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Polysemy

Polysemy is the capacity for a sign, word, phrase, or sentence to bear multiple meanings in a single context. It was observed in the Hebrew Bible, both in poetry and in prose, as early as the medieval times, but became the topic of scholarly publications only after Casanowicz’s ground-breaking study (1893). Nevertheless, despite more than a century of scholarly attention, the study of polysemy in the Hebrew Bible remains in its infancy. We lack not only a consistent taxonomy for the various types of polysemy and their functions (e.g., Sasson 1976; cf. Beitzel 1980; Greenstein 1992), but also a useful vocabulary (but see now Noegel 2013). Consequently, scholars have long used the terms ‘punning’ and ‘wordplay’ for all forms of polysemy (and paronomasia), even though the former does not distinguish types and the latter implies that the device had a playful aim, which is not always the case (→ Paronomasia).

Scholars have proposed a number of different functions for the various types of polysemy. Some types have been seen as demonstrations of erudition and literary or rhetorical flare (Bohl 1926; Herzberg 1979; Hoffman 1980). Others appear to have mnemonic or organizational functions (Freedman 1986; Hurowitz 2001). Still others seem to have comedic or satirical aims (Watson 1986:245). Some polysemes also have a hermeneutic function (Fishbane 1977; Lieberman 1978; Tigay 1983, Noegel 2007a). More recently, scholars have proposed that some forms of polysemy are mechanisms for unleashing or harnessing the illocutionary power of words (Noegel 2007a; 2009a; 2010; 2013), especially when employed in prophetic or ritually empowered contexts (Schorsch 2000). Regardless of its many possible functions, it is clear that Israelite writers, like their counterparts in Mesopotamia and Egypt, were particularly skillful at employing polysemy. We also should note that, while polysemes are extremely difficult to capture in any translation, there is evidence for attempts to do so in the Septuagint, Targumim, Vulgate, and other ancient witnesses (Noegel 1995; 1996a; 2011b).

Unlike the hieroglyphic and Akkadian writing systems, in which individual signs bear multiple phonetic and logographic readings (Bottéro 1977; Farber 1986; Loprieno 2000; Noegel 2007a; Menoz 2008), most of the Hebrew consonants have only one phonetic value and none bear logographic readings. Thus, polysemy in the Bible is primarily restricted to the levels of word, phrase, and sentence. Accordingly, there are three primary ways that Israelite authors could achieve polysemy—by exploiting homonyms, homographs, or single words with broad semantic ranges. Job’s lament in Job 9.30–31 demonstrates polysemy by way of homonyms.

In this passage the phrase בָּרִיחַ ba-bor can mean ‘with lye’ or ‘in a pit’. Though the readings derive from different roots, the former, from בָּרִיחַ b-rr, and the latter, from בָּרִיחַ b-wr, the nouns are indistinguishable. Of course, the primary meaning of ברוח va-bor is ‘with lye’, since it makes little sense for Job to wash his hands in a pit. Nevertheless, the mention of a synonym for pit (תִּטְבְּלֵנִי šabat) just afterwards leads the reader to recontextualize the meaning of ברוח va-bor.

A second way Israelite authors achieved polysemy was by means of homographs; words that look alike, but whose pronunciations differ. This form of polysemy obtains strictly on a visual level. A textbook example appears in Job 26.12–13.

The verb רָגַע raga’ in this passage usually is rendered ‘quieted, stilled’, or the like, thus presupposing the Proto-Semitic root r-g-g. However, we also may derive the verb from Proto-Semitic r-g-g and translate it ‘disturbed’. Both readings
are possible, though they are likely to have been distinguished in speech at an early period (Blau 1982). Thus, this polyseme operates only on a visual register.

A third way of creating polysemy was to exploit the semantic range of a single word. An example of this appears in Pharaoh’s command to Moses in Exod. 5.18:

Here, the verb בָּרָא בַּעֲלָהוֹ wo-’attā lākū ’ibdū ‘Now get to your work!’ in this passage the verb בָּרָא בַּעֲלָהוֹ can mean ‘work, labor’ or ‘worship, serve’. In the former sense, the statement fits Pharaoh’s command that the taskmasters increase the workload for the Israelites. However, as ‘worship’, it prefigures Pharaoh’s release of the Israelites to worship Yahweh at Mt. Sinai.

