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On *The Schizoid Nature of Modern Hebrew*

Shmuel Bolozky


The monograph's central argument is that Modern Hebrew (MH) is a Slavic language. Wexler claims that Yiddish was originally a dialect of the Sorbian subgroup of the Slavic language family (located in the southern corner of former East Germany), and that the supposed Germanic origin of this Judeo-Sorbian dialect is a misconception due to wholesale adoption of a Germanic lexicon for the language. In other words, Yiddish is Judeo-Sorbian, disguised with Germanic vocabulary. Similarly, he argues, the "revivers" of MH as a spoken language were native speakers of Yiddish, who applied the Hebrew lexicon in toto to essentially Yiddish structure—a process made easy by the large number of Hebrew items (at least 15 percent, some through the mediation of Aramaic) already incorporated in Yiddish. So, if MH is essentially Yiddish, and Yiddish essentially Judeo-Sorbian, then MH is—genetically—a Slavic language.
According to Wexler, this type of major lexical shift was not an isolated phenomenon in the history of Ashkenazic Jewry. Thus, from the sixteenth or seventeenth century, Yiddish cryptolects have had a major component of Hebrew vocabulary. In fact, up to 85 percent of the vocabulary of the Yiddish cryptolect used by Swiss horse dealers is of Hebrew origin! In scribal Yiddish, used between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries primarily for recording testimonies in court cases, Hebrew words and phrases constituted about 50 percent of the lexicon. The author also feels that it was no accident that Ludwik Zamenhof came from the same region (Byelorussia) and grew up with the same tradition as Ben-Yehuda. While Ben-Yehuda and friends followed the tradition of wholesale lexical borrowing by transplanting masses of Hebrew vocabulary unto Yiddish, Zamenhof implanted an essentially Latinate lexicon onto a Slavic base in introducing Esperanto.

Wexler does not believe in the possibility of truly "reviving" a spoken norm for an unspoken language of liturgy and literature. No language that lost its spoken function has ever been revived, e.g. Akkadian, Latin, Classical Greek, Egyptian. Modern Hebrew (MH) is not a direct reincarnation of either Biblical Hebrew (BH) or Mishnaic Hebrew (MSH), and certainly not of Medieval Hebrew (MDH), and its first speakers did not learn it from an earlier generation of native speakers, but sort of reconstructed it from what they knew, or thought they knew, about earlier phases of the language. Even the evidence of continued Hebrew speech that has been documented for generations, among special groups, at some Jewish schools, and primarily in contact between members of Jewish communities of different liturgical traditions, cannot be considered the base from which MH sprang (although it may have served as an example to Ben-Yehuda and others that it (reviving) can be done).

Although the author refers to the notion of revival as a "hoax," he does not mean that it was intended as such. "Revivers" like Ben-Yehuda, though proficient in etymological and philological analysis, were linguistically naïve; they be-
lieved that by reintroducing the Hebrew lexicon, as well as Hebrew inflectional paradigms and a few basic syntactic phenomena, they were also reviving the linguistic structure of Hebrew as a whole. Concentrating on words, they were unaware of the degree to which they were applying them onto their own underlying Yiddish structure. However, identifying MH as direct heir of earlier phases of the language, particularly BH (MSH being too close to recent rabbinic traditions, from which the social Zionists wished to distance themselves), had powerful political motivation.

The unbroken link between contemporary Jews and their ancestors in Palestine some eighteen centuries ago required direct lineage from BH/MSH to MH, to emphasize the claim to the land and the right of the Jews to return to their ancestral home. Clearly, this was by no means unique to the Jewish people; the language component is an essential element in any national or ethnic movement, as is the appeal of a glorious past, when that language was the vehicle of a culture of importance. Furthermore, the revival concept was, and still is, strongly supported by educators, language planners, and normative grammarians, who perpetuate the belief in “correct” Hebrew that is based solely on written historical sources.

Wexler’s claim may be analyzed diachronically as well as synchronically. This reviewer is by no means qualified to evaluate the historical-genetic argument, or the validity of the migration pattern required by Wexler’s assumption. For Wexler’s theory to work, it is essential that the migration of Yiddish-speaking Jewry within the German orbit be from east to west rather than vice versa; it is not clear how much evidence there is to substantiate such a claim. Furthermore, as strong as the linguistic evidence for a “hidden Slavic standard” for MH may be, it does not automatically follow, as Wexler claims, that its near-absence in the lexicon (due to re-lexification) and the knowledge that MH was “revived” as a spoken language a century ago allow us to identify the Slavic hidden standard as native rather than borrowed (p. 74). Nevertheless, one can weigh linguistic evidence which, though not constituting direct evidence for the diachronic
hypothesis, might still be regarded as being compatible with it, or interpreted as indirect support for it.

Synchronously and typologically, the claim can only be judged by the degree to which the various components of the grammar are compatible with the basic principles of Semitic language structure. Wexler states that "Modern Hebrew is 'genetically Slavic, with a strong tendency to be(come) typologically Semitic'" (p. 102 italics added for emphasis). In other words, he admits that MH may be typologically Semitic, at least in part. In the opinion of this reviewer, the degree of Yiddish structure preserved in MH is significant, but not distinct enough to qualify the language as only partly Semitic from a typological point of view. In particular, it is difficult to characterize MH typologically as anything but Semitic insofar as morphology is concerned. If typological classification is deemed just as important as genetic origin, then MH is essentially Semitic.

