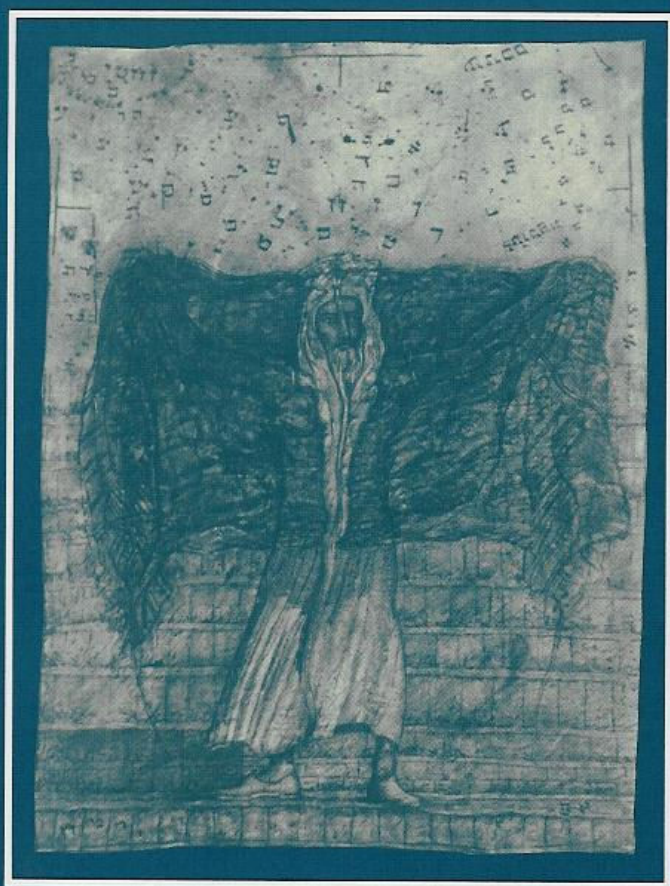# HEBREW IN ASHKENAZ

A Language in Exile

Edited by

LEWIS GLINERT

Hebrew in Ashkenaz

A LANGUAGE IN EXILE

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The Phonology of Ashkenazic

DOVID KATZ

> I rejoice and thank God with all my heart that He made me an Ashkenazic Jew in my pronunciation.
>
> Jacob Emden 1761:§53

The Notion "Ashkenazic"

Ashkenazic Hebrew and Ashkenazic Aramaic

The terms "Ashkenazi(c) Hebrew" and "Ashkenazi(c) pronunciation" are often encountered in reference to the pronunciations of Hebrew deriving from central and eastern Europe. These terms are fine for continued general use but more precision is needed in a study of the subject. For one thing, Ashkenazic Hebrew involves a lot more than pronunciation: it comprises a set of characteristic features in lexicon, semantics, morphology, and syntax (see e.g., Noble 1958). For another, the Ashkenazic sound pattern applies equally to Aramaic. The work at hand calls for a term limited to pronunciation, but encompassing Aramaic as well as Hebrew. I shall use the noun "Ashkenazic" for the phonological system used by traditional Ashkenazim in their pronunciation of Hebrew and Aramaic.

For around a thousand years, Ashkenazic thrived in Ashkenaz, the Jewish culture area that covered much of central and eastern Europe and comprised the geographically and demographically largest speech community in Jewish history. Following the Holocaust, Ashkenazic survives among some of its progeny worldwide, most perfectly so among a number of the more traditional Hasidic and yeshiva-centered communities. In other communities, both in Israel and around the world, its use has diminished sharply, or disappeared, in response to a conscious campaign of discreditation and denigration, the roots of which can be traced, ultimately, to the "Berlin Enlightenment" of the late eighteenth century. Reference to "Ashkenaz," "Ashkenazim," and "Ashkenazic" in this study involves the linguistic state of affairs in pre-war central and eastern Europe, and in traditional communities today around the world.

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Internal Jewish Trilingualism in Ashkenaz

In order to fathom the place of Ashkenazic in linguistic and cultural history, we must bear in mind its multilingual environment. In addition to varying degrees of mastery of local non-Jewish languages, Ashkenazim have three distinct Jewish languages, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Aramaic, which participate in a unique trilingualism (see Katz 1985: 98). Yiddish (itself containing a Hebrew and Aramaic component) is the only vernacular in traditional Ashkenazic culture. Hebrew and Aramaic, although nonvernacular, are, in Ashkenaz, very much alive, used in reading, study, prayer, declaiming, singing, and in quoting from classical texts. They are "uttered" in the course of these activities, thus meeting the proposed definition of Ashkenazic as a phonological system. Moreover, Hebrew and Aramaic thrive as literary languages, and the degree to which writers and readers "mentally utter" the phonological representations of these texts is an issue open to study.

In writing, the three Jewish languages of Ashkenaz complemented each other in part. Yiddish dominated popular literature and intimate personal written communication. Hebrew occupied in social terms the broad educated middle ground of communal, rabbinic, and more formal written communication, Bible and Mishnah commentaries, and works on customs and ethics. Aramaic was the principal language of much talmudic and kabbalistic literature. None of the three languages of Ashkenaz was "low-prestige" or "stigmatized" in any modern sense of these terms. Such notions arose later as a consequence of the Enlightenment and its various offshoots. All three had their accepted and unquestioned place in the eyes of the society in question, and those are the eyes that count. An absence of "low prestige" does not imply an absence of "high prestige." Sociological "highness" was clearly linked with knowledge, learning, and creativity and can be charted on an upward curve from the universally known Yiddish to the more select and learned Hebrew through to the most select and learned Aramaic language of the two most profound and esoteric branches of the culture: the jurisprudence of the Talmud and the mysticism of the Kabbalah. Moreover, those parts of the liturgy that are in Aramaic, although a minority, have the greatest psychological sanctity, including the kaddish prayer for the dead, and the *Kol Nidrey* on the Day of Atonement. The often-encountered notion that Hebrew and Aramaic had somehow blended in Ashkenaz into a hodge-podge, sometimes called "Hebrew-Aramaic" ("Hebrew-hyphen-Aramaic"), is mistaken. To be sure, Hebrew has its Aramaic component, and (Jewish) Aramaic its Hebrew component, but never did the twain merge in lexicon, morphology, or grammatical machinery (see Katz 1985: 98), and a monograph would prove this. They did merge phonologically, however, hence the term and the concept "Ashkenazic."

The Work at Hand

I shall propose principles and methodology concerning the structure, origin, and history of Ashkenazic and its relation to both the antecedent Hebrew and Aramaic and to contemporary Yiddish. The ideas offered differ sharply from the views that

collectively constitute "standard theory" on the subject (see e.g., Lebensohn 1874: 19–25; Tshemerinski 1913: 61–63; Veynger 1913: 79–81; Yalon 1937–38: 63, 1942: 27; Birnbaum 1934: 28–29; Klar 1951; M. Weinreich 1954: 89–99; 1963–1964; 1973: 2: 20–21, 124, 334, 352–54; Morag 1971; Eldar 1978). Arguments on contentious issues have been put forward elsewhere, and will not be repeated (see Katz 1977; 1979; 1980; 1982; 1983a; 1985; 1986; 1987a; 1991; 1992). For previous treatments of Ashkenazic, see Schreiner 1886; Ember 1903; Idelsohn 1913: 531–32, 697–99; Bauer and Leander 1922: 170–71; Cohen 1923: 56–64; Segal 1928a: 18–19, 29, 50, 75, 90, 137; 1928b; Gumpertz 1953; Assaf 1954: 1: 234; Chomsky 1957: 112–16; Zimmels 1958: 82–90, 308–14; U. Weinreich 1959–1961; Leibel 1965; Altbauer 1977.

Dialectological Framework

Classification of Yiddish Dialects

Nearly all late twentieth-century forms of both Yiddish and Ashkenazic derive from the territory of "Eastern Yiddish," in the Slavonic and Baltic lands. Eastern Yiddish comprises three major dialect areas: (1) Northeastern Yiddish (popularly "Lithuanian") on the territory of ethnographic Lithuania, Latvia, White Russia; (2) Mideastern Yiddish (popularly "Polish") on the territory of ethnographic Poland and parts of Hungary and Czechoslovakia; and (3) Southeastern Yiddish (popularly "Ukrainian") on the territory of ethnographic Ukraine, Bessarabia, and Romania.

The no-longer spoken varieties of "Western Yiddish" may also be subdivided into three major dialect areas: (1) Northwestern Yiddish (Netherlands, northern Germany); (2) Midwestern Yiddish (central Germany); and (3) Southwestern Yiddish (Alsace, Switzerland, southern Germany). There are two major intermediate areas: (1) Northern Transitional Yiddish (East Prussia; see Katz 1988a: 43–53) and Southern Transitional Yiddish (parts of Czechoslovakia and Hungary), also known, after U. Weinreich (1964), as Transcarpathian Yiddish. These classifications follow Katz (1983b).

Coterminous Dialect Areas

The dialect areas of Yiddish and Ashkenazic are coterminous. Thus, Northeastern Yiddish is coterritorial with Northeastern Ashkenazic, Southwestern Yiddish with Southwestern Ashkenazic, and so forth. The identity of the geolinguistic patterning is determined by the identity of the speakers: a Northeastern Yiddish speaker in traditional Ashkenaz is by definition a user of Northeastern Ashkenazic.

The Vowel Systems of Yiddish Dialects

Primacy of Vernacular Phonology

Neither Hebrew nor Aramaic was anybody's native language in Ashkenaz. An abstraction of the phonology of these sacred languages without reference to their

users' native language would be folly, firstly because it is spoken language that divulges the true phonology of a speaker, and secondly because, in the society in question, the links between the vernacular and the two sacred languages were profound for virtually the entire population (cf. M. Weinreich 1973: 1:251–320; 3:253–331). The most profound linguistic link is the cooccurrence, in different phonological guise, of thousands of items from the sacred languages in the vernacular.

As a point of departure, therefore, Ashkenazic is best conceived from the perspective of the coterritorial Yiddish dialect, and, especially, the dialect's "Semitic component." The Semitic component in Yiddish, comprising the parts of the language deriving from Hebrew or Aramaic, is synchronically fused with the quantitatively much larger Germanic component. These two Pan-Yiddish components (Eastern Yiddish has, in addition, a prominent Slavonic component) share some phonological features, but each nonetheless maintains a distinct phonological and morphological identity.

Coexisting Phonologies within Yiddish

Documented forms of Ashkenazic cannot, as a rule, have sounds not generally present in the coterritorial Yiddish (one possible exception being the η reflex of historical ʕ in Netherlandic Ashkenazic, which may be a borrowing from local Sephardic usage; see Hirschel 1940: 455). In fact, the vowel inventory of each variety of Ashkenazic constitutes a subset (generally a large subset) of the inventory of the Semitic component of the local dialect of Yiddish. While Ashkenazic has not preserved ancient Semitic sounds, it has preserved phonological patterning that underwent change in Yiddish. Even in Yiddish, change never came close to levelling the phonologies of the two components of the language: they coexist and interact as subphonologies of the supersystem "Phonology of Yiddish."

To cite one pervasive contrast, the Germanic component has root-bound stress and, consequently, fixed full and reduced vowels, e.g., Northeastern Yiddish *lɛb* "(I) live," *lέbn̩* "life," *lébədik* "lively", *lébədikə* "(pl.) lively," *lèbədikərhéjt* "during his/her lifetime." Even when the stem loses primary stress in deference to a stressed suffix (as in the last cited item), it retains stress and vowel color vis-à-vis the posttonic vowel which remains both stressless and shewa-like in quality. Semitic component items, by contrast, exhibit penultimate stress. Suffixation results in shift of stress to the newly penultimate syllable and in the transformation of shewa to a full vowel, e.g., Northeastern Yiddish *málbəš* "garment," pl. *malbúšim*. In other words, the synchronic underlying form of **[málbəš]** is in fact |**malbuš**|. Stress is boundary linked, as in classical Hebrew, although penultimate rather than ultimate (cf. Hebrew מַלְבּוּשׁ *malbúš*, מַלְבּוּשִׁים *malbūším*).

Pan-Yiddish Vocalism

The system of Pan-Yiddish vocalism that follows is based on M. Weinreich's (1960) but reduces his twenty correspondences to the sixteen that can be reconstructed from Yiddish per se, i.e., without reference to the stock languages (see Katz 1983b: 1021–24). Each correspondence represents a diaphoneme. The diaphoneme may

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Table 4.1. Diaphonemic Systematization of Pan-Yiddish Vocalism
GC = Germanic Component; SC = Semitic Component

___

Series 1 (originally short):

Vowel 11:
Pan-Yiddish *a* (but SEY ɔ ~ *a*)

GC: *gas* "street," *hant* "hand," *vant* "wall"
SC: *aváda* "certainly," *dáfka* "as a matter of fact," *prat* "detail"

Vowel 21:
Pan-Yiddish ε

GC: *bésər* "better," *hélfn̩* "help," *vɛn* "when"
SC: *éfšər* "maybe," *éməs* "true," *šɛd* "ghost"

Vowel 31:
Pan-Yiddish *i* (but ε in some NWY)

GC: *fiš* "fish," *nídərik* "low," *zílbər* "silver"
SC: *bris* "circumcision," *ínjən* "matter," *šíkər* "drunk"

Vowel 41:
Pan-Yiddish ɔ

GC: *gɔt* "God," *lɔx* "hole," *vɔx* "week"
SC: *kɔl* "voice," *kɔ́rbn̩* "sacrifice," *xɔ́xmə* "wisdom"

Vowel 51:
NWY *ŏ* ‖ MWY, SWY, NEY, StY *u* ‖ MEY, SEY *i*

GC: *frum* "religious" [Jewish]," *hunt* "dog," *kúmən* "come"
SC: *gúzmə* "exaggeration," *štus* "nonsense," *xúpə* "wedding canopy"

Series 2 (originally long):

Vowel 12:
NWY *ō* ‖ MWY *ō* / *ū* ‖ SWY *ō* / *ou* ‖ NEY, StY ɔ ‖ MEY, SEY *ū* ~ *u*

GC: *blɔ́zn̩* "blow," *nɔ́dl̩* "needle," *šlɔ́fn̩* "sleep"
SC: *ləvɔ́nə* "moon," *mišpɔ́xə* "family," *xɔ́ləm* "dream"

Vowel 22:
NWY ɛj ‖ MWY *ē* ‖ SWY ɛj ‖ NEY, StY ej ‖ MEY aj ‖ SEY ej

GC: *bejz* "angry," *lejb* "lion," *šejn* "beautiful"
SC: *bréjrə* "choice," *maxašéjfə* "witch," *séjxl̩* "common sense"

Vowel 32:
Pan-Yiddish *ī* (but isochronic NEY, StY *i*)

GC: *briv* "letter," *grin* "green," *štivl̩* "boots"
SC: *mevínəs* "expertise," *nəvíim* "prophets," *tfísə* "jail"

