

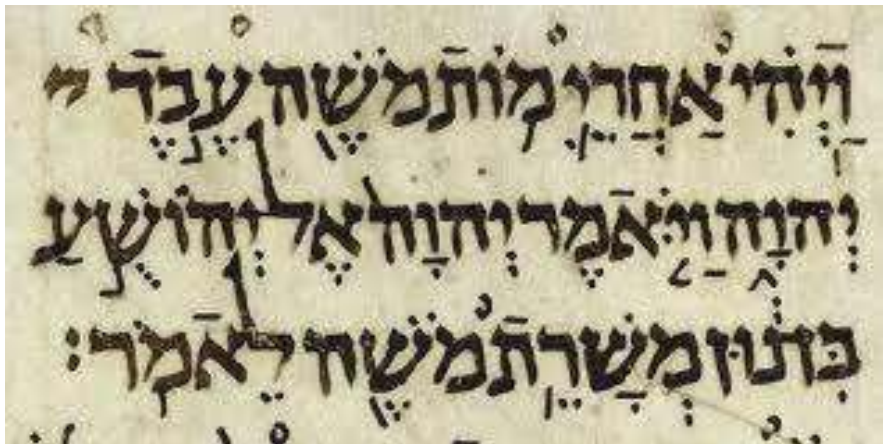
A Brief Introduction to Trope

an excerpt from

The Song of Songs - A Messiah's Confession

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Overview

Trope, otherwise known as cantillation marks, Biblical accents or *ta'amei hamiqrá* in Hebrew (we'll use the word "trope" for

¹ Detail from the Aleppo Codex (10th C.), one of the oldest Hebrew Bibles extant. Like the Leningrad Codex (Cairo, 10th C.) and the Cairo Codex (Cairo, 895) it features both vowel and trope marks.

brevity's sake) is a system of diacritic symbols which serve a number of purposes: they punctuate every sentence in Scripture in detail; they tell us which syllable to accent within each word – both primary and secondary accents; they indicate the value of each word within the sentence; they even overrule the vowels. But more than this, they turn the Scripture into music.

Although there is some similarity between the trope and the punctuation marks used in most modern languages, the similarity is tenuous at best for three reasons: one, every word in the Bible is "punctuated" with a trope mark, sometimes two,² whereas in modern language only certain words in a given sentence are punctuated. Two, while modern punctuation falls between words, trope falls on the words themselves. And three, the trope has no equivalent of many punctuation marks

² Hyphenated word combinations may have only one trope mark for the entire phrase.

such as the question mark, exclamation point, quotation marks, parentheses, etc. On the other hand, the modern system lacks the hundreds of subtleties of accentuation, combination and separation, tension and release that the trope system provides. The only distinct parallel between the two systems is the **Sof-Pasúq** (literally "end of verse"), which is equivalent to a period.

Some of the trope marks called by different names in different communities. However, the symbols and their functions are universal. I have chosen to use the most common names in the Ashkenazi tradition.

The trope system has its own syntax and each trope mark has a set of rules governing where in the verse it may and may not appear. Each trope mark signifies a short musical phrase unique to itself within the context of the culture and occasion in which it is used; not only does

the melody for a given passage vary from place to place, in some communities the melody for a Sabbath reading differs from the melody for the same passage on a holiday. There are also separate sets of melodies for Torah reading, *Haftaráh* (readings from the Prophets and Writings on Sabbath and holidays), the Book of Esther, Lamentations, and the scrolls read on the three Festivals (Ruth, Ecclesiastes and The Song of Songs).

This system is found in 21 of the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible. The Book of Job, Proverbs and Psalms use a parallel system with less elements, known as *ta'amei emét*, "*Emét*" being an acronym for the names of the three books.

