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Evidence of a T/V distinction in European Hebrew

Abstract: This article presents research on the system of T/V distinction in He-
brew from the 16th to the 20th century. As the article is the first attempt to
describe the phenomenon, it aims to give a general overview of the T/V
distinction in European Hebrew, introducing new language data, and posing
new questions. One book served as terminus a quo for the whole article: Course of
the Russian Language by Zalkind (Epstein, Zalkind. 1869. *Учебная книга Рус-
скаго Языка*. מסלת הלמוד או ספר ללמד לשון רוסיא עם העתקה אל לשון עברי [*Course of the
Russian language. Path of learning or book to study the language of Russia with
translation into Hebrew]*. Warsaw: Schriftgisser), written in Hebrew, contains
approximately 100 pages of everyday dialogues in both Hebrew and Russian. The
question of whether the Hebrew language of the 19th century was a dead or living
language is still a matter of debate. In that regard, the course book provides
valuable material that does not fit into the framework of the general idea of the
history of the Hebrew language. Basic elements of conversational politeness are
the focus of the analysis. The system, in which V-forms of address are expressed
by a third-person singular, is reconstructed from the conversations in the
Epstein's book and traced back to the 16th century in a wide range of various
Hebrew sources. The T/V distinction in Hebrew is also compared to the similar
phenomena in Polish and German. Originating before the 16th century, the T/V
distinction disappeared in modern Israeli Hebrew. However, it is still in use in
some specific communication situations, which can be regarded as residues of
earlier forms of traditional speech practices.

Keywords: T/V distinction, Hebrew language, language revival, dead languages,
language politeness, address forms, address pronouns.

1 Introduction

Multilingualism was a characteristic feature of Jewish communities for many
centuries (Fishman 1981: 747). The linguistic situation in pre-World War I East

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European communities is usually referred to as a diglossia of Hebrew (H) and Yiddish (L) (Fishman 1967: 31). However, the sociolinguistic state of the Hebrew language of that period remains a problematic issue. The traditional view of the Hebrew language of the 19th century pictures it as a dead language used for worship and high genres of writing, which was inadequate for use in domestic registers and lacked many baseline elements for such a purpose: it had neither household vocabulary, nor syntax suitable for everyday conversations. In the 1890s, following the same idea, Biblical Hebrew was revived in the Holy Land mainly through the efforts of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Thus, the Hebrew language revival became part and parcel of the broader mythology of the Promised Land.

Modern researchers (Glinert 1987, 2013, 2017; Harshav 1993; Izre'el 2001; Kuzar 2001; Seidman 1997; Wexler 1995; Zuckermann 2003, 2009 and others) have proposed new conceptualizations of the history of Hebrew language, striving to replace the rhetoric of miraculous revival with linguistic terms and concepts. Regarding the status of pre-Israeli Hebrew, these works can be divided into two general groups: those that preserve the idea that Hebrew was a dead language and propose new theories of its revival, and those that widen our knowledge of Hebrew usage before the 20th century and question the idea that the term *dead* is appropriate in this case.

Three main authors must be mentioned in the first group: Paul Wexler (1995), Shlomo Izre'el (2001) and Ghil'ad Zuckermann (2003, 2009). These authors accept the thesis of Hebrew's *deadness*, but reject the identification of Modern Hebrew with the Hebrew of previous periods. The starting point for their reasoning can be reduced to the following: no dead language can be revived, and it is absolutely impossible to make a language which exists only as a written tongue, which has no native speakers and which is no one's mother tongue, into the spoken language of a society. This means that what we have in the case of Hebrew is not a revival of an ancient tongue, but a creation of a new, generally non-Semitic language. Wexler interprets Modern Hebrew as relexifed Yiddish, Izre'el as a creole language emerging from the mixture of Hebrew with Slavic and West European languages, and Zuckermann as a hybrid Semito-European language. Contact-induced features in Modern Hebrew constitute an argument in favor of denying its identity with the Hebrew language of previous periods. This modern Hebrew emerged, according to this view, during a process of language nativization, i.e. while it was being acquired by children as their native tongue from their parents, for whom it was not.

Harshav claims that 'the fuzzy biological metaphor [of dead vs. living language] must be dropped' (1993: 115) and describes an active usage of the Hebrew

language. At the same time he points out its restrictions, with the lack of everyday vocabulary chief among them (1993: 119). Glinert (1987) in contrast demonstrates a vast active everyday lexis in Hebrew, analyzing Ganzfried's Kitzur Shulhan Arukh (1864), its circulation and the role of this book in domestic Jewish life. Seidman (1997) deconstructs the mythology of the Hebrew revival from the perspective of gender studies. Polyan (2014) develops the biological metaphor and suggests the term *sleeping language* for pre-Israeli Hebrew. Yampolskaya (2016) shows that the initial dichotomy of the terms *dead* and *living* language emerged as an argument in the political discussion of Renaissance Italy and has been widely used as such during the history of the Hebrew language, which discredits the term for an academic discourse.

The present article aims to contribute to this discussion by introducing new material – a bilingual conversation book in Russian and Hebrew – and surveying an undescribed, though traditional, grammatical phenomenon: a system of T/V distinction in the Hebrew language.[1] In the first two Sections (2, 3) the system of the T/V distinction is reconstructed from the dialogues of Epstein's *Course of the Russian Language* (1869). I discuss both the grammatical realization of the system (nominal, pronominal and pro-drop) and the sociolinguistic distribution of T- and V-forms, including reciprocal and non-reciprocal usage. In Section 4, the same issues are analyzed on the basis of various Hebrew texts from the 19th and early 20th centuries drawn from two genres: translated fiction and letter manuals. The T/V distinction in Hebrew as a contact-induced change is considered in Section 5. Polish and German are regarded as possible source languages, but both assumptions are rejected. In Sections 6 and 7, the T/V distinction in Hebrew is traced back to the 16th century and traced forward to the present day, respectively. The extensive and consistent use of V-forms of address, found as far back to the 16th century and exemplified in a broad range of Hebrew sources, poses a more general theoretical question: how can a system of conversational politeness emerge in a dead language?

2 Epstein's *Course*: An overview

In the second half of the 19th century, Warsaw, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland which itself formed part of the Russian Empire, was a major centre of

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1 In many languages forms of address are often distinguished between a familiar or intimate pronoun on the one hand and a distant or polite pronoun on the other (like *tu* and *vous* in French). The convention of calling the former T-forms and the latter V-forms, as well as the term T/V distinction itself was introduced by Brown and Gilman (1960).

Hebrew publishing in Eastern Europe. Though the Russian censor was suspicious of Hebrew publications, numerous Hebrew books and newspapers were issued in the period. The Russian policy of russification paired well with one of the basic ideas of Maskilic ideology, that a Jew had to be proficient in the language of the country he lived in.[2] *Course of the Russian Language*, composed in Hebrew by Zalkind Epstein and published in Warsaw in 1869, is a typical publication of this kind. The target audience for course books of the Russian language were Jews striving to acquire Russian culture and to integrate into Russian society.[3] Plenty of similar course books were issued in the 19th century: *Grammar of the Russian Language* by Menachem Mendel Lefin (Vilnius 1846), the highly popular textbooks by Avraham Paperna of the 1860s through the 1880s, and many others. Epstein's book (1869) was chosen as the central material for the present paper because it contains a large section on conversations, including thirty dialogues.