The author produces linguistic evidence for Slavic origin of MH, some of which is quite convincing. There is not enough of it, though. One can begin with the areas of phonology and phonetics. The sound system of MH is significantly different from that of a typical Semitic language, and can be claimed to be closer to that of Yiddish, or European sound structure in general. In itself, however, this cannot be used as evidence for Yiddish, or Slavic, origin of MH, and indeed Wexler does not resort to this type of argument. As pointed out in Goldenberg (1981), the phonological system is usually the least likely to maintain the characteristics of the proto-language,¹ and the most likely to be affected by adjacent languages, regardless of whether they are genetically related or not.² On the other hand, the loss of gemination (e.g. dibber > diber, etc.) in MH is a more likely inheritance from Yiddish, since degemination is a hallmark of Ashkenazi pronunciation of Hebrew.

Another argument for Wexler's position, a rather strong one, is phonotactic: the existence in MH of consonant clusters which Semitic languages generally try to avoid. Thus, in BH, potential consonant clusters were avoided in initial position, usually through the intervention of a schwa where an
initial consonant cluster would be expected, as in ḏvārīm² “things,” k’tuvīm “written, ms. pl.” (the schwa prevented the formation of dvārīm etc. by antepretoneic vowel reduction from underlying /davār+im/). When the initial consonant was low, a shorter variant of the original vowel fulfilled a similar function. Modern Hebrew maintains the modern counterpart of that short vowel (e.g. BH /ʾāšīr+im/ “rich, m. pl.” > ʾāšīr+im > MH ʾāšīrīm; BH /ḥadāš+im/ “new, m. pl.” > ḥadāš+im > MH xadašīm), but the schwa itself, or rather its e-counterpart, is generally deleted, as in dvarīm, ktuvīm. The rule is blocked only when the resulting cluster would have violated the sonority hierarchy, with difficult-to-pronounce clusters like #mk, #yl, #lv, etc., in words like mekomot “places,” yeladīm “children,” levanīm “white, ms. pl.” Yiddish also deletes the same schwas in its Hebrew words, as in tfile “prayer,” gdoylim “big, ms. pl.” króyvīm “relatives” śxēynīm “neighbors, ms.,” skēynīm “old, ms. pl.” The only difference is that the deletion is extended to clusters with initial x, which are allowed in Slavic, i.e. to xsidim “Hassids” vs. Hebrew xasidim; xšad “suspicion” vs. Hebrew xašad.⁴ Although this phenomenon can be attributed to Slavic substratum effect, it may also be used to support the claim for a direct genetic relationship between MH and Yiddish.

Wexler also claims that the severely reduced productivity of the spirantization phenomenon in MH is inherited from Yiddish. Thus, MH has be#kīta “in a class” (instead of be#xīta), be#pōlin “in Poland” (instead of be#folin), be#berlīn “in Berlin” (instead of be#verlīn), following Yiddish norms; it may preserve spirantization in items of BH origin, as in lixivod “in honor of,” lefāxot “at least” (Yiddish lepōxes, though), but not in le#kavōd “to honor (N),” le#paxōt “to less,” nor in most post-Mishnaic forms. Even if the explanation lies in the degree of collocability and binding, the fact remains that in the less frozen items, the spirantization rule is suppressed, following the Yiddish model.⁵

Naturally, Wexler also cites non-final stress of MH personal and place names, which is clearly of Yiddish origin, as in šmūel, dīna, rišōn, rexōvot.
The most obvious area of Yiddish-in-Modern-Hebrew are vocabulary items and borrowing translations. The well known kúmzic “outdoor get-together and meal, usually around fire,” nébex “poor, unable to take care of self,” špric “squirt,” švic “sweat; bragging” etc. are irrelevant here; these are straightforward borrowings. There are, however, semantic doublets in MH, where a Hebrew word coexists alongside the very same word found as a Hebraism in Yiddish, with certain semantic distinctions, as in

(1)  
  
  kley zémer “musical instruments”
  klézmer “musician (who plays East European Jewish music)”
  mıkve “pool of water”
  mikve “ritual bath”
  taxlit “purpose, point”
  táxles “the issue at hand”
  náxat “comfort”
  náxes “pleasure from children”
  xevra “group, society”
  xévre “the gang”
  briya/birya “creature”
  béréye “active and strong woman”
  bitaxon “safety, security”
  bitóxn “trust in God”
  melamed “teach (pres. part.)”
  melámed “xéder teacher”
  maške “drink”
  máške “alcoholic drink”

The very retention of Yiddish Hebraisms in the lexicon, side-by-side with BH or MSH items, fits nicely with a model that assumes a Yiddish base for MH, onto which a Hebrew vocabulary has been transplanted—otherwise, why borrow Hebrew words from Yiddish, with their specific Yiddishized meanings, when the same ones already exist natively? It makes more sense to assume that the Yiddishized elements were already there, and that the “Hebrew Hebrew” ones were borrowed.

