazyke* and *Jews*.

68. Max Grünwald, “Staročeské glossy z X.–XIII. století,” *Věstník České akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění* 2 (1893): 343–50.

69. Kupfer and Lewicki, *Žródla*.

70. Jakobson and Halle, “The Term Canaan,” 867. For the works subsequent to Jakobson and Halle, see Edward Stankiewicz, *Grammars and Dictionaries of the Slavic Languages from the Middle Ages up to 1850* (Berlin, 1984), xxx; Aleksandr N. Galjamičev, “XIII vek v istorii Evrejskoj občiny Pragi,” in *Slavjane i ih sosedi: Evrejskoe naselenie central’noj, vostočnoj i jugo-vostočnoj Evropy: Srednie veka — načalo novogo vremeni* (Moscow, 1993), 71–73; Jiřina Šedinová, “Life and Language in

material irrelevant for our discussion. However, some of the glosses in question may rather be East Slavic, in other words, they may be based on the vernacular used in Kievan and later Lithuanian Rus'. This means that in order to solve the historical question of whom and from where were the Slavic-speaking Jews behind the glosses, we need first to undertake a philological analysis of the glosses themselves.

Only one of the glosses contains specific information on the place of origin of its author, and it turns out to be East Slavic. The author is Isaac of Chernigov, whose foray into comparative linguistics I have already noted (*Sefer ha-shoham*, thirteenth c.; section 1.3 above). In other cases, the identification of a gloss as made in the "tongue of Canaan" (לשון כנען) is not very helpful, since the Jews did not use different terms to distinguish among different Slavic languages. The same was typically true of the Slavs themselves. Thus, the *Russian Primary Chronicle* of the twelfth century (under the year 6406 [898]): СЛОВЕНСКИИ ЯЗЫКЪ И РОУСКЫИ ѠДНО ЕСТЬ . . . ЯЗЫКЪ СЛОВЕНСКІ ИМЪ ЄДИНЪ—"The Slavic and Russian nations are one (and the same) . . . they have the same Slavic language." Western contemporaries concur: thus Roger Bacon (1214/1220–1292) in his *Opus Majus* 1.4: . . . *lingua Sclavonica, quae est una de linguis quae plures occupat regiones. Nam Rusciam, Poloniam, et Bobemiam, et*

Bohemia as Reflected in the Works of the Prague Jewish School in the 12th and 13th Centuries," in *Ibrahim ibn Yacqub at-Turtushi: Christianity, Islam and Judaism Meet in East-Central Europe, c. 800–1500 A.D.: Proceedings of the International Colloquy 25–29 April 1994*, ed. P. Charvát and J. Prosecký (Prague, 1996), 207–16; Johannes Reinhart, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Rekonstruktion des Urtschechischen," *Wiener Slavistisches Jahrbuch* 46 (2000): 165–74; Peter Demetz, "Speculations about Prague Yiddish and its Disappearance: From its Origins to Kafka and Brod," in *Confrontations / Accommodations: German-Jewish Literary and Cultural Relations from Heine to Wassermann*, ed. M. H. Gelber (Tübingen, 2004), 237–47; Mirek Čejka, "Kořeny české gramatografie," in *Pokušení Jaroslava Kolára: Sborník k omdesátinám*, ed. B. Hanzová (Prague, 2009), 90–100; Jiřina Šedinová, "Alttschechische Glossen in mittelalterlichen hebräischen Schriften und älteste Denkmäler der tschechischen Literatur," *Judaica Bohemiae* 17.2 (1981): 73–89; Jiřina Šedinová, "Literatura a jazyk Židů v Českých zemích," in *Euro litteraria et Euro lingua 2005*, ed. O. Uličný (Liberec, 2005), 28–35; Lenka Uličná, "Roman Jakobson a staročeské glosy ve středověkých hebrejských spisech," *Bobemica Olomucensia* 3 (2009): 13–24. Here I do not cite publications preceding Kupfer and Lewicki, *Žródla*. Among these, the works by Markon should be noted in view of their linguistic input (Isaac Markon, "Die slavischen Glossen bei Isaak ben Mose Or Sarua," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 49 [1905]: 707–21; Markon, "Slavjanskije glosy u Isaaka-ben-Moiseja iz Veny v ego sočinenii Or-Zarua," in *Stat' i po slavjanovedeniju* 2, ed. V. I. Lamanskij [St. Petersburg, 1906], 90–96).

multas alias nationes tenet—“. . . the Slavic language, which is one of the languages that occupies many regions. It is spoken in Rus', Poland, Bohemia, and among many other nations."⁷¹ Bacon's information may be based on the *Itinerarium* by William of Rubruck (ca. 1220–ca. 1293): *Lingua Rutinorum et Polonorum et Boemorum et Sclavonorum eadem est cum lingua Wandalorum*—“The language of the Russians, Poles, Bohemians, and Slavs is the same as that of the Vandals.”⁷² One more factor has to be taken into account: not only Slavs but also Jews from diverse Slavic areas could resort to Slavic as their common language of communication. This is demonstrated by the encounter of scholars and students of different Slavic origins in the rabbinic schools of Northern France and the Rhineland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Thus, students of Rabbenu Tam R. (ca. 1100–ca. 1171), such as R. Moses of Kiev, R. Eliezer ben Isaac of Prague, R. Pater ben Joseph from Carinthia (Slovenia; if not from Carentan in Normandy), or R. Isaac Dorbelo, who traveled extensively through West and East Slavia, could easily sit in the same *bet midrash* in Ramerupt or Troyes. They could refer in their discussions to forms from different Slavic dialects without referring to the specific origin of these forms. Although *Sefer ha-shobam* contains a dialectal designation for the “tongue of Tiras, which is Rus',” this does not necessarily mean that the author differentiated East Slavic from other Slavic languages. Similarly, the Cyrillic alphabet, which was shared by different Slavic languages, is described as “Russian letters” (see section 2.2 below). In rare cases Slavic forms were even mislabeled by later editors as “German” (lit. “language of Ashkenaz”).

In most cases, however, no historical documentation is available; we are thus confined to linguistic considerations alone. The glosses pose a methodological challenge for linguistic interpretation. We have to take into account that the glosses are not transliterations but phonetic renderings which reflect the oral usage typical of their locale and historical time period (a circumstance which makes the glosses very valuable as evidence). Thus, for example, we presume that unlike *g* or *г*, which in Slavic alphabets may represent either an occlusive *g* or its fricative development *b*, Hebrew *gimel* or *hey* are not bound by a graphic tradition and will faithfully reflect their corresponding consonants. Normally, we do not find linguistically representative quantities of Slavic glosses belonging to

71. John H. Bridges, *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon* (Oxford, 1897), 1:360.

72. Marie D'Arvezac, “Voyage en orient du frère Guillaume de Rubruk,” *Recueil de Voyages et de Mémoires publié par la Société de Géographie* 4 (1839): 199–398, 275.

a single work or author (editor), and since the glosses are geographically and chronologically dispersed, we cannot expect much graphic consistency in this corpus (similar heterogeneity obtains in the much better documented German and French glosses of the period), although some unstable regularity was noted for the Czech materials, where the glosses are especially abundant.⁷³ The textual history of many of the Hebrew sources containing the glosses has not been thoroughly enough investigated. In the cases which we want to consider, the glosses normally appear in the earliest, as well as in the majority of the textual variants. It is difficult to imagine their being a late insertion into these works. It is easier to reconstruct the cultural context for adding a “Canaanite” gloss on Western soil in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, during the time when the composition or very early stages of the transmission of these texts took place. This is harder to do for a later period, for which we have no evidence on Slavic-speaking Jews in German lands or on Jewish migrants from Slavia in these lands.

