

EVELYN DEAN-OMSTED: The term heritage words kind of came naturally, thinking about heritage languages, because it's a relationship you have with a language because of that family connection in history, regardless of how dominant you are in that language.

SARAH BUNIN BENOR: Welcome. This is Heritage Words, a podcast about how we engage with our ancestral languages in new and creative ways. Heritage Words is produced by the HUC-JIR Jewish Language Project, which raises awareness about Jewish ancestral diversity through the lens of language. I'm your host, Sarah Bunin Benor. When people hear about the Jewish Language Project, they often ask, 'oh, you mean you focus on Hebrew and Yiddish?' This question is exactly why I founded the Jewish Language Project. Yes, Yiddish is the historical and contemporary language of millions of Ashkenazi Jews, and Hebrew is *lashon hakodesh*, the sacred tongue of Jews in all eras and the everyday language in ancient and contemporary Israel. But this is only the tip of the Jewish languages iceberg. For many centuries, Jews have lived around the world. When they moved to a new place, they generally picked up the local language and made it distinctively Jewish by adding Hebrew words and creating distinctive pronunciations and grammar. And this leads to languages like Judeo-Greek, Judeo-Arabic, and Judeo-Persian. Yiddish is actually an exception in this history because Jews started speaking it when their neighbors also spoke varieties of German, but then they maintained it for centuries in Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and elsewhere, where their neighbors spoke completely different languages. Ladino is also an exception. This is another language many Jews have heard of. Ladino was initially spoken by Sephardic Jews in Spain, and after the expulsion in 1492, they maintained their Judeo-Spanish language even when their new neighbors spoke Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian and other languages. So aside from Yiddish and Ladino, most other Jewish languages are somewhat similar to one of the languages spoken by non-Jews nearby. I started the Jewish Language Project in 2020 to raise awareness about this rich history. The Jewish Language Project produces educational materials about Jewish languages, including a website, curricula, exhibits, events, and social media posts. We manage crowdsourced dictionaries of several languages, including Jewish Neo Aramaic, and Jewish English. You can see all of these resources at jewishlanguages.org. This podcast is yet another way we're teaching about Jewish linguistic diversity. In each episode, I'll interview someone who has a connection to an ancestral language that they don't fully speak. Why is this so common? Well, let me tell you a little bit about the history. From the 18th to the 20th centuries, most Jews around the world migrated. They left Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, places where they had lived for centuries. And they moved to Israel, the Americas and elsewhere. Within a few generations, their families stopped speaking the languages they had spoken for centuries. But the languages have not been completely lost. They

survive today in fragmented ways, especially in heritage words. What are heritage words and why did we choose that as the name of this podcast? Our guest today will help us answer those questions. I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Evelyn Dean-Olmsted, an anthropologist who coined the term heritage words. She's also the creator of the Jewish Latin American Lexicon and a member of the Jewish Language Project's Advisory Board. She's taught at the University of Puerto Rico and worked for various research institutions. Today, she conducts program evaluation and other research for Jewish nonprofits at Rosov Consulting. Evelyn, welcome to the show.

EVELYN: Thank you, Sarah. It's great to be here.

SARAH: So I'm going to be asking you about your research. But first I want to start with a quick conversation about your ancestry and heritage and also mine, because we're both scholars who study Jewish language use, but we're also both Jews. So, let me just tell you briefly about my own ancestry. I'm Ashkenazi. Most of my ancestors came from Lithuania. My grandfather was born in Cairo, but in an Ashkenazi community. My dad was born in Israel, but grew up in America. And so my main heritage language is Yiddish. And Hebrew is also a bit of a heritage language as well. Why don't you tell us about your ancestry?

EVELYN: Yeah. So my, on my father's side, I'm Anglo-German Protestant, and on my mother's side, my mother's mother is Baghdadi Jewish via Southeast Asia. She was born in Burma, now Myanmar, and lived in India and immigrated to the US in 1945. And her husband, my grandfather, is Hispanic New Mexican. Their family settled in the region in probably the 15-1600s. And my heritage languages are mostly Spanish. My grandmother, her parents spoke Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, but they didn't really pass it on to the children because Burma and India were both British colonies at the time, and so most of kind of everyday life was in English, and they were educated in English as well.

