

***Wh-Ever* Constructions in American Hasidic Yiddish: The Rise of a Germanic Construction**

Dalit Assouline

University of Haifa

This paper discusses the hitherto undocumented *wh-ever* constructions in contemporary American Hasidic Yiddish. Employment of these Germanic constructions in both written and spoken American Hasidic Yiddish raises the question of their origin and the possibility that several Germanic varieties have influenced this seemingly new pattern. Specifically, these constructions might have originated from Germanized Yiddish varieties and past contact with Judeo-German, and then gradually become entrenched in American Hasidic Yiddish through contact with English. The paper uses this particular construction to offer some more general reflections on the possibility of historical impact of German on American Hasidic Yiddish during the formation of Hasidic Yiddish varieties in Williamsburg (New York) in the 1950s.*

Keywords: Hasidic Yiddish, American Hasidic Yiddish, Habsburg Yiddish, Yiddish dialectology, concessive conditionals

1. Introduction.

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This paper examines the possible origins of *wh-ever* constructions in contemporary American Hasidic Yiddish. Documented in neither Yiddish grammars nor in contemporary Israeli Hasidic Yiddish, these constructions are used in American Hasidic Yiddish in concessive conditionals (specifically, universal concessive conditionals; Haspelmath & König 1998:604–619) and nonspecific free relatives (Bresnan & Grimshaw 1978); they also serve as indefinite pronouns.¹

At the same time, the use of some documented equivalent Yiddish patterns decreases. For example, a common documented Yiddish pattern where the concessive conditional is marked by negation on the verb is quite rare in American Hasidic Yiddish.² This documented pattern with negation probably reflects contact with Slavic languages (Haspelmath & König 1998:615–616). Consider the following example:

- (1) vos er zol ništ šrayb-n,
 what he should.PRS.3SG not write-INF
 šrayb-t er mit gram-en
 write-PRS.3SG he with rhyme-PL

‘Whatever he writes, he writes in rhymes.’ (Sholem Aleichem, *Motl*)

Analysis of spoken and written corpora of American Hasidic Yiddish shows that one of the ways to express the concessive conditional in 1 in this contemporary Yiddish variety is by using a *wh-ever* pattern (*wh-imer*):

- (2) vos imer er šrayb-t, šrayb-t er mit gram-en
 what ever he write-PRS.3SG write-PRS.3SG he with rhyme-PL
 ‘Whatever he writes, he writes in rhymes.’

A comparative study of contemporary American and Israeli Hasidic Yiddish recordings reveals that *wh-imer* constructions occur only in American Hasidic Yiddish. It seems plausible, therefore, to consider this a contact-induced change, where American Yiddish patterns converge

¹ These constructions are not mentioned in Yiddish grammars such as Zaretski 1926, Mark 1978, Jacobs 2005.

² The term *documented Yiddish* refers to the Yiddish spoken in Eastern Europe prior to World War II.

with the English pattern of *wh-ever*. However, while contemporary patterns seem to reflect the impact of English, it is possible that English was not the only contact language affecting the early stages of this change. I suggest that several sources might have introduced this pattern to American Hasidic Yiddish, so that this may be a case of multiple causation (see Joseph 2013). Specifically, I ask whether the presence of Germanized Yiddish varieties, elevated German-like Yiddish styles, as well as contact with Judeo-German varieties during the formation of Hasidic Yiddish in Williamsburg (Brooklyn, NY) in the 1940s and 1950s might have introduced the German *wh-immer* into the emerging American Hasidic Yiddish varieties, where it was gradually entrenched due to its identification with the corresponding English construction.³ Accordingly, I use the specific case of *wh-imer* to discuss the more general possibility of historical impact of German on American Hasidic Yiddish.

The paper is organized as follows. It starts with a short introduction to American Hasidic Yiddish and a description of the analyzed corpora (section 2), and then presents examples of *wh-imer* constructions and constructions with similar functions in the American corpora (section 3). Section 4, the core of the paper, discusses the possible impact of Germanized Yiddish varieties and Judeo-German on *wh-imer* constructions in American Hasidic Yiddish. Section 5 adds a comparative perspective by suggesting some possible reasons for the different extent of German influence in American and Israeli Hasidic Yiddish. Section 6 concludes the discussion by suggesting directions for future research.

2. American Hasidic Yiddish: Background and Corpora.

Yiddish is currently maintained as a spoken community language only in some Hasidic groups, mostly in the US, Israel, the UK, and Belgium (Assouline 2018:472–473). In these close-knit communities, invariably

³ The term *Germanized Yiddish varieties* refers to certain Yiddish varieties spoken in the Habsburg Empire and influenced by German; the term *Judeo-German* refers to German varieties spoken by Jews (see section 4.1 below). Note that the term *Germanic* in the title of the paper refers to the possible impact of two Germanic languages—English and German—on American Hasidic Yiddish. In the context of contemporary Hasidic Yiddish, I use the term *Germanic* in opposition to *Slavic*, in the sense that American Hasidic Yiddish is more “Germanic” (due to the impact of English and possibly also of German) and less “Slavic” than Israeli Hasidic Yiddish (see section 5).

united around a dynastic spiritual leader and preserving as far as possible the way of life of an idealized Eastern European past, Yiddish is a highly prestigious language, functioning as a powerful symbol of a distinct ethnic and religious identity (Isaacs 1999). As a result, many *Hasidim* (plural of *Hasid*) continue to speak Yiddish and pass it on to their children, while also using the majority language (usually English, Hebrew or Flemish).

The exact number of Hasidic Yiddish speakers is hard to gauge. The estimated number of Hasidim worldwide in 2016 was somewhere between 700,000 and 750,000 (Wodziński 2018a:191).⁴ However, not all Hasidim speak Yiddish. Some Hasidic groups have shifted to the majority language (for example, the biggest Hasidic group in Israel, Ger, has largely shifted to Israeli Hebrew), while in other groups Yiddish is maintained as a heritage language with limited use (for example, as a language used by men when studying sacred Jewish texts). The largest Yiddish-speaking Hasidic population is in the United States, where Yiddish is spoken in Hasidic sects such as Satmar, Bobov, Skver, Vizhnits, Belz, Munkatsh, and Pupa, located mainly in the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Williamsburg and Borough Park, in Kiryas Joel (Orange County, NY), and in Monsey and New Square (Rockland County, NY).⁵ The most significant Yiddish-speaking group today is Satmar, the largest Hasidic sect (20% of the world's Hasidim as of 2016; Wodziński 2018a:199), where Yiddish is maintained as a primary spoken language.