To date scholars have identified at least fifteen types of polysemy in the Hebrew Bible. These include: contronymic polysemy, double entendre, antanaclasis, unidirectional polysemy, Janus parallelism, double polysemy, bilingual polysemy, polysemy clusters, numerical polysemy, gematria, notariqon, acronymy, acrostics (also telestichs and menostichs), atbash, and amphiboly. Each of these may perform different functions depending on their contexts. Moreover, these types and their functions can, and often do, overlap. Thus, a case of double polysemy or of amphiboly may also constitute a Janus parallelism, and also be part of a polysemy cluster; basic polysemy and antanaclasis also can serve as double entendres, and so on. There appears to be no limit to the sophistication of the Israelite writers.

1. Contronymic Polysemy

A word that bears its own meaning and its opposite is called a contronym (known as 'addād ‘opposites’ in Arabic; Nöldeke 1910; Gordis 1936–1937). An English example is ‘cleft’, which means both ‘join’ and ‘separate’. We already have seen a strictly visual contronym in Job 26.12. A contronym that operates aurally appears in Job 4.6 in Eliphaz’s sarcastic query to Job:

The query is a subtle barb that relies on the dual meaning of קְסֶל kesel as both ‘confidence’ and ‘stupidity’.

2. Double Entendres

A double entendre is an idiom or other figure of speech that may be understood in two ways. The first is straightforward, innocuous, and not the primary meaning intended by the user, whereas the second is the intended meaning. Often double entendres serve as euphemisms, as in the command of David to Uriah, whom he has just summoned from the battle field:

When interpreting the baker’s dream, Joseph uses it to predict that Pharaoh will ‘lift up your head’, i.e., pardon the cupbearer. However, when interpreting the baker’s dream, Joseph employs the same idiom with reference to his death by ‘beheading’ or perhaps ‘impaling’ (Gen. 40.19).

3. Antanaclasis

Antanaclasis is the repetition of the same word or expression each time with a different meaning (Sasson 1976). While antanaclasis can have a paronomastic effect, it does not involve homonyms, but rather words or expressions of a single etymological derivation. Thus, it more properly belongs to the realm of polysemy. The device appears predominantly in poetry (Sasson 1976:970; Ceresko 1982; Noegel 2007b:21–23). However, a classic prose example appears in the narrative concerning the dreams of Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker (Gen. 40). In this short pericope, we find two different uses of the phrase הָרֹאשׁ אַל חֵם nāsā ’et hā-rōś ‘lift up the head’ (Marcus 1990). In Gen. 40.13 Joseph uses it to predict that Pharaoh will ‘lift up your head’, i.e., pardon the cupbearer. However, when interpreting the baker’s dream, Joseph employs the same idiom with reference to his death by ‘beheading’ or perhaps ‘impaling’ (Gen. 40.19).

4. Unidirectional Polysemy

Unidirectional polysemy is polysemy that produces two meanings that face a single direction. The example of homographic polysemy above (i.e., Gen. 26.12–13) is also a case of unidirectional polysemy. Whether read as ‘stilled’ or ‘disturbed’, רָגַע רָגַע ‘faces forward’ to both the calming of...
the heavens and the smashing of Rahab. There are also cases in which unidirectional polysemy faces backwards (Noegel 2011b).

5. Janus Parallelism

Janus parallelism (sometimes called pivotal polysemy [Grossberg 1986]) is distinguished from unidirectional polysemy in that it exploits a single word that has two meanings, one of which ‘faces backward’ to the previous line, while the other ‘faces forward’ to the next line. Since the initial discovery of Janus parallelism (Gordon 1978), dozens more have been found in the Hebrew Bible and in other ancient Near Eastern texts (e.g., Rendsburg 1992; Ceresko 1994; Gordon 1994; Noegel 2007a). There are two types of Janus parallelism: symmetrical and asymmetrical (Gordon 1982). The former obtains in three stichs of poetry while the second occurs in metrical (Gordon 1982). The former is vocalized as if it derives from the root אבג b-w-ו meaning ‘enter’. However, we also can derive it from the root יבג y-b-d, in which case it means ‘unite with, be one with’. However, it also could derive from the root יבג b-d-b, and be translated ‘rejoice’. Both verbs require revocalization to achieve their dual meanings. To read ‘desire’ one must point the verb as אבג tobâ and to read ‘rejoice’ we must vocalize יבג tibâd (a similar double polysemy appears in Job 3.6). So, to be precise, the polysemy here exists in the written consonantal text, but not in the reading tradition reflected by the vocalization. It is likely, nevertheless, that the writer exploited this graphic polysemy, which existed before the creation of the vocalization system in the Middle Ages.