In the preface, Epstein explains his reason for publishing the *Course*: "Each son of Israel must know the language of the country of his birth" (Epstein 1869: 5), that is, the Russian language.[4] Further he explains his choice of Hebrew as a mediator language. Why not German, which was the main language of educational literature of any kind? Because one who did not study German systematically enough would fail to take advantage of the *Course* book. Why not Yiddish, the language intelligible to all Jews in the region? "Due to the lack of words and tools of eloquence" Yiddish is not suitable for accurate transmission of the great wealth of the Russian language. Indeed, Yiddish was the principal spoken language for the Jews in Eastern Europe. However, despite its longstanding literary tradition, Yiddish was regarded by many Jews and especially by Maskilim as a language of low prestige, as a 'jargon' (L) in opposition to highly prestigious Hebrew (H), which is a typical attitude in diglossic communities. Thus, Hebrew was chosen, because each Jew "grew up, and was raised together with it," and because it is capable of conveying the greatness and beauty of the Russian language (Epstein 1869: 6).

The content of the Hebrew dialogues is quite different from what we might expect to see in a Hebrew text of the 19th century. Naftali Herz Tur-Sinai, a Bible

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2 Haskalah is an intellectual, ideological and social movement of the Jewish Enlightenment (1780s–1880s). Maskilim are adherents of the Haskalah movement.

3 Not much is known about the author of the *Course*. The only scant information I possess is his full name: Zalkind Ben Rav Shabtai from Žagarė (a town in Lithuania). Investigation of a wide range of literature in Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian, as well as a historical records search in the Russian State Historical Archive produced no further information.

4 The original text is in Hebrew. Hereafter, English translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

scholar, linguist and the first President of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, spoke on the anniversary of the Hebrew University in 1950 about the pre-Modern Hebrew language:

> In our national tradition Hebrew was a language of divine literature, of high wisdom, of the Torah and philosophy […], but it was not a language of everyday concerns, was not a secular language. They could speak and write [in Hebrew] about spiritual subjects, or even about material subjects, but only insofar as they were objects of philosophy (cited by Glinert 1987: 40).

The dialogues in Epstein's *Course* do not include any spiritual or philosophical content. Instead, they represent secular conversations about the weather, kinship, welfare and well-being, cuisine, the vicissitudes of a road, kindling an oven and setting the table for dinner. Aiming to teach a potential student-reader to speak a genteel Russian language, the dialogues reveal general rules of etiquette in Russian high society: how, with whom, and about what, it is becoming to carry on a conversation. There are discussions between parents and their children about their progress in education, dialogues with friends about relatives and well-being, discussions in a tavern about alcoholic beverages, conversations with the hostess of an inn about services and payment, table talk with guests, dialogues with servants, small talk with a young lady on the street, dialogues between a patient and his doctor, and the like. Conversational topics represent a whole range of ordinary, everyday, common communication. Does this indicate that Hebrew in some special communicative situations might be regularly used for oral communication? Not at all, because we know that everyday conversations can exist in a written form in an uncolloquial language. So, for instance, multilingual conversation books of the 17th to 19th centuries often contain dialogues in Latin (Capellanus 1890; Nagy de Harfany 1672; Plats 1749). If we believe that the Latin language of the 17th to 19th centuries was a purely written and uncolloquial language (which in itself is not indisputable, for Latin could be heard in the Vatican until recently), then we can perceive Latin conversations in such books as an *imitation* of colloquial speech.

Which linguistic features can distinguish between narrative and conversational text, and which of them are the most difficult to imitate? I would dare to suggest it is language politeness, especially as expressed by grammatical means. One way or another, this is what distinguishes Hebrew from the Latin dialogues in 17th to 19th centuries.

Grammatically marked V-address forms are not found in Latin texts of phrasebooks, though they are used in versions of the same dialogues in Russian, French and German, as shown in the following example.

(1)   Valde equidem, vir clarissime, gaudeo, quod hic per plateam in **te** incido.
Dic, quaeso, mihi, vbi perpetuum **lateas**?
'I am truly delighted, honourable sir, that I have met you (2 sg.) here on the
street. Tell me, I beg you, where have you been keeping (2 sg.) yourself all
the time?'
Я радуюся, государь мой, что съ **вами** здѣсь встрѣтился на дорогѣ. Гдѣ
вы по сїе время **были**?
'My dear sir, I am pleased to meet you (2 pl.) here on the street. Where have
you (2 pl.) been until now?'
Monsieur, je suis bien aise de **vous** recontrer ici en rue, où **étes vous**
toujours? 'Monsieur, I am very glad to meet you (2 pl.) here on the street,
where are you (2 pl.) all the time?'
Mein Herr, ich bin erfreut, Sie hier auf der Gaße anzutreffen, wo sind Sie
immer? 'Sir, I am pleased to meet you (3 pl.) here on the street. Where are
you (3 pl.) all the time?'
(Plats 1749: 10–11)

In the latter three languages, which were surely spoken, grammatically marked
V-forms are used to address an interlocutor: in Russian — *вы*, *вами* (and the verb
form is in 2 pl.); in French — *vous* (the verb is in 2 pl.); in German — *Sie* (the verb is in
3 pl.), while in the Latin version of the sentence the pronoun *te* (and a verb in 2 sg.)
is preserved.

3 The T/V distinction in the dialogues of Epstein's *Course*

In Modern Standard Hebrew there is almost no T/V distinction expressed
grammatically (this 'almost' will be clarified in Section 6 of the present
paper). V-forms are not mentioned in any Hebrew grammar or textbook
known to me. Grammar books describing various historical stages of He-
brew also do not mention special polite forms of address (expressed by
grammatical tools).

In Epstein's *Course*, the polite V-forms of address to a single interlocutor are
expressed with 3 sg.m./f. forms. An address form can be both nominal (*my lord*, *his
honor*, *my courteous friend* etc.), as shown in examples (2), (3), (7), (8) and pro-
nominal (*he/she* instead of *you*), as in (4), (5), (6). In some cases, any word of

address can be omitted, but then it is clearly reconstructed according to the 3 sg. verb form (9) as Hebrew is a pro-drop language.[5]

In the first two examples we find a nominal address and the polite 3 sg. address form is indicated by a possessive pronoun (*his honour*) and a verbal form (*he is travelling*) respectively.

(2)   – יש **לכבודו** שכין טוב מאוד לעשות בו ע
'You (lit. his honor, 3 sg.m.) have a pretty good knife to point a pen with it.'

