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De Mortuis Nil Nisi Hebraice?
The Language of Tombstone Inscriptions in Nineteenth-Century Germany

MICHAEL BROCKE and CHRISTIANE E. MULLER

Language of Inscriptions in Ashkenaz

FROM THE NINTH UNTIL the early nineteenth century, Hebrew was the sole language of sepulchral inscriptions throughout the Ashkenazi world. There was nothing inevitable about this. In Antiquity, Late Antiquity as well as the Early Middle Ages in Southern Europe, Hebrew was just one of several languages used on tombstone inscriptions, and by no means the main one. From the multilingual perspective of Late Antiquity no one could have foreseen that after a few centuries Hebrew would become the exclusive language of Jewish memorial texts, unchallenged by any other for centuries. But Greek was abandoned by the Jewish Diaspora, and while new vernacular languages were still developing, Latin reigned supreme as the language of Edom, i.e. Christian Rome. Thus Hebrew represented the only genuine alternative and was to remain for all of Ashkenaz the language of liturgy, prayer and poetry, of rabbinical and other learned literature, as well as the Jewish lingua franca of trade and travel. By the eleventh century, its dominance is clear in the names, dates, blessings and eulogies of Jewish tombstone inscriptions of Central Europe.

1. Research has shown that 68% of all extant Jewish sepulchral inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE to the 7th century CE are Greek; the rest are Hebrew (or Aramaic) at 18%, and Latin, 12%. Two percent of the inscriptions are bilingual, i.e., Greek combined with another language. See P. van der Horst, Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BC-700 CE) (Kampen 1991), p. 22.

2. The oldest legible tombstone in Germany, dating from 1049, belongs to Yehuda ben Shneor of Mainz (today at Mainz Landesmuseum). The oldest stone in situ is in Worms, belonging to Yaacov ha-Bachur, d. 1076-77.
At that time, the Jewish Ashkenazi vernacular, Yiddish, was still evolving, initially as an oral language, but steadily entering the realm of the written word and booklore. Although Yiddish and leshon ha-godesh / loshn koydesh were linked by more than just language, this did not prevent a certain tension between them, since Yiddish was encroaching on new territory. While its success as a language of prayer was limited and late, Yiddish occupied its own written domain with its various genres of literature. Nonetheless, Yiddish was never considered suitable for sepulchral inscriptions and it comes as no surprise that we do not know of a single example of a Yiddish or partially Yiddish gravestone inscription predating the late nineteenth century.

In the light of both antique and modern multilingualism in Jewish tombstone epigraphs, their traditional Sitz im Leben is certainly noteworthy. With their benedictions and their memorial function—'let him/her be remembered for his/her good'—they are clearly an expression of the mediation between God and Man; in short, they are a type of prayer. Their form may also have been crucial: concise formulas, biblical quotations or allusions, meant to be easily recognised and recited, and even read out loud, were an essential element in these necessarily brief texts incised in stone. As we shall see, translations never reach the level of standardisation needed for conciseness and brevity best conveyed by instantly recognisable features.

Elements and Topics of Hebrew Inscriptions

Early Hebrew sepulchral inscriptions already display fixed and recurring elements. They have an introductory formula, names, date(s), a final benediction as well as an optional eulogy. These varying elements made up a flexible basic scheme that remained in place for hundreds of years until the nineteenth century, and is extant even today, albeit in a much reduced form. Formally, as well as in content and style, the engraved Hebrew inscription exhibits both great variety and at the

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4. See appendix, inscription no. 1 (Josef b. Eisek KaZ, d. 1720, Rheineck / Bad Breisig), which shows the structure of an inscription.
same time an impressive continuity. Nearly everything appearing in eleventh- and twelfth-century inscriptions, both the more formulaic and the freely composed phrases, as well as some much older elements, was used and reused in constantly varying and geographically dispersed contexts throughout the following centuries.

The most obvious themes of the laudatory section relate the exemplary life of the deceased, i.e. heeding and observing the mitzvot (commandments), especially tzedaqah (charity) and gemilut chasadim (acts of loving kindness) and — for men — Talmud Torah (the study of the Torah).

These subjects are the most common, known to Jews everywhere in the Diaspora; they provide links from generation to generation, and connect Jewish communities in different regions and countries, establishing a strong bond in time and space. Thus they constitute a medium that through few words and succinct expressions makes visible to all individuals everywhere and at any time, the commonly shared values and the ideals aspired to by the deceased and striven for by the readers of the inscriptions. In comparison, practical everyday and professional life plays a marginal role. The economic success of an individual is only relevant inasmuch as it improves and supports the life of the community in terms of social welfare, worship, Torah study and learning, or in the attempt to establish good relations with the non-Jewish authorities. Indeed, emphasis on individuality is not the intention of the inscriptions. The accent is rather on common values and their individual realisation, the part played by this or that person in living and achieving the ideals and values of the larger community.

Of course, outstanding personal features or achievements, most often the enduring of hardship for the sake of the (Divine) Name or the community, martyrdom and personal suffering, may be referred to in order to impress upon later generations the ideal of an exemplary life. Also mentioned may be the lamentation of the bereaved family or the entire community, though discreetly and with standard, biblical wording, referring to something beyond individual destiny.

In these Hebrew texts spanning a millennium we find continuity and change, enduring formulations and surprising innovations. Significant transformations in the character and the language of the texts did occur, almost imperceptibly slow changes, against the background of shifting changing mentalities, customs and views about life. These were
couched in formulas, using traditional patterns and continually adding, recombining and reformulating. Yet this took place in the framework of Hebrew, with its wealth of idiomatic, formulaic as well as unique expressions coined in the Middle Ages and reused for centuries.\textsuperscript{5} It is clear, therefore, that \textit{leshon ha-qodesh} as the language of mediation between God and Man, of liturgy and prayer, was not to be abandoned lightly, not least in the domain of sepulchral inscriptions, which belong to the inner realm of tradition and religion. These sepulchral texts continued to be composed and written in Hebrew until the day when another colloquial, but high language began to infiltrate the sacred areas once reserved for high Hebrew alone, laying claim to be the language of the liturgy, religious-legal discussion and scholarly discourse in general. This interloper was Neuhochdeutsch, modern High German.

