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This topic comprises 2 pages: **1** 2

Author	Topic: Te'amim in the Masoretic Texts	
<p><b>Aaron</b> Member Member # 325</p>	<p> posted June 28, 2005 07:54 PM</p> <p> EDIT    quote</p>	<p> profile    email    pm</p>
<p>I'm not sure which forum this is best in. All are welcome to respond, but I am interested in the feedback of OT experts.</p> <p>Last year I stumbled across something fascinating. I contacted a local pastor who has his doctorate in OT, and teaches at a Southern Baptist Seminary. He promised to buy the book and get back with me, but he hasn't. He referred me to three other OT professors to whom I also sent inquiries, but again, in over six months I have yet to receive any feedback.</p> <p>Maybe one of the 12,000 registered members here can help me.</p> <p>Here's a copy of the message I sent:</p> <p>quote:</p> <hr/> <p>Dear Sirs,</p> <p>I was referred to you by the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in [Anytown, Anystate], Xxxx Xxx. I came across an obscure, yet fascinating work deciphering the accent marks in the Masoretic texts, and asked for his impression and for leads to other OT experts who could give me educated responses.</p>		

Suzanne Haik-Vantoura, a French (and Jewish) musicologist, beginning with the premise that the accent marks (te'amim) above and below the lines of text in the Masoretic texts are musical notation, undertook the painstaking and laborious process of deciphering them. Aided by her high degree of musical expertise and what has been learned of ancient music (including Hebrew music) from key archaeological discoveries in the last century, she developed a key to translate the signs and a "brilliant liturgical music emerged."

Her premises and the explanation of her key were published in 1976 in a book she titled, *La Musique de la Bible Révélée*. The English translation, *The Music of the Bible Revealed*, can be ordered through amazon.com. I've included a brief outline of some of her basic premises in the postscript of this message. To include her supporting arguments and documentation would have been tantamount to reprinting her book, so I didn't include them. But the outline includes some of the things I would like to see addressed if you choose to respond—and I hope you will. I also attached an MP3 file of Psalm 122 sang in Hebrew to the music of its te'amim as dictated by Haik-Vantoura's deciphering key. (This recording is not in the public domain, but my purpose here is educational, not commercial.) Despite the viability of her theories as to the origins and purposes of the te'amim, they really do produce beautiful (and modern-sounding!) music when her key is consistently applied. To me, this is the most dramatic evidence that she may be on to something, but you also may be intrigued by what she considered the ultimate test of her key, the Decalogue.

quote:

---

In these verses—which does not happen in any other text—the lower signs and upper signs intercross, overlap, and even straddle each other. What could possibly result from such a scuffle?

The synagogal tradition itself abandons the game at this challenge....

These same signs, which are generally

distributed with a certain parsimony,  
forming the beautiful, expressive melodies  
with which we have become acquainted,  
still form a perfect music, with an  
expression just as completely intense here  
in their intermingled, superimposed state .  
(pp. 279-280)

---

One more point. Suzanne Haik-Vantoura was careful to mention that the Hebrew Bible she used was the French Colbo Edition, which she said,

quote:

---

...is identical to the Masoretic version,  
based on the most ancient extant  
manuscripts which possess these signs  
(9th and 10th c. A. D.). This version is  
unanimously recognized as the authentic  
tradition.

The following explanation will justify this particular point. The shapes and locations of these ancestral signs were not always respected by the authors of the manuscripts after the 10th century and the different editions since then. Thus, when the reader compares the cantillation signs given here in these two volumes of psalms in their rightful locations and with their exact shapes--with those in a Bible which is not conform to the Masoretic version, he will discover differences. This is the reason for them! (Haik-Vantoura, The 150 Psalms in Their Ancient Melodies, Fondation Roi David, p. vi.)

---

I certainly am interested in hearing your thoughts on this work.

Sincerely,

Aaron Xxxxxx  
[snip address info]

P.S. Here is a brief outline of a few of Suzanne Haik-Vantoura's premises.