The American Hasidic sects were founded or rebuilt in the United States after World War II. Most Hasidic sects in the United States are “Hungarian” or “Galician” (Wodziński 2018a:209), representing dynasties of so-called “Habsburg Hasidim” (Biale et al. 2018:359–400). These reestablished postwar sects attracted not only their own original followers, but also other Jews, born in Europe or the United States, some of them with no Hasidic background (Fader 2009:8–9, 223). Some possible linguistic consequences of the American Hasidic revival are discussed in section 4.

The following corpora were consulted in order to examine both spoken and written language.

⁴ See Wodziński 2018a:188–208 for the estimated size of contemporary Hasidic groups and their geographical distribution.

⁵ Hasidic sects are typically named after the Eastern European town or village from which they originated.

- (i) Spoken American Hasidic Yiddish: recorded between 2000–2011 from both men and women. Men: 12 radio interviews (from the *Yiddish Kol Mevasser* news hotline; Assouline & Dori-Hacohen 2017), featuring 12 male interviewees and 3 male interviewers (81,879 words). Women: recorded lectures and lessons by 12 women (77,546 words).⁶
- (ii) Written American Hasidic Yiddish: A corpus composed of two American Hasidic Internet forums, a total of approximately 85 million words: *ivelt* active since 2007 and *kaveshtiebel* active since 2012. These forums are designated male-only, yet participants contribute anonymously, and it is possible that some women participate under the guise of men. The Yiddish in both forums is heavily influenced by English and it seems that most participants are American.
- (iii) Written Yiddish: the online database *Yiddish Book Center's Full-Text Search* (10,055 Yiddish books as of December 2020; mostly prewar East-European Yiddish); and the online database of *Otzar HaHochma* (110,564 Judaic books as of December 2020, including about 6,000 Yiddish books and about 500 Judeo-German books). There is almost no overlap between the Yiddish texts in these two databases.
- (iv) Spoken Israeli Hasidic Yiddish (recorded between 1995–2007): male and female speakers, 250 recorded hours of lessons, lectures, and sermons (Assouline 2017:27).

In the next section, I discuss the distribution of *wh-imer* constructions in the American corpora (i and ii above). I demonstrate that they occur in concessive conditionals, nonspecific free relatives, and as indefinite pronouns, and provide examples of each use.

⁶ The *Kol Mevasser* interviews were recorded from the hotline archives (New York phone number +1 (212) 444–1102). Current interviews and additional Hasidic Yiddish recordings can be downloaded from www.yiddish24.com (last accessed on December 1, 2020). The women's recorded lectures were down-loaded from www.kolhalashon.com (last accessed on December 1, 2020) or purchased in Hasidic stores in Williamsburg.

3. *Wh-Imer* Constructions in the American Corpora.

Wh-imer constructions were documented in the American corpora in concessive conditionals and in nonspecific free relatives. They also function as indefinite pronouns. *Wh-imer* patterns in the American corpora (in concessive conditionals, nonspecific free relatives, and as indefinites) were documented mainly among male speakers, and probably male writers too (since the analyzed Hasidic forums are supposedly confined to men). *Wh-imer* constructions may thus be identified with more elevated and formal Yiddish styles of public speech and writing. It is also possible that these constructions are more commonly used by men, yet the limited number of female speakers in the analyzed corpora prevents one from drawing such a conclusion. Only a single occurrence of *wh-imer* in the speech of a female speaker was documented in the spoken corpus.⁷ The precise status and use patterns of *wh-imer* in the speech community can only be established by means of a more exhaustive study among American Hasidic speakers. At present it is not clear whether *wh-imer* patterns are also common in everyday spoken Hasidic Yiddish.

Furthermore, the word *imer* itself is not used in spoken Hasidic Yiddish in the sense of the German *immer* ‘always’ (rather, *štendik* and *ale mol* ‘always’ are used in Israeli Yiddish, and *aybik/aybig* ‘always’ in American Yiddish), so its uses in spoken American Hasidic Yiddish are restricted to the *wh-imer* constructions.⁸ Note, however, that *imer* ‘always’ is commonly used in American Hasidic Yiddish texts, as are many other Germanisms (see section 4 below).

⁷ The woman delivering the sermon (a member of the Satmar community in Monsey) urged her female listeners to pay more attention to the spiritual aspects of family celebrations and less to material aspects, such as the food served in the celebrations, stating that too much attention is given to the menu and to the table arrangement: “... a sax mer fin de menyū ret men, ci de fiš zol ouszen vi flayš, ci de flayš vi fiš, ci de fruxt vi a katške, ci vus imer se iz” [people talk much more about the menu, whether the fish should look like meat, the meat like fish, the fruit like a duck, or whatever it is.]

⁸ The word *imer* ‘always’ appeared once in the American spoken corpus, when a woman speaker recited an archaic and fixed translation of a Hebrew verse: *imer in aybig, leóyloom vuéd* ‘for ever and ever’ (see Jacobs 2005:295–296 on the traditional Yiddish translations called *taytsh*). However, Israeli speakers use a different *taytsh* for the same Hebrew expression (*afeybik* ‘forever’). See also *imer un eybik* in Joffe & Mark 1971:1261.

3.1. Concessive Conditionals.

Three different patterns of concessive conditionals are attested in the written American corpus: a pattern with *nor* ‘only’, a *wh-imer* pattern, and a pattern marked by negation. These three constructions can also be combined (see the examples in 6 below). In the spoken American corpus, only the first two patterns (the *only*-pattern and the *wh-imer*) are attested.

Consider the following examples of the three patterns. First, there is a construction with the restrictive focus particle *nor* ‘only’ (documented in East-European Yiddish; Haspelmath & König 1998:613), with *nor* usually following the *wh*-word or the verb. This is the most common pattern in the written corpus, appearing in about 60% of all concessive conditionals.⁹

- (3) a. *cu vem x-red nor legabe dem noyse,*
 to whom I-speak.PRS.1SG only about the.OBL.SG issue
kum-t curik cu-m zelv-n šure.
 come-PRS.3SG back to-DEF.OBL.SG same-OBL line
 ‘Whoever I speak to about this issue, I get the same reply’.
 (kaveshtiebel, 2013)

- b. *vu nor ix hob arayn ge-vok-t*
 where only I have.PRS.1SG in PTCP-walk-PTCP
hob ix mix ge-vol-t zeh-n inderoysn.
 have.PRS.1SG I I.OBL PTCP-want-PTCP see-INF outside
 ‘Wherever [whichever place] I walked into, I just wanted to be
 outside again’ lit. ‘I wanted to see myself outside’ (ivelt, 2019)

Second, there is a construction with *wh-imer* (*vos imer* ‘whatever’, *ver imer* ‘whoever’, *vem imer* ‘who(m)ever’, *ven imer* ‘whenever’, *vu imer* ‘wherever’, *vi/vi[a]zoy imer* ‘however’). This construction is used in about 30% of all concessive conditionals in the written corpus:

⁹ The transcription of examples from the written corpus reflects their original (Hebrew) spelling, which may differ from Standard Yiddish spelling, mainly due to the impact of a German-like orthography (see Jacobs 2005:301–302, Krogh 2014:72–84, Assouline 2018:480).