SARAH: Wow. So were there any words from Spanish or Baghdadi Judeo-Arabic that got passed down to you?

EVELYN: Really, none in Baghdadi Judeo Arabic. But my main heritage language is Spanish, and that was one that my mother grew up speaking a little bit, but kind of lost it because they moved away from New Mexico when she was young. But, for me, it's mostly kind of words that have to do with, like, terms of endearment. And one of my favorites is *jito* and *jita*, which is like a very New Mexican thing because, you know, my mom calls me *jita* and calls little boys *jito*. And when I took Spanish class, you know, I learned about the word *hijo* and I'm like, but where's *jito*? So I think kind of my hypothesis about what happened and I'm sure people have studied this is that, you

know, if you say *mi jito* means my little daughter, my little son. And I think the generations that weren't educated to write in Spanish kind of parsed it as *mi* being my and *jito* to be son or daughter. So then *jito* and *jita* remained in our English. So that's a very like New Mexican English word.

SARAH: Wow.

EVELYN: Yeah.

SARAH: And so did your mom call you that or...

EVELYN: Yeah, she still calls me that, yeah. *Jita*. And she writes it in my cards and everything.

SARAH: That's really cool. Well, I, you know, in preparation for this, thought about my own heritage words, and they're mostly child-directed speech, including some terms of endearment, like *bunchkee*, which I think comes from *pontshke*, which is like, a roll or a donut or something like that, like a, a pastry. And it's like, oh, you're so cute. You're like a little pastry. And also, *umbashrien*, which literally means don't yell. And it's sort of, I think, an apotropaic word or what you refer to as a verbal talisman. Like my, my parents, my mom especially would say that when someone did something cute, ugh, *umbashrien*, and like, they're so cute, but we don't want the evil eye to get them, essentially. And I don't think she was thinking about the evil eye. I think it was just a word that she heard from her parents when she was a kid and doing something cute. Also, words for body parts like *keppy*, meaning head and *polkes*, meaning thighs. And notice they're all like e at the end, like *keppy* and *polkes* instead of *kop* or *kepele* and yeah, so definitely child-directed forms. Also lots of foods like *kasha*, *tzimmes*, *blintzes*, *matzah brei*, and then one other Yiddish word, *ongepotchket* or *ongepatchke* or *ongepatchky*, which is like, you know, too much, too busy, overwrought. And then also some words from Hebrew that were kinship terms, because my grandparents lived in Israel, so I referred to my grandfather as *sabi*, which is also, you know, a child form of *saba*, meaning grandfather. And my grandmother, I referred to as *eemee* because my mom called her mother in law *eema* on her request. And then I adapted it to *eemee*. And then, of course, we had all the religious words like *challah*, *kiddush*, *menorah*, *chametz*, which are Hebrew, but Ashkenazi Hebrew influenced. So those are some of the heritage words that, that I grew up with. And I thought it was important to start this podcast with, you know, conversation about my own background as a host and your background as, as our scholarly guest. So do you have any thoughts about all that?

EVELYN: No, I just, I love it and I love, like, the attention and all the variety in heritage words, but also the similarities across context, which is something we're going to be talking about.

SARAH: Yeah. So that's really something I want to explore on this podcast, is how Jews from various places have similarities and differences in the heritage words that get passed down to them and how they use them.

EVELYN: Awesome.

SARAH: So tell us a little bit about your research in Mexico.

