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**Diaspora, Modern Hebrew in**

A prevailing conception of many years’ standing has been that the Hebrew language was part of the identity and culture of Diaspora Jews, a medium that served to connect Jews to each other, to their heritage, and to the State of Israel. Today, however, educators, Hebrew teachers, and communal leaders sense that the status of Hebrew in Diaspora communities is in decline; this feeling is supported by research (Zisenwein 1997; Bekerman 1999; Schiff 1999; Shohamy 1999; Mintz 2002; Wohl 2005). Different Jewish groups relate to Hebrew as a symbol of Jewish identity or as a language of culture, and there is little commitment to teaching Hebrew as a spoken language. Spolsky (2009:155) speculates on whether Modern Hebrew will follow in the footsteps of Jewish languages such as Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and Judeo-Greek, which have become no more than an object of study for language scholars.

Several reasons have been adduced for the current state of Hebrew in the Diaspora. According to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the main causes are the following: the decline in the number of Jews worldwide; the weakening hold of the Zionist ideology and the attenuation of Israel Diaspora relations; a leadership crisis in coping with these trends; and a weakening of the hegemony of Hebrew in Israel.

**References**


Gary A. Rendsburg

(Rutgers University)

Ora (Rodrique) Schwarzwald

(Bar-Ilan University)