\textit{Linguistic Change in Germany}

In the sepulchral inscriptions of the last years of the eighteenth century, faithfulness to tradition and echoes of the \textit{Zeitgeist} could be captured, expressed and unfolded satisfactorily in one language, Hebrew, the language of tradition and holiness. But while the use of Hebrew continued throughout the nineteenth century, new, more modern languages began to appear beside the older epigraphical eulogies. Something entirely new was developing: German was becoming a language of gravestone inscriptions.

This radical change can only be understood in the context of the general linguistic transformation taking place in the Jewish communities of German-speaking countries in the eighteenth century. A growing desire in more affluent and educated circles to learn and use German, a trend already deplored in the seventeenth century, was now paralleled by Western Yiddish\textsuperscript{6} growing increasingly closer to High


German, not only in the aforementioned circles but also in everyday Jewish life. As these linguistic changes were evolutionary, it is virtually impossible to determine an exact philological turning point.

The complex process of the shift from Yiddish to High German took place in many intermediate stages. A good example is offered by the Protokollbuch (minute book) of the Jewish community of Berlin, written as in other Ashkenazic communities of the period in both Hebrew and Yiddish. Steven M. Lowenstein describes the linguistic development of this pinkas as follows: at first, during the 1720s, its Yiddish is not essentially different from that of other Northern-German Ashkenazic communities, although it does contain several High German words. In the years after 1740 one finds some closer approximations to German and from the 1750s on, the grammar moves more consistently towards German. The 1780s reveal a High German written in Hebrew letters with regularly inserted Hebrew vocabulary.

The shift from Yiddish to High German remained hidden to the outside world, since it happened in Hebrew lettering. The phenomenon of standard German being written and printed in Hebrew letters emerged in the mid-eighteenth century. At first, Hebrew letters were essential in providing Jewish readers access to German writings, books and other publications. While the Latin script came to be more widely used in the second half of the eighteenth century, most Jews at the time of Moses Mendelssohn’s German Pentateuch translation (1778-83), printed in

sozialhistorischen und geographischen Hintergrund’, in: M. Richarz (ed.), Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glickl: Jüdische Existenz in der Frühen Neuzeit, Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden, vol. XXIV, (Hamburg 2001), p. 49-67. With reference to the language shift and the smooth transition to High German, the term ‘Judeo-German’ still seems to be the preferred choice, since it covers a linguistic spectrum extending from West Yiddish to High German, including numerous intermediary stages (Weinreich, p. 315-18). The speakers themselves generally referred to their language as taytsh or loshn ashkenaz. See Weinreich, p. 315-18.


9. Among the first such works printed was the German translation of the first chapter of Bahya Ibn Pakudas Chovot Hallevavot in 1765.
Hebrew letters, were familiar with Hebrew lettering only. Until 1812, the books and correspondence of the Berlin Jewish community were written in this fashion.\textsuperscript{10} Even when Latin letters no longer represented a barrier for an increasing number of people, Hebrew characters continued to be used for internal communication well into the nineteenth century. Some Jewish schools still taught so-called Jewish writing or Yiddish script in the second half of the century. It remained popular for a long time not only for personal correspondence, but also in Orthodox publications.\textsuperscript{11}

As for the language itself, however, it is has been clearly demonstrated that the small assimilative changes towards German after about 1770 led to a qualitative turn. Yiddish at first discriminated against and maligned from outside as jargon, became increasingly viewed as the Ghetto language in Jewish circles.\textsuperscript{12} The attempt to make High German the language of German Jews began in the second half of the eighteenth century, among others by Moses Mendelssohn. It was then adopted by the \textit{maskilim} (enlightened) as a major priority of their innovation programme, and was accepted by all of Jewish society during the first half of the nineteenth century, despite the continued use of Yiddish for internal colloquial communication.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{The Great Leap: Adopting German as the New Epitaphic Language}

Inaccessible to Yiddish for centuries, the realm of sepulchral eulogy and inscription was taken over by German within a few decades. For ages


\textsuperscript{12} The rejection of Yiddish can be viewed partially in the context of the rejection of the various local German dialects by 18th-century grammarians. However, from the 19th century on, the local dialects were gradually rehabilitated by philologists, whereas the marginalisation of Yiddish increased, see Freimark, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 159-163 and 173-176.

\textsuperscript{13} See Weinreich, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 280-82 and 321; Weinberg, \textit{op. cit.}, (1984), p. 234f. On the linguistic situation and the shift from Yiddish to High German see S. Lowenstein, 'The Complicated Language Situation of German Jewry, 1760-1914' elsewhere in this volume.
burial rites and associated matters were dealt with by volunteer burial societies of learned and respected men, the chevrah qaddisha (holy brotherhood/society), which also kept a watchful eye on tombstone inscriptions. In the nineteenth century these brotherhoods were mostly affiliated to the Orthodox section of the community.

Unlike the publishing industry, where the lack of Hebrew language skills had, since the seventeenth century led to increasing numbers of translations and adaptations of even religious texts into Judeo-German (Bible, prayers, moral literature), the public religious area of the cemetery, i.e., its epitaphs, had remained purely Hebrew.

The general crisis concerning the use of Hebrew did not greatly affect sepulchral texts, for the expressions customarily engraved were mostly formulas that were understood, even by those more or less ignorant of Hebrew. Everyone knew the eshet chayyil (woman of worth) and the ish tam ve-yashar (honest and upright man), and formularised terms such as p’n (here is buried/interred) or mzeb”h (may his/her soul be bound in the bundle of life/of the living) remain generally understood throughout the Jewish world to this day. Hence it was not problems with textual understanding that led to the first German inscriptions, but rather the insistence on applying the newly embraced German language to all sectors that had hitherto been reserved for Hebrew.