The use of trope in The Song of Songs

In writing The Song of Songs King Sh'lomó used the trope artfully through judicious use of the less common, more melodic trope marks. Less common, since the five of the twenty-four nobles (**King**

Sof-Pasúq, **Queen Etnahtá**, Princess Tip'há, Prince Zaqéf Qatón and Countess Pashtá) which comprise 78% of all the nobles used throughout the Bible³ appear at an even higher ratio in the Song – 85%. More melodic, since the function of these five is primarily harmonic, i.e. preparing and carrying out cadences. **Tip'há** always precedes both **Sof-Pasúq** and **Etnahtá** (unless they are the only nobles in the colon), creating the two strongest cadences in almost every verse,⁴ while **Pashtá** usually precedes **Zaqéf Qatón**, creating the next strongest cadence, also found in most verses. Thus when one of the more unusual and strongly melodic trope marks occurs its impact is much greater by contrast. In fact, he entirely avoided using the melodically rich **Barons Pazér, Qarnei Faráh** and **T'lishá G'doláh** and the super-melodic **Princess Shalshélet**. To give an example, the first

³ Deduced from the *Concordance of the Hebrew Accents in the Hebrew Bible*, James D. Price

⁴ Sof-Pasúq appears at the end of every verse; Etnahtá appears in 90% of verses.

three verses of the Song feature only the five nobles mentioned above (with their servants). In Verse 4, when the Shulamít exclaims: "the King has brought me to his chambers...!" – the first moment of suspense in the Song – these words are accented with two new trope marks: **Baron Géresh** with his handmaiden **Qadmá**, which together form a dramatic musical phrase appropriately known as "ascent and descent," followed by the **Count R'vía**, making the musical impact of the melody echo the verbal impact of the words. This technique is used throughout the Song to the most artistic and subtle effect, as my recording (or any sensitive recital of the Song according to trope) clearly illustrates. For comparison's sake, in the Book of Esther there are 6 **T'lishá G'doláh**, 12 **L'Garméh**, 11 **Géresh**, 5 **Ger'sháyim**, 5 **Pazér**, 5 **Zaqéf Gadól**, 2 **Segól** and 6 **T'lishá Q'tanáh** – in the the first two chapters alone!

Nobles, Servants and Realms⁵

The trope marks are divided into two main categories: nobles and servants. The nobles are often called "disjunctives" or "pausals" as they indicate the end of a verse, phrase or colon, while the servants are called "conjunctives" or "non-pausals" as they are subservient and attached in meaning – verbally and musically – to the nobles they "serve," which they always precede. Thus each noble together with its servant or servants creates one musical/linguistic unit which we will call a realm. From here on, when we speak of a noble **we are referring to the entire realm of the noble.**

The nobles divide into four categories according to "power," in descending order: the **King** and **Queen**, **Princes** and

⁵ There are different systems for naming the various ranks of trope marks; this is the most thorough and also the only one that relates to the gender of the trope, as the Tiberian master Aharon ben Asher stated: "Twelve are the trope marks, they are male and female." (*Diqduqei HaT'qimim*, Ch. 16 line 1)

Princesses, Counts and Countesses, and Barons and Baronesses (see chart below). The servants are all "powerless." What this "power" signifies is hard to put a finger on; the closest generalization would be the amount of disjunction or pause the reader should imply after a given word, as if it were followed by a comma, a semi-colon, a dash or a period. One would expect this to reflect in the complexity or length of the melody of each trope mark but this is untrue; there is little correlation between the rank of the trope and the complexity or length of its melody. Case in point are the Barons, which, despite their inferior rank, are also called "singers" (*m'shor'rim*) because of their lengthier, more complex melodies. Rather, to put it in musical terms (probably the best way to express this anyway): the more powerful the trope, the more powerful the cadence – the overall sense of tension or release. This is what gives the trope its universal quality; essential to the drama of music is

its sense of tension and release, regardless of how it is achieved.

Helpers

In addition, there are three "helpers" which have no musical value but are used to facilitate reading and understanding the Scripture. They are:

Paséq – divider. Separates repeated words, words which are liable to be run together, and the names of God from an adjacent word if the proximity is deemed inappropriate.

Maqqáf – hyphen. Used exactly like a hyphen, i.e. to create compound words.

Méteg – bridle. Indicates a secondary accent.

The Syntax of the Trope - How a Verse is Put Together

The general order of trope in a verse is **Baron**>**Count**>**Prince**>**King** (the male term applies to both genders; gender doesn't affect the quality of the trope). Each of these may be preceded by its servant or servants according to its individual characteristics; this doesn't affect the syntax. For instance, a **Baron** cannot directly precede a **Prince** or a **King**. A **Count** cannot directly precede a **King**. However, a **Prince** or **King** "resets" the verse; that is, any rank can come afterwards. There is only one exception to this rule: **Count R'via** only precedes another **Count** or a **Baron**.

