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## Hebrew and Polish: Mutual Influences and Their Contribution in Creating a Polish Criminals' Jargon

**Abstract:** In this paper I wish to present the complexity of Jewish-Polish relations from the 19th century until the interwar period, with emphasis on sociolinguistic issues. I will illustrate the circumstances of the contact between the Polish and Hebrew languages. Poles and Jews, who lived side by side, developed successful relationships, but mainly in the criminal underworld. That was reflected in a sociolect – a dialect of criminals that constituted a mixture of Polish, Yiddish, Russian, and several other languages, including quite a few Hebrew words, which with time adopted new meanings. Moreover, I will provide some examples of Hebrew words used in Polish criminal jargon, as well as those which have been coined in every-day Polish. Then I will refer to some Hebrew words that are not connected with a world of crime and are still in use in spoken Polish.

**Keywords:** *sociolect; criminal jargon; Hebrew; Polish; interlingual contacts; Polish-Jewish relations; spoken language*

### Introduction

One of the most important factors forming a national, ethnic and cultural identity is language (Bokszański, 1977; Fishman, 1971; Gołąbek, 2015; Piotrowski, 1976; Straczuk, 1999). When it comes to Hebrew, its identity-forming role for Jews is undeniable. Before Hebrew established its position as the most important Jewish language, it was Yiddish that played this role for European Jewry. Yiddish adopted some elements of Hebrew vocabulary and grammar (Geller, 1994) and, being in a continuous contact with European languages, absorbed from them numerous words and structures. Also, many influences of Yiddish may be observed in European languages (Weinreich, 1968). In this paper I wish to examine the circumstances of contact between two genetically and culturally distant languages: Hebrew and Polish. Paradoxically, this encounter has little to do with building and strengthening any national identity; quite the contrary: this contact and mutual influences were taking place while while cultural and ethnic differences were getting blurred.

The complexity of Jewish-Polish relations has so far been studied by historians (Cała et al., 2000; Cała, 2005; Kopciowski, 2014; Żyndul, 2004), literature specialists (Molisak, 2016; Prokop-Janiec, 2014), and linguists, mainly those specializing in Yiddish, who focused on the influence of Slavic languages (including Polish) on Yiddish (Geller, 1994), and the influence of Yiddish on Polish (Altbauer, 2002; Brzezina, 1986; Wieczorkiewicz, 1966b). However, a comprehensive study that presents the contribution of Hebrew to Polish is lacking.

This paper is an attempt to fill this gap: it will therefore deal with the influence of the Hebrew language on contemporary spoken Polish. I will illustrate the historical background, as well as the reasons for, and the circumstances of, contact between those two languages, which occurred not directly, but mostly through Yiddish. Poles and Jews lived side by side, yet they developed a successful relationship not necessarily within the social strata of the middle class, but within the dregs of society. These connections influenced the language of the underworld and were expressed in the development of a common sociolect – the dialect of criminals that constituted a mixture of Polish, Yiddish, Russian and several other languages, with quite a few Hebrew words that, over time, adopted a new meaning.

## Historical background

Jewish settlement in Poland began around the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> / beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Jewish population grew continuously, reaching 10% of the total population of the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the urban Jewish population increased significantly (Cała et al., 2000; Żyndul, 2004).

In the period between the two world wars, up to 76.4% Jews were living in cities. In Lodz, Lvov, Cracow and Vilna they constituted about 30% of the population. In Warsaw, the Jewish community in this period reached even 42% of the city's population. Warsaw was then one of the largest centres of vibrant Jewish life due to the activities of political parties, theatres, artists, as well as numerous Jewish magazines and books in Yiddish, Polish and Hebrew being published here (Cała et al., 2000; Żyndul, 2004).

