



JUDEO-PERSIAN COMMUNITIES X. JUDEO- PERSIAN JARGON (LOTĒRĀ'Ī)

JUDEO-PERSIAN COMMUNITIES OF IRAN

x. Judeo-Persian Jargon (*Loterā'ī*)

Loterā'ī is the secret jargon used by the Jewish communities of Iran and Afghanistan when they do not want the content of their talk to be understood by non-Jews. It is commonly called *Loterā'ī*, or a variant of it (*Luftā'ī* in Kashan, *Lutrā'ī* in Golpāyegān, and *Lutru'ī* in Kermanshah), and it serves to protect the privacy of conversation among the members of the community in the presence of the *guim* (Heb. *goyim*), the gentile (see Yarshater, 1977; Lazard, 1978; Zarubin, 1924 quoted by Lazard, *ibid.*).

The Jewish community of Persia, except for the Jews of Kurdistan who speak an Aramaic dialect, adopted the Iranian language of their home region. Whereas the non-Jewish inhabitants of these regions, who spoke a Median dialect in the north and west of Iran down to Isfahan province, eventually gave up their language to Persian, which began to exert its influence from Sasanian times onward, the Jewish communities, being generally rather secluded from the Iranian populations, have kept their non-Persian Iranian dialects (see Yarshater, 1974).



The term *lot(a)rā* (*lwtr*), and its variations *lot(a)ra* and *lotar*, is defined by Persian dictionaries as a language designed to prevent outsiders from understanding the content of a conversation (See *Farhang-e Jahāngiri*, which is followed in its definition by *Farhang-e Rašidi*, *Borhān-e qāte'*, *Ānandrāj*, *Anjoman ārā-ye Nāšeri*, and Dehḳodā's *Loḡat-nāma*). The oldest text in which the term occurs is *Ḥodud al-'ālam* (10th century, by an anonymous author; ed. Sotudeh, p. 144), where we read that “the people of Astrābād speak in two languages, one the Lotarā (*lwtr*) of Astrābād, and the other the Persian of Gorgān” (Dehḳodā who also quotes the passage, gives “kordāni” instead of “Gorgāni,” apparently from a different ms; cf. V. Minorsky's translation, p. 134, which has “Gurgāni.”) The next oldest occurrence of the term is found in a manuscript of Asadi's *Loḡat-e fors* (quoted by Dehḳodā, s.v. *lwtr*) under *lif*: “*lif* is a plant; and in Lotra the beard is called *lif*.” Three verses are quoted from the 12th-century poet Kamāl-al-Din Esmā'il in the Persian dictionaries—two lines in the *Farhang-e Jahāngiri* and one line in Dehḳodā. Raḥim 'Afifi, editor of the *Farhang-e Jahāngiri* (p. 2095), quotes from the *Tāriḳ-e Waṣṣāf* two lines from the poet Idaji, where *lowtara* occurs, and he takes it to mean ‘nonsense, futile words’, but the text does not seem to warrant this, since here the word refers to a Koranic passage beginning with *law tara* “if you should see,” to illustrate the meaning of the term, leave no doubt that *lotarā* refers to secret, unintelligible, and enigmatic language.

Besides *lif*, mentioned above, two other words are referred to as “Lutorā'i” in a poem of Suzani, the 12th-century poet (Dehḳodā, under *lwtr*). These are *zif* “ugly” and *daḳ* “beautiful.” None, however, occurs in the current Jewish Loterā'i, and therefore could be assumed to have a different basis, if, as the *Borhān-e qāte'* implies, by Loterā'i was meant in Persian an artificial, “made-up” language, like *Zargari*. These words may represent distortions of some other words; for *daḳ*, however, cf. Heb. *Zaḳ* “pure” (for the interchange between *d* and *z*, see below).

Of the explanations of the term offered by the Loterā'i speakers, the one which seems plausible is “non-Toraic” (i.e., **lo-Torah*), which distinguishes it from Hebrew (Toraic). It is possible that the term was adopted into Persian from the Jews in earlier periods, and that Astrābād's Loterā'i-speakers were in fact its Jewish community.

