RA02

JEWISH COMMUNITIES, IDENTITY & LANGUAGES

Faith, ancestry and the languages of Jewish life

COMPLETE SOURCE-BASED STUDY

Historical and linguistic context for a critical reading of Beter's claims.

Ashkenazim · Sephardim · Mizrahim · Yiddish · Hebrew · Ladino

Tempus omnia revelat.

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What this volume explains

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

This volume separates questions that are often compressed into a single question: “Who are the Jews?” Religious membership, community history, family descent, spoken language and citizenship are not interchangeable. A statement can be accurate about one of them and misleading about another. Our task is to make the distinctions usable, rather than to assign people a rank of authenticity.

Pew’s U.S. survey published in 2021 records different understandings of Jewish identity: religion, culture, ancestry and combinations of these. It is evidence of how surveyed people described themselves, not a universal theological definition. The existence of several understandings is itself important evidence against treating identity as a single measurable substance. [S03]

RA02 follows RA01’s examination of medieval Khazaria. Here the historical community labels Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi are introduced alongside less familiar traditions. The language chapters address Yiddish, Hebrew, Judeo-Spanish and other examples. They explain what linguistic evidence can establish and where a conclusion about ancestry requires different evidence.

Beter appears as an author whose categories need examination, not as an authority who settles membership in a religion. Detailed treatment of the Talmud belongs to RA03; Koestler and population genetics to RA04; Zionism to RA05; and the proposed “thousand-year war” to RA11. This division prevents an introductory account of identity from becoming an unsupported theory of modern political coordination.

> **A community, a language and a genealogy are three different objects of inquiry.**

Sources / source notes: S03

How to read the evidence

A religious ruling tells us how an authority defines membership. A survey records answers under specified research definitions. A manuscript documents a text in a particular setting. A genetic study estimates relationships within a model. These sources can illuminate one another, but one cannot silently take over the task of another.

We distinguish source description from our editorial reasoning. Source codes [S01]–[S29] lead to the bibliography. The register states when only an abstract or a translated selection was consulted. We did not examine original manuscripts, conduct linguistic fieldwork, adjudicate conversions or perform DNA analysis. This is an AI-assisted public study, not a peer-reviewed monograph or a religious ruling.

The community overview is selective, not an exhaustive census. Labels can overlap, change over time or be rejected by some of the people to whom outsiders apply them. Historical survey findings are dated. Present-day speaker totals are omitted because definitions and estimates differ and because such figures would age quickly.

Illustrations are newly created historical evocations; they are not photographs, recovered documents or exact reconstructions. Diagrammed links show the relationship explained in the text, not a hidden connection discovered by drawing a line. Fictitious examples are explicitly labeled. The same distinctions apply in the English and Slovak editions.

Our moral premise is separate from an empirical ancestry claim: the safety and dignity of a person do not depend on a pedigree. A question about the truth of a text remains open to criticism; a whole population does not inherit responsibility for a quotation or for the acts of a state.

> **State what the source supports—and what it was never designed to decide.**

Sources / source notes: S01, S29

01 / Five questions, not one

For clarity we use five working questions. Faith and religious status: what does someone believe, and which community recognizes them? Family history: who are the identifiable relatives and ancestors? Cultural community: which inherited customs and social ties matter? Language: what does someone speak, read or use in prayer? Citizenship: to which state does the person legally belong?

These are analytical categories, not five mutually exclusive boxes. A person can participate in several communities and speak several languages. One dimension can change without all the others changing. Learning a language does not replace parents; a change of citizenship does not retroactively alter a childhood.

For example, describing a person as “Ashkenazi” supplies a historical-cultural affiliation but does not by itself tell us whether that person attends a synagogue, speaks Yiddish, holds Israeli citizenship or endorses a political movement. Each further assertion needs its own evidence. The conclusion follows from the different questions, not from an assumption that cultural groups lack history.

The terms “Jewish” and “Israeli” therefore cannot be substituted for one another. Pew’s 2016 report separately examines Jewish and non-Jewish identities in Israel. That observation is enough for the present distinction; this volume does not offer immigration advice or a digest of citizenship law. [S29]

> **Ask which dimension a statement is actually about.**

Sources / source notes: S29

02 / Religious membership and conversion

In the traditional rabbinic framework, Jewish maternal descent and accepted conversion are routes to Jewish status. Maimonides' medieval code discusses entry into the covenant through conversion, including ritual requirements. The translated passage used here is a religious prescription, not a genetic classification. [S04, S05]

A historically important alternative appears in the American Reform discussion of 1983: one Jewish parent could establish a presumption of descent, with specified public acts of Jewish identification. The rule was not simply "any paternal ancestor is sufficient." We cite the historical text, not a promise that every present-day community accepts every case. [S04]

The conceptual consequence is straightforward. A conversion can alter recognized religious membership without altering biological ancestry. Conversely, a family connection is not necessarily sufficient for recognition under every communal standard. To ask whether a specific conversion is valid requires a named authority, procedure and context; it is not settled by a population chart.

This matters for medieval Khazaria. Evidence that a ruler or court adopted Judaism would concern religious affiliation. It would not automatically mean that all subjects changed religion or that the dynasty's later descendants can be identified. Nor does the category "convert" logically establish second-class human worth. Religious status, scope of conversion and later genealogy must be investigated separately.