EVELYN: So, when I was doing my PhD in anthropology at Indiana University, you know, I grew up with my Baghdadi Jewish grandmother, but I really didn't know a lot about Middle Eastern Jewish culture outside of my own family. And so I really wanted to do research in a contemporary Middle Eastern Jewish community. And I already spoke Spanish and kind of made my way to Mexico City, which has an incredibly vibrant and incredibly active Jewish community, about 40,000 people in Mexico City. And about half of the, the community is either Middle Eastern Syria, Lebanese or Sephardic Ladino speaking, or from Ladino-speaking backgrounds. So I ended up, you know, through a bit of luck and, and circumstance and coincidence, ended up doing research in the Shami and Halabi community. Shami means Damascene, from Damascus, and Halabi means from Halab, or Aleppo. This was in the, like, late 2000s, early 2010s. Like, I was kind of a young adult who was, like, exploring my own Judaism because I had not grown up Jewish. And I kind of embraced a Jewish identity as, as a young adult, like in college. And I was, I spent a lot of time with sort of like more ultra-Orthodox outreach kind of efforts like Chabad and Aish and things like that. And so, and in Mexico City at the time, actually still today, kind of the Haredi or ultra-Orthodox presence was growing, and there was a lot of kind of kiruv and outreach efforts. So a lot of classes. And so the young people that I was meeting when I lived in Polanco, which is one of the now more kind of religious areas of the city. A lot of the young people I was meeting, and I was meeting them through synagogue, so it was already kind of, like, selecting for people who were more a bit more interested in religion. But they were also kind of in the, on this derech, right, on this path of like, exploring and thinking, okay, how, how orthodox are they going to be? Most of them didn't grow up super orthodox, but they were being exposed to it. So that kind of became the focus. And that's where I spent my time. That's where I met people in classes of Torah, these Torah classes, which were really accessible to me. As like a Jewish young person, I was kind of their target audience, whereas otherwise it might have been a little more difficult to gain access to kind of institutions. So that was one of my focuses, is how are people navigating this difference

and what does it mean to them to be Shami and Halabi in this context. Mostly these are the children and grandchildren of people who arrived in Mexico in like the 1910s and 20s and 30s, a few newer immigrants in the 60s and 70s. So really, just what are these ethnic designations mean? And it was unique to me, coming from the United States where it was like, well, you're Sephardi or you're Ashkenazi, and that's about it. And in Mexico City, each community institution is really defined by the origins of its members. So there's a big institutions for the Shamis, for the Halabis, for the Sephardim, and for the Ashkenazim. And so my other interest was linguistically there'd been nothing written about kind of Jewish language practices. And for the most part, sociolinguistics in Mexico is very focused on Indigenous languages, naturally, and justifiably, and also kind of language shift and language change among Indigenous peoples and the Spanish of migrants from Latin America, and things like that, a little bit on kind of Spanish immigrants. But there was not a lot of research on the Spanish of transnational migrants and their descendants at all. So, this is sort of the idea right, Sarah, that you've written about, and inspired me to look into more is that, you know, once people kind of speak the dominant language, think like, oh, there's nothing really to study or there's this arbitrary language. It has to be different enough for it to be interesting. And I still encounter that time, sometimes, Sarah, in my research of like, well, this isn't interesting, like but it is. And it turns out that there is quite a lot of distinction happening both within these Jewish sectors, and between Jews and non-Jews. My work is kind of this dual focus on, on the sociolinguistics of being a Jewish Mexican and also these broader kinds of sociological processes of people making decisions about their lives and their religiosity and who they're going to marry and what kind of job they're going to have and things like that, coming of age in contemporary Mexico City.

SARAH: Wow. It sounds like such a fascinating research site. And I know from your dissertation that it really was, and you analyzed it in such an interesting way. And part of that analysis was the concept of heritage words. So can you tell us how you came up with that concept?

EVELYN: So, you know, that's, a key part of setting any Jewish language practice is looking at loan words from other ancestral languages and Hebrew. And so I had prepared a, the draft of the paper, and I showed it to one of my mentors in Mexico City, Liz Hamui. She is a sociologist who works at UNAM, the University of Mexico City. And she's written a lot on, on the Jewish community. So she read this article draft of mine, and I had a section on loan words in, in the lexicon. And she was like, why, why, I don't like that word. She's like, they're not, we didn't borrow them. Nobody loaned them to us. They're ours. Like, what do you mean, loan words? And at the time I was like, oh, but that's just a linguistics term. That's just how we say it. And she's like, well, you should do it differently. Like, you should coin a new word. And at the time I was like, I can't do

that. You know, that's just the way it is. But I really started to think about it more. And the fact is, is that I was not, I was much less interested in this kind of strict etymology of the word. And I was really more interested in, like, the meaning and function of these words for the people who use them. And they really, you know, the term heritage words kind of came naturally thinking about heritage languages, because it's a relationship you have with the language because of that family connection in history, regardless of how dominant you are in that language. And so heritage words fit really well. And then the more I read about loan words, the more I learned that that's a very tricky, imprecise concept anyways, in terms of like what's borrowing, what's transfer, what's interference, what's code-switching, right. Those are sometimes irresolvable debates.