## The spoken languages

As is generally known, Polish Jews were at least trilingual. Polish was used for communication outside the Jewish quarter; Yiddish was the everyday language (in Poland it was spoken from the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century), while Hebrew was a liturgical language, which was also used for correspondence (both official and private). Under the influence of the *Haskala*, Jews wishing to disconnect from Yiddish, which they considered to be a symbol of a cultural ghetto, sought to revive the Hebrew language and to speak it. It is important to note that assimilated Jews were very fluent in Polish, while Poles did not know Yiddish, and certainly not Hebrew (Brzezina, 1986; Małocha, 1994).

## Relations between Jews and Poles

Most of the Jews dealt in trade and crafts. Some ran flour mills, saw mills or taverns. In addition, they were engaged in various services for their community, such as rabbis, cantors and *melameds*-teachers (Cała et al., 2000; Żyndul, 2004).

The economic and social changes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to a change in the employment structure of the Jewish population: Jews were bankers, entrepreneurs, burghers and labourers. Starting from the second half of the century, they became a visible group among doctors, lawyers, journalists, as well as criminals (Cała et al., 2000; Żyndul, 2004).

Jews lived in their quarters, without much contact with the outside world. But Polish and Jewish communities were never entirely separated. Thanks to the main Jewish occupations: trade and crafts, there were frequent opportunities for mutual contacts. Moreover, Christian women worked in Jewish houses as maids and nursing mothers. Jewish bands would play at Christian weddings. Polish villagers held dance parties in taverns run by Jews. Jewish peddlers or craftsmen wandered from town to town, providing a connection with the outside world and a source of news from the region. The villagers, as well as representatives of the bourgeoisie, visited *tzaddikim*, believing in their miraculous powers to heal diseases (Cała, 2005). These contacts resulted in mutual influences in the two cultures, which were expressed in clothing, ornaments, songs, folk tales and language (Prokop-Janiec, 2014).

Few, however, were the areas of life in which a long-term cooperation and relationships developed. One of them was the underworld – here, close relations were possible, and even desired.

The involvement of Jews in the world of crime was first mentioned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, 65% of the dealers of stolen property in Cracow were Jews (including Jewish women). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews began also to be engaged in other types of offenses such as smuggling, forging documents, human trafficking, as well as pimping (Cała et al., 2000, p. 272).

After the First World War the country was overwhelmed with chaos; hunger, poverty, diseases, desertion – in such circumstances “multicultural” criminal gangs were easily formed. The gang members were mostly army deserters: Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Jews and Gypsies. Their main occupation was robbing peddlers and stealing horses (Cała et al., 2000, p. 272).

The underworld in Warsaw was well organized, especially when it came to theft and prostitution. It could boast several prominent figures, such as the famous burglar Icchak Farberowicz, known as Urke Nachalnik, who enjoyed great respect among his colleagues, both Jews and Poles. While serving a prison sentence, he wrote a novel, *Biography of a criminal*<sup>1</sup>, which became a bestseller (Molisak, 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> Nachalnik, U. (1989). *Życiorys własny przestępcy*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie.

Prostitution and trafficking in women were at the time serious social problems, reflected in many literary texts, such as the novels of I.B. Singer or in *Motke Ganev* by Shalom Ash, whose protagonist became a pimp after escaping from his *shtetl* (Molisak, 2016).

A good command of language (in this case, Polish and criminal jargon) as well as good orientation in the city were crucial for successful cooperation in the underworld. However, for the overwhelming majority of Jews it was difficult to find their way in the Christian part of the city, and for that they needed Polish partners, and vice versa. Most of the criminals of Polish origin lived in the Jewish quarter or found refuge there (Kopciowski, 2014).

Criminals, both Jews and Poles, living off the dregs of the society, were able to create a closed world of their own. They ceased to bear the characteristics of the representatives of their ethnic group: they were not Jews or Poles anymore – they simply became thieves or robbers. The shared life in hiding led to close ties that were expressed in eating together (as a result, Jews would stop eating kosher), playing cards, drinking alcohol, relations with prostitutes (the pimps who provided prostitutes were usually Jews). The Poles, on the other hand, would acquire elements of Yiddish language and Jewish customs. Time spent together led to a blurring of the differences between these two groups, while the weakening social barriers on the margins of the society allowed the two populations to develop good relations that left a mark on their common language.

