

Sometimes a *munah pasek* is just a *munah pasek*

By Joshua R. Jacobson

As every experienced cantillator knows, a *munah* followed by a vertical line | has two possible interpretations. In most cases the word marked with *munah* is conjunctive, leading to a word marked with a disjunctive *ta'am*, such as *zakef* or *etnahta*; and the vertical line is *pasuk*, a marking that indicates a subtle pause, something like a sixteenth-note rest in Western musical notation.

The Masoretes marked disjunctive *t'amim* on words that ended a verse or a clause or a phrase. Consequently we chant those words with a subtle lengthening, or we raise the volume, or we pause slightly after these disjunctive words. The Masoretes marked all other words with conjunctive *t'amim*, indicating that they should be connected without a pause to the word that follows.

The *ta'am pasek* is neither conjunctive for disjunctive. But it is found exclusively after words marked with conjunctive accents. It never follows disjunctive words, since a disjunctive *ta'am* already demands a slight pause. Most scholars agree that *pasek* was added to the text after the other Masoretic accents had been codified. It was used to further refine the system. Typically *pasek* is found in the following circumstances (Ben-Asher, 135, 244-246).

1. *Pasek* is used to separate the pronunciation of two words, where the second begins with the same phoneme with which the first one ends. For example, in Song of Solomon 4:12 the *pasek* ensures clear enunciation by separating the two [n] sounds — גָּן | נְעוּל אַחֲתֵי כְּלֵה.

2 *Pasek* is used to put a slight pause between identical or nearly identical words. For example, in Genesis 22:11 the *pasek* divides the repetition of “Avraham” — וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם | אַבְרָהָם. And in Genesis 17:13 the *pasek* divides between two forms of the word הַמּוֹל | יְמוּל יְלִיד בֵּיתְךָ וּמְקַנְתָּ בְּסִפְּךָ — מוֹל.

3. *Pasek* is used to distance the name of God from other, less holy words. For example, in Deuteronomy 4:32 the *pasek* serves to distance “God” from “humanity.” — לְמַן־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר־ בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים | אָדָם.

4. *Pasek* is used to indicate a subtle syntactic disjunction between words that had been joined by a conjunctive accent. For example, in Song of Solomon 1:13 the *pasek* indicates that הַמָּר is more closely connected to צָרוּר than it is to דוּדִי לִי — צָרוּר הַמָּר | דוּדִי לִי — “My beloved is to me like a bag of myrrh.”

5. *Pasek* is used to call attention or to emphasize a word. Wickes (122) calls this “*pasek emphaticum*.” For example, in 1 Samuel 14:45 the name יוֹנָתָן is given emphasis — וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹנָתָן | יְמוּתָהּ. And in Ezekiel 33:25 the word דָם is emphasized — עַל־הַדָּם | תֹּאבְלוּ.

The other interpretation of *munah* followed by a vertical line | is the compound *ta'am*, לְגַרְמָה, or to give its full name, מוֹנַח־לְגַרְמָה. In nearly every case, מוֹנַח־לְגַרְמָה is found immediately be-

fore two words marked with מוּנַחַּ רְבִיעַ. For example, Exodus 26:8 אָרְדָּ | הִרְיֵעָה הָאֶחָת. There are few exceptions. *Legarmeh* is found three times before *pashta*, once before *t'vir*, and eleven times in place of *t'lisha ketana* before *geresh* (Jacobson, 236-7).

But then the question arises, what about the 67 occurrences in the Tanakh (excluding, of course, Psalms, Proverbs and Job) where *munah*+*pasek* occurs immediately before *r'via*, without an intervening *munah*? For example, יָהּ | יִתְנוּ (Exodus 13:30). Do we treat that combination as *legarmeh* or as *munah* followed by *pasek*? The authorities give different answers to that question.

Curiously, the oldest treatise on the *t'amim*, Aharon Ben-Asher's *Sefer dikdukei ha-t'amim*, doesn't even mention *l'garmeh*. What we now call *l'garmeh* is simply listed under examples of *pasek*.