I. The te'amim are musical notation.

II. Previous attempts to decipher the te'amim have resulted in inconsistent and contradictory meanings because

A. The attempts were made by non-musicologists, and

B. By musicologists without the aid of key archaeological discoveries of the last century.

[The webpage developed by the American agent for Haik-Vantoura's work explains in better detail the previous attempts and their "weaknesses." <http://www.rakkav.com/kdhinc/pages/attempts.htm> ]

III. The notation predates the Masoretes.

A. "This is what many commentators of the Middle Ages affirmed, including those who disclosed the notation itself: the Masoretes ."

B. "Certain Jewish exegetes of the medieval period ascribed the origin of this notation to Ezra....Only as late as the 16th century was it suggested that the Masoretes were its creators."

C. Recent archaeological discoveries suggest the te'amim are of "very old" origins predating the Masoretes by centuries.

IV. The cantillation of the synagogues does not reflect the real Tradition and "differed from one community to another."

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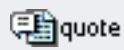
Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
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**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted June 28, 2005 10:55 PM


 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

I should have asked, Is anyone here willing to read the book and give me their impressions?

---

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**robycop3**

4,000 Posts  
Club  
Member # 221

 posted June 29, 2005 01:10 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

Please don't get discouraged if ya don't receive an immediate answer, Aaron...There ARE Hebrew readers here,(I'm NOT one of 'em) but it takes time to read a book.

---



Posts: **4248** | From: **near Chesapeake, OH** | Registered: **Jul 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**


Member  
Member # 325

 posted June 29, 2005 02:55 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote





Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Ziggy**

Member  
Member # 9005

 posted June 29, 2005 04:09 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

FWIW (from another internet site):

The claims of Suzanne Haik-Vantoura to have reconstructed the original melodies of the psalms ... have been critiqued by Peter Jeffery in Biblical Archaeology Review 18/4 (July/August, 1992):6.

[http://www.yale.edu/ism/images/Yale\\_Studies\\_Spring\\_'01.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/ism/images/Yale_Studies_Spring_'01.pdf), page 11, n.6.

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
Posts: **481** | From: **NC** | Registered: **Jul 2004** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted June 29, 2005 06:41 PM


 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

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The link isn't working.

---

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
[Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Ziggy**

Member  
Member # 9005

 posted June 30, 2005 05:06 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

Sorry: the comma after "pdf" should not have been part of the link. Try again (although the full text of that note was quoted in my message, and there is nothing more at the site; someone needs to see what BAR said on the matter).

[http://www.yale.edu/ism/images/Yale\\_Studies\\_Spring\\_'01.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/ism/images/Yale_Studies_Spring_'01.pdf)

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
Posts: **481** | From: **NC** | Registered: **Jul 2004** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**NateT**

Active Member  
Member # 475

 posted June 30, 2005 08:46 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

Just out of curiosity, who at SBTS did you contact?

---

Posts: **553** | From: **US** | Registered: **Oct 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 01, 2005 10:45 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

Ziggy,

Thanks for the updated link, but now I just open a blank window when clicking on it. This sounds just like the kind of critique I'm looking for. Maybe someone can get a copy of it and email it to me?



---



Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
[Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 01, 2005 10:47 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote


---

quote:


---

Originally posted by NateT:  
**Just out of curiosity, who at SBTS did you contact?**

---

See your PM's. 

---

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
[Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 01, 2005 11:01 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

Speaking of PM's, perhaps Phillip the moderator could check his???



---



Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
[Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 01, 2005 11:21 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

Haik-Vantoura has divided the styles into two main categories; psalmodic and prosodic. The psalmodic melodies accompany the poetic sections of the OT, and are melodious and hymn-like.

The prosodic melodies accompany the prose sections and, judging from the 20 or 30 recordings I listened to, are more like the recitatives in Baroque oratorios.

If what she states is true, that when her key is applied consistently these differences in styles without exception emerge, what other plausible explanation exists than that she has decoded an ancient musical notation? But that's what I want to know. Is what she states true?

Whether they're the "original" melodies as she believes, but never insists upon dogmatically, or not, is not important to me. Even if the te'amim "suddenly appeared" in its final form sometime in the

Ninth Century with the Masorettes, her work is significant.

