

MUSIC IN THE PSALM SUPERSCRPTIONS

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SUMMARY. In this paper we study the superscriptions of the Psalms, especially those indications of genre and music that are phonetically transcribed in the Bible translations. Following the introduction, the study is divided into 3 sections. The first section provides some important information on the cult and musical role of the superscriptions: how they were created, what is their role, and why some Psalms have superscriptions, while others don't. The second part etymologically and semantically explores those superscriptions, which, apart from genre, also indicate the way of musical performance, the instrumental accompaniment and the role of music next to singing, in general. A total of seven Hebrew concepts are explored concerning their meaning and etymology. The third part deals with superscriptions indicating musical performance and melody. Before going into a detailed analysis of each concept, however, the meaning of the term LAMŌNACÉÁKH is presented. This concept is included in the superscription of 55 Psalms and is translated by Károli with the term “the director of music” each time. This is followed by an analysis of 10 concepts that are specifically related to the melody material, i.e. music. In which tone and accompanied by which instruments should the Psalm be performed, and to the melody of which other song should each be sung. The study concludes by discussing the etymology of the musical term SZELÁH. This musical symbol is not found in the superscriptions, but in the main text of the Psalms.

Keywords: -SIR, MIZMÓR, MIKTÁM, MASZKIL, TÖHILLÁH, TÖFILLÁH, SIGGÁJON, melody, stringed instrument, low pitch, soprano, SZELÁH

The Book of Psalms is one of the most beautiful and one of the richest collections of Old-Testament Hebrew religious lyric poetry. All Psalms were created in the Semitic spirit that never lost its poetic sense, regardless of age or historical endowment, which was always open to aesthetics and

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could transform even the most dramatic reality into wonderful music. The heart of an entire people is in these poems. If the individual utters them, the community stands beside him, and when the congregation raises its voice, there is the individual as a member of the community who fits into the great harmony of the lyrical picture with his issues.

The universal questions of man are uttered in the Psalms in the most perfect orchestration. Pain and suffering, grief and loss, and joy and exaltation, rejoicing and praise interweave poetic imagery and fill specific Hebrew linguistic expressions with content. The pain of the poems, however, is not a closed tragic image, nor is the joy self-serving or artificial. The Old Testament man in these songs always stands before God, always manifests openness towards heaven and is receptive to reflections from heaven. This explains why not only the pre-Christian age, but also Christianity itself, was so keen on the Psalms and incorporated them in its worship, liturgy, singing, prayer and preaching.

Two important things can be stated about every work of the Book of Psalms. Each one is a poem, i.e. a lyric creation, or more precisely a literary work, in which a known or unknown author uses literary methods, formal and stylistic features for expressing content. The second important thing is that all the works of the book are music, in which the aesthetic beauty, height and depth, dynamics of intonation and emotional world of the individual voice and the community voice, i.e. the chorus are intertwined with the melody of the era's instruments.

In this paper, we will study the music of the Psalms. We will take a closer look at the Psalm superscriptions, specifically their musical, artistic references and indications.

I. General Information on Psalm Superscriptions

Not all the 150 Psalms have superscriptions. These psalms are usually called anonymous psalms. In the Hungarian language we also use the term orphan psalms. These psalms are the following: 1, 2, 10, 33, 43, 71, 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 135, 136, 137, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150. A total of 35 psalms.

However, the lack of superscriptions does not mean that these psalms were not sung and there was no musical accompaniment in their performance. It is probable that the musical presentation of these psalms was well known, thus a separate written record of the musical reminder was not considered important for their inclusion in the temple repertoire.²

² H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen [Psalms]*, Berlin, 1980, p. 15.

The superscriptions usually contain the name of the author, the circumstances under which the psalm was created, the genre or collection it belongs to, and the musical notations we wish to examine in this study.

Nevertheless, before we move on to this, it should be noted that in 18 psalms with superscriptions there are no musical indications whatsoever. Presumably, the musical performance and instrumental accompaniment of these psalms was also well known. These psalms are the following: 11, 14, 17, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36, 37, 70, 72, 86, 90, 103, 138, 144.

