

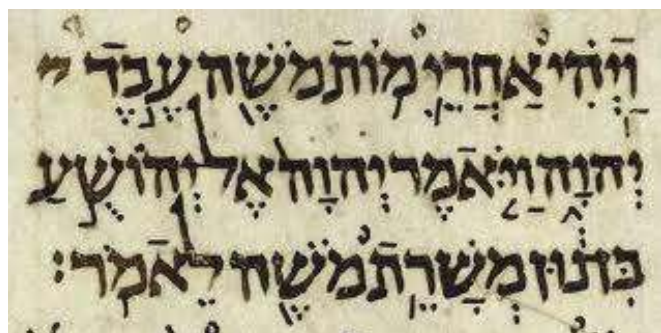
A Brief Introduction to Trope

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 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 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

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.

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

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 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

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.

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 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:

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'qmím*, Ch. 16 line 1)

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 Zarcá 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 **Mahpách** serves only **Countess Pashtá**

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

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

Handmaiden **T'lishá Q'tanáh** 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 **Zarqá** 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:

[1-3] מונח [תלישא-קטנה] [מונח/קדמא] [מהפך/מרקא] פשטא

The possible combinations for the realm of Pashta are:

פשטא, מרקא פשטא, מהפך פשטא, קדמא מרקא פשטא, קדמא מהפך פשטא,
מונח מרקא פשטא, מונח מהפך פשטא, תלישא-קטנה קדמא מרקא פשטא,
תלישא-קטנה קדמא מהפך פשטא, תלישא-קטנה מונח מרקא פשטא, תלישא-
קטנה מונח מהפך פשטא, מונח תלישא-קטנה קדמא מרקא פשטא, מונח תלישא-
קטנה קדמא מהפך פשטא, מונח תלישא-קטנה מונח מרקא פשטא, מונח תלישא-
קטנה מונח מהפך פשטא, מונח מונח תלישא-קטנה קדמא מרקא פשטא, מונח
מונח מונח תלישא-קטנה קדמא מהפך פשטא, מונח מונח תלישא-קטנה מונח מרקא
פשטא, מונח מונח תלישא-קטנה מונח מהפך פשטא, מונח מונח מונח תלישא-
קטנה קדמא מרקא פשטא, מונח מונח מונח תלישא-קטנה קדמא מהפך פשטא,
מונח מונח מונח תלישא-קטנה מונח מרקא פשטא, מונח מונח מונח תלישא-קטנה
מונח מהפך פשטא.

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	Alternate Names	Meaning of the Name	Name	English transliteration and rank King and Queen
אין	טפּהאַ אתנחטאַ	[מרקאַ] סוף פּסוק	סילוק	End of verse	סוף פּסוק	King Sof-Pasúq
סוף פּסוק טפּהאַ זקף קטן זקף גדול כל שר למעט זרקאַ כל משורר	טפּהאַ אתנחטאַ	[1-2] מונח אתנחטאַ	אתנח	Pause, rest	אתנחטאַ	Queen Etnahtá
סוף פּסוק אתנחטאַ	אתנחטאַ זקף גדול זקף קטן סגול תביר	[מרקאַ] טפּהאַ		Handbreadth; Pat; Small amount; Nurture	טפּהאַ	Princesses Princess Tip'há
זקף גדול / זקף קטן (עד 3) טפּהאַ כל שר כל משורר	אתנחטאַ, זקף גדול / זקף קטן (עד 3) טפּהאַ כל שר פשטאַ יתיב	[1-2] מונח זקף קטן		Small upright	זקף קטן	Prince Zaqéf Qatón
זקף גדול / זקף קטן (עד 3) טפּהאַ כל שר כל משורר	אתנחטאַ זקף גדול / זקף קטן (עד 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)	זרקאַ	סגול (אחרי זרקאַ בלבד), מונח [1-2] סגול	סגולתא, שרי, קבלא	Cluster	סגול	Prince Segól
יתוב, פשטאַ רביע	אין	שלשלת	רתק, מרעם, מרעיס	Chain	שלשלת	Princess Shalshélet*