> **Conversion concerns membership; it does not rewrite a biological family tree.**

Sources / source notes: S04, S05

03 / Family, culture and secular identity

Pew's study of Jewish Americans in 2020 includes people who identify as Jewish without describing Judaism as their religion. It also distinguishes denominational identification from synagogue membership. Those findings concern declared affiliation in a defined survey population; they should not be transformed into a universal rule about every Jew. [S03, S27]

The expressions "Jewish by religion" and "of Jewish family background" consequently answer different questions. They may overlap, but neither exhausts the possibilities. Someone can retain family memories, a language, holiday practices or a sense of belonging while being agnostic. Another person may enter the religion without growing up in a Jewish family.

"By blood" is too imprecise for careful discussion. It may mean one known ancestor, an unbroken family line, a statistical DNA resemblance or an imagined biological essence. Instead write the exact proposition: "Her grandmother belonged to this community," "The family lived in this town," or "This study estimates similarity to these reference samples."

The distinction does not make family history unreal. It makes it testable. A dated marriage register and an oral family account have different evidential strengths; neither can be replaced by a conclusion based on a surname or an appearance. An individual's actual affiliation should not be guessed from an illustration or from a supposed ethnic look.

> **Describe the actual family claim instead of invoking "blood."**

Sources / source notes: S03, S27

04 / Community is not denomination

Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi are historical-cultural labels. Orthodox, Reform and Conservative/Masorti usually answer a different question about religious affiliation or practice. Pew's historical reports show that cultural ancestry and religious self-description do not line up as one-to-one categories. [S03, S07]

A further trap is the word Masorti. In Israeli usage it can mean an informal "traditional" religious identity, whereas Conservative/Masorti can name an organized religious movement. Pew's 2016 comparison explicitly distinguishes the two. A document must tell us which meaning applies; the same word does not make the categories identical. [S28]

A useful classification therefore has several columns rather than a single branching family tree. Record community background, ritual tradition, religious affiliation, languages and place or period separately. Add "mixed," "multiple," "not stated" or "uncertain" when that is what the evidence supports. Blank information should not be completed by stereotype.

The word "Sephardi" illustrates the problem especially well: it can refer to Iberian ancestry, a wider diasporic tradition or a liturgical affiliation. A broad label used for a communal institution is not automatically a precise pedigree for every member. Likewise, "Mizrahi" is a grouping, not the name of one ancient tribe. [S07]

This study introduces the categories needed for reading the series. It does not adjudicate which community is the most authentic, count all modern denominations or assume that piety determines political opinion. The safest formulation is often narrower: "This author," "this congregation," or "this dated survey," rather than "the Jews believe."

> **Several dimensions can intersect in the same person.**

Sources / source notes: S03, S07, S28

05 / Ashkenaz: European history is real

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

The ShUM sites at Speyer, Worms and Mainz preserve material evidence of medieval Jewish communal institutions in the Rhine region. UNESCO's account connects their synagogues, ritual baths, cemeteries and ordinances with the formation of Ashkenazi traditions particularly between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. This is concrete historical evidence, not an inference made from modern vocabulary alone. [S06]

Yiddish subsequently had important western as well as central and eastern European settings. "Ashkenazi" should therefore not be reduced to "Russian," and the history should not be compressed into the borders of a single present-day country. Communities and their cultural networks developed over time. [S08, S10]

What does a synagogue establish? It can show that a community worshipped in a place, how it organized space and what later communities preserved or rebuilt. It cannot give the complete ancestral origin of every worshipper. The same limit applies to cemeteries: individual inscriptions can anchor a family history, but the stones are not a census of all remote ancestors.

European cultural formation and older ancestral connections are not competing alternatives by definition. A family can spend many generations in one region while having earlier connections elsewhere. Whether a particular connection can be demonstrated is a further research question. Evidence of European life is neither erased by this possibility nor sufficient to disprove every earlier migration.

> **A documented European community is not a complete map of all its ancestors.**

Sources / source notes: S06, S08, S10

06 / Sepharad: ancestry and a wider tradition

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

In its narrower historical use, Sephardi refers to Jewish communities linked to Iberia and their diasporas. The expulsion from Spain in 1492 was a major rupture. Judeo-Spanish developed further among communities in the Ottoman world and North Africa, in contact with new surroundings. A Sephardi history therefore extends beyond Spain itself. [S07, S14]

North African histories also contain encounters between newcomers and already established Jewish communities. Bentolila's account of Haketia describes both the persistence of Spanish-derived speech in some places and the adoption of local Judeo-Arabic in others. "North African Jewish" and "descended exclusively from Spain" cannot simply be made equivalent. [S15]

A careful family description may need two scales: a named local community and a broader ritual or diasporic tradition. These scales can coexist. The family's language may change; a religious rite may spread beyond the descendants of its original speakers. One label may be appropriate in a prayer book and another in a local history.

The point is not to strip people of an identity they use. It is to explain what the chosen word means in the document under discussion. When a source calls a congregation Sephardi, ask whether it is describing family origins, liturgy, legal custom or institutional membership. Without that question, a cultural designation can be mistaken for a claim about every ancestor.