II. Genre and Musical Indications

In the psalm superscriptions there are several indications, which are not only musical, but also genre signals. There are 7 such indications in total.

1. The first is the term SIR and its feminine form is SIRÁH. However, the female figure is only found in the superscription of Psalm 18, and in Psalm 42,9, and the female plural form in Am. 8,3.³

The meaning of SIR is song. (Kecskeméthy: word-song, song; Károli: song; according to the new translation as well; LXX=ode) It means, however, a song, or more precisely a cult song, performed in worship accompanied by an instrument. (Am. 6,5 calls the instrument K^oLÉJ – SIR. Cf. 1 Chron. 15, 16; 16, 42; 2 Chron. 5, 5, 13; 23, 13.)

In contrast, according to O. Kaiser, the SIR is a song that has only been sung.⁴ Nevertheless, if we consider the data of 1 Chron. 6, 16 k; 25, 6 k; 2 Chron. 5, 13; 23, 18 on singing, we see that it was performed, sung, singing and music are almost inseparable. In this way, SIR usually means vocal singing as well as the cantillation of song words to music⁵). This is proven by Am. 5,23 by the term HĂMÓN SIRIM, which means the hum, noise, verve of the song. The meaning of the term HĂMÓN is: noise, blare, racket, hum.

The concept is not found only in the Book of Psalms. Apart from the Psalter, it appears in several Bible passages. Its meaning is rich and varied. It can mean cheerful songs (Gen. 31:27; Isa. 24: 9; Am. 8:10; Proverbs 25:20), love songs (Ez. 33, 32) as well as the most beautiful song of all, the Song of Songs (Ēn 1,1) (I 1,1).

³ István Kecskeméthy, *Bevezetés az Ó Testamentumba [Introduction into the Old Testament]*, Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, Teológus Kör, 1909-1910, p. 505.

⁴ O. Kaiser: *Einleitung in das AT. [Introduction into the Old Testament]*, 1975. p. 319.

⁵ H. J. Kraus: *op.cit.* p. 14ff.

It comes up 31 times in the Psalms, and in many cases it stands beside the MIZMÓR inscription (cf. Psalms 30; 48; 65; 66; 68; 75; 76; 83; 87; 88; 92; 108) without there being a concrete demarcation, a separator between them.

Nevertheless, a comparison of some biblical passages suggests that SIR, compared to MIZMÓR, is a specific technical term for temple songs. This is also evidenced by the superscriptions where the SIR is a collection indicator. E.g. SIR HAMMA^oÁLÓT (= A song of ascents is the inscription of Psalms 120-134). Furthermore, the names SIR CIJJON (= Song of Zion) and SIR BÉJT JÁHVÉ (= Song of Jehovah's Temple, 1 Chron. 25, 6), in which SIR refers to the worship songs that praise the abode of the glory of God, Zion and the temple itself.⁶

2. The second indication is MIZMÓR⁷, which means: song (Károli: psalm, New translation likewise; Kecskeméthy: harp song; LXX: psalm).

MIZMÓR appears only in psalm superscriptions 57 times. 34 times by itself: Psalms 3, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 29, 31, 38, 39, 40, 41, 47, 49, 50, 51, 62, 63, 64, 73, 77, 79, 82, 85, 98, 101, 109, 110, 139, 140, 141, 143.

In several cases (a total of 35) it appears together with the term L^oDÁVID, and it means a song, which is performed accompanied by a musical instrument similarly to SIR.⁸

The instruments accompanying MIZMÓR should be sought among stringed instruments (Cf. 33, 2; 71, 22; 98, 5; 147, 7; 149, 3). This is confirmed by the etymology of the word, which can be traced back to the verb ZÁMAR.⁹ According to Leviticus 25, 3.4 and Isaiah 5, 6, the original meaning of ZÁMAR is: to pluck off, to cut off, to nip, to cut out grapevine. It is related to the Assyrian word "zamâru", which means: he/she is singing, while the noun "zammern" means: singer. The actual Old-Testament meaning of ZÁMAR can be derived by comparing the original and the Assyrian meaning: playing music (Judges 5, 3; Károli: singing; Isaiah 12, 5; 2 Sam. 22, 50; 2 Chronicles 16, 9), playing an instrument (Károli: sing to Him; 33, 2), playing a stringed instrument (carpere = rip, tear, break), singing a song (47, 8). According to its frequent occurrence with the particle L^o, we can state that it is a song that does not praise the temple like the SIR, but praises Yahweh, the King and the Savior (Cf. 9, 12; 30, 5; 47, 7; 71, 33).