6. Double Polysemy

Double polysemy exploits two words in successive stichs, each of which projects multiple meanings (Rendsburg 1982). In Gen. 49.6, Jacob declares to Simeon and Levi:

Two polysemes are active—the verbs אבג tobô and יבג têbad. The former is vocalized as if it derives from the root אבג b-w-ו meaning ‘enter’. However, we also can derive it from the root יבג y-b-d, in which case it means ‘unite with, be one with’. However, it also could derive from the root יבג b-d-b, and be translated ‘rejoice’. Both verbs require revocalization to achieve their dual meanings. To read ‘desire’ one must point the verb as אבג tobô and to read ‘rejoice’ we must vocalize יבג tibôd (a similar double polysemy appears in Job 3.6). So, to be precise, the polysemy here exists in the written consonantal text, but not in the reading tradition reflected by the vocalization. It is likely, nevertheless, that the writer exploited this graphic polysemy, which existed before the creation of the vocalization system in the Middle Ages.

7. Bilingual Polysemy

Bilingual polysemy occurs when a word may be read as reflecting more than one language. Thus far, scholars have proposed Hebrew-Egyptian (Rendsburg 1988b), Hebrew-Akkadian (Machinist 1983:734–735), Hebrew-Aramaic (Greenstein 1992:971; Noegel 1996a:43–44; 2000:171; 2013), Aramaic-Akkadian (Noegel 2007a:148–149), and Hebrew-Greek bilingual polysemes (Wolters 1985).

A couple of cases of Hebrew-Egyptian polysemy will demonstrate. In Pharaoh’s insult to Moses in Exod. 10.10 we read: לארשי יכ ראה וא נג ו_bytekem ‘See, indeed evil is before you!’ The noun rendered ‘evil’ (i.e., נג râdâ) also can be read as the name of the Egyptian solar god Ra, thus allowing us to translate the line: ‘See, indeed Ra is against you!’ The same bilingual polysemy occurs in Exod. 32.12, and possibly also in Exod. 32.22 and Num. 11.1 (Rendsburg 1988a; 1988b). It also has been suggested that we read the
name שָׁם Hām in Gen. 9–10 bilingually, both as a personal name and as the Egyptian noun ḫm 'servant'. The latter underscores his role as the progenitor of the Egyptians (Gen. 10.6) and anticipates Noah’s curse (Gen. 9.25) that Ham will become a servant to his brothers (Rendsburg 2000:144–145).

It is likely that further examples of bilingual polysemy remain to be discovered. The device certainly continued to be employed well after the Second Temple Period, as is evident from rabbinic texts (Noegel 2007a:235–244).

8. Polysemy Cluster

When multiple polysemes appear in close proximity they constitute a polysemy cluster. The clustering of polysemes creates an unraveling effect in which the contextual meaning must be continually rethought. Polysemy clusters relate to the poetic strategy of clustering other devices in biblical Hebrew poetry (Greenfield 1990; Noegel 2004; 2011a). An exquisite polysemy cluster can be found in Job 29.20–23:

There are no fewer than five polysemes in this brief passage. The first, תבלייב tablî'îḇ, can be rendered ‘renews’ (וְתֹלֵל, Proto-Semitic b-l-p) or ‘made to pierce’ (וְתֹלֵל, Proto-Semitic b-l-p). We may understand the second, וְעָיִב we-עוליב, as ‘they waited’ (from וְעָיִיב y-h-l) or ‘they pierced’ (from וְעָיִיב b-l-p and repointed as a pî'él וְעָיִיב yohallîḇ). The third polyseme, וְעָיִב we-עוליב, means both ‘they waited’ (from וְעָיִיב d-m-h) or ‘they were silent’ (from וְעָיִיב d-m-m and repointed as a nîf'al נִפְּלָם we-יָדְדָם, and the fourth, וְעָיִב we-עוליב, we can translate as ‘reply’ (from וְעָיִיב, Proto-Semitic t-n-y) or ‘was sharpened’ (from וְעָיִיב, Proto-Semitic š-n-n and repointed as a nîf'al נִפְּלָם we-יָדְדָם [cf. Isa. 49.2]). Each of these polysemes is strictly visual. Capping off the polysemous cluster is the verb יִשְׁנּוּ tîttôp, whose semantic range includes ‘drivel, prophesy, argue against’ (Deut. 32.2; Amos 7.16; Mic. 2.6) and ‘dew upon’ (Job 36.27). The result is a concatenation of multiple meanings.