Loan translations, including phrases and expressions—of the colloquial ata coxek miméni “you are laughing ‘from’ me” type, instead of ata coxek li “you are laughing at me,” which corresponds to Yiddish du laxst fun mir—also abound. However, loan translations are quite common across lan-
guages, and thus do not constitute a strong argument for Wexler’s claim (and indeed he does not use them as evidence.) More significant, perhaps, is the fact that most adverbs, adverbial phrases, and conjunctions in Yiddish are Hebraisms7 (or Aramaisms) that are also employed in MH, like dāvka “in spite . . . ,” ádraba “on the contrary,” aful “even,” bekicūr “in short,” beikar “primarily,” pašut “simply,” halevay “I wish . . . ,” lehax()is “to spite.” Grammatical elements such as these are usually inherited, not borrowed.8

The syntactic claims are harder to evaluate: firstly, because syntactic structure does change—in fact, according to Kutcher9, there is no living Semitic language whose word order has not changed from that of its parent language; secondly, Wexler’s syntactic arguments draw from only very basic phenomena, virtually ignoring complex sentence structure involving subordinate clauses, etc.; thirdly, many MH syntactic structures have parallels in both Yiddish and MSH, i.e. it is impossible to tell whether they were inherited from Yiddish, or constitute reintroduction of MSH processes. Here is one illustration. The use of the resumptive (or “retrospective”) pronoun in relative clauses, as in aséfer šekarātī bo/oto “the book that I read ([in] it)”10 as a variant of aséfer šekarātī “the book that I read” may be related to Yiddish dos bux vos ix hob im geléynt. However, although BH does not leave resumptive pronouns in object relative clauses, MSH occasionally does,11 as in šāde šeqqeshâruh goyim “a field which Gentiles have reaped (it),” or 'āvānim šezzi'za'tân hammaḥâreyšâ “stones which the plough has moved (them).” Since this phenomenon is found both in MSH and in Yiddish, on whom is the burden of proof?

A similar argument can be made regarding another apparent syntactic relationship: the tendency in MH to replace dependency constructions which mark possession, e.g. sifri “my book,” by analytic structures involving šel “of” (e.g. haséfer šeli “the book mine = my book”) parallels possessive structures in Yiddish, e.g. mayn bux. The same natural shift from synthetic to analytic constructions had already applied, however, in MSH, is found in all Slavic languages and many
other European ones, and is even found in the colloquial dialects of Arabic, which replace synthetic structures involving inalienable possession with analytic ones containing tāba’ “of,” as in kitābī “my book” developing into 'alkitāb tāba’ī “the book my = my book.” This is probably why Wexler does not actually invoke this commonly raised argument for the impact of Yiddish on MH.

What Wexler does attribute to Yiddish in this connection is the colloquial variety of definite smixut (dependency) constructions. Colloquially, bāal habāit “the landlord” (literally “the owner of the house”) is replaced by abāal bāit, i.e. the definite article #(h)a+ precedes the whole construction instead of the second noun only. According to Wexler, this is a Yiddish feature maintained in MH, since in Yiddish such Hebraisms are always preceded by the definite article: der balebos “the landlord.” Similarly, ktav hayad “the manuscript” becomes aktav yad, as it is in Yiddish, der ksav yad; bet hadin “the court” turns into abet din (see Yiddish dos běyzdn), etc. It is also obvious, however, that the shift of #(h)a to the front of the whole construction reflects the speaker’s conception of it as a single unit, and would have probably happened even without the intermediacy of Yiddish—as it does, for instance, in the colloquial dialects of Arabic.12

Another point concerns definiteness and word-order. Hebrew subject-verb order is shifted to verb-subject when the subject is indefinite, as in ayéled higía “the child arrived” vs. higía yéled “arrived a child = a child arrived.” Wexler attributes this distribution to Yiddish der yíngl íz ongekúmen vs. es íz ongekúmen a yíngl. Actually, for many native speakers of Yiddish, both íz gekúmen a yíngl and a yíngl íz gekúmen are equally acceptable, whereas in Hebrew, *yéled higía is unacceptable (unless the subject is contrastively stressed). Still, the existence of verb-subject order in MH sentences with indefinite subjects has a parallel in Yiddish. However, this phenomenon is by no means unique to Yiddish and Hebrew (or Slavic): there is a tendency across languages13 for the (indefinite) noun in presentational sentences to follow the
verb, so as to place it in a less topical position and thus give it more prominence.

An additional syntactic feature: the order of a proper name and the noun in apposition to it. Biblical Hebrew and MSH require proper name first: yeša'yáhu hannávi “Isaiah the prophet,” dávid hammálex “David the King”; in MH, the order is often reversed (anávi yešaayáu, amélex david), reflecting parallel structures in Yiddish and other European languages.\(^{14}\)

Yiddish and other European language elements are reflected in the use of the copula in structures like habáít hu gadol “the house is big,” in addition to habáít gadol “the house big = the house is big.” In BH and in MSH one finds either habbáýit gádol “the house big = the house is big,” or habbáýit gádol hu “the house big is”/gádol hu habbáýit “big is the house,” but not habbáýit hu gádol.\(^{15}\)