⁶ Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen [The Psalms]*, Tübingen, 1996, p. 125.

⁷ H. J. Kraus, *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸ H. J. Kraus, *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹ Franz Delitzsch, *Die Psalmen [The Psalms]*, Leipzig, 1894, p. 89.

3. The third indication is MIKTÁM. Its meaning is uncertain, it is a hard-to-define concept (Károli translates it phonetically, or: a song as a precious stone; New translation: testimony; Kecskeméthy: translates it as a musical sign, meaning: blunt, LXX: ejsz sztélográfián.)

MIKTÁM appears only in the superscriptions of the Psalms 16 and 56-60. Gesenius calls it a “dark word,”¹⁰ whose meaning is unclear. In late Jewish philosophical literature it refers to the epigram, but this is not a fitting translation for the Psalms. There is hardly any Psalter researcher, who hasn’t somehow tried to decipher the meaning of the concept. Mowinckel, for example, tries to explain its meaning with the Assyrian verb *Katâmu*=clamp, cover, wrap, arguing that it means atonement, the covering of sin. Thus, MIKTÁM means an atonement song. According to F. Hitzig and R. Tournay, it stems from the verb *KÁTAM*=hide, cover, thus MIKTÁM means an intimate prayer. Others (including Luther) rely on the noun *KETEM*, which means gold. However, Gesenius considers this etymology incorrect.¹¹

The Syrian meaning of the verb *KÁTAM* is: to be filthy, dirty, and its targum translation is: contaminated with blood. In the Old Testament it appears as *hapax legomenon* in Jer. 2,22. Its meaning: to prove to be an indelible stain; according to Károli: to stay recorded. The translations “to stay filthy” or “to stay dirty” are a bit far-fetched. Context-wise, Károli’s translation is more accurate, and when compared to the translation of LXX: stelography and the translation: a song as a precious stone, we can state that MIKTÁM means a song that was carved in stone, recorded, and its message was kept.

According to H.J. Hermisson¹² there was a public scroll in the temple of Jerusalem as well, where the deeds of the praying person were recorded as well as what God had done to him and for him. This is referred to by the scroll in Psalm 40, 8, as the manuscript of the glorifying song that was read in the temple. Based on H.J. Hermisson’s finding, H.J. Kraus concludes that MIKTÁM is an indication referring to the stelographic publication of the song in question.¹³ Therefore, the Psalms 16 and 56-60 were songs recorded in writing in an institutional setting, performed with a musical accompaniment.

¹⁰ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das AT [Hebrew and Aramaic Hand Dictionary of the OT]*, Heidelberg, 1962, p. 423.

¹¹ H. J. Kraus, *ibid.*, p. 18-19.

¹² H.J. Hermisson: *Sprache und Ritus im altisraelitischen Kult [Language and Rite in the Ancient Israelite Cult]*. In *WMANT* 19, 1965. 45.

¹³ H.J: Kraus: *op.cit.* p. 19 and 462.

4. The fourth indication is a MASZKIL¹⁴. It appears 13 times in the Psalms (32; 42; 44; 45; 52; 53; 54; 55; 74; 78; 88; 89; 142). There are many questions regarding its meaning: (Károli translates it as: teaching, Kecskeméthy: teaching poem, but prefers the translation of premeditation, New translation: teaching poem, Lisowsky: hymn; Luther: education; LXX: pause). The concept: its translation as teaching poem, teaching or meditation is based on the meaning Hif'il of the verb SZÁKAL: to be wise, to act wisely, to do right; to make smart; to teach. In this case, MASZKIL means a teaching, educational poem. Its cochmatic features reveal the pedagogical, cautionary, and constructive education system of human wisdom, cleverness, and intellect.