---

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
[Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 02, 2005 08:05 PM

 profile  email  pm

 EDIT  quote

---

Okay, Ziggy. I finally got to the page. I had to go to Yale's home page and search it's site for Vantoura. I then opened it as an html document.

You're right. The info in your post is simply an end note for the following text:

quote:

---

For all the talk of music and singing associated with Christian psalmody, the history of these poems must begin with their texts. No melodies, or even melodic formulae, from the Judaeo/Christian traditions of atiquity survive.

---

The point is that this is old news. I sure would like to see the article referred to in the note. Can anyone help?

---


Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
[Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 02, 2005 08:06 PM

 profile  email  pm  EDIT

 quote

---

Here's a short review:

quote:

---

'This well-translated edition is stocked with written musical examples, photographs of cited manuscripts, and copious documentation . . . In addition, the impressive array of testimonials from experts in the field assures the uninformed reader-as well as scholars, musicians and theologians-that Haik-Vantoura's work deserves serious consideration.'  
Biblical Archaeologist 56: 47

[http://larimerco.com/cgi-bin/apf4/amazon\\_products\\_feed](http://larimerco.com/cgi-bin/apf4/amazon_products_feed).

cgi?

Operation=ItemLookup&ItemId=094103710X&templates=my

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
Logged | Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325

posted July 02, 2005 08:08 PM

profile email pm

EDIT quote

Here's another note:

quote:

Joshua R. Jacobson. 2002. Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Complete Guide to the Art of Cantillation. Jewish Publication Society. Accompanied by a CD, this is a comprehensive presentation of the cantillation system. While aimed at performance in a religious context, it gives due attention to the academic side of the teamim. Jacobson does not interact with the Haik-Vantoura hypothesis which has been ably critiqued by Daniel Meir Weil in The masoretic chant of the Bible (Jerusalem: Maas, 1995).

Can someone help me find this critique?

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:  
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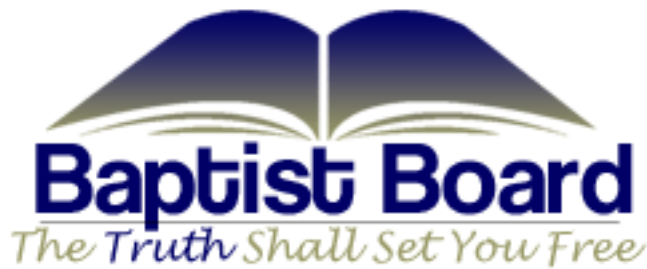
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This topic comprises 2 pages: [1](#) [2](#)

Author	Topic: Te'amim in the Masoretic Texts	
<p><b>Aaron</b> Member Member # 325</p>	<p> posted July 02, 2005 08:25 PM  EDIT  quote</p>	<p> profile  email  pm</p>
<p>Here's a blurb from the kind of critique I am NOT interested in.</p> <p>quote:</p> <hr/> <p>Speaking as a biblical scholar with a considerable amount of training in Jewish liturgical chant, I must say that I am not put off by the speculative nature of H-V's enterprise. Rather, it's her initial assumptions that raise my hackles: she asserts that the Psalms and their melodies are mostly Davidic, and the Davidic tunes were preserved intact for a thousand years until 70 CE; that the te'amim are the Davidic musical notations, and that they were written down in the Bible from the outset; and that the original musical values of these signs is recoverable because they constitute what she terms "a subtle system of abbreviations." If you're willing to follow her that far, I've got a bridge connecting Manhattan and Brooklyn to sell you.</p>		

<http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/ANE/ANE-DIGEST/V03/v03.n086>

---

His problem is with her premises. That's fine. Who cares?

I want to know IF her deciphering key TRULY is used CONSISTENTLY to produce the melodies she has recorded. I will have to contact some musicologists for that info probably.

This is my thought. Attempting to produce music with a system of notation not designed to be music is impossible. In fact, I would expect to see what she says the results of the previous attempts to decipher the te'amim have been--inconsistent and contradictory meanings of the signs.