A special type of polysemous cluster exploits the literal meanings of idioms containing body parts by using them in tandem with literal references to body parts as well as polysemes that suggest body parts. The result is an assembly of human features that provides a subtext to reinforce key themes. The device has been identified in Exod. 4.1–17; Judg. 3.12–30; 7.1–25; 1 Sam. 5.1–6; Jon. 2.3–10; Prov. 6.1–35; and Prov. 8.1–36 (Noegel 2011a). Thus, in the episode detailing Gideon’s campaign against the Midianites (Judg. 7.1–25), one finds תַּחֲלִֽיף יִשְׁנּוּ ‘hand’ used abundantly as a keyword (7.2 [2x], 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 [2x]). In addition, the word ‘hand’ constitutes a partial anagram with the name מִדְיָן mîdyān ‘Midian’, with which it is collocated three times (7.7, 14, 15). The frequent idiomatic use of this body part heightens one’s awareness of other body parts in the story including: ‘ears’ (7.3), ‘tongue’ (7.5), ‘knees’ (7.5, 6), and ‘mouth’ (7.6), as well as idioms that contain body parts, such as יָד יָדְדָם יִשְׁנּוּ šâpat hay-yām, literally ‘lip of the sea’ > ‘seashore’ (7.12), רָדִים râdim, literally ‘heads’ > ‘men’ (7.16), רֹאשׁ roṣ, literally ‘head’ > ‘beginning’ of the middle watch (7.19), יָדְדָם יִשְׁנּוּ šâpat-âbel, literally ‘lip of the meadow’ > ‘border’ (7.22), and רֹאשׁ roṣ ‘oreb ‘head(s) of Oreb and Ze’eb’ for ‘leaders’ (7.25). In turn, these are reinforced by other words that suggest body parts, such as מִדְיָן מִדיָן mîdyān ‘Midian’ intensifies the narrative’s central theme that Yahweh has promised Gideon that he would deliver the Midianites into his hand (7.7).

9. Numerical Polysemy

Numerical polysemy occurs when the names of numbers are exploited extensively for non-numerical meanings (Garsiel 1994:326). An example of this appears in Qoh. 4.8–14:

Another form of polysemy that involves numbers is gematria (also called isopsephy). Gematria involves reading the consonants that comprise a word for their numerical values. In Hebrew alphabetic letters double for numbers. Thus, the first letter א 'aleph = one, ב bet = two, and so on up to ten; subsequent letters hold values of ten, i.e., twenty, thirty, forty, etc., through שד '90; and then the last four letters of the alphabet connote 100 through 400. The earliest discussion of gematria in the Hebrew Bible occurs in rabbinic texts. Consequently, scholars debate whether these are later readings imposed on the text. However, the presence of gematria as an exegetical tool in much earlier Akkadian materials demonstrates that the device could have been known during the time in which the biblical texts were written (Lieberman 1978; Tigay 1983). Some scholars have proposed the presence of a gematria on the name Gad in Gen. 46.16, because the numerical value of Gad is seven, and the name appears in a chapter replete with sevens and multiples of seven (Sasson 1976:969). A well-known case of gematria found in a rabbinic comment states that the 318 soldiers who battled alongside Abram against the kings of the east (Gen. 14.14) is a gematria for Abram’s servant Eleazar, whose name equals 318 (Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 32a).

ii. Notarikon

Notarikon is the practice of reading the consonant of a word or successive words acroynmically. For example, in Jer. 7.4 the phrase ‘temple of Yahweh’ is repeated verbatim three times and followed by the term hemmad ‘these’. The odd line has led some to conclude that the three consonants that comprise the word hemmad (i.e., ה ב מ + מ + ה) are an acronym for [הֶמַּד] [בָּמַד] [בָּאָמַד] b[am]-m[agom] b[az-ze] ‘this place’ (Sasson 1976; though Corré 1973 argues that hemmad is equivalent to ‘sic’). Like gematria, notarikon is more common in later rabbinic texts; however, it too is an attested
exegetical tool in much earlier Akkadian materials (Lieberman 1978; Tigay 1983).