On the other hand, the exegesis of the psalms with the indication MASZKIL proves that not all psalms labelled with MASZKIL are educational poems. The exceptions are Psalms 32 and 78, where the influence of the philosophy school and the pedagogical intent of the psalm are undoubtedly present (Cf. 32,8 and 78, 1-4; MĀSĀL = slogan, metaphor, parable, profound and thought-provoking poem).

We translate the concept quite differently when comparing Psalm 47, 8 and 2 Chronicles 30, 22 (Cf. Gesenius: SZÁKAL Hif 6, meaning: to play, to sing artistically).¹⁵ In Psalm 47, 8 the expression ZAMM^oRU MASZKIL: "chant to him" (New translation), as well as: "sing with wisdom" (Károli), which is not entirely accurate. 2 Chronicles 30, 22 refers to the Levites as: HAMASZKILIM SZÉKEL THÓB L^oJAHVÉ (Károli calls them: wise and good-natured to the Lord; New translation: they performed their duties competently). The expression, according to H. J. Kraus (the same way L. Delekat) refers to the skilful and artistic formulation and form of the songs and poems performed by the Levites. In this sense, 47, 8 refers to an artistic song, and the correct translation is: sing an artistic song. MASZKIL is thus a collection of songs created with a special artistic concern, a love of form and a need for style. If we accept L. Delekat's position that MASZKIL has much to do with the "new song" mentioned in 96, 1, then we can say that these artistically composed songs were created in the spirit of the prophetic charismatic principle and the philosophy school, and became favorite and appreciated poems of the cult repertoire.¹⁶

¹⁴ W. Gesenius, *ibid.*, p. 465.

¹⁵ W. Gesenius, *ibid.*, p. 786.

¹⁶ L. Delekat: *Probleme der Psalmenüberschriften [Problems of Psalm Superscriptions]*. ZAW 76, 1964, p. 282ff.

5. The fifth indication is T^oHILLÁH¹⁷. It appears as a superscription only in 145, 1, and it is not only a concept of collection, but also one of genre. It appears in the following places in the Psalter: 22,4. 26; 33, 1; 34, 2; 40, 4; 48, 11; 65, 2; 66, 8; 71, 8; 71, 14; 100, 4; 106, 12. 47; 109, 1; 119, 171; 145, 1; 147, 1; 148, 14; 149, 1.

Its translation is almost definitely praise, praising song, glory and as a technical term: hymn. As a literary term denoting a genre, it refers to both the individual's praising, glorifying song (22, 26; 65, 2; 71, 8; 119, 171) and the community's hymn of thanksgiving and worship (100, 4). The etymology of T^oHILLÁH can be derived from the meaning Pil'el of the verb II. HÁLAL: to cheer, to exalt, to praise, to glorify. In the context of 100, 4, it is synonymous with TÓDÁH (praise, exaltation; Cf. II. JÁDÁH – in Hif'il: to praise, to exalt with a grateful heart; Cf. 69, 31; 95, 2; 147, 7, etc.). Thus, the T^oHILLÁH represents the totality of songs (hymns, odes) that sing the liberating acts of JAHVÉ in an elevated tone, solemnly, with an almost ecstatic feeling.

6. The sixth indication is T^oFILLAH. It denotes both the individual's prayer due to suffering, distress, and misery (4, 2; 102, 2), and the complaint of the people about their collective emotions and interests (80, 5).

It appears in the Book of Psalms in the following superscriptions: 117, 1; 86, 1; 90, 1; 102, 1; és 142, 1. Etymologically, it can be traced back to the meaning Hitpa'el of the verb II. PÁLAL: to ask, to beseech, to pray for others. Thus, T^oFILLÁH means the songs that represent the requests, prayers, and tragic situations revealed to Yahweh. The term may be a genre indicator as well, but it may also mean the collection itself, as evidenced by 72:20: "This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse", that is, the collection that includes prayers that are said to come from David.