Vowel 42:
NWY ɔu ‖ MWY *ō* ‖ SWY ɔu ‖ NEY ej ‖ MEY, SEY, StY ɔj

GC: *brɔjt* "bread," *grɔjs* "large," *vɔjnən* "live [= "dwell"]"
SC: *gɔ́jləm* "golem," *šɔ́jtə* "fool," *xɔjdəš* "month"

Vowel 52:
NWY, MWY, SWY *ū* ‖ NEY, StY *u* ‖ MEY, SEY *ī*

GC: *bux* "book," *fus* "foot," *šul* "synagogue"
SC: *bsúlə* "virgin," *malbúšim* "clothing," *rəfúə* "remedy"

Series 3 (series 1 vowels subject to early lengthening):

Vowel 13:

NWY ō ‖ MWY, SWY ā ‖ NEY, StY ɔ ‖ MEY, SEY ū ~ u

GC: *grɔz* "grass," *nómən* "name," *tɔg* "day"

Vowel 25:

NWY ē ‖ MWY ī ‖ SWY ē ‖ NEY, StY ɛ ‖ MEY ej ‖ SEY ej (older ī/i)

GC: *bétn* "request," *lébədik* "lively," *štétḷ* "village"

SC: *régə* "minute," *tévə* "habit," *xésəd* "act of kindness"

Series 4 (original diphthong):

Vowel 24:

NWY, MWY, SWY ā ‖ NEY, StY ej ‖ MEY aj ‖ SEY ej

GC: *gléjb* "(I) believe," *klejd* "dress," *zéjgər* "clock"

Vowel 34:

NWY ɛj ‖ MWY, SWY aj ‖ NEY, StY aj ‖ MEY ā ‖ SEY a

GC: *bašájmperlax* "obvious," *lájləx* "sheet," *vajs* "white"

Vowel 44:

NWY, MWY, SWY ā ‖ NEY, StY ej ‖ MEY, SEY, StY ɔj

GC: *bɔjm* "tree," *ɔjg* "eye," *tɔjb* "deaf"

Vowel 54:

NWY, MWY, SWY ɔu ‖ NEY, StY ɔj ‖ MEY ōu, ō ‖ SEY ou/u

GC: *hɔjz* "house," *mɔjl* "mouth," *tɔjb* "pigeon," "dove"

Construction of Synchronic Systems

Systematization of these geographically differentiated reflexes of common historic sources allows for the construction of a synchronic system for a given variety. Thus, the system may be used to construct the actual stressed vocalism of Northeastern Yiddish, which is illustrated in Table 4.2, and to compare it with that of Mideastern Yiddish (Table 4.3) or Northwestern Yiddish (Table 4.4), a variety no longer spoken. Where possible, a sample word is provided from the Semitic component. Where the vowel is limited to the Germanic component, the sample is drawn from that component. Glosses are provided at the relevant point in Table 4.1.

Table 4.2. Stressed Vowel System of Northeastern Yiddish

$i_{31/32}$ *(šíkər, tſísə)*	$u_{51/52}$ *(gúzmə, bsúlə)*
$ej_{22/24/42/44}$ *(bréjrə, glejb, géjləm, bejm)*	$ɔj_{54}$ *(hɔjz)*
$ɛ_{21/25}$ *(éfšər, régə)*	$ɔ_{12/13/41}$ *(ləvónə, nómən, xóxmə)*
	aj_{34} *(lájlax)*
	a_{11} *(avádə)*

Series 3 (series 1 vowels subject to early lengthening):

Vowel 13:
NWY *ō* ‖ MWY, SWY *ā* ‖ NEY, StY *ɔ* ‖ MEY, SEY *ū ~ u*

GC: *grɔz* "grass," *nɔ́mən* "name," *tɔg* "day"

Vowel 25:
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Vowel 34:
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GC: *bašájmperlax* "obvious," *lájləx* "sheet," *vajs* "white"

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NWY, MWY, SWY *ā* ‖ NEY, StY *ej* ‖ MEY, SEY, StY *ɔj*

GC: *bɔjm* "tree," *ɔjg* "eye," *tɔjb* "deaf"

Vowel 54:
NWY, MWY, SWY *ɔu* ‖ NEY, StY *ɔj* ‖ MEY *ōu, ō* ‖ SEY *ou/u*

GC: *hɔjz* "house," *mɔjl* "mouth," *tɔjb* "pigeon," "dove"

Construction of Synchronic Systems

Systematization of these geographically differentiated reflexes of common historic sources allows for the construction of a synchronic system for a given variety. Thus, the system may be used to construct the actual stressed vocalism of Northeastern Yiddish, which is illustrated in Table 4.2, and to compare it with that of Mideastern Yiddish (Table 4.3) or Northwestern Yiddish (Table 4.4), a variety no longer spoken. Where possible, a sample word is provided from the Semitic component. Where the vowel is limited to the Germanic component, the sample is drawn from that component. Glosses are provided at the relevant point in Table 4.1.

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$ej_{22/24/42/44}$ *(bréjrə, glejb, géjləm, bejm)*	$ɔj_{54}$ *(hɔjz)*
$ɛ_{21/25}$ *(éfšər, régə)*	$ɔ_{12/13/41}$ *(ləvɔ́nə, nɔ́mən, xɔ́xmə)*
aj_{34} *(lájlax)*	
a_{11} *(avádə)*	

Table 4.3 Stressed Vowel System of Mideastern Yiddish

ī$_{32/52}$ *(tʃīsə, bsílə)*	u$_{12/13}$ *(ləvúnə, númən)*
i$_{31/51}$ *(šíkər, gízmə)*	
ej$_{25}$ *(réjgə)*	ōu$_{54}$ *(hōus)*
	oj$_{42/44}$ *(gójləm, bojm)*
ε$_{21}$ *(éfšər)*	ɔ$_{41}$ *(xóxmə)*
	aj$_{22/24}$ *(brājrə, glajp)*
	ā$_{34}$ *(lálax)*
	a$_{11}$ *(avádə)*

Origins of the Vowel System of the Semitic Component in Yiddish

Sources of the Semitic Component's Vowel System

The vowel system of the Semitic component in Yiddish derives directly from a Northwest Semitic vowel system akin to that known as "Tiberian." Tiberian is a highly sophisticated system of diacritic marks (comprising vowel signs and stress marks), codified on the western shores of Lake Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee) in the late first millennium CE. Both the Tiberian system and its specific phonological version of the text of the Hebrew Bible have been standard for many centuries. There are two principal phonological interpretations of the system. One postulates seven vowel qualities (*i, e, ε, a, ɔ, o, u*). Another, formulated by the Kimchis, a prominent family of philologists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, posits a ten-vowel system comprising five tense vowels distinguished from five lax vowels (see M. Kimchi [1509–1518]: [11]; D. Kimchi 1545: 48). The graphemic system can be constructed to support either, but metrical evidence supports the Kimchis (see Ben-David 1958). The Semitic component in Yiddish unambiguously derives from a Kimchian-like system comprising ten protovowels. Arguments that have been put forward linking Yiddish to another system, the five-vowel Palestinian system, are unsustainable (see Katz 1977; 1979; §§10–14; 1982: §9; 1987a: 50–57).

In Table 4.5, Tiberian graphemes are confronted with their cognates in the Pan-Yiddish system, yielding the following basic correspondences. Yiddish samples are

Table 4.4. Stressed Vowel System of Northwestern Yiddish

ī$_{32}$ *(tʃīsə)*	ū$_{52}$ *(bəsúlə)*
i$_{31}$ *(šíkər)*	ŏ$_{52}$ *(gózmə)*
ē$_{25}$ *(régə)*	ō$_{12/13}$ *(ləvōnə, nómən)*
εj$_{22/34}$ *(bréjrə, léjliš)*	ɔu$_{42/54}$ *(góuləm, hɔus)*
ε$_{21}$ *(éfšər)*	ɔ$_{41}$ *(xóxmə)*
	ā$_{24/44}$ *(glāp, bām)*
	a$_{11}$ *(avádə)*

Table 4.5. Yiddish Cognates of Tiberian Vowels

Series 1:

Vowel 11

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian
a) closed syllabic pathaḥ:				
cad	cad	cad	"side (of family or dispute)"	צַד [ṣað]
b) originally closed syllabic pathaḥ:				
kálə	kálə	kálə	"bride"	כַּלָּה [kallɔ́]
c) ḥatef pathaḥ:				
xázər	xázər	xázər	"pig"	חֲזִיר [ḥăzī́r]
d) closed syllabic qameṣ:				
jam	jam	jam	"sea"	יָם [jɔ̄m]

Vowel 21

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian
a) closed syllabic segol:				
éstər	éstər	éstər	"Esther"	אֶסְתֵּר [ʔɛstḗr]
b) originally closed syllabic segol:				
hétər	hétər	hétər	"legal permission"	הֶתֵּר [hɛttḗr]
c) ḥatef segol:				
éməs	éməs	éməs	"true"	אֱמֶת [ʔĕméθ]
d) closed syllabic ṣere:				
šɛd	šɛd	šɛd	"ghost"	שֵׁד [šēð]

Vowel 31

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian
a) unstressed closed syllabic ḥireq:				
mídbər	mídbər	mídbər	"desert"	מִדְבָּר [miðbɔ̄́r]
b) originally unstressed closed syllabic ḥireq:				
xídəš	xídəš	xídəš	"surprise"	חִדּוּשׁ [ḥiddū́š]
c) stressed closed syllabic (long) ḥireq				
din	din	din	"law"	דִּין [dīn]

Vowel 41

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian
a) unstressed closed syllabic qameṣ (qameṣ qatan):				
kórbn̥	kórbn̥	kórbən	"sacrifice"	קָרְבָּן [qɔrbɔ̄́n]
b) closed syllabic ḥolem:				
sod	sɔt	sɔt	"secret"	סוֹד [sōð]

Vowel 51

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian
a) unstressed closed syllabic qibbuṣ:				
xúcpə	xícpə	xṏcpə	"chutzpah"	חֻצְפָּה [ḥuṣpɔ́]

b) originally unstressed closed syllabic qibbuṣ:

šútəf	šítəf	šṓtəf	"partner"	שֻׁתָּף [šuttṓf]

c) closed syllabic shureq:

zxus	zxis	zəxṓs	"merit"	זְכוּת [zəxū́θ]

Series 2:

Vowel 12

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss		Tiberian

a) open syllabic qameṣ:

lɔvónə	ləvū́nə	lɔvṓnə	"moon"	לְבָנָה [ləvɔnṓ]

Vowel 22

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian

a) open syllabic ṣere:

xéjlək	xájlək	xéjlək	"part"	חֵלֶק [ḥḗlɛq]

Vowel 32

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian

a) open syllabic ḥireq:

šxítə	šxī́tə	šəxī́tə	"slaughter"	שְׁחִיטָה [šəḥīṭṓ]

Vowel 42

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian

a) open syllabic ḥolem:

séjdəs	sɔ́jdəs	sṓudes	"secrets"	סוֹדוֹת [sōðṓθ]

Vowel 52

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian

a) open syllabic shureq:

búšə	bī́šə	bū́šə	"shame"	בּוּשָׁה [būšṓ]

Series 3:

Vowel 13b

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian

a) stressed open syllabic pathaḥ:

páxət	pā́xət	pā́xət	"fear"	פַּחַד [páḥað]

Vowel 25

NEY	MEY	NWY	gloss	Tiberian

a) stressed open syllabic segol:

régə	réjgə	rḗgə	"moment"	רֶגַע [réɣaʕ]

provided in Northeastern Yiddish (NEY) and Mideastern Yiddish (MEY), the two modern dialects that collectively provide a maximal set of oppositions, as well as Northwestern Yiddish (NWY), to represent the former dialects of the West. Transcriptions of Tiberian follow each example, using the following equivalents: qameṣ ⟨ ָ ⟩ = ɔ̄; ṣere ⟨ ֵ ⟩ = ē; long ḥireq ⟨(י) ִ ⟩ = ī; ḥolem ⟨וֹ⟩, ⟨ ֹ ⟩ = ō; (long) shureq ⟨וּ⟩ =

$\bar{u}$; pathaḥ ⟨ ̣⟩ = a; segol ⟨ ̤⟩ = ε; short ḥireq ⟨ ̣⟩ = i; unstressed closed syllabic qameṣ (qameṣ qatan) ⟨ ̣⟩ = $ɔ$; (short) qibbuṣ ⟨ ̣⟩ = u; ḥatef pathaḥ ⟨ ̣⟩ = $\breve{a}$; ḥatef segol ⟨ ̤⟩ = $\breve{\varepsilon}$; ḥatef qameṣ ⟨ ̤⟩ = $\breve{ɔ}$; mobile shewa ⟨ ̣⟩ = ∂. Glosses provide usage in Yiddish.

Primary and Secondary Fusion

"Primary Fusion" is the fusion between the Semitic and Germanic components of Yiddish immediately upon the settlement in Germanic-speaking lands of the Jews who were, retrospectively taken, the first Ashkenazim. This primary fusion encompassed the ten vowels of series 1 and 2. Each of these ten Yiddish protovowels came into existence by way of the fusion of a given Semitic with a given Germanic vowel into a unitary new Yiddish vowel.

"Secondary Fusion," on the other hand, refers to joinings of Germanic and Semitic some time during the history of Yiddish. Consonantal loss and its phonetic effects are a prime catalyst of secondary fusion. Loss of $ʔ$ (א) and $ʕ$ (ע), for example, gave rise to hiatus which was variously resolved (cf. below). The hiatus merged with vowel 34 in Eastern Yiddish, e.g., NEY *dájgə* "worry," *tájnə* "complaint" ‖ MEY *dā́gə, tā́nə* ‖ SEY *dágə, tánə* (cf. Tiberian דְּאָגָה *dəʔɔ́γɔ́*, טַעֲנָה *taʕănɔ́*). Thus, from the viewpoint of Eastern Yiddish alone (and some parts of Western Yiddish), Semitic component 34 could be added to vowel 34 (see Table 4.1, Series 4). In other parts of Western Yiddish, however, hiatus gives $\bar{a}$, part of the local realization of merged 24/44 (in Southern Western Yiddish 13/24/44).

Finally, there are isolated cases where a Semitic component form has "gone astray" into a usually strictly Germanic vowel, e.g., (some) Mideastern Yiddish *gō*, *gou* "gentile" with vowel 54, for expected *gɔj*, "Christian" (cf. Tiberian גּוֹי *gṓj*). The diphthong in the Hebrew-derived word fused in the dialect with the local realization of 54, apparently at a point in time when local 54 was /ɔj/. The conspicuous rarity of such exceptions serves to highlight the remarkable overall consistency in the Yiddish realizations through time and space, clearly pointing toward the derivation of Yiddish, and its Semitic component, from a protolanguage formed when primary fusion transpired (see Katz 1970; 1988c).