### The criminals' language – main features

The offenders' language is recognized as both a professional and a secret language. Its secret character is deliberate. Polish criminal argot was based on the grammar of general Polish; its vocabulary was composed of Polish, German, Russian, Greek, Gypsy, Ukrainian, Latin, and Jewish elements (from Yiddish and from Hebrew as well) (Ułaszyn, 1951, pp. 49–57). The presence of the Jewish element in this language cannot be explained by the dominance of Jews among criminals, but stems from the need to create necessary words which will not be understandable for the general public.

### Hebrew words in Polish criminal jargon – grypsera

The Polish dialect of criminals is called *grypsera*. The table below contains some examples of Hebrew words which can be found in *grypsera*:

Table 1. Hebrew words in 'grypsera'

Polish word derived from Hebrew	Polish word's meaning in English	Pronunciation in Hebrew*	Hebrew root** / word and its basic meaning
chawira	lodge	<i>chaver</i>	חבר a friend
chelichy	money	<i>chiluf</i>	חליפה exchanging

Polish word derived from Hebrew	Polish word's meaning in English	Pronunciation in Hebrew*	Hebrew root** / word and its basic meaning
kejsef	money	<i>kesef</i>	כסף money
kiś	purse	<i>kis</i>	כיס a pocket
ganef	thief	<i>ganav</i>	בגנב a thief
kafar	peasant	<i>kfar</i>	כפר a village
gałach	priest	<i>galach</i>	ח.ל.ג. to shave
szacher	fraud	<i>sachar</i>	ס.ר.ח. to trade

\* A simplified phonetic transcription of Hebrew sounds is used here. The vowels are represented by a, e, i, o, u. The most dilemmatic consonants are represented as shown below:

Equivalent in phonetic transcription	Hebrew consonant
<i>v</i>	ו ב
At the end of a word, read as a vowel: <i>ah</i> Read as a consonant: <i>h</i>	ה
<i>z</i>	ז
<i>ch</i>	ח
<i>t</i>	ת ט
<i>k</i>	ק כ
<i>s</i>	ס
<i>f</i>	פ
<i>tz</i>	צ
<i>sh</i>	ש

\*\* Hebrew roots are marked by dots after each and every letter as כ.ט.ב., while words are written in their basic form like כסף.

The origin of the word “chawira” (other variants: hawira//chawirka//hawirka//chabira//chabirka) is being discussed by researchers. Małocha (1994, p. 136, 154) claims after Es-treicher (1903, p. 43) and Ułaszyn (1951, p. 49) that it was derived from the Hebrew word *kever* (a grave) rather than from *chavura* (a company, friends). However, as the lexeme’s “chawres” meaning is explained as “a friend”, “a companion” (Ułaszyn, 1951, p. 49); and “chewra”//“hewra” – as “a band”, “a company” (Stępnia, 1993, p. 67; 1986, p. 34; Wiczork-iewicz, 1966b, p. 123), a direct semantic connection between all the mentioned lexemes might be observed, which leads us to its basic meaning of the Hebrew word *chaver* (a friend), derived from the word-forming root ח.ב.ר. Presenting Hebrew roots besides lexemes derived from them is necessary in this paper, as it enables one to understand a wider spectrum of semantic fields relevant to specific Polish words discussed here.

When it comes to the word “chelichy”, it is mentioned by Ułaszyn (1951, p. 49) and translated as “money”, since “chillef” – “a bill of exchange”. According to the author, these

two words have been probably derived from Hebrew *chiluf* (from the root *chalaf* ח.ל.ף. – exchange, pass), which means “exchanging”.