Loterā'i is a mixed language. The pronouns, adjectives, and the majority of nouns and verbal bases, as well as some prepositions, are Semitic, whereas verbal endings, modal prefixes, suffix pronouns, most of the particles, as well



as sentence structure are Iranian. In fact, it is very much like a ‘spoken’ *Huzwāreš*, if one could imagine it being spoken, where the vocabulary is Semitic, but the structure and syntax are Iranian. This can be illustrated by comparing the following examples from Golpāyegān. Abbreviations used: Heb(rew), Aram(aic), Ara(bic), OHeb = Old Heb., BHeb. = Biblical Heb., Gol(pāyegāni), Neh(āvandi), Khom(eyni), Shir(azi), Kāsh(āni), Mash(hadi), Esf(ahāni), Yaz(di), Ham(adāni), Teh(rāni), Huz(vārish). Also G (Harold L. Ginsberg), and R (the late Prof. Franz Rosenthal), who helped the author with the Semitic components of *Loterāi*.

Ir(anian): *mon gun be-šon xiābān, šon o var-e-gard-on* “I want to go out (lit. in the street); I shall go and return” was given in *Lot(erā’i)* as *ANNI BĀY-um b-EZ-on xiābān, būd šon vā-EZ-on. ANNI* (Neh., etc., *ANI*) “I” Heb. *ani*, Gol. *mon. BĀY-un* “I want to, I am about to, I must”; Aram. *b’y, be’a*; Heb. *ba’a*; “to want to, to ask, to seek.” (*be’a* is the common Aramaic word for ‘to want to’). The Lot. verb must derive from the Aram. participle *bā’i* (G). *-b(e)-EZ-on* “that I go.” Cf. *b(e)-EZ* “go!” *EZ-id-am* or *be-EZ-ā-m* “I went,” *vā-EZ* “go back, return.” The stem *EZ* (*E:Z* or *HEZ* in other variations) must be traced to Aramaic and Hebrew *ʾl* “to go.” Cf. MPers. Huz. *ZLWN= šudan* “to go”; Arabic *azaliyyun* “long gone, long past, without beginning.” The verb, which is the common word for “to go” in Aramaic, occurs in Old Aramaic, Egyptian and Biblical Aramaic, Mandaean, Samaritan, Christian-Palestinian and Judeo-Aramaic (Köhler and Baumgartner, *Heb. u. Aram. Lex.*, p. 26). Already in the Talmudic period, *-l* tended to drop (G.), a fact which may explain its absence in *Loterā’i*.

Another example will further illustrate the hybrid nature of the language: Lot. *vaxti EZ(Z)-id-am DERAX-e NĀŠĪM GĀDUL-ie, be-š-MEŠTĀ-n-ā ANNI TĀM mi-ĀŠunam* “when I went to the wife of the elder one, she said, “I shall put it right.” *DERAX* “before, French *chez*, to,” Heb. *derex* “road”; cf. *han-DERAX-e* “accompanied by,” Pers. *ham-rāh-e* (lit. “following the same road”); *NĀŠĪM* “wife,” Heb. pl. of *iššā* “wife” (cf. *išā*, which is used in Lot. for “woman”); *GĀDUL* “big, great,” Heb. *gadōl*; *MEŠTĀ* “to say” is not quite easy to explain; one might think of *mešta’e*, the participle of *išta’e*, “to talk, converse, narrate” (G.); *TĀM*, “whole,” corresponds to Pers. *dorost*. – *mi-ĀŠ-un-am* “I fix, prepare,” Neh. *TĀM KĀM-un-*; *ĀŠ-ne, ĀŠ-un* “do!” *ĀŠ-un-d* “did.” As a general-purpose verb, it assumes different meanings with different prefixes and complements. *-un* is an Iranian causative element; cf. Neh. *be-HEZ* “go,” *be-HEZ-un* “bring,” *var-KĀ(M)* “get up!” *dar- KĀ(M)* “sit down!” *dar- KĀM-un-eš* “seat him!” The base *ĀŠ-* also occurs without *un-*, e.g., Neh. *be-m-ĀŠ-i* “I bought, took.” This



could possibly be traced to Heb. *ʾāsā* “to do,” although the phonetic change in the sibilant is not supported by other examples. Cf. Shir. *ŠEQ*, *ŠOQ*, Heb.-Aram. *šūq* “market,” although it remains to be ascertained whether the phonology of the Shirazi Loterā'ī, which has marked differences from the Loterā'ī of Median provinces, would be applicable here.