(3)   ?אם לא **יסע** אנא ואנה, **אדוני** –
'You are (lit. is my lord, 3 sg.m.) travelling here and there, aren't you, my lord?' (Epstein 1869: 147, 155)

The following is a conversation between a doctor and a sick gentleman, in which both interlocutors refer to each other using indirect forms, namely pronouns of 3 sg.m:

(4)   .אדוני, אנכי צויתי לקרוא **אותו** -
'My sir, I ordered to call to you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.)'
?מה זה נעשה **לו** -
'What has happened to you? (lit. him, 3 sg.m.)'
.חולה אנכי, אדוני הרופא
'I am sick, my lord doctor.'
?הכרת **פניו** ענתה בו, **פניו** רעים, מה זה יכאב **לו** -
'It is written on your (lit. his, 3 sg.m.) face, **you (lit. he, 3 sg.)** look bad, where are you (lit. he, 3 sg.m.) hurting?'
.יש לי חולי מעים -
'My stomach hurts.'
(Epstein 1869: 161)

Interestingly, in modern medical practice in Israel ultra-Orthodox Jews sometimes address a doctor in a similar way, which is usually confusing for the latter.

In many cases, a character addresses his interlocutor using the pronominal address (*he*) and a verb in a corresponding form (*does not eat*), as we can see in a conversation between several fellows sitting at the dinner table:

(5)   .**והוא לא יאכל** מאומה, אדוני נ׳ -
'You do not (lit. he does not, 3 sg.m.) eat anything, Mr. N.'
?מה זה **לו** -
'Are you (lit. is he, 3 sg.m.) alright?'
(Epstein 1869: 159)

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5 In pro-drop languages a pronoun can be omitted when it can be reconstructed from the context (as it is in Italian and Spanish, but not French or English).

Moreover, we find in the dialogues polite forms of address in third person feminine forms (*her*). Guests of an inn address their hostess in this way:

(6) - ?אדוני, אם נחה נפשכם במשתה הערב

'My lords, have you enjoyed the evening fest?'

- טוב בעינינו, גבירתנו.

'We liked it, our lady.'

?וכמה מחויבים אנחנו לשלם **לה**

'And how much should we pay you (lit. her, 3 sg.f.)'

(Epstein 1869: 160)

The imperative mood in polite address is conveyed by third person imperfect, as shown in the following two examples.

(7) - כאשר אדוני **יקרב** אל הכפר הראשון, אז **יפנה** אל הימין.

'When my lord will approach (3 sg.m.) to the first village, then turn (lit. let him turn, 3 sg.m.) right'

(Epstein 1869: 156)

(8) - **יבאר נא** לי, ידידי הנכבד, מדרגת שארת בשר!

'Explain to me (lit. let him, please explain to me, 3 sg.m.), honorable friend, the degrees of kinship!'

(Epstein 1869: 152)

The polite V-form of address in 3 sg. can be expressed with no nouns or pronouns, using only the corresponding verb form:

(9) - ?והנהר איפה יהיה לנו? האם רחוק הוא

'And the river where is it? Is it far?'

- אם אך **יצא** מן היער...

'As soon as you go out of (lit. he goes out, 3 sg.m.) the forest…'

(Epstein 1869: 157)

The thirty Hebrew dialogues published in the *Course* represent enough material to roughly outline the general sociolinguistic principles of the distribution of T- and V-forms of address. According to the theory of address pronouns by Brown and Gilman (1960), grammatically marked forms of address – the T/V distinction – can signify one of two relationships. In relationships of authority, the T/V forms are necessarily asymmetrical: an addressant talk to an addressee, using the polite form (*he/she*), and receives in return a simple form (*you*). In an equal relationship, the interlocutors address each other in an equivalent manner, with the choice of T- or V-forms depending on the social distance between the interlocutors.

In Epstein's dialogues, forms of address that express equality and mutual respect in the interaction of speakers coincide in the Hebrew and Russian texts.

In the dyads of intimate friends (male adults) and pupils (boys), familiar address in 2 sg.m. is used in both the Russian and the Hebrew texts. In the dialogues between acquaintances of different kinds and strangers, who have just met, the distant V-forms are used symmetrically. Feminine V-forms in 3 sg.f. are used in two dialogues. The first one represents an interaction between a gentleman and a young lady, who are acquainted and meet each other outdoors accidentally. The second conversation takes place in an inn between a hostess and a group of guests addressing her in 3 sg.f. forms (example 6).

In contrast, non-reciprocal forms of address that signify a relationship of authority do not always coincide in the Hebrew and Russian texts.

The social inequality of a master and his boy-servant is expressed with non-reciprocal T- and V-address forms in both the Russian and Hebrew versions. In conversations between a father and his son in the Russian text, the father uses the T-form, while the son uses V-form. In the Hebrew text, the son avoids any direct form of address to his father (which is a special conversational strategy of politeness) so that it is impossible to determine the person of the address (neither according to the pronoun nor to the verb). But in conversations between a son and his mother, the mismatch between the speech etiquette of the Russian and Hebrew texts becomes obvious:

(10)

שלום לך, אמי יקרתי.	Здравствуйте, маминька.
'How do you (2 sg.) do, dear mother'	'How do you (2 pl.) do, my dear mother'
שלום לך, בני.	Здравству**й**, дитя мое
'How do you (2 sg.) do, my child'	'How do you (2 sg.) do, my child'
אם ישנת במנוחה, אמי יקרתי?	Хорошо ли **вы**, маминька, почива**ли**?
'Have you slept **(2 sg.)** calm, my dear mother?'	'Have you (2 pl.), dear mother, slept (2 pl.) well?'
	(Epstein 1869: 125)

In the Russian text a mother addresses her son in T-forms of 2 sg. and receives V-forms in 2 pl., but in the Hebrew version they use symmetrical T-forms. This discrepancy may indicate that, while composing the dialogues, Epstein did not follow the Russian grammar, but took into account a speech etiquette inherent in Hebrew, which would be surprising in a dead language. In order to understand the nature of the system of speech etiquette in Zalkind Epstein's *Course*, and to determine whether it is the result of his personal creativity or a reflection of a general system of T/V distinction in Hebrew language, it is necessary to consider a wider range of Hebrew texts.

4 The T/V distinction in Hebrew translated fiction and letter manuals of the 19th and early 20th centuries

Fictional writing and correspondence are typical genres for studies in historical pragmatics (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 9). This section is based on two types of data: dialogues in Hebrew translated fiction, which are chosen because the T/V distinction of an original text can be compared directly to its usage in the Hebrew translation, and Hebrew letter manuals, which represent the T/V distinction internal to the Jewish tradition of written communication.

Since the 19th century translations of world literature into Hebrew were very popular in Hebrew publishing. In these numerous translations, we can find dialogues written in V-forms in 3 sg. It should be mentioned that in source texts V-forms of 2 pl. (whether it is Russian or French) are used more often than V-forms 3 sg. in Hebrew translations, and thus their use cannot be explained as a calque. The first example is taken from Joseph Hayim Brener's translation of *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevsky (1924). Following is a dialogue between Rodion Raskolnikov and an old lady pawnbroker:

(10)   - מה דרוש **לו**? <…>

(11)   'What do you (lit. does he, 3 sg.m.) need?'

         - משכון הבאתי, הנה!…

         'I've brought a pawn, here is it!'

         - אבל הן הגיע כבר גם זמן הפרעון של החוב הקודם. החדש עבר כבר שלשום.

         'But the time is up for your last pledge. It was a month to the day before yesterday.'

         -אני אשלם **לה** רבית בעד עוד חדש, **תמתין** לי.

