

# לקט

יִיִּדִישֶׁע שטודיעס היינט

**Jiddistik heute**

**Yiddish Studies Today**

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*Leket* erscheint anlässlich des XV. Symposiums für Jiddische Studien in Deutschland, ein im Jahre 1998 von Erika Timm und Marion Aptroot als für das in Deutschland noch junge Fach Jiddistik und dessen interdisziplinären Umfeld ins Leben gerufenes Forum. Die im Band versammelten 32 Essays zur jiddischen Literatur-, Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft von Autoren aus Europa, den USA, Kanada und Israel vermitteln ein Bild von der Lebendigkeit und Vielfalt jiddistischer Forschung heute.



יִיִּדִישׁ אױסגאַבעס און פֿאַרשונג

Jiddistik Edition & Forschung

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Herausgegeben von Marion Aptroot, Efrat Gal-Ed,  
Roland Gruschka und Simon Neuberg

Band 1



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*Yidish: oysgabes un forshung*  
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*Leket: yidishe shtudyas haynt*  
*Leket: Jiddistik heute*  
*Leket: Yiddish Studies Today*

Bibliografische Information Der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek  
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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Typografie, Satz, Umschlag: Efrat Gal-Ed  
Druck und Bindung: Druckerei C. H. Beck, Nördlingen  
Hauptschriften: Brill, Hadassah EF  
Papier: 100 g / m<sup>2</sup> Geese-Spezial-Offset

ISBN 978-3-943460-09-4 ISSN 2194-8879  
URN urn:nbn:de:hbz:061-20120814-125211-1  
Printed in Germany

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## How Satmarish is Haredi Satmar Yiddish?

### 1. Introduction

With the exception of the northeastern Yiddish of the Chabad-Lubavitch Jews and other, mostly minor, groups based in Jerusalem, Haredi Yiddish today is of Central or, to a lesser extent, Southeastern Yiddish provenance. The Satmar Jews, who, according to their tradition, originate from the so-called Unterland, hold a particularly prominent position among today's Haredim. The Unterland mainly includes the low-lying country between the tributaries of the Tisa (the Bodrog/Laborec and the Someş) in the northwestern corner of Romania, in East Slovakia, and in Carpathian Ruthenia. In a wider sense, it also comprises the rest of Transylvania and the mountainous parts of East Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. This is contrasted with the *Oyberland*, which incorporates (present-day) Hungary, West Slovakia and the Burgenland.<sup>1</sup> The Unterland, in the narrower sense of the word, coincides largely with the formerly Hungarian counties of Szatmár, Máramaros, Ugocsa, Bereg and Ung. After World War I, the northern part of the Unterland (East Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia) was ceded to Czechoslovakia and the remaining parts to Romania. Carpathian Ruthenia, which in 1938/1939 came under Hungarian control as Carpatho-Ukraine, was annexed in 1945 to the Soviet Union and, in 1946, became part of Ukraine. The term 'Satmar' derives from the name of the town Satu Mare (Hungarian *Szatmárnémeti*), which has been part of Romania since 1920 and, during the interwar years, grew to become an important center for Hasidism. Haredi Jews usually name themselves after the Eastern and Central European towns where their respective Hasidic dynasties resided before World War II. Since 1928 the Satmar Jews have been led by the Teitelbaum rabbinic dynasty.

*I am greatly indebted to Sarah Jennings and Peter Slomanson for proofreading the manuscript. My seven informants deserve special thanks for generously sharing their native Unterland Yiddish with me.*

<sup>1</sup> Weinreich 1964: 249f.

The focus of this paper is the Yiddish of the Haredi Satmar Jews living in and around New York City. The Satmars form the largest group among today's Haredim and, therefore, occupy a key position in terms of the use of Yiddish. This is because they support and promote the use of Yiddish in daily life much more vigorously than all other Haredim. Consequently, they are behind most of the Haredi Yiddish-language publications appearing in and around New York City. Restricting observations to the New York City area is justified, since this area is the most important place of residence, literacy and printing for the Satmar movement. Despite the fact that we refer to today's Satmar community as 'Hungarian' in general and 'Satmar' in particular, these designations should not tempt us to view this group as an unbroken continuation of the Hasidim who lived in the Unterland before the war; since its foundation by Joel Teitelbaum (1887–1979) in the late 1940s, the modern Satmar movement has included adherents originating not only from Hungary (with its 1914 borders), but also from Poland and Ukraine. However, anyone who has heard the Yiddish spoken by Satmar Jews in New York City today for themselves will be in no doubt that it is in the first place Central Yiddish and in the second place, for the most part, Unterland Yiddish. The following are the predominant characteristic features of Central Yiddish, as they appear in Haredi Satmar Yiddish:<sup>2</sup>

- 1) Change of common Eastern Yiddish *\*ey* to *ay*, e. g. *\*eydel* > *aydl* 'polite, refined', *\*geyn* > *gayn* 'to go', *\*sheyn* > *shayn* 'beautiful', *\*shteyn* > *shtayn* 'stone'.
- 2) Monophthongization of common Eastern Yiddish *\*ay* to *a:*, e. g. *\*tsayt* > *tsa:t* 'time'.
- 3) Change of common Eastern Yiddish *\*au* to *ou*, e. g. *\*aus* > *ous* 'out'.
- 4) Diphthongization of common Eastern Yiddish *\*e:* to *ey*, e. g. *\*le:ben* > *leybm* 'to live'.
- 5) Raising of common Eastern Yiddish *\*o:* to *u:* that was subsequently, in part, shortened to *u*, e. g. *\*klo:r* > *klu:r* 'clear', *\*zo:gen* > *zugn* 'to say'.
- 6) Fronting of common Eastern Yiddish *\*u:* and *\*u* to *i:* and *i*, e. g. *\*bru:der* > *bri:der* 'brother', *\*gezunt* > *gezint* 'healthy'.
- 7) Change of common Eastern Yiddish *\*ou* to *oy*, e. g. *\*vounen* > *voynen* 'to live', *\*grous* > *groys* 'big'.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the transcription of Yiddish follows the standard system devised by YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. In the spoken Yiddish material, vowel length is indicated by a colon, and the sound [ʏ], a sandhi-conditioned variant of [χ], is rendered by the sign *gh*. Hungarian and Romanian loan words and names which occur in the spoken sequences without being phonetically integrated are italicized and in their traditional spelling.