In each region Loterā'ī follows more or less the grammar of the local dialect—not without some differences, which are of particular interest for the study of the earlier stages of the local dialect. But because of the general resemblance of these dialects, and a fairly common stock of Semitic vocabulary, Loterā'ī is more or less understood among all the Jewish communities in question. Only in Fārs (Persis) do the verbal stems differ more conspicuously from those in the Median regions.

In Tehran, where the Jewish population was 43,000 in 1976 (Statistical Center of Iran, p. 79), is derivative, and possesses no native dialect, a modicum of Loterā'ī was used in the bazaar and in the ghetto among the Jewish traders and shopkeepers. Its vocabulary is mixed and reflects the varied origin of Tehrani Jews. At the same time it shows the close relationship, and in some instances the unity, of Loterā'ī vocabulary from different regions.

The Semitic vocabulary of Loterā'ī poses some interesting questions as to its origin and date. The majority of nouns are Hebrew, sometimes without significant modification, e.g., *EVEN* “stone”; *ES* “tree” (Heb. *ʿēš*); *HITTIM*, Shir. *ITIM* “wheat” (Heb. *ḥittīm*); *ZEHAD* “this, this one” (Heb. *ze-eḥād*); *ŠATTEYAH* “rug” (Heb. *saṭīaḥ*); *HALOW* “milk” (Heb. *ḥālāv*); *BĀQĀR* “cow” (in Heb. collective: “cattle”); *MELĀXĀ* “work, affair”; *RĀŠĀ* “wicked, cruel” (Heb. *rāšā*); *ĀFĀR* “earth” (Heb. *ʾāfār*); *MAŠĀRET* “apprentice” (Heb. *māšārēt*); *HĀM* “warm” (Heb. *ḥam*); *TĀM* “whole”; *KAMĀ* “how many” (for *KAMĀ-tā* “a few”; cf. Pers. *cand-tā*); *HĀNUT* “shop” (Heb. *ḥānut*); *BOQER* “morning”; *QĀTUN* “little” (Heb. *qāṭōn*); *BĀSĀR* “meat”; *SAXVI* “cock” (OHeb. *sexwi*; it occurs in Job 39:36 and in Jewish liturgy (G.) *LEHAM*, Shir. *LĀM* “bread” (Heb. *leḥem*); *TAPUAH* “apple” (Heb. *tappuah*); *EQUZIM* “walnut” (Heb. pl. *egōzīm*); *HĀTUX* “broken” (Heb. *ḥātux* “cut”); *BEQIĀ*, Shir. *BĀXIĀ* “weeping” (Heb. *boxia*), *MAYEM* “water” (Heb. *māyim*); *RİŠON* “first”; *IŠ* “man,” *IŠĀ* “woman” (Heb. *iššā*).

Some other nouns show some phonetic modifications, e.g., Gol. *PUNIM* “face” (Heb. pl. *pānīm*); *SUN* “sheep” (Heb. *šōn*); SA'UR, Khom. SA'URI “barley” (Heb. *se'ōrā*, pl. *se'ōrīm*); *ŠĀXAR* “aqua vita” (Heb. *šēxār*); *QEMA* “flour” (Heb.



qemaḥ); *ḤĀTUR* “cat” (Heb. *ḥātūl*); Xum. *KELE* “dog” (Heb. *kelev*); *HINNA* “gratis” (Heb. *ḥinnām*); *QANNO* “thief” (Heb. *gannāv*); *AHRA* “back” (Heb. *āḥōr*); Shir. *BIKA* “egg” (Heb. *bēšā*); Shir. *RAKKA* “thin” (Heb. *raqqā*); Shir. *MAYERĀ* “quickly” (Heb. *meherā* “soon”); Shir. *ARON* “last” (Heb. *aḥarōn*); Shir. *PALITA*, Ham. *PERITĀ*, Mash. *PARUTĀ* “money” (Heb. *pērūtā* “penny”).