The crux of the problem is that in most cases we cannot distinguish a Czech, or any other West Slavic form, from an East Slavic one, because Hebrew consonant transliterations seldom reflect vocalism (except for the several sources that do provide vocalization). For the unvocalized forms, the vowels can be discerned only by means of the Hebrew *mater lectionis*—*waw*, *yod*, and *aleph*; however, this is always done in a rather ambiguous way: *waw* is used to convey either *o* or *u*, and *yod*—either *i*, *e*, *ě* or a diphthong; either may also be used to render *jerš* (Ѣ and Ъ, respectively); an *aleph* without any additional *mater lectionis* could render *a* and possibly other back vowels, as well. In addition, consonant equivalency between the languages is not perfect: even though Hebrew has both *š* and *c*, the vernaculars of some transliterators did not feature these consonants, hence instead of the distribution *šbin*—*š* and *twadi*—*c*, what we often see is *šbin/sin* without any distinction between *š* and *s* (or, sometimes, *šbin/sin* standing also for *ž*, *č*, or *c*), and *samekb* for *c* and *č* (rendered also by *twadi* and the combination *tw*, respectively). There may also be more complicated cases, where the Ashkenazi fricative *tav* may stand for *s*, or when the velar *r* and *b* are used interchangeably, and so on.

So what made JH so sure of their identification of the whole corpus as Czech? The implicit reasoning of JH was apparently that if they conclusively identified at least some of the forms as Czech, while the origin of the others could be interpreted either way, then all of them are most

73. See Jakobson, “Iz razyskanij;” Šedinová, “Life,” 212–13.

probably Czech. This kind of extrapolating is convincing enough, but only when applied to a single text or at least to a group of texts having in common some characteristics such as date, localization, milieu, and so on. Our glosses, however, are dispersed over a variety of texts from different regions and milieus. Thus, if *'Aruḡat ha-bosem* and *Or zaru'a* were authored by Bohemian Jews and contain a number of indisputable West Slavic forms, it is very probable that the other forms in the same works are also Czech. But how can this extrapolation be applicable to texts written in France, Germany, or Italy, which do not contain unequivocally West Slavic forms? This becomes especially obvious in light of the evidence presented in the first section of this essay: the considerable data on the presence and creative activity of the Jewish scholars of East Slavic origin in these countries.⁷⁴

Chronologically, the first source which we should consider is the eleventh-century *Mainz Commentary* on tractate *Hulin* of the Babylonian Talmud, ascribed to Rabbenu Gershom of Mainz (R. Gershom ben Judah Me'or Ha-Golah, "Light of the Exile," ca. 960–1028), but probably written and compiled largely by his students.⁷⁵ The text has been checked with the oldest manuscript from the Bibliotheca Angelica in Rome, dated paleographically to the twelfth or thirteenth century (Rome, Ang A.5.18; F 11669)⁷⁶ and almost identical to the Vilna edition of 1880–86 (with two minor discrepancies in vocalization; see in the footnotes below). The text is vocalized, although here, as in other cases, vocalization may be a later editorial addition and is normally ignored for purposes of linguistic reconstruction. There are four "Canaanite" glosses:

74. On Jews from Rus' traveling or immigrating to Germany, France, England, Spain, and possibly Italy during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, see Kulik, "Jews from Rus'." In what follows I will not be concerned with Slavic forms such as **nemec* (?; נמץ) in the letter of the Khazarian King Joseph or **veverkiš* (ואייריטש) brought up by Benjamin of Tudela. These are loanwords transmitted not necessarily through Jewish mediation; the first one may not even be Slavic.

75. See Abraham Epstein, "Der Gerschom Meor ha-Golah zugeschriebene Talmud-Commentar," in *Festschrift zum achtzigsten Geburtstag Moritz Steinschneider's* (Leipzig, 1896), 115–43. Cf. Hebrew translation with introduction by Uziel Fuks in *Netuim* 6 (2000): 107–33; Israel M. Ta-Shma, "On the Commentary of Rabbenu Gershom Me'or ha-Golah to the Talmud" (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 53 (1978): 356–67; Avraham Grossman, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz: Their Lives, Leadership and Works (900–1096)* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1981), 165–74.

76. The last code hereafter refers to the microfilm copy in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

- **xmel* (כמיל; CS *xmĕlŭ*, Cz *chmel*, Pol *chmiel*, Russ *xmel'*) for Aram כְּשׂוּתָא 'cuscuta' and Old French הוּמלוֹן, *humlone* 'hop' (bHul 47b);⁷⁷
- **plečo* or *plece* (פּלְצָא; Cz *plece*, Pol *plece*, Russ *plečo*) for Aram כַּפּא דִּידָא 'shoulder' (bHul 54a).⁷⁸ The vowel *e* is most typically transliterated by *yod*, while *aleph* apparently renders a back vowel, usually *a*.⁷⁹ In East Slavic the change *e* > *o* is attested since the eleventh century; beginning in the twelfth, it is well represented in written sources, especially after sibilants and palatalized consonants.⁸⁰ The letter *tsadi* is sometimes used to stand for *č* (the consonant itself not being part of the Hebrew phonetic inventory). This makes both the West and the East Slavic interpretations tenable, to the exclusion only of the South Slavic forms with *št* (CS *plešte*, and so on.).
- **teg/tig* (טִיג) for Aram עֲרִיקוּמָא 'knee, hough' (bHul 76a).⁸¹ JH propose *tieb*, *těb*, a medical term unique to Old Czech, with the appropriate meaning of 'joint' or 'knee joint'.⁸² The form might also bear a connection to the Slavic **stegno* 'heap'; cf. CS *stegno*, Cz *stebno*, Pol *ścięgno*, OR *stegno*. Cf. also Russ dial. *stig*, *stega*, *st'ag* 'stick' and Lat *tignum* 'bar.'⁸³ The form *stegno* (סְטִיגְנָא) also appears among the Slavic

77. Wider citation: "כְּשׂוּתָא [means] הוּמלוֹן [in French and] כמיל in the Canaanite language" (כְּשׂוּתָא הוּמלוֹן כמיל בלש' כנען).

78. "כַּפּא דִּידָא [means] פּלְצָא in the Canaanite language" (*kamats* in Vilna ed.] אלימא מכפא דִּידָא כ' פּלְצָא).

79. A plural form *pleca* would go better with the transliteration with *aleph*. However, the gloss refers to the Aramaic form in the singular and an *aleph* is attested interchanging with a *waw* rendering *o* in some Romance glosses (see, e.g., for Hebrew transliterations of *ammoniaco* (אֲמוֹנִיאָא in Soncino as well as אֲמוֹנִיאָקוּ, אֲמוֹנִיאָקוּ in other versions; bGit 69a; Arsène Darmesteter and David S. Blondheim, *Les gloses françaises dans les commentaires talmudiques de Raschi*, 2 vols. [Paris, 1929–37], 1:6), or *balsamo* (בלשמוא in MS Vatican 138 along with בלשמו and בלישמו; bShab 62a; *ibid.*, 1:11).

80. Viktor I. Borkovskij and Petr S. Kuznecov, *Istoričeskaja grammatika russkogo jazyka* (Moscow, 1965), 128–30.

81. "עֲרִיקוּמָא is called in the Canaanite language טִיג" ([with *birik* in Vilna ed.] עֲרִיקוּמָא שקורין בלשון כנען טִיג).

82. Jakobson and Halle, "The Term Canaan," 884, referring to Karel J. Erben, *Rbazeovo ranné lékařství* (Prague, 1864). It is found in the manuscript of the second half of the fifteenth century (National Museum, Prague, IV D 56) and might be derived from the verb *tábnúti* "to pull" (I thank Robert Dittmann for helping me to check this reference).