”Kejsyf” (kejsyf), derived from Yiddish and Hebrew *kesef* כסף (money), means “money”, “dollars or other foreign currency”, “precious metals” (Estreicher, 1903, p. 43; more meanings: Stępnia 1993, p. 220).

”Kis” (kies//kis) (a purse) stems from Hebrew *kis*, which means “a pocket” (Estreicher, 1903, p. 57; Stępnia 1993, p. 228; Ułaszyn, 1951, p. 50).

”Ganef” (ganew//genef) was derived from the Hebrew word *ganav* through Yiddish *ganev*, which in all three languages meant the same: “a thief” (Stępnia 1993, p. 151; Ułaszyn, 1951, p. 50; Wiczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 179).

”Kafar”, derived from Hebrew *kfar* (a village), meant in Polish criminal jargon “a villager”; and “kafarka” – “a peasant woman”, “a housemaid” (Estreicher, 1903, p. 54; Stępnia 1993, p. 208; Ułaszyn, 1951, p. 50).

”Gałach” is translated as “a priest” (Estreicher, 1903, p. 49; Stępnia 1993, p. 15). According to Małocha (1994, p. 136), Yiddish *galech* (shaved, tonsured), derived from the Hebrew root *galach* ג.ל.ח. (to shave), was an insulting name for Christian priests.

According to Małocha (1994, p. 151), “szacher” is derived from Yiddish *socher* and Hebrew *sachar* and stands for “robbery associated with fraud”. Wiczorkiewicz (1966a, p. 399), besides the meaning mentioned above, connects the word with *szacher* from 19<sup>th</sup> century Warsaw dialect, which meant “ice cream seller” (derived from Russian “sachar” – sugar). According to the dictionary of Zgółkowa (1994–2205, Vol. 41, p. 183), the lexeme was derived from a German noun “Schacherer” (a cheater, a person who likes to haggle) and the verb “schachern” (to haggle). A comprehensive study of the whole word family derived from “szacher” may be found in Stępnia (1993, p. 544); however, its origin is not given. In modern Polish “szachrajstwo” is used in the meaning of cheating, chicanery, or as a part of the compound “szacher-macher” of the same meaning. Thus, it seems reasonable to derive “szacher” from the Hebrew root *sachar* ש.ח.ר. (trade), yet it is not the only possibility; the origin of the compound “szacher-macher” needs to be studied thoroughly.

The above Hebrew words were used by Polish criminals and might be found in dictionaries of *grypsera* (Stępnia 1986, 1993). However, one cannot verify whether they are still in use, as our knowledge on this language is quite limited: research materials are slightly outdated and access to new ones is lacking, since the most recent dictionary of Polish criminal jargon was published in 1993.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The most comprehensive study of Polish criminals’ jargon might be found in: Stępnia (1986, 1993) and Ułaszyn (1951).

## Hebrew words in *grypsera* that were incorporated into spoken Polish

Some words from *grypsera* gradually started to penetrate the Polish spoken language (Milewski, 1971). Here are some examples of the most common Hebrew words which are still used in every-day Polish:

Table 2. Words of Hebrew origin in ‘*grypsera*’ which are used in spoken Polish

Polish word derived from Hebrew	Polish word's meaning in English	Pronunciation in Hebrew	Hebrew root / word and its basic meaning
ksywa	letter; pseudonym	<i>katav</i>	כ.ת.כ. to write
dintojra	revenge of honour	<i>din Tora</i>	הרות ניד law of Tora
melina	lodge	<i>lun (lan)</i>	ל.נ.ל to sleep overnight
szaber	loot	<i>shavar</i>	ר.ב.ש. to break
szmira	muck	<i>shamar</i>	ר.מ.ש. to guard, to watch
trefny	illegal	<i>trefa</i>	הפרט not kosher