A third group displays semantic modifications, with or without phonetic changes, e.g., Gol. *MALBIŠ* “clothes” (Heb. act. participle *malbīš* “one who clothes”); *MAUN* “goods” (Heb. *mā’ōn* “dwelling, tabernacle”); Khom. *PETAH* “door” (Heb. “entrance”); Neh. *HEBEL* “bad” (BHeb. “vanity, nothingness”); *YĀHID* “empty” (Heb. *yāḥīd* “solitary, sole”). Among this group may be included also possessive constructions which serve as single words, as is the case in some Middle Persian ideographs, e.g., Gol. *AYNĀM* “eye,” (Heb. *’ēnām* “their eye”); *KULLĀM* “all” (Heb. “all of them”); Khom. *ĀBI* “father” (Heb. “my father”; cf. Shir. *ABEQ*); *AHI* “brother” (Heb. *āḥī* “my brother”; *BENI-čī* “son” (Heb. *beni* “my son”); *GAMELLI* “camel” (Heb. *gāmāl* “camel,” *gemallī* “my camel”); Shir. *IMI* “mother” (Heb. *immī* “my mother”)—Khom. *IMMO* and Gol. *IMMĀ*, however, may come from Aram. voc. *immā* “mother!”; cf. *ŠENAY*, below. *BAT-ičī* “daughter” appears to have been formed by analogy from Heb. *bat* “daughter,” since “my daughter” in Heb. is *bitti* (G.); cf. Gol. *pir-čī* “son,” *do-čī* “daughter.”

A fourth group is common to Aramaic and Hebrew, and is generally found in the Aramaicized Hebrew of Talmudic periods; e.g., Gol. *ŠENAY* “tooth” (Heb. *šen* “tooth,” *šinnai* “my teeth”); *LIBBĀ* “heart” (Aram. *libbā*, Heb. *lev*); Khom. *REŠĀ* “head” (Aram. *rēšā*, Heb. *roš*); Shir. *YĀRT-ak* “child” (possibly from Aram. *yaldā* “boy”; cf. Heb. *yeled*); *KĀFĀR* “market” (Aram. and OHeb. “village, country place”). In Neh., etc., *BĀBUSE* “father” and *MĀMUSE* “mother,” an Aramaic diminutive particle (*ōs*, *ōsō*) seems to have been attached to *bāvā*, an Aramaic adaptation of Iranian *bābā* “father” (G.) *MĀMUSE* must have been formed by analogy from *māmā* “mother.”

The nature and provenance of some of the nouns and adjectives do not seem to be clear and require further study, e.g., Gol. *DENEY* “husband,” *LAKMĀ* (a mis-hearing on my part for *LATMĀ*?) “beating,” *NEŠAQ* “on credit” (cf. Pers.-Ara. *nesya*), *PASILĀ* “*gōīm*, Muslim” (cf. Heb. *pāsūl*, Aram. *pāsīl* “disqualified, ineligible,” G.), *TANAYIM* “hen,” cf. Heb. *tarnegol* “cock,” *tarnegolet* “hen” (G.); *EKLUL* “cock”; Khom. *DĀQIM* “almond” (I have recorded this word in Shir. in the sense of “place”[?]); Neh. *QEYRĀ* “thick soup” = Pers. *āš*; Shir. *ĀQĀR* “meat,” *ČUMĀ*, (beside *PALITA*) “money”; Mash. *SĀYEF* “Muslim.”



The numerals have Hebrew forms, e.g., Shir. *EYĀD-i*, *YĀD-i* (cf. Gol. *EHĀTā*, i.e., *EĤĀD* “one” + *tā* “unit of counting”) “one,” *ŠANE* “two,” *ŠALOŠĀ* (Gol. *SARUŠĀ-tā*) “three,” *ARBAĀ* “four,” *HAMIŠĀ* “five,” *ŠISĀ* “six,” *ŠEBĀ* “seven,” *ŠAMONĀ* “eight,” *TISĀ* “nine,” *ASĀRĀ* “ten” (in Shirazi *s* and *z* are regularly pronounced like the unvoiced and voiced English *th*, respectively, as is the case in several Central dialects; in this entry, however, they have been transcribed by *s* and *z*), *EYĀD ESĀR* “eleven,” *ESRIN* “twenty,” *EYAD ve-ESRIN* “twenty one.”