The Distinct Phonology of Ashkenazic

The Notion "Formal Ashkenazic"

Contrary to much popular belief, the sound patterns of Ashkenazic are not those of Yiddish. Every traditional Ashkenazi commands two distinct Semitic phonologies, one for the Semitic component in his or her Yiddish, the other for Ashkenazic. There is, moreover, a sociolinguistically determined continuum between the fixed pole of Yiddish, and the variable pole of Ashkenazic: from its most formal through a range of varieties ultimately approaching Yiddish. These varieties of Ashkenazic are discussed below. The forms cited for purposes of illustration will reflect "Formal Ashkenazic," the variety used, for instance, in reading from the Torah. This variety is chosen for examples cited because it provides an opposing conceptual pole to the

phonology of Yiddish, facilitating comparison between two maximally different objects. That is not to gainsay the far more widespread usage of "Popular Ashkenazic". In some instances, penultimately stressed Popular Ashkenazic variants are provided alongside their Formal counterparts.

Major Differences between Ashkenazic and Yiddish

Ashkenazic is phonologically distinguished from the Semitic component of Yiddish in two fundamental ways, one prehistoric (from the viewpoint of Ashkenaz), the other historic. Prehistorically, the Hebrew and Aramaic pronunciation that became Ashkenazic was never processed by an across-the-board rule of Closed Syllable Shortening (or "Laxing") which did process the Hebrew and Aramaic that became the Semitic component in Yiddish. In the Semitic component, Closed Syllable Shortening results in the systematic morphophonemic alternations 22 (proto *ē) ~ 21 (*ɛ); 12 (*ɔ̄) ~ 11 (*a); and 42 (*ō) ~ 41 (*ɔ). In each of the alternations the syllable boundary is the conditioning factor: closed syllables trigger Shortening. Hence the Tiberian pairs שֵׁדִים *šēðĩm* "ghosts," sg. שֵׁד *šēð*; כְּלָלִים *kəlɔlĩm* "rules," sg. כְּלָל *kəlɔl* "general rule," "generality"; סוֹפֵר *sōfér* "scribe," pl. סוֹפְרִים *sōfərĩm* "scribes," each of which has identical vowels, give Semitic component alternating pairs, e.g., Northeastern Yiddish *šéjdim* (22) ~ *šed* (21), *klɔ́lim* (12) ~ *klal* (11), *séjfər* (42) ~ *sófrim* (41); Mideastern Yiddish *šájdəm* (22) ~ *šed* (21), *klū́ləm* (12) ~ *klal* (11), *sójfər* (42) ~ *sófrəm* (41). Note that in cases such as classical סוֹפְרִים *sōfərĩm*, syllabification was obviously *sōf|rĩm*, with no mobile shewa, at the point in history when Shortening occurred.

Dialects preserving length distinctions among the high vowels also alternate 32 ~ 31 and 52 ~ 51, or preserve vestiges of these alternations, e.g., (some) Mideastern Yiddish *dĩnəm* (32) "laws" ~ *din* (31), *gífə* (52) "itself" ~ *gif* (51) "body." Cf. Tiberian cognates דִּינִים *dīnĩm*, s.g. דִּין *dīn*; גּוּפָא *gūfɔ̄* גּוּף *gūf*.

The Ashkenazic of each area, however, preserves long vowels in closed syllables as in open ones, except in the case of vowel 12, where Ashkenazic too shortens in closed syllables, not to 11 (*a*) as in Yiddish, but to 41 (*ɔ*). This Ashkenazic alternation is obscured in Northeastern Ashkenazic where 11 and 41 are merged (as unitary *ɔ*), but evident in other dialects. Classical אָדָם *ʔɔðɔ́m* "man," "human," for example, turns up as Mideastern and Southeastern Ashkenazic *udɔ́m* / *údɔm* and Western Ashkenazic *ōdɔ́m* / *ódɔm*. The two Mideastern Ashkenazic types of qameṣ are distinguished in modern Hasidic alphabet primers by explicit exercises (e.g., Birnhak 1976: 95; Fried 1983: 141–42; cf. below).

Table 4.6 contrasts Semitic component alternation with Ashkenazic nonalternation (differing alternation in the case of qameṣ) for the three pairs of vowels which consistently alternate in all varieties of Yiddish. The contrasts are illustrated in Northeastern, Mideastern, and Northwestern Ashkenazic. Stress is left unmarked in Ashkenazic forms to allow for both more formal variants (with ultimate stress) and less formal variants (with penultimate stress).

The second series of differences between the Semitic component in Yiddish and Ashkenazic results from the resistance of Formal Ashkenazic to some of the phonological changes that have transpired during the history of Yiddish, most promi-

Table 4.6. Alternation in Yiddish vs No (or other)
Alternation in Ashkenazic

Northeastern Yiddish	Northeastern Ashkenazic
šéjdim ~ šɛd	šejdim, šejd
klɔ́lim ~ klal	kəlɔlim, k(ə)lɔl
séjfər ~ sɔ́frim	sejfejr, sejf(ə)rim
Mideastern Yiddish	**Mideastern Ashkenazic**
šájdəm ~ šɛt	šajdim, šajd
klŭ́ləm ~ klal	kəlulim, k(ə)lɔl
sɔ́jfər ~ sɔ́frəm	sɔjfajr, sɔjf(ə)rim
Northwestern Yiddish	**Northwestern Ashkenazic**
šɛ́jdəm ~ šɛt	šejdīm, šejd
kəlṍləm ~ klal	kəlōlīm, k(ə)lɔl
sɔ́ufər ~ sɔ́frəm	sɔufajr, sɔuf(ə)rīm

nently Stress Shift (to penultimate accentuation) and Posttonic Reduction (reduction of full vowels to a unitary shewa-like vowel after word-stress). The contrast is illustrated in Table 4.7 for the same three dialects. The three sample items are, in Tiberian, גַּנָּב *gannɔ̄v* "thief," יִשְׂרָאֵל *jiśrɔ̄ʔél* "Israel," כַּלָּה *kallɔ̄* "bride."

Closed Syllable Shortening, Stress Shift, and Posttonic Reduction all conspire to make for numerous differences in the phonological representations of historically identical lexical items. The correspondences characterizing the Yiddish-Ashkenazic phonological relationship are illustrated in Table 4.8. Oppositions levelled in Yiddish by Closed Syllable Shortening are preserved in Ashkenazic. Stress Shift results in Tiberian pretonic vowels bearing word stress, while Posttonic Reduction

Table 4.7. Yiddish Stress Shift and Posttonic Reduction
vs Unshifted, Unreduced Ashkenazic

Northeastern Yiddish	Northeastern Ashkenazic
ganəv	ganɔ́v
jisrɔ́əl	jisrɔéjl
kálə	kalɔ́
Mideastern Yiddish	**Mideastern Ashkenazic**
gánəf	ganɔ́v
jisrŭ́əl	jisruájl
kálə	kalú
Northwestern Yiddish	**Northwestern Ashkenazic**
gánəf	ganɔ́v
jisrṍəl	jisrōéjl
kálə	kalṍ

Table 4.8. Yiddish-Ashkenazic Vowel Correspondences

Yiddish	Ashkenazic	Tiberian
11	**11, 41**	**Pathaḥ, closed syllabic qameṣ**
NEY: *sam* "poison," *jam* "ocean"	*sam, jɔm*	סַם *sam,* יָם *jɔm*
MEY: *sam, jam*	*sam, jɔm*	
NWY: *sam, jam*	*sam, jɔm*	
21	**21, 22**	**segol, ṣere**
NEY: *éfšər* "maybe," *gɛr* "proselyte"	*ɛfšɔr, gejr*	אֶפְשָׁר *ɛfšɔr,* גֵּר *gēr*
MEY: *éfšɔr, ger*	*ɛfšɔr, gajr*	
NWY: *éfšɔr, ger*	*ɛfšɔr, gejr*	
41	**41, 42**	**unstressed closed syllabic qameṣ, holem**
NEY: *kórbn̩* "sacrifice," *sɔf* "end"	*kɔrbɔn, sejf*	קָרְבָּן *qorbɔn,* סוֹף *sōf*
MEY: *kórbn̩, sɔf*	*kɔrbon, sɔjf*	
NWY: *kórbən, sɔf*	*kɔrbon, sɔuf*	
ə	**11**	**pathaḥ**
NEY: *kárpəs* "celery [at Passover]"	*karpas*	כַּרְפַּס *karpás*
MEY: *kárpəs*	*karpas*	
NWY: *kárpəs*	*karpas*	
ə	**21**	**segol**
NEY: *xéjšəx* "darkness"	*xejšɛx*	חֹשֶׁךְ *ḥṓšɛx*
MEY: *xɔ́jšəx*	*xɔjšɛx*	
NWY: *xóušəx*	*xoušɛx*	
ə	**31**	**ḥireq**
NEY: *jájən* "(ritual) wine"	*jájin*	יַיִן *jájin*
MEY: *jä́jən*	*jájin*	
NWY: *jä́jən*	*jájin*	
ə	**41**	**qameṣ**
NEY: *bátiən* "lazy fellow"	*batlɔn*	בַּטְלָן *baṭlɔ́n*
MEY: *bátlən*	*batlɔn*	
NWY: *bátlən*	*batlɔn*	
ə	**12**	**qameṣ**
NEY *halóxə* "Jewish law"	*halɔxɔ*	הֲלָכָה *halɔ̄xɔ́*
MEY *halúxə*	*halūxū*	
NWY *halṓxə*	*halōxō*	
ə	**22**	**ṣere**
NEY *téjvəs* "(month of) Teveth"	*tejvejs*	טֵבֵת *tēvḗθ*
MEY *tájvəs*	*tajvajs*	
NWY *téjvəs*	*tɛjvejs*	
ə	**32 (~ 31)**	**ḥireq**
NEY *jóxəd* "individual"	*jɔxid*	יָחִיד *jɔ̄ḥī́ð*
MEY *júxət*	*juxīd/juxid*	
NWY *jṓxet*	*jōxīd*	
ə	**42**	**holem**
NEY *xaléjməs* "dreams"	*xalejmejs*	חֲלוֹמוֹת *ḥălōmṓθ*
MEY *xalɔ́jməs* "dreams"	*xalɔjmɔjs*	
NWY *xalóuməs* "dreams"	*xaloumous*	
ə	**52**	**shureq**
NEY *xóšəv* "important"	*xošuv*	חָשׁוּב *ḥɔ̄šū́v*
MEY *xū́šəf* "important"	*xūšiv*	
NWY *xṓšəf* "important"	*xōšūv*	

renders stressed Tiberian vowels both stressless and reduced. Yiddish shewa is therefore cognate with a whole range of full vowels in the Ashkenazic of the same speakers.

In the sample items provided in Table 4.8, stress is left unmarked in Ashkenazic forms to allow for comparison between Yiddish and various styles of Ashkenazic (see below). Thus, for example, in the final contrast cited, Northeastern Yiddish *ə* in *xə́šəv* is cognate with Northeastern Ashkenazic *u* in *xəšúv*, whether it is *xəšúv* (Formal Ashkenazic) or *xə́šuv* (Popular Ashkenazic). Items penultimately stressed in Tiberian retain penultimate stress in all forms of Yiddish and Ashkenazic.

Resistance of Ashkenazic to Yiddish Sound Change

Sacred Language Resistance to Vernacular Sound Shift

Speakers would not, a priori, in any given generation, hasten to incorporate in their sacred languages the latest vogue in pronunciation to take hold in the vernacular. There is potential in the evidence of sacred languages for better understanding the nature of sound shift in general. Is there a difference in principle, or a predictable difference, between "imperceptible gradual shift" and "abrupt shift"? One might perhaps predict that "low-level phonetic shift" would go unnoticed and permeate the sacred language, while higher level phonological shift not entailing "phonetic difficulty" in undoing a fait accompli sound shift would be more "resistible" in the sacred language. Alternatively, one might postulate a sociolinguistic condition: perhaps as long as a sound shift remains a variable, the population will shun it in the sacred language, but once the old form disappears, it is "goodbye Charlie" in the sacred language every bit as much as in the vernacular.

As in political history, it is often the case in the social history of language that one cannot necessarily predict what will become an issue and what won't. At the end of the day, it may boil down to the linguistic background and views of those in positions of authority and influence who make a fuss of some incorporations of sound shift into the sacred language, and let others go unnoticed. Moreover, scholars of a Dialect A which did not undergo a certain shift would be predisposed to object to incorporation of a Dialect B sound shift in the sacred language used even by Dialect B speakers. Ashkenazic studies can provide a wealth of material for students of theoretical linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Final Devoicing

Modern Standard Yiddish, following Northeastern and Southeastern usage, does not have the rule of Final Devoicing, but Mideastern Yiddish does, and all of Western Yiddish had it. Many modern Mideastern Yiddish speakers who have Final Devoicing in their Yiddish do not have it in their Ashkenazic, producing such pairs as Mideastern Yiddish *kúrəf* "relative (n.)," *mín(h)ək* "custom," *dúvət* "David," contrasting with Mideastern Ashkenazic *kurójv / kúrəjv* "close"; *minhóg / mínhəg; duvíd / dúvid;* (cf. Tiberian קָרוֹב *qōrṓv*, מִנְהָג *minhṓγ*, דָּוִד *dōwī́ð*). Hebrew primers for Hasidic children have special exercises dedicated to the preservation of word final voicing distinctions (e.g. Fried 1983: 93–114).

The battle against Final Devoicing in Ashkenazic is at least seven hundred years old on the evidence of Yekusiel of Prague (whether he was indeed from Prague is not at all certain). Dated by Zunz (1845: 115) to the late thirteenth century and by Gumpertz (1957: 36–37) to the early part of that century, he is also known as Yah(a)bi (acronym of Yekusiel Hakoyheyn ben Yehudo). Amongst Ashkenazim he was known as Zalmen Hanakdn "Zalmen the Vocalizer [i.e., expert on the Hebrew vowel pointing system]" (see Elye Bokher 1538: 77). Defending the phonological integrity of the reading of sacred Hebrew and Aramaic texts, Zalmen Hanakdn stormed against the word-final collapse of [d] and [t], and of [v] and [f] in Hebrew reading amongst the Ashkenazim, citing such minimal pairs as אַב *ʔav* "father (construct)," אַף *ʔaf* "also." He complains of "people who ruin many words on account of the letters at their end, pronouncing them as other letters" (Yekusiel 1395: [189a]). (See Eldar in this volume.)