SARAH: Yeah that's true. But even just the, the concept of loan, like people who use a word from another language aren't using it temporarily to give it back. It's kind of an odd term in general, even separate from those fuzzy boundaries.

EVELYN: It is an odd term. It is an odd term. So the more I kind of thought about it, the better I felt about kind of discarding it and using heritage words. And, I drew on notions of heritage, not just heritage language, but heritage theorizing in anthropology, especially Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has theorized it a lot in terms of like, you know, it's something in the present. It's something we do and we recreate. We think of it as an old thing that's remained, and sometimes it is an old object that's remained, but kind of what we're doing with it, the meanings we associate with it, that is wholly of the here and now. So, and it's a very ideological thing, kind of what old things count as heritage and what doesn't? You know, what gets kind of elevated and what, and what gets left aside. And that also drew a lot on Jeffrey Shandler's work on post-vernacularity in terms of Yiddish being a language that's not used for day-to-day communication among a lot of Jews in the US, for example, but still has meaning and use. And there's sort of, especially in certain more kind of artistic and symbolic functions. So like in, Yiddish magnetic poetry and tchotchkes and t-shirts and, and children's books, but even theater. So, all of that kind of contributed to how I envisioned heritage words.

SARAH: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And when I think of the term heritage words, it reminds me of an heirloom, of something that is passed down in your family. Like in my family, I have the candlesticks of my great-great-grandmother, and they're so special to me. It's an heirloom, you know, and language is also an heirloom, and it's something that gets passed down the generations to us, and often we don't value it in the same way as we value physical objects. You know, some people might have a necklace or a ring or a kiddush cup or so many other things that get passed down the generations. Words are similar. And so I think that's kind of one of the points of this podcast is to highlight how special that is. It's also, this podcast is part of a broader initiative that the

Jewish Language Project is doing called Heirloom: Recovering Our Jewish Family Languages. And one of those tracks is heritage words, where we're going to ask people to add words to our crowdsourced dictionaries that have been passed down the generations to them. And then another track is language advocacy, where people will raise awareness about languages and document them and advocate on their behalf. And then the final track is the mentor-learner track for people who want to make more of a commitment and actually learn or really engage with their ancestral language. And we will try to match them with a native speaker to speak that language to them, to have a little bit of intergenerational transmission.

EVELYN: That's really exciting. I'm so excited about that.

SARAH: Okay. So heritage words. You know, when you mentioned Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, I, I just want to read a quote that you quote from her. She's an important scholar who studies heritage and museums, especially Jewish museums. She says heritage is "a new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past." So I'm wondering, in your research on heritage words, how much were they aware of these words as being connected to the past?

EVELYN: Very much so. Like, very, very much so. So, I guess I didn't, I don't know if I said this, but the, the main kind of source language of heritage words among Shami and Halabi Mexicans is Arabic, and, or words that are conceived of as Arabic even if they're not. But, there was a lot of awareness that they were kind of in-group words. There were some negative ideologies surrounding them, stigma, basically. And I can talk about that a bit more in a bit. But, yes, there is absolutely awareness that these are from past generations still around. Even sometimes when I ask younger people, like, do you use these words? It's like, no, it's *de las abuelitas*, that's like kind of the grandmother words. Or like *de las señoras grandes*. So there was, there was some sort of like, no, that's kind of the more the old ladies do that more, and me, not so much. So yeah, for sure.