This is also the case with the pronouns, e.g., in Neh.:

	Sing.	Plural
1st person:	<i>ANI</i>	<i>ANI-ā</i>
2nd person:	<i>ATĀ</i>	<i>KULLAM ATEM</i>
3rd person:	<i>u-HAYI</i>	<i>u-HĀY-ā</i>

(*-ā* in the 1st and 3rd person plural is the Iranian plural marker; *KULLAM* is an indefinite pronoun, meaning ‘all’, but also used for ‘you’; *u-HAYI* appears to be a combination of an Iranian and a Hebrew pronoun, cf. *u* + *EĤĀDĀI* “that one”; see above: *ZEHĀD* “this, this one”).

The more significant and also the more problematic Semitic elements in Loterā'ī, however, are the verbs. Loterā'ī employs relatively few verbal bases, partly because the language has limited scope and is used only for common daily purposes, and partly because it makes extensive use of a few general-purpose verbs by (a) assigning to each more than one meaning, even opposite ones, and (b) modifying their meaning by prefixes, and, more frequently, by nominal complements, as is also the case in Persian. For example, the base (H)EZ- means “to go” as well as “to come” and “to arrive”; (H)EZ-un, its causative form (the causative marker in the Imperative may be *-un* or *-n[e]*), means “to carry” and “to bring”; *vā-EZ* “to go back” and “to come back.” In Esf., *bi-PRIS* means “eat!” “take!” and “buy!” Gol. *ĀŠ-un*, Neh. *KĀM-un*, and Shir. *TA:N*, like Pers. *kardan*, serve a variety of meanings; Gol. *dar-ĀŠ-ne* (Kash. *der-ĀŠ-an*) “take!”; *ŠAELĀ ĀŠ-ne* “ask!” (Heb. *šā'elā* “question”). *TĀM ĀŠ-un* corresponds to Pers. *dorost kardan* and means “to prepare, to fix, to cook, to sew, to milk, to weave and to put on” depending on the context; *QEMA ĀŠ-ne* “grind,” *ŠEPPAR ĀŠ-ne* “break!” (Heb. *qemaḥ* “floor”).

In a few cases the Hebrew origin of the verb is clear, e.g., Mash. *be-LEX*, Yaz. *ve-LEX* “go!” (Shir. *LEX*, but also *DEX*; for the interchange between *d* and *l*, cf. *DABAR/LAVAR* “word, talk”). Ham., etc. *dar-HALUM* “go to sleep” (Heb. *ḥa-lōm* “dream”). A larger number, about seven or eight, are traceable to verbs



common to Aramaic and Talmudic Hebrew—more often to Aramaic, perhaps, but not unknown to the Jews anyway (R.). These are Ham., Gol., Esf., etc. *(H)EZ* “to go”; *P(E)RIS, PIRIS* “to eat”; Shir. “to drink” (Aram. *p̄aras*, BHeb. *paras* “to break, divide; to break bread”); Shir. *AV-* “to give” (Aram. *yehav-*; already in midrash *h* drops out: *ya(h)av* > *yav*, G.); Gol., etc. *BAU-* “to want to”; *NAZK-un*, Kash. *NASK-en* “kill! hit!” (Aram. *nzq* “to injure”; cf. Heb. *hizziq* < *hinziq*, R.; hardly Aram. *n̄xas* “to kill”); Shir. *OXEL-* “to eat” (cf. Heb. *ōxēt* “eating”).

These bases, although used in Biblical or Talmudic Hebrew, raise the question whether they were borrowed directly from Aramaic, or, to put it in a different way, whether at the time of the inception of Loterā’i the Jews of Persia were Aramaic-speaking and Hebrew elements were imported only later and increasingly in the course of time. This suspicion is somewhat strengthened by the fact that a couple of verbal bases are specifically of Aramaic origin. One is Shir. *ZA(W)N-* (here it is possible that *-n* is an original sound which has coalesced with the Iranian causative marker; in Shir. both *ZAN* and *DAN* “sell!” occur; cf. *Z(E)VĀ/D(E)VĀ* “to say,” below); Teh. *DEV-*, Esf. *DAM-* “to sell”; Aram. *zabben* “to sell.” The other is *DEYL-* “to fear”; Aram. *dehel* (this verb does not occur in Heb. G.).