7. The seventh indication, SIGGÁJON, appears in the Bible only two times:¹⁸ in Psalm 7, 1 as a superscription and in the editorial introduction to Habakkuk's Prayer (Hab 3, 1). The concept is difficult to translate and to interpret. Károli transcribes it phonetically, the New Translation simply translates it with the term song. If we take into account the meaning of the Assyrian verb "səgû": to be angry, to complain fiercely, then the Hebrew SIGGÁJON means: song of complaint. This is also supported by the Aramaic related word, which is used to denote the complaining howling of camels.¹⁹

¹⁷ István Kecskeméthy, *ibid.*, p. 510.

¹⁸ W. Gesenius, *ibid.*, p. 807.

¹⁹ Friedrich Baethgen, *Die Psalmen [The Psalms]*, Göttingen, 1904, p. 15.

However, if the term is derived from the Hebrew word *SÁGÁH* = wandering, rampaging, it is a collection indicator that does not refer to alternating and fluttering rhythms, but to the state of mind of the ridden singer. In this case the correct translation of *SIGGÁJON* is dithyramb (Kecskeméthy), which is “a lyrical genre between the ode and the battle song, which is not always easily distinguishable from the above. It is pervaded by a vehement, exultant cheer, with passion up to ecstasy. This makes its line of thought discursive, fluttering and its rhythm often irregular.”²⁰

III. Indications of Musical Performance and Melody

Before we move on to detailing the above terms, the conceptual clarification of *LAM^oNACÉAKH* is necessary, as all other musical indications are associated with it. The term appears in the superscriptions of 55 psalms, so it can be called a key term. Károli translates it in all psalm superscriptions with the term “for the director of music...”.

Etymologically, the meaning of *NÁCAKH* according to Ezra 3, 8; 1 Chron. 23, 4; 2 Chron. 2, 1; 34, 12: to be outstanding, to excel, to lead, to conduct. Thus, the participle meaning is: supervisor, conductor (Kecskeméthy), music master (H. Seidel)²¹, director of music (Károli), choral conductor. According to 1 Chronicles 15:21, however, the verb means to play an instrument, to play music in a liturgical sense. Accordingly, the term *LAM^oNACÉAKH* is merely a musical expression, meaning the musical presentation of the song in question. According to Kecskeméthy, in 1 Chronicles 15, 21 it is an act of dealing with unnamed temple music, from which he concludes that the term may also mean a solo singer. The translation is acceptable if we consider that almost all the psalms with the superscription *LAM^oNACÉAKH* are suitable for solo singing.

How should we understand the *L^o* particle though? If we look at the views of the representatives of Old-Testament royal ideology (S. Mowinckel, A. Bentzen), the expression *M^oNACÉAKH* (exquisite, excellent) is the attribute of David, or the King David, and, in this sense, the particle is *L^o* -auctoris, because they are songs composed by David, the excellent singer and musician. On the other hand, if we accept the dative meaning (R.F. Edelman), we are dealing with songs that have been added to the repertoire of the temple choir and needed to be practiced. The translations of Aquila: *tó*

²⁰ *Magyar Irodalmi Lexikon [Hungarian Literary Encyclopaedia]*. Bp., 1965. I. p. 257.

²¹ H. Seidel, *Az imádkozók nyomában [Auf den Spuren der Beter]*, Ev. Verlanganstalt, Berlin, p. 91.

nikopójo, Hieronymus: *victori* and LXX: *ejsz to telosz* are almost completely inexplicable to today's Psalm researchers. Therefore, Gesenius proposes an abstract translation of the concept: for liturgical, musical performance.²²

Should we accept any of the interpretations, it is quite clear that the superscription was meant for the conductor, the musical director or the person providing the musical accompaniment. In this case, the superscription was meant to indicate to which melody the psalm was sung to. The melody, however, was not necessarily a cultic musical melody. At least the superscription does not specify this. Thus, we can think of a secular melody as well.