         'I'll pay your (lit. her, 3 sg.f.) interest for another month, wait (lit. let her, 3 sg. f.) for me.'

         - זה כבר תלוי ברצוני הטוב, אבי,להמתין או למכור את המשכון **שלו** מיד.

         'It already depends on my kind will, my father, whether to wait or to sell your (lit. his, 3 sg.m.) pledge immediately.'
         (Brener 1924: 225)

The lady pawnbroker addresses Raskolnikov in the 3 sg.m. forms, while he addresses her in the 3 sg.f. respectively. The person, number and gender of the address forms are indicated by Hebrew pronominal suffixes (*him, her, his*).

One more example of this kind is found in a translation of Chekhov's short story "In the Court" (1886) published in Hebrew translation in N. A. (1913). A judge speaks with an accused using V-forms of address:

(12)　　– ?המאשם! האם מודה **הוא, שהוא** אשם בזה, שבאור ליום ט' יוני **הרג** את **אשתו**

'Accused! Do you (lit. does he, 3 sg.m.) confess that you (lit. he, 3 sg.m.) are guilty of the fact that on 9th of July you killed (lit. he has, 3 sg.m.) your (lit. his, 3 sg.m.) wife?'[6]

The V-forms are expressed by means of direct address with the personal pronoun *he* (used twice), the verbal form (*he killed*) and the pronominal suffix (*his wife*).

The following example is a short conversation from *Boule de Suif* by Guy de Maupassant (1880), in which Mr. Cornudet and the lady Boule de Suif address each other in Vous-forms in French (to the right) and in 3 sg.f. and 3 sg.m. forms respectively in the Hebrew translation (to the left).

(13)

?תשמע, פתיה **היא**, ומה איכפת לה –	Voyons, **vous** êtes bête, qu'est-ce que ça **vous** fait?
'Listen (3 sg.f.), you are (lit. she is, 3 sg.f.) silly, why do you (lit. she, 3 sg.f.) care?'	'Look (2 pl.), you are silly, why do you (2 pl.) care?'
?מפני מה? **הוא אינו** מבין מפני מה–	Pourquoi? **Vous** ne comprenez pas pourquoi?
'Wherefore? You do not (lit. he does not, 3 sg.m.) understand wherefore?' (N. A. 1914: 32).	'Why? You (2 pl.) do not understand why?'

Similarly, in this dialogue the verbal form, pronominal suffixes and personal pronoun designate the V-address of the characters.

The following example is taken from a translation of a short story by Leo Tolstoy. "After the Ball" (1911) was translated by Yoeli in 1913, and depicts a courteous dialogue between a young man and a young lady at the ball.

(14)　　– **יתן** לי את המנפה, – אמרה היא.

'Give me (lit. let him give, 3 sg.m.) the hand fan, – she said.'

– צר לי להשיבה, – אמרתי בהושיטי לה את מנפתה הלבנה.

'I feel sorry to return it, – I said offering her the white hand fan.'

– < הנה **לו**, למען לא **ייצר לו** >...<

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6 An example of similar forms of address in a modern Israeli court is given in Section 9 of the present article.

'This is for you (lit**.** him, 3 sg.m.), for you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) not to feel sorry.'

ורינקה, **תגש** נא הנה -

'Varenka, please come (lit. let her come, 3 sg.f.) here.'

(Yoeli 1913: 16)

As in the previous examples, the verbal forms and the pronominal suffixes used in the last conversation clearly indicate the address forms in 3 sg.m. and 3 sg.f.

While we might be cautious of translated texts due to the possibility of foreign influence and loan constructions, there is one genre of original Hebrew texts in which V-forms of address in 3 sg.m./f. are its essential feature: Hebrew letter manuals. In the 19th century Hebrew letter manuals were popular and in high demand, were issued in pocket format, had large print runs, and were republished repeatedly. Letter manuals could contain solely Hebrew texts (Buchner 1810; Dolitsky 1883; Hacohen 1864), or parallel texts in Judeo-German (Letteris 1856; Neuman 1827), in Russian (Feigenson 1889; Paperna 1874), and occasionally in Polish (Paperna 1911).

To demonstrate the fact that V-forms of address in 3 sg.m./f. were essential in these publications, I will quote for example a bilingual Hebrew and German letter manual, composed by Neumann (1827). Each letter in the manual is given in one Judeo-German version and this is followed by two Hebrew versions of the same letter – the first simpler, and the second more eloquent. The main difference between these two Hebrew versions is T-address forms versus V-forms of address in 3 sg.m.

(15)   a. **Judeo-German version**

ווערהרטהעסטער פריינד! איך האבע דיא עהרע **איהנען** הירבייא איינע שאבטעל טרויבען
צו איבערשיקקען, וען זיא **איהנען** שמעקען זאָ שטעהען נאך מעהרערע צו דיענסטען...

'Dearest friend! I have the honor to send you (3 pl.) with that a box of grapes, if you (3 pl.) like it, then I have even more to your service.'

   b. **Hebrew version 1**

אהובי היקר! הנה אנכי שולח **לך** בזה כלי עם אשכלות ענבים, ואם יטעמו לך אלה, עוד
רבים מהם מוכנים **לך** לאכלך.

'My dear beloved! Here I send you (**2 sg**.) by that a dish with bunches of grapes, and if they are to your (2 sg.) liking, I have a lot of them ready for you (2 sg.) to eat.'

   c. **Hebrew version 2**

אדוני! הנה אנכי שולח לו כלי זה עם מעט מאשכלות ענבים אשר לי, למצוא חן בעיני **אדוני**.
ואם יטעמו לו אלה, עוד רבים מאלה מוכנים לו **לאכלו**.

‘My lord! Here I send you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) this dish with a few bunches of grapes, which I have to please my lord. And if they are to your (lit. his, 3 sg.m.) liking, I have a lot of them ready for you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) to eat.’ (Neuman 1827: 2–3)

The Judeo-German version is articulated with polite pronominal forms in 3 pl. dative *ihnen*. In Hebrew there are two versions: the first one contains pronominal T-address forms in 2 sg. (with preposition); the second version involves both nominal and pronominal V-address forms in 3 sg.m. The style of composition exemplified in this book demonstrates the sustainability of the system of T/V distinction in Hebrew. In addition, it indicates that the pragmatic usage of the V-forms in Hebrew was narrower than in German, as Neuman considered that a letter in Judeo-German with V-address forms could appropriately be translated two ways in Hebrew: either with V- or with T-forms.

The distribution of the T- and V-forms of address in Hebrew letter manuals of the 19th century is as follows: family correspondence is conducted in T-forms of address in 2 sg., although a very few V-forms in letters from a son to his father occur; correspondence between brothers is always conducted in 2 sg. Letters to a young lady are also formulated in T-forms. Correspondence between friends is mostly articulated with T-forms, but sometimes we can find letters in V-forms as well:

(16) .אהובי היקר! הנה אנכי שולח **לו** כלי זה עם מעט תפוחים למצוא חן בעיני אדוני
‘My dear beloved! Here I send **you** (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) a dish with a few apples to please **my lord**.’
(Feigenson 1889: 6–9)

Most Hebrew letter manuals include business correspondence discussing trade of various goods from silk to honey. About half of these letters are written in V-forms of 3 sg.m. The address forms are predominantly reciprocal, representing equality in relationships between interlocutors. But sometimes one can find asymmetrical forms of address in a correspondence. These cases are nearly always related to money issues. In the following example the author of the first letter sends money to his partner (T-forms in 2 sg.m.). However, his respondent answers him in V-forms (3 sg.m.) with a detailed description of his awful disasters, intimating that he will not be able to return the money.