Within Central Yiddish, the apical *r* in all positions is a shibboleth of Unterland Yiddish. In the rest of Central Yiddish, the dorsal *r*, which is often dropped in final position, predominates.

A systematic analysis of non-Haredi Unterland Yiddish and a corresponding description of modern Haredi Satmar Yiddish would help to clarify the relationship between the two idioms. The present paper attempts to fill this gap, at least partially, by comparing three grammatical traits in the two idioms mentioned.

The evidence is drawn from two types of sources, which, at first glance, seem to be complementary. The first source comprises recent oral recordings of some of the last in situ informants, i. e. native speakers of Unterland Yiddish who, unlike the founders of the Haredi Satmar movement in America, never left their Transylvanian home grounds (except for their enforced sojourn in German, Hungarian or Romanian concentration camps during World War II and short-term visits abroad after the war) and were never substantially exposed to any other variety of Yiddish than that of the Unterland. These recordings were conducted by this author in northwestern Romania in 2009, 2010 and 2011. The second source comprises recent published material in modern Haredi Satmar Yiddish from New York City.

It could be argued that these two types of sources, both oral and written, are too different to form an informative unity. Ideally, using oral material exclusively would, of course, offer the safest ground for investigating the genetic bonds between original Unterland Yiddish and modern Haredi Satmar Yiddish. However, given that previous research in this field is virtually non-existent, it seemed advantageous – as a preliminary to a more comprehensive survey on Haredi Satmar Yiddish – to consult written sources, which, with respect to the features I have set out to investigate, are not fundamentally different from what we would find in oral material. The material on which the survey is based is a corpus that reflects, as broadly as possible, the diversity of the daily private and public written language of the Satmar community in New York City. It includes issues of the weekly newspapers דער איך, דער בלאַט and דיע וואָך and an issue of the magazine געדאַנק. The oral material from Romania consists of extensive interviews with seven native speakers of Yiddish, born between 1913 and 1926 in the Unterland (in the wider sense of the word), the area from where the core of the postwar Satmar movement is said to originate:

Mr Gerson (Gershn) Schvarcz, b. 1913 in Érmihályfalva, then in Hungary, since 1920 Romanian as Valea lui Mihai, now residing in Oradea.

Mr Eugen (Menakhem-Yehude) Grünfeld, b. 1920 in Zau de Câmpie, c75 km southeast of Cluj-Napoca, now residing in Cluj-Napoca.

Mrs Margareta (Malke) Mezei, b. 1920 in Sighetu Marmăției, now residing in Oradea.

Mr Mihai (Avrom-Khaim) Freundlich, b. 1921 in Baia Mare, deceased 2011 in Oradea.

Mr Lazar (Moyshe-Leyzer) Freund, b. 1922 in Baia Mare, now residing in Oradea.

Mr Eugen (Yankev) Krausz, b. 1923 in the village of Zoreni, near Sânmihaiu de Câmpie, c80 km northeast of Cluj-Napoca, now residing in Cluj-Napoca.

Mrs Golda (Goldi) Salamon, b. 1926 in Sighetu Marmăției, where she still resides.

Each of the informants was interviewed about his or her life, especially before the Holocaust, and was subsequently presented with a questionnaire containing a number of sentences and words in Hungarian, which he or she was asked to translate into Yiddish.<sup>3</sup> All seven informants have native proficiency in Yiddish and (standard) Hungarian, as these were the languages in which they were brought up. In most cases, the state language, Romanian, was acquired later, typically in connection with formal education. With the exception of basic Russian, none of the informants speaks a Slavic language.

## 2. The Common Central Yiddish Basis

The two idioms in question, Unterland Yiddish and Haredi Satmar Yiddish, are undoubtedly very closely related varieties of the same Yiddish dialect. Common to both of them is, for instance, the consistent replacement of a nominal indirect object by a prepositional phrase with *far*. This trait, which to many outsiders with a command of secular Yiddish has become a virtual hallmark of Haredi Yiddish,<sup>4</sup> is also found in Polish Central Yiddish, but – according to my experience – merely as a rare variant construction.<sup>5</sup> Only in Transcarpathian (i. e. Unterland and

3 Not all translations provided by the informants were useful in the present investigation. In some cases, the translation proved inaccurate or did not elicit the desired construction(s).

4 On the spreading of this construction within contemporary Israeli Haredi Yiddish, where it is even used to mark historically direct objects, cf. Assouline, forthcoming.

5 It is generally agreed on that the dative is a more marked case than the nominative and the accusative. The innovation in question may have been triggered by a desire to indicate this higher degree of markedness by means of iconicity. The device was a prepositional

Oyberland)<sup>6</sup> Yiddish is it the canonical means of forming a nominal indirect object. Examples occur in the written Haredi Satmar Yiddish sources as well as in the Yiddish of my seven informants. Examples occurring in the written Haredi Satmar Yiddish sources include:

· der porets hot fardingen mit a sheyne por yor tsurik, zayn kretshme far a id do in dorf ‘The landowner rented his inn here in the village to a Jew a couple of years ago’ *Di vokh*: 6 (2).

· take dos hot untergezogt far hitler’n az di velt iz tsufridn mit vos er tut ‘The very same thing prompted Hitler to think that the world was content with what he did’ *Der idisher gedank*: 60 (2).

· shpeter [...] hobn idishe aktivistn zeyer asakh aroysgeholfn far di shvartse bafelkerung tsu bakemfn di natsyionale diskriminatsye kegn zey ‘Later Jewish activists helped the black population very much in fighting national discrimination against them’ *Der blat*: 12 (3).