A Remark about Methodology

The geographic range of sepulchral inscriptions is vast, and just as enormous as spread of this source material is the number of individual sources. Indeed, Hebrew epigraphy is still at the stage of source collection and its scholarly reconstruction, e.g., textual classification, is still in its infancy. Moreover, in order to reconstruct the separate corpora of inscriptions, the history of the communities whose cemeteries are being scrutinised must also be explored. The language of the inscriptions developed within a network of different factors; e.g., community officials in many places composed or intervened in the formulation of the texts themselves. In addition, every cemetery appropriated and used German, and later displaced Hebrew or combined both languages at its own pace. Nevertheless, in the well-researched or, so to speak, representative corpora of inscriptions, general trends and tendencies can be discerned, both with respect to the themes and styles of Hebrew inscriptions as well as to the adoption of
German. An attempt to define these phases is only difficult for those who insist on precise dating within the space of a decade and want to set fixed boundaries, forgetting that for tombstone inscriptions a coexistence of styles and themes has always been the norm, that old and new often existed for centuries alongside one another before one particular formula or stylistic element or a once frequently used quotation slowly faded away. Bearing these circumstances in mind, we intend first to describe the material at hand and then present some preliminary theses about how multilingualism came to prevail in nineteenth-century Jewish cemeteries.

A good source for studying this transition is the corpus of inscriptions once found in the old Große Hamburger Straße cemetery in Berlin (1672-1827), which today only exist in the form of copied texts. These copies do, of course, have certain advantages: the texts are more easily accessible to scholars than gravestone inscriptions in situ, and they are not subject to the erosion that has affected later Berlin sources, such as the inscriptions at Schönhauser Allee cemetery (after 1827), about half of which show a marked deterioration. This is unfortunately the case with many, perhaps even most of the sepulchral texts dating from the second half of the nineteenth century as in many places rapid population growth led to the use of inferior material (and stonemasonry).

Individual Berlin inscriptions in Latin letters from the late eighteenth century are probably not originals, but were added later when the stones were renovated. In 1860, when the inscriptions were copied, the apparently oldest German-language Berlin inscription — in Latin letters below the Hebrew text — was that on Moses Mendelssohn’s tomb (d. 1786). However, it is now certain that this was not the original gravestone, but a second. The text of the first stone was entirely in Hebrew. As for the next German-language inscription, dated 1799, N. Hüttenmeister believes that the German text was also added later. According to her the

14. Copies were made by Elieser Leiser Landshuth 1860-63 (LBI New York, Jacob-Jacobson-Archiv, I 66-70); see N. Hüttenmeister, 'Zur Geschichte des alten jüdischen Friedhofs Große Hamburger Straße in Berlin. Versuch einer Rekonstruktion', unpublished Masters thesis at the Institut für Judaistik (Freie Universität Berlin 1997), p. 96f. In 1942-43 the cemetery was destroyed; only about 20 tombstones and a number of fragments survived.


16. L 435, Edel Helffi, Hebrew inscription and German inscription in Latin letters (Hüttenmeister, op. cit., p. 48).
earliest original German-language inscription in Berlin dates from 1806, although in Hebrew lettering. Elieser L. Landshuth, the copyist of the Große Hamburger Strasse inscriptions, noted that the front of this headstone was inscribed in Hebrew and the back in jüdisch-deutscher Schrift, i.e., German in Hebrew lettering. In the ten years following 1806 German texts established themselves, appearing both together with Hebrew texts and increasingly as the sole inscription. In the third decade of the nineteenth century the number of German texts in Berlin grew steadily, so that by 1822 almost half of the inscriptions were in German.

In the nearby Potsdam cemetery we find the backs of two tombstones dated 1807 already inscribed in German. It is not possible, however, to tell from these brief inscriptions, that consist of names and dates only, when they were actually engraved, whether simultaneously with the Hebrew ones on the front or years, maybe even decades, later. The cursive lettering used was fashionable into the 1840s. On at least one of these stones, however, the date is given according to the Christian calendar (the second inscription is too far eroded to decipher), which definitely hints at a later insertion, for Jewish-calendar dating continued to be important in the first phase of the German inscription period and probably even mandatory. Another factor indicating a later addition of both texts is that the next German inscription does not appear until 1819, and here we also note the recording of the dates in a mixed calendar form, the year of death being given according to the Jewish calendar. After 1807, all German texts in Potsdam until 1843 generally supply the date either in a mixed form or – as in the majority – only in the traditional way. It should be noted, however, that in Potsdam there are only three cases of German in Hebrew lettering, a strong indication that

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17. L681, Samuel Levi; see Hüttenmeister, op. cit., p. 48; appendix inscription no. 2.
20. This was the case in ‘avant-garde’ Berlin, where in 1826 the Jewish date was mandatory, see C.E. Müller, Zur Geschichte und zu den Inschriften des jüdischen Friedhofs an der Schönhauser Allee (Berlin), unpublished Masters thesis at the Institut für Judaistik (Freie Universität Berlin 1998), p. 75.
this variant did not catch on here. The reason may have been the lack of censure regulations. It may well have been that, as in Berlin during the same period, the demand for German inscriptions was high, but that unlike in Berlin, the chevrah qaddisha in Potsdam did not insist on Hebrew lettering. In Leipzig, too, German inscriptions appeared fairly early, as attested by the oldest preserved tombstone belonging to Moses Bock, a teacher from Berlin who died in 1816.

As with the general linguistic shift to German, the Berlin community was the first to introduce German to its cemeteries, followed by localities in its immediate sphere of influence. The trend, however, was not limited to Berlin and its environment; soon other regions followed suit, such as rural Westphalia, e.g., Rietberg-Neuenkirchen, after 1818. In Heidelberg, too, we find the first German inscription on the back of a gravestone dating from 1821. On the other hand, there are numerous cemeteries whose first German admixtures only appeared decades later. This is the case in the more traditionally minded and orthodox communities, as in Southern Germany or in the Rhineland. Furthermore, it seems that the people responsible for the care of the older cemeteries, which sheltered centuries of Hebrew-inscription culture, were more closely bound to it; it should, however, be pointed out that the oldest cemeteries were located in the more traditional regions anyway.

22. Stone O2, Fanny Steinthal, d. 1823, with a few lines in Latin letters at the end; Stone O6, Mindel Herzbach, d. 1829, one single squeezed-in German line in Hebrew italic letters, in an otherwise Hebrew inscription; Stone U5, Meschullam Herzbach, d. 1833, German text in Latin letters on the back (Strehlen, p. 193, 207 and 216).