But HAVE previous attempts to decipher the te'amim TRULY resulted in inconsistent and contradictory meanings?

Or, are biblical scholars really agreed on the meanings of the te'amim and one system can really explain it all?

---

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post


**Aaron**  
Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 04, 2005 11:19 PM  profile  email  pm  
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Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**  
Member  
Member # 325

 posted July 07, 2005 03:46 AM  profile  email  pm  
 EDIT  quote

---

bump


---

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Ziggy**

Member

Member # 9005

 posted July 07, 2005 05:45 PM profile email pm EDIT quote


I finally got to a library that had the review that was cited in a footnote above:

From the review of Haik-Vantoura in Biblical Archaeology Review, Jun/Jul 1992, p.6:

Reviewed by Peter Jeffery, visiting scholar, Harvard University Center for Literary and Cultural Studies; associate professor, University of Delaware.

"...Her credentials do not inspire confidence....Her argument is essentially circular...a series of spurious arguments....The evidence adduced to support [her] ... assertions is consistently unimpressive, culled from secondary sources that are ... often inaccurately cited....The author has read no primary sources in the original languages, is completely uninformed about ancient and medieval music theory and has overlooked much of the recent scholarly literature....What Haik-Vantoura has really done is to impose her own thoroughly modern musical preferences on the \_te` amim\_....Any series of random symbols could have been 'deciphered' with comparable results....Her claim to have 'revealed' the original 'music of the Bible' is utterly untrue."

Draw your own conclusions.... 😏

Posts: **481** | From: **NC** | Registered: **Jul 2004** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member

Member # 325

 posted July 07, 2005 10:38 PM profile email pm EDIT quote

Thanks, Ziggy! I really appreciate the effort! 😊👍

I'm sorry to say that I'm disappointed in the quality of that review.

quote:

---

**Any series of random symbols could have been 'deciphered' with comparable results...**

---

This is an utterly incredible statement. Random symbols cannot be deciphered. Here are some random symbols:

quote:

---

anh 32q34ghhe[gvmwoaew;/e48r-9843g2=5, ga]  
p9id rtg[or]pq3

---

They're meaningless. Absolutely un-decipherable by any consistently applied method. And that is my central question. Was her key *consistently* applied? If it wasn't then the point is moot. Discrediting her work would have been a simple task of point out that fact. If it was consistently applied, that's all the proof needed to say she has deciphered an ancient notation. Now, many might conceivably argue that the te'amim are *not* the original melodies, but not that they are something other than the melodies they were once chanted to.

quote:

---

**...is completely uninformed about ancient and medieval music theory and has overlooked much of the recent scholarly literature...**

---

Judging from other things I have read about her work, she seems well-respected by the musicological community. In the past, I have been in contact with Bob Fink, a musicologist who specializes in music archeology. I've sent him a note asking him he's heard about Haik-Vantoura's work. I'm awaiting his response.

A note about Fink. He's an old-earth evolutionist. He would have no sacred cows concerning this "notation." He insists that nature, not man, forced the do-re-mi scale into existence. His descriptions of what has been learned of ancient music in recent archaeological discoveries changes what has been generally thought of ancient music. It wouldn't have sounded as exotic as is assumed.

That's my conclusion based on the blurb, but it's hard to judge from a blurb. Can you send me a photocopy of the article? E-mail me and I'll give you my address, or scan it and e-mail to me if you can.

(Our local libraries do not keep editions of this publication that far back.)

---

Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:

[Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325



posted July 13, 2005 05:20 AM



profile



email



pm



EDIT



quote



Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP:

[Logged](#) | Report Post

**Ziggy**

Member  
Member # 9005



posted July 16, 2005 01:18 PM



profile



email



pm



EDIT



quote

Long post -- Posted with permission

The following was provided to me as appearing in a letter written by Dr James A. Price to the translator of Haik-Vantoura's book.

Dr Price is probably one of the leading experts in the Massoretic accents, having published a four-volume analysis of such throughout the entire OT. Dr Price also mentions that someone at Southern Seminary in Louisville has written an entire doctoral dissertation on Haik-Vantoura's claims.

=====

...