Wexler also argues that MH morphology is Slavic-through-Yiddish. In some cases the connection is obvious, e.g. the diminutive/affectionate suffixes +nik, +čik, as in

\[\begin{align*}
(2) \quad \text{kibúcnik} & \quad \text{kibbutz} \\
& \quad \text{mošávnik} & \quad \text{moshav member} \\
& \quad \text{mapáynik} & \quad \text{member} \\
& \quad \text{the katánčik} & \quad \text{very small} \\
& \quad \text{xabúbcik} & \quad \text{little dear}
\end{align*}\]

These are relatively minor, though. A more substantial argument may be drawn from Blanc.\(^{16}\) Hebrew seems to have inherited from Yiddish some aspect-type distinctions. There are cases in Yiddish where the plain verb has imperfect reference, while the prefixed one refers to perfect action denoting transition from one state to the one denoted by the plain verb, e.g. šlofn “sleep” vs. áynšlofn “fall asleep.” The same asceptual difference is conveyed in a number of pa'ál-nif'ál or pa'ál-hitpa'el pairs, all of which have Yiddish equivalents: yašav “be sitting”—hityašev “sit down” (see zicn/[lavek] zicn zix); šaxav “be lying down”—niškav “lie down” (lign/[lavek] leynzix); amad “stand”—neemad “stand up, come to a halt” ([šteyn/[lavek] šteln zix, ōpšteln zix); zaxar “remember”—nizkar
"recall" (gedënken/dermônennen zix). It is noted in Kutcher,\(^{17}\) however (and to an extent by Blanc himself), that there were some BH precedents, such as BH pâḥad “be afraid”—*nivhal “become frightened” (though not same root), and MSH zâxur ’ani “I remember”—’ani nizkâr “I recall.” The phenomenon is certainly more systematic in Yiddish, though. The inherited aspect argument can be extended beyond the realm of morphology: *ix šrayb “I write” denotes a plain action; *ix gib a šrayb “I ‘give a writing’ ” refers to an instantaneous or abrupt variety. Modern Hebrew *noten kfica “‘give a jump’ = go and be right back” or *noten cilcul “‘give a ring’” thus go back to *gib a šprung and *gib a klung, respectively.

Wexler’s main argument in the morphological domain is drawn from general observations regarding the verb system. He argues that the verbal derivation system was becoming unproductive in BH and in MSH, that MH continues this tendency, and that in the Hebrew component of Yiddish, the system of discontinuous verb patterns (*binyanim) absorbed a strong Slavic influence, which has remained intact in MH. The reputed seven *binyanim of MH already represent a reduced system, which lost the internal passive of *pa‘al, the *hitpâ‘el counterpart of *hitpa‘el (a pair reflected in separate *tâ‘ala and *’iftâ‘ala in Arabic?).

In MH, only four *binyanim are truly productive: *pi‘el, *hif‘îl, *nîf‘al, *hitpa‘el; the first two are accompanied by their less productive passive equivalents, *pu‘al and *huf‘al. Loss of vocalic length difference as well as gemination contributed to increased opacity and breakdown of the *binyan system. The decline in the productivity of *pa‘al (*qal) began in BH, and has been gradually progressing, owing to the relative semantic opacity of *pa‘al, its inability to accommodate more than three root consonants, its relative paradigmatic complexity, the absence of a truly corresponding passive, etc. Wexler claims that the decreased productivity of the *binyanim in general, as well as the weakening of semantic correlates of particular *binyanim, reflects a tendency in Slavic and Yiddish for conjugations with particular affixes which are devoid of semantic functions (e.g. the Yiddish infinitival endings +e(n), ene
or even). In fact, he goes as far as to say that in MH the binyan system is being restructured in the direction of the Slavic practice of deriving compound verbs linearly by suffixation—that hit+, for instance, becomes a linear device for deriving new denominative verbs by mere prefixation, without reference to a root or a discontinuous consonant-vowel pattern.

As support for this claim he cites hitxaver “became friends (with)—clearly derived from xaver “friend”—alongside hitxaber “joined,” and the Yiddish use of the reflexive pronoun in translation equivalents: xávern zix “be associated with.” The same claim may be made for the hi+ of hid’il in hišpirc “squirited” and hišvic “sweated; bragged.” Although on the face of it, this appears to be Wexler’s strongest claim, it is in fact this area of word-formation which clearly characterizes MH as a Semitic language. Wexler could argue that this is a consequence of wholesale lexical borrowing from earlier stages of the language, and thus does not constitute an innate component of MH. Still, synchronically, the morphology of MH is characteristically Semitic. Typical word-formation in Semitic is discontinuous, consisting of extraction of a sequence of consonants from an existing word (sometimes referred to as “root”), and reapplying it onto a fixed canonical pattern of consonants and vowels to form a new lexical item. This is the only way to form verbs. Although hitxaver “became friends (with)” happens to look like a linear sequence of hit+ xaver “friend,” it has to fit into a canonical hit+CaCeC pattern, which is still done by extracting the consonant sequence xvr from xaver and reapplying it onto the canonical pattern hit+CaCeC (cf. hištabec “found its rubric” vs. hištavec “got a heart attack,” the latter originating from šavac “heart attack”). Also, most recent denominative verbs are not in hitpa’el but in pi’el, a discontinuous pattern which is not characterized by a special derivational prefix.

