

## Sacred music in the Old Testament

Ioan CHICIUDEAN<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The first connection, through music and sacred creation, between man and God is reported in the first book of the Holy Bible, Genesis (Genesis). We do not have a reference of the first book specifying the time or the way in which music (the sacred creation), respectively the sang word, with its entire shape and dimension, has been planted in the human being by God. Thus, we can understand that from the genesis man has been endowed by God with one of the most beautiful gifts-the gift of melos- that can be expressed both vocal and by musical instruments.*

Key-words: *analysis, first instruments, part harp*

### 1. Introduction

The sacred music from the time of the patriarchs can be called a constant of the spiritual life, a part of each religion's culture be it large or small, which kept evolving in time, from the psalms, towards small byzantine musical notation and incantations, to the great sacred masterpieces, such as *Messa da Requiem*. Thus, man, the transmitter, expresses its feelings in this harmony of the Universe. The first words from the Holy Scripture that talk about music and the art of music can be seen in the Genesis (Genesis) 4:21. Iabal's brother was Iubal. According to the Holy Scripture he is called the father of all that play the harp and wind instruments. Here we can see the first reference to the musical instruments.

### 2. General aspects

In this chapter we will illustrate the first form of the two musical instruments that were used in the tent, temple and later on in the synagogue during the religious ceremonies. Harp is an instrument that accompanies music ever since its genesis following a determined and well known way from the Meeting Tent, temple and synagogue up to the rites of today's world, but it is still present at both protestants

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<sup>1</sup> Transilvania University of Braşov, ioan\_tenor@yahoo.com

and neoprottestants. This instrument creates many sounds and even accords, playing in different registers.

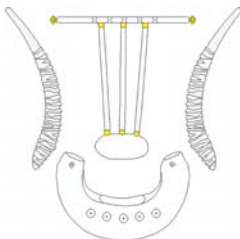
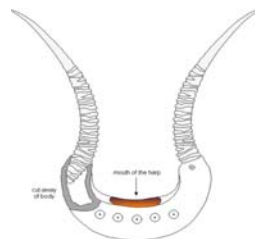
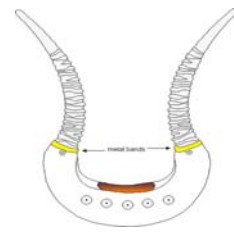
Moreover we can also observe the elements of the harp. This lyrical instrument was part of the Mosaic religious music, begging God to be part of the Mosaic liturgy. We can also add the fact that there are some other musical instruments used to accompany the Psalms at the temple which are also mentioned in the text of the Torah. These will be classified according to the three criteria that suggest the great number of instruments manufactured by Iubal and not only. (Genesis 4:21).

Ex.1-2

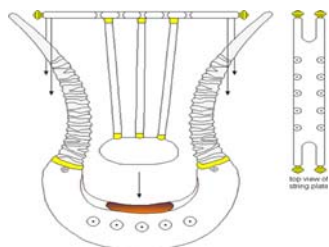
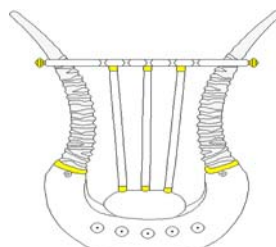
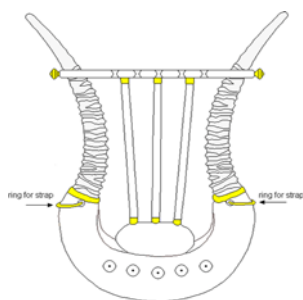
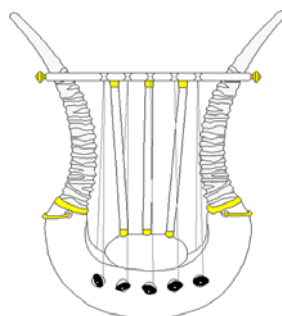
HARP, n., nevel(ně'-vël)<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The first part-harp

Ex. 3-9

1. *Parts of the Harp*2. *Inserted Animal Horns and Mouth of the Harp*3. *Metal Bands and Trimmed Horns*

<sup>2</sup> Dennis F. McCorkle. *The Davidic Cipher*, Copyright © 2012 by Dennis F. McCorkle, All Rights Reserved, D.F. McCorkle Music and eBook Publications, Hartford, Connecticut USA.

4. *Slotted String Assembly*5. *Attached String Assembly*6. *Rings for the Harp Strap*7. *Ten Strings and Tuning Keys*

Eight Harps:

“and

1. Zechariah, and

2. Aziel, and

3. Shemiramoth, and

4. Jehiel, and

5. Unni, and

6. Eliab, and

7. Maaseiah, and

8. Benaiah, with harps on alamoht;”—1 Chronicles 15:20.

#### 4. Harp

Ex. 10

<sup>3</sup> McCorkle, Dennis. *The Davidic Cipher* (Colorado: Outskirts Press, Inc., 2010), pp. 27-36.