- (4) a. ix bin du far dir, vus imer di fil-st
 I be.PRS.1SG here for you.OBL what ever you feel-PRS.2SG
 az ix ken dir helf-n, vus imer di
 that I can.PRS.1SG you.OBL help-INF what ever you
 fil-st ix ken dix max-n a bisale
 feel-PRS.2SG I can.PRS.1SG you.OBL make-INF a bit
 gring-er, ix bin du.
 easy-COMPR I be.PRS.1SG here

‘I am here for you, whatever you feel that I can help you with,
 whatever you feel that I can make a bit easier for you, I am here’
 (Kol Mevaser, male speaker, 2011)

- b. zayn imeyl adrese ve-t er hob-n cu di hant
 his email address will-3SG he have-INF to the hand(available)
 vu imer er gefun-t zix
 where ever he find-PRS.3SG REFL
 ‘He will use his email address wherever he is’ (ivelt, 2014)

The third pattern is marked by negation (subjunctive + negation + infinitive), as shown in 5. This pattern is relatively less common in the written corpus and was not attested in the spoken corpus.

- (5) vos er zol ništ zog-en, max-t er zix
 what he should.PRS.3SG not say-INF make-PRS.3SG he REFL

son-im bay halb amerike.
 enemy-PL in half America

‘Whatever [no matter what] he says, half of America hates him’
 (ivelt, 2017)

The three patterns can also be used together, as in 6.

- (6) a. *Wh-imer + nor*
 ven imer ix kum nor arayn in štibl

when ever I come.PRS.1SG only in in Shtiebel

zeh ix do gest
see.PRS.1SG I here guest.PL

‘Whenever I enter this forum [kaveshtiebel], I see guests [that is, unlisted users]’
(kaveshtiebel, 2012)

b. *nor + ništ*

vu du zol-st nor ništ gey-n
where you should-PRS.2SG only not go-INF

ve-t er dix alc xap-n
will-3SG he you.OBL nevertheless catch-INF

‘Wherever [no matter where] you go, he will catch you anyway.’
(kaveshtiebel, 2019)

c. *Wh-imer + nor + ništ*

vos imer zol-st nor ništ tu-en,
what ever should-PRS.2SG only not do-INF

ix vuntš dir [hacloxe merube]_{Hebrew}
I wish.PRS.1SG you.OBL success great

‘Whatever you do, I wish you plenty of success.’ (ivelt, 2015)

The estimated proportion of the different patterns in the written American corpus (the *ivelt* and the *kaveshtiebel* databases together comprising circa 85 million words; see ii in section 2 above) is presented in table 1.¹⁰

¹⁰ I would like to express my deep gratitude to Aaron J. Kogon (University of Toronto) for allowing me to search the database, as well as for his invaluable help in designing and conducting the searches.

Pattern	Estimated number of occurrences in the corpus	Proportion of concessive conditional patterns in %
<i>nor</i>	1580±1011	58.9±15.8
<i>wh-imer</i>	792±130	29.4±11.6
<i>imer nor</i>	127±0	4.73±1.80
<i>nor ništ</i>	117±22	4.34±1.82
<i>ništ</i>	58±40	2.16±1.66
<i>imer nor ništ</i>	8±0	0.300±0.113
<i>imer ništ</i>	3±0	0.112±0.04

Table 1. Frequency of concessive conditional patterns in the written American corpus (CI 95%).¹¹

As can be seen from table 1, the pattern with *nor* is the most common in the American Hasidic written corpus, and the pattern *wh-imer* the second most common.¹² The pattern with negation is the least common, with its proportion in the written corpus (including combinations with other patterns) about 7% of all concessive conditionals.

3.2. *Nonspecific Free Relatives and Indefinite Pronouns.*

In both spoken and written American corpora, *wh-imer* constructions are commonly used in nonspecific free relatives, or “fused relatives” (Huddleston et al. 2002:1068), such as *zey tuen vos imer zey viln* ‘they do whatever they want’. Besides, *wh-imer* constructions also serve independently (as in *vos imer* ‘whatever’), alongside several other series of free-choice indefinite pronouns and parallel nonspecific free relatives

¹¹ The total usage of each pattern in the corpus was estimated by a three-step process. First, all sentences that matched the structure of each concessive conditional pattern were automatically extracted. Second, for each set of sentences, a random sample of 200 sentences was manually examined to estimate the proportion of the sentences containing concessive conditionals. Finally, the total number of each concessive conditional pattern in the corpus was estimated by multiplying the proportion of sentences containing concessive conditionals with the number of candidate sentences.

¹² The spoken corpus is too small to assess statistically (only eight concessive conditionals were attested in the men’s corpus, seven with *wh-imer* and one with *nor*).

(Haspelmath 1997:52, 55). Consider the following examples of indefinites and lexicalized nonspecific free relatives expressing free choice in the American corpora, all with a meaning similar to ‘anyone, whoever’, ‘anything, whatever’, ‘anywhere, wherever’, etc.

(7) a. *say* + *wh* (Yiddish *say*—deriving from German *es sei*)

say vos ‘whatever, anything’
say ven ‘whenever, anytime’
 etc.

b. *wh* + *imer*

vos imer ‘whatever’
ver imer ‘whoever’
 etc.

c. *wh* + *es zol nor zayn* lit. ‘it should only be’

vu es zol nor zayn ‘wherever, anywhere’
vos es zol nor zayn ‘whatever, anything’
 etc.

d. *wh* + *es zol ništ zayn* lit. ‘it should not be’

ver es zol ništ zayn ‘whoever, anyone’
ven es zol ništ zayn ‘whenever, anytime’
 etc.

