

## The Accents of the Hebrew Bible: Handout

The complete paper and slides for this presentation are available through the Music page:

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The French organist and composer, Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura, in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, following much experimentation, inferred that the signs below the text for the prose books correspond exactly to a tonic sol-fa scale with a raised fifth: c d e f, g# A B C. Her default setting for the poetry scale is: d# e f# g A B C.

In the winter of 2014, I wrote a computer program with rules based on her work, to convert the Hebrew text into Music XML. The music conversion is well defined. When a set of rules is applied, it is unambiguous, indicating that these Scriptures are a programmed art-form from ancient minds.

All the pitches are relative to the tonic (e = doh in moveable doh solfege), the third note of the prose scale and the second note of the poetry scale. The tonic is signified by the *silluq*, under the letter. This sign occurs at the end of every verse. The vast majority of verses also come to a point of rest on the A subdominant. The sign, ^ the *atnah*, is the primary disjunctive mark in all such verses.



Accents in part of 2 Samuel 19.1

The first thing to note about the accents is that there are exactly eight signs below the letters for the prose and seven for the poetry. This was the first of the clues that was pointed out and followed by Haïk-Vantoura. The second clue she followed is that the signs below the text occur in *every* verse, but the signs above the text do not, and *are entirely absent* in about 14% of the verses of the Bible (18% in the poetry, 12% in the prose). There are many sections of the Bible that illustrate her work well. One to note is David's lament over Absalom, a favorite also among 16<sup>th</sup> century composers.

19.1 וַיִּרְגַּז      הַמֶּלֶךְ      וַיַּעַל      עֲלֵיתָ עַל      הַשָּׁעַר      וַיִּבֶן

va - yir - gaz    ha - me - lek    va - ya - al    al a - li - yat    ha - sha - ar    va -

And the    king    shud - dered    and he went    up, up    to the upper    chamber over the    gate / and

וַיֵּיבֶקֶה      אָמַר      בְּלִכְתּוֹ      בְּנֵי      אַבְשָׁלוֹם      בְּנֵי      בְנֵי      אַבְשָׁלוֹם

yeiv-ke    ve - koh    a - mar    be - lek - to    be - ni    av - sha - lom    be - ni    ve - ni    av - sha - lom

wept. /    And    thus he said    as he went,    My    son, Ab - sa - lom,    my    son, my son,    Ab - sa - lom.

מִי      יִתֵּן      מוֹתִי      אֲנִי      תַחֲתֶיךָ      אַבְשָׁלוֹם      בְּנֵי      בְנֵי

mi    yi -    tein    mu - ti    a -    ni    tach - tei - ka    av - sha - lom    be - ni    ve - ni

Would he had    given /    death    to    me instead of    you,    Ab - sa - lom,    my    son, my    son.

David's Lament as decoded using the deciphering key of Haïk-Vantoura