Fronting of the Old u Vowels

The Battle of Final Devoicing continues to be fought in the education of today's Mideastern Yiddish speaking Hasidic schoolchildren. Other battles were fought by individuals but resolved by language history centuries ago. It is often acquiescence, not resistance, that has prevailed. A case in point is application of the fronting and unrounding of all old *u* vowels to *i* in Southern Eastern Yiddish (comprising Mideastern and Southeastern Yiddish), whereby *ū* 〉 *ī* and *u* 〉 *i*, e.g., מְלוּכָה *məlūxɔ́* 〉 *m(ə)líxə* "kingdom," "country," חֻצְפָּה *ḥuspɔ́* 〉 *xícpə* "insolence," "chutzpah."

There is evidence that in older Yiddish, short *u* shifted before long *ū*; at first to *ü*, before its unrounding to *i* which led to merger with old *i*. A large body of evidence was assembled by Birnbaum (1934). Christian Hebraists from Reuchlin onward sometimes distinguish *ü* = qibbuṣ from *u* = shureq, notwithstanding their overall predilection for Sephardic variants (e.g., Reuchlin 1506: 12, 14, 16, 19, 20).

Shabse Soyfer of Pshemishl (Shabbethai Sofer of Przemysl, ca. 1565–1635), a grammarian and specialist on Hebrew pointing, writing of Ashkenazic on Mideastern Yiddish territory, warned against pronouncing *i* for *u* (see Reif 1979: 37, 94). He is echoed by Yekhiel-Mikhl Epshteyn (d. 1706), well-known German rabbi, educationalist, and popular kabbalist, who warned against pronouncing qibbuṣ as ḥireq (i.e., as *i*), insisting that it be pronounced as *shureq*, in other words, that the classical *u* quality be preserved (Yekhiel-Mikhl Epshteyn 1697: 49a–49b; 1714: 20b–21a). In Yekhiel-Mikhl's variety of Ashkenazic, historical short *u* had shifted to *i*, but historical long *ū* remained unshifted. It can be inferred that in seventeenth-century varieties of Ashkenazic known to these scholars, some people succeeded in blocking the application of vernacular sound shift to the sacred language.

Incidentally, these and other traditional Ashkenazic authors use the traditional Ashkenazic terms for these vowels: Ashkenazim's *shureq* = qibbuṣ 〈 ֻ 〉 and Ashkenazim's *melupum* (〈 Aramaic *məlō pūm* "full mouth") = shureq 〈 וּ〉. The pronunciation of the vowel names varies according to dialect, hence Northeastern *šúrək, məlúpm̩*, Mideastern *šírək, m(ə)lípm̩*, and so forth.

Among those on the other side of the debate was no less a figure than the Maharal of Prague (Yudo Leyb ben Betsalel ca. 1525–1609), known in folklore as the creator of the Golem. He went to great lengths to defend his *ü* pronunciation of

qibbuṣ. The following is an excerpt from a discourse in which he invokes arguments from (a) proposed interrelationships between the shapes of the vowel graphemes and their phonetic realizations, (b) kabbalistic interpretations of the graphic shapes and their relative positions, and (c) the force of tradition and his belief in its sanctity:

> I have seen people accuse the Ashkenazim of changing the vowel system—the vowels which are [symbolically] the People of Israel— . . . saying . . . that the shureq that is in the letter [ו] and the three dots [ֻ] have a single reading, for they have so read in the works of the grammarians. And in order that the rest of the people who are not experts in the grammar of the language not fall into error and think this thing to be true and bring about the ruin of the language, a matter of great importance to Torah sages, I will here demonstrate with reliable evidence that the reading of the Ashkenazim is a proper reading. In fact, you will not find a true way other than the reading of the Ashkenazim. . . .
>
> They [the grammarians] wrote that the qibbuṣ sefathayim (that we call shureq) [ֻ] and the shureq (that we call melupum) [ו] should be read identically, which the Ashkenazim do not do. . . . Now according to the reading of the Ashkenazim, all the vowel signs have shapes demonstrating their vowel quality. . . . [Here follows an explanation of the graphic shape of each vowel sign as an indication of the shape of the mouth when uttering the vowel it represents.] And so it is with the three dots . . . and the dot in the letter *vov*. . . . Here too we read each one according to what the vowel points show us: . . . the three dots under each other [apparently his *ü*] because we extend the voice of three dots fully and it is like the extending of the three continuous dots; . . . one dot in the letter [apparently his *u*], according to which the extending . . . is in the middle, not above nor below, but in the middle just as the dot is in the middle. But in qibbuṣ sefathayim the extending of the voice is downward like the three dots which are extended from the top downward. And it is not possible for there to be three extended dots without a middle one which is always the essence of the vowel.
>
> You may understand something great and wonderful, for no other vowel has what is in the shureq. For all the other vowels have their vowel point under the letter or upon the letter, but in the case of shureq a self-contained *vov* was established, and in it the shureq [ו]. This teaches us something vital on the seven vowels [תְּנוּעוֹת] of the pointing system, which reflects the movements [תְּנוּעוֹת] of the Seven Sides. For one vowel sign is always to one side: above, or below, or to the right, or to the left, or in front, or in back, or in the middle, and therefore they are seven vowels [here follows a discussion of the human qualities kabbalistically represented by each of the vowel signs and their positions] reflecting the Seven Voices at the Giving of the Torah, . . . and the Middle was set apart unto itself, . . . and because the shureq reflects the Middle, it was given a vov unto itself. . . . From this alone you will understand the differentiation that exists between the shureq and the three dots [נְקוּדוֹת = "dots," "points," "the traditional vowel points"]: that the shureq reflects the middle that is set apart unto itself, and it is the middle point that has no width or length at all, only a single point. Therefore the shureq was given one dot in a letter unto itself, reflecting the Middle which is a single point unto itself. But the three dots comprising the qibbuṣ sefathayim reflect the Middle that is not a point alone, as it is impossible to create a middle without three, for the one that is between the other two is the middle. And the explanation is, that when three dots are placed in such a shape, extended diagonally as such ֻ , the middle dot has the judgment of the Middle that does not go out of the realm of balance and justice. For the upper one tends to the right and the

lower to the left and the middle one tends neither to right nor left, but stands in the middle and in the justice of the middle judgment, and is thereby set apart unto itself as is the case with every middle, but it is not totally set apart as is the dot in the vov [֗].... Qibbuṣ sefathayim refects the movements [/vowels] of the Middle, but does not reflect the Middle that is set apart unto itself, for that which is set apart unto itself has greater virtue. But the qibbuṣ sefathayim reflects the Middle that is not fully distinguished, and therefore no instance of these three dots has a vowel [letter] unto itself.... [Arguments are presented in favour of the Ashkenazic pronunciation of shewa as *ə*, and against the *a* realization preferred by some Sephardi grammarians].

We have not come here to argue other than to maintain the reading that is in our hands from our forefathers of old, to not change, God forbid, anything in it, because of that which is found in the books of the later Sephardi grammarians, who are themselves not of one opinion. It is therefore incumbent upon us to stand for our tradition and our custom of old. For even if a wise man wrote in his work certain things, they did not come down to him by tradition, but according to his hypothesis (and Ibn Ezra [b. Tudela, Spain 1089, d. 1164] himself noted that these things did not come down to him via tradition), and how are his views contradicted by the custom in our hands and the tradition unto us from our forefathers. All the more so bearing in mind that we have explained that our custom has the appearance of wisdom and good taste and knowledge, and if we err, will not our forefathers intercede in our favour? And He, blessed be He, will place His Torah in our hearts to bestow upon us from His wisdom, Amen.

(Maharal of Prague 1599: 58b–59b)

The Maharal's defense of Ashkenazic *ü*ₒᵢᵦᵦᵤₛ was echoed by his contemporary, the talmudic luminary Mordekhay Yafe (Mordechai Jaffe), known as *der Levush* "the Levush" (ca. 1535–1612), who was, incidentally, a teacher of Shabse Soyfer (who, as noted above, took the opposite theoretical viewpoint, albeit on the *i* rather than the *ü* realization of qibbuṣ). The Levush starts off with the force of tradition, and proceeds to a structural linguistic argument drawing analogies from the qameṣ (*ɔ*) vs. pathaḥ (*a*) and ṣere (historically *ē*) vs. segol (*ε*) oppositions which are distinguished qualitatively in Ashkenazic (e.g., Northeastern Mideastern *ɔ* vs. *a*, *ej* vs. *ε*; Mideastern *u/ɔ* vs. *a*, *aj* vs. *ε*, Western *ō/ɔ* vs. *a*, *ej* vs. *ε*). By way of analogy, he infers that the shureq vs. qibbuṣ opposition must also be qualitative, presumably shureq = *u* (or *ū*) vs. qibbuṣ = *ü*. He invokes the homiletic argument that the sacred and complete Torah could not be bereft of any vowel, and proceeds to offer phonological arguments derived from the graphemes of Tiberian Hebrew:

For I have seen recently that some people who consider themselves wise in their own eyes in the science of grammar have come forward to the point of leading astray some students, who err following them, and have made themselves like remnants of the generation of the Tower of Babel whose language was confounded, and they have invented and thought up a new language, and have gotten themselves and their students used to reading our vowel shureq [= qibbuṣ, ֻ, apparently his *ü*] exactly as we read the vowel melupum [= shureq, �, apparently his *ū/u*], and they say that there is no difference between the vowel shureq and the vowel melupum except for lengthening of the breath of the vowel: for the shureq short, and for melupum long, as in the case of our correct [pronunciation of the] vowel ḥireq without yud [ ] and ḥireq with yud [ʾ] which we correctly differentiate by shortening the breath for the one, and lengthening it for the other. And maybe they were confused because Rashi calls our

melupum "qibbuṣ sefathayim," and some grammarians call the shureq "qibbuṣ sefa-
thayim," and therefore thought that they [ֻ and ֻ] are one vowel.

I have therefore decided to write somewhat at length to demonstrate the nonsense
and the error of the people I referred to, and [to demonstrate] that we should not
change the vowel which we have received from our forefathers on the grounds of
"Forsake not the teaching of thy mother" [Prov. 1:8, 6:20].

And if they have fallen into this error because all agree that our shureq [= qibbuṣ,
ֻ] is [phonologically] the short counterpart of the melupum [= shureq, וּ], which is a
long vowel (like ḥireq without yud and ḥireq with yud, the one being called short, the
other long, but alike in their vowel [quality], only one is short and one long; they
therefore want to draw an analogy to the vowels shureq and melupum)—if this is
their argument, they have no case, for if so, what will they do with pathaḥ and qameṣ,
with segol and ṣere, being that the pathaḥ is [phonologically] the short counterpart
of the qameṣ, and the segol is [phonologically] the short counterpart of the ṣere, even
though their vowel [quality] does not match that of their long-vowel counterpart. So
why should we not say this also in the case of shureq and melupum?

Moreover, I propose that from the viewpoint of common sense and a priori logic
it is not possible for things to be so, for if, according to their view, the vowel of the
melupum and the shureq are identical and there is no difference between them other
than in the length of the breath, if that were the case, one vowel that is within the
power of human speech would be missing in the vowel system of the Torah, and that
is the vowel which we read for our shureq [presumably *ü*]. Heaven forfend that the
complete Torah which was given to us to complete within ourselves wholeness in all
human knowledge, physical and logical, should lack a vowel that is present and very
common in the pronunciation of humans, and that there should not be found one
word to be read with that vowel! That is nothing but nonsense and foolishness, for
of course all the vowels that a human can with his palate emit from his lips in his
pronunciation are included, and especially this vowel, with which we pronounce our
shureq, which is common among all and extremely frequent in the pronunciation of
most speakers, and how could it be lacking, God forbid, in the vowels of the Torah.

One cannot claim an inconsistency in my view on the grounds that if I am right
then *their* [i.e., the grammarians' Sephardi] pronunciation of shureq would be miss-
ing from the Torah, for you would be pointing out an inconsistency in your own
position, bearing in mind that the vowels qameṣ and ṣere are called "great vowels"
[תְּנוּעוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת], which are long in the breath. Why were signs not also devised for
when one wishes to shorten the breath, as was done in the case of ḥireq without yud
and ḥireq with yud? To the contrary, you must concede that the tradition came down
to the Pointers [i.e., the Masoretes] who were masters of pure language, that in the
case of the "great vowels" even if one wants to shorten them one cannot by nature
do so to any great extent, to the point that whoever would try to shorten them greatly
would have to lengthen them somewhat to spirantize a following *begedkefet* conso-
nant [*b, g, d, k, p, t* spirantize to *v, ɣ, ð, x, f, θ* in Hebrew and Aramaic via postvocalic
spirantization; in Tiberian, short unstressed vowels occur in closed syllables, hence
after a short vowel, *begedkefet* geminate stops occur (spirants do not geminate). Cf.,
e.g, *jab|bɔ̄ššɔ̄* "dry land" vs. *jɔ̄|vḗš* "dry." The Levush is arguing that qameṣ and ṣere
are *phonologically* long/tense vowels that cannot be "shortened" to make a short
vowel]. Moreover, a shewa that follows [qameṣ or ṣere] is mobile shewa [because a
long unstressed vowel always occurs in an open syllable; hence if the next vowel is
shewa, it is a mobile shewa initiating the syllable thereafter; thus, e.g., ⟨כָּתְבוּ⟩ is
kɔ̄|θə|vū̆]. Moreover, even there we find that special signs were made [which bear
upon vowel length], the *mappíq,* and the *mafsíq* and the *dehíq* and *ṣōē̄ mĕrahíq.*

This being the case, we may here too also in the case of melupum [= shureq: וּ] discern the reason why there is no diacritic to incite shortening of the vowel, because it is like the qameṣ and the ṣere, and unlike the vowel ḥireq which by nature can be shortened greatly, in view of which a special mark was designed to differentiate the short from the long, i.e., the yud [י]. This seems to me obviously to refute the views of those who are in error, and [confirm] that we should introduce no change in the vowel shureq [= qibbuṣ: ֻ]. And, forsake not the teaching of thy mother.

(Levush 1603: 49b)

It is significant that both the Maharal and the Levush offer intellectual defenses for the retention of *ü* in Ashkenazic. It is equally significant that neither relies on this defense alone. Both bring to bear the argument of tradition. The polemic tone is indicative of the passions raised by disputes on the pronunciation of Ashkenazic. Shabse Soyfer and Yekhiel-Mikhl Epshteyn have as their ideal a "correct" Ashkenazic which preserves the historical [u] quality of qibbuṣ and must not be overrun by the *u* ⟩ *ü*, or *u* ⟩ *i* shift common to some Yiddish dialects.

Looking back, it is obvious that the Maharal's and the Levush's views were in concord with the course of history. Modern Mideastern and Southeastern Ashkenazic users have *i* quality realizations in regard to both qibbuṣ *and* shureq. Older *ü* (from original *u*) was unrounded to *i*. It was never unfronted back to *u*. To the contrary, it dragged long *ū*, which was fronted to **ü*, then to *ī*. The two ensuing *i* vowels are no longer phonemically opposed in many forms of Mideastern and Southeastern Ashkenazic (see below).