> **An Iberian connection and a local North African or Ottoman history can coexist.**

Sources / source notes: S07, S14, S15

07 / Mizrahim: one umbrella, many histories

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

Mizrahi, associated with the Hebrew word for “eastern,” is an umbrella label used for diverse Jewish communities linked to the Middle East and, in broader usage, North Africa. It overlaps in practice with “Sephardi,” but neither word erases the histories of individual places. Pew’s 2016 explanation explicitly treats the labels as overlapping rather than a clean biological division. [S07]

Language makes the diversity visible. Judeo-Arabic varieties developed across Arabic-speaking regions, while Jewish Iranian communities used Persian and other Iranian varieties. Persian and Arabic are not one language family merely because they occur in neighboring regions. A convenient regional label must not make the Iranian histories disappear. [S16, S17]

“Iraqi Jewish,” “Iranian Jewish” or a particular city’s community may be the more useful description for a given document. These terms also require dates: a family’s place of residence, language and citizenship can differ across generations. Regional geography is a starting point for research, not a timeless list of permanent human types.

A second caution concerns culture and power. Shared ritual customs do not demonstrate common political command. If a claim concerns a donor, party or military decision, evidence must identify the relevant institution and person. Neither “Mizrahi” nor “Ashkenazi” can serve as a substitute for that missing chain of responsibility.

> **Use the most precise local and historical description that the evidence allows.**

Sources / source notes: S07, S16, S17

08 / Beyond the best-known labels

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

Greek-speaking Jewish traditions, often associated with the Romaniotes, have histories spanning ancient, Byzantine and later settings. Krivoruchko's account distinguishes periods and writing practices rather than treating all Jews in Greece as descendants of one migration. Greek-language evidence already prevents a two-language story limited to Yiddish and Hebrew. [S18]

Beta Israel in Ethiopia historically used several spoken languages and Ge'ez for liturgy. The language of sacred reading therefore need not be identical to a community's everyday speech. This example should not be forced into either the Ashkenazi or Iberian model. We do not select a single origin legend as a demonstrated family history. [S19]

Kerala's Jewish communities offer another example. Their Malayalam traditions and local community names deserve attention in their own right. Zacharia and Gamliel warn that outsider accounts concentrated on a small, better-known group and could distort the wider picture. This is a source-selection problem, not a reason to abandon historical inquiry. [S20]

Karaite religion must also be distinguished from Karaim, a Turkic language associated with some eastern European Karaite communities. These are not identical labels; self-identification also varies. Neither speaking a Turkic language nor having a Karaite affiliation by itself establishes a medieval Khazar pedigree. The project's own profile notes the diversity of self-identification. [S21]

> **A selective overview is not a complete census of Jewish communities.**

Sources / source notes: S18, S19, S20, S21

09 / Script, language and translation

A script is a system for writing; a language is a system of vocabulary and grammar. The same script can be used for several languages. Yiddish's use of Hebrew letters therefore does not make its sentences Hebrew. YIVO's alphabet guide shows letter values and transliteration conventions that must be learned as part of reading Yiddish. [S11]

The reverse mistake is equally important: writing a Yiddish word in Latin letters does not turn it into German or English. Transliteration changes the representation of sounds or letters; translation changes the language of expression. A page's appearance can suggest where to investigate, but a linguistic identification requires reading more than the alphabet.

Our examples use accessible romanization, generally following YIVO for Yiddish. "Kh" represents a sound like the ch in Scottish loch, not English k followed by h. Slovak readers can approximate it with ch. We retain familiar Slovak community names in the Slovak text rather than pretend that one spelling system serves every language equally well. [S11]

For an unfamiliar document the useful questions are: what script is present, what words and grammar occur, who produced it, and whether the copy is original or later. A Hebrew-script letter might require a Yiddish, Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic or Judeo-Spanish specialist. Guessing the language from the letters alone risks misunderstanding the whole document.

> **Hebrew letters do not automatically mean Hebrew language.**

Sources / source notes: S11

10 / Yiddish: a history, not a birth certificate

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

Yiddish is generally classified as a West Germanic language with its own development. Its history includes medieval European Jewish life, migrations, contact and distinct literary traditions. Calling it a language is not a political concession; it reflects the independent history and structure described by linguistic researchers. [S08, S09]

The first surviving witness to a language is not necessarily its moment of birth. Finch's profile discusses the short inscription in the Worms Mahzor dated 1272. It contains both Germanic and Hebrew material. We use the scholarly description rather than claim to have inspected the manuscript. A surviving example supplies a chronological anchor, not the complete origin story. [S10]

Western and Eastern Yiddish should not be collapsed into one uniform dialect. They developed in different contact environments. The broad eastern pattern has substantial Slavic influence; the western history is indispensable even though discussion often concentrates on eastern Europe. Historical dialect names do not reproduce modern national boundaries. [S09, S10]

An exact date and a single village of origin would require much more precise evidence than an introductory overview supplies. Linguists debate parts of the early development. That uncertainty does not mean that any proposed origin is equally well supported, and it does not by itself support a Khazar explanation. A dispute over a migration route must be evaluated using the relevant linguistic and historical data.