83. Fedot P. Filin, *Slovar' russkikh narodnykh govorov* (Leningrad, 1965–), 31:111, 156; Max Vasmer, *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language*, 4 vols. (Heidelberg, 1962), 3:790.

glosses: in the anonymous commentary to *Selibot*, dated not later than the fourteenth century, elaborating on Heb יר (Cod. Munich 346, fol. 18b; among three other glosses).⁸⁴

- **trebono/trebnъ* (טריבונו; “[ritually] cleansed [meat];” bHul 8b).⁸⁵ The form **trebeno* may be a part. pass. sg. neut. from *trěbiti*; cf. CS *trěbiti*, OCz *triebiti*, Pol *trzebić*, OR *terebiti*, Russ *trebiti*.⁸⁶ All these verbs may mean “cleansed of unnecessary parts” in agricultural and, occasionally, butchery contexts. The widespread use of this Slavic verb among Jews is confirmed by the Yiddish Slavicism *trejb(er)n* “to cleanse meat in order to make it kosher,” found in both Western and Eastern Yiddish.⁸⁷ The verb may have had cultic connotations even in Slavic usage because of its homonymy and its possible common etymology with the CS *trěba* “sacrifice.” Our gloss may also be an adjective derived from *trěba*. The adjective *trěbъny*, unlike the participle, is well attested: it was widely used in different recensions of Church Slavonic with the meaning of “sacrificial,” “fit or destined for a sacrifice.”⁸⁸ In both cases, as with *mako/makъ* below, the transliteration would show the *jer* that has not fallen in a weak position, but with a *ъ* or its back reflex instead of a *ь* (in view of that the letter *waw*, in contrast to *yod*, always renders a back vowel, usually *o* or *u*). This could also indicate an assimilation of the *jer*’ to the back vowel of the next syllable (bearing out the regularity found in the Zograph Gospel of the eleventh century).⁸⁹

84. Kupfer and Lewicki, *Žródla*, 199–200.

85. “[The talmudic prohibition] לא ליסחוף איניש כפלי means that one should not take a loin [forbidden part] that he removes from a piece of meat which is not טריבונו [as it is called] in ‘Canaanite’ and put it on another piece of meat which is טריבונו”

לא ליסחוף איניש כפלי משמע זו כפלי שהוא נוטל מבשר אחד ואינו טריבונו בלשון כנען לא יסחוף על בשר אחר שהיא טריבונו

86. JH mention OCz *trěbeno* “purgatum,” but do not provide any reference to their source (Jakobson and Halle, “The Term Canaan,” 884).

87. See Wexler, *Explorations*, 162–63. Cf. also Russ *trebuxa* “entrails,” “parts removed from cleansed meat or fish” and Slavic parallels having the meaning of “entrails,” “belly.” The parallels may show a Proto-Slavic alternation of **ъ/ъ/ъ*: Novgorodian *tribuxъ* (thus Upyr’ Likhjoj [1047] for Gk ἐνυστρον in LXX Mal 2:3) and Ukr *tribux*, Bulg *trъbъxъ*, Cz *terbuch*, *trěbuch*, Pol *terbuch*, *trybuch*, and others.

88. Izmail I. Sreznevskij, *Materialy dlja slovarja drevneruskogo jazyka po pis’ mennym pamjatnikam*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1893–1912), 3:1023.

89. Samuil B. Bernštejn, *Očerk sravnitel’noj grammatiki slavjanskib jazykov*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1961–74), 1:250.

The glosses above may all belong to any of the Slavic subgroups, with **teg/tig* of unclear etymology being attested only in Czech.

R. Nathan ben Jehiel (1035–c. 1110) in his encyclopedic dictionary the *Arukb* (completed in 1101; Rome) has one Slavic gloss:

- **mako/makъ* (מִקוֹן; Cz *mák*, Pol *mak*, CS *makъ*, OR *makъ*) for Aram פִּרְנִי “poppy.”⁹⁰ Noteworthy here is that this early twelfth-century transliteration reflects the weak *jer* in final position as still pronounced. We find the same evidence only in East Slavic sources.⁹¹ Furthermore, the letter *waw* in the transliteration tends to reflect a back vowel, making the front reflexes of *jer*, such as can be found in Czech and Polish (but not in Slovak), less appropriate here.

R. Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi; ca. 1040–1105; Troyes, Mainz, Worms) in his *Commentary on the Pentateuch* gives a Slavic gloss:

- **snir/šner* < **snib/šneb* (שְׁנִיר; CS *sněžъ*, Cz *snib*, Slk *šneb*, USorb *sněb*, South Russ and Bel *šneb*, Ukr *snib*) for Heb שלג “snow” (Dt 3.9).⁹² The gloss is found without significant discrepancies in all of the oldest manuscripts and printed editions of Rashi’s commentary⁹³ and

90. “‘Poppy’—In [the Mishnah], *Shevi’it*, ch. 2 [we find as follows]: “[Rice, millet,] poppies and sesame [that had taken root before the new year must be tithed according to the previous year],” the meaning [of poppy] is מִקוֹן in the Canaanite language” (פרגין בשביעית בפר’ ב’ הפרגין והשומשין פ’ מִקוֹן בלשון כנען). Among the five oldest manuscripts, two have this form (Sassoon collection, 1206; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. Add. Qu. 2; both of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries) and three show the distortion מִקוֹם (which could be abbreviated as מִקוֹן; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr 142, year 1285; Wien, Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 7, year 1286; Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Cod. Parm. 3011, year 1296). The term is rendered as מִקוֹבִיז’ה (**makov-ica*) in *Or Zarua*, Hilchof Halla, 216.

91. Cf. the rich Novgorodian data for final reducents in this period (Andrej A. Zaliznjak, *Drevnenovgorodskij dialekt* [Moscow, 1995], 51–52): forms such as the nom. *gorodo*, *čelověko* (ibid., 606, 679), and the like. The Jewish gloss is less likely to reflect the literary pronunciation of the weak *jer*s as attested in Rus’ before the fourteenth century (Boris A. Uspenskij, *Istorija russkogo literaturnogo jazyka (X–XVII vv.)* [Moscow, 2002], 150–55; cf. also Uspenskij, “Russkoe knižnoe proiznošenie XI–XII vv. i ego svjaz’ s južnoslavjanskoj tradiciej (čtenie erov),” in *Aktual’nye problemy slavjanskogo jazykoznanija* [Moscow, 1988], 99–156).

92. “שְׁנִיר is ‘snow’ in the tongue of Ashkenaz and the tongue of Canaan” (הוא שם שלג בלשון אשכנז ובלשון כנען).

93. See, e.g., Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Opp. Add. fol. 69; Parma, Biblioteca Palatina 2708; Roma, Biblioteca Casanatense 2848.

cited in the commentary by Nahmanides (1194–1270) *ad loc.* As was shown by Moshe Altbauer, *resb* (for a velar *r*) must render *b* here.⁹⁴ The transliteration conforms to the late Czech form but is hardly possible for eleventh-century Czech, which still preserves its occlusive *g*. Even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Latin transliterations almost unanimously show a *g* (*Bog, Glupa, Gostik, Pođgrad, Praga*, and so on in addition to the rest of our Hebrew glosses);⁹⁵ the same holds for Slovak and Upper Sorbian.⁹⁶ Cf. also “Bohemian” **deg(e)t* (דגית) for the OCz *debet* in the twelfth century Ra’avan’s work (see below). The few cases found in Czech (like *Bobuslaus* in 1169) and Slovak (*Behis* from, possibly, **Běgyš’* in 1138) are uncertain, and in any case they are later than our source.⁹⁷ In East Slavic the shift $g > \gamma < b$ appears much earlier; it is first attested not later than the eleventh century, when we find Γ and χ used interchangeably.⁹⁸ For the period in question, this form may belong only to Southern dialects of East Slavic (or to literary pronunciation patterns in the East Slavic North).

The commentary on 1 Kg 6.7 ascribed to Rashi explains Heb מַקְבֹּוֹת (hammer) as “א בלשון רוסיא דלוט” *dlwtw* [doloto] in the tongue of Rus’.” This is the second case where the East Slavic provenance of the form is explicitly mentioned, although the Polish form *dloto* seems to be closer to the transliteration, which does not render a pleophonic vowel. Nevertheless, in contrast to the previous gloss, this one is not found in the earliest manuscripts, all of which date from the thirteenth to fourteenth⁹⁹ centuries, and may well be a later addition.

Rashi’s *Commentary on the Talmud* contains three more glosses:

94. See Moshe Altbauer, “Une glose slave de Raschi: s’nîr,” *Revue des études slaves* 8 (1928): 245–46.

95. František Trávníček, *Historická mluvnice československá* (Prague, 1935), 122–27; Stuart E. Mann, *Czech Historical Grammar* (Hamburg, 1977), 143–48; Arnošt Lamprecht, Dušan Šlosar, and Jaroslav Bauer, *Historická mluvnice češtiny* (Prague, 1986), 82–84.