Although in the total Hebrew lexicon there is little correlation between binyan and meaning, frequent everyday items do exhibit considerable form-to-meaning correlation, which is further reinforced in productivity tests. Thus, it can be
shown that in recent word-formation, as well as when productive innovation cannot be avoided\(^\text{18}\) (see Bolozy 1978, 1982, 1986a), speakers first distinguish between “focus on the patient” and “focus on the agent.” If the focus is on the patient (be it reflexive, inchoative [i.e. “become . . . ”], ingressive, reciprocal, etc.), *hitpa’el* is chosen:

(3) **Recent:**

- *hitazréax* “became a citizen”
- *hitgamed* “became very small”
- *hitrakez* “concentrated”
- *hizdayen* “copulated”

**Potential:**

- *hištaref* “became a sheriff”
- *hitsnobeb/histaneb/histnobeb/*
- *hitsnabeb/histnabeb* “became a snob”
- *histalen* “became an armchair revolutionary”
- *hitmarkses/hitmarkes* “became a Marxist”

If the focus is on the agent, true causatives would still tend to be realized in *hif’il*, as in

(4) **Recent:**

- *himxiš* “made real”
- *hincíaax* “eternalized”
- *hifnim* “internalized”

**Potential:**

- *higmid* “made (something/somebody) small”
- *hišrif* “made (somebody) sheriff”
- *hisnib* “made (somebody) snobbish”
- *hislin* “made (somebody) into an armchair revolutionary”

But all other agentives, which make for the majority of innovations, would opt for *pi’el*:
Recent: 
biyel “put stamp (on envelope)”
biyet “lied”
nitev “marked route”
flirtet “flirted”

Potential: 
širef “behaved like a sheriff”
pinel “covered with panels”
isfelt “covered with asphalt”
pitent/pitnet “registered as patent”
sportet/spiritet/sipret “engaged in sports”
keres “fitted with a hook”

Derivation of nouns is not as rigorously constrained as verb-formation is; new nouns may be formed linearly as well as discontinuously. It is from the area of noun-formation that Wexler’s claim could receive its strongest support: if linear formation can be shown to be expanding at the expense of discontinuous derivation, then it could be argued that MH is indeed losing its Semitic character. However, it can be shown that while linear derivation of nouns is indeed on the increase, it has been operating alongside root-pattern derivation, with both strategies maintaining their productivity and reinforcing each other.\textsuperscript{19} Even in this respect, MH is not less Semitic than a language like Arabic.

Many illustrations from the MH noun system can be introduced to prove that non-linear word-formation continues to be (very) productive. In this context, only one case will be discussed—one which Wexler also uses: nouns ending with the agentive suffix +an, like kablan “contractor.” The use of this pattern as an illustration is particularly appropriate, since it allows both discontinuous and linear derivation, e.g. kabl+an “contractor” (constituting a realization of the discontinuous CaCC+an pattern) vs. alxut+an “wireless operator” (linearly derived from alxut “wireless” +an), and the choice of device is not affected by semantic considerations. Usually, transparent relationship with an existing verb form
results in CaCC+an realization, whereas linear N+an preserves the transparency of the source noun or adjective—but not necessarily so.

Wexler believes that the expanded popularity of nouns with +an in MH is due to its common use in the Hebrew component of Yiddish. In fact, he points out that Yiddish uses it not only for nouns, as in gázlen “robber,” kábren “undertaker,” bádxen “joker,” but also to derive new verbs from other stems. Thus, badak “check, examine” +an agentive + +en infinitive yields Yiddish bádkenen, katvan “writer, typist” (actually non-existent in Yiddish by itself) becomes Yiddish káslenen “write = author (V),” leycan “joker” (Yiddish leycn) yields Yiddish lécen ten “joke around.” Slavic verbal derivation requires a linking suffix before the infinitive ending, and Wexler attributes the choice of +an to similarity with the Upper Sorbian verbal noun suffix +nye.

Essentially, both CaCC+an and N+an started in MSH:

(6) CaCC+an forms by origin

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<tr>
<td>Biblical</td>
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<td>[00.48 percent]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mishnaic</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>[17.48 percent]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>[12.14 percent]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
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<td>[69.90 percent]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
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N+an forms by origin

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<tr>
<td>Mishnaic</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>[13.46 percent]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>[2.14 percent]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>[84.40 percent]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>[100.00 percent]</td>
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Although the percentage of linear N+an innovations in MH is very high, there were significant precedents for it in MSH, and in spite of the fact that MH CaCC+an cases are “only” about 70 percent, their sheer number is overwhelming. In other words, both devices have coexisted from MSH,
and are very productive in MH. There is no reason to believe that linear derivation is actually replacing discontinuous word-formation under the impact of European languages—or a "hidden Slavic standard."