The first letter:

(17) **אתה** אחי, כבא המכתב הזה לידך, הואילה נא להשיבנו דברים אחדים לאמר: כספך הנה
.בא! – ובקנותך דבר מה בו, **תשמחני** בדבריך הנעמים ואז תגל נפש ידידך

'And you (2 sg.), my brother, when the letter will come to you (2 sg.), be so kind to answer me in several words: here your (2 sg.) money came! And while buying something with the money, cheer me with your (2 sg.) pleasant words, and then the soul of your (2 sg.) friend will rejoice.'

The answer:

לכן **יעשה** עתה אדוני כחכמתו **ויודיעני** מה אעשה בדבר הזה, אך אל **יתמהמה** בתשובתו כי האנשים לא יתנו לי מנוח.

'Therefore do (lit. let my lord do, 3 sg.m.) according to your (lit. his, 3 sg.m.) wisdom and report (lit. let him report, 3 sg.m.) me, what I shall do with that, but do not delay (lit. let him not to delay, 3 sg.m.) your (lit. his, 3 sg.m.) answer, because those people do not leave me alone.'

(Mohr 1888: 8–9)

A mismatch between speech etiquette in the Russian, Judeo-German and Hebrew texts of letter manuals occurs quite often. In comparison with the Russian and Judeo-German texts, V-forms in Hebrew are used less often. However, a request to borrow money is mostly formulated in V-forms in both Hebrew (3 sg.) and Russian (2 pl.), as shown below (a similar communicative situation was presented in example 11).

(18)   במצוק אשר אנכי בו הפעם, לא ידעתי למי אפנה ואנה אנוסה לעזרה כי אם אל איש יקר ונדיב לב **כמוהו**. ואוהב נאמן כאשר **הוא** לי

'Being in need this time, I do not know whom to call and where to ask for help, if not from such a dear and generous person, as you are (lit. he is, 3 sg.m.), my faithful friend as you are (lit. he is, 3 sg.**m.**) to me.'

Находясь теперь въ очень стѣснительномъ положеніи, я не знаю къ кому обращаться за помощью кромѣ **Васъ**, котораго я знаю какъ великодушнаго человѣка и лучшаго моего друга

'Being now in a very difficult situation, I do not know to whom I shall call for help if not to you (2 pl.), whom I know as a very generous person and as my best friend.'

(Feigenson 1889: 11–12)

The T/V distinction widely used in Hebrew epistolary texts and frequently observed in translated fiction seems, however, underrepresented in other Hebrew writings of the same period. Perhaps the best example is the first translation (or rather an adaptation) of *Othello* in Hebrew composed by Salkinson (1874/2015, about the Hebrew translation see Kahn 2017). T/V distinction in the Shakespeare's play is well researched (Brown and Gilman 1989; Busse 2003; Mazzon 2003). Surprisingly, no V-forms of address are used in the Hebrew translation. Another example of this kind is a novel *Les Mystères de Paris* by Eugène Sue, translated into

Hebrew by Schulman (1857–1860): no V-forms are used in Hebrew translation, despite numerous V-forms in the source text. There might be two possible reasons for the presence of a stable T/V distinction in some Hebrew texts, while in others it is absent. Firstly, Maskilic Hebrew authors declared their preference for the language of Biblical Hebrew, which did not have T/V distinction (despite occasional usage of 3 sg. forms of address in the Bible, to be discussed in Section 5). Although the real language of Maskilic texts is far from this ideological model, the intention might have sometimes affected a Hebrew author or translator, who chose to avoid the V-forms of address. Secondly, in numerous multilingual letter manuals and in the dialogues of Epstein's book we find cases when the usage of V-address forms in Hebrew does not follow the corresponding forms in the second language, whether it is Russian, Yiddish or German. All this suggests that the pragmatics of T/V distinction in Hebrew was quite specific, and it was not aways perceived by Hebrew authors as an appropriate analogue for the European system of T/V distinction.

The initial concept of the binary T/V distinction, proposed by Brown and Gilman (1960, 1989) and developed into a theory of language politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987), has been criticised in recent decades. The main direction of new approaches is the development of a tripartite framework of analysis, adding the third dimension – N – that signifies neutral forms of address (Clyne et al. 2009; Cook 2014). Amongst others the notion of the N-strategy in communication was adjusted to analyse languages with grammatical T/V distinction, in which one of the address pronouns is used as a default pronoun (relating to Swedish *du* see Clyne et al. 2009; to German *Sie* see Kretzenbacher 2010; and to French *vous* see Warren 2006). From this perspective, Hebrew T-forms in 2 sg. can be regarded as both familiar or intimate and neutral or unmarked address pronouns, while the V-forms in the third person are rather intensive markers of respect and distance.

5 The Hebrew T/V distinction as a contact-induced change

As commonly believed, the main domains of use of the pre-Modern Hebrew language were religion (reading texts in synagogue), traditional education (again – reading texts) and high literature genres (mainly poetry). It would seem that in these language domains there is no need for any language etiquette relating to dialogue speech. However, since we know that the T/V distinction existed, it would be reasonable to assume that the rules of speech etiquette in Hebrew were borrowed from some other, living and spoken language. Yiddish is not appropriate for this role, insofar as V-forms in Yiddish are expressed by 2 pl. איר *ir* (Mark 1978: 241).

At first sight, Polish seems to be well suited to the role of a source language, from which the speech etiquette could have been borrowed. Indeed, in Polish V-forms of address are expressed with a noun *pan*/*pani* and a verb in 3 sg. (as opposite to the T-form of address in 2 sg.). However, several circumstances cast doubt on the assumption that Polish could have been the source of the Hebrew T/V distinction described above. Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak (1990) researched models of address in the Polish language of the 18th century as found in Polish plays, and concluded that the forms of address in 3 sg. were used infrequently (1154 cases of T-forms in 2 sg., and only 43 cases of V-forms in 3 sg.), not systematically and either occurred in conversations between a master and his servant, or expressed the irritation of a speaker (compare with ironic German usage, example 22). In the 19th century, V-forms of address in 2 pl. became more frequently used in Polish, while the nouns of address *pan*/*pani* were used with verbs in both 2 sg. and 3 sg. (Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak 1998: 47–48). The following examples are to demonstrate Polish V-forms of address with the grammaticalized nouns and an agreement in both 2 sg. and 3 sg.

(19)   Czy **umiesz (2 sg.) Pan** jedzić konno?
         'Can you (2 sg.), ***Mr.,*** ride?'
         Können (3 pl.) **Sie** reiten?
         Czy **pójdzie** (3 sg.) **Pan** dzieś na teatr?
         'Is ***Mr.*** going (3 sg.) to the theatre today?'
         (Kleine 1856: 119, 121)

In the Polish language of the 19th century, forms of address in 3 sg. could be interspersed with forms of address in 2 pl. even within a single phrase, as shown in the example below.