The free-choice indefinite pronouns in 7a are the most common type in the written corpus followed by the ones in 7b. The two lexicalized nonspecific free relatives in 7c,d are rarely used, probably due to their length and complexity, which restrict their use to specific syntactic environments. Thus, for example, while *say ver* ‘whoever’ was documented 775 times in the written corpus and *ver imer* (as the indefinite ‘whoever’) 105 times, the longer patterns were less frequent, with 9 occurrences of *ver es zol nor zayn* ‘whoever’ and 3 occurrences of *ver es zol ništ zayn* ‘whoever’. Note that these constructions can also be combined, thus emphasizing the sense of free choice that they imply (for example, *say ven imer* ‘whenever’, *vu imer es zol nor ništ zayn* ‘wherever’, *say vos es zol nor zayn* ‘whatever’). Besides, free-choice indefinites are expressed in both American corpora in

additional ways, as, for example, with the borrowed *eni* ‘any’ + N: *eni zax* ‘any thing’.

The distribution patterns of the different free-choice indefinite pronouns in the American corpora are complex and are not discussed here. For the present purpose, it is sufficient to note that *wh-imer* free relatives and indefinites are commonly used in the American corpora.

4. The Origins of *Wh-Imer* in American Hasidic Yiddish.

Having established that *wh-imer* is commonly used in the corpora of men’s written Yiddish and public speech, the next step is to consider the origins of *wh-imer* in American Hasidic Yiddish. It is possible that contact with English is affecting this Yiddish construction, and it appears that Yiddish speakers identify *wh-imer* with the parallel English *wh-ever*.¹³ While English seems to affect contemporary patterns of use, however, it is possible that English was not the only source of this construction in American Hasidic Yiddish. I suggest that these constructions were not necessarily introduced to American Hasidic Yiddish as calques of the English *wh-ever*, and that they may have been accessible to speakers directly through Germanized Yiddish dialects, German-like formal Yiddish styles and contact with Judeo-German varieties (see section 4.1 below). In other words, I suggest that these Yiddish constructions may not have been innovations based on English patterns, but rather patterns already familiar to some Yiddish speakers due to the direct and indirect impact of German varieties. Their dissemination in American Yiddish, thanks to the impact of English, can be described as a gradual shift from a minor use pattern (for example, from a construction found only in certain German-like elevated Yiddish written texts) to a major use pattern, found in various contexts of use (Heine & Kuteva 2005:44–62).

In order to examine this hypothesis, I first turn to the dialectal makeup of American Hasidic Yiddish and the possible impact of German and Germanized Yiddish varieties during its formation. Note that written

¹³ A possible proof of this identification is, for example, the Yiddish calque *vi imer* or *viazoy imer* lit. ‘how ever’, calquing the English conjunction *however*. This calque, not attested in documented Yiddish, is used mainly in formal written Hasidic Yiddish, such as entries in the Yiddish Wikipedia, and may be part of an Ausbau process, where writers try to create a higher Yiddish variety with English as the model language.

American Hasidic Yiddish (mainly Satmar Yiddish) manifests German-like orthography and abounds in German loanwords (Krogh 2014). This is also evident in the written corpus, which manifests a tendency toward Germanized orthography and contains hundreds of Germanisms such as *alzo* ‘so’, *manxe* ‘some’, *umfarmaydbar* ‘inevitable’, etc. Both the Germanized orthography and the use of German loanwords follow certain conventions and preferences of the so-called *daytshmerish* style of early 20th-century East-European Yiddish (Krogh 2018).¹⁴ The present discussion suggests that German-like prestigious Yiddish written styles played a role in the rise of the *wh-imer* constructions and speculates that contact with spoken German and spoken Germanized Yiddish varieties might have also played a part in this process.

4.1. Multilingualism and Formation of American Hasidic Communities.

Contemporary American Hasidic communities were founded in the United States after World War II. Several small Hasidic communities did exist before the war, but most Hasidic immigrants were Americanized and did not succeed in passing the Hasidic way of life to their children (Glazer 1957:143, Poll 1962:19–20, 26–27). Substantial, close-knit Hasidic communities were established only after the war with the arrival of prominent Hasidic leaders and their surviving Hasidim, who settled in New York (Poll 1962:29, Perlman 1991:132, Belcove-Shalin 1995:8–9). Two studies conducted in Williamsburg in the 1950s shed light on the early stages of the Hasidic revival in the United States. Kranzler (1961) and Poll (1962) describe the formation of Hasidic groups in Williamsburg, mainly the dominant Satmar Hasidic sect led by rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (1887–1979). After Teitelbaum settled in Williamsburg in 1946, Hasidim started to join him (a few dozen in 1948, and 860 households by 1961, according to Rubin 1997:47). Williamsburg had attracted Jewish immigrants before—mainly Galician and Polish Hasidim in the 1920s and 1930s, and refugees from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s (Kranzler 1961:18–19). Kranzler describes the arrival of surviving Hasidim after the war, who chose Williamsburg because it allowed them to continue a Hasidic way of life, offering Hasidic

¹⁴ Krogh (2018) describes the chronology of the *daytshmerish* Yiddish style (peaking between ~1880–~1920), noting that this style is still very common in contemporary Hasidic Yiddish texts.

educational institutions, etc. (Kranzler 1961:14, 19). The main groups forming in Williamsburg were “Hungarian”, and they also attracted new members, including Hasidim who had come to the United States before World War II (Kranzler 1961:19, Rubin 1997:47). Williamsburg gradually became a center of Hungarian Hasidic Jews (with about 10,000–12,000 Hasidim in 1959; Poll 1962:30), who later settled in other neighborhoods as well (Kranzler 1961:15).

Yiddish, Hungarian, and to a lesser extent German seem to have been the common native languages of Jews in Williamsburg in the 1940s and 1950s. The term *Hungarian Hasidim* refers to Hasidim from “Greater Hungary”, which includes those areas that belonged to Hungary in the 19th-century Habsburg Empire (Biale et al. 2018:624).¹⁵ Hasidim who came from the so-called *Unterland* (a Jewish folk-geographic term, referring roughly to northern Transylvania and the mountainous portions of East Slovakia and Carpathorussia; Weinreich 1964:246, 249–250, Biale et al. 2018:390) spoke mainly Yiddish. Orthodox (usually not Hasidic) Jews who came from the *Oyberland* (a Jewish folk-geographic term referring to West Slovakia, West Hungary, and the “Seven communities” of the Burgenland; Weinreich 1964:246, 249) spoke mainly German (or Judeo-German) and Hungarian (Poll 1962:16–17, 1965:130, Perlman 1991:63–65, Katz 1995:12).¹⁶ Some of these *Oyberlander* spoke *Oyberland* Yiddish, one of the last Western Yiddish varieties that survived into the 20th century (Weinreich 1964:251–252, Fleischer 2018:245–246).

