ADDENDUM TO PRINCE'S "METRICAL FORMS"

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In the huge area stretching from Spain in the West to Indonesia and the Philippines in the East, which has been and continues to be under the cultural and religious dominance of Islam, the meters of classical Arabic poetry were utilized by poets writing verses in languages other than Arabic. One of the earliest examples of this adaptation of Arabic meters is the Hebrew poetry produced by the Jewish poets living in Spain and Provence during the more than five hundred years that ended with the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. It is generally agreed by specialists that the Arabic meters were introduced into Hebrew about 950 by Dunash ben Labrat (see Allony 1951:21). Dunash, who was born about 920 in Fez, Morocco, studied with Saadyah Gaon (882–942), head of the Jewish academy at Sura in Babylonia, and came to Spain where he was in the service of Hisdai Ibn Shaprut, the Jewish minister of the caliphs of Cordova. Dunash adopted, essentially intact, the different meters codified by the Arab scholar al-Xalīl, but modified the correspondence rules between the abstract entities of the meters and the syllables of actual lines of verse.

As noted by Prince, the basic phonetic distinction utilized for implementing the meters in Arabic was that between syllables with nonbranching rhymes, represented by a breve (˘), and syllables with branching rhymes, represented

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by a macron (¯). Because branching and nonbranching rhymes are distributed quite differently in the words of Hebrew than they are in those of Arabic, this distinction was not viable for the implementation of the meters in Hebrew. Dunash, therefore, based the implementation on a somewhat different principle.

It is well known that in the Hebrew orthography, each consonant in the word is represented by a single letter. Vowels, on the other hand, are not consistently represented in the orthography. The vowels are omitted in the orthography in certain cases; in other cases, the vowels are represented by consonant letters—the so-called *matres lectionis*; such vowels are indicated in our transciption with a circumflex. The omission is exceptionless for the schwa vowel and for its morphophonemic variants (*ḥaṭapîm*) (see M. Rappaport 1984); these are never represented in the orthography. Since Hebrew syllables (with one exception discussed below) must all begin with an onset consisting of a single consonant, closed syllables will be represented orthographically by a sequence of two letters. Open syllables with full vowels will also be represented by a sequence of two letters whenever the full vowel is transcribed by a *mater lectionis*. Open syllables with the schwa vowel or with one of its morphophonemic variants are thus the only class of syllable that is invariably represented by a single letter. This division into one-letter syllables versus syllables with two or more letters was terminologically recognized by the medieval grammarians: they referred to open syllables ending with schwa or its congeners as SLAVES (Hebrew *ʕăbādîm*), whereas all other syllables—that is, those that are at least potentially two-letter syllables in the orthography—were termed KINGS (Hebrew *məlakim*).[1] It is on this distinction that Dunash based his metrical correspondence rules. He postulated that only a syllable of the slave class could implement a breve, whereas a macron could only be implemented by a syllable of the king class.

Although the distinction parallels the phonetic distinction between syllables whose rhymes consist of ultrashort vowels and all other syllables, the essence of the distinction is orthographic rather than strictly phonetic. We see this more clearly when we examine the metrical treatment of the vocalized form of the conjunction *w*, 'and.' Before words beginning with a labialized consonant or with a consonant sequence, this morpheme is actualized as the full vowel [u] and is represented in the orthography with the *mater lectionis, waw*. Thus,

[1] Allony (1951:38) writes: "The seven nuclei (*tnuʕot*) that were called 'kings' were all equivalent (metrically) and occurred only in open and long syllables, or more accurately in closed syllables, because according to our medieval scholars there is after them one of the *matres lectionis* . . . REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE LETTER IS WRITTEN OR NOT" (my emphasis).

/u + miśtāʕer/, 'and is in turmoil,' is orthographically represented as *wmśtʕr*, whereas */u + lkā/*, 'and walk!' is represented as *wlkh*. The initial syllable of the latter word is treated as belonging to the king class, whereas that of the former word is treated as belonging to the slave class, in spite of the fact that the initial vowel in *ûmiśtāʕer* is not a reduced vowel. It is treated as belonging to the slave class because the syllable is orthographically represented by a single letter.

Occasionally poets play on this difference, as shown in the following lines by Yehuda Halevi (Shirman 1959:483) written in a variant of the meter *basit* KKP KP KKP KP, where the second and fourth P are represented by a single macron:

(1) – – ˘ – /– –/ – – ˘ –/ – –

yāšēn — wəlibbô ʕēr, bôʕēr, ûmiśtāʕēr.
'He's asleep, yet his heart's awake, burning, in turmoil.'
cê nâ wəhinnāʕēr ûlkâ bəʔôr pānay!
'Go out, awake and walk in the light of my countenance!'

where the initial syllable of *ûmiśtāʕēr* corresponds to a breve, and *ûlkâ* corresponds to a macron.

Because of the fact that two syllables of the slave class cannot occur one after the other in a word, the meters of the so-called "second circle," that is *wafir* and *kamil*, which contain two consecutive breves, are not found in Hebrew poems. (Allony 1951:128, 150). The other meters are regularly represented in Hebrew poetry. A few illustrations follow:

(2) *hazaj* PKK PKK PK — Moshe Ibn Ezra (1055–after 1135) (Shirman 1959:374)

˘ – – –/ ˘ – – –/ ˘ – –

wətappûaḥ, ʔĕmet, ʔēl lô bərāʔô
'And the apple, indeed, God created it
ləbad ʕōneg ləmērîaḥ wənôšēq
but for the pleasure of him who smells and kisses it.'