12. Acronymy

Acronymy is the opposite of notarikon and requires that one read the initial consonant of successive words. One example of acronymy that has been proposed appears in Esther’s statement to the Persian king in Esth. 5.4: [טב:ן] [םו:ק [םנ:ק [קנ:מ ג] יא:ב א h[am-melek] ut[a-h]mân] h[ay-yôm] ‘Let the king and Haman come’. The initial consonants of each of these words (i.e., ה-י-י-י y-h-u-h) spell out the divine name Yahweh, which is nowhere explicitly mentioned in the book of Esther (Beitzel 1980:7–8).

13. Acrostics (also Telestichs and Menostichs)

An acrostic (also called an abecedarius) is a form of polysemy that works by reading vertically the initial letter of each successive word in a poem. Since each of the lines also bear meanings horizontally an acrostic may be considered a structural form of polysemy. A telestich is an acrostic that reads the final letters of successive lines. A menostich is an acrostic that reads the middle consonants of a word (on this form see below under Atbash). When an acrostic, telestich, or menostich spell out a name, word, or sentence it is called a menostich (Brug 1990; Guillaume 2009). Many biblical menostichs have been suggested, but have met with varied levels of acceptance (e.g., Ps. 2 [Treves 1967; refuted by Lindars 1967]; Ps. 9 [Skehan 1965]; Ps. 10 [Treves 1967; refuted by Lindars 1967]; and Lam. 5.17–18 [Bergler 1977; and supported in part by Guillaume 2009]). Though telestics and menostichs are more frequently attested in Akkadian and Egyptian texts (Clère 1938; Stewart 1971; Soll 1988), a few do appear in the Hebrew Bible.

Most acrostics in the Hebrew Bible proceed alphabetically from the first letter (א ‘aleph) to the last (י taw), but there are a variety of ways this is achieved. A new letter can commence with every line (Ps. 25; 34; 145), or couplet (Ps. 37; Prov. 31.10–31; Lam. 1, 2, 4), or even every half-line (Ps. 111; 112). The acrostics in Lam. 1; 2; 4 move to a new alphabetic letter every fourth verse (Renkema 1995). Lam. 3 does the same, but repeats the acrostic letter in each of the three successive verses. The acrostic in Ps. 119 starts with a new letter every ninth verse. Some broken or fragmentary alphabetic acrostics are also present in Nah. 1.2–8 (Christensen 1987; Spronk 1998; Pinker 2006); Prov. 24.1–22 (Hurowitz 2000); and Prov. 29.22–27 (Hurowitz 2001). Acrostics may have been employed as mnemonics (Soll 1988) or to convey a sense of order. Those in Lamentations may have provided readers with a tool for rationalizing their emotions.

14. Atbash

‘Atbash’ (א”תבש) is a polysemy of consonantal transposition. It replaces the first letter of the alphabet with the last, the second with the penultimate, the third with the antepenultimate, and so on (hence, the name ‘atbash’ which combines the first, last, second, and penultimate letters of the alphabet, i.e., א aleph and ה taw, ב bet and ו shin. Though atbash is sometimes thought to be an exegetical device of the Rabbinic period, the clear use of atbash on a 12th century B.C.E. abecedary from ‘Izbet-Šar’ta shows it to have been in use well before the period of the Israelite monarchy. Moreover, scholars often treat atbash as if it functions as a cipher (Steiner 1996), though there is limited evidence that it served such a purpose (Korpel 2009). Others see atbash as a performative device of illocutionary power (Noegel 2009a).

There are three types of atbash. The first employs a word that makes little sense unless it is read as an atbash. A second type of atbash makes perfect sense both as it appears and when read as an atbash (Noegel 1996a; 1996b; 1996d). A third type of atbash is even more sophisticated, in that the consonants to be transposed appear vertically in the form of a mesostich (Korpel 2009). I demonstrate the device by way of the first group, to which belongs Jer. 25.26; 51.1, 41, and a possible fourth spotted by Cyrus H. Gordon in 1 Kgs 9.1 (noted in Sasson 1976:969).