> **Earliest surviving evidence is not the same thing as the first day of a language.**

Sources / source notes: S08, S09, S10

11 / Germanic structure, several lexical layers

Yiddish combines a Germanic core with Hebrew-Aramaic, Slavic and other contributions; likht, ‘light/candles’ in the cited example, illustrates Germanic vocabulary. Contact affects more than a list of borrowed nouns; it can influence word formation, idiom and parts of grammar. It is misleading both to call Yiddish “only German” and to treat every contact feature as evidence that its Germanic classification has disappeared. [S09]

The Hebrew-Aramaic component is not confined to rare ceremonial terms. Weiser’s YIVO explanation gives everyday examples such as khaver, “friend,” and kholem, “dream.” Their spellings preserve the source tradition while their Yiddish pronunciations differ from Modern Hebrew. Recognizing an unfamiliar pronunciation therefore requires care before dismissing a word’s origin. [S12]

For Slavic contact, the eastern profile gives familiar kinship words such as bobe and zeyde. One borrowed word illustrates a historical contact; it is not a genetic marker in the speaker’s body. The same family may transmit words inherited from several communities and periods. [S09]

Why is there no single “percentage of Hebrew” here? A dictionary count, a spoken conversation and a learned religious text are different samples. Counting roots, word forms and repeated tokens also produces different denominators. A proportion is meaningful only after specifying corpus and method. We therefore present examples and relationships, not an unsupported pie chart of the whole language.

> **Vocabulary percentages need a defined corpus and a defined counting method.**

Sources / source notes: S09, S12

12 / What language can establish

Consider a simple inference: a dated text contains Germanic grammar and Slavic loans. That is evidence about a language and its contact history. The next inference—therefore all of the writer's ancestors came from one European region—is a different proposition and does not follow from the words on the page.

This is not a special exemption for Jewish history. A community can adopt a language through education, migration, political pressure, commerce or family contact. Those are possible mechanisms to test in a particular case, not interchangeable explanations assumed in advance. A documented language shift can occur without a complete population replacement.

Jewish English offers an accessible comparison: Benor describes varieties with different degrees of Hebrew, Yiddish and other influence. Someone's English can carry family or community features without making every ancestor English. The linguistic observation and the genealogy simply operate at different levels. [S22]

To establish a migration one should combine dated records, local history and linguistic evidence, and state how the pieces connect. To establish a person's lineage requires further family evidence. To establish political organization requires institutional evidence. A language is not a shortcut that supplies all three missing records.

The legitimate conclusion for Yiddish is that its speakers' communities have substantial European linguistic histories. The illegitimate shortcut is to convert that conclusion into exclusive ancestry, collective character or inherited political intention.

> **Language history can guide a genealogical question; it cannot answer it alone.**

Sources / source notes: S22

13 / Hebrew and the meaning of “Semitic”

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

Hebrew belongs to the Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Arabic and Aramaic are also Semitic languages. The category is linguistic: it concerns relationships among languages, not a biological test separating “true” from “false” members of a present-day population. The profiles of Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic and Ethiopian languages illustrate why the geographical and religious categories cannot be equated. [S13, S16, S19]

Hebrew has served literary, liturgical and communicative functions across different periods. Its modern expansion as everyday speech drew on earlier textual resources as well as language contact. It was neither invented without a past nor transmitted unchanged as everybody’s mother tongue through every century. A careful history distinguishes functions and periods. [S13]

The familiar claim “someone is Semitic because their ancestors lived in Palestine” misstates a language-family term. Many people can have ancestry in the region without sharing one present-day religion. Conversely, Semitic languages have histories beyond the southern Levant. A speaker’s language does not reveal every ancestral branch.

“Antisemitism” is a separate historically established word for prejudice or hatred directed at Jews. Its meaning is not recalculated by checking the language spoken by a target or a perpetrator. Explaining that Arabic is Semitic does not make anti-Jewish prejudice linguistically impossible; nor does opposition to anti-Jewish prejudice diminish the dignity of Arabic-speaking people. [S26]

> **A linguistic family is not a hierarchy of peoples.**

Sources / source notes: S13, S16, S19, S26

14 / Ladino and the Sephardi comparison

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

Judeo-Spanish is a Romance language associated with Sephardi history. The names Ladino, Judezmo and Judeo-Spanish overlap, although some scholars reserve Ladino for a particular translation register. It has been written in Hebrew and Latin scripts. A discussion should state which usage of the name it adopts. [S14]

Its later history includes contact with Turkish, Greek and other languages in the Ottoman setting. Haketia provides a North African comparison involving Spanish-derived speech, local Arabic influence and Hebrew elements. Neither variety is adequately explained as an unchanged packet of medieval Spanish. [S14, S15]

The comparison helps test the argument made about Yiddish. If a Germanic language proved wholly Germanic ancestry, a Romance language would have to prove wholly Romance ancestry. But a linguistic family is not a certificate for all ancestors. Both cases require the same evidential standard; changing the favored community cannot change the rule of inference.

Nor does the use of Hebrew script make Ladino Hebrew. The distinction between script and grammar applies consistently. A translation can preserve sacred vocabulary while giving the surrounding sentence a different linguistic structure. That is a cultural and literary achievement to describe, not a puzzle requiring a hidden ethnic replacement.