On the other hand, it may be argued that, if direct borrowing occurred, one would have expected Aramaic forms in pronouns and numerals. On balance, however, it is easier to explain later importation of Hebrew numerals and pronouns than later Aramaic borrowings.

A number of verbs remain to be identified, namely, Gol. *REJ-* “see, know,” Mash. *RUJ-* “look, watch,” Neh. *vā-REJ-* “see, know, find” and also “be able to” (Neh. *vā-REJ-am* “that I see,” *vā-REJ-id-am* “I saw, knew,” *vā-š-e-REJ-ā* “he used to know”); Shir. *KELOWS-* “laugh” (*be-KLOWS* “laugh!” *KELOWS-id* “he laughed,” *be-KLOWS-un* “make laugh!”); Neh. *VIĀJ-*, Mash. *VELĀJ-* “sell, finish with” (Neh. *be-š-VIĀJ-ā-yeš* “he sold to him”; Mash. *be-VELĀJ* “sell!”), *YOQAR-VELĀJ* “one who charges high prices” (Heb. *yāqār* “dear”); Mash. *NUND* “give” (*be-NUND* “give!”); *TEK-* “do, make” (*be-TEK-en* “make! fix!”); Shir. *GĀL-* “go” (*be-GĀL-* “go!”; *GĀL-ed-em* “I went”); *ĀJ-* “come” (*be-ĀJ* “come,” *ĀJ-essem* “I came”); *TA:N-* “do, make” (*be-TA:N* “do,” *mi-TA:N-em* “I do”); *KOD-* “hit, kill” (from *qtl* ?); *ŠED(D)* “catch [a disease!]”; *Z(E)VĀ, D(E)VĀ-* “say” (*mi-ZVĀ-n* “they say,” *eš-DEVĀ-s* “he said,” *LE-BEZVĀ* “don’t say!,” *em-LE-DEVĀ-sesā* “I had not said”); *MARG-un* (also in Teh.) “hit” (Shir. *LE-be-MARG-u* “don’t hit!” *šu-mi-MARG-ondesā* “they had hit”; *šu-mi-MARG-ono* “I shall hit”; Teh. *MARG-und* “he hit”); *ČED-* “know, understand” (*LE-mi-ČED-em* “I don’t know”), cf. Kash. *ČA-* “know,



see” (*ni-Ā-n* “I don’t know,” *ne-Ā-dun* “I did not see,” *ni-Ē-u* (sic) “he did not know”), Esf., Yaz., Ker. *ĀER* “see, know” (Esf. *be-ĀER* “see!” *ne-ĀER-une* “I don’t know, I don’t understand,” *be-m-ĀERN-a* “I said, I knew”; Yaz. *ne-ĀER-in* “I don’t recognize, I don’t know”).

Some of these verbs have a non-Semitic look, but the final test of a word being Loterā’i is whether it is considered as such by the speakers and whether they use a different word for it in their native Iranian dialect. Obviously the verbs, which seem to be the oldest elements of the Semitic vocabulary, have undergone considerable phonetic change.

The fact that the great majority of the Semitic vocabulary in Loterā’i is drawn from Old Hebrew and Aramaic attests to the antiquity of the Jewish settlements of Persia, but does not encourage tracing them to pre-exilic periods, when the language of the Jews was Hebrew—notwithstanding Shalmaneser’s reported deportation of the Jews to Median territories (2 Kings 17:6).

Loterā’i must have developed at a time when the cities in which the Jews were dwelling had not yet given up their local language for Persian (as is still the case in *Kānsār*) and the Iranian dialects which are now spoken by the Jews as their native tongue were understood by the gentile population around them. Therefore a language with a heavy dose of Semitic elements for private communication made sense. It is equally conceivable that, as Persian gradually replaced the local dialects, the Iranian language of the Jews could, at least partially, serve the purpose of privacy, and this factor most probably contributed to the shrinking of Loterā’i and to its retaining only the most basic vocabulary. Hebrew vocabulary, however, could be imported almost at will from the common fund of Hebrew religious literature known to the Jews.

