

the form of loanwords is quite small, with paraphrase being employed for expressions regarded as otherwise untranslatable.<sup>132</sup>

### *7.6 Mediaeval Hebrew in Italy and central Europe*

The social and cultural environment in which the Jewish communities of Italy and other parts of Europe lived was very different from that of the Iberian peninsula. Relations with Palestine were particularly strong at important periods, for example during the flowering of Hebrew literature in Italy in the ninth and tenth centuries. The influence of the *payṭanim* is especially noticeable in the poetry of this early period from Italy. Solomon b. Judah ha-Bavli, who was born in the east but had settled in northern Italy, was one of the first Hebrew poets in Europe, and played a significant rôle in the future development of liturgical poetry in Italy and central Europe. He was heir to the ancient tradition of *piyyuṭ* of the school of Kallir and his followers, and his language was cast in its mould, containing not only biblical, rabbinic, and Aramaic elements, but also, especially, numerous features typical of the *payṭanim*, such as new forms of nouns and verbs and the introduction of servile letters into the root.<sup>133</sup> In contrast to the Spanish tradition, which was undergoing development at this time, the Hebrew poetry of Italy remained faithful to the Palestinian standard for several centuries. In the thirteenth century, and especially with the work of Immanuel of Rome, an important change took place, with an acceptance of the BH model used by the poets of Spain, albeit with a number of distinctive features, ranging from the incorporation of rabbinic elements and Arabic calques to the direct influence of Italian, exemplified by <sup>ה</sup>ה<sup>ל</sup> (haš-sæl-lō) 'his' (lit. 'the which-is-to-him').<sup>134</sup>

<sup>132</sup> See Ferre 1987.

<sup>133</sup> See Fleischer 1973, 95ff.

<sup>134</sup> See E. Goldenberg 1971, 1633f.

In his prose, the tenth-century Italian physician Shabbetai Donnolo mixes RH and BH, with additional components from Greek, Latin, and spoken Italian.<sup>135</sup> Halfway through the eleventh century, Aḥimaaz b. Palṭiel wrote *Megillat Aḥimaaz* using a type of Hebrew close to that of the *payṭanim*, but also with traces of Italian influence.

In Provence, Judaism maintained an unmistakably Spanish character, and, strengthened by the arrival of important groups of Andalusian Jews, the Provençal community played an extremely important rôle in the translation of Arabic works and their dissemination to the Jews of northern France and the rest of Europe. ‘Tibbonid Hebrew’ was, in reality, a Provençal creation.

In all other parts of Europe, Hebrew prose was composed using a late form of RH in which, alongside the dominant rabbinic component, there are BH and Aramaic elements, as well as Arabisms emanating from Spain or Provence. It was also influenced to varying degrees by the spoken languages of the period – French, Middle High German, and Yiddish. The proportions in which all these elements are found differs according to writer, time, and place.

Rashi and the Tosafists employed this type of Hebrew, which in their case shows French influence, for example the use of עשה (‘śh) ‘do, make’ in the various senses of *faire*, changes in gender, etc. RH is clearly dominant, although there are also some BH words and constructions. In his commentary on the Talmud, Rashi often uses Aramaic as well, and he frequently employs neologisms. His easy and intelligible style would become a model for generations.<sup>136</sup>

In the *Sefer Hasidim*, written in central Europe during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, there is noticeable influence from Middle High German and Yiddish in, for example, the use of prepositions, everyday vocabulary, and various calques, and in the frequent extension of the meanings of words so that they correspond to

<sup>135</sup> See Muntner 1949; 1971.

<sup>136</sup> See Avinery 1940–60.

their German equivalents. This last feature is particularly striking and occurs elsewhere in Ashkenazi Hebrew, so that, for example, עשה ('sh) 'do, make' functions like *machen*. Forms that do not have a German equivalent, such as the object-marker, are used less often, as is the article. The participle is used indicatively to refer to the present and the future, with the prefix-conjugation employed as a subjunctive, expressing doubt and possibility, for example, and היה (hyh) 'be' with the participle functioning like the German preterite. The sequence of tenses also often reflects that of German. Although RH forms the main component in *Sefer Ḥasidim*, there are some notable oddities, such as the use of the *Nuf'al* derived conjugation. Consecutive tenses, lengthened forms of the verb, and other constructions typical of BH are also found.

Relations with the Jews of Spain and Provence led to the Arabizing style of earlier Spanish writers making its mark on the type of prose used, for example, in Poland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The kabbalistic and philosophical works of the *Ḥasidim* in the eighteenth century also employ a version of Hebrew quite similar to that found in Spain. In later Ashkenazi writings there is an increased use of words and phrases from Aramaic.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>137</sup> See E. Goldenberg 1971, 1635ff.