At the end of every verse is **King Sof-Pasúq**. Most verses are divided into two sections (by content, not by length), known as cola (singular: colon), by **Queen Etnahtá**. **Princess Tip'há** always precedes the **King** and **Queen** unless they mark the first word in the colon. Thus any given

verse can only have one **King Sof-Pasúq**, one **Queen Etnahtá** and up to two of **Princess Tip'há**.

Most trope marks can appear a number of times in a given verse; those which can only appear once are: **King Sof-Pasúq**, **Queen Etnahtá**, **Princess Shalshélet** and **Prince Segól**.

Countess Zarqá and **Prince Segól** appear only in the first colon of a verse, i.e. before **Queen Etnahtá**. **Princess Shalshélet** appears only at the beginning of the verse.

Servants

Most servants serve a variety of nobles; some serve only one or two. Some always have another servant between themselves and a noble:

Servant **Yérah Ben Yomó** only serves **Baroness Qarnei Faráh**

Servant **Ma hpách** serves only **Countess Pashtá**

Handmaiden **Dargá** serves only **Count T'vír** and **Count R'via** (with a **Munáh** in between)

Handmaiden **Mer'chá K'fuláh** only serves **Princess Tip'há**

Handmaiden **T'lishá Q'taná h** is always followed by Handmaiden **Qadmá**

Escorts

Certain nobles "escort" others of equal or immediately superior rank:

Baron **L'Garméh** is followed by either another Baron **L'Garméh**, **Baron Pazér** or **Count R'via**.

Countess Zarcá always precedes **Prince Segól**

Countess **Pashtá** and Count **Y'tív** are always followed by either another Countess **Pashtá** or Count **Y'tív** or by Prince **Zaqéf Qatón**

Count **T'vír** is always followed by Princess **Tip'há**

Princess **Tip'há** is always followed by either King **Sof-Pasúq** or Queen **Etnahtá**

Twins

There are three pairs of "twin" trope marks, i.e. they fulfill the same function and one or the other appears based on the characteristics of the word they mark, such as number of syllables or whether a word with a servant precedes. These are:

Prince **Zaqéf Qatón** / Prince **Zaqéf Gadól**
Countess **Pashtá** / Count **Y'tív**
Baron **Géresh** / Baron **Ger'sháyim**



The Syntax of the Trope - The Structure of the Realm

Every noble has a realm which comprises the noble and its servant or servants if it has any. In the "realm" column are listed all the possible combinations for each trope mark.

If the name of the servant is in brackets, such as [מרקא], the servant is optional, i.e. the noble can appear with or without the servant.

If there is a series of servants in brackets, they are all optional and can only appear in the order in which they are listed.

A slash between the names of two trope marks means either/or; either one or the other of the trope marks may appear in the given place.

A number in parentheses indicates the number of times the given servant may

appear consecutively before the next trope mark.

Example – Countess Pashtá:

[מונח/קדמא] [תלישא-קטנה] [מונח (1-3)]

[מהפך/מרכא] **פשטא**

The possible combinations for the realm of Pashta are:

פשטא, מרכא **פשטא**, מהפך **פשטא**, קדמא מרכא

פשטא, קדמא מהפך **פשטא**, מונח מרכא **פשטא**,

מונח מהפך **פשטא**, תלישא-קטנה קדמא מרכא

פשטא, תלישא-קטנה קדמא מהפך **פשטא**,

תלישא-קטנה מונח מרכא **פשטא**, תלישא-קטנה

מונח מהפך **פשטא**, מונח תלישא-קטנה קדמא מרכא

פשטא, מונח תלישא-קטנה קדמא מהפך **פשטא**,

מוֹנַח תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה מוֹנַח מֵרְכָא פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה מוֹנַח מֵהֶפֶךְ פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה קִדְמָא מֵרְכָא פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה קִדְמָא מֵהֶפֶךְ פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה מוֹנַח מֵרְכָא פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה מוֹנַח מֵהֶפֶךְ פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה קִדְמָא מֵרְכָא פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה קִדְמָא מֵהֶפֶךְ פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה מוֹנַח מֵרְכָא פִּשְׁטָא, מוֹנַח מוֹנַח מוֹנַח
 תְּלִישָׁא-קִטְנָה מוֹנַח מֵהֶפֶךְ פִּשְׁטָא.

Thus there are 24 possible combinations for the realm of Pashtá.