There are, however, attestations of "dipping into history" or dipping into other dialects in certain circumstances, and preserving an *u* quality. One informant, from a village in Romania (Southeastern Yiddish territory), recalls that shureq was consistently *i* in his Ashkenazic, with the exception of the word רוּחַ *rúah* which was read *rúax* in the Bible to avoid the sacrilege of uttering *ríax* in that hallowed context. In the coterritorial Yiddish, *ríax* is a curse word, e.g., *a ríax in zajn tátṇ* "Damn his father" = "Damn him."

In fact, this *i* vowel, like the other vowels of Mideastern Ashkenazic, is for its users a symbol of authenticity and religiosity which proudly sets them aside from modernized and Northeasternized forms of Ashkenazic as well as from Israeli Hebrew. And thus it transpires, as so often in the history of language and culture, that a feature that once symbolized radical "incorrect" usage becomes the banner of "classic" language for a future generation.

One large question looms here for Western Yiddish studies. In view of all of Birnbaum's (1934) philological evidence pointing to *ü*qibbuṣ in older Western Yiddish, how is it that attestations from the eighteenth century onward generally have *u* in the West? Could it be that Ashkenazic Resistance prevailed in the West? This calls for a monograph.

Ashkenazic Sound Shift Lag

Looking at twentieth-century relationships between Yiddish and Ashkenazic recoverable from native informants, it is obvious that those dialectal features of Yiddish that are most stigmatized are most likely to be kept out of Ashkenazic. One

case in point is the variety of Southeastern Yiddish popularly known as *tɔ́tə-mɔ́mə lúšņ̩*, after its rendition of standard *tátə* "father" and *mámə* "mother." In linguistic terms, historical short *a* (vowel 11) merged with historical $ɔ_{41}$ in most environments (see Veynger 1929: 133–35; U. Weinreich 1958: 225, 236). Southeasterners often report that the historical *a* quality was however retained in Ashkenazic, hence Southeastern Ashkenazic *šabɔ́s / šábɔs* "Sabbath" vs. Southeastern Yiddish *šɔ́bəs* (cf. Tiberian שַׁבָּת *šabbɔ̄́θ*).

There are other examples of "lag in progress" in the attempts of speakers to override their sound shifts. In *sábəsdikər lɔ́sņ̩*, a folkloristic name for Northeastern Yiddish, *s* is merged with *š*, and *c* (*tˢ*) with *č* (see U. Weinreich 1952). There is evidence from some informants that sibilant merger was less prevalent in Ashkenazic than in Yiddish. Altbauer (1968: 455) notes that some Northeastern Ashkenazic users, who have $ej_{22/24/42/44}$ in their Yiddish, preserve $ɔj_{42}$ in their rendition of ḥolem, thereby undoing the Northeastern merger of 42 and 22 in the sacred language (e.g., some Northeastern Yiddish *tējrə* "Torah" vs. Ashkenazic *tɔjrɔ́ / tɔ́jrɔ,* cf. תּוֹרָה *tōrɔ̄́*). Bin-Nun (1973: 300) describes a variety of Siebenbürgen that has *ej* for ṣere in Ashkenazic, contrasting with the *aj* of the same speakers in Yiddish.

In each instance, the "stigmatized" feature is one rejected by Modern Standard Yiddish. Ashkenazic thereby provides valuable evidence for the societal forces at work in the rise of Standard Yiddish, before and wholly outside the compass of the secular Yiddish scholars who formalized the notion and the features of the standard language (cf. Kerler 1988). This is one of many potential services of Ashkenazic studies to Yiddish linguistics and to sociolinguistics generally.

It is possible, with caution, to extrapolate Ashkenazic lag into situations in the past where documentation may not be readily available. For example, in Northern Transitional Yiddish and in parts of northern Western Yiddish, initial *s*, for historical samekh (ס) and śin (שׂ), was affricatized to *c* (*tˢ*), merging with the reflex of ṣade (tsadik), historical *ṣ* (צ), giving e.g., Northern Transitional *cájfər* "(sacred) book" ⟨ Tiberian סֵפֶר *séfer* (see Friedrich 1784: 39; Cohen 1923: 59; Katz 1988a: 50–51). Perhaps some speakers in the area would have had *sájfɛr* in their Ashkenazic contrasting with the *cájfər* of their Yiddish.

Lexicalized Variants of Yiddish-Ashkenazic Cognates

Phonologically differentiated reflexes of the same Hebrew or Aramaic etymon have often undergone centuries of divergent semantic development in Yiddish, contrasting with older meanings surviving in Ashkenazic. This results in such doublets as e.g., Northeastern Yiddish *baləbɔ́s* "boss," vs. Ashkenazic *baal habájis* "head of the household" (⟨ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת *báʕal habbájiθ*); *nəkéjvə* "woman of loose morals" vs. Ashkenazic *nəkejvó / nəkéjvɔ* "female," "feminine gender" (⟨ נְקֵבָה *nəqēvɔ̄́*); *ɔs* "letter [of the alphabet]" vs. *ejs* "heavenly omen" (⟨ אוֹת *ʔōθ*); *vajzɔ́sə* "fool" vs. *vajzɔsɔ́ / vajzɔ́sɔ* "name of one of Haman's ten sons" (⟨ וַיְזָתָא *wajzɔ̄́θɔ*); *xadgádjə* "jail [humorous]" vs. *xad gadjɔ́, xad gádjɔ* "name of the Passover song *Chad gadyo*" (⟨ חַד גַּדְיָא *haɗ gaɗjɔ̄́* "one kid"); *xɔ́xmə* "sense of the joke" or "stupid idea passed off as a wise one" vs. *xɔxmɔ́ / xɔ́xmɔ* "wisdom" (⟨ חָכְמָה *hɔxmɔ̄́*). In each pair cited, note that Yiddish forms can be used for either the "Yiddish" or the "Ashkenazic"

meaning, while Ashkenazic forms are strictly limited to the Ashkenazic meaning—itself usually identical with the classic Hebrew or Aramaic gloss.

Ashkenazic as a Self-Contained Structure

Synchronic Structure

For the foregoing discussion, Ashkenazic has been viewed through the eyes of the Semitic Component in Yiddish, on the grounds of the primacy of native spoken language in phonological analysis. It is, however, equally important to view Ashkenazic as a synchronic linguistic structure capable of description, analysis, and reconstruction. Everybody learning Ashkenazic acquires the pronunciation via the study of the Tiberian system of vowel diacritics. These diacritics (called *nɔkúdɔs* in Yiddish) are before the eyes of Ashkenazic users for an important part of their use of Ashkenazic (all of it for speakers whose Ashkenazic is limited to prayer and Pentateuch study, both of which entail "pointed texts," i.e., texts with the vowel diacritics included). A synchronic description of Ashkenazic may therefore include reference to the diacritics. The vowel system of each dialect of Ashkenazic may conveniently be mapped out using the Pan-Yiddish vowel correspondence (see above).

The stressed vowel system of present day Northeastern Ashkenazic comprises six phonemes, as illustrated in Table 4.9.

By contrast, the vowel system of Mideastern Ashkenazic, illustrated in Table 4.10, preserves more distinctions than any other modern form of Hebrew (Ashkenazic or non-Ashkenazic). It does not however preserve as many as the Semitic component of Mideastern Yiddish; in the Semitic component, the long vs. short reflexes of ḥireq and shureq are determined by Tiberian phonology. In many forms of Mideastern Ashkenazic the length differentiation seems on the whole to have been reinterpreted allophonically (long in stressed open syllables, short elsewhere), but this point requires further fieldwork. It is almost certain that *ej* and *ɛ* are also complementary and therefore nonphonemic in Formal Ashkenazic. In popular varieties, application of posttonic reduction causes them to appear in the same environment (stressed open syllable), rendering them clearly phonemic, e.g., *xéjsɛd* "kindness" vs. *émɛs* "truth"; cf. formal *xéjsɛd, emés* (Tiberian חֶסֶד *ḥéseð*, אֱמֶת *ʔĕméθ;* cf. below). The theoretical question arises however of whether a nonvernacular language can have "allophones" that are unquestionably "phonemes" in the native language of its users. Are they real or the results of overstructuralism by the linguist? This question, posed by Ashkenazic studies, merits further research.

Table 4.9. The Vowel System of Northeastern Ashkenazic

i ḥireq	u shureq/qibbuṣ
ej ṣere/ḥolem	
ɛ segol/hatef segol	ɔ qameṣ/ḥatef
	qameṣ
a pathaḥ/hatef pathaḥ	

Table 4.10. The Vowel System of Mideastern Ashkenazic

$\bar{\imath}$_hireq/shureq/ in stressed open syllables	$\bar{u}\ (\sim u)$_qameṣ in open syllables
i_hireq/shureq/qibbuṣ in closed syllables, unstressed open syllables	
ej_segol in stressed open syllables	ɔj_holem
ɛ_segol in closed syllables/ḥatef segol	ɔ_qameṣ in closed syllables/ before hey with mappiq/before yud; ḥatef qameṣ
	aj_ṣere
	a_pathaḥ/ḥatef pathaḥ

Ashkenazic Hebrew Education in Late Twentieth-Century Primary Schools

Children in Hasidic schools rooted in southern (i.e., non-Lithuanian) East European traditions around the world generally learn the Mideastern Ashkenazic system from the outset. In some schools, however, all segols are rendered ɛ when studying the vowel points, and the *ej* realization in stressed open syllables is "picked up" later in primary education, resulting in a child learning e.g., *emés* and *xésɛd,* modified at a later age to *emés* vs. *xéjsɛd.* Whether this is a symptom of declining use of *ej* for stressed open-syllabic segol in Hasidic communities needs to be researched. The two Mideastern Ashkenazic types of qameṣ (*ū / u* in open syllables, ɔ in closed syllables) are however distinguished in alphabet primers by explicit exercises (e.g., Birnhak 1976: 95; Fried 1983: 141–42).

Historical Phonology of Ashkenazic

Overview

The historical phonology of Ashkenazic is, in short, one of a Tiberian-like system that has undergone phonetic and phonological development over a millennium of European history. Its phonetic history generally follows closely upon that of coterritorial Yiddish dialects, but its phonological history is characterized by a substantial measure of independence resulting both from generation-to-generation language transmission (nonspoken living languages are transmitted this way too) and from the phonologically retentive power of the hallowed system of vocalization signs.

Consonantism

The consonantism of Ashkenazic is a much leaner system than its Tiberian antecedent. Consonants "not supported" by the indigenous central European phonetic scene, ʔ ⟨א⟩, ʕ ⟨ע⟩, w′ ⟨ו⟩, ḥ ⟨ח⟩, ṭ ⟨ט⟩, q ⟨ק⟩, and ṣ ⟨צ⟩, disappeared. Likewise, of the "begedkefet" spirants, arising from Northwest Semitic postvocalic spirantization (*b ⟩ v, g ⟩ γ, d ⟩ ð, k ⟩ x, p ⟩ f, t ⟩ θ*), those without European counterparts—

γ, ð, and θ—also disappeared. Phonetic "disappearance" can have diverse structural implications. The following listing covers (a) loss, (b) merger, and (c) phonetic shift retaining phonological distinctiveness. Within each category, the order follows the Jewish alphabet.

(a) Loss

א [ʔ] ⟩ zero, e.g., אָמֵן *ʔɔmén* "amen" ⟩ Northeastern Ashkenazic (NEA) *ɔméjn*, Mideastern Ashkenazic (MEA) *umájn*, Western Ashkenazic (WA) *ōméjn*.

Functionally consonantal *ʔ* was lost in all positions although [ʔ] does occur phonetically in various environments in Yiddish dialects. Traces of historical *ʔ* may be recovered from Yiddish (and cautiously extrapolated, with allowance for time lag, to Ashkenazic). Cf. e.g., Northeastern Yiddish *sónim* "enemies" ~ sg. *séjnə*, Mideastern *sónəm* ~ *sójnə*. The vocalic alternations in all dialects result from the application of Closed Syllable Shortening, demonstrating that aleph was consonantal (at the pre-Ashkenazic time of Shortening), i.e., **sōn|ʔīm* ⟩ **sɔn|ʔīm* via shortening (hypothetical *sōn|nīm* would not have processed by Shortening). On the bearing of this evidence on mobile shewa, see below.

ע [ʕ] ⟩ zero, e.g., עוֹלָם *ʕōlɔ́m* "world" ⟩ NEA *ejlɔ́m / éjlɔm*, MEA *ɔjlɔ́m / ójlɔm*, WA *ōlɔ́m / ólɔm*.

Ayin too has left recoverable traces in Yiddish, which may bear on its presence in early Ashkenazic. Closed Syllable Shortening has processed the Biblical נָע וָנָד *nɔ́ʕ wɔnɔ́ð* "a fugitive and a wanderer" (Gen. 4:12, 14), giving Yiddish *na vənád (zajn)* "wander without a home," where the *a* in *na* (⟨ נָע *nɔ́ʕ*) betrays an erstwhile closed syllable (cf. vowel-final monosyllables, e.g., בָּא *bɔ́* "comes" ⟩ NEA *bɔ*, MEA *bu*, WA *bō* etc; syllable-final ⟨ א ⟩ and ⟨ ה ⟩ are not consonantal in Tiberian).

There are a number of issues on which the fates of *ʔ* and *ʕ* are best treated together. Loss of both resulted in sequences of two successive vowels. In Yiddish, the ensuing hiatus fused with various Germanic component vowels (see above, where this instance is cited to illustrate secondary fusion): with vowel 34 in Eastern Yiddish (hence דְּאָגָה *dəʔɔ́γɔ́* ⟩ Northeastern Yiddish *dájgə* "worry," Mideastern *dãgə*). In some forms of Western Yiddish, merger occurred with Western Yiddish *ā₂₄*, the local realization of 24/44 or 13/24/44 (see Guggenheim-Grünberg 1973: 40–43).

In Northeastern Yiddish, hiatus was resolved by yotization, e.g., *švújəs* "(the holiday) Shavuoth" ⟨ שָׁבוּעוֹת *šɔ̄vūʕóθ*. These and other Yiddish reactions to hiatus are often absent in Ashkenazic where the two ensuing vowels in succession are simply read in sequence, e.g., Northeastern Ashkenazic *dəɔgɔ́ / dəɔ́gɔ, šɔvuéjs / šɔvúejs*.

Yekusiel of Prague warns against such pronunciations as וָמַר *wɔ̄már* "and bitter" for וְאָמַר *wəʔɔ̄már* "and he said," quipping that such errors are רע ומר בעיני *raʕ wɔ̄már bəʕéjnáj* "evil and bitter in my eyes" (Yekusiel 1395: [186b]). He also bemoans failure to distinguish עוֹר *ʕōr* "hide (n.)" from אוֹר *ʔōr* "light" (ibid. [189b]).

It is evident from Yekusiel's samples that by the thirteenth century the old aleph
(ʔ) vs. ayin (ʕ) distinction, and the aleph vs. zero and ayin vs. zero distinctions, were
all in trouble.