The following indications expressly refer to musical performance and melody:

1. BIN^oGINOT. The term appears in the superscription of 7 psalms²³ (Zsolt 4; 6; 54; 55; 61; 67; 76) and refers to playing stringed instruments (Isa. 38, 20; Hab. 3, 19; Psalm 77, 7), as well as to the stringed instrument itself. Its basic meaning is the verb NÁGAN: to touch strings, to play on them. These are, therefore, songs that were performed with a stringed instrument (The translation of György Komáromi Cs.: „for the main percussion instrument” – is almost inexplicable).²⁴
2. HANN^oKHILOT. As a musical term, it appears only in the superscription of 5, 1 and its translation is uncertain (Károli translates it phonetically). Grammatically speaking, there are two translation possibilities for this term, and Psalm researchers accept the probability of both (Kecskeméthy I., H. J. Kraus, H. Seidel).²⁵ The first translation possibility is from the verb NÁKHAL=to receive a heritage, based on the noun NAKHĀLĀH=inheritance, property. Accordingly, the term means that the Psalm was sung to the melody of another song, beginning with “Inheritance...”.
According to the second translation, the term stems from the Pi'el participle of the verb II. KHĀLĀL (Cf. 1 Kings 1, 40: to play the flute) and the noun KHĀLĪL = whistle, flute, which means that HAN^oKHILÓT denotes psalms that were performed with a flute accompaniment (Kecskeméthy: flute, New translation: wind instrument; H. Seidel: oboe).

²² W. Gesenius, *ibid.* p. 517.

²³ Klaus Seybold, *ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁴ György Komáromi Csipkés: Psalm 4,1, *Magyar Biblia, avagy az Ó és Új Testamentum könyveiből álló teljes Szent Írás a Magyar Nyelven... [Hungarian Bible, or the Full Scripture of the Old and New Testament Books in Hungarian language]*, Leiden, 1685.

²⁵ István Kecskeméthy, *ibid.*, p. 508. / H. J. Kraus, *ibid.*, p. 22. / H. Seidel, *ibid.*, p. 94.

3. 'ĀLMĀKHALAT. It is only found in the superscriptions 53, 1 and 88, 1, and if we consider the LXX translation: *hūper maeleth*, the term is a liturgical indication, whose meaning is unknown. Károli transcribes it phonetically. Kecskeméthy merely notes that he is completely uncertain. The New Translation, on the other hand, provides the translation “onto the melody of the song beginning with disease”. This translation is based on the meaning QAL of the verb KHĀLĀH: to be weak, powerless, sick, and thus the superscription refers to songs that were sung to the melody beginning with “Disease...”. However, if we consider the meaning of the Ethiopian synonym: playing a musical instrument, singing, the superscription indicates psalms that had to be sung with melancholy. This musical tone and mode of presentation corresponds to the contents of both Psalm 53 and 88. Other scholars (e.g. H. Seidel),²⁶ however, associate it with the meaning of the noun MĀKHÓL = dance, circle dance (Cf. Jer. 31, 13; Ps. 30, 12; 149, 3; 150, 4). In this case the translation is: for performing in the way of a circle dance. According to the combination with KHĀLĪL=whistle, flute: it was a song performed accompanied by a wind instrument (See the translation of György Komáromi Cs.: “for singing with blown (wind) instruments”).
4. HAS^oMINIT. It appears in the superscriptions of Psalms 6, 1 and 12, 1. Károli transcribes it phonetically, the New Translation translates it with deep-pitched stringed instrument and deep pitch. The interpretation of the term gives way to two translation possibilities. The first one: eight-stringed instrument (György Komáromi Cs.²⁷: to the eight). For the eighth). This means that it is a poem sung accompanied by a stringed instrument. However, this translation is not correct, because the historical edition of the instrumentation is quite different. Therefore, the second translation is more appropriate.
In 1 Chronicles 15, 20-21, the term stands next to 'AL'ĀLĀMOT (Károli: like virgins), which means that it denotes a high octave sound, that is a soprano. According to Kecskeméthy's translation: bass, it is a deep octave sound, meaning that men sang these poems.
5. 'AL-HAGGITIT. The translation of the concept is questionable. We are actually talking about the superscriptions of 8, 1; 81, 1 and 84, 1, which are phonetically transcribed by Károli. The New Translation provides the version: to the melody of the song that begins with

²⁶ H. Seidel, *ibid.*, p. 98.

²⁷ György Komáromi Csipkés, *ibid.*, Psalm 6, 1.