· derfar kedey tsu vayzn far’n kenig az dos iz nisht rikhtig, hot mordkhe hatsadek gebetn dem kenig er zol gebn reshus az idn zoln zikh aroysshteln un nekome nemen fun zeyere sonim ‘Therefore, Mordecai Hatzadik – to show the king this was not right – asked the king to permit the Jews to rise and take revenge on their enemies’ *Der id A*: 55 (1).

In the spoken Yiddish of my seven informants we find:

Schvarcz:

· (In reply to the question *tshaushesku?* [Ceașescu?]) er iz geveyn a giter mentsh – yo – er hod gegeybm ales far de yi:dn (1. 06) ‘He was a good man – yes – he gave the Jews everything’

Grünfeld:

· in der za:t transilvanye vus i ibergegeybm gevorn far [...] ungarn (II. 1. 07) ‘in the part of Transylvania that was ceded to Hungary’

phrase with *far* – a construction widely used in Yiddish to express notions of benefactivity and malefactivity. Hungarian is not likely to have played a part in this process since Hungarian does not use prepositions at all.

6 Cf. Weinreich 1964: 257f.

Mezei:

- vuz zol igh zogn far da:n khusn? (o. 55) 'What shall I say to your fiancé?'
- va:l dus hod gefeln far yeydn (1. 18) 'because this [story] used to please everybody'

Freundlich:

- gh dertsayl es far ale yi:dn (II. o. 11) 'I say it to all Jews'
- dus ken ikh nisht moykhl za:n – nisht far got (II. o. 18) 'For that I cannot forgive God'

Freund:

de houz indzere hot men gegeybm far de doytshn (o. 21; the informant's Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Odaadták a házat a németeknek*) 'Our house was given to the Germans'

Krausz:

· des houez hot men jedzd gegeybm far de doytshn (II. o. 26; the informant's Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Odaadták a házat a németeknek*) 'The house has now been given to the Germans'

Salamon:

hob igh gezukt far de mi:me (III. 1. 12) 'Then I said to my aunt.'

In both corpora *far* is also used with personal pronouns, e. g.:

- mayn meynung iz: dos men darf dos yo vayzen far ir 'My opinion is that you should show it to her' *Di vokh: 12* (3–4).
- de ba:be ester ho gezukt far mir (Salamon, I. 1. 41) 'Grandma Esther said to me.'

There can be no doubt that the innovation that underlies this feature by *far* predates the Holocaust.<sup>7</sup> Given that it is firmly established, not only

<sup>7</sup> In songs in Oyberland Yiddish, edited by Taglikht in 1929 (based on his recollection of yeshivah students performing them c50 years earlier), there are instances of this construction, e. g. *zugts niks ous far kanem* 'Don't tell anybody anything' (Taglikht 1929: 300).

in the Unterland, but also in the Oyberland, and that it is also attested in the rest of the Central Yiddish area, the innovation must have had a much wider geographical range than commonly thought. Today, the origin of the feature is being obscured by the fact that the other Yiddish dialects for which it used to be characteristic have either vanished or are on the verge of extinction.

### 3. Features Characteristic of Haredi Satmar Yiddish

The features that distinguish, or appear to distinguish, Haredi Satmar Yiddish from its ancestral dialect in Transylvania are found primarily within the domain of lexicon<sup>8</sup> and syntax. In the sections 3.1 and 3.2, I provide a description of two selected syntactic traits which are generally considered typical of Haredi Satmar Yiddish, and which are indicative of the complex development this variety of Yiddish has undergone since it started evolving in the postwar years.

#### 3.1 Loss of gender and case distinctions

One of the most striking features of Haredi Satmar Yiddish, not only in America, but also in other parts of the world,<sup>9</sup> is the extensive loss of gender and case distinctions in the inflection of the definite article, attributive adjectives, certain pronouns (particularly *yeder* 'every,' *yener* 'that,' and *velkher* 'which') and the numeral *eyner* 'one.' In spoken language, this syncretism has developed to such an extent that the overall form of the definite article is [də] and the forms mentioned before end in [ə], regardless of gender, case and number. In written language, this state of affairs is reflected in extensive morphological vacillation. In written usage, the most frequent forms of the definite article are *di* and *der*, and the most frequent suffixes of the other words are *-e* and *-er*. It is this feature in particular that has given Haredi Satmar Yiddish the reputation of being deviant and corrupted Yiddish. The analyzed material shows abundant evidence of this syncretism. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate this point:

· [...] *di hunderter khsidim, vos hoben gehat dem groyse skhie onteyl tsu nemen* '[...] the hundreds of Hasidim that had the great honor to attend' *Di vokh*: 3 (1).

· *kristal nakht, dos ershter ofitsyeler blut-bod vos di daytshe khayes yimakh shmom hobn durkhgefirt oyf idn* 'Kristallnacht, the first offi-

8 Cf. Krogh, forthcoming.

9 On Haredi Satmar Yiddish in Great Britain, cf. Mitchell 2006: 101–108.

cial bloodbath that the German beasts – may their names be erased – perpetrated on the Jews’ *Der idisher gedank*: 59 headline.

· dem diner hot zikh geendigt mit gor groys khizek far ale askonim ‘All the leaders felt very fortified after the dinner,’ literally: ‘The dinner ended with very great strengthening for all the leaders’ *Der blat*: 110 (5).

· es iz take der legitimer balebos velkhe prubirt dos tsu nutsn ‘It is the legitimate holder himself that is trying to use it’ *Der id A*: 39 (2).

In Unterland Yiddish, by contrast, nominal phrases are generally seen to be morphologically ‘intact.’ Compare the following examples:

Schvarcz:

· mir hobm gehat a groysn hoyf (o. 5) ‘We had a large yard’

· igh gedenk nokh ha:nt – dem khazn vos hod gezingen (o. 15) ‘Today I still remember the cantor that sang’

· yonkiper i geveyn a groysen tuk (o. 18) ‘Yom Kippur was a great day’

· in der gantser veld zenen zey avek – de yi:dn – spetsyal in ame:rike (o. 38) ‘They dispersed into the whole world, the Jews, especially to America’

Grünfeld:

· igh bin geveyn ba der rumeynisher armye (II. o. 10) ‘I was in the Romanian army’

· s iz a dorf nor a greserer dorf (II. o. 15) ‘It is a village, but quite a large one’

· demols is is<sup>10</sup> farbrend gevorn dez beyshamigdesh (II. o. 58) ‘Then the Temple was burnt down’

· yeydn yu:r brenkt men arous a nayem kalendar (II. 1. 00) ‘Every year a new calendar is released’

<sup>10</sup> Words which were repeated for reasons of hesitation or uncertainty and words which were articulated erroneously and instantly corrected by the informants are not included in the present English translation.