Wickes (p. 129) considers the sequence *munah*-*pasek*-*r'via* to be interpreted as *l'garmeh*-*r'via*. He writes, *l'garmeh* “stands in the place of *pasek*, when this latter sign is due before *r'via*” (119). But then he adds, “The object of the change was simply musical... *l'garmeh* was musical-ly admissible, and was preferred to the simpler melody of *munah*-*pasek*” (119). Wickes also provides a comprehensive “list of *l'garmehs*, which take the place of *pasek* before *r'via*” (129).¹

Heidenheim also concludes that *l'garmeh* can be found immediately before *r'via*. “This is the way it is: you will never find *legarmeh* coming except with a *shofar* [i.e. *munah*] and *makel* [i.e. *pasek*] between two words, and every *l'garmeh* in the Bible comes before *r'via*...other than a few places ... and you will never find a *pasek* before *r'via* (in the middle of a verse), with a single exception in the Bible, namely בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם | ה' בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם (Isaiah 42:5)” (7b—the present author's translation).

Yeivin writes, “[T]he conjunctive *munah* generally appears between *l'garmeh* and *r'via*,” but “sometimes *l'garmeh* stands immediately before *r'via*.” And “Where *pasek* is expected immediately before *r'via*, it is converted into *l'garmeh*” (214). Then he concludes, “Thus every case of *munah* followed by the *pasek* stroke occurring before *r'via* is *l'garmeh*, except for that at Isaiah 42:5” (215).

Breuer is a bit more circumspect. “A simple segment ending with *r'via* is divided often by *l'garmeh*—even if both words are short” (117—the present author's translation). But “The *l'garmeh* that serves in a simple segment is different from the usual *l'garmeh*, which serves in a longer segment. Generally *l'garmeh* cannot come on a word that is immediately before *r'via*, and therefore *l'garmeh* must be transformed into a conjunctive in every case where the next word is *r'via*” (118). “Therefore in every case where *l'garmeh* comes immediately before *r'via* or *pazer*, it makes sense to say that it's not *l'garmeh* at all, rather it's *munah* followed by *pasek*; since *munah* serves also as the normal conjunctive before *r'via* and *pazer*.” (119).

Perlman implies that *l'garmeh* cannot appear without an intervening *munah*. He writes, “*munah* *l'garmeh* is a minor disjunctive that comes before *r'via*. Between it and the *r'via* appears

1. In the interest of consistency, the editor has changed all transliterations to conform to the standard for this journal.

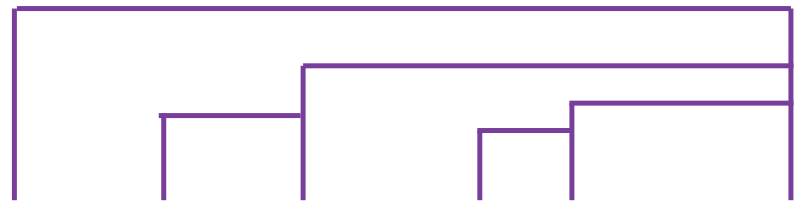
munah, the conjunctive of *r'via*.” (212—the present author’s translation). And in his parsing diagrams, Perlman consistently shows *munah*+*pasek* immediately before *r'via* as a conjunctive.

Neeman agrees: “*Munah l'garmeh* essentially comes on the third word [inclusive] before the word marked with *r'via*” (31—the present author’s translation).

Price likewise follows the same interpretation.

The name *l'garmeh* means “break” or “to itself.” The accent mark combines two marks. ... Together they resemble the combination of *munah* followed by *pasek*. ... Whenever *pasek* follows a word accented with *munah*, it is possible to confuse such a figuration of accents with *l'garmeh*. This confusion could happen before any disjunctive accent that admits *munah* as a preceding conjunctive. Several criteria distinguish true *l'garmeh* from its counterpart *munah*+*pasek* (which I have labeled *pseudo-l'garmeh*): (1) *l'garmeh* only appears before *r'via* and occasionally before *pashta* and *geresh*; (2) *l'garmeh* occasionally has its own preceding conjunctive *mer'kha*; (3) *l'garmeh* never intervenes between a disjunctive accent and its lawful conjunctives; (4) *pasek* always immediately precedes a disjunctive accent and intervenes between the disjunctive and its preceding conjunctives...” (118, 122-123)

Let us examine several of these controversial cases. The first occurrence of this combination is in Genesis 3:15.