Below are some instances of CaCC+an and N+an (even for MSH, gemination is not marked):

(7) Some CaCC+aa innovations
MSH baṭlān "idler, loafer" dabrān “talkative, verbose”
šaqrān “liar” gazlān “robber”
qablān “contractor” qamsān “miser”
MDH 'axlān “glutton” bādhān “joker”
qabrān “gravedigger” lāmdān “learned man, scholar”
šadxān “matchmaker” salḥān “forgiving, lenient”
MH asfān “collector” badrān “entertainer”
rakdan “dancer” raslān “negligent, slovenly”
baxyan “weeper, crybaby” bazbezān “spendthrift”

(8) Some N+an innovations
MSH dodān “cousin” /'eymatān/ > 'eymtān “terrorist”
leyš+ān “mocker, jester” reyyān “empty, vain”
/kotev+ān/ > kotvān duvšān “honey cake”
“scribe”
MDH mišr+ān “neighbor” /šimḥā+ān/ > šimḥān “a happy person”
/solēlah+ān/ > solḥān “forgiving, lenient”
/ga’āvat+ān/ > ga’avātān “boastful, haughty”
MH roš+an “tadpole” cor+an “silicon”
egrof+an “boxer” yevu+an “importer”
maxšir+an “tool operator” matīr+an “permissive”

The CaCC+an forms below are clearly related to existing pa’al or pi’el stems, as indicated by the difference in stop/fricative realization (p, b and k are maintained in pi’el-related forms; their respective variants, f, v and x, point to relationship with pa’al verbs):
CaCC+an forms, related to pa'al and pi'el bases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Rel. Pa'al</th>
<th>Rel. Pi'el</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dabran</td>
<td>talkative, verbose</td>
<td>debe̱er</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kabcan</td>
<td>beggar, pauper</td>
<td>kабe̱c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kablan</td>
<td>contractor</td>
<td>kабел</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šabšan</td>
<td>one who makes</td>
<td>šабе̱ш</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tapsan</td>
<td>climber, alpinist</td>
<td>тапе̱сы</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakxan</td>
<td>polemist</td>
<td>(hit)vаке̱аx</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>axlan</td>
<td>glutton</td>
<td>ахал</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baxyan</td>
<td>weeper, crybaby</td>
<td>баха</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kafcan</td>
<td>jumper; sand flea</td>
<td>кафе̱ц</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>safdan</td>
<td>mourner</td>
<td>сафад</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>savlan</td>
<td>patient, long-suffering</td>
<td>саваl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>navran</td>
<td>field mouse; rodent</td>
<td>наваr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationships are further supported by the very existence, or relative frequency, of related stems. Thus, when no related verb exists, realization would occur in one pattern and never in the other: non-existent *sibel accounts for savlan rather than *sablan, *šabaš accounts for šabšan rather than *šavšan, etc. In other cases, the alternative option is marginally acceptable to the extent that a related verb can be shown to exist as an infrequent item. Thus, only kablan “contractor” is attested since kibel “received” is so much more frequent than literary kaval “complained,” and only axlan “glutton” is attested because axal “ate” is so more frequent than literary íkel “consumed.” Marginally, speakers do understand what potential forms like ??kavlan “chronic complainer” (from literary kaval “complained”), or ??aklan “corrosive” (from literary íkel “consumed”) would mean had they been attested. Their knowledge of the meaning of such potential forms also emphasizes how productive the process is.
The Schizoid Nature of Modern Hebrew

One might be tempted, then, to try to derive such forms from their related verbal stems in a simple linear fashion, followed by stem-vowel elision: /daber+an/ > dabran, /axal+an/ > axlan, etc.

Though quite possible, this type of linear derivation is not very probable, particularly not in MH. In general, agentive nouns formed from verbs are derived from the *benoni* (the present tense or the present participle); in most cases, the same form is used for both, as in

(10)  
ofe “bake, baker” yored “go down, emigrant from Israel”  
šomer “guard, guard” šoxet “slaughter, ritual slaughterer”

menahel “direct, director” meamen “train, trainer”

mefake’ax “inspect, inspector” metosfel “drum, drummer”

malxın “compose music, composer” marce “lecture, lecturer”

mazkir “remind, secretary” maškif “observe, observer”

Agentives related to *hitpa’el* and to *hif’il* stems with +an are also clearly derived from the respective *benoni* stems of these two *binyanim* in a linear fashion:

(11)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>benoni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>histagel</td>
<td>adapted</td>
<td>mistagel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>histakel</td>
<td>observed</td>
<td>mistakel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hištamet</td>
<td>shirked</td>
<td>mištamet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liter. N</th>
<th>Coll. N</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>staglan</td>
<td>mistaglan</td>
<td>opportunist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staklan</td>
<td>mistaklan</td>
<td>observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>štamtan</td>
<td>mištamtan</td>
<td>shirker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(12)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Rel. w/an</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hicxik</td>
<td>made</td>
<td>macxik</td>
<td>macxikan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hirgiz</td>
<td>made</td>
<td>margiz</td>
<td>margizan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the cases before us, however, it would be difficult to argue for linear derivation of CaCC+an realizations from related pa'āl or pi'el bases: in pa'āl-related CaCC+an cases, it would necessitate derivation from the past stem; in pi'el-related verbs the (present/imperfect) stem would be the correct one, but without the prefix me+ which is required to distinguish the present/present participle from the future/imperfect stem. In other words, since CaCC+an forms cannot be shown to be derived by linear affixation of +an to a benoni stem, they can only be generated discontinuously, from root plus consonant-vowel pattern.