¹⁵ See also Wodziński 2018a:224–228 on Hasidic “imagined boundaries”, that is, the Hasidic geographical perception of Eastern Europe, according to which “‘Hungary’ corresponds to the former kingdom of Hungary, including, outside the ethnically Hungarian areas, Transylvania (Kolozsvár/Kloyzenburg/Cluj-Napoca), Transcarpathian Ruthenia (Munkács), and other once-Hungarian territories” (p. 227; compare Sadock & Masor 2018:92–93, 98–100).

¹⁶ As an illustration of Hungarian Jews’ multilingualism, see the literary description of Jewish immigrants in New York in the 1950s:

New people appeared—all of them Europeans. They launched into long discussions in Yiddish, Polish, Russian. Even Hebrew. Some of those who came from Hungary mixed German, Hungarian, Yiddish-German—then all of a sudden they began to speak plain Galician Yiddish. (Singer, *The Cafeteria*)

There are no exact data about patterns of multilingualism in 1940s and 1950s Williamsburg or the relative proportion of Yiddish speakers in the Hasidic communities; only some impressionistic and anecdotal descriptions regarding language use, such as observations that many Hasidic women spoke only or mainly Hungarian (Kranzler 1961:219, Poll 1965:135).¹⁷

When considering the possible impact of German during the formation of Hasidic Yiddish in Williamsburg, note that German could have influenced the language of Yiddish speakers in several ways. The impact of German is evident first and foremost in the Germanized Habsburg Yiddish varieties, including *Unterland* Yiddish. Yet another channel through which German constructions such as *wh-immer* could have been introduced to the nascent Hasidic Yiddish in Williamsburg was the Judeo-German speaking Jews.

Note that the term *Judeo-German* refers to “a variety spoken by Jews containing special vocabulary, but not otherwise differing form (local) German” (Fleischer 2018:239).¹⁸ Judeo-German speakers in Williamsburg were mostly *Oyberlander*, such as the “Viennese Community” (*Adas Yereim Vien*, Kranzler 1961:152, 209), and other groups of Orthodox, non-Hasidic so called *Ashkenazish* or *Yekish* Jews (lit. German Jews). Both terms, meaning ‘German’, refer in the Hungarian Jewish context to orthodox non-Hasidic streams such as Pupa, Nitra, and Kashoy. Today, such streams have become Hasidic or merged into dominant Hasidic groups (Weinreich 1964:255, Sadock & Masor 2018:98). The possibility

¹⁷ Narrowly considered, the *Unterland* and the *Oyberland* corresponded (more or less) with the mountainous non-Magyar regions of the Kingdom of Hungary, while the great eastern plain and parts of Transdanubia were Magyar and would constitute the much reduced post-World War I nation of Hungary. It was mainly in these regions that one would once have found Orthodox, even Hasidic Jews who spoke Hungarian, at times even as a first language (I thank Michael K. Silber for this information).

¹⁸ In the written corpus, Judeo-German is usually referred to as *idiš-daytš* (Fleischer 2018:239) or as *yekiše idiš/šprax* ‘German Yiddish/language’. For example: “di yekiše idiš, vos iz geven kimat reyn daytš mit a bisl a idišn flevor” [The Yekish [German] Yiddish, that was almost pure German with a bit of a Jewish/Yiddish flavor] (kaveshtiebel, 2019). See also Poll 1965:130 on Judeo-German in Hungary.

of direct influence of Judeo-German is supported by metalinguistic comments such as “*say ven (ven imer, oyf di yekiše šprax)...*” [whenever [*say ven*] (whenever [*ven imer*] in the German language)...] (kaveshtiebel, 2018). Most speakers of Judeo-German (as well as German) were among the Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia that came to Williamsburg in 1938 and 1939 (Kranzler 1961:95, 257–259).

4.2. *Wh-Imer in Prewar Judeo-German and Yiddish Texts.*

German constructions such as *wh-immer* might also have been present in *Unterland* Yiddish, but perhaps only in formal or written registers, as discussed below. Satmar Yiddish derives mainly from *Unterland* Yiddish (Krogh 2012), maintaining *Unterland* phonological, syntactic, and lexical features (for example, the use of *aybik/aybig* ‘always’ mentioned at the beginning of section 3 is typical of the *Unterland* (see *ajbæg* in Weinreich 1964:261).

In order to check the distribution of *wh-immer/imer* constructions in prewar Judeo-German and Yiddish texts, I searched the two databases of the *Yiddish Book Center’s Full-Text Search* and *Otzar HaHochma* (see iii in section 2 above).¹⁹ Very few occurrences of *wh-imer* were attested in prewar Yiddish texts, as follows: Eight occurrences of *wh-immer* constructions were attested in Judeo-German texts written or printed between 1881–1905 in Habsburg territories, printed in Sighet, Paks, Budapest etc.; written by writers from Kleinwardein (Kisvárdá), Pressburg (Bratislava), etc., for example: “...und vas immer ihm cukommt nixt vankend cu verden” [and whatever may happen to him, he should not lose faith] (Krausz 1899:91; Krausz was the rabbi of Jánoshalma and later of Lackenbach). Furthermore, seven occurrences of *wh-imer* constructions were attested in Yiddish books published in the US and Canada between 1919–1939, six of which by writers born in Habsburg territories (for example, Sarah Berndstein Smith, b. 1888 in Bustyháza, and Samuel Rocker, b. 1864 in Görlitz). Finally, three occurrences of *wh-immer* constructions were attested in *Unterland* Yiddish texts, two of which in a text printed in Sighet in 1935, for example, “vos immer es geht fariber iber

¹⁹ In neither of the two database searches was there a limitation on the distance between the *wh*-element and *imer/immer*. Note that in all occurrences, there were no attested cases of intervening elements between the *wh*-element and *imer/immer* (see, for instance, the German pattern *wh + auch + immer*).

dem menš, zoll er zix ništ zorgen, den a foter tit kayn šlextc far zayne kinder” [Whatever happens to a person, they should not be worried, since a father never harms his children] (Strohli 1935:156); the other in a letter written in Homok (a village near Satmar) in 1936 (Gross 2004:156).

While these databases are by no means exhaustive, the fact that very few occurrences of *wh-imer* were attested in thousands of prewar Yiddish texts suggests that this is not an original Yiddish construction (that is, it is not inherited from German as the source language from which Yiddish originally developed). Rather, it seems plausible that this construction was introduced to Habsburg Yiddish speakers through contact with German, and, possibly, to Yiddish speakers in the United States through contact with English.