96. Ján Stanislav, *Dejiny slovenského jazyka*, vol. 1 (Bratislava, 1956). Bernštejn, *Očerk*, 292–97.

97. George Y. Shevelov, *A Prehistory of Slavic: The Historical Phonology of Common Slavic* (Heidelberg, 1964), 593.

98. Uspenskij, *Istorija*, 156–59; cf. Bernštejn, *Očerk*, 294 and 296; Vasilij I. Abajev, “O proishozhdenii fonemy (*b*) v slavjanskom jazyke,” in *Problemy in-doevropejskogo jazykoznanija* (Moscow, 1964), 115–21.

99. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Poc. 127; Parma, Bibliotheca Palatina Cod. Parm. 2726; Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana Plut. II.24.

- **mak/mako/makʿ* (מק/מקו; bRoshHash. 13b), the same as in the *Arukḥ* above;¹⁰⁰
- **krocec/karokač* (?) (קרוקים/קרוקים; WS **krocec*, ES **korokec* or *korokač*) for Aram חִפְשָׁתָא, Old French אֶשְׁכַּרְבוּט (*escarbot*) “beetle” (b’AZ 28b).¹⁰¹ Kupfer and Lewicki discuss the variant with *mem*, identifying it as the Hebrew plural of a noun derived from the onomatopoeic *krokati/krakati* “creak, crackle.”¹⁰² The variant with *samekb* seems preferable, since this letter (as opposed to the letter *sin*) can render *č*, as in סרניגוב for *Černigov* (see above), or *c* as in ס for Ц (in the Hebrew-Cyrillic alphabet below). The form could also have been derived from the PS **korkʿ* ‘leg’—WS **krok* or ES **korok*. Cf. Russ *korokatica/karakatica* and Bulg *krakatica*, lit. “legged or leggy [creature],” “octopus,” which could have meant a multiple-legged insect as well, as possibly in Ukr *krakoč* “cockroach.”¹⁰³ Notice that Rashi reiterates the same Old French gloss as here for “anything that has many legs” in Lev 11.42.
- **okrin* (אוקרין; ¹⁰⁴ OCz *okřín*, Russ *okrin*) for Aram מִשְׁכִּילְתָא “trough” (b’AZ 51b¹⁰⁵ and bBM 84b¹⁰⁶). Some MSS define this gloss as “German.” It is difficult to accept Wexler’s complicated reconstruction of

100. *Mako* (מקו) appears only in the first printed editions (Soncino, 1484–1519 and Venice: Bomberg, 1520–23). Early manuscripts have either *mak* (מק Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Cod. Parm. 2244, year 1321; New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, Rab. 840/1, 14th–15th cents.) or corrupted מקבל (Cambridge, University Library, Add. 494, year 1454).

101. “Beetle—*escarbot* (אֶשְׁכַּרְבוּט) [in French], and in the Canaanite language (חִפְשָׁתָא אֶשְׁכַּרְבוּט) [in Hebrew]” (קרוקים/קרוקים).

102. Kupfer and Lewicki, *Žródla*, 93. Cf. English *cricket* as derived from OFr *criquet* hailing from the verb *criquer*, which has the same meaning.

103. Oleksandr S. Mel’ničuk, *Etimologičnij slovník ukrains’koi movi*, 7 vols. (Kiev, 1982–89), 3:74.

104. Variants: אוקרין (“Oriental” MS 1190; German MSS thirteenth–fifteenth c.; Italian MS fourteenth c.), אוקרין (Provençal MS, thirteenth–early fourteenth c.), אוקרין (Italian MSS fourteenth–fifteenth c.), אוקרין (Soncino 1489), אוקרין (Venice 1521), אוקרין (Vilna 1880–86). Textual variants are given by Darmsteter and Blondheim, *Les glosses françaises*, 103, and by Wexler, *Explorations*, 36.

105. “The vessel is inverted over its [the idol’s] head, and it is not made as a kind of turban, but as a long vessel, in the Canaanite language אוקרין, into which one pours water and washes one’s clothes and hands” (דְּחִיפָא לָהּ מִשְׁכִּילְתָא אֶרִישִׁיָּהּ) “כפוייה לוֹ גביה אֶרִישִׁיָּהּ ואינה עשויה כמין כובע אלא כלי ארוך ובלע” כנען אוקרין (Venice: Bomberg, 1520–23).

106. “Like small tubs that one uses to [put] water [into] and [afterwards] drops it, and in the alien language *okrin*” (מִשְׁכִּילֵי כַמְבִין עֲרִיבוֹת קִטְנוֹת שְׁמִשְׁחָמְשִׁין בְּהֶן) “מים ושופכין ובלשו לעו אוקרין” (Cambridge, University Library Add. 478, 14th c.).

a hypothetical Judeo-Slavic *akadon* going back to Gk *kadion* based on the printed editions.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Gk *κάδιον* / *κάδος* are jars for storing liquids, rather than vessels that can fit the description of a certain kind of wash-basin, as added by Rashi: כפויה לו גביע ארישא — ואינה עשויה כמין כובע אלא כלי ארוך שנותנים בו מים ורוחצין את הבגדים והידיים — “The vessel is inverted over its [the idol’s] head, and it is not made as a kind of turban, but as a long vessel into which one pours water and washes one’s clothes and hands.” The Slavic word normally designates specifically flat bowls corresponding to this description.¹⁰⁸

There is one more gloss in the early commentary on *Genesis Rabba*, which is ascribed to Rashi:

- **perinos* (פרינוס) for Heb כסה “feather-bed,” commenting on the Aram hapax פרינוס, probably corrupted טורוס, Lat *torus*, here “couch” (GenR 68).¹⁰⁹ This may be an etymologization from the Slavic *perina* (Cz *perina*, Pol *pierzyna*, Russ *perina*, etc.).¹¹⁰

R. Joseph ben Simeon Kara (the “Biblicist”; before ca. 1065– ca. 1135; Troyes and Worms) in his commentaries on the Prophets and Job provides five Slavic glosses, none of which is obviously West Slavic:¹¹¹

107. Wexler, *Explorations*, 36–40.

108. “Misa” (František Šimek, *Slovníček staré češtiny* [Prague, 1947], s.v.; Jaromír Bělič, Adolf Kamiš and Karel Kučera, *Malý staročeský slovník* [Prague, 1978], s.v.; “church vessel, bowl” (Vladimir I. Dal’, *Tolkovyy slovar’ živogo velikorusskogo jazyka*, 4 vols. [St. Petersburg-Moscow, 1880–82], s.v.); cf. *krin*, *krinica* (ibid.).

109. “[Jacob] used [the stones that he lied down upon] as a bed and פרינוס. עשאן כמטה וכפרינוס • פרינוס) (בלשון כנען כסה). The exact dating or location of the commentary whose earliest MSS belong to the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. (Jerusalem, Jewish National and University Library MS Heb. 24^o6990, fourteenth–fifteenth c.; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Opp. Add. fol. 3) is not clear; see Yonah Frankel, *The Methods of Aggadab and Midrash* (Hebrew; Givatayim, 1991), 512; Judah Theodor, “Article on a Commentary on Bereshith Rabbah” (Hebrew), in *The Glory of Israel: Jubilee Volume for Rabbi Israel Levi* (Hebrew; Breslau, 1911), 132–57; Meir Benayahu, “Rabbi Samuel Yaffe Ashkenazi and Other Commentators of Midrash Rabba: Some Biographical and Bibliographical Details” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 42 (1973): 419–60, 457.

110. There are also six glosses in a thirteenth–fourteenth c. version of Rashi’s commentary on the Prophets and the Hagiographa, all of which may be assigned to any of the Slavic subgroups: *nevod* (ניבוד), *dub* (דוב), *britva* (ברישווא), *doska* (דוסקא), *volkudlaki* (בולקודלקי), *krug* (קרוג) (see Harkavi, *Jews*, 62).

111. The glosses to Isaiah found in MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary Lutzki 777 of the year 1268 have been published recently by Kristen A.