(b) Merger with European-Compatible Consonants

ג [γ] merged with ג [g], e.g., עֵגֶל ʕẽγɛl "calf" ⟩ NEA éjgɛl, MEA ájgɛl, WA éjgɛl.

ד [ð], merged with ד [d], e.g., עוֹד ʕôð "yet" "more" ⟩ NEA ejd, MEA ɔjd, WA ɔud.
In names of letters of the Jewish alphabet there is evidence of *s* reflexes in West-
ern Yiddish. Bibliophilus (1742: 3) offers the variant spellings ⟨Jud⟩ and ⟨Jus⟩ for
י, ⟨Lamed⟩ and ⟨Lames⟩ for ל. Cf. classical יוד, למד. These forms are also attested
in a twentieth-century variety of German in the village of Schopfloch which bor-
rows heavily from Western Yiddish (see Philipp 1983: 43; Shy 1990: 346).

ו [w] merged with ב [v], e.g., וַיִּקְרָא *wajjiqrɔ́* "and he called" ⟩ NEA *vajikrɔ́ / vajíkrɔ*,
MEA *vajikrú / vajíkru*, WA *vajikrɔ́ / vajíkrō*.
Yekusiel mourns the collapse of historical אָבִיו *ʔɔ́víw* "his father" with אָבִיב
ʔɔ́vív "Spring" (Yekusiel 1395: 189a).

ח [h] merged with כ [x], e.g., חָכָם *hɔxɔ́m* "wise man" ⟩ NEA *xɔxɔ́m / xɔ́xɔm*, MEA
xuxɔ́m / xúxɔm, WA *xōxɔ́m / xɔ́xɔm*.
In the medieval Rhineland dialects of the "Children of hes," *h* merged with ה
[h] rather than with כ [x] (see M. Weinreich 1958; Katz 1987a: 57; 1988a: 39–42;
1990b; 1991; and below).

ט [t] merged with [t], e.g., טַל *ṭal* "dew" ⟩ Pan-Ashkenazic *tal*.
Yekusiel decries merger of שִׁבְתּוֹ *šivtó* "his sojourn" and שִׁבְטוֹ *šivṭó* "his staff,"
"his tribe" (Yekusiel 1395: 189b).

ק [q] merged with כ [k], e.g., קָדוֹשׁ *qɔðṓš* "sacred" ⟩ NEA *kɔdéjš / kɔ́dejš*, MEA
kudɔ́jš / kúdɔjš, WA *kōdɔ́uš / kɔ́dɔuš*.
Yekusiel cites merger of קַלָּה *qallɔ́* "easy (fem.)" with כַּלָּה *kallɔ́* "bride" (1395:
189b) as one of the evils resulting from failure to distinguish the two consonants.

ת [θ] merged with ס [s] (שׂ [ś] was itself almost certainly merged with [s] long before
the rise of Ashkenaz), e.g., אֵת *ʔɛθ* "[particle preceding accusative definite noun]" ⟩
Pan-Ashkenazic *ɛs*.
In the name of the fourth letter of the Jewish alphabet, דלת, final ת appears as
plosive *t* (itself usually the reflex of ת [t] or ט [t]), or as [d], hence *dálət* or *dáləd* in
modern Ashkenazic. There is however evidence of older Western Yiddish *s*. Biblio-
philus (1742: 3) has ⟨Dalet⟩ alongside ⟨Dales⟩.

(c) Phonemic Preservation Via Phonetic Shift

צ [ṣ] was affricated to [c] ([tˢ]), leaving a distinct phoneme. Probably during the pri-
mary fusion characterizing the birth of Yiddish and Ashkenazic, the Semitic *ṣ* fused
with medieval German ⟨tz⟩, producing the unitary Yiddish /c/ phoneme which

occurs in both components, producing such homonyms as *kac* = "cat" (cf. Middle High German *katze*) and "Katz" (cf. Hebrew ק״ץ).

Vowel System

The vowel system of Ashkenazic derives straightforwardly from a system closely resembling a version of Tiberian vocalism. There are, however, differences: (1) in Proto-Ashkenazic, the three ḥatef or ultrashort vowels (ֱ [ɛ̆], ֲ [ă], ֳ [ɔ̆]) were not distinguished from their normal-length counterparts (ֶ [ɛ], ַ [a], unstressed closed-syllabic ָ [ɔ]). Secondly, the variant imported to Ashkenaz apparently had short ɔ (corresponding with Yiddish vowel 41) for qameṣ in *all* closed syllables (not only in unstressed closed syllables, as per classical Hebrew grammar). The descriptive environment of that shortening rule includes as consonants [j] and ה with *mappiq* (ה), which traditional Hebrew grammarians consider to mark the exceptional con-sonantality of word-final ה. It is morphologized in third-person possessives ending in ה. The Proto-Ashkenazic qameṣ shortening apparently inherited from the Near East was therefore of the type qameṣ → [− long] / __C| (where | = syllable bound-ary). The phonology of the language obviously treated /j/ and /H/ (where H = ה) as consonantal.

The effects of this pre-Ashkenazic shortening are evident in modern dialects of Ashkenazic which distinguish vowel 12 (Proto-Ashkenazic *ɔ̄, corresponding with qameṣ) from 41 (Proto-Ashkenazic *ɔ, corresponding with stressed open-syllabic qameṣ and ḥatef qameṣ). Thus, for example, in modern Mideastern Ashkenazic, where open-syllabic qameṣ is realized as *u* (often [ū] but there is no phonemic length opposition for this vowel, hence the unitary transcription *u*), closed-syllabic qameṣ and qameṣ before *j* and mappiq are realized as ɔ, e.g., *purɔ́n* "(Wilderness of) Paran" ⟨ פָּארָן; *bizɔjɔ́jn* "disgrace" ⟨ בִּזָּיוֹן *bizzɔjɔ̃n*; *īšɔ́* "her husband" ⟨ אִישָׁה *ʔīšɔH* (cf. *išū́* "woman" ⟨ אִשָׁה *ʔiššɔ́*). Mappiq forms often retain ultimate stress even in Popular Ashkenazic, accentuating such contrasts as *îšu* "woman" vs. *íšɔ́* "her husband."

The Proto-Ashkenazic Vowel System

The proposed system of Proto-Ashkenazic vocalism is illustrated in Table 4.11. Yiddish vowel numbers are added to denote the fusion with vernacular vowels which took place at the theoretical linguistic starting point of Ashkenaz.

Table 4.11. Proto-Ashkenazic Vocalism

*ī*long ḥireq / 32	*ū*(long) shureq / 52
*i*short ḥireq / 31	*u*(short) qibbuṣ / 51
*ē*ṣere / 22	*ō*ḥolem / 42
*ɛ*segol, ḥatef segol / 21	*ɔ̄*open syllabic qameṣ / 12
	*ɔ*closed syllabic qameṣ, ḥatef qameṣ / 41
*a*pathaḥ, ḥatef pathaḥ / 11	

Summary of Sound Changes

(1) Assorted Consonantal Shifts (See Above)

Loss of *ʔ* and *ʕ*; Merger of *γ* with *g*; *ð* with *d*; *w* with *v*; *ḥ* with *x*; *ṭ* with *t*; *q* with *k*; *θ* with *s*; shift of *ṣ* to *c* (*tˢ*).

(2) Lengthening

Lengthening, inspired by the analogous German development, processed short vowels in stressed open syllables at an early point in the history of Ashkenaz. Only two Tiberian vowels met the structural description of the rule: pathaḥ and segol in stressed open syllables, hence *xésɛd ⟩ *xḗsɛd "kindness, mercy," páxad ⟩ *páxad "fear." In terms of Pan-Yiddish vocalism, proto 21 (*ɛ, e.g., *xésɛd, *ɛmés "truth") split into unlengthened 21 (*ɛmés) vs. lengthened 25 (*xḗsɛd). Proto 11 (*a, e.g., xajjɔ́ "animal," páxað) split into unlengthened 11 (*xajjɔ́) vs. lengthened 13 (*páxað) with dialectological consequences parallel to those in the Semitic component of Yiddish (see above). Wherever a Tiberian form did not meet the structural description (the conditions, so to speak) of the sound shift, it escaped Lengthening. In the samples cited, the first *ɛ* in *ɛmɛs* escaped because it was not stressed (there is no evidence that ḥatef vowels differed in Proto-Ashkenazic from their non-ḥatef variants). The *a* of *xajjɔ́* was originally in a closed syllable (opened only later by Degemination, no. 3). Cf. the Tiberian cognates חֶסֶד *ḥésɛð*, אֱמֶת *ĕméθ*, חַיָּה *hajjɔ́*, פַּחַד *páḥað*.

(3) Degemination

By C¹ C¹ → C¹, consonantal length was lost, e.g., *bammɔkɔ́m "in the place" ⟩ *bamɔkɔ́m, *gibbór "mighty (man)" ⟩ *gibór, *jittén "(he) will give" ⟩ *jitén, *mənaššé "Manasseh" ⟩ *mənašé, *šuttɔ́f "partner" ⟩ *šutɔ́f, *uzzí "my strength" ⟩ *uzí. Cf. Tiberian cognates בַּמְּקוֹם *bammɔqóm*, גִּבּוֹר *gibbór*, יִתֵּן *jittén*, מְנַשֶּׁה *mənaššé*, שֻׁתָּף *šuttɔ́f*, עֻזִּי *ʕuzzí*.

(4) Stress Shift

Formal Ashkenazic was never processed by Stress Shift, but many forms of Popular Ashkenazic were, in varying degrees, under the impact of the Semitic component in Yiddish (cf. Katz 1980; and above). Stress Shift entailed the collapse of ultimate and penultimate stress to a unitary pattern of penultimate accentuation, e.g., *axašwḗrɔ́š "[King] Ahasuerus" ⟩ *axašvérɔs, *rɔ́š haššɔ́nɔ́ "New Year" ⟩ *rɔ́š haššɔ́nɔ, *šɔ́láx "(he) sent" ⟩ *šɔ́lax (cf. Tiberian cognates אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ *ʔăḥašwērɔ́š*, רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה *rɔ̄š haššɔ̄nɔ́*, שָׁלַח *šɔláḥ*).

There are a number of categories of exceptions. In morphology, articles and particles do not generally accept stress, hence monosyllables preceded by these retain stress, e.g., *hɔ́íš "the man" (⟨ הָאִישׁ *hɔ̄ʔíš*) never became ·*hɔíš* (the black dot · distinguishes spurious forms from asterisked reconstructions, which are at any rate not meant to be spurious). In semantics, particularly sacred terms, notably names of

God, retained ultimate stress, e.g., *ɛlōhī́m* "God" did not usually undergo Stress Shift to ·ɛlṓhīm (cf. אֱלֹהִים *ʔɛlōhī́m*). In phonology, if the penultimate and antepenultimate syllable vowels are both long, stress *may* move back to the antepenult, e.g., Northeastern *géjrəsin*, Mideastern *gájrəsin* "laws of divorces" (cf. גרושׁין *gērūšī́n*), cf. Leibel 1965.

(5) Great Yiddish Vowel Shift

Ashkenazic was fully processed by the Great Yiddish Vowel Shift, which paved the way for it to follow the major events in the ensuing phonological history of the various Yiddish dialects. The Great Shift included raising of *$\bar{\varepsilon}_{25}$ > $\bar{e}_{25}$ and *$ɔ_{12}$ > $\bar{o}_{12}$; lowering and diphthongization of old *$\bar{e}_{22}$ to $ɛj_{22}$ and old *$\bar{o}_{42}$ to $ɔu_{42}$ (for a more detailed survey, see Katz 1982: 77–81).

By the Great Vowel Shift, then, *$x\acute{\bar{e}}sɛd$ > $x\acute{e}sɛd$, *$d\bar{ɔ}v\acute{\imath}d$ > $d\bar{o}v\acute{\imath}d$, *$x\acute{\bar{e}}lɛk$ > $x\acute{e}jlɛk$, *$\bar{o}l\acute{ɔ}m$ > $ɔul\acute{ɔ}m$. These processed forms are amply attested in Western Yiddish. In Eastern Ashkenazic dialects, further phonological development gave the characteristic modern forms (Northeastern *xésɛd, dɔvíd, xéjlek, ejlɔ́m;* Mideastern *xéjsɛd, dūvíd, xájlek, ɔjlɔ́m*).

Questions of Relative and Absolute Chronology

Consonantal shifts and the Great Vowel Shift can, from a structural point of view, be ordered anywhere. Consonantal shifts are tentatively assigned to (1) because of the speed with which Semitic sounds would have a priori disappeared among a population shifting to a central European base of articulation (cf. above). The Great Vowel Shift results in vowels largely preserved in Western Yiddish, and the similarity of its results to a documented near-modern variety might augur for a late relative dating.

The internal ordering of Lengthening and Degemination cannot be determined because their environments are mutually exclusive: stressed open-syllabic short vowels are in Tiberian phonology never followed by a geminate consonant. Indeed, geminate consonants invariably close the preceding syllable.

What is certain is that Lengthening preceded Stress Shift. This is evident from forms such as Popular Mideastern Ashkenazic *élul* "(month of) Elul," *émɛs* "true." One of the conditions for Lengthening is stress. At the time of Lengthening, these items were still ultimately stressed (*$ɛmɛ́s$, *$ɛlúl$), hence their escape, whereas items such as *$x\acute{e}sɛd$ "kindness" and *$r\acute{e}ga$ "moment," both historically penultimate, were duly processed by Lengthening, hence modern (Popular) Mideastern Ashkenazic *élul, émɛs* vs *xéjsɛd, réjga* (cf. Tiberian אֱלוּל *ʔĕlúl,* אֱמֶת *ʔĕmḗθ,* חֶסֶד *ḥésɛð,* רֶגַע *réɣaʕ*). By virtue of Stress Shift, the effects of Lengthening, originally allophonic, became phonemicized (*é* and *éj* both occur in stressed open-syllabic position).

It is extremely probable that Degemination also preceded Stress Shift. Circumstantial evidence comes from forms such as Popular Mideastern Ashkenazic *hékajš* "(type of) analogy," *šábɔs* "Sabbath." At the time of Lengthening, these items were still in closed syllables (*$hɛk|k\acute{\bar{e}}š$, *$šab|b\bar{ɔ}θ$), hɛnce their escape, whereas items such

as *hévɛl* "vanity" and *jáḥað* "together," historically in open syllables, were duly processed by Lengthening, hence modern (Popular) Mideastern Ashkenazic *hékajš* vs. *héjvɛl, šábɔs* vs. *jáxad* (cf. Tiberian הֶקֵּשׁ *hɛqqḗš*, הֶבֶל *hévɛl; šabbɔ̄θ* "Sabbath," יַחַד *jáxað*). Note that *ā* forms such as *jáxad* occur only in the more conservative Southwestern portions of Mideastern Ashkenazic (e.g., Stencl 1978). In many varieties of Mideastern Ashkenazic, these forms have been shortened to *a*. The evidence here is "circumstantial" because stresslessness can also explain nonlengthening of historical *ɛ* and *a* in such forms as *hékajs* and *šábɔs*. In other words, lack of stress can itself explain all the unlengthened forms, whereas erstwhile presence of geminate consonants (closing the preceding syllable, thereby blocking lengthening) can explain only some of them.