> **The same standard must apply to Yiddish, Ladino and every other language.**

Sources / source notes: S14, S15

15 / Arabic, Iranian and other Jewish vernaculars

Judeo-Arabic is not one identical dialect spoken everywhere. The category includes Jewish varieties of Arabic from several regions and periods, with spoken and written traditions. Many written texts use Hebrew letters. The script does not alter the language's Arabic basis. [S16]

Jewish Iranian speech also contains several local histories. Gindin's profile distinguishes non-Persian Iranian varieties from Persian itself. It would be misleading to translate "Mizrahi" into "Arabic-speaking" and then assign that language to every family covered by the label. The narrower language or place name can be more informative. [S17]

The broader comparison includes Greek, Malayalam, Ge'ez liturgy and modern Jewish English. None is a deficient form of Jewish identity because it differs from Hebrew. Researchers can ask which features are distinctively communal, which are shared with neighbors and how people alternate between repertoires. These are linguistic questions, not measures of personal worth. [S18, S19, S20, S22]

A distinction between a "language" and a "dialect" can itself involve scholarly and community conventions. Rather than force every variety into the same label, we retain the terminology of the cited profile where practicable. The overview illustrates diversity; it does not claim that all Jewish speech has a single origin or identical relationship to its neighboring languages.

> **A regional umbrella cannot replace the history of a particular language.**

Sources / source notes: S16, S17, S18, S19, S20, S22

16 / Family trees, DNA and reference samples

Mathieson and Scally distinguish genealogical ancestry, genetic ancestry and genetic similarity. Genealogy concerns ancestors in a pedigree; inherited DNA represents only parts of those relationships; similarity compares samples. These notions connect, but they are not synonyms. Their article is methodological analysis, not a new estimate for a Jewish population. [S23]

The consequence for reading an ancestry result is practical: identify the sampled people, reference categories, time scale and assumptions. A comparison with people living in a region now is not automatically proof that a distant ancestor lived in that same region then. Migration and the choice of comparison samples matter. [S23]

Consider an explicitly fictitious family file: a birth record names a grandmother in a particular city, a letter records the language she used, and a DNA report provides a regional similarity estimate. These are three different pieces of evidence. A responsible account explains each and does not change “similar to a reference sample” into “a named ancestor is proven.”

Nor can a genetic result decide whether a conversion was religiously accepted, which cultural identity a person holds, or whether a politician’s claim is true. Those questions require other records. The methodological limit does not make genetics useless; it prevents an informative tool from being asked to issue a verdict outside its field.

> **Genetic similarity is informative, but it is not a complete named pedigree.**

Sources / source notes: S23

17 / Ancient roots are not a zero-sum contest

Behar and colleagues' 2013 abstract reports combined Middle Eastern and European ancestry in the studied Ashkenazi population and does not identify a significant Khazar contribution in its analysis. It also acknowledges the difficulty of defining an adequate modern Khazar reference. We report that result as a result of that study, not as proof that no individual could ever have a Khazar ancestor. [S25]

Agranat-Tamir and colleagues' 2020 research compares ancient southern Levantine genomes and later populations. Its models support substantial ancestry related to ancient Middle Eastern populations in several Jewish and Levantine Arabic-speaking groups. The authors explain uncertainty in separating closely related source components and the possibility of other sources. [S24]

These findings do not license a simple hierarchy of "real" versus "imitation" inhabitants. A population-level model does not specify each person's religion, every ancestor's home or uninterrupted residence of a particular family on a particular property. Those are separate claims. Nor should one modern community's historical connection be assumed to cancel another's.

The study's conclusion is methodological and ethical rather than a border proposal. Historical ancestry can be researched, but political rights and the protection of living people are not DNA prizes. A Palestinian family and a Jewish family need not compete in genealogical purity before their experiences deserve serious examination. The more detailed ancestry debate remains the subject of RA04.

> **Shared or overlapping ancestry does not assign exclusive human worth or collective guilt.**

Sources / source notes: S25, S24

18 / Reading Beter without replacing his words

AI illustration / historical evocation — not an archival image

In Audio Letter 50, Topic 3, Beter describes converted Khazars as “adoptive Jews” and then moves from conversion and dispersal to claims about an inherited political and religious hostility. That is his construction. Our community and language overview does not independently establish the later continuity he asserts. [S01]

Audio Letter 67 distinguishes ordinary American Jews from the Zionist leadership he attacks. The distinction is real in the transcript and should not be omitted. But an author’s distinction in one passage does not validate every claim elsewhere about a group’s origins, motives or coordination. We report the textual distinction without treating it as blanket exoneration or a complete character judgment. [S02]

RA02 does not attribute an argument about Yiddish’s vocabulary to Beter unless a specific passage is identified. The language question was added as contextual research for this series. It would be inaccurate to make our own explanatory question appear to be his documented claim. Similarly, the statement that Ashkenazim are simply Khazars cannot be supplied by an arrow in a diagram.

The relevant test is claim by claim. Does the passage concern religious affiliation, a named family line, a language, an ideology or an organization? What evidence would bridge the gap to the next claim? When the gap remains, write “not established in the examined sources.” Neither admiration for an author nor dislike of an allegation can fill it.

> **Faith, ancestry, language and political organization each require their own evidence.**

Sources / source notes: S01, S02

19 / Three small tests of careful reasoning

Example A is fictitious. A person's grandparents came from an eastern European Jewish community; the person speaks only English and does not practice a religion. The language and religious facts do not erase the family history. Nor does that history alone tell us citizenship or politics. To report more than the example supplies would be an unsupported addition.