Mezei:

- azoy zemer geblim biz de letste tsa:t ven m ot – de:m gantn la:ger – ouzgelert (0.3) ‘Thus we stayed until the end when the entire camp was emptied’
- me hot indz gegeyn an ander klayt (0.9) ‘We were given a different dress’
- z od gebrenkt – a a aza grousn top mit kartofln (0.35) ‘She brought a big pot with potatoes’
- dem andern tok fri: gayt ara:n de di:nst in ba:detsimer in treft aynem shlufn (1.11) ‘The next day the maid enters the bathroom and finds somebody sleeping’

Freundlich:

- yeydes leybm iz a iz a ekstere a ekstere mayse (I. 0.23) ‘Every life is a special story’
- varem vaser maghd dem mentsh – shvekher (II. 0.0) ‘Warm water makes a person – weaker’
- zemer gekimen fin der mikve (II. 0.13) ‘We returned from the mikva’
- dus iz an ingerisher [...] ma:khl (III. 0.0) ‘This is a Hungarian dish’
- er hod genimen a shi:tef an ingerishn (III.0.8) ‘He chose a Hungarian business partner’

Freund:

- yeyder khayder hod gehad za:n melamet (0.4) ‘Every elementary school had its own teacher’
- du iz geveyn a yidisher litse:um (0.6) ‘Here was a Jewish high school’
- fin der pri:vung direkt tsin – ara:ngenimen tsim arbet (0.7) ‘From the exam straight to – drafted to labor’
- in satmar iz er geveyn der ru:f (0.9) ‘In Satu Mare he was the rabbi’

Krausz:

- ba der yi:disher *comunitate* vurt ir? (I. o. 11) 'Were you at the Jewish Community Center?'
- er tid zikh farnemen mid dem besoylom (I. o. 11) 'He takes care of the cemetery'
- er iz – geveyn – a a komunist – a groyser komunist (I. o. 30) 'He was – a communist – a great communist'
- varem vaser (I. 1. 00) 'Warm water'
- ven du: de *fakultate bolyai* hot ibergenimen yenem yenem *local* (II. 1. 25) 'When here the Babes-Bolyai University took over the other building'

Salamon:

- homer gehat a groysn gu:rtin du: nogh der shti:p (I. o. 30) 'We had a large garden here next to the house'
- yo dem telefon vil ikh a:gh geymb (I. 2. 23) 'Yes, I will give you my telephone number'
- dem aynen zayde hob ikh yo gekent – zayde yankl (II. o. 22) 'I did know one grandfather – Grandpa Yankl'
- der rebay fin groyzveda:n i geveyzn ov der lavaye (II. o. 36) 'The rabbi from Oradea attended the funeral'
- zemer geganen yeydn inderfri tsi der arbet (III. o. 35) 'Every morning we went to work'
- ze hobn du: an aygenem bu:t in a shil in a hotel (III. 1. 09) 'Here they have a bath of their own and a synagogue and a hotel'
- des fenster i geveyn tsi der gas (III. 1. 51) 'The window faced the street'
- ikh l dir zugn tsi velekhon dokter de zolzd gayn (III. 1. 52) 'I will tell you to which doctor you should go.'



However, examples that contrast with Standard Yiddish usage also occur in the Yiddish of all seven interviewees. These examples are mainly instances of the definite article in the form *de*, which is used invariantly in the entire singular and plural. It must have spread from the nominative and accusative singular feminine and from the plural, where it is the original form (Standard Yiddish *di*), to the rest of the paradigm. When *de* is followed by an attributive adjective, this adjective often ends in the likewise invariant inflectional morpheme *-e*. Other determiners, such as *yeyder*, *yener* and *vel(e)kher*, can also end in this *-e*. Compare the following examples:

Schvarcz:

- egh bin geboyrn in a shteytl ober de shteytl iz a shtot (o. 1) ‘I was born in shtetl, but the shtetl is a town’
- de hoyf iz fi:l geveyzn mit layt (o. 5) ‘The yard was full of people’
- de numen gedenk ikh nisht (o. 16) ‘I don’t remember the name’

Grünfeld:

- ikh ho gelernt in de talmettoyre (I. o. 20) ‘I was studying in the Talmud Torah’
- in yene fabri:k vi ikh hob gearbet (I. o. 21) ‘In that factory where I used to work’
- tse velekhe gru:p halt ikh? tse velekhe khsidishe gru:p geher ikh? (I. o. 31) ‘Which group do I stay with? Which Hasidic group do I belong to?’
- de rebe d gehaysn – listig zayn – trinken bromfn nisht kan vayn (I. o. 40) ‘The rabbi ordered: Be cheerful! Drink liquor, no wine!’
- in fiftsik iz arouz der tate mid de klayne shvester (I. 1. 33) ‘In ’50 my father left [the country] with my little sister’
- ho gedarft arbetn far de armye (II. o. 8) ‘I had to work for the army’

Mezei:

· azoy zemer geblibm biz de letste tsa:t ven m ot – de:m gantn la:ger – ouzgelert (o. 3) ‘Thus we stayed until the end when the entire camp was emptied’

· zolmer zikh arolaygn in de kokh (o. 34) ‘so that we can lie down into the kitchen’

Freundlich:

· a plats [...] far de esn (I. o. 11) ‘a place to eat’

· de sotsyalizm iz hod gehad zayne khatuim (I. o. 24) ‘Socialism had its flaws’

· in yeyde vokh hod zi gemakht [...] in der haym dray mu:l broyt (II. o. 9) ‘She would bake bread three times a week at home’

· de mame iz arouzgekimen in [...] de gas (II. o. 14) ‘My mother came out into the street’

· de tate hot indz gedekt far de mame (II. o. 14) ‘My father would screen us from my mother’

Freund:

· de letste mu:l (o. 1) ‘the last time’

· de tate in de mame? (o. 1) ‘My father and my mother?’