וְאִיבָהּ | אֲשִׁית בֵּינָךְ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין זְרַעָךְ וּבֵין זְרַעָהּ

Parsing this verse, we note that the first segment comprises only two words, *וְאִיבָהּ אֲשִׁית*. According to the binary system of syntactic parsing, we divide each verse into two parts, and continue dividing each resulting segment into two parts, until the smallest segment has two or fewer words. At that point there is generally no further need to subdivide. The last word in each segment is disjunctive, and, if there are two words in the segment, the first is conjunctive.

The first segment in this verse therefore consists of a conjunctive word *וְאִיבָהּ* followed by a disjunctive word *אֲשִׁית*. The only reason for subdividing a minimal segment of two words would be if either or both of the words is long, in which case they would both be marked with disjunctives. This occurs, for example in the domain of *zakef*. Normally in a two-word segment, if the second word is marked with *zakef*, the word before it would be marked with its expected conjunctive, *munah*. However, in some cases where the *zakef* word is long, the word preceding is “upgraded” from the conjunctive *munah* to the minor disjunctive, *pashta*. We see this in Numbers 24:20 — *וַיִּרְאֵ אֶת-עַמּוּלֶק*. Is this practice of substituting a disjunctive for a conjunctive is found in the domain of *r'via*? Only extremely rarely: in two cases the expected *munah* is upgrad-

ed to *geresh* (Leviticus 18:17 and Deuteronomy 34:11). But even if *munah* were to be upgraded to *l'garmeh* in the domain of *r'via*, we would expect to find it only in cases where the words are long, such as Ezekiel 12:35 שְׁמַעְתִּי | אֶת־כָּל־נְאֻצוֹתֶיךָ.

On the other hand, returning to the first words of Genesis 3:15, there is a good reason why we would indeed expect a *pasek* in this segment. It is likely that the Masoretes wanted to emphasize the strong word *איבה* (enmity), and therefore used the *pasek* to set it off.

In other cases, we see the well-established principle of *pasek* separating two words to avoid eliding a common phoneme. In Numbers 7.13 the *pasek* separates the two [m] sounds — מְלֵאִים | שְׁנֵיהֶם.

Pasek is also used to create a subtle division between two identical or nearly identical words. This example from 2 Kings 2:12 — אָבִי | אָבִי is analagous to the example in 2 Kings 13:14 — אָבִי | אָבִי. In one case *pasek* is in the domain of *r'via*; in the other case the *pasek* is in the domain of *zakef*. There seems to be no justification for calling one *l'garmeh* and the other *munah+pasek*.

We have seen that *pasek* is often summoned to set off the name of God. That is the case in this familiar phrase from Numbers 10:35 — קוֹמָה | ה' וַיִּפְצוּ אֵיבֶיךָ.

Pasek can be summoned in cases where syntactic separation is called for after a conjunctive word. In Joshua 5:14 there was a perceived need to set off the word *לא*. Here the *pasek* serves as a colon. It pushes *לא* away from the word *ויאמר* and into the quotation itself. Note the difference between *לא* *ויאמר* in the first half of the verse and *ויאמר* *לו* in the second half.

וַיֹּאמֶר | לֹא כִי אָנִי שֶׁר־צָבָא־הָ עִתָּה בְּאֵתִי וַיִּפֹּל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־פְּנָיו אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ מָה אַדְנֵי מְדַבֵּר אֶל־עַבְדּוֹ:

We see the a similar construction in Genesis 18:15, where the *pasek* intervenes between *mer'kha* and *tipp'ha* — וַיֹּאמֶר | לֹא כִי צָחֻקָתָּ.

So what is the bottom line? Should we follow Wickes, who writes, “The object of the change was simply musical... *l'garmeh* was musically admissible, and was preferred to the simpler melody of *munah-pasek* ” (119)? Or should we heed Breuer, who tells us “in every case where *l'garmeh* comes immediately before a *r'via* ..., it makes sense to say that it's not a *l'garmeh* at all, rather it's *munah* followed by *pasek*...” (119)? Each reader can decide for him- or herself. But this author is convinced that *l'garmeh* cannot stand before *r'via* without an intervening *munah*.

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IN OUR HANDS ARE A NUMBER OF MOTIFS—A TRADITION—PASSED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...AT WHOSE APPEARANCE IN THE OLD PRAYER CHANT, WORSHIPERS TREMBLE ...AND IF THIS IS TRUE FOR PRAYER, HOW MUCH MORE SO FOR BIBLE CHANT.

(Yehoshua Leib Ne'eman, *Ts'lilei ha-mikra*, 1955)