The column "before" lists the noble trope marks - including the members of their realms - which can precede the given trope mark. The column "after" indicates

the noble trope marks including their realms which can follow the given trope mark.

In terms of the servants, the "realm" column refers to the noble trope marks and their other servant/s that the given servant can precede. Sometimes one or more servant comes between the given servant and the noble and sometimes not.

Below is the table of trope marks. Those which do not appear in The Song of Songs are marked with an asterisk. The trope marks are color-coded according to rank and gender; the "males" are darker and the "females" are lighter. They are listed according to frequency in descending order within each rank.

After	Before	Realm	Other names	Meaning of the Name	Name	English transliteration and rank King and Queen
אין	טפּוּאָ אַתְנַחְתָּא	[מַרְכָּא] סוּף פּסוּק	סילוק	End of verse	סוּף פּסוּק	King Sof-Pasúq

סוף פסוק טפּהאַ זקף קטן זקף גדול כל שר למעט זרקאַ כל משורר	טפּהאַ [מונח] (1-2) אתנחְתָּא	אתנח	Pause, rest	אַתְנַחְתָּא	Queen Etnahtá
סוף פסוק אתנחְתָּא זקף גדול זקף קטן סגול תביר	אתנחְתָּא [מרקא] טפּהאַ		Hand- breadth; Pat; Small amount; Nurture	טפּהאַ	Princes and Princesses Princess Tip'há
זקף גדול/ זקף קטן (ע 3) טפּהאַ כל שר כל משורר	אתנחְתָּא, זקף גדול/ זקף קטן (ע 3) סגול פשטאַ יתיב	[מונח] (1-2) זקף קטן	Small upright	זקף קטן	Prince Zaqéf Qatón
זקף גדול/ זקף קטן (ע 3) טפּהאַ כל שר כל משורר	אתנחְתָּא זקף גדול/זקף קטן (ע 3) סגול	זקף גדול	זקפא Large upright	זקף גדול	Prince Zaqéf Gadól
זקף קטן זקף גדול כל שר למעט זרקאַ כל משורר (מופיע רק בצלע הראשון של הפסוק) יְתִיב,	זרקאַ סגול (אחרי זרקאַ בלבד), [מונח] (1-2) סגול	סגולתא, שרי, קבלא	Cluster	סגול	Prince Segól
	אין	רתק,	Chain	שְׁלֶשֶׁת	Princess

<p>פשטא רביע גרש</p>	<p>מרעם, מרעים, מרעיד</p>	<p>* Shalshélet*</p>			
<p>זקף קטן פשטא יתיב (עד 2) רביע</p>	<p>אתנחתא כל נסיך למעט טפחא פשטא יתיב (עד 2) רביע</p>	<p>[1-3] מונח [תלישא- קטנה] [מונח/קדמא] [מהפך/מרקא] פשטא</p>	<p>Reach out; Extend</p>	<p>פּשְׁטָא</p>	<p>Counts and Countesses Countess Pashtá</p>
<p>כל שר למעט רביע גרש גרשים תלישא גדולה</p>	<p>אתנחתא כל נסיך למעט טפחא פשטא גרש גרשים לגרמיה ו</p>	<p>[מונח] [דרגא] [מונח] רביע</p>	<p>רביעי Square; Lie down</p>	<p>רְבִיעַ</p>	<p>Count R'vía</p>
<p>תביר (עד 2) טפחא</p>	<p>אתנחתא זקף גדול/ זקף קטן סגול תביר (עד 2), רביע כל משורר למעט לגרמיה ו</p>	<p>[מונח] [תלישא- קטנה] [קדמא/מונח] [מרקא/דרגא] תביר</p>	<p>תברא Broken</p>	<p>תְּבִיר</p>	<p>Count T'vír</p>
<p>זקף קטן פשטא יתיב (עד 2)</p>	<p>אתנחתא כל נסיך למעט טפחא</p>	<p>יְתִיב</p>	<p>Sit</p>	<p>יְתִיב</p>	<p>Count Y'tív</p>

פשטא/יטיב

(עד 2)

רביע

כל משורר

למעט

לגרמיה |

סגול

זרקא (עד 3)

(מופיעה רק בצלע הראשון של הפסוק)

זקף קטן /

זקף גדול

זרקא (עד

3), רביע

כל משורר

למעט

לגרמיה |

[מונח]