”Ksywa” (ksiwe//ksyw//ksywka//ksiwa//ksiba//kcywa) is given numerous meanings: “a letter”, “a document”, “illegal correspondence in prison”, “a forged document”, and many others. In modern colloquial Polish this word stands for “a nickname”, “a pseudonym” (Ludwikowski, Walczak, 1922, p. 41; Stepniak, 1993, p. 265–266; Ułaszyn, 1951, p. 50). According to Zgółkowa (1994–20015, Vol. 18, p. 237–238) its origin is unclear, while Ułaszyn (1951, p. 50) and Małocha (1994, p. 155) claim it is derived from Hebrew. It is unknown exactly which word served the basis for *ksywa*: *ktav* (a letter, writing, a document); *ketuba* (a marriage contract); or *ktiva* (writing). Nevertheless, all these Hebrew words come from one stem – כ.ת.כ. *katav*. Therefore, it may be stated quite unequivocally that *ksywa* was formed from some Hebrew word derived from the root *katav*, whose basic meaning is “to write”.

“Dintojra” (*dintojra*//*dentojra*//*dyntojra*//*tentojra*//*dintoria*//*dintorie*//*demtorie*) functioned in criminals’ language in the meaning of “arbitration of fellow-thieves”. With time, after penetrating from criminal to general language, it took on the meaning of “lynch”, “revenge”, “severe punishment for betraying the group”. Its origin is Hebrew *din Tora* ניד הרות (law of Tora, rabbinical court) (Stepniak, 1993, p. 101; Wiczorkiewicz 1966b, p. 138; Zgółkowa, 1994–2005, Vol. 8, p. 377–378).

The main meaning of the word “melina” (*melina*//*melinka*//*malina*//*malinka*) is “a secret hideout”, “hiding place of criminals” or “criminals’ flat” (Ludwikowski, Walczak, 1922, p. 47; Stepniak, 1993, p. 308; Wiczorkiewicz 1966b, p. 279). In modern colloquial Polish it stands

for a place where suspicious people gather to drink alcohol, also a place where you can illegally buy alcohol. According to Zgólkowa (1994–2005, Vol 10, p. 444–445), its origin is unknown. However, Małocha (1994, p. 155–156) as well as Ułaszyn (1951, p. 50) indicate its Hebrew origin and trace it back to from *meluna* (a lodge, a hut), which comes from the stem *lun* ל.נ.נ. – to sleep overnight.

”Szaber” is a noun translated as ”a tool for cracking”, ”crowbar” (Wieczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 399), as well as ”stealing goods of little value” (Stępiak, 1986, p. 235); while the verb ”szabrować” means ”to open”, ”to steal”, ”to break into”, ”to take or use waiif” (Ibid). Ułaszyn (1951, p. 50) and Małocha (1994, p. 136) confirm its Hebrew origin as derived from *shavar* ש.ב.ר. (to break); Estreicher (1903, p. 80) connects it with the Czech word ”szabr” (an ax) and Zgólkowa (1994–2005, Vol. 41, p. 179) stems it from German ”Schaber” (a scraper). As seen above, unambiguous determination of the origin of ”szaber” is pretty difficult and requires further research; however, the theory regarding its Hebrew roots does not seem to be unfounded, given the semantic closeness between *shavar* (to break) and ”szabrować” (to break into).

In criminals’ jargon, the word ”szmira” meant ”watch”, ”guard” (Małocha, 1994, p. 142; Ułaszyn, 1951, p. 50), as well as ”vodka” and ”a drunk person” (Ludwikowski, Walczak, 1922, p. 68; Stępiak, 1993, p. 556; Wieczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 404). Estreicher (1903, p. 81) adds to the list ”a girl from the dregs of society”, ”an ugly woman”. In Modern Polish it is used as ”trash”, ”kitsch”, ”muck”. Thus, such meanings are given by Zgólkowa (1994–2005, Vol. 41, p. 379), who derives the word from German ”Schmiere”. As the word’s first given meaning – ”watch, guard” might be easily explained by its Hebrew origin from *shmira* (watching), derived from the stem *shamar* ש.מ.ר. , its current use, origin and semantic change remain unclear.

