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### **A Yiddish Bar-Mitzvah speech from 1927 in linguistic and sociolinguistic context**

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This paper examines a bar-mitzvah speech delivered in New York in 1927. The speech consists of 11 hand-written pages. The speech was delivered by Bernard R. Frank (1915-1972) at his bar-mitzvah, and written/written out by Rabbi J. Zuckerman, in close collaboration with Bernard. Bernard's father--an instrumental force in the founding of this orthodox synagogue--had passed away (a major theme in the speech), and Rabbi Zuckerman had stepped in and tutored Bernard for a year, working closely with him in preparation for the bar-mitzvah event. A pdf of the speech was sent to me in February 2014 with a request that I identify a few salient points about the contents, and convey these to Bernard's surviving sister, Sylvia Frank Lippe, who is the current owner of the document. I translated the entire document, and as I did so, became more and more interested in the linguistics, sociolinguistics, and stylistics of the language used in the speech. The document is representative of the kind of Yiddish used in such occasions in America in that period. Permission to use this document, and to identify the individuals involved, was graciously given by Sylvia Frank Lippe.

The present paper offers a close reading of the speech, and situates the language use within the broader history of Yiddish, including issues of Yiddish dialectology; standardization trends (this reflects clearly a pre-YIVO standardized style common in Yiddish literature of the period); the occurrence of English loan words (such as \*trayen\* 'to try, attempt') in the context of broader scholarship on Yiddish in America; code-switching with Hebrew, etc. Thus, a close reading of this document, at first glance fairly simple, quickly calls into discussion many of the classic issues in Yiddish linguistic scholarship, such as the role of German as the "hidden standard" in Yiddish in the modern period (Schaechter 1969); language contact and diglossia (especially with Hebrew; see M. Weinreich 1980), and the ethnography of Jewish speech; Yiddish stylistics and competing models for a modern standard language. The present paper is divided into the following sections: 1. Historical overview of the setting for the speech--time, place, occasion, audience, etc; the role of the rabbi and the role of Bernard in the formation of the speech; content themes in the speech. 2. Relation of the model of language use in this speech to contemporary models of written/formal-spoken Yiddish. 3. Discussion of noteworthy points of grammatical structure found in the speech, along with grammatical variation. 3. Focus on code-switching and language contact, the roles of Hebrew, German, and English. This paper thus attempts to provide examination of a single Yiddish speech from 1927 as a means to an archaeological ethnography which sheds light on broader issues of language usage in multiple, and multiply-complex contexts.