Example B is fictitious. A person without known Jewish ancestors undergoes a conversion accepted by a named community. The acceptance answers a religious-status question within that framework; it does not manufacture ancient Levantine ancestors. A different authority's disagreement must be stated as a disagreement about recognition, not turned into an accusation of biological fraud.

Example C is fictitious. A family uses a Sephardi rite, has ancestors in a North African city, and speaks a local Arabic variety. These facts do not require us to choose a single box and delete the rest. Whether an Iberian branch can be documented is a separate question. Ritual, locality and language should remain distinct entries in the research file.

The examples are teaching exercises, not accounts of real people or statistical samples. They show why many heated identity arguments are not disagreements about the same proposition. First reformulate the proposition precisely; then determine which evidence would answer it. When the information is absent, uncertainty is the correct result.

> **An honest "not specified" is better than a confident stereotype.**

20 / Findings and the next questions

The central finding is not that ancestry or religious traditions are irrelevant. It is that different kinds of continuity must not be collapsed into one. A community may preserve a ritual while changing its everyday language; a family can acquire a new citizenship without losing its history. To explain those changes, specify the period, place and evidence.

The cited linguistic profiles and historical documents support a diverse account of Jewish communal life. Yiddish's European development, the Sephardi connection to Iberia, Middle Eastern and North African local histories, and additional communities are not mutually exclusive parts of one uniform origin story. They are different histories that sometimes intersect. [S06, S08, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S20, S21]

For Beter research, this supplies a discipline of reading. A label in his narrative must be unpacked before it can be linked to a modern institution. The existence of a conversion does not demonstrate an entire later population's ancestry; ancestry does not demonstrate political intention. Those bridges require separate evidence, and RA11 will examine the proposed chain directly.

RA03 turns to scripture, rabbinic interpretation and disputed passages. RA04 treats Koestler and the ancestry debate more fully. RA05 examines the history and internal diversity of Zionism. This volume provides a vocabulary for entering those studies without confusing their subjects in advance.

Our final editorial principle is simple: evidence deserves scrutiny, and people deserve to be judged by their actions rather than assigned collective guilt. Critical discussion can be exacting without making identity a contest of purity. The next useful question is not "Which people are genuine?" but "What precisely does this source establish?"

> **Tempus omnia revelat. Evidence must still be read carefully.**

Sources / source notes: S06, S08, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S20, S21

Community guide / read across the columns

A selective overview, not a division into biological types. Places refer to historical settings, not fixed modern citizenship.

Community / label	Historical setting	Language / caution
Ashkenazi	Rhine region; later western, central and eastern European settings.	Yiddish had western and eastern varieties. Community background does not establish present-day speech. [S06, S08, S10]
Sephardi	Iberia and subsequent diaspora, including Ottoman and North African settings.	Judeo-Spanish / Ladino and Haketia are examples. “Sephardi” can also refer to a rite. [S07, S14, S15]
Mizrahi	An umbrella for different Middle Eastern histories; wider usage includes North Africa.	Arabic-speaking and Iranian settings must be distinguished. The label overlaps with other categories. [S07, S16, S17]
Romaniote	Greek-speaking communities in different historical periods.	Greek traditions do not reduce to the Iberian migration story. [S18]
Beta Israel	Ethiopian communal histories.	Spoken repertoires and Ge’ez liturgy need not coincide. [S19]
Kerala communities	Local Jewish histories in southern India.	Jewish Malayalam and local names require their own account. [S20]
Karaim / Karaite	A language name must be separated from a religious label.	Karaim is Turkic; not all Karaite communities speak it or describe their identity alike. [S21]

Sources / source notes: S06, S07, S08, S10, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S20, S21

Language laboratory / words are not pedigrees

Brief lexical examples make the distinctions visible. The spellings below are teaching examples, not photographs of a manuscript.

Hebrew-script form	Yiddish romanization	Meaning
חבר	khaver	friend
חלום	kholem	dream

The two words above occur in YIVO's "Holy Language" discussion. They illustrate familiar Hebrew-derived words in Yiddish; their pronunciation need not match Modern Hebrew. [S12]

The Eastern Yiddish profile gives the short example "Der zeyde hot gebentsht khanike likht." The components illustrate several histories in a single sentence: a Germanic grammatical frame, Slavic zeyde, Semitic khanike and the Romance-derived root in bentsh. This is a linguistic analysis, not a count of the speaker's ancestors. [S09]

Bobe means grandmother and zeyde grandfather; both illustrate Slavic contact. Likht belongs to the Germanic layer. In the candle-lighting example it is associated with Hanukkah lights or candles. The examples do not establish percentages for the whole language. [S09]

Transliteration represents letters; phonetic transcription represents sounds; translation conveys meaning in another language. A change of script is not a change of ancestry. Our Latin-letter Yiddish follows the cited YIVO conventions where practicable. [S11]

SCRIPT ≠ LANGUAGE FAMILY ≠ GENEALOGY

Sources / source notes: S09, S11, S12

Claim register / C01–C05

Claims under examination, followed by the editorial assessment. A proposition below is not automatically Beter's wording.

C01

Jewish identity means religious belief alone.

Too narrow. Surveyed identities also include culture and family background. The survey does not establish religious status.