(20)   — Co to za wieści **waszmość przywiózł**? Nie oddalajcieże mnie. Będę
         was, ile się godzi, pocieszać, albo zapłaczę z **wami**.
         'What news **has your grace** brought (3 sg.)? Do not send me away! I will try
         to solace you (2 pl.) as much as I can, or I will cry together with you (2 pl.)'
         (Sienkiewicz 1963: 2)

As exemplified above the Polish system of T/V distinction displays a certain degree of retractability, which is "the possibility to switch from Y to T and back with the same interlocutor" (Mazzon 2000: 135). Unlike Polish, Hebrew V-forms in letter manuals and Epstein's dialogues are commonly non-retractable and switches from T- to V-forms of address do not normally occur within one conversation without considerable change in relationship between the interactants. In addition, there is one more significant difference between the uses of polite forms of 3 sg. in Polish

and Hebrew: Polish does not allow pronominal address terms in the 3 sg. meaning that a nominal address (*pan/pani/waszmość* or others) is necessary, while in Hebrew texts personal pronouns in the third person are used along with nominal address forms (see examples 5, 12, 18). In this light, it seems unlikely that the influence of Polish forms of address in 3 sg. could have led to the regular and systematic use of 3 sg. address forms in Hebrew.

Another possible source language for the V-forms of address in 3 sg. is German, especially because we know that the general influence of German on Hebrew was rather significant in the 19th century. Indeed, in the German language of the 17th to 19th centuries there were polite address forms in the 3 sg. m/f (*er, sie*). An example below demonstrates a typical nominal term of address *der Herr* refering to an addressee with agreeing verbal form in 3 sg.

(21)　　**Ist der Herr** auch in dem Weinberge **gewesen**?
　　　　'Have you been (lit. has the Mister been, 3 sg.m.) to Vinnytsia, sir?'
　　　　(Moneta 1738: 172)

From the third decade of the 17th century address pronouns of 3 sg.m. and f. are regularly found in German texts (Simon 2003: 96). The following words uttered by Faust to Mephistopheles illustrate ironic usage of this pronominal address form.

(22)　　Mein Herr Magister Lobesan,
　　　　'My sir honorable magister.'
　　　　Laß **Er** mich mit dem Gesetz in Frieden!
　　　　'Leave (lit. let him leave, 3 sg.m.) me alone with the law!'
　　　　Und das sag ich **Ihm** kurz und gut <…>
　　　　'I tell you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) pure and simple <…>'
　　　　(Goethe 1836: 176)

A problematic point is that in Hebrew we observe a binary system with two possible forms of address to a single person: in the 2 sg. and in the 3 sg., while in the German language of the 17th to 19th centuries the system was much more complicated: apart from the address *du* (2 sg.) there were two alternative forms of address – in 2 pl. (*ihr*) and in 3 sg. (*er, sie*), with the third option *Sie* coming into use in the 18th century (Simon 2003: 86, 95–96; Salmons 2012: 325–326).

All these doubts probably would not be enough to reject the assumption that the T/V distinction in Hebrew was a result of a later influence of an adjacent European language, were it not for the early Hebrew texts, with the T/V distinction, composed before similar systems were fully developed in either Polish or German.

6 Polite forms of address in 3 sg. in the Hebrew language before the 19th century

Johannes Buxtorf, a famous Christian scholar, a researcher of the Talmud and other Jewish texts, wrote among others the treatise *Institutio Epistolaris Hebraica* (1610), in which he analyzed Hebrew epistolary eloquence, quoting numerous examples of letters drawn from three Jewish letter manuals of the 16th century: *Igrot shlomim* 1534; *Megilat sefer* 1552; *Maʿayan Ganim* (Arkevolti 1553). In a chapter devoted to greetings in Hebrew letters, one can find a number of texts couched in V-forms of address of 3 sg. To make the T/V distinction clear in the florid style of the following letters, two examples are drawn in parallel: one with V-forms and another with T-forms of address respectively.

(23)

הִנְנִי נוֹתֵן לוֹ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי שָׁלוֹם לַאֲהוּבִי אִישׁ חַיִל רַב פְּעָלִים הָאַלּוּף אֲבִי הַחָכְמָה כמהר״ר יִצְחָק יצ״ו וְכָל־הַמַּצּוֹרָף אֵל מ״כ.	יִפְתַּח הָאֵל אֶת אֲרֻבּוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְיָרִיק בְּרָכָה עַד בְּלִי דֵי לְךָ וּלְכָל בְּנֵי **בֵ**יתֶךָ.
'Here I give you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) my covenant of peace, to my friend, to a courageous, operose person, a nobleman, a father of wisdom, to our honored teacher Itzhak, let his Stronghold [=God] save you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) and grant life to him and to all his relatives.'	'Let God open the cataracts of heaven and shed his infinite blessing on to **you** (2 sg.m.) and **your** (2 sg.m.) family'
(Buxtorf 1610: 19)	(Buxtorf 1610: 19)

More evidence of the T/V distinction in 16th-century Hebrew are found in *Leshon Zahav* (Marsal 1715) a bilingual latter manual written in Hebrew and Yiddish by Yosef Marsal in the 16th century and preserved in the exquisite Amsterdam editions of the 18th century. The text to the left is the beginning of a Shabbat greeting letter in V-forms, and the text to the right is the opening to another Shabbat greeting letter in T-forms:

(24)

הַשֵּׁם יָרוּם **כִּסְאוֹ** מַעֲלָה מַעֲלָה. וְיִשְׁמְרֵהוּ מִכָּל נֶגַע וּמַלָחָה. עַד כִּי יָבוֹא שִׁילֹה. לַאֲהוּבִי חֲבֵירִי וַחֲבִיבִי הַיָּקָר בֶּן תְּבוּנָה וּמַדָּע.	**יַשִּׂיגֵךְ** שָׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה. בְּלִי יָגוֹן וַאֲנָחָה. אַךְ חֶדְוָה וּרְוָוחָה. וְה׳ יִתֵּן **לָךְ** בְּרָכָה וְהַצְלָחָה.
'Let God exalt your (lit. his, 3 sg.m.)	'Let joy and gladness reach **you** (2 sg.). Without grief and groan.

throne very high. And let [the God] save you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) from any damage or disease. Until Shiloh come. To my friend, my confidant, my dear soul mate, wise and knowledgeable man.' (Marsal 1715: 44)	Only gaiety and wellbeing. And let God give **you** (2 sg.) blessing and good luck.' (Marsal 1715: 44)

The third source of V-forms of address in early printed books in Hebrew is a letter manual *Igrot Shelomim*, composed by Yitzhak Aharon from Prostitz and published in 1578 in Krakow. Here again, two examples are presented: one with V-forms and the other with T-forms of address respectively:

(25)