SARAH: Well, that's something I want to explore in this series is to what extent people just know these words from hearing them from their grandparents or are using them themselves? And how important is it to the interviewees to cast these words down to their children, to what extent are they in use in communities today? So those are some things we're going to explore. So you mentioned that, the word you mentioned from Spanish that is part of your family and some of the words I mentioned are terms of endearment. They're they're terms that a parent or grandparent would say to a child and, or maybe also to other people in the family or just other young people. And so was that a big part of the collection of heritage words that you found in Mexico?

EVELYN: Absolutely. Terms of endearment and words for people in general, kinds of both positive and negative. But certainly terms of endearment are a big one. Absolutely. In Mexico, words like *roji*, which means like my, my, my heart. And that does seem to be something that resonates across the board. The terms of endearment are really, really prominent.

SARAH: Okay. And what are some other categories of heritage words?

EVELYN: So absolutely. Food, right? Food is a big one that, as you mentioned, in your family. So, foods in Mexico City are like *kipes* and *mahasha* and other, other Arabic, Arab foods. And also just not even saying them, but kind of talking about them, right, becomes a really fun way of kind of engaging in your shared identity with somebody. Words that have to do with religion in, in Mexico City, it's, if you say, I'm going to the *knis*, the *knis* means congregation or meeting place or synagogue in Arabic. If you say, I'm going to the *knis*, you know that you're Shami or Halabi. If you say I'm going to *shul*, you know you're Ashkenazi. And also, you know, different Hebrew pronunciations becomes an important signifier as well, right? If you say *Arvit* versus *Ma'ariv*, for the afternoon prayer, if you say, *jajam* versus *rab*. So, *jajam* means sort of sage in Hebrew, but it's used as a term of address for rabbis in Syrian communities. So that becomes an important domain for distinction. Other kind of like emotional words, right? Insults. Curses. Yiddish is the best for curses. Arabic has some really great curses, too. A lot of taboo words, body parts. And a lot of kinship terms. Words for your grandmother or your grandfather or your mother-in-law. There is kind of a recurring thread that it's words for the people close to you. It's words with a lot of emotion, often kind of intense emotion, both positive and negative. A lot of child-directed language, as you mentioned. And then words having to do with kind of community, shared community life, like religion, and other kind of cultural traditions and festivals and things like that. Yeah. And also, also insults and bad words, like using it as a, as taboo language, which is really, you know, widely documented for talking about things we shouldn't be talking about, then that, a lot of times you'll use terms from your heritage language.

SARAH: Yeah. What about the word *pishar*.

EVELYN: *Pishar* is the best. *Pishar* means to pee. And like everybody, everybody I spoke to in Mexico City, whatever their ancestral language was, they claimed *pishar*. They're like, what, what Yiddish words do you use? They'd say *pishar*. What Ladino words do you use? They'd say *pishar*. What Arabic words do you use? They'd say *pishar*. And they were all convinced it was theirs. I'm, it's, it's pretty clearly from Ladino. But, it's made it into, yeah, their various lexicons. Yeah.

SARAH: I mean, it's part of the euphemism of heritage words. Right where it's a little uncomfortable to say a word that's taboo or that's about a bodily function or sex or death or things that make people afraid. They're often used in other languages. And, that's especially common in Jewish languages. You have a lot of Hebrew words. For example, the word *ha-makom* or *makom*, meaning toilet. That is a term that's used in, in several Jewish languages.

EVELYN: I didn't know that.

SARAH: Okay. So we talked a little bit about transfer of words out of a community, but I want to ask about the opposite trend, which is words that are used just in a family but not in the broader community. Do you consider those also to be heritage words?

EVELYN: Yeah, absolutely I would. Yeah, for sure. The scale is different, but yeah, I'd say honestly, they're, like, heritage words, like, they're really associated with one's very literal, you know, heritage and descendants. So for sure. Yeah.

SARAH: Well, so do you have a sense of the roles of family and community in perpetuating heritage words like, do you think that some words are really more transmitted through the family, while others are more transmitted through the community?

EVELYN: That's a good question. And you know by the community I guess maybe we're thinking like in synagogue and school context and kind of institutional contexts like.

SARAH: Yes, yes.