“those who tread the grapes”. Kecskeméthy²⁸ suggests two translation options. One starts out from the noun GAT, which means a press-house created in a rock, where grapes were squeezed. Thus, the translation of the concept is: song for wine pressing. More likely, however, is the second translation, which traces the etymology to the name of the city of Gath. In other words, they are songs sung in Gathic style, with the performance technique and melodic material from the city of Gath.²⁹

6. - 'AL-'AJJELET HASSAKHAR. This indication appears in 22, 1. 'AJJÁLÁH, in the superscription *status constructus* meaning: female deer, and SAKHAR stands for dawn, flush of dawn, sunrise. It is a psalm that is sung to the melody of the song “The dawn deer” (New Translation) or the song of the deer at the flush of dawn (Kecskeméthy) (Gy. Komáromi Cs.: “the female deer at dawn”).
7. -'ALMÚT- LABBÉN. This indication can be found in the superscription of Psalm 9, 1 and has several translations. If we separate the word ALMUT with a maqqéff, then it is a song sung to the melody of the song beginning with “The death of the boy”.³⁰

On the other hand, if we reposit the consonant material of the term 'ALMÚT (Gesenius, H. J. Kraus), we get a completely different reading: 'ĀLĀMŌT, which is the plural form of 'ĀLMĀH = virgin, maiden, generally: female person until giving birth. This expression is present in the superscription of 46, 1, meaning in the context of 1 Chron. 15, 20: for girls' voices, high pitch, soprano. This is the case in 9, 1 as well, the song was created for a soprano performance (Kecskeméthy's translation is: girlishly).

This translation modifies the meaning of the last word of 48, 15. The last word of the poem is not “to the end,” but “soprano”: “For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide... Soprano.” In this case, the phrase indicates that after the performance of the Psalm the chorus of the girls will be heard.³¹

8. 'AL-SOSANNIM. The indication appears in the superscriptions of four psalms: 45, 1; 69, 1; as well as 60, 1; 80, 1, where the expression is followed by the word 'ĒDŪT = testimony, law, ordinance. The word

²⁸ István Kecskeméthy, *ibid.*, p. 515.

²⁹ L. Delekat, *Problemen der Psalmenüberschriften [Problems of Psalm Superscriptions]*, ZAW 76, 1964, 293ff.

³⁰ H. J. Kraus, *ibid.*, p. 27.

³¹ Roland de Vaux, *Das Alte Testament und seine Lebensordnungen II [The Old Testament and its Rules of Life II]*, 1962, p. 222.

SÓSANNÁH means lily, but it may be a common denominator of several flower species. Translation of the superscription: “To the melody of the song beginning with lilies” (Kecskeméthy: in the way of lilies). In Psalms 60 and 80, the word 'ÉDÚT may refer to the regular observance of the melody’s accuracy. (New translation: admonition).

9. 'AL-TASKHÉT. The phrase can be found in 57, 1; 58, 1; 59, 1; and 75, 1. For its translation we need to look at Isaiah 65, 8. The marked passage speaks of a song that was sung at wine pressing, and it began with: “Don’t destroy it, there is still a blessing in it.” According to the New Translation, the indicated Psalms were sung to the melody of the song “Don’t destroy it”. It is therefore possible that this was the melody of the song indicated in Isaiah 65: 8. Kecskeméthy translates the Hif'il form of the term SÁKHAT with the verb: to ruin, to destroy and this is more correct. Accordingly, we are talking about the melody of the song “don’t destroy it (because, etc.)”.³²
10. 'AL-JÓNÁT 'ÉLEM R^oKHQIM. It is included in the superscription of 56, 1 as a denotation of the melody of that psalm. If the term is translated literally, it is the melody of the song that begins with the “The quiet dove among strangers” (Gy. Komáromi Cs.: “the dove of the nobleman who is away”).³³ However, the text correction of the word 'ÉLEM = to silence, suppress also provides two other translation options. 'ÉLIM can mean deity, but also oak. Thus, the superscription refers to the song “The dove of the distant oaks” (Kecskeméthy) or the song “The dove of the distant gods.” According to H. Gunkel’s text correction, the correct translation is “According to the Greek mode of the remote islands.”³⁴ Nevertheless, this translation referring to Isaiah 66, 19 is quite debatable.

