

The Persian dialect Gilaki in Herat, Afghanistan

The people in Afghanistan speak mainly two languages, Pashto and Dari. These are living languages and of course many dialects emerged from them. Most of the Jews in Afghanistan, in Herat and Kabul, spoke Dari, an important dialect of Persian and there is extensive literature and journalism in this language. It is also the language spoken mainly in the western part of Afghanistan, although there is a difference between Dari Kabuli and Dari Herati. Those who have read "A Thousand Shining Suns" by Khaled Hosseini perhaps understand the weight of the meaning of the spoken dialect, how they recognized the Dari speaker from Herat, and how it was literally a matter of life and death in the hand of the tongue.

The Jews in Herat spoke Dari (also called 'Herati'). The dialect of the Jews was different from the dialect of the Muslims in that it was combined with words from the holy language. For example, the Jews sang 'Shudi Hatan' while the Muslims sang 'Shudi Damad'. Also prevalent among merchants is a slang called 'La Torai' [combination of biblical Hebrew with Persian suffixes]. All the Jews of the Herat in the last centuries originated in Iran [as evidenced by their names: Yazdi, Kashani, Ahwaz and more].

The Gilaki dialect was used by Jews who immigrated from Mashhad [martyrs who returned to their Judaism in Herat in 1840].

Some of the Jewish families in Herat whose roots are in Iran spoke the Gilaki dialect. This dialect was special for the Jews of Herat, because they also used the Hebrew language distortions in addition to the language distortions of the Gilaki dialect. There is no doubt that there is a great difference between the Gilaki dialect spoken by the people of Mashhad in Afghanistan and the dialect spoken by the residents of Gilan. As mentioned, one of the signs of the living language is that the Gilaki of about a hundred years ago is not the same as today's Gilaki.

Unfortunately, I did not find any literature about the Jews of Herat that were written in. On the other hand, I found many writings from the Afghan Jews that were written in Judeo-Dari in the Oriental-Jewish script.

Despite this, I was able to collect a few examples from the Gilaki of the Herat here, in the Land of Israel:

[The examples are beautiful in my eyes]

My father, Alantan Yekutieli, spoke Dari Herati. He used to say to me: "I don't understand your mother, she talks to her mother and I don't understand her." And my mother Rachel Yekutieli nee Bezalel used to say to me in Gilaki chi: "Why do you also speak in an Iranian Persian dialect? I don't like it, speak like me, Gilaki chi." And me? I speak a complete mixture, from here and there I received and absorbed so that I speak with both on the one hand, but I do not have complete knowledge of any of the dialects. On the other hand, it never particularly bothered me and therefore I did not examine the difference in depth. My questions as a

child were answered by answers such as "We from the Bezalel family speak Golchi", or "Golchi is the language of the Gol family" - since "Gol" was my mother's last name before her marriage to my father.

Rachel Yekutieli gave examples of the differences between the dialects:

Drive the chicken away - in the Gilaki dialect - the Herati Jews will say: "Karka kish bacon", and in the Dari Herati dialect they will say: "Morg kish bacon".

I don't want to - in the Gilaki chi dialect the Herati Jews will say: "Navom", and in the Dari Herati dialect they will say: "Namichom".

And my mother added a common saying: "Naum naum to jipham begzar", which literally translates to "I don't want it but put it in my pocket", and its meaning is: give it to me without me feeling...

Miriam Bezalel nee Gadlihu (wife of Dodi Yaakov)

Daughter of the late Abigail and Yehuda Gedaliah, granddaughter of Lipa and the late Mishal Gol, was born in Herat, Afghanistan, in 1935, left with her family for India on the way to Israel at the age of 10 and arrived in the Land of Israel at the age of 13. She married the late Yaakov ben Tzvia and Shmuel Bezalel. L, granddaughter of the late Lipa and Mishal Gol and the late Abigail and Yehuda Gedaliu.

In March 2009, I recorded Mrs. Bezalel who sang me soulful folk songs in Gilaki chi and also translated them.