Another interesting documentation of *wh-imer* is found in a postwar (transcribed) sermon delivered by the founder of Satmar, rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum: “vu imer m’kumt, broyx men mesaken cu zayn” [wherever one goes, one has to make things right] (Teitelbaum 2006:235). This documentation suggests that *wh-imer* constructions might not have been limited to written texts but were used in formal spoken Yiddish as well.

The use of German and Germanized forms in written and formal-spoken *Unterland* Yiddish may reflect the historical impact of Western Yiddish or an impact of *Oyberland* Judeo-German on spoken *Unterland* Yiddish (Weinreich 1958:193, Weinreich 1964:262–263), or rather, a stylistic tendency to Germanize Yiddish in formal contexts. Note that the tendency to Germanize Yiddish in order to elevate the language is typical of Habsburg Yiddish in general. Galician Yiddish, for example, was impacted by continued exposure to the German language under Austrian rule (Bartal & Polonsky 1999:3, Silber 2017:790–791; see an example in Kiefer 1995:272–273). Hasidic speakers of Galician Yiddish in the postwar-United States joined either Galician Hasidic groups, such as Bobov and Belz, or Hungarian groups, such as Satmar (Kranzler 1961:18–20, Krogh 2014:65, Sadock & Masor 2018). Either way, it is possible that some German features were introduced to the emerging American Hasidic Yiddish through Galician Hasidim.²⁰

²⁰ Additionally, note that some Galician Hasidim came to the United States in the late 1930s after spending some 20 years in Vienna. After the Russian westward deportation of some 200,000–450,000 Galician Jews in 1914–1915 (Engel 2010), about 80,000–130,000 Jews, many of them Hasidim, found shelter in Vienna, and

To sum up, it is possible that Germanized Yiddish elevated styles and Judeo-German varieties influenced American Hasidic Yiddish in the early stages of its formation. German might have influenced American Hasidic Yiddish indirectly, due to its role as a prestigious linguistic model for certain Yiddish formal styles, and also directly, due to the possible impact of contact with spoken Judeo-German and spoken Germanized Yiddish varieties.

The impact of German could have made the *wh-immer* pattern available to Yiddish speakers, who adopted it due to its identification with the parallel English construction. Such hypothesized impact of German on spoken American Hasidic Yiddish need not be limited to *wh-immer*. For example, it is possible that common American forms such as *vem* ‘whom’ (Standard Yiddish and Israeli Yiddish *vemen*) also reflect German influence, but this needs further investigation.²¹ Besides, dozens of Germanisms, such as *urzax* ‘reason’ (Standard Yiddish *sibe*) and *nubar* ‘useful’ (Standard Yiddish *nuclex/niclex*), were attested in the spoken American corpus. However, these may be typical of an elevated German-like style and influenced by the Germanized written Hasidic Yiddish style rather than reflecting an organic “Habsburg” German component. Moreover, note again that in the corpus such Germanisms appeared in the formal genres of radio interviews and public sermons, and it is not clear whether they are used in everyday American Yiddish. Any attempt to examine different types of German impact on Hasidic Yiddish should therefore be highly sensitive to the different registers of use, distinguishing between formal written Yiddish (books and newspapers), less formal written Yiddish (such as Yiddish in Hasidic Internet forums), formal spoken Yiddish (such as sermons), and everyday spoken Hasidic Yiddish. Only Germanisms used in everyday speech are likely to reflect contact with spoken German: either historical contact with German in Habsburg Yiddish varieties and/or contact with Judeo-German varieties during the formation of Williamsburg Yiddish.

many of the Hasidim remained in Vienna after World War I (Wodziński 2018b:253–254).

²¹ The form *vem* is commonly used in both spoken and written American corpora, alongside the Standard (and Israeli) Yiddish *vemen*.

5. American Versus Israeli Hungarian Yiddish.

It seems likely that, as well as English, both Germanized Yiddish varieties and Judeo-German played a part in the rise of the *wh-imer* constructions, though the relative role played by each language is hard to establish. Yet even if in this specific case the impact of German may be limited or even uncertain, it is important to note that American Hasidic Yiddish has maintained many “Habsburg” or Hungarian-Galician features, such as the use of Germanisms. This feature of American Yiddish, mainly Satmar Yiddish, becomes more salient when compared to another contemporary Hungarian Hasidic Yiddish variety, spoken in Israel. While I hope that future comparative studies of contemporary Hasidic Yiddish dialects will shed more light on the subject, some preliminary explanations for this difference may be briefly presented.

To begin with, note that the communities that best maintain Yiddish in Israel are also Hungarian, mainly “zealous” extremist groups such as *Toldot Aharon* (originally founded in interwar Satmar; Biale et al. 2018:720–721).²² However, the spoken language of such “Hungarians” is less Germanized than American Satmar Yiddish (for example, almost no German loanwords are attested in the Israeli Hungarian spoken corpus). Two possible explanations may be suggested for this difference. First, each community had its own formation history and, as a consequence, a distinct dialectal makeup and dialect contact setting. Second, the two communities show different literacy rates in Yiddish, which may also contribute to the presence of German features in the spoken language.

Speakers of Habsburg Yiddish (mainly Hungarian Hasidim), who came to the United States after World War II, during the late 1940s and 1950s, were a rather homogenous group that was free to choose where to settle. Many of them chose to settle in Williamsburg, where they formed their own organized communities, with Hungarian and Galician Yiddish as dominant varieties. They maintained strict communal boundaries, with very limited contact with outsiders, even if these outsiders were religious Jews (Poll 1962:38). Such isolated life of a homogeneous group in one

²² The term *zealous* is used by group members themselves; *Toldot Aharon* and its offshoot, *Toldot Avraham Yitskhak* are the largest groups maintaining Yiddish as a primary language in Israel, with 2,874 households as of 2016 (Wodziński 2018a:199), residing mostly in Jerusalem and the neighboring city of Bet Shemesh.

place supported the maintenance of Habsburg and typical Hungarian features, which remain evident in American Hasidic Yiddish to this day.