EVELYN: Yeah absolutely. Especially of course the terms of endearment. Although you know, I would say like probably teachers in, in, in Jewish educational contexts are probably using those same terms of endearment. That's probably just going to vary by context in terms of like how much of a distinction there is between the family and the broader Jewish community, honestly.

SARAH: Yeah. That's true. And it probably also depends how concentrated a particular group is. So if the institutions are all from a community of a particular ancestry, then they'll be more likely to transmit certain words...

EVELYN: Yeah. Right. In the case of Mexico City, it's hard. I think it's hard to make that distinction. In the case of most communities in the US, for sure. You know, and when a

lot of times the synagogue has people from a lot of different backgrounds. And so you might just be all sort of using, I don't know, what the rabbi uses or something, and it's not going to be the same. Yeah.

SARAH: Right. Well, yeah. So then Mexico is unique in that way and that it still maintains these ancestral distinctions in a way that some communities in America do a little bit. Like you'll have the Yemenite synagogue and the Persian synagogue in LA. But, you know, a lot of them are mixed, even those synagogues will draw people from different backgrounds. And then the communities, the synagogues that, and schools that are predominantly Ashkenazi are increasingly mixed. And there are more and more Mizrahi Jews coming into those communities. And so I really think we're at this historical moment in American Jewish history where you have a mixing going on and communities that were historically one branch of the Jewish world are now becoming more and more mixed. And we'll have to see how that develops. I think we're really developing what we might call *Minhag America*, which is a term that's been used in several contexts. And meaning, like an American tradition. You know, you have the Ashkenazi tradition and the Sephardi tradition. Maybe we have an American tradition that's developing that involves a lot of Ashkenazi influence and a lot of Modern Hebrew influence and also increasing influences from, you know, Jewish communities around the world.

EVELYN: Yeah, I bet that's right. Yeah, that's very interesting. In Mexico City, it's, there are still these big communities that are kind of organized along ethnic lines. And marriage between different sectors only continues to increase. And, I just want to mention our colleague Anayeli Hernández Cruz, who's a Mexican socio-linguist who trained at the Colegio de México, which is a very prestigious university in Mexico City. And her research is on language shift among the Ashkenazi Jewish community. And she did, she first analyzed interviews that were conducted in the 1980s with Ashkenazi migrants to Mexico City, looking at Yiddish Spanish influence like when, code-switching, but also Yiddish influences in the Spanish and vice versa. And then she's done heritage word research among future generations and second generation and third generation. And she has really laid out the really next steps needs to be looking at people who are the children of quote unquote, mixed marriages of, you know, marriage between people from different Jewish sectors in Mexico City and kind of see, like, okay, what's going on with with heritage words there.

SARAH: Yeah. And I think we'll have several of those interviewed on this podcast. In fact, a lot of the people we have lined up for interviews are children of mixed marriages. So we'll see how that... So one more question. You talk about Hebrew words as

heritage words. Can you tell us about that decision, like, not just including Arabic words as heritage words?

EVELYN: Yeah. Well, number one, it is often impossible to clearly, you know, delineate the etymology of any given word. And so like we talked about, you know, the word *Arvit* or *Ma'ariv*, like, oh, is that Arabic or is that, is that Hebrew? I mean, it originally came from Hebrew, but it was incorporated into people's Arabic speech as sort of a heritage word. So. Right. It's kind of, you can never go all, all the way back. So that's one reason why I don't think you should ever apply kind of strict etymological definitions to what is a heritage word. But the other reason is that, that, you know, on a different level, of course, you know, Jewish identification and Hebrew is, like, is the heritage language for all Jews. And so, and it's always played that role in every Jewish language practice, you know, throughout history and time and space. And it isn't, you know, it is 100 percent associated with heritage. Sometimes it's a more abstract, right, sense of heritage. Now it is associated with the State of Israel. Right. So there's a whole kind of different level to it, as opposed to kind of like religious, liturgical, Hebrew terms or whatever that are, or words for holidays. So I just don't think you can really kind of have a complete picture. And again, it, it's really about understanding the perspective and the ideology of the people who are using them. Like, oh, I'm using this and this feels like an Arabic word to me, even though technically it's Hebrew or Ladino or whatever. And this, like, when I say, for example, *tnuá*, right. That's a word that's really common in Latin America for youth group. It comes from Hebrew, like in Spanish it's spelled *tnuá*. And there's a lot of these kind of more modern Zionist words, *madrij* or *madrija*, or things like that. There's things that you really might be kind of feeling and thinking of as more as, like a Modern Israeli Hebrew showing that. So I just think you can't really discount anything, and you just have to, you got to do the ethnography and kind of see what is relevant and salient to people.