I appreciate the information you provided in an effort to clear up possible misunderstanding of Suzanne Haik-Vantoura's work on the music of the accents of the Hebrew Bible. There are certain aspects of her work that I regard as correct from the perspective of accents. She is obviously a gifted musician and composer. I am not sufficiently trained in music to criticize the musical aspects of her work, except as intuition and common sense dictate. These are some aspects of her work that I regard as correct:

1. The accents represent very ancient tradition along with the other signs the Masorettes added to the Hebrew text, such as the vowel points, the niqqudim, and Masoretic notes. The accent signs represent the ancient oral cantillation of the text.
2. There is a system of laws that govern the sequences of the accents. My computer research has verified that fact, and formalized the laws. The verification has now been extended to the entire Hebrew Bible.
3. The laws of the accents function in harmony with the natural

grammatical syntax of the verses, except as overruled by the musical restraints.

4. The accents are primarily musical in their function and secondarily syntactical, because the musical restraints on the laws of the accents overrule the syntactic laws when the two systems are in tension. By musical here I mean the rhythmic aspects of cantillation, not the melodic aspects. I have not studied the melodic aspects of the restraints. The musical restraints, as recorded by the authorities on accents, are primarily determined by syllable count. Basically the restraints say that a certain number of syllables must exist between sequences of certain accents or substitution takes place. This does not mean that melody is not involved, but that the melodic reason for the restraint is not clearly stated.

However, there are many problems that I have with her work. Although she exhibits some knowledge of Hebrew, her academic credentials and the way she discussed the language, when she did, do not reflect much depth. Here are some of the problems I see with her work:

1. With respect to the traditional body of knowledge of accents, she demonstrated no awareness of the acknowledged authorities such as William Wickes, Aron Dotan, Israel Yeivin, etc. While she mentions G. E. Weil, who wrote in French, she references his work on the history of Hebrew grammarians, but not his extensive work on accents. Likewise, she shows no knowledge of the authorities in the field of cantillation. Yet she criticizes the authorities on accents as though they were entirely wrong. This makes me wary about the value of her work. It has the appearance of the work of a gifted but partially informed amateur.

2. The accents are a part of the oral tradition passed down from antiquity and recorded by the Masoretes by means of the signs they inserted into the Hebrew text. The oral pronunciation of the words was recorded by the vowel points, whereas the ancient cantillation was recorded by the accent marks. SHV seems to regard the vowel points as accurate and reliable, so that a current reading of the text is a valid rendering of the ancient oral tradition. In like fashion she regards the accent marks to be an essentially accurate preservation of the hand signs used by the ancient teachers of cantillation. However, she asserts that the musical values of the accent signs had been lost by the time the Masoretes recorded the signs, and that they must be rediscovered. This is a problem. How could the signs be preserved but the music they represent be lost? The music of cantillation is

an integral ingredient for memorizing the oral pronunciation. How difficult it is to remember the words of a familiar hymn without the accompanying music! How difficult it would have been for the ancient cantor to recite the text without the associated music of cantillation! Music and recitation seem to be inseparable. If the oral tradition of pronunciation had been accurately preserved, then the cantillation surely must have been preserved as well. If the cantillation was lost, then that suggests that the pronunciation was lost also. That suggestion has serious ramifications.

It is true that the pronunciation and cantillation have drifted into different traditions in the past thousand years, but that does not prove that the ancient tradition was lost by the time the Masoretes provided the vowel points and accent marks. On the contrary, the Masoretes provided the marks to preserve the tradition that had been passed down to them in order to prevent such an eventual drift. She herself acknowledged that the Masoretes regarded the tradition to go back to the Second Temple. The fact that such a drift occurred subsequently, does not prove that it had already occurred previously. The way to recover the ancient tradition is to compare the current divergent traditions and discover their common ancestral roots. This certainly would be possible for the pronunciation of the consonants and vowels, since the various traditions are not that different; so it is reasonable to assume that for the music as well.