Musical Indications in the Lyrics

We can find musical indications and references to music not only in the superscriptions of the Psalms, but also in the lyrics themselves. This indication is the term SZELÁH.

³² István Kecskeméthy, *ibid.*, p. 598.

³³ György Komáromi Cs., *ibid.*, Psalm 56, 1.

³⁴ H. Gunkel: *Einleitung in die Psalmen [Introduction into the Psalms]*. Göttingen, 1933. Vol. II., p. 457.

In the Psalter it appears 71 times, and beside the Psalms we can only find it in Hab. 3, 3. 9. 13. It is usually present at the end of a text unit that is consistent both in terms of meaning and content. In Psalms 55, 20; 57, 4, and Hab. 3, 3. 9, however, it is placed in the middle of the poem or at the end of the verse. In 3, 9 and 24, 10 it is placed at the end of the poem. In 9, 17 it stands next to the term HIGGÁJÓN.

György Komáromi Cs.³⁵ translates HIGGÁJÓN as a thig for contemplation. Kecskeméthy translates it as: roaring music, while the New translation simply uses the word interlude.

The verb HÁGÁH, as the basis of the etymology of the term HIGGÁJÓN, can mean the growling of the lion over its prey (Isa. 31, 4), the moaning of the dove (Isa. 38, 14), the lamentation of man (Isa. 16, 7), the meditation on religious issues (Psalm 1, 2), pondering about something (Isa. 33, 18), poetic speaking (Psalm 115, 7), and praise (Psalm 35, 28; 71, 24). Thus, the basic meaning is to meditate, to think. Accordingly, the SZELÁH next to the HIGGÁJON is a signal that calls for a deeper reflection, pondering and thinking about what is said (See: György Komáromi Cs.).

On the other hand, in 92, 4 the term HIGGÁJÓN means the sounding of stringed instruments, from which we can conclude that SZELÁH is a musical or vocal “intermezzo” with a doxological purpose³⁶. (See Kecskeméthy and LXX: the translation *diápszálmá*, which refers to instrumental interlude.)

However, if we consider the verb SZÁLAL = to lift up, to throw high in the air as the etymological basis, then there are two more translation possibilities. The first one is that SZELÁH means raising the tone, that is hitting a higher pitch, and the second one is that it means raising the eyes. In this case, the praying man raises his gaze to reflect on the passages he has heard or read so far. Thus, SZELÁH indicates repetition: *redi sursum cantor*, i.e. *da capo*.³⁷ If we consider the meaning of the Assyrian noun “sullu” = prayer, it may be a cultic indication that calls for prayer, bowing before God.

Overall

By examining the genre and musical symbols in the Psalms in detail, the researcher may draw several conclusions. We shall only mention three.

³⁵ György Komáromi Cs., *ibid.*, Psalm 9, 17.

³⁶ S. Mowinckel: *Offersang og sangoffer*. 1951. p. 494ff.

³⁷ R. Stieb: *Die Versdubletten des Psalters [The Psalter's Verse Duplicates]*. ZAW 57, 1939, 104 and I. Kecskeméthy: *op. cit.*, p. 517.

The first one is that any reference to genre and text, or even poetry is intended to make the lyrics literally, formally and content-wise expressive, artistic, aesthetic and beautiful. The content should be clear and unequivocal, according to the rules of poetry.

The second one is that musical notations and references should make sure at an artistic level that the melody, the music is the carrier and expression of the content. The music should carry the joy, vivaciousness, gratitude, or even the mourning, complaining and screaming cry that is also contained in the lyrics. Therefore, the text is sometimes sung as a solo song, sometimes as a choral work accompanied by instruments, and sometimes it lets only the music play.

The third one is that attention is paid precisely and at an artistic level to harmony and aesthetics, both poetically and musically, so that the lyrics and melody express the Hebrew man's gratitude and praise towards God in perfect harmony. In this context, both poetry and music are the actions of the Hebrew man in glorifying God.

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