”Trefny” (tryfny) is derived from Hebrew word *trefa* תפרט (not kosher) and in spoken Polish equates to ”stolen”, ”illegal”, ”unreliable” (Stępiak, 1993, p. 594; Zgólkowa, 1994–2005, Vol. 43, p. 168–169).

As phonetic changes of the above words (*katav* – ksywa; *din Tora* – dintojra) are explained by the interference of Yiddish or other languages, the shift in their semantic meaning is another question. Their etymology is clear – they were imported into Yiddish from Hebrew, while keeping their original meaning. However, in Polish their meaning changed. For example, *din Tora*, which originally meant ”rabbinical court”, got a new meaning: passing a death sentence on a criminal by a group of other criminals as a punishment for treason or breaking the rules of a gang. The same phenomenon of semantic shift might be observed when it comes to other words which were adopted in Polish criminals’ jargon. It could be explained by the secrecy of *grypsera* that must not be understandable to anyone from outside the criminal underworld.



### Hebrew words (not connected with a world of crime) in spoken Polish<sup>3</sup>

Table 3. Words of Hebrew origin, not conned with a criminals' word, contemporary spoken Polish

Polish word derived from Hebrew	Polish word's meaning in English	Pronunciation in Hebrew	Hebrew root / word and its basic meaning
bachor	brat, bastard	<i>bachur</i>	רוחב young man
chała	something of bad quality	<i>chalah</i>	הלה Challah
mamona	money	<i>mamon</i>	וןממ money
mecyje	something very special	<i>metziyah</i>	האיצמ finding, discovery
kabała	serious problems	<i>kabalah</i>	הלבק Kabbalah
sitwa	clique	<i>shutafut</i>	תופתוש partnership, cooperation
hucpa	audacity	<i>chutzpah</i>	הפצוח impertinence
gehenna	suffering	<i>gehenom</i>	מוניהג Hell
machlojka	illegal business	<i>machloket</i>	תקולחמ controversy, disagreement, argument

“Bachor” (brat, bastard, nasty child) was probably derived from Yiddish *bucher* and Hebrew *bachur* (young boy) (Małocha, 1994, p. 159; Zgółkowa, 1994–2005, Vol. 3, p. 144). Detailed discussion of the origin and meaning of the word “bachor” in Polish might be found in Stachowski (2010) and Rosół (2010). Rosół claims that it is definitely of Hebrew-Yiddish origin, probably derived from *bachur* רוחב (young boy) or *bechor* רוכב (first-born); Stachowski considers its other probable etymology: Slavic, Turkish or Hungarian. Ultimately, he states that its origin comes probably from the Yiddish word *bechor*, which was borrowed into the Polish language through Belarussian. The discussion remains open; nevertheless researchers agree that the origins of “bachor” are *bachor* or *bechor*, which are Hebrew words, then borrowed into Yiddish, and eventually into Polish.

The word “chała” has got two meanings: “challah for shabbat” and “worthless thing, cheap, trashy, carelessly done” (Wieczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 122; Zgółkowa, 1994–2205, Vol. 3, p.

<sup>3</sup> More about Warsaw dialect and spoken Polish: Wieczorkiewicz (1966a).

259–260). Since the origin of the first meaning is obviously clear, the source of the second one and the way of its semantic transformation remain unknown.

The origin of “mamona” (money, wealth, fortune) (Stępnik, 1993, p. 302; Wiczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 273) has been presented in the dictionary of Zgółkowa (1994–2005, Vol. 20, p. 201). It is claimed there that the word has been derived from Aramaic word *mamon* (money, material goods). As the same word of the same meaning exists in Hebrew (מָוֶנָה), its Hebrew-via-Yiddish origin cannot be ruled out.

”Mecyje” (rarities, delicacies) (Wiczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 277; Zgółkowa, 1994–2005, Vol. 20, p. 414) has been derived from Hebrew *metziyah* מְצִיָּה (finding, discovery, bargain), which was borrowed into Yiddish as *mecije*, and then into Polish.