(3) *rajaz* KKP KKP KKP — Yehuda Halevi (before 1075–after 1141) (Shirman 1959:504)

– – ˘ –/ – – ˘ –/ – – –

zê rûḥăkā, cad maʕărāb, rāqûaḥ
'Your spirit, West Wind, is pure perfume,
hannērdə biknāpāw wəhattappûaḥ
in its wing is spikenard and apple.'

(4) a. *basit* KKP KP KKP KP[2] Samuel Hanagid (993–1056)
(Shirman 1959:131)

– – ◡ –/ – ◡ –/ – – ◡ –/ – ◡ –
ʔāmrâ: "śəmaḥ baʕăbûr higgîʕăkā ʔēl ʔĕlê
'She said: "Rejoice that God has brought you to
šānîm ḥămiššîm bəʕôlāmāk!" wəlô yādʕâ"
the fiftieth year in your life!" and did not know'

b. *basit* variant KKP KP KKP Moshe Ibn Ezra
(Shirman 1959:370)

– – ◡ –/ – –/ – – ◡ –
daddê yəpat tōʔar layil ḥăbôq
'Caress at night the breasts of her of beautiful form
ûśpat yəpat marʔê yômām nəšôq
and kiss all day the lips of her of beautiful appearance'

(5) *mujtaθθ* KQK KPK KQK KPK
Shelomo Ibn Gabirol (1021–after 1055)
(Shirman 1959:208)

– – ◡ –/ – ◡ – –/ – – ◡ –/ – ◡ – –
hamʕat hĕyôtî bətôk ʕām yaḥšob śəmôlô yəmānî
'Is it a small thing for me to be among people who think that left is right?'

There was opposition to Dunash ben Labrat's proposals almost from the moment of their becoming public knowledge. Part of the opposition was personally motivated because Dunash was involved in a bitter dispute with the scholar Menahem ben Saruq (see Dubnov 1936:165). Yet another part of the opposition was motivated by chauvinism and by an unreasoning conservatism opposed to all change as a matter of principle. "May we be preserved . . . from going beyond the boundaries of our forefathers and destroying the house of the ancients . . ." wrote the disciples of Menahem in their response to Dunash (see Allony 1951:104).

It is, however, not without significance that among the opponents and critics of Dunash's proposals were Yehuda Hayyuj (ca.940–ca.1010), one of the most important students of the Hebrew language, and Yehuda Halevi, the author of some of the greatest poetry in the Hebrew language. They objected on the grounds that the Arabic meters were inappropriate for verse written in Hebrew because of the vast differences in the languages. Since a large part of

[2]The last P in the second line is represented by a single syllable of the king type.

Yehuda Halevi's poetry is written in conformity with Dunash's metrical scheme, this objection can hardly be taken at face value. It must, nonetheless, be admitted that the Arabic meters do not constitute a natural development within Hebrew poetry, which at that time had a history of well over 2,500 years. It is, therefore, not surprising that Hebrew poets writing in these meters were also experimenting with other metrical schemes. Two of these seem to me worth commenting on here.

Both schemes are based on the above classification of syllables into those represented in the orthography invariably by a single letter and those that may be represented by two or more letters, but unlike the Arabic meters, the arrangement of the syllables in this sequence is not significant; only their number counts. In (6), only king syllables may be utilized in the verse; slave syllables (i.e., syllables with ultrashort vowels) are systematically excluded in this kind of verse.

(6) eight king syllables per line — Moshe Ibn Ezra (Shirman 1959:371)

kotnôt passîm lābāš haggan
'the garden has put on a striped coat
ûksût riqmâ maddê dišʔô
and its raiments of grass were like robes of embroidery'

In the second variant of syllable-counting verse, slave syllables are admitted but not counted in the verse. We illustrate this in (7) with lines taken from Yehuda Halevi's octosyllabic poem "The Storm at Sea" (see Shirman 1959:506). As shown, actual lines can have as few as eight syllables (7b) and as many as 13 syllables (7c).

(7) a. *wəhoʔŏnî ḥôlâ yôrdâ wəʕôlâ*
'And the vessel is weak, it rises and falls
wəʕayin tôlâ ləḥôblîm ʔayyām
and the eye looks up for the sailors, where are they?'
b. *ʔānâ ʔēlēk mērûḥekā*
'whither shall I go from your spirit?'
c. *wərāpû ḥăzāqîm, wənehləqû ʔăpîqîm*
'And strong men grew weak, and river beds split'

This type of syllable-counting meter resembles the classical meters of the Romance languages (see Halle and Keyser 1980) as well as those found in a limited number of biblical poems (see Halle and McCarthy 1981, and Halle 1987). The Judeo-Spanish meters differ, however, from both Romance and biblical meters in that they do not stop the count with the last stressed syllable in the line, but include the posttonic syllables as well. This is illustrated in (8).

(8) octosyllabic — Moshe Ibn Ezra (Shirman 1959:401)

yizkôr geber biymê ḥayyāw / kî lammāwet hû lāqûaḥ
'Let the youth remember in the days of his life / that he is being taken to death'

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