- **leto* (ליטו) for Heb קיץ “summer” (Is 28.4)¹¹²;
- **monista* pl. (מונישהא) for Heb pl. שהרנים “[finery in the shape of] crescents” (Is 3.18)¹¹³;
- **odezia* (אודיזא) for Heb מעטפות “mantles” (Is 3.22)¹¹⁴ looks most like a West Slavic form (with $\partial j > \partial z$), although it is attested only in late Polish,¹¹⁵ so that the letter *zayin* in the Hebrew may here stand for *z* (unavailable in Hebrew) in well and early attested East Slavic *odeža*;
- **pena* (פינא) for Heb קצף “foam” (Hos 10.7)¹¹⁶;
- **plenka* or, less probably, East Slavic **pelenka* (פלינקא) is another gloss for Heb מעטפות (see above, Is 3.22)¹¹⁷;
- **omet* (אומט) translating the obscure Heb פימה which covers the loins

Fudeman (“The Old French Glosses in Joseph Kara’s Isaiah Commentary,” *Revue des études juives* 165.1–2 [2006]: 147–77). Most Slavic forms in this manuscripts show secondary corrupted readings.

112. “קיץ [‘summer’] means *leto* in the Canaanite language” (קיץ בלשון כנען ליטו) Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 163, year 1253; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 162, before 1342; Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana Plut.II.24, 13th–14th c.). Variant: אִישְׁטִי (Muenchen, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 5, year 1233).

113. “And שהרנים means מונישהא in the Canaanite language” (והשהרנים בלשון) ומונישהא Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 163, year 1253; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 162, before 1342; Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana Plut.II.24, thirteenth–fourteenth c.). Variants: מוניקטש (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary Lutzki 777, year 1268; possibly a Germanized form, see Fudeman, “Old French,” 161) מוסישא (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina Cod. Parm. 2994, thirteenth–fourteenth c.) מוסיטה (Modena, Estense e universitaria a.Q.6.20, fourteenth–fifteenth c.).

114. “*odezia* is called in the Canaanite language פלינקא and some people call it in the Canaanite language אודיזא” (אודיזא בלשון) ופלינקא, ויש שקורין אותו בלשון) כנען אודיזא; Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana Plut.II.24, thirteenth–fourteenth c.; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Cod. hebr. 5, year 1233; Variants: אודיזא (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 163, year 1253), אודיזא (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary Lutzki 777, year 1268).

115. For example, *odezia* is attested in the works of Sebastian Petrycy (1554–1626); see also Kupfer and Lewicki, *Źródła*, 123. In this case, the Hebrew transliteration is the earliest attestation of this Slavic form.

116. “קצף בלשון כנען פינא” (קצף בלשון כנען פינא) Breslau, Jüdisch-theologisches Seminary 104II, year 1288; New York, Jewish Theological Seminary Lutzki 777, year 1268).

117. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Cod. hebr. 5, year 1233; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 162, before 1342. Variants: פלינקין (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurentiana Plut.II.24, 13th–14th cents); פִּרְנִיצָא (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 163, year 1253); פִּלְקִינָא (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary Lutzki 777, year 1268).

of the wicked in Job 15.27,¹¹⁸ is known only from South and East Slavic sources, where *omet'* and *ometa* may designate clothing or its border edges (ὄα, περιστόμιον).¹¹⁹ Notably enough, the word used in this Hebrew commentary is found in the Church Slavonic versions of the same verse; cf. Gennadi Bible: покры лице свое тоукомъ его и створи ометоу [περιστόμιον] сте[г]н[ъ]ноюю—“he covered his face with fat and made a cloth for [his] loins.”¹²⁰ Thus, the Jewish author may have been acquainted with the Church Slavonic Bible.

Commentaries to the Haftarat (prophetic readings following readings of the weekly sections of the Pentateuch) from MS St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I 21 dated to the fourteenth century, were attributed by Harkavi to R. Joseph Kara.¹²¹ Another version of the commentary referred to by Harkavi contains an additional gloss (*kobyła*; 2 Kgs 4.42) significantly at odds with a gloss on Is 29.20.¹²² Comparing several parallel places in Isaiah and Jeremiah shows that Kara's commentary on the same verses in Prophets was completely different from his commentaries on these passages appearing as part of the Haftarat.¹²³ The manuscript, or at least part of it, is in what looks like the same hand as MS St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I 20, fourteenth century, which contains R. Joseph Kara's commentary on Job (see above). Among the nine Slavic glosses in the text, three are obviously West Slavic:

- **belǐdlo* (בילידלו; cf. Cz *bělǐdlo*; etc. “bleach”) for the Hebrew בורית “lye, bleach” and **myǔdlo* (מידלו; cf. Cz *mýdlo*, Pol and USorb *mydło* “soap”) for the Hebrew נתר “natron” used for washing (Jer 2.22).¹²⁴ These forms can be only West Slavic: in South and East Slavic languages

118. The words בלש' כנ' אמש appear on the left side of the text in St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I 20. (cf. Mosheh Arend, *The Commentary of Rabbi Joseph Kara on the Book of Job* [Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1988], 47–48).

119. Mikl 503; Srezn 2.666.

120. As noted earlier by Firkovich (see Harkavi, *Jews*, 53).

121. Harkavi, *Jews*, 48.

122. MS Munich published by Geiger in *Nite Neemanim*, (Breslau, 1847) (see Harkavi, *Jews*, 51).

123. I thank Uri Mogilevsky for verifying this.

124. “בורת” (בילידלו [means] בורית in the Canaanite language, בלש' כנ' מידלו בורית בילידלו).

the consonant cluster *ðl* was simplified to *l* long before our texts were created.

- The entire phrase reconstructed by JH as Old Czech *toliko budi státý a neměj sã iné péci* (אִי נִפְיִצִי) “only be steadfast and have no other cares” for the Hebrew חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ “only be strong and courageous” (Josh 1.18).¹²⁵
- **kobyła* (קובילא) for Heb צִקְלוֹן (2 Kgs 4.42). Most Jewish exegetes explain this *hapax* as meaning “garment” or “bag.” The latter meaning is attested in West Slavic forms: Slk *kobela*, OCz *kabele*, *kabela*, Pol *kobiel*, and so on (possibly from the Old German *kobel* “basket,” though attested only from the fifteenth century on).

Beyond this, there are some glosses whose inner-Slavic affiliation cannot be ascertained. Consider the following:

- The undeciphered phrase פּוּמְק נִסָּא¹²⁶ (with the meaningless variant בְּנִיקָם נִכְרָא for the verse וְאֵשְׁבָה לִי וְאֵשְׁבָה לִי וְאֵשְׁבָה לִי “the place is tight for me, make me room, and I will settle” (Is 49:20).¹²⁷ Samuel Joseph Fün̄n suggested reconstructing this as פּוּסְקָא נִסָּא, i.e., *puska narъ* “let us in” meant to explain the obscure לִי וְאֵשְׁבָה, here “stay far from me,” “make me room” (lit. “approach [sg.] for me”).¹²⁸ The form *puskati* (in contrast to *pustiti*) is well attested only in early East Slavic texts.¹²⁹
- **blazen/blazen* (בלאזין) for the Hebrew טוֹב (2 Kgs 5.3);¹³⁰
- **guna* or *gunja* (גונא; Cz *bouně*, Sk *buna*, Pol *gunia* “blanket”; Russ, Ukr, Bulg *gunja* for different kinds of clothes and covers) for Heb שְׂמִיכָה, Aram גּוּנְבָא / גּוּנְבָא “blanket, bed-cover” (Jgs 4.18).¹³¹ Here the choice of the gloss could be connected to possible pronunciation patterns of the Aramaic equivalents as the Slavic diminutive *gunka*.
- **most/muost* (מושט) for Heb עָסִיס ‘must’ (Is 49.26), a loanword (German

125. “טוֹלִיקוּ בּוּדִי סְטָטִי אַמִּיסָא [means] חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ, in the Canaanite language [means] חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ” (רק חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ, in the Canaanite language [means] חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ). (רק חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ בְּלִשׁ כִּנּוּ טוֹלִיקוּ בּוּדִי סְטָטִי אַמִּיסָא אִי נִפְיִצִי) “אִי נִפְיִצִי”.

126. According to MS Munich published by Geiger in *Nite Neemanim*, (Breslau, 1847) (see Harkavi, *Jews*, 50–51 and 136). On p. 136 Harkavi corrected the erroneous form אַנְסַפּוּסְקָא as it appears on pp. 50–51.