23. On the censure regulations in Berlin, see Huttenmeister, op. cit., p. 49ff., and Müller, op. cit., p. 75-77.

24. Bock, a pedagogue and school director, published Mendelssohn's Pentateuch translation in Gothic lettering together with David Frankel in 1815. Relatives of the maskil Bock may have been responsible for bringing the Berlin 'innovation' of a German inscription to Leipzig. His tombstone stood in the Johannistal cemetery (founded in 1814, dissolved in 1936-7) and is one of the few stones that were rescued and brought to the Delitzscher Straße cemetery.


26. Der alte jüdische Friedhof am Klingentor in Heidelberg 1702 bis 1876, a documentation by B. Szklanowski (Neue Hefte zur Stadtentwicklung und Stadtgeschichte 3) (Heidelberg 1984), p. 56.
As in Berlin, some isolated German inscriptions on stones from the second half of the eighteenth century were added later when the stones were restored or repaired. It could, of course, be that some of the German texts were already engraved for the original stone setting, but these remained isolated cases and did not signify a trend. The communities concerned only began to use German in the second decade of the nineteenth century or even later. For example, Darmstadt: whereas it is possible that German dates on two stones from the 1780s were added ex post facto, the German text on the tombstone of Hirsch ben Rafael, who died in 1798, may actually date from that year. Hirsch, who came originally from Hechingen and was a member of the Kaula family of court Jews, was able to continue the successful activities of the Hechinger business. Perhaps the family set store by the generally widely understood German on the back of his stone: ‘Hirsch Raphael Kaula, Hofagent’ (court agent). The next German inscription in Darmstadt does not appear until 1822.  

Another example is that of Celle. The Jewish Community originated at the end of the seventeenth century under ducal protection, and its cemetery bears the imprint of the elegant sepulchres of the families of court Jews. The first German inscription appears on the stone of the court Jew Isaak Jacob Gans, d. 1798. However, it is certain that the engraving did not take place until 1821, when a memorial stone was erected for his wife Pesschen, who died in 1821 in Hannover and was buried there, a stone on a twin base with an entirely German inscription. Both German texts are identically arranged, in Gothic script and on inlaid marble slabs. Here again the community did not follow suit for a while; only after 1843 did German inscriptions regularly begin to appear, and at first entirely in cursive lettering.

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28. Marble slabs became fashionable around 1870, so it could be that they were not set until decades after Pesschens death. Interestingly, a long Hebrew inscription was devoted to her in Hannover, see *Genealogische Studien über die alten jüdischen Familien Hannovers*, bearbeitet von Dr. S. Gronemann (Berlin 1913), Zweite Abteilung (Grabinschriften und Gedächtnissworte), S. 15.

Chronology

While the change to German took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century only a few examples survive from this first decade. Nevertheless, these inscriptions offer confirmation of a trend, becoming more numerous in the second decade. The German inscriptions which first appeared in Hebrew lettering were soon joined by texts in Latin script. Beginning in the 1820s, texts in German became increasingly frequent, although in some areas it took a while for them to gain ground. By the end of the 1820s, however, they had become widespread in Eastern and Northern Germany as well as in Westphalia; in Müncheberg (Brandenburg) just as in Hamburg-Wandsbek, Hameln or Oldenburg. Meanwhile, in Southern and Western Germany additional German texts only become usual around mid-century (see, e.g., Fritzlar, Gailingen, Hanau, Krefeld, Neuwied-Niederbieber, Rexingen, Wankheim). Individual examples illustrating the opposite tendency do, of course, exist e.g., early German texts in the South: Harburg (late 1820s) or Heidelberg (1821).

This trend did not mean that all sepulchral inscriptions automatically fell in line, even after German had permeated virtually every aspect of Jewish life. But the changes in religious liturgy which had barely commenced at the turn of the century were advancing at full speed by the mid-1800s. The German tombstone inscriptions denote the acquisition of a new domain, one previously the preserve of Hebrew. They represent a conscious attempt to carry out the linguistic transformation propagated and promoted by the Haskalah in a hitherto traditional field. It is no coincidence that the Berlin community, where the maskilim together with the more prosperous elite ensured a rapid rate of modernisation, was among the first to discover German as an inscription language per se, to push for its use and thereby (albeit at first in Hebrew lettering and hence only significant for the community itself) to herald the dawn of a new historical epoch.³⁰

An interesting aspect of the story of the individual communities is the degree to which the regulations of the chevrah qaddisha influenced

³⁰. It is certainly no coincidence that the oldest German inscription was written for Samuel Salomon Levy (d. 1806), a son-in-law of Daniel Itzig (d. 1799), mint leaseholder, banker and manufacturer as well as regional elder of the Prussian Jewish community.
the timing of the change to German, since this might explain some deviations in the general trend. In general, however, no conservative community institution was able to prevail in the long run against the mainstream, as developments soon swept aside the controls and regulations. Berlin is a good example of this process, for here the stringent and power-conscious Orthodox chevrah qaddisha supervised the inscriptions. Nevertheless, it was here, perhaps earlier than anywhere else, that German inscriptions caught on, possibly facilitated by the compromise of using Hebrew lettering for the German texts.31

After the first appearance of German texts the fashion spread rapidly and a variety of different types emerged:
- German inscriptions continued to appear in Hebrew letters beyond the mid-nineteenth century.
- These were sometimes combined with a Hebrew text (this was in fact the rule).
- German appeared in Latin lettering, often initially with a Hebrew text.
- A German inscription in Latin lettering might also be combined with another German text in Hebrew lettering; many examples of these German-German inscriptions can be found.
- Many gravestones, indeed still the vast majority in the 1820s, bore only a Hebrew inscription.

Form and Content of the German Texts

From the start German inscriptions were clearly structured, with characteristic opening and closing formulas. A typical opening is the classic formula Hier ruht ('here rests/lies'), the most frequent conclusion, Sanft ruhe seine/ihre Asche ('may his/her ashes repose gently/peacefully'); both are found in the oldest Berlin inscription, dated 1806.32

Names mostly appear in a different form from the Hebrew, with civil first and family names, where applicable with civil titles, and with names often Germanised. Hebrew honorary titles and abbreviated

31. Hebrew letters were still prescribed for the front of a gravestone in the first years of the new Schönhauser Allee cemetery. See Müller, op. cit., p. 76.
32. Appendix inscription no. 2.
epithets preceding the name are not translated as a rule. Thus the Hebrew ’h”h Shmuel ben gove de-kehillatenu [...] h”h Shlomo ha-Levi is accompanied simply by ‘Samuel Salomon Lewi’.