גֶרֶשׁ		מרעיד		*		Counts and Countesses	
זָקַף קָטַן פִּשְׁטָא יְתִיב (עד 2) רְבִיעַ	אתנחתא כל נסיד למעט טפּקא פִּשְׁטָא יְתִיב (עד 2) רְבִיעַ כל משורר למעט לגְרָמְיָהּ	[מונח] (1-3) [תלישא- קטנה] [מונח/קדמא] [מרקא/מרכא] פִּשְׁטָא	Reach out; Extend	פִּשְׁטָא	Countess Pashtá		
כל שר למעט רְבִיעַ גֶרֶשׁ גרשִׁים תְּלִישָׁא גְדוּלָה	אתנחתא כל נסיד למעט טפּקא פִּשְׁטָא גֶרֶשׁ גרשִׁים לגְרָמְיָהּ	[מונח] [דרגא] [מונח] רְבִיעַ	רביעי Square; Lie down	רְבִיעַ	Count R'vía		
תְּבִיר (עד 2) טפּקא	אתנחתא זָקַף גְּדוּלָה / זָקַף קָטַן סגול תְּבִיר (עד 2), רְבִיעַ כל משורר למעט לגְרָמְיָהּ	[מונח] [תלישא- קטנה] [קדמא/מונח] [מרקא/דרגא] תְּבִיר	תברא Broken	תְּבִיר	Count T'vír		
זָקַף קָטַן פִּשְׁטָא יְתִיב (עד 2)	אתנחתא כל נסיד למעט טפּקא פִּשְׁטָא יְתִיב (עד 2) רְבִיעַ כל משורר למעט לגְרָמְיָהּ	יְתִיב	Sit	יְתִיב	Count Y'tív		
סגול זרקא (עד 3) (מופיעה רק בצלע הראשון של הפסוק)	זָקַף קָטַן / זָקַף גְּדוּלָה זרקא (עד 3), רְבִיעַ כל משורר למעט לגְרָמְיָהּ	[מונח] [תלישא- קטנה] [מונח/קדמא] [מרקא/מונח] זרקא	צינור Pipe or tube; Slingshot	זָרְקָא	Countess Zarqá		

Barons and
Baronesses

<p>כל שר תלישא גדולה, לגרמיה </p>	<p>אתנחתא כל נסיך למעט טפחא רביע תלישא גדולה, פזר</p>	<p>גרש, מונח/קדמא גרש, תלישא-קטנה קדמא גרש, מונח (1-3) תלישא-קטנה קדמא גרש</p>	<p>גרש, טרם, אזלא</p>	<p>Push away, separate</p>	<p>גְרֵשׁ</p>	<p>Baron Géresh</p>
<p>כל שר תלישא גדולה, לגרמיה </p>	<p>אתנחתא כל נסיך למעט טפחא רביע תלישא גדולה, פזר</p>	<p>[מונח] גרשים</p>	<p>שני גרשין, טרסא</p>	<p>Double push away, separate</p>	<p>גְרֵשִׁים</p>	<p>Baron Ger'sháyim</p>
<p>כל שר למעט רביע גרש גרשים</p>	<p>אתנחתא זקף גדול זקף קטן סגול רביע פזר, גרש גרשים</p>	<p>[מונח (1-5)] תלישא גדולה</p>	<p>תלשא</p>	<p>Large detached</p>	<p>תְּלִישָׁא גְדוּלָּה*</p>	<p>Baroness T'lishá G'doláh*</p>
<p>רביע, לגרמיה פזר</p>	<p>אתנחתא זקף גדול זקף קטן סגול רביע גרש, גרשים לגרמיה </p>	<p>[קדמא] [מרקא] לגרמיה </p>		<p>(placed) Alone</p>	<p>(מִנְחָה) לְגַרְמִיָּה </p>	<p>Baron (Munáh) L'Garméh</p>
<p>תכיר פשטא / יתב כל משורר</p>	<p>אתנחתא זקף גדול זקף קטן סגול לגרמיה פזר (עד 8)</p>	<p>מונח [(1-6)] פזר</p>	<p>פזרא</p>	<p>Scatter, sprinkle</p>	<p>פָּזַר *</p>	<p>Baron Pazér*</p>
		<p>serves:</p>	<p>פזר גדול, גלגל</p>	<p>Cow's horns</p>	<p>קַרְנֵי פָּרָה *</p>	<p>Baroness Qarnei Faráh*</p>
	<p>סוף פסוק טפחא זרקא פשטא</p>		<p>מאריך, מארכא</p>	<p>Extension</p>	<p>מֵרְכָא</p>	<p>Servants and Handmaidens Handmaiden Mer'chá</p>