לזקן נכבד **יברכהו** .מראהו כאש ולהבה .צח ואדו׳ גדול מרבבה .סבא **ההוי** ׳לה ויב׳ יעלה טובה בשפע האל To a respectable elder [He is] a pure and great lord. Your (lit. his, 3sg.m.) face resembles fire and flame. Let God bless you (lit. him, 3 sg.m.) in abundance, let the welfare come to that elder (Yitzhak 1578: 8a)	לבעל הבית **וישמרך** .אל אליון יתן ישועתו מציון .ממחלון וכליון To the landlord Let the Supreme God give [you] his perfect salvation. And let Him save **you** (2 sg.) from diseases and perdition (Yitzhak 1578: 8b)

In these three letter manuals, texts posed in V-forms of address appear regularly and represent about one third of the total number of letters in these editions. Hence, we may conclude that the model of conversational politeness expressed in 3 sg. forms is an old phenomenon in the Hebrew language. The T/V distinction was entirely operative in the 16th century and must have emerged earlier, that is, before any possible influence of Polish or German on Hebrew: in Polish some forms of address in 3 sg. were fixed from the 15th century, but they were not used regularly until the end of the 18th century (Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak 1998: 46–47); in German the use of V-forms in 2 pl. is known from the ninth century (Hickey 2003: 402), but V-forms in 3 sg. appeared only in the late 16th century (Besch 1998: 94). Both German and Polish might have supported the usage of a T/V distinction in Hebrew in the 18th and 19th centuries, but none of them could have had a considerable influence on the emergence of the system in Hebrew.

The genre of letter manuals demonstrated a continuous tradition of grammatical T/V distinction in Hebrew for centuries. To fill the gap between the early editions of the 16th century and those of the 19th century mentioned above (in Section 3) it is necessary to name several more books that contain coherent V-forms of address in the third person: Zarko 1736 (the author lived in the 16th century), Rakower 1704, ʿItur sofrim 1759, and Zvi 1789.

Thus, the issue of the origin and emergence of the system of T/V distinction with V-forms in the third person remains open for future research. The possible existance of the system in medieval Hebrew writings and Talmudic texts in Hebrew and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic is beyond the scope of the present article and requires separate and extensive research. However, several words about Biblical Hebrew cannot be omitted.

In Biblical Hebrew, a speech etiquette as an integral part of the grammar system does not exist. In the numerous biblical dialogues, there are very few cases where forms of address in 3 sg. are used. However, even in those rare cases the 3 sg. forms of address are interspersed with 2 sg. address forms within a single speech. In the following example Jacob talks to Esau addressing him with a 3 sg.m. form (Genesis 33: 14):

(26)   יַעֲ־בָ־ר-נָא אֲדֹנִי לִפְנֵי עַבְדּוֹ
              '**Let** my lord **pass** (3 sg.m.) over before his (3 sg.m.) servant.'

Both the verb form and the pronominal suffix indicate a 3 sg.m. address form. However, a little earlier in the same dialog Jacob talks to Esau in the 2 sg.m. (Genesis 33:10):

(27)   וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אַל-נָא אִם-נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ **וְלָקַחְתָּ** מִנְחָתִי מִיָּדִי
              'And Jacob said, No, please! if I have found grace in **your** (2 sg.m.) eyes,
              then receive (2 sg.m.) my present at my hand.'

Here, the verb form and the pronominal suffix are used in 2 sg., though no significant change in the relationship of the characters has occurred between these verses. Hence, the 3 sg. address forms represent a figure of speech used sporadically, rather than a grammatical system of T/V distinction, though they may have supported a later emergence of the T/V distinction in Hebrew. Perhaps even more importantly, the Biblical Hebrew in the perception of later Jewish writers did not have the T/V distinction in its grammar repertoire.

7 Polite forms of address in 3 sg. in Hebrew after the 19th century

People who were engaged in Hebrew language planning in Palestine, and later in Israel, mostly had socialist views, which presupposed social equality in the country. Probably for this reason, the T/V distinction was not inherited by Israeli Hebrew (compare with attempts to put out of use the French address pronoun *vous* during the French Revolution (Anderson 2007: 77); a similar argument of egalitarian ideology that influences forms of address can be adduced for Swedish (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2003: 6). V-forms of 3 sg. were not included in the educational system for children and immigrants, they are not mentioned in Hebrew grammars and textbooks, and they are unknown to an ordinary Israeli. Forms of address in 3sg. can still be found in a letter manual (a supplement to a phrasebook), composed by Aharon Leyb Bysko and issued in Warsaw in 1926:

(28)   ...אתמול באתי **לביתו** בשעה הרביעית אחר הצהריים לפי הזמנתו הנכבדה לראות **אותו**
'Yesterday I came to your (lit. his, 3sg.m.) house at four o'clock in the afternoon according to his kind invitation to see you (lit. him 3 sg.m.)'
(Bysko 1926: 120–121)[7]

However, in a letter manual of Khasidov (business and official correspondence), published in 1964 in Jerusalem, no traces of any V-forms are left (Khasidov 1964).

While in the 19th century forms of address in 3 sg. were widely used in secular texts (as shown in Section 3), in the mid-20th century they have entirely disappeared from the secular sphere. However, these forms are still preserved in marginal religious discourse – a little-known phenomenon that is not reflected in scholarly literature. For instance, in *Igrot kodesh*, a 15-volume collection of correspondence of Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1954), most of the letters are written using the polite forms of address in 3sg.m., as shown in the example below.

(29)   ולקראת חג המצות הבא עלינו ועל כל ישראל לטובה הנה יחוגו אותו **הוא** וכל ב"ב שיחיו
בכשרות ובשמחה.
'And on the threshold of the Khag Ha-Matzot, coming to us and to all the Jews for good, let **him** (3 sg.m.) and all [his] family to celebrate it with purity and joy.'
(Schneerson 1954: 21)

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7 In the Polish and Yiddish versions of the letter polite forms of address in 2 pl. are emloyed (Bysko 1926: 119).

Moreover, forms of address in 3 sg. seem to be in use among some religious Jews in colloquial speech up to the present day: in this manner a Haredi rabbi is frequently addressed by a student in yeshiva (*he – you/he*), or by a different rabbi (*he – he*), or by another member of the Jewish religious community (depending on status *he – you/he*). This phenomenon lacks description in scholarly literature and certainly requires careful research. The following are some primary data gathered in recent years.[8]

The responses of interviewees indicate that address in 3 sg. is regularly used in spoken language, and sometimes in written form, which is prescribed by rules of etiquette in traditional Jewish communities (they were all from different sub-groups within ultra-Orthodox Judaism). Below are some examples:

(30)   ?לא הבנתי את דברי הגמרא, הרב **יוכל** להסביר לי
       'I did not understand the words of Gemara, **could** (3 sg.m.) the teacher explain me?'

(31)   ?הרב **ראה** את מה שכתוב כאן
       'The teacher **has seen** (3 sg.m.), what is written here?'

(32)   ... הרב **אמר** לי
       'The teacher **told** (3 sg.m.) me…'

(33)   .אני אשמח אם הרב **יוכל** לבוא
       'I will be glad, if the teacher can (3 sg.m.) come.'