Typical of the early German inscriptions is the rendering of dates according to the Jewish calendar. However, we soon find mixed dates, with the month and day given according to the civil calendar, with the Jewish year. The German dating is, nevertheless, seldom identical to the Hebrew. As a rule the dates of death and burial are provided in Hebrew inscriptions, as in the 1806 example. The date of birth, hitherto not customary in Hebrew, is provided in the German, while the date of burial is omitted. The German date is often shorter, with no mention of the weekday, which is seldom missing in the traditional Hebrew inscription, especially when festivals and holidays are involved, such as Shabbat Kodesh. Thus the dates of the Hebrew and German inscriptions complement each other.

As for the content of the eulogies, translations from Hebrew dominate at first. For example, the short Berlin inscription of 1806, does not offer any new departures: ha-gvir ve-ha-nadiv becomes der edle und würdige [...] (‘the noble and dignified [...]’).

A contrast is offered by the inscription for Isidor Jonson, d. 1822.33 The text in Hebrew letters is actually German (only the dates are mixed, if mostly Jewish) with just the weekdays cited according to the Christian calendar; more important are the day of the month and the year, indicated by the festival days (Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah) and the Jewish year. Death and burial dates are provided, but no birth date. Only then is the introductory Hier ruht inscribed. What follows is completely German, from the Kaufmann (‘merchant’) title to the eulogy: Er war zärtlich als Gatte, liebreich als Vater und unermüdet tätig als Mann von Geschäft. Nur der Tod, der ihn in der Blüte der Jahre dahin raffte, vermochte seinem schönen Streben Grenzen zu setzen (’He was gentle as a husband, loving as a father and tirelessly active as a man of commerce. Only death, which carried him off in his prime, was able to put limits to his fine efforts.’) Hitherto the role of the man within his family had been described more discreetly, if at all; here the tribute to the family man

33. L1998, appendix inscription no. 3.
comes at the outset. No mention of Torah and charity is made whatsoever. Indeed, there is nothing traditional about the inscription at all (except perhaps the euphemistic phrasing of his premature death, which can be similarly flowery in Hebrew). This is a new style, which sets new parameters for content: bourgeois life, i.e., family and work and a vague reference to *schönes Streben* ('fine efforts'). The formulas for the German text were obviously already at hand.

But the reverse is also found: Hebrew contents translated into German, making their own influence and imprint on the text.

All this does not mean that Hebrew inscriptions were abandoned. Hebrew could be used for two purposes, either to uphold the old values in time-honoured traditional fashion or to express new values, aspirations and self-images. Even in the old Berlin cemetery the Hebrew often sounds like a translation from German, as in the inscription for Rabani Salkind Büto(w), d. 1826.34

Landshuth's copy begins with the names and dates in Hebrew, the death and burial dates given according to the Jewish calendar; this is followed by a remarkable eulogy. Then a kind of Hebrew panegyric entitled *ish yakar!*, below which the German poem is engraved in Hebrew letters:

Würdiger Mann!  
Dieder Stein sage nichts zu deinem Lobe  
er zeige nur die Stätte wo du ruhst  
denn wie edel du warst was Gutes  
du auf Erden getan das sagen mehr  
als alle Denkmäler deine Handlungen  
die tief eingegraben sind in den Herzen  
aller die dich kannten

Worthy man!  
May this stone say nothing in praise of you,  
May it only show the place where you are resting.  
How noble you were, the good  
You did on earth, this, more  
Than all memorials, is said by your actions,  
Which are deeply embedded in the hearts  
Of all who knew you.

Indeed, the Hebrew was based on the German, beginning with the direct salutation.

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34. L875, appendix inscription no. 4. As we have only a copy of the inscription, the arrangement of the bilingual text on the stone is not known.
Yet the Hebrew of traditional inscriptions, in both style and content, continued to be used everywhere. One example from Rietberg illustrates that even after the change to German the traditional style was not universally abandoned: the back of the gravestone of the court agent Jacob Eltzbacher (d. 1825) has a long Hebrew inscription with a detailed eulogy, praising his charity and describing the high esteem in which he was held, as well as mentioning his honorary titles for rabbinic scholarship. The short German text on the front of the stone gives only the secular title by which he was known; and the dates of birth and death according to the Christian calendar. This is a fine early example of the division of functions between the two sides of the stone and its languages.35

Equality in Bilingualism?

Some texts were conceived bilingually, in Hebrew and in German, with both texts allotted more or less the same amount of space. These date from a time when the German-Jewish community was generally bilingual, so that the influence and presence of the alternative language can be discerned even in monolingual texts. Yet it is the bilingual texts in which German and Hebrew are equally weighted that most vividly illustrate the evolving relationship between the two languages.

Ideally, both languages would have been granted approximately the same amount of space. Inscribing stones on both sides solved this problem. The idea of using both sides of the gravestone to provide information in two equally valued languages was a feature of the shift to German. The first Berlin bilingual phase had already been characterised by an attempt to treat the two languages equally. It was precisely at the beginning of the movement for conscious innovation that people realised that it was not the supplementing of a lofty incomprehensible text with words accessible to all that was at issue, but the addition of an equally esteemed language that would not challenge or replace the hitherto unique language. By using both sides of the stone, German did not at first displace Hebrew, since there was ample space for both languages, for two equally valued texts which could exist on

their own, but also in relation to one another. This opened the door to an extended phase of bilingualism.

On the early gravestones, moreover, it is rare to find a language division on one side. Where this is the case, these are hardly two inscriptions of truly equal rank, for a horizontal division automatically implies a hierarchy. Only rarely do we find vertically partitioned stones with the two texts side by side — these invariably illustrate the wish to place both languages on an equal footing.36

Each side consists of a complete inscription with introductory and closing formulas, names, dates and usually a eulogy as well. As indicated, this bilingualism is useful in a practical way: the biographical dates can complement each other, thus providing more information. Often the Hebrew text mentions the traditional forename or surname by which the deceased was known at home or in the synagogue, along with the patronymic and the Jewish dates of death and burial. In German these details are often simply repeated; generally, however, we find the civil first and surnames together with the dates of birth and death. At first, the dates are given partially according to the Jewish calendar or in a mixed form: day and month follow the civil calendar, with the Jewish year. This is not just a matter of *chevrah qaddisha* regulations, but also of custom and tradition.37 German texts often include the complete Jewish date, in brackets or, equally weighted, next to the Christian date. Clearly, the information section of an inscription reveals the polyphonic world of German Jewry after Emancipation.