· de houz hot men gegeybm mir (o. 21) ‘The house was given to me’

Krausz:

· ints hobmer gehat fin de *federatie* deys plats (II. 1. 26) ‘We got this place from the Federation [of the Jewish Communities in Romania (FJCR)]’

Salamon:

· demls bin ikh ayn yu:r gegang n de ungarishe shul (I. o. 42) ‘Back then I went to the Hungarian school for one year’

· hob igh gezukt far der doktern az [...] ov de linkn oyg zey ikh nisht azoy git (I. 2. 17) 'I said to the doctor that I don't see that well in my left eye'

· er hot ibergemaghd de gantse houz (II. 0. 14) 'He renovated the entire house'

· yo – hob ikh a bilt fin de tate in fin de mame (II. 0. 16) 'Yes, I have a picture of my father and my mother'

· dey frou velokhe kh hob ir gemaghd de hu:r (III. 0. 38) 'The woman whose hair I used to do'

· in shul bin igh gegang in de ershte klas (III. 0. 42) 'At school I was in first grade'

· hob igh gezukt far de mi:me – di host a tokhter – makh da:n tokhter khasene tsi de shna:der nisht mikh (III. 1. 12) 'Then I said to my aunt: You have a daughter, marry off your daughter to the tailor, not me'

· ir vayst az [...] dey khasi:dishe velkhe ze kimen gayn nisht ara:n in de sfardishe shil (III. 1. 17) 'You know that the Hasidim that come don't enter the Sephardic synagogue'

· er hot nor direkt azoy gezukt – de gantsn veyk (II. 1. 48) 'He said that directly – all the way.'

Apart from instances in which the definite article was reduced for obvious phonetic reasons, e. g. before a homorganic consonant in *in dem ba:detsimer* → *in de ba:detsimer* (Salamon, III. 1. 05) 'in the bathroom', it was not possible to determine why the informants chose to inflect regularly in some cases but not others. In this respect, the Central Yiddish of the Unterland adopts an intermediate position between the more northern Central Yiddish, in Poland, in which case syncretism is obligatory in the entire feminine singular (Polish Central Yiddish uniform *de* versus Standard Yiddish *di, di, der*),<sup>11</sup> and Haredi Satmar Yiddish in America, in which gender and case syncretism, as was shown above, has been generalized to the entire paradigm of determiners and to all attributive adjectives. Although the Unterland Yiddish and the Haredi Satmar Yiddish system differ considerably, there can be no doubt that the latter merely represents a more advanced stage of the former.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Herzog 1965: 130 fig. 4: 42.

Given the fact that, in terms of the inflection of the definite article and the other words mentioned, Haredi Satmar Yiddish strongly resembles coterritorial English, it is possible in theory that the development that led to the present state of affairs in Haredi Satmar Yiddish was triggered by the rule of not inflecting determiners and attributive adjectives in English. However, it is important to note that, in the inflection of the attributive adjective, Haredi Satmar Yiddish adds an ending, a schwa, not a zero, as in English. The point of departure for the development in Haredi Satmar Yiddish is, therefore, more likely to have been the syncretism that existed without having been fully developed in the Yiddish brought to America after World War II by the founders of the Haredi Satmar movement.

### 3.2 Pronominal reference

In Standard Yiddish, as well as in the Eastern European Yiddish dialects, the personal pronouns *er* 'he' and *zi* 'she' refer to masculine and feminine antecedents, regardless of whether they are human or non-human. Consequently, they can refer not only to *der man* 'the man' and *di froy* 'the woman' respectively, but also to *der vorem* 'the worm' and *di moyz* 'the mouse' and even to *der zeyger* 'the clock' and *di vant* 'the wall'. In the Haredi Satmar Yiddish of New York City, however, *er* and *zi* refer almost exclusively to human antecedents, whereas all other nouns are replaced by the formal neuters *es* 'it' and *dos* 'that'. Compare the following examples (the relevant neuter pronouns in small caps):

· ven a mentsh kumt tsum heyligen khoyze, nemt er zayn neshome un vasht DOS oys un reynikt DOS fun yede shmits un rost 'When a man visits the Holy Seer, he takes his soul and washes it and cleans it of any dirt and rust' *Di vokh*: 19 (1).

· "ikh bin oyf aykh goyzer az als pikuekh nefesh zolt ir esn dem zup," der rebe hot keyn breyre nisht gehat un er hot DOS gegesn "I order you, in accordance with the commandment to save a life, to eat the soup"; the rabbi had no choice but to eat it' *Der idisher gedank*: 29 (1).

· er hot geshribn az bloyz er, teri nikols, maykl fortier un zayn froy hobn gevust detaln fun di atake eyder er hot ES durkhgefirt 'He wrote that only he, Terry Nichols, Michael Fortier and his wife knew details about the attack before he carried it out' *Der blat*: 115 (5).

· nokh an interesante teve vos di vol farmogt, dos ven ES tsit arayn in zikh flisigkayt, blaybt ES nisht ineveynig oyf lang, un es geyt oykh

nisht tsurik aroys di flisigkayt fun vu es kumt original ‘Another interesting quality wool has is that, when it absorbs liquid, it does not stay in there for long, and the liquid does not go out again to where it originally came from’ *Der id A*: 31 (3).

At first glance, it would seem reasonable to conclude that this change must have occurred as a consequence of the comprehensive gender and case syncretism in Haredi Satmar Yiddish mentioned above. When gender and case distinctions are lost, the traditional agreement in gender between a pronoun and its antecedent becomes irrelevant, and a new differentiation between human and non-human emerges, which makes reference to non-human entities by means of a neuter pronoun preferable. Comparable changes have taken place in several other modern Germanic languages, first and foremost English. Even the secular Yiddish spoken in New York City tends to favor *es* instead of *er* and *zi* when reference is being made to non-human antecedents, as can be seen from innumerable examples in the פֿאַרווערטס. In secular Yiddish in New York City, however, the change must have come about for other reasons, most notably the influence of English, because this variety of Yiddish has not undergone the radical gender and case syncretism that characterizes Haredi Satmar Yiddish.