3. SHV assumed that all signs of a given shape have the same musical value, without regard to their position in a word. This is in serious disharmony with the traditional view of the accents and with respect to the different names given to the signs in different positions. So for example:

(a) Pashta, a postpositive accent, is a disjunctive accent; whereas Azla, the same sign, occurs only on the stressed syllable of a word, and is a conjunctive accent. These signs never occur in the same context, that is, they have different laws of sequence. Their different names, different context, and different function, imply that they are different; and traditional cantillation treats them differently.

(b) Yethib, a prepositive accent, is a disjunctive, a musical substitute for Pashta under certain conditions; whereas Mahpak, the same sign, occurs only on the stressed syllable of a word, and is a conjunctive. These signs never occur in the same context. Their different names, different context, and different function, imply that they are different; and traditional cantillation

treats them differently.

(c) Silluq, the strongest disjunctive accent, occurs only on the stressed syllable of the last word of a verse, causing its pronunciation to be modified; whereas Metheg, the same sign, but not part of the traditional system of cantillation, occurs only on syllables with secondary stress in long words. Metheg may occur anywhere in a verse where a word is long enough to require it. There is no rule of accentuation that governs its occurrence with respect to the regular accents. Its use is governed strictly by linguistic grammar.

(d) She was correct in not including Paseq in her musical system, but she overlooked the fact that Paseq occurs with certain of the accents to produce Legarmeh, a minor disjunctive accent, one that is omitted in her system.

(e) Similar problems exist in the way she treats the accent system of the Poetical Books.

4. The joining of Silluq and Metheg as the same tone seems like a fundamental flaw in her whole system. First of all, the Metheg is not part of the traditional system of accentuation; it is not assigned a musical value in that system. Yet SHV has combined the statistics of the Silluq and Metheg to provide the basis for selecting them as the "tonic" note for the whole system--because they have the same shape! But Metheg occurs far more frequently than Silluq. Without the statistics of Metheg, Silluq would fail to be the "tonic" note because its frequency count is significantly less than some of the other signs, such as Zaqeph, Tiphcha, Munach, and Merecha. This appears to be a gross disregard for the cantillation tradition that the Masoretes recorded when they invented the accent signs. I know she discussed this on page 445, but the discussion seems like an afterthought to cover her tracks, a dogmatic assertion without dealing with the issue. How could Metheg, the fundamental tone of cantillation (according to SHV), be lost and completely fall out of the tradition as a non-musical sign?

How do the traditional grammarians explain the use of one sign with two different meanings and functions? Conservation of symbols. Two symbols are not needed if the given phenomena never occur in the same context. Thus one sign plus its context is sufficient for several independent phenomena. That principle explains why one word in a language has several different meanings, depending on context. Without the principle of conservation of symbol, language would be burdened with an

unmanageable number of words. The principle provides the system of cantillation with a manageable number of signs. The same conditions exist within the system of vowel points. There are two shewas, but one sign: the vocal shewa and the silent shewa. They never occur in the same context. Grammarians know the difference and never confuse them. There are two Qamets, but one sign: the Qamets Gadol, and the Qamets Qatan; one a lengthened "a" class vowel, and the other a short "u" class vowel. They never occur in the same context. Grammarians know the difference and never confuse them. There are two dageshes, but one sign: dagesh forte and dagesh lene. They never occur in the same context. Grammarians know the difference and never confuse them.

The same is true about the accent signs. There are two different accents with different cantillation values, but the same sign. They never occur in the same context. Cantors know the difference and never confuse them. It is evident that SHV does not know these facts. At least she has not addressed them and appears to have ignored them.

5. She says that the accent signs below the line have a fixed musical meaning, but that the signs above the line are subordinate to those below. This is inaccurate. The laws of accentuation regard the signs above and below the line to be integral parts of the same structured system, some of the signs below the line being hierarchically subordinate to those above.

This has been verified by my computer analysis of the whole Old Testament.