When trying to determine the relative productivity of word-formation strategies involving the suffix +an, one also finds that there are numerous cases whose historical origin is probably linear, but which end up as CaCCan—e.g. gaavtan “boastful” (see gaava “pride”), parvan “furrier” (see parva “fur”), yaaran “forester” (see ŋaar “forest”), etc. Speakers consequently cannot tell from the surface form whether they are dealing with a linear derivation or with discontinuous realization of CaCC+an, since synchronically, both interpretations are possible.23 There are also cases in which both strategies can be shown to have applied, and to be equally acceptable even at the literary register: both taxbulan and taxbelan “resourceful person” are attested (see taxbula “ruse, strategem”), as are taxsisan and taxsesan “strategist” (see taxsis “strategy”). In most instances of multiple realization, however, the colloquial CaCC+an variant is clearly the preferred one: yazman “initiator” is commoner than yozman (see yozma “initiative,” or yozem “initiate, benoni form”), zalelan “glutton” is more frequent than zolelan (see zolel “devour food, benoni form.”) Productivity tests usually also indicate preference for the discontinuous CaCC+an (supposedly substandard): literary katalogan “cataloguer” is reinterpreted as katlegan, pulmusan “polemist, disputant” as palmesan, sixletan “rationalist” as sxaltan. It appears, then, that discontinuous CaCC+an is reinforced by linear derivation which on the surface looks like CaCC+an, and that
whenever both strategies are attested, or when speakers are given a productivity-measuring task, the CaCC+an variant tends to be preferred.

In MH, then, discontinuous derivation continues to exist productively, and is in no danger of losing its productivity owing to Slavic (or Yiddish) general preference for linear derivation. Whatever claims are made with regard to the rest of the grammar, it would be very inappropriate to regard MH word-formation as non-Semitic.

Since discontinuous word-formation is a hallmark of Semitic languages, and as such constitutes perhaps the first condition for characterizing a language as Semitic, one can state with considerable certainty that at least typologically, MH is Semitic. The crucial question is whether labeling a language as Semitic can be determined solely on the basis of genetic development, or must also take typological considerations into account. In the latter case, the productivity of non-linear word-formation processes would in itself suffice to characterize MH as Semitic, and the considerable MSH component in syntax would reinforce the classification—irrespective of how many of the same structures can also be found in Yiddish (or in Slavic).

One may claim that even in the syntactic domain, today's MH is closer to BH and MSH than it was, say, forty years ago: there are significantly more cases today of smixut dependency constructions, etc. The argument can be made that had Hebrew continued to develop uninterrupted for these 1,800 years, it could have become less "Semitic" than it is today—which is what happened, for instance, to Neo-Syriac (in which "ergative"-type structure has pushed aside the earlier "active" structure under the influence of Persian and Turkish, ultimately resulting in loss of the original inflected forms of the verb), and certainly to African Semitic pidgins, which are no longer Semitic. Even if MH resulted from a kind of "creolization" process, its increasing Semitization, primarily in morphology, is gradually "decreolizing" it. Typologically, then, even if MH was not distinctly Semitic to start with, it certainly is today.
Wexler’s main argument, regarding the diachronic genetic development of MH, is, as stated above, beyond the expertise of this reviewer. However, evidence appears to be stronger for Yiddish origin of MH than for Slavic origin of Yiddish. The development of MH on a Yiddish base is a reasonable hypothesis, and many unexplained phenomena fall into place with the notion of an underlying Yiddish syntax, modified by Hebrew structures already in operation in Yiddish and by elements of MSH syntax brought about through extensive use of Mishnaic clauses and phrases in the initial revival stage (primarily in the literary register, but to an extent in the colloquial as well.)

The weakness of this monograph is not in the theory; on the contrary—it is an exciting hypothesis, which appeals to the intuition of this reviewer (in its Yiddish-to-MH argument). Rather, it is lacking in the amount of syntactic evidence that it invokes. There must be much more support there for Yiddish syntactic structure than offered in the book, particularly from more complex levels of subordinate clauses of different types and at different levels of subordination. Apparently, the author felt that “the message had to go out” before he was able to fully explore the potential of Yiddish-syntax-in-MH evidence. Further research into this specific issue may significantly strengthen his argument.

A monograph like The Schizoid Nature of Modern Hebrew is an important and welcome contribution to the study of MH and its origins, to research on language revival, and in particular to the issue of determining language affiliation. The author should be congratulated on having the courage to boldly state a hypothesis which others in the field have long considered a taboo. Although the evidence is incomplete, the proposed theory can shed new light on many questions, linguistic as well as extra-linguistic, and will probably initiate a healthy, productive debate among Hebraists and other scholars. Even if that were the only merit of the Wexler hypothesis (which it certainly is not), it would still make the publication of this book a very worthwhile enterprise.
Notes

1. e.g. see G. Goldenberg, "Ruah ha-safa u-mdinyyut lešonit le-or hitpăḥuyot be-saḥot šemiyot ḥadašot," Zixronot ha-'akademya la-Lašon ha-'ivrit 21 (1981), pp. 36–39.