The Unterland Yiddish of my seven informants displays an ambiguous picture regarding pronominal reference. At first glance, it seems to be in accordance with Standard Yiddish, showing examples like the following (the relevant pronouns are in small caps):

Grünfeld:

· dort iz der hunt – mit tsvay yu:r tserik hob ikh EYM gekoyft (II. 1. 28; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Ott van a kutyám. Két évvel ezelőtt vettem*) ‘There is the dog – I bought it two years ago’

· dort iz ma:n kats – mit tsvay yu:r tserik hob igh ZI gekoyft (II. 1. 29; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Ott van a macskám. Két évvel ezelőtt vettem*) ‘There is my cat – I bought it two years ago’

Krausz:

· s iz nisht kayn shtut – ZI hayst azoy – *Sânmi haiu de Câmpie* (I. 0. 0) ‘It’s not a town – it’s called like this – Sânmi haiu de Câmpie’

- s a medikamentfabrik a groyse medikamentfabrik in yerusholaim – ZI hot a a filial in ungarn oukh (I. o. 5) ‘It’s a pharmaceutical company, a large pharmaceutical company in Jerusalem – it has a branch in Hungary as well’
- de shil – ZE hot iber hindert yu:r (I. o. 43) ‘The synagogue – it’s more than a hundred years old’
- ER iz gepaygert (I. 1. 08) ‘It died’ (about a *faygl* ‘bird’ mentioned in an earlier sentence)
- de kats – far tsvey yu:r hob igh ZE [...] gekouft (II. o. 23; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Ott van a macskám. Két évvel ezelőtt vettem*) ‘The cat – I bought it two years ago’

#### Salamon:

- ER i nisht kan shlekhter hint (I. 1. 45) ‘He is not a bad dog’
- du gayd der tsug vus ER fu:rt kayn klouznburk (I. 1. 48) ‘There is the train that goes to Cluj-Napoca’
- igh geb em dem gu:rtn er zol EM haltn (I. 1. 49) ‘I leave the garden to him so that he can tend it’
- de kafe fin ame:riko hob ikh nisht lip n ikh tring ZE nisht (IV. o. 1; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Az amerikai kávé nem szeretem. Nem iszom meg*) ‘I don’t like coffee from America, and I don’t drink it.’

However, the informants also use the neuters *es* and *dus* (*des*, *deys*) when referring to non-human antecedents in the masculine or feminine<sup>12</sup> (the relevant neuter pronouns are in small caps):

<sup>12</sup> The determination of the ‘proper’ gender of a noun must be based on what is generally known about the gender of that noun in Eastern Yiddish, especially Central Yiddish (cf. Viler 1926), and on the possible testimony of determiners and attributive adjectives, e. g. *dem* + *-(e)n* (in the accusative) and *der* + *-er* excluding neuter gender. The determination of the gender of nouns in Unterland Yiddish poses some fundamental problems. Firstly, it is not always possible to deduce the gender of a noun from its grammatical surroundings. Determiners and attributive adjectives may be lacking, and even if they are present, they may provide ambiguous or no information about the gender of the noun, cf. the remarks above on the invariant article *de* and the corresponding adjectival ending *-e*. Secondly, the gender of a noun may vacillate due to influence from Hungarian which lacks grammatical

Grünfeld:

· trinken bromfn – yo – in DEYS trinken de khasi:dim trinken de de mayste fin du – bromfn – darf EZ za:n fin israel – zay zugn DEYS is ku:sher (I. o. 41) ‘Drink liquor, yes, and the Hasidim drink that, most people from here drink that – liquor. It must be from Israel. They say that is kosher’

· de khasi:dim fleygn DEYS deys trinken – de dem sli:vovits (I. o. 42) ‘The Hasidim used to drink that, the Slivovitz’

· DEYS i geveyn ale mu:l ku:sher – der sli:vovits (I. o. 42) ‘That has always been kosher, the Slivovitz’

Mezei:

· bam mituk hot men gebrenkt a supe – DUS hod gekritst inter de – tseyen va:l s i geveyn fil mit [...] bleter (o. 7) ‘At noon a soup was served. It scratched behind the teeth because it was full of leaves’

· vuser glig de:r hod gehad ven shtaufnberk hot em gelaygd de bombe dortn – ayner hot ES avegerikt in yener iz geshtorbm (o. 42) ‘How lucky he was when Stauffenberg put the bomb there next to him. Somebody removed it, and the other one died’

Freundlich:

· de sotsyalizm iz hod gehad zayne khatuim – ober [...] ES hod gehad zayne zayne avantazhn (I. o. 24) ‘Socialism had its flaws, but it had its advantages’

· in gu:rtn iz a boym – igh zey ES fin du (I. o. 31; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *A kertben van egy fa. Innen látom*) ‘There is a tree in the garden. I see it from here’

· dort iz mayn kats – ikh hab [!] EZ gekoyft fin – shoyntsvay yu:r (I. o. 33; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Ott van a macskám. Két évvel ezelőtt vettem*) ‘There is my cat – I bought it two years ago’

gender and gender-specific pronouns (also noted by Weinreich 1964: 261f). In some cases, the gender of a noun may have switched to neuter, which would account for why that noun is represented by *es* and *dus* (*des*, *deys*) in a given context.