[S03]

C02

A convert needs a demonstrable ancient Judean pedigree.

Not a requirement in the conversion prescription cited here. Religious recognition is not ancestry testing.

[S05]

C03

Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi are three denominations.

Category error. Historical-cultural labels and religious affiliations answer different questions.

[S03, S07]

C04

Every Sephardi identity proves exclusively Iberian ancestry.

Not established. Ancestry, rite and wider communal usage must be distinguished.

[S07, S14, S15]

C05

Yiddish is Hebrew because it uses Hebrew letters.

Incorrect. Script and language are different; Yiddish is generally classified as West Germanic.

[S08, S11]

Claim register / C06–C10

Claims under examination, followed by the editorial assessment. A proposition below is not automatically Beter's wording.

C06

Yiddish has virtually no Hebrew-Aramaic vocabulary.

Incorrect. Documented examples include ordinary as well as religious vocabulary; the share depends on the corpus.

[S09, S12]

C07

Germanic grammar proves exclusively European ancestry.

Does not follow. Language history alone cannot supply every ancestral relationship.

[S09, S22, S23]

C08

"Semitic" establishes who is biologically authentic.

Category error. Here it names a linguistic relationship, not a test of human authenticity.

[S13, S16, S19]

C09

A shared Middle Eastern component proves an exclusive modern claim.

Not a conclusion the genetic model can deliver. It does not decide property, rights or individual religion.

[S23, S24]

C10

Beter's distinction between ordinary Jews and leaders validates his entire theory.

Does not follow. The textual distinction is acknowledged; each historical allegation still requires separate evidence.

[S01, S02]

Glossary and edition notes

Diaspora — Communities living outside a historical center; not automatically a single migration or a political organization.

Halakha — Jewish religious law and its interpretation. A religious prescription is not a genetic measurement.

Minhag / rite — A custom or ritual tradition; not a complete description of ancestry.

Vernacular — Language used in everyday life, which may differ from the language of prayer or scholarship.

Transliteration — Representation of letters in another writing system; distinct from translation.

Language contact — Interaction among languages and speakers; not by itself a complete family history.

Genealogy — A reconstruction of family relationships from evidence, with gaps and uncertainty stated.

Reference sample — A comparison sample used in an analysis; its label is not an eternal population essence.

Collective guilt — Responsibility assigned by group membership instead of evidence of an individual's actions.

RA02 · Version 1.0 · 11 October 2026. Complete study and illustrated guide in separate English and Slovak editions. This is an independent, AI-assisted editorial publication, not a peer-reviewed academic monograph.

The illustrated guide condenses this study; it does not add historical evidence. Its source codes refer to the same register. Historical scenes are imaginative composites, not portraits of named individuals or reconstructions of exact buildings. Letter-like marks inside artwork are not authentic source quotations.

No original manuscript examination, linguistic fieldwork, religious-status ruling or new DNA computation was performed. S25 was consulted as an abstract; S05 as a translated excerpt. Source descriptions state the other limits of consultation.

The series investigates Beter's writings without treating them as proof of their allegations. RA03 and later volumes were still planned at this edition's cutoff. Corrections should identify the edition, section and source concerned.

Editorial work: Me & Zen · Colombine Michelangelo. Archive: www.peterdavidbeter.com. Source texts retain their respective rights. No third-party photographs or manuscript facsimiles are reproduced.

Sources and reading record / S01–S08

The source descriptions record what was consulted. Access date: 11 October 2026.

S01 · Peter David Beter
Audio Letter No. 50 — Topic 3
1979-09-30 · archival transcript
Primary evidence of Beter's assertions, not independent evidence for the history he alleges. Topic 3 consulted.
https://www.peterdavidbeter.com/docs/all/dbal50.html

S02 · Peter David Beter
Audio Letter No. 67 — Topic 2
1981-08-25 · archival transcript
Passages distinguishing American Jews from political leaders consulted. Contemporary allegations are not independently verified here.
https://www.peterdavidbeter.com/docs/all/dbal67.html

S03 · Pew Research Center
Jewish Americans in 2020: Jewish identity and belief
2021-05-11 · original survey report
Published survey chapter; U.S. respondents in 2020. Neither a global census nor a rule of religious admission.
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-identity-and-belief/

S04 · Central Conference of American Rabbis
CARR 61–68: Patrilineal and Matrilineal Descent
1983-10 · historical religious ruling
1983 Reform responsum and quoted resolution. The archive warns that historical responsa need not reflect current policy.
https://www.ccarnet.org/ccar-responsa/carr-61-68/

S05 · Maimonides; translated excerpt in a source sheet by Erin Leib Smokler
Mishneh Torah, Forbidden Intercourse 13:1–5
12th-century code / Pesach 2016 source essay · primary text in a source sheet
Translated selection (especially 13:4–5) in Erin Leib Smokler's "The Geulah of Gerut: Pesach as Transformation." The original essay is dated Pesach 2016. Not an examination of the complete code.
https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/414745

S06 · UNESCO World Heritage Centre
ShUM Sites of Speyer, Worms and Mainz
2021 inscription · heritage documentation
Official statement of heritage value and material documentation of medieval Ashkenazi institutions.
https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1636/

S07 · Pew Research Center
Israel's Religiously Divided Society: Identity
2016-03-08 · original survey report
2016 publication, including the Ashkenazi/Sephardi/Mizrahi explanation. Its categories and results are historically situated.
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2016/03/08/identity/

S08 · YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
Learning Yiddish / About Yiddish
n.d. · institutional linguistic introduction
YIVO's introductory account of the language and its cultural history; not a reconstruction of every ancestral migration.
https://www.yivo.org/Yiddish

Sources and reading record / S09–S16

The source descriptions record what was consulted. Access date: 11 October 2026.