The absolute chronology of Degemination is assisted by Yekusiel of Prague. He notes that dagesh forte (= *dagesh ḥazaq*, the diacritic marking gemination) was pronounced for *w, z, ṭ, l, m, n, s, ṣ, q, š* "by most people of our land," but moans that "the younger readers were in the habit of not pronouncing dagesh forte in these letters when shewa occurs under the letter with the dagesh [i.e., when the relevant consonant is followed by shewa]." A bit later in the same discussion, Yekusiel's characterization of those who fail to geminate sours a bit, proceeding from youth to boorishness. He notes that "for the letters *w, z, ṭ, l, m, n, s, ṣ, q, š*, the boors miss out on their dagesh, as we said, when shewa occurs under the letter with the dagesh" (Yekusiel 1395: [187b]).

Mobile Shewa

The fate of mobile shewa in Ashkenazic, like so many of the issues touched upon, needs to be the object of a monograph. In the most formal style of reading by trained readers, mobile shewa will appear as a shewa vowel (locally [ə], [ɨ], [I], [ɜ], etc.). In Popular Ashkenazic, however, historical mobile shewa underwent various fates. It was reduced to zero in phonetic environments where Yiddish tolerates consonant clusters, e.g., Northeastern Ashkenazic *krejvó* "close" ⟨ *qərōvɔ́*, *gvul* "border" ⟨ *gəvúl, hɔlxɔ́* "she went" ⟨ *hɔ́ləxɔ́*. Contextual loss of mobile shewa may result in wholesale remake of the classical Tiberian CV(C) syllabic structure, e.g., the last cited example, where CV|CV|CV → CVC|CV. There is, however, conflicting evidence from Closed Syllable Shortening that some graphic shewas which classical Hebrew grammar regards as mobile were in fact silent long before Ashkenaz Cf., e.g., Mideastern *sɔ́frəm* "scribes," *sɔ́nəm* "enemies" where the short vowel betrays a pre-Ashkenazic closed syllable. The Yiddish forms cannot derive from *sɔ̄ | nə | ʔīm, sō | fə | rīm*.

Possibly as a hypercorrection introduced to combat shewa loss, and possibly as a normal sound shift buttressed by penultimate stress in popular renditions of Ashkenazic (and maybe even both), shewas that do survive have been known in many forms of Ashkenazic to be "exaggerated" to vowel 22, i.e., to merge with the local realization of ṣere (see, e.g., Emden 1745: 4a; Wessely 1827: 204). In many variants of Yiddish, in fact, the name of the shewa vowel has itself shifted to 22, e.g., (some) Mideastern Yiddish *šájvə*, (some) Southeastern, Northeastern *šéjvə*, both alongside expected *švu, švɔ* respectively (cf. שְׁוָא *šəwɔ́*).

Old East and Old West Ashkenaz

Two Kinds of Ashkenazim

Ashkenaz, in its early history, comprised two culturally distinct groups. The most famous, in the Rhineland, was centered in the cities of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz (collectively known as *Shum,* from the Hebrew acronym שו״ם). The second grouping lay further eastward on the banks of the Danube and the surrounding areas, centered in Regensburg, Rothenburg, Nuremberg, and also Prague. That is the area that was the Eastern Ashkenaz of those days. In later centuries, of course, it along with the Rhineland became the new Western Ashkenaz, in contradistinction to the later and modern Eastern Ashkenaz of the Slavonic and Baltic lands (see Katz 1987a: 54–55; 1990; 1991; 1992).

Two Distinct Languages

The western communities, in the Rhineland, spoke a Germanic-based Jewish language that was not Yiddish, and used a liturgical form of Hebrew and Aramaic that was not at all like any known variety of Ashkenazic. Both the Semitic component of the Rhineland Jewish language and its speakers' pronunciations of Hebrew and Aramaic had a five-vowel system very much like the vocalism of Sephardic Hebrew, in which qameṣ and pathaḥ were merged as unitary *a*, ṣere and segol as unitary *ε*, ḥolem and qameṣ qatan as unitary *ɔ*, long and short ḥireq as unitary *i*, long and short shureq as *u*. This is betrayed in medieval manuscripts by massive promiscuous confounding of qameṣ with pathaḥ and ṣere with segol (see Katz 1987a: 56).

Moreover classical [ḥ], represented by the Hebrew letter ח (classical חֵית *ḥēθ*), had merged with [h] among the old Rhinelanders, rather than with [x] (cf. M. Weinreich 1958; Katz 1987a: 57; 1988a: 39–42; 1990b; 1991; 1992). In fact, this isogloss provided the names of the two groups. In Old Ashkenazic folklore, the westerners were known as בני הית *bnej hεs* "Children of *hεs*," i.e., "those who pronounce *'hεs'* for ח," the easterners as *bnej xεs* "those who pronounce *'xεs'* for ח. The fictitious letter הית *(hεs)* was coined to poke fun at the westerners. Westerners occasionally used the spelling כית to refer to the [x] pronunciation of the easterners. These names invoke a humorous reference to the biblical Children of Heth of Genesis 23 (see Katz 1991, 1992).

This shibboleth refers to the two groups in all sorts of legal, cultural, and folkloristic contexts. For example, in his responsa, the Maharil (acronym of Moyreynu Horav Yankev Haleyvi, also known as Mahari Segal; Yankev Segal; Mahari Molin; Yankev ben Moyshe Haleyvi Moellin/Mollin, ca. 1360–1427) notes a difference in custom concerning the *tfiln* (phylacteries) donned during weekday morning prayer. The question concerns the positioning of the box of the *tfiln shel yad* ("hand phylactery"), whether it should be placed with the *maabarto* (aperture at one end of the box through which the strap passes) at top or at bottom. The easterners positioned the box so that the end with the *maabarto* and strap are at bottom, closer to the hand. By contrast, the western tradition placed the side with the *maabarto* at the top, closer to the head (both descriptions assume the arm is at rest at one's side).

The Maharil put it this way:

> *Tfiln shel yad: bnej estrajkh* ["the Children of Austria"] and all the regions of the *bnej hes* position the *maabarto* toward the hand; and we, the Children of the Rhine and all the *bnej hes*, position the *maabarto* toward the body, as with the head phylactery.
>
> (Maharil 1556: 6a)

Added to their five-vowel system and their *h* realization of ח, the Rhinelanders had a third major linguistic feature. Yekusiel of Prague noted that:

> We also know that there are some Ashkenazim who pronounce ה [*hē?* = *h*] and ח [*hēθ* = *ḥ*] as one and likewise שׂ [*śīn* = *š*] and שׂ [*śīn* = *s*].
>
> (Yekusiel 1395: [189b])

In pointed Hebrew and Aramaic texts, ⟨שׂ⟩ marked by the diacritic to the left denotes an [s] rather than an [š] pronunciation (the letter is known as *sin, šin smol,* or *der smol* in Yiddish). Transcribed [ś] by Semitists to distinguish it from *samekh* ⟨ ס⟩, it was nevertheless merged with *samekh* long before the European period in Jewish history, and attempts to prove otherwise have not succeeded (see Faber 1982: 86). On the fate of Hebrew sibilants in medieval Europe, see Gumpertz (1942; 1953: 33–50), M. Weinreich (1973: 2:36–38, 4:51–55) and Faber (1982; 1987: 18).

By the early thirteenth century, then, it was known to Yekusiel of Prague that the subgroup of Ashkenazim who had merged [ḥ] with [h], i.e., the *bnej hes,* had also merged [š] and [s]. Unlike [ḥ], which is limited to the Semitic component, [š] and [s] are well represented in the Germanic component, and so in a stroke Yekusiel solves for us the old question of why a single grapheme, ⟨שׂ⟩, is used almost exclusively for both historical [š] and [s] in old Yiddish texts (see, e.g., Shtif 1928: 143–46; Timm 1987: 272-73; Kerler 1988: 227–28).

Destinies of the Two Branches of Old Ashkenaz

Both the vernacular of the early Rhineland Jews, and their Hebrew and Aramaic phonology, became extinct many centuries ago, although not without leaving traces in both Yiddish and Ashkenazic. The language of Danube Jewry—*Yiddish*—and its Hebrew and Aramaic phonology—*Ashkenazic*—spread to the four corners of Ashkenaz, and, via migration in recent centuries, to many parts of the world.

Social and Contextual Dialects

Formal vs. Popular Ashkenazic

Ashkenazic shares with natural languages social and contextual variation. Nearly all that variation can be measured on a scale extending from the pole of "Formal Ashkenazic" to a variety incorporating features of the coterritorial Semitic component in Yiddish, principally: Closed Syllable Shortening, Penultimate Stress Assignment, and Posttonic Reduction (see above). Varieties incorporating one or more of these Yiddish features may collectively be called "Popular Ashkenazic."

The Ashkenazic Continuum

One might a priori postulate that social prestige necessarily slips downward from Formal Ashkenazic to the forms processed by Closed Syllable Shortening, Penultimate Stress Assignment and Posttonic Reduction. One would be misguided. It all depends on what is being uttered, by whom, and in what context. As it happens, Popular Ashkenazic is used in the highest academic endeavours of Ashkenazic society, Talmud and Kabbalah, which are studied from unpointed texts. The same scholar who will read *dɔm* "blood" in the Bible, or in reciting the ten plagues at Passover *seyder,* will use *dam,* with Closed Syllable Shortening, in Talmud study (cf. Tiberian *dɔ̄m*). On the other hand, in synagogue reading from the Pentateuch and weekly portions from the Prophets, Formal Ashkenazic would be the variety aspired to (with the advent of possible interference from varieties of Popular Ashkenazic, or, in other words, interference from the phonology of the vernacular). Use of Popular Ashkenazic in Torah reading might well be taken as a sign of ignorance and lack of education. Khayim ben Moyshe Lifshitz summed up the differential this way in his *Seyfer derekh khayim* ("Book of the Way of Life"):

> A man should be careful to read with the Accents [i.e. the Tiberian stress marks] everything that is from the Torah, the Prophets and the Hagiographa [i.e. anything from the Hebrew Bible]; analogously, [a man should be careful to read] Mishna and Gemara [= the Talmud] with the [traditional] melody.
>
> (Lifshitz 1703: 20b, no. 28.9)

Jacob Emden allowed rather more leeway:

> One should be careful with *mileyl* ['penultimate stress'] and *milra* ['final stress'], for whom it is possible and knows these things. But for the man who did not acquire this habit in his youth, it is impossible to bother him with placing of the accents for this would trouble him so and make his speech weary, and his loss is greater than his reward.
>
> (Emden 1745: 4a–4b)

Between the poles of Formal Ashkenazic for biblical readings in synagogue and Popular Ashkenazic for Talmud, Kabbalah, and an array of informal and semiformal uses of phrases and formulas, there is a huge middle ground with considerable variation. Much of that middle ground is occupied by the daily and festival liturgy, and by Torah study (as opposed to formal synagogue reading). The first two words of most blessings, classical בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה *bɔrū́x ʔattɔ́* "Blessed art Thou," and the first two words of the Bible, בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא *bərēšī́θ bɔrɔ́* "In the beginning created," occur inter alia in variants illustrated in Table 4.12. Note the appearance of pretonic reduction (no. 2).

The complex phonological and sociological interplay of stress pattern and vowel reduction merits a monograph. The same Northeasterner, say, who might have *bərejšís bɔrɔ́* for Torah reading in synagogue, might utter *brejšís bərɔ́* when reading the text more rapidly at home, *bréjšis bɔ́rɔ* in a more comfortable setting of study, and *bréjšəs bɔ́rə* when citing the Hebrew passage in a Yiddish conversation. Like many generalizations, these can serve for orientation but cannot do justice to the complexity of real life. In one and the same genre, considerable sociolinguistic

Table 4.12. The Ashkenazic Continuum: Realizations of
בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא *bərēšíθ bórɔ́* and בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה *bɔ́rux ʔattɔ́*

	Northeastern	Mideastern
1. *Formal Ashkenazic:*	bɔrúx atɔ́ bərejšís bɔrɔ́	buríx atú bərajšís burú
2. *With Pretonic Reduction:*	brúx ətɔ́ brejšís bərɔ́	bríx ətú brajšís bərú
3. *With Stress Shift:*	bɔ́rux átɔ bréjšis bɔ́rɔ	búrɪx átu brájšis búru
4. *With Stress Shift and* *Posttonic Reduction:*	bɔ́rəx átə bréjšəs bɔ́rə	búrəx átə brájšəs búrə

variation can be observed. Appendix 1 provides two renditions of the first chapter of the Book of Esther (traditionally read twice in synagogue during the festival of Purim). The first approaches Formal Ashkenazic (with some incursions by Penultimate Stress Assignment). The second is in a variety of Popular Ashkenazic (with mixed stress patterns and several hypercorrections).

In some cases, a semantic distinction is supported by pronunciations taken from different rungs on the Ashkenazic continuum. The same Northeasterner, say, who might have *bɔɔl(ə)mɔ́* or *bɔɔ́l(ə)mɔ* "in the world" in the hallowed kaddish prayer, will say *bəálmə* "generally," "with no specific intention," in equally hallowed Talmud study (cf. Tiberian בְּעָלְמָא *bəʕɔ́ləmɔ́*). The sociophonological differentiation within Ashkenazic represents a treasure of research possibilities in the study of exotic forms of multilingualism.

Modern Standard Ashkenazic

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, various versions of Standard Ashkenazic arose. The classic variety of standard literary Ashkenazic follows Standard Yiddish in its vowel system, characterized as "Northeastern Yiddish except that vowel 42/44 is realized *ɔj* as in the other Eastern Yiddish dialects, not *ej* as in Northeastern." As it happens, Standard Ashkenazic adopts penultimate stress, but not, on the whole, posttonic reduction. It is in this variety that some of the greatest modern Hebrew poetry was written. Israeli literary scholars, while Sephardicizing the vowels (merging qameṣ and pathaḥ in *a*, ṣere and segol in *ɛ*, ḥolem and qameṣ qatan in *ɔ*), retain penultimate stress to preserve the rhythm of the poetry.

Standard Ashkenazic renditions of H. N. Bialik's *Loy bayoym veloy balaylo* ("Not by day and not by night," Israeli Hebrew *Lo bayom velo balayla*) and of the original first verses of N. H. Imber's *Hatikvah* appear in Appendix 2. With the final two lines rewritten after the author's death, these verses became the Israeli national anthem. Note from these transcriptions that standard literary Ashkenazic does not spirantize across word boundaries (hence *lɔj bajɔjm,* not *lɔj vajɔjm*); it does not gen-

erally preserve pausal forms (*balájlɔ*, not *balɔ́jlɔ*); it often omits mobile shewa (*pójsrɔ*, not *pójsərɔ*).