SARAH: I love that, so we'll keep that in mind as we do our interviews, that we need to have an insider community perspective rather than an outsider researcher perspective.

EVELYN: Absolutely. Yeah.

SARAH: So what else do you want to know about heritage words among contemporary Jews? Because maybe we'll be able to help answer that through our interviews.

EVELYN: What a great question. Yeah I really think, you know, I, I kind of meant, you know, I kind of lay out, in, in the dissertation and in the book, these kind of qualities of heritage words that I think are sort of shared. Right. And what is this, high emotion, a lot of them are associated with high emotion. And I recently uncovered some research and

like in kind of neurolinguistics that talks about how the way we process some of these high-emotion words like that you're saying to your baby or your dog when you feel really strong love, or when you're shouting in anger, that they're really, there's like a different kind of cognitive and neurological processes kind of going on with those words. And so it kind of makes sense that those are going to stick around more and be transmitted. And the other, you know, in terms of the salience, that's something that can kind of come and go. And it's interesting to see when things are really on people's radar and when they're not, you know, you know, in talking to my, I talked to my kids confirmation class and they were really not so aware. I was like, what are the Yiddish words in your families? Like, I don't know. And then I started giving examples. They're like, oh yeah, oh yeah. That's Yiddish. When at what point does it kind of come to their awareness that that is Arabic or that is Yiddish? And when does that become a very salient marker of identity? Also their association with strong language ideologies. I'd like to see how that might vary across context. In Mexico City, it's very much that, as I said, there's stigma kind of related to broader sort of orientalist, kind of anti-Arab stigma that's present in the Jewish world, but also in the non-Jewish world. And that influences a lot in how people use these words. Some people don't use them for that reason, and other people really, really enjoy using them for that reason as having a kind of a covert prestige as, as Bill Labov said, like kind of enjoying it and celebrating it, even though, you know, it's stigmatized by the wider community. And then just like the way these words are used really to, like, construct a stance of like, what kind of Jew you are. So, so that's what I'm interested in, is, and to see to what extent these, these qualities are present or not, and variation in that in, in different contexts of heritage words.

SARAH: Amazing. So we will look for all of those issues in this series. And we might come back to you again once we've done some interviews to help us analyze what we found.

EVELYN: Ooh, I hope so.

SARAH: Okay. Well, thank you so much, Doctor Evelyn Dean-Olmsted. And we'll be in touch.

EVELYN: And thank you, Sarah, for all the amazing work you're doing with Jewish languages. You have like, inspired and supported so many of us. And this work is just so great for bringing it to a wider public.

SARAH: Heritage Words is produced and edited by Avishay Artsy. I'm the executive producer, Sarah Bunen Benor, founding director of the HUC-JIR Jewish Language Project. The theme music is from Maurice El Medioni's French and Algerian

Judeo-Arabic album Cafe Oran, featuring The Klezmatics' David Krakauer and Frank London, courtesy of Piranha Records. The podcast is a collaboration of the Jewish Language Project and HUC Connect with support from listeners like you. Your tax-deductible donation supports the important work of documenting endangered Jewish languages and raising awareness about Jewish diversity. If you'd like to make a financial contribution or sponsor an episode, you can contact us at jewishlanguages.org. There you can also learn about the broader initiative Heritage Words is part of, Heirloom: Recovering Our Jewish Family Languages. You can apply to be a language advocate or participate in the mentor-learner track. And you can sign up for occasional email updates and follow the Jewish Language Project on Facebook, Instagram, Threads, TikTok, and YouTube. Thank you, *a sheynem dank*, *soghboshi*, *toda*, and *mersi muncho*.