127. “וְאֵשְׁבָה בְּלִי כְנַעַן בְּנִיקָם) “בְּנִיקָם נִכְרָא in the Canaanite language means in the Canaanite language (נִכְרָא).

128. Harkavi, *Jews*, 50–51, 136.

129. Sreznevskij, *Materialy*, 2:1726.

130. “אחלי [means] ‘good,’ that is בְּלִאֲזִין in the Canaanite language” (אחלי) (אדוני טוב בלשׁ כִּנּוּ בְּלִאֲזִין).

131. “גּוּנְבָא in the Canaanite language should be translated as גּוּנְבָא, that is שְׂמִיכָה in the Canaanite language” (וְהַכְסָהוּ בְּשְׂמִיכָה תְּרַגִּי גּוּנְבָא הֵינּוּ בְּלִשׁוֹן כִּנּוּ גּוּנְבָא) (וְהַכְסָהוּ בְּשְׂמִיכָה תְּרַגִּי גּוּנְבָא הֵינּוּ בְּלִשׁוֹן כִּנּוּ גּוּנְבָא).

most, must; Lat *mustum*) appearing in many Slavic languages: Czech *mošt*, Pol *moszcz*, OR *мѡштъ*, Russ *must* and *most*, but with a front vowel in OCz—*mest*.¹³²

- **ugli* (אוגלי) for Heb פחם “coal” (Is 54.16).¹³³
- **δbvr* < *δbbr* (דוור) for Heb רכסים “mountain ridge” (Is 40.4).¹³⁴ Even though they suggest the correct Slavic equivalent,¹³⁵ Kupfer and Lewicki are still faced with two problems: (1) the correspondence is not ideal: the gloss has a *waw* where a *b* is called for; (b) how can a word meaning “dell” explain the Hebrew word for “mountain ridge”? I suggest the following solutions: (1) the change *b* > *v* must reflect a feature characteristic of West German, especially the Middle Franconian dialects spoken in the Rhineland.¹³⁶ For example, a different Slavic form known as *nɔbɔx* “poor, unfortunate” in Eastern Yiddish (from the Slavic *nebogъ*) is pronounced with a *v* in most dialects of West German Yiddish; (2) the Slavic word, well attested as having the meaning of “dell, ravine, hollow,” refers not to רכסים “mountain ridge,” but to the word בקעה “hollow, valley” in the same verse: והרכסים לבקעה “and the mountain-chains [will become] a valley.”

The extrapolation by JH becomes even more problematic if we take into account that one and the same author can use both West and East Slavic forms. That is clearly what happens in texts composed by R. Eliezer ben Nathan (Ra’avan; ca. 1090–ca. 1170; Mainz):

- On the one hand, he mentions **černy dusi* “black spirits” (שטריני דוסי) (*Sefer Ra’avan* 52a, 270/271)¹³⁷ as the name of a disease caused by demons. The form *dusi* reflects the East and South Slavic product of

132. “וכעסיס בל' כנ' מושט) in the Canaanite language” (וכעסיס בל' כנ' מושט).

133. “(פחמים אוגלי בל' כנ') (פחמים אוגלי בל' כנ').”

134. “(והרכסים בלש' כנען דוור) (והרכסים בלש' כנען דוור).”

135. Kupfer and Lewicki, *Źródła*, 116–17 (following Harkavi, *Jews*, 136).

136. See, e.g., Wilhelm Braune and Walther Mitzka, *Altböhmische Grammatik*. 10th ed. (Tübingen, 1961), 82; Johannes Franck, *Altfränkische Grammatik* (Göttingen, 1909), 77–80; Henry Kratz, “The Second Sound Shift in Old Franconian,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 24 (1963): 66–78.

137. “שטריני דוסי [לעו] [mentioned in b'AZ 70a] is the name of the disease that is called in the foreign language [alien tongue, לעו] דוסי.” This was checked against the earliest manuscript (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Gülf. Auf. Fol. 5.7, dated in the catalogue of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem to the twelfth c.) and editions (Prague 1610; Warsaw 1905; Simleu, 1926). The only minor discrepancy is שטריני דוסי in Albeck’s Warsaw edition.

the second palatalization ($x > \dot{s}$) and cannot be early West Slavic. Forms such as the Pol *mnisi* and the like are first dated not earlier than the seventeenth century. More complicated is the situation in Polabian and East Slovak. However, in contrast to Polabian, which lost \dot{s} in all positions, our author does distinguish between \dot{s} and s , as becomes evident from his use of *samekb* for s and *shin-tet* for \dot{s} . As for early East Slovak dialects, they show s in dat.-loc. sg. (*mucha-muše*), but not in nom. pl.¹³⁸

- On the other hand, in his *Commentaries to Prayers* Ra'avan also gives the form **deg(e)t* (דגית) for Heb עיטרן “tar,” defined as “Bohemian” (לשון בהם) in the text (cf. OCz *debet* and Slk *debt*, etc.).¹³⁹

Ra'avan knows a great deal about pre-Mongolian Rus', particularly about Kiev and the material conditions of life there. This knowledge was either based on his own trip there or on data he received from his contacts from Rus' (see *Sefer Ra'avan* 8b; 8d; 53c; 61b; 68d; 74b; 77a).

The situation is more obvious with regard to the texts composed in Bohemia, such as *'Arugat ha-bosem* (Spice garden) written about 1234 by R. Abraham ben Azriel, who lived in Bohemia, or *Or zaru'a* (Sown light) authored by his pupil, R. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (ca. 1180–ca. 1250), who was of Bohemian origin. These texts contain many indisputably West Slavic forms, including **vidla* (וידלא) “pitchfork,” **omdleni* (אומדלני) ‘faint’, **pometlo* (פומטלו) “broom,” and others. Nevertheless, even here we come across forms that may not be Czech, and not even West Slavic.¹⁴⁰

- Thus, **blaxa* (בילחא; for Heb פרעוש “flea” in *Or zaru'a* 2.15a) or **pblt* (פילט; for Heb רפסודות ‘raft’ in *Or Zaru'a* 1.27b) show a vowel preceding the liquid consonant in the reflexes of the Proto-Slavic group *tlst* in which the reconstructed order is liquid-vowel. It can theoretically be an anaptyctic vowel inserted by the transliterator in order to show the syllabic quality of the sonant in West Slavic (like in OCz and Sk *blcha*). Otherwise, our gloss provides the earliest attestation of such a reflex, which is found only in later South Slavic, mainly in the Bulgarian forms, in which it becomes a regular feature; see Bulg

138. Cf. Shevelov, *Prehistory*, 294–95.

139. Hamburg, Staats- und Universitaetsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 61, fol. 153; F 26298. Cited according to Kupfer and Lewicki, *Źródła*, 127. The copy of the manuscript was not available at the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

140. Checked in the new edition (Jerusalem, 2010).

balxa, Slov *bólba*, or SC *balba*. The Hungarian loan from Slavic witnesses the same vocalization: *bolba*. Occasionally, a secondary vowel can also occur in a preceding position in East Slovak, for instance, in *selza* for *slza*, as well as in South-Western Ukrainian dialects (*ker-vavyy*), but these have only very late attestation.¹⁴¹

- The form **paduxa* (פדוּחָא; for Heb בית השחי “bosom” in *Or zaru’a* 1.156a) confirms the form with *ð*, attested only in the South Slavic, Slovene, *pâzðuba*. This may, however, document an unattested West Slavic form. In any case, if not a late corruption,¹⁴² this spelling can provide an additional witness of this form with *ð*, unattested except in Slovene; it is thus very significant for the reconstruction of the PS **pazðuxa*.¹⁴³
- The form **daloko* (דלוקין; for Heb רחוק “far” in *Arugat ha-bosem* 1.84–85)¹⁴⁴ is known with *o* during the early period only in East Slavic and later in Lower Sorbian, and *lod* (לוד; for Heb ברד and French גלצא, *glace*, in *Or zaru’a* 2.30a), only in East Slavic and later in Polish and Sorbian. These, however, may be scribal corruptions of *daleko* and *led*, as suggested by JH.¹⁴⁵
- The form אושג (*Or zaru’a* 2.152a) may be interpreted in different ways, depending on the Hebrew word to which it is supposed to refer: **ořag* (a Turkish loanword attested exclusively in East Slavic) for Heb תנור “hearth,” or **ořeg* (as in Cz *ořeh*, Pol *ořóg* and others) for Heb אוד התנור “poker.”¹⁴⁶ The latter seems more probable.