Further, the fact that Loterā’i is shared by all the Jewish communities of Persia, except the Jews of Kurdistan, seems to point to a common origin of these communities. However, considering some differences in vocabulary, particularly between the Loterā’i of Fārs and that of the Median territories, dialectal differences among the original settlers seems probable. (Cf. the following text.) The Aramaic dialect of Kurdish Jews has no bearing on Loterā’i, cannot have been its origin, and has followed an entirely different development.

One might hope that a closer study of the Semitic elements in Loterā’i would



help to clarify some of the questions that this preliminary survey has raised and yield more precise conclusions concerning the date of the Jewish settlements in Persia and their original language.

SAMPLE TEXT

A. Loterā'i of Golpāyegān: 1. ANNI KAMĀ-tā BENI-či ve BAT-iči VIĀ-m-a. 2. DENNEY ANNI BOQER mi-EZ-ad ḤĀNUT. LEYLĀ mi-EZZe BETĀ. 3. un-HĀD va-ne-mi-REJ-ad ANNI bā in BENI-či-ā ve MELĀXĀ-ye BETĀ če-mi-ĀŠ-un-am. 4. ASĀRĀ-tā ham ĀDĀYIM VIA-m bu QĀTUN-e: KAM(M)Ā BĀQĀR, MELĀXĀ GUIM-ā. ATĀ vā-mi-REJ-i re MELĀXĀ. 5. ANNI TOFERET LIBBĀ-m BĀU-š b-EZ-om YERŠALĀYM. DENNEY-im LIBBĀ-m BĀU-š b-EZ-om YERŠALĀYM. DENNEY-im LIBBĀ-š ne-BĀ. na-š-BĀU b-EZ-u. 6. KULĀM-e MĀUN-eš-a NEŠAQ GE-KĀM-un-de be PĀSIL-ā, PERIS-id-and. 7. ve ANNI o BENI-či-ā-m GĀLUT-and hālā na-ČER-on XOTIN-em vā BENI-či-ā b-EZ-on ISRĀEL. 8. DENEY-m-ā če-MELĀXĀ be-ĀŠ-un-on? 9. ATĀ MEŠTān-i ANNI če ĀFĀR REŠĀ-m ĀŠ-n-on.

B. The above text in the native Iranian dialect: 1. mon čan-tā pir-či va do-či dāron. 2. mira-m sobḥ šu, dokkun, še yu kia. 3. un na-zun-u ke me tu kia bā večā če-kār ekeron. 4. da:-tā kāregar-am dār-bon kam-u. čan-tā gāb, kār-ā-ye guym-ā. to zuni če kār-ā. 5. mon xayyāt-on. mon del-em gu-š bešon Yerušalāim. mira-m del-eš na-š-egu be-šu. 6. hame māle-eš-ā heš-da nesya be guym-ā, xordand. 7. mon-o večā-m dar ezāb-enda. hālā na-zun-on xo-m ve večā-m be-ši-m Isrāel. 8. mira-m-ā če-kār be-keron? 9. to vāy če xāki sar-em ker-on?

C. Translation: 1. I have (lit. there is to me) several sons and daughters. 2. My husband goes to his shop every morning. He returns (lit. comes) in the evening. 3. He does not understand what I do (i.e., what problems I have) with these children and the housework. 4. Even if I should have ten men, it is still not enough (lit. is little): I must take care of several cows, [and] the works of the gentile. You know what work. 5. I am a seamstress. I want (lit. my heart wishes, a *calque* on the Persian expression: *del-am-mi-xāhad*.) to go to Jerusalem. My husband does not want to go. He has given (i.e., sold) all his goods to the gentile on credit; they have refused to pay (lit. they ate; lit. translation of the Persian colloquial idiom *xordan* “to refuse to return or pay back”). 7. And I and my children are in misery (BHeb. *galut* “exile” by extension has come to mean “persecution” and “misery”). At the moment I cannot, myself and my children, go to Israel. 8. What shall I do with my husband if I go? 9. You tell me what shall I do (lit. what earth should I pour on my head; translation of the Persian idiom *ce xāki be saram konam*, adopted



also into the Iranian dialect of Golpāyegān).

(Not being a Semitist, the author was helped for the Aramaic and Hebrew equivalents of Loterā'ī vocabulary by two distinguished colleagues, the late Professors Harold L. Ginsberg and Franz Rosenthal. Only occasionally their given explanations are marked by G. and R., respectively.)

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