While the Williamsburg community appears to be an isolated Hungarian enclave formed within a single decade in a single neighborhood in Brooklyn, the formation process of Hungarian Hasidic communities in Israel was more complex. Some groups of Hungarian orthodox (*Ashkenazim*) and Hasidim came to Ottoman Palestine before World War I and settled mostly in Jerusalem (for example in the neighborhood *batey ungarin/ungeriše hayzer* ‘Hungarian houses’, established in 1891). These “Hungarians” and other Habsburg Hasidim found in Jerusalem existing Hasidic communities, where Northeastern and Southeastern Yiddish varieties were widespread (that is, Yiddish dialects that are more “Slavic”, with Slavic loanwords and syntactic calques). This is because the founders of the Hasidic communities in Ottoman Palestine in the late 18th and early 19th centuries came mainly from Eastern Belarus (Wodziński 2018a:23). As for Northeastern Yiddish, it was also used in the so-called “Jerusalemite” ascetic, non-Hasidic groups, who maintain their “Lithuanian” Yiddish dialect to this day (Assouline 2010). As a result, even the contemporary Yiddish of a largely Hungarian group such as *Toldot Aharon* is mixed with Northeastern Jerusalemite Yiddish, which blurs its distinct Hungarian traits. Another factor that hindered the maintenance of Hungarian features in Israel was the fact that unlike Williamsburg Hasidim in the late 1940s and 1950s, Hungarian Hasidim who came to Israel after 1948 could not always choose where to settle. These Hasidim either joined family members in different locations in Israel or were sent to temporary immigrant camps, thus postponing the creation of homogenous Hasidic centers like the one in Williamsburg.

Thus, in the United States both the relative homogeneity of the Hasidic community as well as the concentration of Habsburg, mainly Hungarian Hasidim in one location in the 1940s and 1950s supported the maintenance of Habsburg and especially Hungarian features. By contrast, dialect contact in Jerusalem and the geographical dispersion of Hasidim in Israel of the 1950s hindered the maintenance of such features.²³

²³ Hasidic communities and neighborhoods were formed later in Israel as well (Biale et al. 2018:708–711). However, most contemporary Hasidic sects in present day Israel maintain Yiddish only as a heritage language, with Hebrew as the dominant language. Only the segregated “zealous” sects, such as *Toldot*

The second explanation is based on the difference in Yiddish literacy rates observed within the two communities. Yiddish literacy rates are generally much higher in the United States, whereas Yiddish-speaking Hasidim in Israel read and write mostly in Hebrew (Assouline 2018:475). American Hasidim are thus more exposed to German loanwords common in written Hasidic Yiddish texts. As a result, higher Yiddish literacy rates may also support the maintenance of German features in the United States.

In conclusion, while contemporary Hasidic Yiddish varieties spoken in different countries are distinct mainly due to the different contact languages, their different dialectal makeup, formation history, and other sociolinguistic factors should also be considered in any comparative study of Hasidic Yiddish dialects. This is of course relevant not only to American and Israeli Yiddish, but also to European varieties. The impact of the majority language remains crucial and can explain many linguistic changes, but other factors may be important as well. For example, returning to the concessive conditional patterns discussed above, the fact that the Slavic pattern with negation is used by Israeli Hungarian speakers (while never attested in the American spoken corpus) may testify both to past and contemporary contact with speakers of the Slavic, North- and Southeastern Yiddish dialects, as well as to the impact of Israeli Hebrew, where a similar pattern exists.²⁴

By contrast, in the United States the Slavic negation pattern is not supported by any parallel pattern: Contact with Northeastern Yiddish speakers is very limited, and a similar pattern with negation does not exist in English.²⁵ As a result, the use of the negation pattern in the American

Aharon, who ideologically oppose the use of Israeli Hebrew, maintain Yiddish in a similar manner to that found in the United States (Assouline 2017:6–9).

²⁴ Concessive conditionals with negation in Modern Hebrew probably reflect the Yiddish/Slavic pattern (see, among others, Garbell 1930:70, Haspelmath & König 1998:615–616), as do Hebrew nonspecific free relatives and indefinites with the same pattern.

²⁵ Most Hasidic Yiddish speakers in the United States speak Central Yiddish dialects, mainly Hungarian and Galician. Northeastern Yiddish is maintained among some Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidim in Crown Heights (Brooklyn), but the number of Hasidic Northeastern Yiddish speakers in the United States is small (Sadock & Masor 2018:90), and there is no extensive daily contact between

corpora seems to be decreasing. Similarly, the use of *wh-imer* by American speakers can be attributed both to the impact of English and to the possible impact of German, due to the role played by Germanized Yiddish and Judeo-German in the development of Williamsburg Yiddish. Both factors contribute to American Hasidic Yiddish, which was in any case more “Germanic” and less “Slavic” to begin with, gradually becoming even more “Germanic”.

6. Future Research Directions.

The study of Hasidic Yiddish is still in its early stages, and still suffers from the lack of scholarly interest in Hasidic Yiddish throughout the second half of the 20th century (Nove 2018). As a result, there is very little information about the formative years of contemporary Hasidic Yiddish dialects and the various factors affecting their development. This paper employed the construction *wh-imer* in order to speculate about the possible impact of German on the emerging American Hasidic Yiddish in Williamsburg. Further research is needed in order to assess the possible impact of past contact languages on contemporary Yiddish varieties. In the American case, due to the multilingual nature of the emerging Hasidic community in the 1950s, it would be fruitful to examine the possible impact of a Hungarian substrate, as well as that of a German superstrate (and possibly also substrate). Further studies in other Hasidic communities worldwide would inform our understanding of the interplay of past and present contact languages in the development of contemporary Yiddish varieties.

APPENDIX

In order to briefly illustrate the differences between Judeo-German and Germanized Yiddish texts, consider the following examples. All texts are written in the Hebrew alphabet. The transcription follows the YIVO transliteration rules, with three modifications: [c] is used instead of [ts], [š] instead of [sh], and [x] instead of [kh]. Hebrew elements are transcribed as in Standard Yiddish.

Northeastern and Central Yiddish speakers in the United States, as there is in Jerusalem (Assouline 2014:40–41).

Judeo-German (from the *Oyberland*)

An excerpt from the will of Abraham Ratzerdorfer, written before his death in Pressburg (Bratislava), 1881:

nun yeet komt di cayt ... verdet mix fihren ... veys velxen veg ix for mir habe, velxe grosse ferantvortung, darum mayne libe kinder am”š [Hebrew acronym; “see what I have written above”], maxt es ayx cur oyfgabe, das man zagen zoll oyf ayx, di kinder haben ayne gute ehrciung gehabt, und im yidišem veg ergocen. (Geshtetner 1990:310)

So now comes the time... [you] will guide me ... [I] know which path I have in front of me, what great responsibility, therefore my beloved children, see what I have written above, make it your task that people will say about you: “The children had a good upbringing, and were raised in the Jewish way”.