141. Cf. Shevelov, *Prehistory*, 477–78; 474–75; 470.

142. See comm. to the next item.

143. See Vasmer, *Etymological Dictionary*, 3:187.

144. Hereafter Ephraim E. Urbach, *Sefer ‘arugat ha-bosem* (Jerusalem, 1939–47).

145. Jakobson and Halle, “The Term Canaan,” 884. It should be noted, however, that both *paduxa* and *lod* appear only in the later manuscripts (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. 40 [Neubauer 650], fol. 241 of the seventeenth c. and Frankfurt am Main, Stadt- und Universitaetsbibliothek, Hebr Fol 7, fol. 17r of the sixteenth–seventeenth c. respectively), while the oldest extant version dated by 1260–1300 has *pazuxa* and *led* (Amsterdam, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Rosenthal 3, fol. 202v–203r and 200r respectively). MS Amsterdam might have been a source for MSS Oxford and Frankfurt; for the relations between the manuscripts, see Uziel Fuks, *Studies in the Book Or Zaru’a by R. Isaac ben Moses of Vienna* (master’s thesis; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993), 41–68, esp. 57 and 59–60).

146. See Harkavi, *Jews*, 61; Andre Mazon, “Le passage de *g* a *b* d’après quelques gloses judéo-tchèques,” *Revue des études slaves* 7 (1927): 261–67, 261–63; Kupfer and Lewicki, *Žrǔdla*, 229.

I believe that in these particular cases *intepretatio bohemica* should be preferred as long as we do not have any additional information. These cases show, however, that JH's extrapolation cannot be accepted without reservation even for the most obviously Bohemian works; this is even more true for the earlier texts which have no evident Bohemian links. We probably need to distinguish between phonological and lexical argumentation, that is, between forms phonologically *impossible* for a certain region, on the one hand, and lexica accidentally *unattested* there, on the other. In this case, the availability of forms such as *tžb*, attested only in Czech, or *očag*, attested only in Russian, will not constitute a decisive argument.

The topic deserves a monograph-size study, but even this brief survey leads us to a number of preliminary conclusions:

1. Textual critical and linguistic data show that the glosses cannot be late scribal additions, as has been suggested by Weinryb,¹⁴⁷ not only because they are attested in the earliest manuscripts but also because they reflect early linguistic phenomena, such as the pronunciation of *jerš* in weak positions, occlusive *g* in the Czech forms, and other early linguistic features.
2. The provenance of the majority of the glosses, within the Slavic realm, cannot be determined exactly, i.e., most of them may equally well be East or West Slavic in origin (and occasionally even South Slavic).
3. The extrapolation from the minority of cases (where West Slavic or specifically Czech forms can be convincingly identified) to the whole corpus, which is then in its entirety defined as Czech, is not warranted. This is because, despite the approach followed in JH, the corpus of glosses contains forms that cannot be Czech but are best attested in East Slavic, such as *b/γ* for the eleventh century (**neb*), pronunciation of final *jerš* for the twelfth century (**mako*), and *š* resulting from the second palatalization (pl. nom. *duši*); see also the possibly East Slavic *plečo* and probable East Slavic vocables such as *puokati* and *očagъ*.
4. This kind of extrapolation is not tenable even within the limits of a single work, since forms of different provenance can coexist in the works of the same author (as in the case of the Ra'avan). This could happen for a number of reasons:
 - 4.1. the author may have been exposed to a variety of linguistic

147. "Beginnings," 482.

influences. This is the situation of the Ra'avan, who probably traveled to Rus' through Bohemia;

- 4.2. glosses could be borrowed from one text to another, such as in the case of the gloss from the *'Arukḥ* appearing in the same form in a commentary by Rashi;
- 4.3. glosses can occasionally serve comparative linguistic purposes, as in the case of *jěbo* for Heb יָבוּם, *perinos* for Aram פֶּרִינוּס, and *gunka* for Aram גּוּנְכָא.

There is another possible explanation for this heterogeneity, although extremely hypothetical. Consider the possibility that we are dealing here not with a conglomerate of forms belonging to different Slavic vernaculars but with consistent evidence demonstrating the existence of a “Canaanite,” that is, Judeo-Slavic, language which integrates both West and East Slavic forms (just as this happens in Yiddish).

Weinreich's idea of a Judeo-Slavic language was developed by Wexler mainly on the basis of the Slavicisms in Yiddish.¹⁴⁸ Even at the present preliminary stage we should note several indications of consistency among this heterogeneous material. For instance:

- *Jers* may be pronounced in weak positions (**makol/makъ*, **trěbonol/trěbъnъ*). This phenomenon is documented only in the earlier *Mainz Commentary* and the *'Arukḥ*, both dating from the late eleventh century, while none of the later sources shows a weak *jer*.
- Two kinds of *jers* are differentiated (as in the East Slavic languages, Slovak, Bulgarian, and Macedonian), provided that the early instances in the *Mainz Commentary* and the *'Arukḥ*, on the one hand, and the *Or zaru'a*, on the other, are reflective of the same system. However, in both kinds of texts, correlation of the front and back vowels for *jer'* and *jer*, respectively, is not consistently preserved, either in weak (**trěbъnъ* for PS **trěbъnъ*; **bъlxa* for PS **bъlxa*), or in strong positions (**pъlt* for PS **pъltъ*).
- This language may in fact also preserve archaic forms such as **pa[z]*

148. Wexler, *Explorations*, 151–96. See also the work by Aslanov, “Izmenenie.” Cf. also discussions of Judeo-French and Judeo-German based on similar material found in rabbinic glosses: Menahem Banitt, “Une langue-fantôme—le judéo-français,” *Revue de linguistique romane* 27 (1963): 245–94; Cyril Aslanov, “Le français de Rabbi Joseph Kara et de Rabbi Eliézer de Beaugency d’après leurs commentaires sur Ezéchiel,” *Revue des études juives* 159.3–4 (2000): 425–46; Erika Timm, “Zur Frage der Echtheit von Raschis jiddischen Glossen,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 107 (1985): 45–81.

*dux*a or the earliest attestation of the reflex *tblt* for PS *tblt* (**bьlxa*, **pьlt*), or, alternatively, a unique rendering of the West Slavic syllabic sonant.

- All the sources except one (**snib/sneb*) show an occlusive *g*.
- The pronunciation may have been Germanized in some cases, as in **ð[b]vr* (in conformity with the attested pattern for some Slavic forms common in Western Yiddish, such as *nəbəx/nəvəx*, and the like).

Also noteworthy is the possibility that the glosses may testify to a certain level of literacy in Church Slavonic and even familiarity with the Church Slavonic Bible (cf. **omet?* in Job 15.27). This may have far-reaching implications for the extent of Jewish involvement in early medieval Hebrew-Slavic translations (see 2.1 below). This possibility may find new and unique confirmation in the source presented in section 2.2 below.