Additional evidence of the modern use of 3 sg. address forms in Hebrew can be found on Israeli television. For example, in a recent Israeli TV show *Shababnikim* Eliran and Paran (2017–2018) portraying the life of yeshiva students in Israel the T/V distinction is also used from time to time as a characteristic feature of yeshiva

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8 I collected four primary oral interviews and nine written interviews from rabbis and people who studied in yeshivas. All respondents confirmed the existence of such a language practice and provided examples of this phenomenon, some of which are published below. I take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the respondents for their valuable help and cooperation. In the summer of 2016 an initial small field study was carried out. During the field study a survey of residents of Mea Shearim (an Ultra-Orthodox neighbourhood in Jerusalem) and of Bnei Brak in Israel was conducted (mainly in Yiddish). The survey confirmed the use of forms of address in 3 sg. in Hebrew. For example, one interviewee told me that his brother – a very pious man – talks to his father in Hebrew, always using forms of address in 3 sg. The interviewee himself has less stringent views and addresses his father in 2 sg. In this fieldwork I was honoured to enjoy invaluable assistance from Professor Robert Brym, to whom I am pleased to express my heartfelt gratitude. In 2017–18 this data was corroborated during inquiries with Orthodox Jews in the Stamford Hill area of London.

Table 1: Distribution of pronouns in forms of address (a).

	Friend	Pupil	Acquaintance	Stranger	Gentleman	Guest
Hebrew	T↓ T↑	T↓ T↑	V(he)↓ V(he)↑	V(he)↓ V(he)↑	V(she)↓ V(he)↑	V(she)↓ V(he)↑
Russian	T↓ T↑	T↓ T↑	V(you)↓ V(you)↑	V(you)↓ V(you)↑	V(you)↓ V(you)↑	V(you)↓ V(you)↑
	Friend	Pupil	Acquaintance	Stranger	Young lady	Hostess

Table 2: Distribution of pronouns in forms of address (b).

	Master	Father	Mother
Hebrew	T↓ V(he)↑	T↓ ?↑	**T↓ T↑**
Russian	T↓ V(you)↑	T↓ V(you)↑	**T↓ V(you)↑**
	Servant	Son	Son

speech. In the following example, a well-mannered student asks a head of his yeshiva using the V-form, but his democratic teacher rejects this form of address (season 1, episode 1, 05:30).

(34)   לאיזה חדר **הוא** רוצה להעביר אותי?

'To which room do you (lit. does he, 3 sg.m.) want me to move?'

גדליה, אני נמצא כאן, **אל תקרא לי 'הוא'**.

'Gedaliah, I am here, do not call me '**he**.''

As part of the Jewish tradition, the model of a specifically marked, respectful form of address to a teacher, as a person whose standing is even higher than a father, is fixed in different texts, for example, in the Code of Maimonides Mishneh Torah (Maimonides 1862: 19). The rabbis, who were so kind to correspond with me, perceive this form of address as a very old tradition originating from the Talmud. In the treatise Brakhot (27b) Rabbi Jeremiah Bar Aba addresses his teacher using the form in 2 sg., instead of 3 sg., from which it is concluded that Rabbi Jeremiah was not at all a student of this teacher (otherwise he would address him using the 3 sg. form).[9]

In modern secular Hebrew, one can find some residues of the traditional T/V distinction as well. For example, V-forms of address are obligatory for speech etiquette in the Supreme Court up to this day. In October 2017, there was a scandal that reached newspapers when a judge talked to a female lawyer in unacceptably

rude manner: גברתי **תסתום** את הפה [Let the Madam shut up (3 sg.f.)] (*Maariv* 31 Oct 2017), though still maintaining the conventional V-form of address.

8 Conclusion

The article represents primary research on the system of T/V distinction in the Hebrew language that has never been specified before. The ample data collected and summarized in it aims to introduce the phenomenon and to outline its general features. Consequentially, the article poses more questions than answers.

First, a Hebrew-Russian course book by Epstein (1869) is analyzed as a source of daily dialogues in Hebrew. A key feature of the colloquial or pseudo-colloquial register in Hebrew appeared to be a system of T/V distinction with V-forms in 3 sg.m./f. The small corpus (30 conversations) provides an opportunity to roughly reconstruct a sociolinguistic distribution of T- and V-forms in the Hebrew texts.

This system of conversational politeness is further attested in Hebrew translations of world literature and Hebrew letter manuals (both mono- and multilingual). Additional specifications for the distribution of T- and V-address forms are made on the basis of these new materials. As the usage of the T/V distinction proves to be a constant phenomenon in various European Hebrew texts of the 19th century, it is assumed that the system could have been a contact-induced change from some other adjacent spoken language containing similar T/V distinction.

However, the assumption that the Hebrew system of T/V distinction resulted from Polish or German influence does not hold up under close scrutiny. In Hebrew texts, we encounter these V-forms as early as in the 16th century, before similar (but not identical) systems were formed in Polish and German. An attempt to find sources of T/V distinction in Biblical Hebrew was similarly unsuccessful as the few sporadic usages of 3 sg. address forms testify to the existence of a specific figure of speech, rather than to a system of T/V distinction. Hence, the origin of the T/V distinction that existed in European Hebrew of the 16th to 19th centuries remains obscure.

A survey of later usage of T/V distinction in Hebrew also brought surprising results. The V-forms of address in 3 sg. were not inherited by Modern Israeli Hebrew – we find them neither in Hebrew manuals for pupils, nor in course books for new immigrants, and they are not described in Hebrew grammar books, and are unknown to the average Israeli. However, respectful forms of address in 3 sg. with appropriate verb and pronoun agreement are still regularly used in a very narrow context – in some traditional yeshivas and Orthodox Jewish communities, primarily in oral communication. While the domain where the form of address in 3 sg. is used has become drastically limited compared to the 19th century, in this marginal sphere it is still operative today.

Thus, we face a paradox: colloquial Hebrew before its renaissance (and after its death in ancient times), is a language (or language register), which has never existed and yet persists to this day. If Hebrew was never used in yeshivas in the 19th century for oral communication (and Yiddish was the only internal colloquial language), then in modern Israeli yeshivas we would expect to find the new Hebrew language, which was propagated in Israel with the help of the state machinery, and which had no forms of address in 3 sg. The issue requires further thorough and detailed study; two hypotheses might nonetheless be suggested. The first is that the usage of V-forms in 3 sg. in the oral communication of some Orthodox Jews reflects the fact that these forms existed in the real colloquial practices of Jews centuries before and were preserved in these communities along with the Yiddish language and numerous cultural and religious traditions. The alternative hypothesis is that T/V distinction had traditionally existed solely in written Hebrew, and for some reason it was introduced into colloquial practices of some ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities from these texts in the 20th century, when Hebrew became a spoken language. If so, this is a case of an invention charged with the authority of an old tradition.

Lastly, the sheer fact that a system of T/V distinction originated in Hebrew more than 500 years ago and was in use for centuries, points to a broader theoretical question left largely unexamined in the present work: how can a system of T/V distinction emerge in a dead language that was not used for oral communication? Do we know any other examples of a purely written language that developed such a system of conversational politeness? All in all, the development of the system suggests intense written communication and productive use of the Hebrew language going far beyond high religious and philosophical discourses.

The following abbreviations are used in this article:

2   second person
3   third person
sg.   singular
pl.   plural
f.   feminine
m.   masculine
lit.   literally

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