An excerpt from Shtern 1905 (b. 1861 in Mád; a rabbi in Marosludas/Luduš):

indem ix diezes seyfer [book] b”h [by the help of God] der öffentlixkayt ibergebe, eraxte ix als mayne pflixt cu bemerken: ix vollte nämlix—um der kritik oys cu veyxen—am šlusse dem seyfer ayne špraxfehler berixtigung drucken lassen. aber ayn zehr geaxteter rabbiner n”y [may his light shine] in bayern, šrieb mir, das er ayne zolxe berixtigung fir hōxst ungeaygnet halte—ihre lezer in ungar—šraybt er—und oyx die in daytšland verden es ihnen nixt ibel nehmen, vegn daytše špraxfehler unterlofyen zind, und geben zix geviss mit dem guten inhalte cu frieden.²⁶ (Shtern 1905, foreword)

By presenting this book to the public, I consider it my duty to state [the following]: In order to avoid criticism, I wanted to have corrections of language-mistakes printed at the end of the book. But a very respected rabbi (may his light shine) in Bavaria wrote me that he considers the publication of corrections highly unsuitable. “Your readers in Hungary”, he writes, “and also those in Germany will not blame you for having made mistakes in German, but will rather be satisfied with the valuable content [of your book]”.

²⁶ The umlaut (in the words *öffentlixkayt*, *nämlix* and *hōxst*) appears in the original Hebrew text, above the Hebrew letter *Aleph*.

An excerpt from the will of Abraham Pollak (a rabbi in Zsámbék, and later in Poughkeepsie and McKeesport in the US. Written before his death in Pittsburgh, 1934):

dir zugosi eyšes xayil [my wife, virtuous woman] danke ix fir dayne bezondere gute und oyfopferung fir mix, und unzere kinder yxi' [may they live], du hast immer nur arbayt, und zorge gehabt an mayner zayte, fercayhe es mir, zay mir moyxl [forgive] den caar [sorrow] das ix dix gebraxt habe gegen daynen villen nach amerike, mayn kavone [intention] vahr cum guten. (Pollak 1967:11)

I thank you, my virtuous wife, for your unique goodness and your sacrifice for me and for our children, long may they live. You always had work and worries [living] by my side. Forgive me, forgive the sorrow caused by my bringing you to America against your will. My intention was a good one.

Germanized Yiddish (from the *Unterland*)

Excerpts from letters, written by Yekhiel Homoker in 1936-1940 to his son and daughter-in-law in New York (from Homok/Kholmok, a village near Satmar). Besides the Germanized orthography, the German-like characteristics used by this writer are mainly the sporadic use of German verbal conjugation (including preterite forms such as *vahr, vahren* (Ger. *war, waren*) and subjunctive forms such as *hette* (Ger. *hätte*)), and of German lexicon. Note that the orthography lacks the Yiddish diacritics, so that the writing of some elements allows for both a German-like and a Yiddish pronunciation (both options are given in the transcription). The Yiddish transcription represents the YIVO standard pronunciation rather than the pronunciation of the writer's Yiddish, e.g. *xosn* 'groom' and *tog* 'day' (pronounced *xusn* and *tug* in *Unterland* Yiddish). The transcription follows the YIVO transliteration rules (with three modifications: [c] is used instead of [ts], [š] instead of [sh] and [x] instead of [kh]).

geliebte kinder n"y [may your light shine (long may you live)], fon yect virde ay"h [God willing] šrayben fir enk in yudiše špraxe dennox ix habe biz yect immer gešrieben blh"k [in the holy tongue] fir dir lieber zohn n"y [may your light shine] aber/ober fon yetct an/on gefangen befinde ix mix das/dos fer anderen, den ix volte das die liebes froy šti' [may she live] zol oyx ferštehn vas/vos ix šreibe fir enk ci giten. [...] lieber zohn n"y [may your light shine] die ferlofene voxen zinden vir zehr umbevist fon dayn lage – den dem brief vas/vos du hast/host gešrieben das di bist

ayn xosn [groom] gevorn haben/hoben mir nixt bekommen biz cum haytiegen tag/tog oyx nixt ...

(Gross 2004:164)

Beloved children, may your light shine. From now on, I will write you, God willing, in the Jewish/Yiddish language, after always having written to you, beloved son, may your light shine, in the holy tongue [Hebrew]. But from now on I would change this, since I want your beloved wife [my daughter in law], long may she live, to also understand what I write you (may they only be good things) [...] Beloved son, may your light shine, during the last few weeks we were not informed about your circumstances, since we have not received, to this day, the letter in which you wrote that you got engaged.

liebe kinder [...] mir haben/hoben bekommen šrayben fon enk [...] das etc hate cu giten gekommen ayn xošev'n [important] gast ayn thayeres toxter šti' [may she live] lmz't [congratulations, may she have good fortune]. oyf diezen brief haben/hoben mir zo fort beantvortet in mir haben/hoben gehoft cu bekommen vayter šrayben fon enk das mir zollten kenen begrissen mit dem namen/nomen fon enker toxter šti' [may she live], aber/ober biz yect habe ix gevartet in mir veysen nox alc nixt vi das/dos naves geborene fraylene heyst cu gitin amo"š [may she live to be a hundred and twenty]

(Gross 2004:184)

Beloved children, we received your message [...] that you happily received 'a distinguished guest', a dear daughter, may she live and have good fortune. We immediately replied to this letter, and we hoped for more letters from you, so that you would also write us more, so that we could congratulate you on the name of your daughter, may she live and be well. But I have been waiting to this day, and we still do not know how the new born missy is called (may her name bring her only good), may she live to be a hundred and twenty.

dieze voxte habe fon enk brief. oyx di cvey fotografyen erhalten, die fotografyen vas/vos mir haben/hoben zehr švehr gevartet [...] gloybet mir liebe kinder das/dos herc tit mir veh das zo lange cayt haben/hoben mir nixt di zxyie [privilege] cu zehen zix mindlix layder, aber/ober mir müssen hofen cu ašy"t [The Lord] das es vird oyf diezen oyx kommen di cayt bekorev [soon] ay"h [God willing].

(Gross 2004:186)

This week I received letter/s from you, also received the two photos, the photos that we waited so long for [...] Believe me, beloved children, my heart aches since we did not have the chance to meet in person and to talk for so long, unfortunately. But we must hope to the Lord that the time for this will also come soon, God willing.

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Department of Hebrew Language
 University of Haifa
 199 Aba Khoushy Avenue, Mt. Carmel
 Haifa 3498838
 Israel
 [dalitassouline@gmail.com]