2. Slavic Literacy among Jews

2.1. Hebrew-Slavic Translations

The possibility of Church Slavonic literacy among Jews may be corroborated by the rich corpus of medieval Hebrew-Slavic translations of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, with the originals chosen for translation not only from the Judeo-Christian repository of biblical texts common to both Judaism and Christianity but also from specifically Jewish material such as medieval midrash, liturgical texts, and the like. The translations include, inter alia, Slavic versions of Hebrew translations from Latin (the *Book of Josippon* and Johannes de Sacrobosco's *Book of the Sphere*) and Arabic (such as Al-Ghazali's *Intentions of the Philosophers*; Maimonides' *Logical Vocabulary*; on "Physiognomy" from Rhazes' *Al-Manzuri*; and Pseudo-Aristotle's *Secret of Secrets*). It is also possible that the Greek-speaking Jews in Rus' took part in the translation of Judeo-Greek materials.¹⁴⁹ However, the form that Jewish involvement in these translations assumed, just as the question of whether or to what extent Christians took part in working on the translations has, thus far, not yet been fully elucidated.¹⁵⁰

149. See Kulik, "Judeo-Greek Legacy."

150. For the most up-to-date survey of medieval Hebrew-Slavic translations, see Moshe Taube, "Eres' židovstvujuščih' i perevody s evrejskogo v srednevekovoj Rusi," in *Istorija evrejskogo naroda v Rossii: Ot drevnosti do rannego novogo vremeni*, ed. A. Kulik (Moscow, 2009), 367–97; see also Horace G. Lunt and Moshe Taube, "Early East Slavic Translations from Hebrew," *Russian Linguistics* 11 (1988): 147–87; Anatolij A. Alekseev, "Russko-evrejskie literaturnye svjazi do

We must also take into account that, for the period in question, the official language of the Great Duchy of Lithuania, including the language of juridical and financial documentation, was “Ruthenian,” a Western variant of the East Slavic vernacular also known as “Old Russian,” in its written form strongly influenced by (and, for its users, often not distinguishable from) Church Slavonic. It seems very probable that the Jews involved in economic activities in medieval Rus’ could benefit from a certain level of literacy in this language, just as their compatriots in the West could by mastering Latin. This literacy finds new and unique corroboration in the abecedarium discussed below.

2.2. *Cyrillic-Hebrew Abecedarium*

The Cyrillic-Hebrew abecedarium of the thirteenth century has never been discussed by Slavic linguists. It is found in a Hebrew Psalter from the collection of Matthew Parker, a seventeenth-century Archbishop of Canterbury, preserved in the Oriental collections of the Bodleian Library at Oxford (MS Oxford, Bodl. Or. 3). The psalter is dated paleographically to the thirteenth or the early fourteenth century and was owned or probably even copied by an English-speaking Christian. The manuscript contains several abecedaria (alphabets): the Hebrew and the Greek alphabets with the acrophony (names of the letters) and notes in Latin (ff. 75r and 74v). These are followed by the Arabic and the Cyrillic alphabets with the names of the letters spelled out above the Cyrillic characters in vocalized Hebrew writing (ff. 72v–73v).

The Cyrillic-Hebrew abecedarium belongs to the very small group of medieval Slavic (Cyrillic or Glagolitic) abecedaria in which the names of the letters are transliterated into non-Slavic (Latin and Greek) scripts.¹⁵¹

15–go veka,” *Jews and Slavs* 1 (1993): 44–75; Moshe Taube, “The Fifteenth-Century Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is There a Connection?” in *Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. V. V. Ivanov and J. Verkholantsev (Moscow, 2005), 185–208.

151. For the most recent surveys, see Borjana Velčeva, “Abecedar,” in *Kirilo-Methodievska enciklopedija* (Sofia, 1985), 1:20–26, 37–38; Roland Marti, “Slavische Alphabete in nicht-slavisches Handschriften,” *Kirilo-Methodievska studii* 8 (1991): 139–64; Marti, “Abecedaria—A Key to the Original Slavic Alphabet: The Contribution of the Abecedarium Sinaiticum Glagoliticum,” in *Cyrillomethodianum: Thessaloniki. Magna Moravia* (Thessaloniki, 1999), 175–200. For the letter-names, see Tatjana A. Ivanova, “O nazvanijah slavjanskih bukv i o porjadke ih v alfavite,” *Voprosy jazykoznanija* 6 (1969): 48–55; Paul Cubberley, “On the Origin and Development of the Slavonic Letter-Names,” *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 2.1 (1988): 29–54. For other Russian abecedaria (of the seventeenth–eighteenth c.) found in British collections, see Veronica M. Du Feu and John

In fact, only two such acrophonic alphabets are known before the end of the thirteenth century: the Paris Glagolitic-Latin alphabet, known also as the *Abecedarium Bulgaricum*, dated to the eleventh or early twelfth centuries,¹⁵² and the Greek abecedarium from the “Bandurian Legend” created possibly in the thirteenth century but preserved only in fifteenth-century copies. This means that our text may be the earliest Cyrillic xenographic abecedarium and the second earliest xenographic acrophonic abecedarium of any kind.

I give a detailed linguistic and historical treatment of the Cyrillic alphabet in an earlier essay in this journal,¹⁵³ where, following Olszowy-Schlanger’s notice,¹⁵⁴ I argue that the Cyrillic alphabet must date from the same time as the rest of the text and is likely to have been produced by (or at least with the participation of) a Cyrillic-literate Jew from Rus’ rather than by an English Christian Hebraist. The most likely appears to be a team made up of an English Christian Hebraist and a Slavic-literate Jew, who prepared the text using Hebrew as their common language, while their object of study was elements of the Slavic language.

The language behind the transliterations points at an East Slavic provenance of the author (or the informant) of the abecedarium. It also suggests certain Central East Slavic dialectal features, which may be pinpointed in specific areas where Jewish presence is attested in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Thus, the dialect reflected in the abecedarium includes the following features: explosive *g*, differentiation of *c* and *č*, *akanie*, pronunciation of *ě* as *ie*, and possibly transformation of *e* to *o*. Taken together, these features exclude the extreme South and North, namely, Kiev and Novgorod, but go well with transitional Central East Slavic dialects characteristic in this period for Chernigov and Novgorod-Seversky, as well as for Minsk and Novogrudok.¹⁵⁵ The latter two areas were integrated into the Great Duchy of Lithuania by the mid-thirteenth century. It should be noted that what we know of Isaac of Chernigov dates from the same period. Besides, Jewish settlement in Lithuania, most probably going back to the Kievan and Galician-Volhynian communities of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, is well documented only

S. G. Simmons, “Early Russian Abecedaria in Oxford and London,” *Oxford Slavonic Papers* 3 (1970): 119–33.

152. Paris BN 2340; see diplomatic edition in Bartholomaeus Kopitar, *Glagolita Clozianus* (Vienna, 1836).

153. Kulik, “Jews from Rus’.”

154. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, *Les manuscrits hébreux dans l’Angleterre médiévale: Étude historique et paléographique* (Paris, 2003), 36.

155. See Kulik, “Jews from Rus’,” 397–98.

beginning in 1388, when the first charter of privileges was granted to Lithuanian Jews by Vytautas.¹⁵⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Scant as it may seem, the evidence on the knowledge of East Slavic among early East European Jews is incomparably richer than the data on any other language they may have spoken during this period. This evidence is also very diverse and representative. It ranges from grassroots elements such as the mastering of obscene speech or the adopting of Slavic personal names, to the much more advanced level of East Slavic proficiency involving Church Slavonic literacy in its East Slavic variation. Literacy of this kind leads to participation in translation projects or even becomes an object of teaching. Our sources witness both Jewish East Slavic monolingualism, on the one hand, and Jews as possibly the first attested teachers of Slavic literacy in Latin Europe, on the other.

The emerging picture may impact different fields of knowledge and prompt a reevaluation of many historical and linguistic problems. Slavic linguistics should take into account early East Slavic forms documented in Hebrew transliterations which sometimes provide earlier attestations of these forms than the ones preserved in the Slavic written sources. The issue of an early Slavic substratum is also of crucial importance for the history of Yiddish. The very existence of an East Slavic-speaking Jewry may provide an additional argument in favor of the existence of Jewish communities in this region, who either were not of German descent or else treated their German legacy in a way very different from later Yiddish-speaking communities.

This situation contrasts strikingly with what we know of the linguistic insolubility of Yiddish-speaking Jews in their Slavic environment in the early modern and modern periods up to the beginning of the assimilation processes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Only then do we once again encounter East European Jews who speak only Russian or Polish, or who play a leading role in the teaching of these languages in the West. The linguistic situation reflected in our early sources may indicate a peculiar type of coexistence between Jews and their Slavic neighbors, one that differs from later models of either extreme isolationism or no less extreme assimilation attested in this region. What I am suggesting is a model in which the boundaries between the two groups could take shape along confessional rather than ethno-cultural lines.

156. Stanislovas Lazutka and Edwardas Gudavichius, *Privilege to Jews Granted by Vytautas the Great in 1388* (Moscow, 1993).