Naturally, the Hebrew texts did not need a German equivalent to provide the new civil information. As early as the eighteenth century, changes in the personal information offered on tombstones had hinted at new developments: for instance, the increasingly noticeable omission of the father’s full name and its replacement by the surname, and this at a time when this was neither customary nor officially required. The date of birth also began to be added more frequently to Hebrew texts. But, as indicated, the bilingual memorial allowed a kind of division of labour.

36. See, e.g., Heidelberg, Inscription for Berta Blümchen Reckendorf, d. 1845, p. 84.
The German eulogy was able to draw on the traditional Hebrew inscription. Much thought went into attempts to render traditional Hebrew eulogies into authentic contemporary German – in both linguistic expression and content – as a means of communicating and demonstrating Jewish values to Christians in a language they could understand. The engraved expressions and images still make a powerful impression in German, but as the nineteenth century wore on, the trend returned to the traditional inscription, with its basis in biblical and Talmudic tradition, and catering more to the linguistic and cultural tastes of the period. This often resulted in a shift of emphasis in the content.

The ensuing division of labour between the two sides of the tombstone can be formulated as follows. The tendency of the Hebrew eulogies is to express time-honoured religious and social values, something they succeeded in doing almost effortlessly, with their age-old allusions to biblical and Talmudic texts. German inscriptions were hardly able to compete with the wealth of associations offered by the Hebrew and its dense network of quotations from the Holy Scriptures. German was less tradition-bound and more suited to conveying changing attitudes toward life and personal self-awareness. So family values are found where once so-called objective values (like charity and Talmud Torah) and public service had been prominent. The emphasis on the emotional expression of family love, the pain of separation and the loss suffered by the bereaved signals the adoption of middle-class, Christian tombstone eulogies common at the time. Thus the bilingual texts can be seen as the expression of a conscious endeavour to absorb different worlds of experience and to somehow bring them in tune with each other in a kind of synthesis, a complex relationship subject to manifold and changing conditions.

The Hebrew formulations did not remain unaffected by this linguistic tug of war, visible on both bilingual and single-language stones with exclusively Hebrew inscriptions which continued to be erected. Hebrew texts now included civil dates along with apparently German contents. Since the new lease on life conveyed by the Romantic movement and Biedermeier lifestyle was not hampered by linguistic barriers, it was easy to transfer it into Hebrew, whereby German was relied on for inspiration only indirectly.
On the tombstone of Gela Caroline Jacobs (d. 1858) in Dinslaken, Lower Rhine, it appears at first glance as if two virtually identical texts have been inscribed, apart from the biographical data. A closer look, however, reveals that the German eulogy and lamentation do not repeat their Hebrew counterpart, but express it differently. The Hebrew text consists mostly of biblical quotations. As some of these might well have been considered offensive to other women, they were watered down: *eshet chayyil ve-y'a'alat chen* ('woman of worth and graceful gazelle', Prov. 31:10 and 5:19) was turned into *eine edle biedere Frau* ('a noble, upright woman'); *ke-shoshanah ben ha-chochim* ('like a rose by the thorns', Canticles 2:2) was tactfully changed to *wie eine Rose auf schattiger Umgebung* ('as a rose in shady surroundings'). Interestingly, the German continuation of the line: *In Gottesfurcht bestand ihr Schatz* ('the fear of the Lord is her treasure', cf. Isa 33:6), is not biblical at all: *In Gotteslehre ihr Wegweiser* ('In divine teaching [was] her guide'). The Hebrew here seems to have been translated from the German: *u-mi-darkhe ha-te'udah lo natetah* ('und von den Wegen des Zeugnisses wich sie nicht ab').

Other texts assign different functions to the two languages more clearly, e.g., the two inscriptions on the gravestone of Samuel Bacher Berend (d. 1828) at Schönhauser Allee cemetery. Here, too, both the Hebrew and the German texts are carefully composed, equally balanced inscriptions. Functions are clearly allotted, and not just in the dates section. The Hebrew eulogy describes the deceased, the Oberlandesältester (provincial elder) of the Jews of Kurmark and an elder of the Berlin community, in his position as a leading figure of the community. His activities ranged from God and the community to his God-fearing treatment of the needy. And yet, despite the traditional content, the formulations have an individual touch; the structure is looser, without the virtually obligatory *tnzb"h*. The German eulogy also recalls the private man, the husband, father, the relative and friend, and expresses the grief felt. Here, God and his commandments play no role whatsoever. This bilingual text from 1825 therefore utilises the possibilities of bilingualism to the full.

38. Appendix inscription no. 6.
39. Appendix inscription no. 7.
Stones featuring this level of bilingual equality had their heyday around the middle of the nineteenth century, holding out in some places, however, until the end of the century, even though they were soon outnumbered by gravestones with solely German inscriptions. Bilingual inscriptions flourished above all in places where German had made an early appearance. At first this might seem paradoxical, but this was where a more liberal attitude to traditional methods was possible and where, for precisely this reason, the tombstone-inscription genre remained creative for a long period of time.

Replacement as an Alternative to Bilingualism

In other places there was never any equality in the use of two languages. Especially in Southern and Western Germany there was no general need to convey information and thoughts in German. Here German appeared only decades later, and then only for a minimum of additional names and dates on the back or on the bottom of the tombstone. The situation remained this way with terse, almost marginal supplements in German until the language switched completely to German, henceforth leaving only a peripheral position for Hebrew. If one language is deemed to suffice on a stone, by the end of the nineteenth century – i.e., after the completion of the linguistic transformation in virtually all areas of Jewish life – only in specifically Orthodox contexts do we find Hebrew; otherwise single-language inscriptions are in German. And in places where it had never been customary to write two texts, German simply replaced Hebrew.