2. Some of the typically-Semitic phonemes of BH were either weakened or merged in ways similar to what is found in MH. There is evidence for the weakening of the pharyngeal 'ayin to glottal 'alef or its complete loss already in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Except for the so-called "oriental" traditions, i.e. those observed by Jews from Arabic-speaking countries, the distinction between t and the emphatic (or pharyngealized) taire not has been preserved. Furthermore, there is ample support from losses and neutralizations of phonemes that have taken place in other Semitic languages and dialects, which look very much like what we find what we find in MH when we compare it with BH: merger of the pharyngeal ḥ with the velar x in favor of the latter, absence of distinction between emphatic s and non-emphatic s, disappearance of q or its merger with other phonemes, etc.

3. Unless marked otherwise, stress is word-final throughout.

4. But one also finds xavēyrim "friends, ms.." xalóymes "dreams," where deletion is blocked. Why?

5. The question of why Yiddish blocks spirantization in some Hebrew words which do spirantize in MH, as in lepōxes “at least,” is harder to answer, and may depend on time of borrowing, stratal influences, etc.

6. Ze taluy mimēnū “it depends from him” instead of ze taluy bo “it depends ‘in’ him,” histakel al “look on” instead of histakel be “look at” and ecel in the sense of Fr. chez are probably Yiddish in origin; the use of nora “awfully” as a superlative in hu nora n nexmad “he is awfully nice” etc. probably goes back to Yiddish šréklix, mitxašek li “it ‘self-desires’ to me = I feel like” to es glist zix mir, ose xaim “‘makes life = has a good time’ to maxt a lebn, lo holex “doesn’t go” to ‘s geyt ništ, asa li xor baroš “made to me a hole in the head” to er hot mir gemaxt a lox in kop, hu menadned li al an(e)šama “he ‘shakes to me on the soul’ = he bores me; he does not let go” to er farūnādet mir di nešūme, hu ose li et amāvet “he ‘makes to me death’ = he torments me (mentally)” to er maxt mir dem toyt, ani maxzik mimēnū “I ‘hold from him’ = I believe in him” to ix halt fun im, ze yikax arbe zman “it will take much time” to dos vet nēmen a lānge cayt, etc.


8. Although in normative MH the first three items carry final stress, the normal accent is as above. Colloquially one also hears
Yiddishized bekícer, aíker, leáxis. The non-final stress certainly betrays Yiddish intermediacy.

9. op. cit. p. 222.
10. e.g. see H. B. Rosén, Contemporary Hebrew (The Hague: Mouton, 1977).
12. As pointed out to me by Benjamin Hary, July 1992.
15. ibid., pp. 213–214.
17. op. cit., p. 216.
20. BH forms like na‘ámán “pleasant, lovely,” barqán “briar, thorn,” ‘avdán “ruin, destruction” can only marginally be claimed to constitute realizations of CaCC+an, and those that look like BH N+an are probably realizations of discontinuous CoCC+an (qorban “sacrifice,” ‘ovdán “ruin, destruction”) and ClCC+an (tinyán “matter,” qinyán “property, possession,” binyán “building,” kivšán “oven, furnace, kiln,” miskán “dwelling; temple”).
21. The reviewer has not been able as yet to distinguish the different sources for cases whose origin is medieval.
22. Below, the colloquial variants contain #mV+, which marks the benoni in all verb patterns except for pa‘al and nif‘al.
23. Included are also forms in which a base vowel is elided, as in safkán “skeptic” (see safek “doubt”), psantran “pianist” (see psanter “piano”); or e is maintained or added for phonetic reasons, as in pardesan “citrus grower” (see pardes “citrus grove”), marpekan “aggressive, pusher” (see marpek “elbow”); or a is inserted in the environment of a historical glottal, as in mahapxan “revolutionary” (see /mahpexa/ “revolution”). Also relevant are derivations from segolate bases, as in raftan “dairy farmer” (see /raft/ > réfet “cowshed”), yarkan “greengrocer” (see /yark/ > yérek “greens”). Occasionally,
The colloquial reduction obliterates the distinction between strategies, as in literary kalkalan "economist" (see kalkala "economy") becoming kalkelan and mada(l)an "scientist" (see mada "science") turning into mad(l)an.

24. Though not total. Slavic languages do display some discontinuous morphology, particularly in shifts from one aspect to another, in a manner that is similar to what English does in its set of strong verbs, as in sing-sang-sung, ring-rang-rung; take-took-taken, shake-shook-shaken; blow-blew-blown, grow-grew-grown; etc. As pointed out in A. Spencer, Morphological Theory, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), and in S. Bolozky, "Awareness of linguistic phenomena in the native language and its implications for learning Hebrew," Bulletin of Hebrew Higher Education 1:2 (1986), pp. 14–17, such patterns should be handed by root+pattern discontinuous mechanisms not unlike those used in the description of Semitic languages.

25. As noted in Kutcher op. cit., p. 222, a language such as Amharic is still Semitic typologically owing to its morphological structure. Had it been defined on the basis of its syntax alone, it would have been considered an African non-Semitic language.

26. As this reviewer has been reminded by Shlomo Izre’el, personal communication, July 1992.

27. See Kutcher, op. cit., p. 200.


30. As suggested to me by Ora Schwarzwald, personal communication, July 1992.