<p>תְּכִיר לְגַרְמִיָּה אֲתַנְחֵתָא, מוֹנַח אֲתַנְחֵתָא, סְגוּלָּה, מוֹנַח סְגוּלָּה, זְקָרָה קָטָן, מוֹנַח זְקָרָה קָטָן, רְבִיעִי, דְּרַגְא מוֹנַח רְבִיעִי, זְרַקְא, מַרְכָּא/מוֹנַח זְרַקְא, תְּלִישָׁא-קַטְנָה מוֹנַח/קַדְמָא מַרְכָּא/מוֹנַח זְרַקְא, מַהְפֵּךְ/מַרְכָּא פְּשֻׁטָא, (עד 3) תְּלִישָׁא-קַטְנָה מַהְפֵּךְ/מַרְכָּא פְּשֻׁטָא, מַרְכָּא/דְּרַגְא תְּכִיר, תְּלִישָׁא-קַטְנָה מַרְכָּא/דְּרַגְא תְּכִיר, פְּזֹר, מוֹנַח פְּזֹר, (עד 5) תְּלִישָׁא גְּדוּלָּה, לְגַרְמִיָּה , גְּרֵשׁ, (עד 3) תְּלִישָׁא-קַטְנָה קַדְמָא גְּרֵשׁ, גְּרֵשִׁים פְּשֻׁטָא</p>	<p>שופר, שופר הולך</p>	<p>Placed</p>	<p>מוֹנַח</p>	<p>Servant Munáh</p>
<p>פְּשֻׁטָא</p>	<p>מהופך, שופר הפוך, שופר מהופך</p>	<p>Inversion; Sudden change</p>	<p>מַהְפֵּךְ</p>	<p>Servant Mahpách</p>
<p>מַהְפֵּךְ פְּשֻׁטָא מַרְכָּא פְּשֻׁטָא דְּרַגְא תְּכִיר</p>	<p>אזלא</p>	<p>Precedes</p>	<p>קַדְמָא</p>	<p>Handmaiden Qadmá</p>

מֵרְכָא תְּכִיר

מֵרְכָא/מוֹנַח

זֶרְקָא,

גֵּרֶשׁ

מוֹנַח רְבִיעַ

תְּכִיר

קִדְמָא זֶרְקָא,

מוֹנַח/קִדְמָא

מֵהֶפֶךְ/מֵרְכָא

פִּשְׁטָא,

קִדְמָא תְּכִיר,

קִדְמָא

מֵרְכָא/דֶּרְגָא

תְּכִיר,

קִדְמָא גֵּרֶשׁ

שישלא

תילשא,
תרצא,
תרסא

תרי
טעמי,
תרי
חוטרין

Step, stair;
Degree

Small
detached

Double
Extension

Inclined

גלגל,
עגלה

Day-old
moon

דֶּרְגָא

תְּלִישָׁא

קְטַנָּה

מֵרְכָא
כְּפֻלָּה *

מֵאֵילָא *

יֶרַח בֶּן-
יוֹמוֹ *

Handmaiden
Dargá

Handmaiden
T'lishá
Q'tanáh

Handmaiden
Mer'chá
K'fuláh*

Handmaiden
M'aylá*

Servant Yérah
Ben Yomó*

Helpers

Divider

פִּסְקָא

Paséq

גְּעִיא

Hyphen

מִקְרָא-

Maqqáf

Bit, bridle
(secondary
accent)

מֵתַג

Méteg