The best known atbash appears in Jeremiah’s prophecy that a number of nations will drink the wrath of Yahweh: ‘And last of all, the king of פֶּסָח šeṣak shall drink’ (Jer. 25.26). As the Targum translates and medieval Hebrew commentators observe, the consonants in the word פֶּסָח šeṣak are an atbash for בּבֶל bêbel
‘Babylon’. Here the meaning ‘Babylon’ is the only one that makes sense. Jeremiah has encapsulated the destruction of ‘Babylon’ by turning its name into a meaningless heap of letters.

15. Amphiboly

Amphiboly (also called amphibiology) is the employment of an ambiguous grammatical structure for polysemous effect. Three types of amphiboly appear in the Bible. The first suggests multiple readings by combining two different morphologies, while at the same time making a clear reading of one or the other impossible. This type of amphiboly is sometimes referred to as forma mixta or portmanteau. An example of this appears in Job’s statement about Yahweh in Job 26.9.

ma‘ahéz pané-kissé parséz ‘áláw ‘ánánó
He seizes (his) throne, he parks his cloud upon it.

The verb ירֶשׁ parséz is a rare example of a blend word in ancient Hebrew, created by combining two different roots to form a quadrilateral verb and hapax legomenon. The first, יָרֶשׁ pāras means ‘spread out, extend’; the second, פָּרַשׂ paršez, means ‘muster, separate’. The use of the verb creates a polysemy, suggesting both meanings while conforming morphologically to neither verb.

A second type of amphiboly seamlessly combines the morphlogy of two different, but normative grammatical structures. The amphiboly of these structures is marked in the Masoretic vocalization. See, for example, Jotham’s parable in Judg. 9, where the olive tree replies to the other trees that would make him king: ‘Have I ceased yielding (תַּחְלָל be-hádaláti) my rich oil, through whom God and men are honored, that I should go and wave above the trees?’ (v. 9).

The highlighted verb combines two different morphologies—either it is a first person singular perfect biph‘il of the verb ‘cease’ or first person singular perfect qal of the same root, preceded by an interrogative be. If the former, the vowel under the bet should have been šewa or hateph-seghol. If the latter, then we would expect to see a gâmes rather than hateph-gâmes as the vowel marking the first syllable of the verb (Joosten 1990). While both readings are possible in the consonantal text, neither is possible in the vocalized text. The vocalization could be interpreted as reflecting elements of both readings. Other formas mixtae of this type appear in Gen. 16.11; Judg. 13.5; 2 Sam. 11.1; Isa. 59.3; Jer. 23.6; Lam. 4.14; and Ps. 68.3.

A third type of amphiboly combines an infinitive absolute derived from one root with a finite verb derived from another (Noegel 1998a; 1998b). Only a handful of these appear in the Bible (Isa. 28.28; Jer. 8.13; 42.10; 48.9, Zeph. 1.2). The prophecy against Judah in Jer. 8.13 will demonstrate.

Yahweh’s proclamation יָסֹק אֲסִיפֵם is amphibolous. The infinitive absolute derives from the root יָסֹק s-w-p ‘sweep away, destroy’. By suggesting the meaning ‘gather’, the phrase anticipates the agricultural reference in the next line: ‘No grapes on the vine, no figs on the fig tree, the leaves all withered’ (Jer. 8.13). By suggesting a violent ‘sweeping away’, the pronouncement follows Jeremiah’s guarantee that the people of Judah ‘will fall among the fallen, in the time of their punishment they shall stumble’ (Jer. 8.12).

Thus, the amphiboly in this passage functions also like a Janus parallelism, but does so by combining different roots where a single root would be normative.
This taxonomy most likely does not exhaust the possibilities for polysemy in the Hebrew Bible, and doubtless, as scholars continue to give attention to such devices, new discoveries will be made.

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### Popular Music

Secular popular music in Hebrew first emerged with the rise of national sentiments among Jews in the 1880s. The nation-building efforts of the Jewish national movement was accompanied by a project of transforming Hebrew into a spoken language, to be used by the emergent speech community for all its communication needs. All realms of endeavor, including popular culture, had to be catered to. The creation of songs was an integral component of this general trend.

Two main phases may be observed in the evolution of Hebrew popular music (Regev and Seroussi 2004). Between the 1880s and the 1960s the field was dominated by music which consciously reflected and supported the hegemonic Zionist ideology. This tradition, named by musicologists ישראלי השירה אורי by musicologists שיר היישוב נ iyshiyov shel sheloshim, had to be catered to. The creation of songs was an integral component of this general trend.

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