Freund:

- er hod zigh gebrenkt fin ouslant skhoyre – hot er DES farkoyft (o. 5)  
‘He used to bring goods from abroad. Then he sold them’
- in gu:rtn iz a boym – igh zey ES fin du (o. 18; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *A kertben van egy fa. Innen látom*) ‘There is a tree in the garden. I see it from here’
- dort iz ma:n kats – far tsvey yu:r hob ikh EZ gekoyft (o. 19; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Ott van a macskám. Két évvel ezelőtt vettem*) ‘There is my cat – I bought it two years ago’

Krausz:

- de shil – ze hot iber hindert yu:r – nor me hot s ibergemakht [...] s iz geveyn bombardirt (I. o. 43) ‘The synagogue – it is more than a hundred years old – but it has been renovated. It was bombed’
- s iz nokh kolt – der zip (II. o. 1) ‘It is still cold, the soup’
- in gu:rtn iz du ayn boym – igh zey ES fin du (II. o. 22; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *A kertben van egy fa. Innen látom*) ‘There is a tree in the garden. I see it from here’
- der epl iz nizhd gut [!] – es ES nisht ouf (II. o. 22; the informant’s Yiddish rendition of Hungarian *Az alma nem jó. Ne edd meg!*) ‘The apple is not good. Don’t eat it!’
- de shil broukht tse bla:bm azoy vi s iz geveyn [...] ze hobn s renovirt hobn s reparirt (II. 1. 27) ‘The synagogue should remain as it used to be. They renovated it, repaired it’

Salamon:

- s i du a yi:dishe tsaytung – of ayn za:t shra:pt ES rumeynish in ov der anderer za:t shra:pt ES yi:dish (I. o. 40) ‘There is a Jewish newspaper. On one page it is written in Romanian, and on the other it is written in Yiddish’
- ikh hob a groysn gu:rtn – igh gib ES iber far a goy velokher er koset in er farkoyft – igh darf nizhd gu:rnisht fin dortn vayl ikh hob ES nisht mid veymen tsi baarbetn (I. 1. o) ‘I have a large garden. I leave it to a goy who cuts [the grass] and sells [the fruit and vegetables]. I don’t need anything from there because I don’t have anybody to cultivate it with’



· me ho gemakht a film – a frou fin baya ma:re fin du – a film – z i gekimen ahe:r in in dra:y fi:r mu:l hot men EZ gevizn in *televízió* – dem film (I. 1. 42) ‘A film was made. A woman from Baia Mare from here – a film. She came here, and three or four times it was shown on television, the film’

· DES iz zayer shta:rk (II. o. 6) ‘It is very strong’ (with reference to *broufn* ‘liquor’ which had been mentioned in an earlier sentence)

· de fotografye – vays ikh nisht in velekhn yu:r – de elteren hobn EZ gemakht (II. o. 17) ‘The photo – I don’t know in which year it was taken. My parents arranged for it to be taken’

· [In reply to the question *Vi hot di gas geheysn demolt?* ‘What was the name of the street in those days?’] fin lank [...] hot EZ gehaysn de *Thököly Út* – in of rumeynish hot EZ gehaysn azoy vi hidzd *Dragoş Vodă* – azoy hot EZ gehaysn in yene yu:rn oukhet in hitst oukhet (III. o. 59) ‘A long time ago it was called *Thököly Út*, and in Romanian, it had the same name as now: *Dragoş Vodă*. It had that name in that period, and it still does’

· ir vayst az [...] dey khasi:dishe velkhe ze kimen gayn nisht ara:n in de sfardishe shil [...] DES is trayfo (III. 1. 17) ‘You know that the Hasidim that come don’t enter the Sephardic synagogue. It is impure’

· tomer d est makhn a de urin in s et za:n royt zolzdikh nizhd dershrekn – vayl deys is fin dey tabletn – nor d est tserik – bakimen de farb azoy vi s i geveyzn in pu:nem (III. 1. 53) ‘When you pass urine and it is red, don’t get frightened because it’s caused by these pills. But you will get the coloring of your face back as it used to be.’

This new evidence is a strong indication that the replacement of the traditional mode of pronominal reference by the human/non-human differentiation in Haredi Satmar Yiddish is not an innovation that occurred during the last decades overseas, but is, instead, a trait which originated at a sub-dialectal level on the European home grounds of the Satmar movement and was brought along to America in the wake of the Holocaust. Once in America, it must have intensified as a result of the gender and case morphology collapse. The European locus of the innovation may not even have been the Unterland (although the innovation is in fact attested there),<sup>13</sup> but another region in Eastern Eu-

13 In the Yiddish spoken in and around Satu Mare, the center of Joel Teitelbaum’s prewar Hasidic movement, this tendency may have been stronger than elsewhere in the Unterland. Unfortunately, I haven’t been able to locate any in situ informants from Satu Mare itself.

rope, from which members of the Satmar movement were recruited. The innovation in question is also likely to have been carried through in parts of southeastern Yiddish. Mikhoel Felzenbaum, the well-known Israel-based Yiddish writer and linguist, confirms (p.c.) its presence in his native Bessarabian Yiddish dialect, in a form which is, in fact, more similar to Haredi Satmar Yiddish than to the Unterland Yiddish that I have tried to cover through my in situ fieldwork.

So far, I have discussed pronominal reference only in the singular. Regarding reference between a pronoun and an antecedent noun in the plural there is a significant difference between, on the one hand, Haredi Satmar Yiddish and, on the other hand, the Unterland Yiddish of my informants. In this case, Unterland Yiddish apparently corresponds with standard Yiddish and the bulk of Eastern European Yiddish dialects, using the plural of the personal pronoun, whereas Haredi Satmar Yiddish again distinguishes between human and non-human, using *zey* for the former and, not infrequently, *es* or *dos* for the latter. Compare the following examples (the relevant neuter pronouns are in small caps):

When I visited there in 2009, my search for Yiddish speakers with a prewar background was unsuccessful. According to the local Jewish Community Center, the last Yiddish speaker of Satu Mare had passed away a couple of months prior to my arrival. A twenty-six minute video recording with a (now deceased) Yiddish speaker from Satu Mare, with which Péter Varga (Budapest) kindly provided me, and my own recordings of Baia Mare Yiddish (Freundlich and Freund – Baia Mare is located about 70 km east of Satu Mare) are the closest I have come to prewar Satu Mare Yiddish. In the recording, which was conducted by Péter Varga approximately 10 years ago, there were no relevant examples of pronominal reference. The digital archive of the Shoah Foundation Institute in Los Angeles includes four video testimonies in Yiddish by Jews who were born and raised in or very close to Satu Mare. All four interviewees emigrated from Romania after World War II. Consequently, they cannot be considered in situ informants, and the significance of their Yiddish, though entirely fluent, natural and far from being attrited, must be treated with caution for the purposes of the present study. One of the interviewees, Mr Meyir-Mano Daskal, born in 1906 in Satu Mare and residing at the time of the interview (1998) in Israel in – as appears from the recording – a non-Haredi environment, uses neuter pronouns several times during the interview when referring to non-human antecedents that are either definitely or in all likelihood masculine or feminine, e. g. (the relevant neuter pronouns in small caps):