The motive for composing a German text had changed entirely – the minimum information of the German name and the civil dates were now needed in order to define the deceased’s place in society. In contrast to the first phase of the German-language inscription at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the choice of German can be seen as a conscious, self-confident gesture, it had now become automatic – for purposes of communication, of making oneself understood to fellow Jews, German was now a sheer necessity. Hebrew did not, however, disappear all at once. There remained a name here, a saying there, often the Jewish form of dates (Jahrzeit), even if only the day of the month, and more frequently the concluding tnzb”. Thus the predominantly German texts

40. As an example of this ‘fragmentation’ see in the appendix inscription no. 8 for Sophie Meyer, d. 1908 in Krefeld (M. Brocke and A. Pomerance, Steine wie Seelen: Der alte jüdische Friedhof
often seem strangely fragmented, sprinkled with bits of Hebrew. Well into the twentieth century these fragmented inscriptions attest the wish to integrate Hebrew. The Hebrew language signalled Jewishness, German applied to everything else, the private and the civil or secular realms. However, the German rendition also strove to include at least a minimal relic from the religious sphere, such as the translation of the traditional concluding formula for the Jewish date with the abbreviation n.d.E.d.W., meaning nach der Erschaffung der Welt (’after the creation of the world’).

It is noteworthy that where the late shift to German meant that everything Hebrew was discarded, hardly any original German eulogies emerged. Their heyday was the bilingual period and the framework of the bilingual text. In the twentieth century the trend moved toward increasingly shorter texts which resulted in sepulchral inscriptions ceasing to be a creative genre.

Hebrew Continuity

Even if hardly any signs, even first signs, of an original German eulogy style appeared, Hebrew continuity did remain, since toward the end of the nineteenth century it held out in certain circles where the Hebrew inscriptions were as detailed as the German were brief. It is above all, the Orthodox communities and tendencies that express themselves thus, both the traditionally observant congregations of the countryside as well as the urban neo-Orthodox groupings, which tried to combine Torah in a broader sense with secular knowledge, middle-class education and civic culture (Torah 'im derekh eretz).

Not surprisingly, these Hebrew texts make use of many familiar quotations, turns of phrase and formulas, but also provide lengthier biographical accounts. Hence they are constructed in a more heterogeneous fashion than the texts of earlier centuries. In many cases they mirror a tendency, already apparent in the closing years of the eighteenth century, to list in detail what was once taken for granted and to set forth in sometimes surprising detail the individual’s adherence to Torah. The heightened interest of contemporaries in exact biographical information strengthened this tendency.

Thus, with respect both to form and content, these detailed Hebrew inscriptions relate only minimally to older models. Hebrew remained important to the community's religious and cultural life, but the old treasury of motifs, quotations and formulas needed to be modernised and expanded. Alongside the traditional praise of the virtues of the deceased we find various expressions of sadness, pride and the hopes of the bereaved, i.e., those post-romanticist, bourgeois expressions of emotion so characteristic of the inscriptions of that period. If we look at what the bilingual texts otherwise achieve — the connection between tradition and transformed social environment, the bridging of cultural-religious areas of conflict — this is also accomplished by the monolingual Hebrew texts. Even secular accounts of professional and private success are formulated in Hebrew, although for centuries it had been service to the community that counted and found expression in the eulogies. A completely new and surprising feature also appeared: direct and indirect polemics against religious liberalism, i.e., its exponents and adherents.41

It might be regarded as a sign of the liveliness of the Hebrew of those decades that those who used it displayed such openness for the influences of their surroundings, the thought and emotionality of their times. The German text, if employed at all in this context, was confined to brief biographical addenda.

These Hebrew inscriptions are found not only in the cemeteries of the so-called Orthodox secessionists (Austrittsorthodoxie) though here, of course, as a rule, but also in others, as an expression of a traditional religious ethos (e.g., in Wesel and Krefeld we continue to find German texts only on the bottom of the tombstone, up into the twentieth century). Thus a century after the appearance of the first German-language

41. The Memorbuch (Sefer hazkarat neshamot) of the neo-orthodox Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft of Mayence (Mainz) contains outright polemics. It began its own Memorbuch, a genre closely related to sepulchral inscriptions, upon its founding in 1853. A. Pomerance finds in its first three decades of its entries 'sharp polemics against the reformers and their innovations', polemics not to be found in such outspoken manner in any other Memorbuch. The corresponding sepulchral inscriptions do not have this polemical component, due to the public character of the cemetery and its inscription as opposed to the internal use of the Memorbuch. See A. Pomerance, 'Geeiltes Gedenken. Die Mainzer Memorbücher des 19./20.Jahrhunderts', in: M. Brocke, A. Pomerance and A. Schatz (eds): Neuer Anbruch. Zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur (minima judaica 1) (Berlin 2001), p. 205-219, here p. 206, 213-216 and 218f.
inscriptions, it is evident that the transition to German did not bring about a quasi-automatic replacement of Hebrew in Jewish cemeteries.

In the graveyards of communities with a high proportion of immigrants from Eastern Europe, the traditionally religious orientation of the latter is also reflected in the comparatively large number of tombstones with longer Hebrew texts – a tendency that continued well into the twentieth century. The constraints on language had been lifted, and the language, content and form of the inscriptions could be freely chosen. Thus a new multilingualism emerged in Jewish tombstone inscriptions throughout Europe, which affected Germany insofar as immigrants or transitional guests could be commemorated with inscriptions in Yiddish, Polish, Russian or even in English, Dutch etc, that is, in their respective vernaculars, depending on their country and language of origin.

Multilingualism of a special kind may be found in the Duisburg-Mattlerbusch cemetery. The tombstone of Max Freilich, a steel worker from Pabianice in Poland who was the victim of an accident in 1928, bears an Aramaic-Yiddish-German inscription. The Aramaic is a quotation from the Talmud (bSanhedrin 11a), that has become proverbial ‘Alas for those who are gone and no more to be found’, the German just translates the Yiddish. The love for the Yiddish *mameloshn* seems to be linked to the refusal to include Hebrew, which does not even appear as the standard valedictory blessing.\(^{41}\)

With the onset of the nineteenth century Hebrew letters became only the outer garb of the inscription, implying nothing about the language, style and content of its text. Not only might this be Hebrew or German, but it might, whether Hebrew or German, be oriented towards a traditional inscription style or the new *bürgerlichen* (‘middle-class’) style that was then evolving. Various levels of expression and arrangement emerged that require separate examination and assessment: the script and lettering, the language and finally the content of the inscriptions themselves. The content cannot be inferred from either the choice of language or the lettering.

