PART I

Judeo-Arabic: The Language of Arabic-Speaking Jews
CHAPTER ONE
THE JEWISH LINGUISTIC SPECTRUM

This chapter investigates the spectrum of Jewish linguistic usage in historical and sociolinguistic terms. It opens with an examination of how sociolinguistics and history have inquired into when, how, and why Jews have written and spoken differently from their neighbors. It then tracks the emergence and development of “Jewish languages.”1 This is followed by a discussion of instances where Christians and Muslims have adopted Jewish linguistic usages, leading to a proposal for some modifications in the accepted terminology. The chapter goes on to map the prototype of a Jewish language and lists the various Jewish languages mentioned in the literature. Finally, definitions of several terms are given, including Jewish-defined language, majority language, (language) variety, linguistic intelligibility, religiolect, castelect, and more.

The Sociolinguistics of Jewish Varieties
Sociolinguistic studies attempt to analyze language use according to variables such as place of birth and language acquisition, place of domicile, age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic factors, occupation, education, and so forth. An important variable which is often overlooked is religious affiliation and identity. Indeed, Jews almost everywhere tend to speak and write somewhat differently

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1 I use the term “Jewish language/s” in quotation marks here because I have doubts about its accuracy. This is how it is meant to be used throughout the book. Later in the chapter I coin the term Jewish-defined languages.