· er hot a groysn va:ngu:rt[n [...] DES hod gehaysn – of ungarish hot EZ gehaysn der barg fin satmer (I. o. 22) ‘He owns a large vineyard. This was called – in Hungarian it was called the Satu Mare Mountain’

· dort iz men aru:vgegangen [...] of a barg aru:f – s hod gehaysn de shpiglbarg (I. o. 23) ‘There a mountain could be ascended. It was called the Mirror Mountain’

· m hot ints ara:ngefi:rt in blok – s hod gehaysn tsegaynerblok (III. o. 10) ‘We were led into the barrack. It was called the Gipsy Barrack’

· ho bakimen a vu:rsht ober DES iz dogh geveyen a milya:rd vert (III. o. 18) ‘I got a sausage but after all it was worth a billion.’

· tsulib dem hoben zikh di mashinen asakh shneler tsibrokhen hot men DOS gebrenzt tsu farekhten ‘Therefore, the engines broke down much faster; then they were taken in for repair’ *Di vokh*: 14 (5).

· ikh hof az m’vet mekabl zayn di verter vos m’hot do geshmuest, m’vet ES mekabl zayn tsu farbesern di maysim ‘I hope that attention is paid to the words that were uttered here. Attention will be paid so that the deeds may become better’ *Der idisher gedank*: 19 (2).

· geyendig aroys fun ofis hot er zikh dermant az di oybershte shuflohn hot er nisht unterzukht. er efnt DOS oyf ‘On leaving the office he recalled he had not examined the top drawers. He opens them’ *Der blat*: 56 (2).

· ven der mentsh vert elter, farlirn di disks a teyl funem vaser vos ligt gevenlikh derin. dos makht ES mer boygzam un mer oysgeshtelt az ES zol zikh tseraysn ‘As a person grows older, his spinal discs lose some of the water that is usually in them. That makes them more elastic and more prone to bursting’ *Der id A*: 36 (4).

Given that this feature seems to be absent from all coterritorial languages in the historical and present stages of Haredi Satmar Yiddish in both Eastern Europe and in America – Slavic languages, Hungarian, Romanian and English – its genesis is difficult to explain. However, the parallel to the same procedure in the singular cannot be ignored. The development must have begun in the singular and spread to the plural. According to the above-mentioned Mikhoel Felzenbaum (p.c.), exactly the same state of affairs can be observed in Bessarabian Yiddish.

The origin of the abandonment of gender agreement between a pronoun and its non-human masculine or feminine antecedent may date back to the time when the ancestors of Unterland Jewry still resided in Galicia and were exposed to coterritorial Slavic languages on a daily basis. In colloquial Polish, e. g.,<sup>14</sup> there is a tendency, when referring deictically to an inanimate noun, to let *to*, the neuter of the demonstrative pronoun *ten* ‘that,’ represent that noun, regardless of whether it is masculine or feminine.<sup>15</sup> This feature could have been borrowed by Central Yiddish, where its use could have widened to include, not only the demonstrative *dus*, but also the personal pronoun *es*. This particular use of *dus* and *es* is typical of colloquial Central Yiddish from Poland and has, to my knowledge, never been subjected to scholarly scrutiny.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Mendoza 2004: 294f.

<sup>15</sup> As this trait is also found in colloquial German, e. g. when A – pointing at an apple (Germ. *der Apfel*) – says to B: *Nimm das!*, it may not be borrowed in Yiddish at all, but be rooted in the common basis of Yiddish and modern German.

In the Central Yiddish of the Unterland it has undergone further widening to include the non-deictic use of the pronouns and – at a more advanced stage in certain sub-dialects – to include animals.

#### 4. Summary

In this paper three salient grammatical features of Haredi Satmar Yiddish have been presented. The first, the replacement of a nominal indirect object by a prepositional phrase with *far*, which is equally well established in Haredi Satmar Yiddish and Unterland Yiddish (the assumed ancestral dialect of the former), unmistakably precedes the founding of the modern Satmar movement in postwar America. The remaining two traits, comprehensive syncretism within the gender and case system, and reference to masculine and feminine antecedents by means of neuter pronouns, display an ambiguous picture, inasmuch as they are prominent characteristics of Haredi Satmar Yiddish, but merely alternative or peripheral constructions in Unterland Yiddish. However, on closer inspection, it appears that the current traits featured by Unterland Yiddish must represent the first stage of the morphological collapse and subsequent restructuring within nominal phrases, which can be observed in Haredi Satmar Yiddish. Regarding one aspect, however – the possibility of referring to an antecedent noun in the plural by means of a neuter pronoun in the singular – the result of the process cannot be deduced from Unterland Yiddish grammar. In Haredi Satmar Yiddish, this trait must have been either caused by a recent innovation or adopted from one of the other Eastern European Yiddish dialects which contributed to the formation of this Haredi Yiddish variety. Bessarabian Yiddish displays an exact parallel to the feature in question. To prove that this correspondence is not purely coincidental, further research must establish from where the Satmar movement in America recruited its members from after World War II.

Haredi Satmar Yiddish – although at its core undoubtedly Central Yiddish and Unterland Yiddish – may turn out to be far less Satmarish than commonly thought. And considering that a significant number of those who joined the Satmar movement after World War II in America originated from places other than the very city of Satu Mare – the legendary Grand Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum himself was born and raised in Sighetu Marmăției (then *Máramarossziget*), and both his wives in Poland – this is not surprising.

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