S09 · William F. Weigel; quick facts by Isaac Bleaman
Yiddish (Eastern)
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Classification, contact, dialects and vocabulary consulted; no current speaker count adopted.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/eastern-yiddish

S10 · Auden Finch
Yiddish (Western)
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Western varieties and the reported 1272 Worms Mahzor inscription. Manuscript not inspected directly.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/western-yiddish

S11 · YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
Yiddish Alef-beys (Alphabet)
n.d. · language teaching resource
Letter values and YIVO romanization. Our small examples are teaching aids, not a complete orthography guide.
https://www.yivo.org/Yiddish-Alphabet

S12 · Alex Weiser / YIVO
Holy Language
2017-07-13 · institutional linguistic essay
Hebrew/Aramaic vocabulary in everyday Yiddish and retained spellings; brief lexical examples only.
https://summerprogram.yivo.org/Holy-Language

S13 · Eden Moyal
Hebrew
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Historical functions, language family and modern contact. Contested reconstructions are not treated as settled.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/hebrew

S14 · Ora Schwarzwald
Judeo-Spanish / Judezmo / Ladino
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Iberian and Ottoman history, names, writing systems and contact.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/judeo-spanish-judezmo-ladino

S15 · Yaakov Bentolila
Haketia
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. North African Judeo-Spanish and interaction with local Jewish communities.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/haketia

S16 · Benjamin Hary and Josh Mendel
Judeo-Arabic
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Multiple varieties, Hebrew-script practice and contact; not one uniform dialect.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/judeo-arabic

Sources and reading record / S17–S24

The source descriptions record what was consulted. Access date: 11 October 2026.

S17 · Thamar Gindin
Judeo-Iranian Languages
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project; adapted from Gindin (2003). Local Iranian varieties are not equated with Arabic.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/judeo-iranian

S18 · Julia Krivoruchko
Judeo-Greek
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Historical Greek-speaking Jewish traditions and their multiple writing practices.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/judeo-greek

S19 · Anbessa Teferra
Jewish Ethiopian Languages
2023 · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Beta Israel's spoken languages and Ge'ez liturgy; no unique descent theory adopted.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/jewish-ethiopian

S20 · Scaria Zacharia and Ophira Gamliel
Jewish Malayalam
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Kerala communities, local names and limits of outsider classifications.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/jewish-malayalam

S21 · Isaac Mayer
Karaim
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Turkic language versus Karaite religious tradition; diverse self-identification acknowledged.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/karaim

S22 · Sarah Bunin Benor
Jewish English
n.d. · expert linguistic profile
Jewish Language Project. Variation within Jewish English and contact with heritage languages.
https://www.jewishlanguages.org/jewish-english

S23 · Iain Mathieson and Aylwyn Scally
What is ancestry?
2020-03-09 · methodological opinion article
PLOS Genetics 16(3), e1008624. Genealogical ancestry, genetic ancestry and genetic similarity; not a new population dataset.
https://journals.plos.org/plosgenetics/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgen.1008624

S24 · Lily Agranat-Tamir et al.
The Genomic History of the Bronze Age Southern Levant
2020 · original research article
Cell (2020). Main text and discussion of present-day populations consulted; no new computation or full supplementary-data audit.
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10212583/

Sources and reading record / S25–S29

The source descriptions record what was consulted. Access date: 11 October 2026.

S25 · Doron M. Behar et al.
No Evidence from Genome-Wide Data of a Khazar Origin for the Ashkenazi Jews
2013 · research abstract and repository record
Human Biology 85(6), 2013. Here we use the accessible abstract only; the detailed genetic debate belongs to RA04.
https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/humbiol/vol85/iss6/9/

S26 · United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Antisemitism: An Introduction
n.d. · museum research and educational overview
Definition, racialization and collective scapegoating. Used for the historical meaning of antisemitism, not to settle every political dispute.
https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism

S27 · Pew Research Center
Jewish Americans in 2020: Jewish practices and customs
2021-05-11 · original survey report
Synagogue membership and religious practice in the 2020 U.S. survey. Not a global membership rule.
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/05/11/jewish-practices-and-customs/

S28 · Michael Lipka / Pew Research Center
Unlike U.S., few Jews in Israel identify as Reform or Conservative
2016-03-15 · original survey analysis
Explains the difference between informal Masorti identity and affiliation with the Conservative/Masorti movement. Historical comparison, not current population proportions.
https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/03/15/unlike-u-s-few-jews-in-israel-identify-as-reform-or-conservative/

S29 · Pew Research Center
Israel's Religiously Divided Society
2016-03-08 · original survey report
Overview of Jewish and non-Jewish religious identities and the survey's definitions. No citizenship-law advice is derived from the survey.
https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2016/03/08/israels-religiously-divided-society/