When it comes to the origin of the colloquial meaning of “kabała” (difficult, troublesome situation), none of the resources provides it (Wiczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 212; Zgółkowa, 1994–2005, Vol. 15, p. 197–198). Most likely, the word was derived from Hebrew *kabbalah* קַבָּלָה, however, the circumstances and reasons for its semantic transformation have not been examined yet.

”Sitwa” has been derived from Yiddish *sitfes* and Hebrew *shutafut* תּוֹפְתוּשׁ (partnership, cooperation) (Altbauer, 2002, p. 107–108; Małocha, 1994, p. 156; Zgółkowa, 1994–2005, Vol. 38, p. 370). Its main meaning in Polish was “community”; “thieves’ company” (Stępnik, 1993, p. 503–504; Wiczorkiewicz, 1966b, p. 379). The word has been borrowed into colloquial Polish and nowadays it means: “caucus”; “clique”.

”Hucpa” (arrogance, impudence, audacity) has been derived from the Hebrew word of the same meaning *chutzpah* חֲצֻפָּה (Zgółkowa, 1994–2005, pp. 31–32).

”Gehenna”, derived from Hebrew *gehenom* גֵּהֵנוֹם (hell), has probably been borrowed into Polish through Greek and Latin (Zgółkowa, 1994–2005, Vol. 12, p. 207).

Regarding to Polish word “machlojka” (swindle), its etymology is explained by Altbauer (2002, pp. 115–116) as derived from the Hebrew noun *machloket* מַחְלוּקָה (controversy, disagreement, argument); however Zgółkowa (1994–2005, Vol. 20, pp. 73–74) claims that it comes from the German verb “makeln”.

Most of the above words, which had previously been in use in criminals’ language, are nowadays part of Polish vocabulary and their use is not connected with the underworld. Some of them are used in special contexts or with new collocations. For instance, “sitwa” has recently been used to name a group, clique of politicians who support each other in order not to lose their cushy jobs or to reveal their secrets. “Hucpa” usually collocates with the adjective “political” – “hucpa polityczna” refers to “impertinence and arrogance of politicians who overuse their power”. These Hebrew words, having penetrated standard Polish, lost their secrecy and probably are not in use in *grypsera* in their primary meanings, if at all.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, different social groups living side by side will develop interactions in all areas of life, including language. As Yiddish was influenced by Slavic languages (about 10% of the Yiddish vocabulary is Slavic) (Brzezina, 1986), Polish also borrowed from Yiddish, for example words like *belfer* (teacher), *cymes* (something delicious), *geszef* (business), *rejwach* (fuss, hoo-ha), *git* (good). Some terms connected with religion were borrowed from Hebrew via Greek or Latin, like: *amen*, *alleluja*, *cherubin* (Altbauer, 2002, p. 27; Stachowski, 2010, p. 186). Other Hebrew words were found useful by Polish criminals for their communication and thus were internalized in their secret-professional language. Some other words – after their secret character was invaded – were excluded from use in criminals' sociolect and incorporated into the Warsaw dialect, and eventually – into the spoken Polish language. There are still Hebrew words used in Modern Polish – they have received the Polish system of forms, some of them have expanded or changed their semantic fields (such as *ksywa* or *szaber*), some have changed phonetically, so that even Hebrew speakers cannot decipher their origin and meaning. Up to now the etymology of Jewish influences on the Polish language, as well as the process of semantic, grammatical and phonetic changes of Jewish/Hebrew words in Polish have not been researched thoroughly.

The purpose of the above study is to show a slightly different face of the Jewish-Polish relations, their complexity and vivid character, which have found expression in language. Further research will demand studying Polish literature and other texts of culture in order to observe the use of Hebrew words in *grypsera*, Warsaw dialect and standard Polish in various contexts, as well as their semantic and phonological changes.

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