[תלישא-

קטנה]

[מונח/קדמא]

[מרקא/מונח]

זרקא

צינור

Pipe or tube;
Slingshot

זַרְקָא

Countess
Zarqá

גרש,

מונח/קדמא

גרש,

תלישא-קטנה

קדמא גרש,

מונח (1-3)

תלישא-קטנה

קדמא גרש

גריש,
טרם,
אזלא

Push away,
separate

גֶרֶשׁ

Barons and
Baronesses
Baron Géresh

כל שר

תלישא

גדולה,

לגרמיה |

אתנחתא

כל נסיך

למעט

טפקא

רביע

תלישא

גדולה,

פזר

כל שר

תלישא

גדולה,

לגרמיה |

אתנחתא

כל נסיך

למעט

טפקא

רביע

תלישא

גדולה,

פזר

[מונח]

גרשים

שני
גרישין,
טרסא

Double
push away,
separate

גֶרְשִׁים

Baron
Ger'sháyim

כל שר למעט

רביע

גרש

אתנחתא

זקף גדול

זקף קטן

[מונח (1-5)]

תלישא

גדולה

תלשא

Large
detached

תְּלִישָׁא
גְדוּלָה *

Baroness
T'lishá
G'doláh*

גרשים	סגול רביע פזר, גרש גרשים	[קדמא] [מרקא] לגרמיה	(placed) Alone	(מִנְחָה) לְגַרְמִיָּה	Baron (Munáh) L'Garméh
רביע, לגרמיה פזר	אתנחתא זקף גדול זקף קטן סגול רביע גרש, גרשים לגרמיה				
תביר פשטא / יתיב כל משורר	אתנחתא זקף גדול זקף קטן סגול לגרמיה פזר (עד 8)	[1-6] מונח פזר	פזרא Scatter, sprinkle	פזר *	Baron Pazér*
			פזר גדול, גלגל	קרני פרה *	Baroness Qarnei Faráh*
		serves:			Servants and Handmaidens Handmaiden Mer'chá
	סוף פסוק טפתא זרקא פשטא תביר לגרמיה אתנחתא, מונח אתנחתא, סגול,	מאריד, מארכא	Extension	מרקא	
		שופר, שופר הולך	Placed	מִנְחָה	Servant Munáh

מונח סגול,

זקף קטן,

מונח זקף

קטן,

רביע, דרגא

מונח רביע,

זקא,

מרכא/מונח

זקא,

תלישא-קטנה

מונח/קדמא

מרכא/מונח

זקא,

מהפך/מרכא

פשטא,

(עד 3)

תלישא-קטנה

מהפך/מרכא

פשטא,

מרכא/דרגא

תביר,

תלישא-קטנה

מרכא/דרגא

תביר,

פזר, מונח

פזר, (עד 5)

תלישא

גדולה,

לגרמיה א,

גרש, (עד 3)

תלישא-קטנה

קדמא גרש,

גרשים

פּשטאַ	מהופך, שופר הפוך, שופר מהופך	Inversion; Sudden change	מִהֶפֶךְ	Servant Mahpách
מהפך פּשטאַ מרכא פּשטאַ דרגא תביר מרכא תביר מרכא/מונח זרקא, גרש	אזלא	Precedes	קִדְמָא	Handmaiden Qadmá
מונח רביע תביר	ששלא	Step, stair; Degree	דֶּרְגָא	Handmaiden Dargá
קדמא זרקא, מונח/קדמא מהפך/מרכא פּשטאַ, קדמא תביר, קדמא מרכא/דרגא תביר, קדמא גרש	תילשא, תרצא, תרסא	Small detached	תְּלִישָׁא קִטְנָה	Handmaiden T'lishá Q'tanáh
תרי טעמי, תרי חוטרין		Double Extension	מֵרְכָא כְּפֻלָּה *	Handmaiden Mer'chá K'fuláh*
		Inclined	מֵאַיִלָּא *	Handmaiden M'aylá*
	גלגל, עגלה	Day-old moon	יְרַח בֶּן- יוֹמוֹ *	Servant Yérah Ben Yomó*

Helpers

	Divider	פְּסֵק	Paséq
גַּעְיָא	Hyphen	מַקְרָא-	Maqqáf
	Bit, bridle (secondary accent)	מֵתֵג	Méteg