נבל

## Harp

### Various Coins from the bar Kochba revolt depicting the Harp



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<sup>4</sup> Dennis McCorkle, *HARP, The Instruments of the Bible, vers 2.2*, by Dennis F. McCorkle, All Rights Reserved, D.F. McCorkle Music and eBook Publications, Hartford, Connecticut USA. Copyright © 2012

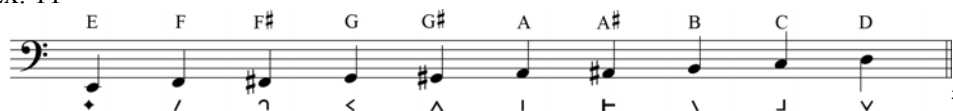
Among all the musical instruments presented in the Bible and represented on Bar Kochba's coins, the first one is an unusual one-string instrument called NEbal (in Hebrew)- the meaning being that of "leather wine bottle". The instrument we are going to refer to is a harp made from a bulb which was pierced in one of its chambers and some metal pieces fixed some animal horns (antelope). The main part of the instrument was built according to the oval shape of a bowl in which the Jews mixed salad. It was similar with a bowl opened on its upper side. This piece (mentioned in Amos 6:5 as the mouth of the harps) allows the string-instrument maker to carve inside the instrument and fix the horns there.

The ten strings (or probably more) were attached on each part of a slate named row and ended at the opposite side of the tuning clef where they were introduced in both sides of the main body. This floating now makes an assembly which moved freely on 2 or 3 horns or even more vertical columns which were similar with a big potato. This did not just cover the access hole on the harp mouth but it also allowed a vibration that was transmitted inside the sounding chamber. All the wires were completely fixed by the tension created between the superior slate (slotted string plate) and the tuning clefs. Apart from the traditional harps whose strings have different lengths, the ten strings of the Hebrew harp had an equal length and were arranged on 2 sets of 5 strings on each side of the instrument. Both hands were used to play it, similar to the technique used to play a modern one. Nabala was first of all a melodic instrument that most probably accompanied the singers and played a counterpoint role. While referring to the harps tuning the most important factors for all the string instruments with a fixed length, in this case the harp, are the thickness and the tension of the strings. Apart from lira which could change three strings that could also change its characteristics, the harp can change the tension of a string immediately after it is tuned. From the Psalms manuscripts we reach to the conclusion that the 10 tunes that are presented the beginning of their melodies and a possible evolution for the harp were as follows.

E-F-F#-G-G#-A-A#-B-C-D

## 5. The ten tones playable on the harp

Ex. 11



<sup>5</sup> Idem

After Hadrian left Judea, the Jews started riots. Bar Kohba coined money on which the written message was “Liberty to Israel” and he started to be considered Messiah who the Jews had been waited for a long time. The period started in 123 and ended in 126.

Ex. 12



6

The war lasted for 3 years until 135 BC. The final battle was in Betar, Bar Kohba's headquarter. At the end of the tremendous fight which ended by defeating the rebels, the Jew fighters were tortured and crucified and the rest of the population was sent to slavery. Here are some examples that were found after the Betar

Ex. 13

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<sup>6</sup> Jewish Bar Kokhba (or Second Jewish) Revolt against the Romans (ad 132–36), depicting a five stringed broad lyre.



## 6. Bible References

1 Samuel 10:5;

2 Samuel 6:5;

1 Kings 10:12;

Isaiah 5:12, 14:11;

Amos 5:23, 6:5; Psalm 33:2, 57:8

(58:9 JPS), 71:22, 81:2 (81:3 JPS), 92:3 (92:4 JPS), 108:2 (108:3 JPS), 144:9, 150:3;

Nehemiah 12:27; 1Chronicles 13:8, 15:16, 15:20, 15:28, 16:5, 25:1, 25:6; 2

Chronicles 5:12, 9:11, 20:28, 29:25—total 27 Occurrences.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the music from the time of the patriarchs, the sacred music, was totally lacking in the religious ritual being replaced by the sacrifices. It can be noticed that in the patriarch's time, until Moses, musical instruments were being used. This first reference to music is completely different, because here we have a music with a profane character, when Laban scolds his son-in-law for leaving without letting him know so he could send him away "with mirth, and with songs, with tabret and with harps" (Genesis 31:27). So the Hebrews used both instrumental and voice music. We have no specific data about the instrumental technique and its execution, but arguments regarding the content of the vocal songs from the mosaic period tell us that the vocal songs were just like the poems structure.

<sup>7</sup> Idem

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