6. My knowledge of structured systems, such as the structured system of rules governing Hebrew accents, and my limited knowledge of music, makes me very suspicious that any thoughtful mapping of musical features with the elements of any structured system will produce "music" which may indeed sound pleasing. Such music could be thought to be like the "primitive" music of antiquity, when it is merely the product of human ingenuity. This would be particularly true if the structured system were a semi-musical system of rule-governed signs for cantillation. I strongly suspect that is what has happened with Suzanne Haik-Vantoura. My suspicion is that her music of the Psalms is boringly redundant, because many of the lines of the Psalms are short and have essentially the same accents from line to line.

I regret to report these things. I think SHV is a sincere, lovely lady who loves the Bible and music. Her motives and intentions are honorable. But I think she is mistaken to think she has discovered the lost music of the Bible. Having mapped the features of music to

the structured system of rules governing the accents, it is begging the question to state that "the syntactical complexities are intuitively obvious via the original music!" They are only obvious from the music because they have been built into the music. That does not make the music original, but merely a musical image of the built in laws of cantillation.

....

Sincerely,

James D. Price, Ph.D.  
Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament  
Temple Baptist Seminary

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Posts: **481** | From: **NC** | Registered: **Jul 2004** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

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**Aaron**

Member  
Member # 325


 posted July 25, 2005 08:12 AM

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 quote

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I came to bump this up and discovered your post, Ziggy. Thanks! This looks just like the kind of feedback I was looking for. 

John Wheeler is the American agent for SHV's work. I'll forward this to him and see what he has to say.

Dr. Price seems to have an awful lot invested in his own dicerphering efforts as well. He mentioned his own computer analysis as proof of his conclusions. SHV stated that there is no real consensus on the meaning of the accents, and not all versions of the Hebrew Bible are agreed on the placement of the signs. I'm wondering if there are criticisms of Price's work, and if his is generally agreed upon to be the actual meaning of the accent signs.

Anyway, I'll look into this further.

Again, my questions are:

1) Have the traditional attempts to decipher the te'amim resulted in contradictory and inconsistent meanings?

So far the answer seems to be yes. If the answer was no, we could summarily dismiss SHV's work as the product of an innovative and highly musical mind, and we would expect the answer to the next question to be no.

2) Is her key consistently applied?

So far the answer seems to be yes. Haik-Vantoura considers the Ten Commandments to be the ultimate test of her key.

quote:

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In these verses—which does not happen in any other text—the lower signs and upper signs intercross, overlap, and even straddle each other. What could possibly result from such a scuffle?

The synagogal tradition itself abandons the game at this challenge....

These same signs, which are generally distributed with a certain parsimony, forming the beautiful, expressive melodies with which we have become acquainted, still form a perfect music, with an expression just as completely intense here in their intermingled, superimposed state . (pp. 279-280)


---

Keep in mind, that the "music" resulting from SHV's key is logical and sounds natural.

I would love to see these points addressed.

Thanks again!

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Posts: **4329** | From: **Heart of America** | Registered: **Sep 2000** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Petrel**



Member  
Member #  
12186

 posted July 25, 2005 10:08 AM

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 quote

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This is very interesting. I may buy this book.

Amazon carries a cd with some of the musical translations sung on it. You can listen to excerpts on [this page](#).

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Posts: **289** | From: **USA** | Registered: **Jul 2005** | IP: [Logged](#) |  Report Post

**Ziggy**

Member

Member # 9005

 posted July 25, 2005 02:41 PM

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 quote

Aaron: John Wheeler is the American agent for SHV's work. I'll forward this to him and see what he has to say.

Carrying coals to Newcastle....Wheeler was the original addressee of Price's letter. Price says that Wheeler was the English translator of the work, but that I don't know.

Original address (letter sent in Jn 1994):


Mr. John Wheeler  
King David's Harp, Inc.  
the Institute for Biblical Chant  
50 Murray St.  
San Francisco, CA 94112

Aaron: I'm wondering if there are criticisms of Price's work

As far as I know, Price's computerized analysis of the Hebrew accents has not received any negative reviews.

For myself, I don't care either way, since I don't think the issue matters as much as you seem to think it does. I am, however, far more persuaded by the negative comments seen in the various reviews than by any attempt to "push" her thesis in a more favorable direction.

With that, I cheerfully absent myself from writing about something that I know nothing about. 🤔



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