A variant of standard Ashkenazic developed in the United States has *ōu* (or other local American reflexes of "long o" as in *home*) for ḥolem. In the 1960s, it was used as the spoken language in the classroom for Jewish studies classes in New York City in a number of Hebrew day schools, including Etz Chaim, Rambam and RJJ (Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva). The *ōu* for ḥolem came to signify a Hebrew-speaking, Orthodox, pro-Zionist, Ashkenazic social setting. It was to the cultural "left" of those (Hasidim and "yeshiva circles") using the East European *ɔj*. Ashkenazic in the British Isles similarly uses local reflexes of *ou* (as in *home*), or in circles consisting now mainly of older people *au* ("ou" as in *round*), for ḥolem, variants possibly derived from older German Jewish practice. London Yiddish *ɔ* for historical *a* (*šɔ́bəs* for *šábəs*) seems not to have made many inroads into local Ashkenazic (which usually has expected *šabɔ́s* or *šábɔs*). Here again, as throughout the field of Ashkenazic studies, rewarding fieldwork awaits the researcher.

Epilogue

Sadly, the prejudices and misconceptions concerning Ashkenazic have, as is so often the case, affected scholars as much as others. Of necessity, much of twenty-first century Hebrew historical linguistics will concentrate on the Ashkenazic Hebrew and the Ashkenazic Aramaic that the twentieth century failed to study in depth. There are still many Ashkenazim born before World War II who use exotic and uncharted forms of Ashkenazic, and a rapidly dwindling few born before the First World War. There is still time to capture this invaluable linguistic data and still time to conserve this great Hebrew and Aramaic heritage, one of the most splendid and creative in the history of those languages.

Appendix 1. Two Versions of *Esther*, Chapter 1 in Varieties of Mideastern Ashkenazic

NOTE: These transcriptions aim at phonemic accuracy. In view of both informants' chanting the text according to traditional Ashkenazic muscial realizations of the Tiberian stress marks (which double as musical notes), there are instances where it is difficult to distinguish lexical from musical stress. Some ambiguities also arise concerning vowel length amongst the high vowels, *ī/i* and *ū/u*. In the transcription that follows, *i* and *ī* are distinguished because they are distinguished in the native Yiddish of the readers. Longer and shorter renditions of /u/, on the other hand, are strictly contextual variants in both Mideastern Yiddish and Ashkenazic, and are not distinguished in the transcription. Realization of /u/ is longest in stressed open syllables.

Informants' texts are retained intact, even where they diverge from the accepted standard versions.

A: As chanted in synagogue, in London, on Purim of 1984 by Mr. Shimen Mandel, born 1951 in Antwerp. Mr. Mandel is a member of the Belz Hasidic community whose parents were born between 1925 and 1930 in central Galicia between Lancut and Belz.

1:     vajəhī́ bimáj axašvajrójš hī́ axašvajrójš haməjlájx
majhójdī́ vəád kíš šéjva vɛɛsrím imáju mədīnú:

2:     bajumím huhájm kəšéjvɛs haméjlɛx axašvajrójš al
kisáj malxisój ašér bəšīšán habīrú:

3:     bišnas šulójš ləmɔlxój usú mištéj ləxɔ́l suróv
vaavudóv xajl purás imudáj hapartəmím vəsuráj
hamədīnójs ləfunóv:

4:     bəharɔjsój ɛs ójšɛr kəvójd malxisój vəés jəkór
tiféjrɛs gədilusój jumím rabím šmɔjním imɛás jójm:

5:     ivimlɔjójs hajumím huájlɛ usu haméjlɛx ləxɔ́l
huóm hanimcɛím bəšišán habīrú ləmigudójl vəád kutón
mištéj šivás jumím baxacár gínas bísan haméjlɛx:

6:     xīr karpás isxájlɛs uxíz bəxavláj bic vəargumón al
gəlílaj xéjsɛf vəamī́daj šájiš mītójs zuhóv vuxéjsɛf al
rícpas báhat vūšájš vədár vəsɔjxúrɛs:

7:     vəhaškójs bixláj zuhóv vəxájlim mikájlim šójnim
vəjájin malxís róv kəjád haméjlɛx:

8:     vəhaššī́ju xadós ájn ɔjnájs kī́ xajn jīsád haméjlɛx
al kɔl rav bajsój laasójs kīrcójn iš vuíš:

9:     gam vaštī́ hamalkú ɔsəsú mištáj nuším bajs
hamalxís ašér laméjlɛx axašvájrɔjš:

10:     bajójm hašvī́ī kətójv lajv haméjlɛx bajójin umár
liməhímɔn bízəsū xarvójnu bígsu vaavagsú zajsár
vəxarkás šivás hasurisím haməšɔrəsím ɛs pənáj
haméjlɛx axašvájrɔš:

11:     ləhuvī́ ɛs vaštī́ hamalkú lifnáj haméjlɛx bəxéjsɛr
málxis ləharójs huámim vəhasúrim ɛs jɔfjó kī tɔjvás
márej hī:

12:     vatəmuájn hamalkú vaštī́ luvój bidvár haméjlɛx
ašér bəjád hasurísim vajikcójf haméjlɛx məójd
vaxamusój buárū vɔj:

13:     vajójmɛr haméjlɛx laxaxumím jɔjdáj huítim kī
xajn dvar haméjlɛx lifnáj kɔl jójdaj dɔs vudín:

14:     vəhakurójv ajlóv karšənú šajsór admúsu saršīš
méjrɛs mársənu məmī́xɔn šivás suráj purás imudáj
rɔjáj
pənáj haméjlɛx hajójšvim rīšɔjnu bamálxis:

15:     kədós ma laasójs bamalkú vaštī́ al ašér lɔj ɔsəsú ɛs
maamár haméjlɛx axašvajrójš bəjád hasurísim:

16: vajójmɛr məmīxón lifnáj haméjlɛx vəhasurím lɔj
al haméjlɛx ləvádɔj ɔvsú vaštī́ hamalkú kī al kɔl
hasurím vəál kɔl huamím ašér bəxól mədīnójs haméjlɛx
axašvájrɔjš:

17: kī jajcáj dvar hamalkú al kɔl hanuším ləhavzójs
baalajhén bəajnajhén bəɔmróm haméjlɛx axašvajrójš
umár ləhuvī́ ɛs vaštī́ hamalkú ləfunóv vəlój vúu:

18: vəhajójm hazéj tɔjmárnū surójs purás imudáj ašér
šumī́ ɛs dvar hamalkú ləxójl suráj haméjlɛx ixədáj
bizójɔjn vukúcɔf:

19: im al haméjlɛx tɔjv jajcáj dvar málxis mīlfunóv
vəjikusájv bədusáj purás imudáj vəlój jaavójr ašér lɔj
suvój vaštī́ lifnáj haméjlɛx axašvajrójš imalxīsó jitájn
haméjlɛx lirīsó hatójvu miménu:

20: vənišmá pisgóm haméjlɛx ašér jaaséj bəxól
malxisój kī rabú hī vəxól hanúšim jitnī́ jəkór
ləbaalajhén ləmigudójl vəád kutón:

21: vajītáv haduvór bəajnáj haméjlɛx vəhasúrim
vajáas haméjlɛx kidvár məmíxɔn:

22: vajišláx səfurím ɛl kɔl mədīnójs haméjlɛx ɛl
mədīnú imədīnú kixsuvó vəél am vuóm kilšɔjnój lihijójs
kɔl iš sɔjrájr bəvajsój imədabájr kilšójn amój:

B: As chanted at home, in London, by Majer Bogdanski, born 1912 in Piotrkow,
Poland (Yiddish *Pyeterkov*), as per his memory of Piotrkow practice in his youth.

1:   vajəhī́ bimáj axašvájrɔjš hī́ axašvajrójš hamójlajx
majhójdī vəád kiš šéjva vəɛsrím imajú mədīnú:

2:   bəjumím huhájm kəšéjvɛs haméjlɛx axašvájrɔjš al
kisáj malxísɔj ášer bəšíšan habī́ru:

3:   bišnás šulójš ləmɔlxój úsu míštɛ ləxól súrɔv
vaavúdɔv xajl purás imudáj hapártəmim vəsúraj
hamədīnójs ləfúnɔv:

4:   bəharɔjsój ɛs ójšer kəvójd malxisój vəés jəkór
tiféjrɛs gədilúsɔj júmim rábim šmójnim iməás
jɔjm:

5:   ivimlójɔjs hajúmim huajléj úsu haméjlɛx ləxól
huóm hanímceim bəšíšan habíru ləmigúdɔjl vəád kútɔn
míštej šívas júmim báxcar gínas bī́tan hamejlɛx:

6:   xīr karpás isxájlɛs úxiz bəxávlaj vic vəargúmim al
gəlílaj kéjsɛf vəamídaj šájiš mátɔjs zúhɔv vɔxéjsɛf al
rícpas bahát vūšájš vədár vəsɔjxúrɛs:

7:   vəhaškójs bixláj zúhɔv vəxájlim mikájlim šójnim
vəjájin malxís rav kəjád haméjlɛx:

8:	vəhaššíju kadós ajn ɔjnájs kī xajn jisád haméjlɛx
al kɔl rav bájsɔj láasɔjs kīrcójn iš vuíš:

9:	gam vấstī hamálku ósəsu mištéj núšim bəbájs
mélɛx ášer laméjlɛx axašvájrɔjš:

10:	bajójm hašvī̃ī kətójv lajv haméjlɛx bajójin umár
liməhímɔn bízəsu xarvójnu bígsu vaavágsu zájsar
vəxárkas šívas hasuri̇̃sim hamšórsim ɛs pnáj haméjlɛx
axašvájrɔš:

11:	ləhúvī ɛs vấstī hamalkú iifnáj haméjlɛx bəxéjsər
málxis ləharójs huámim vəhasúrim ɛs jɔfjíjə kī tójvas
maréj hī:

12:	vatmuájn hamálku vašti̇̃ luvój bidvár haméjlɛx
ášer bəjád hasuri̇̃sim vajīkcɔjf haméjlɛx məɔjd
vaxmúsɔj buáru bɔj:

13:	vajójmɛr haméjlɛx laxaxúmim jójdaj huítim kī
xajn dəvar haméjlɛx lífnaj kɔl jódaj das vudín:

14:	vəhakurójv ajlóv káršənu šájsɔr admúsu tấršiš
méjrɛs mársənu məmi̇̃xɔn šívas súraj púras imúdaj
rójaj

pənáj haméjlɛx hajójšvim rīšójnu bamalxís:

15:	kədós ma lasójs bamalkú vašti̇̃ al ašér lɔj ósəsu ɛs
maamár haméjlɛx axašvájrɔjš bəjád hasuri̇̃sim:

16:	vajójmɛr məmi̇̃xɔn lífnaj haméjlɛx vəhasúrim lɔj
al haméjlɛx ləvádɔj ɔvzəsú vấstī hamálku kī al kɔl
hasúrim vəál kɔl huámim ašér bəxɔ́l mədi̇̃nɔjs haméjlɛx
axašvájrɔjš:

17:	kī jájcaj dəvár hamalkú al kɔl hanúšim ləhávzɔjs
baalájhɛn bəajnájhɛn bəómrɔm haméjlɛx axašvájrɔjš
úmar ləhúvi ɛs vấsti hamálku ləfúnɔv vəlój vúu:

18:	vəhajójm hazéj tɔjmarnú súrɔs púras imudấ ašér
šómī ɛs dəvar hamálku ləxójl súraj haméjlɛx ixdáj
bizújɔjn vukúcɛv:

19:	im al haméjlɛx tɔjv jájcaj dəvár málxis milfúnɔv
vəjikúsajv bədúsaj purás imudấ vəlój jáavɔjr ášer lɔj
túvɔj vấstī lifnáj haméjlɛx axašvájrɔjš umalxísə jitájn
haméjlɛx līrusó hatójvu mimɛnú:

20:	veníšma pisgóm haméjlɛx ášer jáasɛ bəxɔ́l
malxísɔj kī rabú hī vəxɔ́l hanúšim jífnī jəkór
ləbaalájhɛn ləmigudójl vəád kutón:

21:	vajítav hadúvɔr bəajnáj haméjlɛx vəhasurím
vajáas haméjlɛx kidvár məmi̇̃xɔn:

22:	vəjíšlax səfúrim ɛl kɔl mədi̇̃nɔjs haméjlɛx ɛl
mədi̇̃nu vimdi̇̃nu kixsúvə vəɛl am vuóm kilšójnɔj lihijójs
kɔl iš sójrajr bəbájsɔj imdabájr kilšójn amój:

Appendix 2. Two Modern Hebrew Poems in Standard Ashkenazic

Sung by Menke Katz (b. Svintsyan, Lithuania 1906) in Spring Glen, New York, 8 October 1990, as remembered from New York in the 1920s. The informant's text is retained intact. Note that in *Hatikvah* (text 2), adaptation of the words to its Bohemiam melody results in most of the final words in each line being ultimately stressed, contrasting with the penultimate stress of the rest. The troche-iamb pattern of each line is a characteristic feature of the song.

1. Bialik's **Loy bayoym veloy balaylo**

lɔj bajójm velɔj balájlɔ
xɛreš éjcej li atájlɔ

lɔj bohór velɔj babíkɔ
šitɔ ójmdɔ šɔm atíkɔ

vəhašítɔ pójsrɔ xídɔjs
umagídɔ hi asídɔjs

ɛs hašítɔ éšal óni
mi vɔmí jehéj xasóni

umejájin jóvɔj šítɔ
hamipójlin ɔj milítɔ

habmɛrkóvɔ jáavɔjr švílɔj
im bəmáklɔj uvtarmílɔj

uma jóvi li šilúmim
xaruzej pнinim im algúмim

uma tɔórɔj cax im šóxɔjr
almɔn hu im ójdɔj bóxur

šemɔ zókejn šitɔ tójvɔ
ɔz lɔj éšma ɔz lɔj ójvɛ

óymar ləóvi hamiséjni
uvjad zókejn al titnéjni

ləráglɔv épɔjl vəšókejn
ax lɔj zókejn ax lɔj zókejn.

2. Imber's Hatikvåh (First Stanza and Refrain)

kɔl ɔjd baléjvɔv pnimó
néfeš jehúdi hɔjmió
ulfaásej mízrɔx kɔdimó
ájin lɔcíɔjn cɔjfió

ɔjd lɔj óvdɔ tikvɔséjnu
hatíkvɔ hanɔjšónɔ
lóšuv ləérɛc avɔjséjnu
ləir bɔ dóvid xɔnó

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