The emergence of German inscriptions led to a complex structure of relationships between the two languages that was not simply a one-way movement towards German. It had an impact in both directions – Hebrew influencing German and vice versa – in terms of both language and content. From the start we find an imaginative combination of language and letters, but also an imaginative mutual influence.

The easing of controls on the language used gave the tombstone-inscription genre a creative impetus which not only stimulated the composition of German epitaphs and many individual attempts to translate old Hebrew standards as spiritual values, but also enlivened the production of Hebrew inscriptions and modernised the Hebrew sepulchral language. Only towards the end of the nineteenth century did German standard formulations gain the upper hand.

A surprising discovery of our survey is the enormous diversity and liveliness of the nineteenth-century inscription language(s), which is astonishing when we recall that the Jewish cemetery was a place governed by strict rules and regulations. Located somewhat on the periphery of the disputes that racked the Jewish world, and on the margins of the visual perspective of the guardians of tradition, the cemetery was able to evolve into a multilingual public space. As more and more restrictions on the language and content of inscriptions were lifted, gravestone texts attest an increasingly direct juxtaposition, a plurality of customs and needs, ambitions and mentalities of individuals as well as of different community groupings.

It was a question of being not only next to one another but also with one another – languages, moral concepts and stylistic ideas. The bilingual phase testifies to the needs and possibilities of coexistence. The diversity of individual endeavours becomes particularly clear when we look at the tombstone-inscription genre, a source that we can follow continuously throughout the ages and that, above all, belongs to everyone: texts which record not only the elites, but to which, with the growing freedom of languages and contents, every man and every woman has a right of access.
Appendix

No. 1: Structure of a Hebrew inscription (Josef b. Eisek KaZ, d. 14 April 1720, Purg Rheineck/Bad Breisig)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Inscription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory formula</td>
<td>ב&quot;ג</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laudation (eulogy)</td>
<td>א镧 ירב</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles (honorary)</td>
<td>והקצין</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names</td>
<td>ב&quot;ג ציר</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>ונפסר ו&quot;י רא</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final benediction</td>
<td>והצבר&quot;ה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. 2: Samuel Levi (d. 6 September 1806), Berlin

פַּתְנַגֶּמֶן הַנְּבֵר הַנוֹבֵר ת"ו ה' כ"ז שומאלה
וֹנַבֵּהּ רֶקֶחָלָהּ שְׁמַמְתָּה ת"ו ה' שְׁלָמָתָהּ חֶלֶד יִיל
ונְפַסֵּר בָּשֶׁם כ"ז אָלָלִים וּבֵי ב"ו כ"ז אָלָלִים שְׁמַתָּהּ חֶלֶד יִיל
וּכְב"ה

וֹי רֹחֲמִים דּוֹרֵר הָעָלִים אָנוּךָ וְיִרְדְּגֵנָה
ואֲמֶתָלָא אֲחָלָמָא לְמוּחי
נֶבְּראוֹרִין דּוֹ איַלָלֵוּ 5520
נֶבְּשָׁאוּרִין כ"ב איַלָלֵוּ 5566
ואָמְטָו רֹחֲמִים יִיְנֵנָא אָשְׁא

No. 3: Isidor Jonson (d. 7 October 1822), Berlin

עֵר שְׁפָיָאָר מַאֲמָזָא שְׁפָיָאָר אָנוֹהוּ הַיְּנִירִיָא דוּבְּרָדְיִיָא דוּבְּרָדְיִיָא שְׁפָיָאָר שְׁפָיָאָר
תק"ב

וֹי רֹחֲמִים דּוֹרֵר קְרַפְּמֵן אֶיְרָדְמֵן אוֹתֵאְנָאָר דוֹסְטְלְנָאָר רָעְאָלָמְלָא שְׁפָיָאָר
עֵר אוֹתַר צְרַפְלָלְלָא דוֹסְטְלְנָאָר לְיבִריָיָא דוֹסְטְלְנָאָר לְיבִריָיָא דוֹסְטְלְנָאָר
אָלָלָא שְׁפָיָאָר שְׁפָיָאָר מַאֲמָזָא שְׁפָיָאָר
דַּאָמְטָא רָזְפִּיסֵן מַרְמָאָסִיסֵן דוֹסְטְלְנָאָר שְׁפָיָאָר שְׁפָיָאָר
ואָמְטָו רֹחֲמִים יִיְנֵנָא אָשְׁא
No. 4: Salkind Bülow (d. 18 May 1826), Berlin

No. 5: Jacob Eltzobacher (d. 8 January 1825), Rietberg
No. 6: Gela Caroline Jacobs (d. 22 August 1858), Dinslaken

Hier ruht
Caroline Jacobs
geb. Bacharach aus Hamm
geb. 4 Sept. 1831 verm. 21 Febr. 1855
gest. 22 August 1858
Eine edle biedere Frau
Wie eine Rose auf schattiger Umgebung
Kam aus ihrem Geburtsorte sie her...
von Gott und Menschen gleich geliebt
In Gottesfurcht bestand ihr Schatz
In Gotteslehre ihr Wegweiser
Aber [ach?] erblaste sie. Tod
[...]
Hier ruhet die irdische Hülle
des in Gott entschlafenen
S.B. Berend
Aeltester der Jüdischen Gemeine
zu Berlin
Geb. d. 25 Kislev 5533
gest. d. 24 Thebet 55[88]
Musterhaft als Gatte Vater
Verwandte Freund u. Mensch
stets eifrig bemüht für das Wohl
seiner Mitmenschen wurde er
im Leben allgemein geehrt
im Tode allgemein betrauert.
Nicht der Leichenstein
sein Leben ist sein Denkmal

No. 8: Sophie Meyer (d. 13 July 1908), Krefeld

Hier ruht
unsere liebe Mutter
Sophie Meyer
geb. Veiten
geb. 18 Mai 1818,
gest. 13 Juli (י”ד תמוז) 1908.