

Biblical Hebrew Poetry and Word Play

Reconstructing the Original Oral, Aural and Visual Experience

By David Steinberg

David.Steinberg@houseofdavid.ca

Home page <http://www.houseofdavid.ca/>

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III *The Issue* – The Oral-Aural Nature of Biblical Hebrew Poetry, and Some Kinds of Wordplay, Require the Closest Approximation to their Original Pronunciation for the Fullest Possible Appreciation and there are Practical Criteria for Reestablishing a Good Approximation of the Pre-Exilic Pronunciation

1. The Importance of Reconstructed [EBHP](#)

“Essential to metrical analysis in (biblical) ... Hebrew ... is some knowledge of the pronunciation of the language at the time of the composition of a given poem. Since ... Hebrew ... orthography (did not) fully indicate(d) vowels it is obvious that a certain degree of subjectivity will be present in reconstructing (this) ... spoken language(s). It is nevertheless mandatory that such an attempt be made as a prelude to metrical analysis in spite of the pitfalls involved¹. To do otherwise would be to ignore the manifestly oral-aural nature of the poetry. Phonetic features ... are inherently determinative in the composition, memorization, and vocal reproduction of our poems.”

“ The general characteristics of (the) vowels ... (of biblical Hebrew poetry can) be understood.”

[Stuart](#) p. 24iii

2. The Basis for the Reconstruction of an Approximation to EBHP

“Naturally we only have indirect sources of information about the pronunciation of Classical Hebrew. Among the more important of them are:

1. **The Jewish traditions:** Ashkenazi, Sepharadi, and Yemenite².
2. **The pronunciation of living Semitic languages**, especially [Arabic](#), [Ethiopic](#) and [Aramaic](#).
3. **Internal considerations.**
4. **Transliteration and transcription of Hebrew words and names**, especially in Greek and Latin, e.g. the second column of the [Hexapla](#), [Jerome](#), and the [Septuagint](#); there are some inherent difficulties arising from the nature of the phonemic inventories of these classical, non-Semitic languages.
5. **Transliterations in [Akkadian](#), [Ugaritic](#), and [Egyptian](#)**, though here again similar problems arise.”

[Joüon-Muraoka 1991](#) § 5ga

See [Reconstruction of EBHP](#) below.

IV The Impact – Wordplay and Reconstructed EBHP

A Word on Homonymy

In my view *homonymy* is only a useful concept when applied synchronically i.e. at a given stage and dialect in a language's development. [The terminology relating to homonyms is unfortunately confused](#). For the sake of this paper I will use the following definitions:

Full Homonym – words that are spelled and pronounced identically but have distinctly different meanings at a given stage and dialect in a language's history e.g. (drill) bit and bit (of toast);

Homograph – words that are spelled identically but have distinctly different pronunciations and meanings at a given stage and dialect in a language's history e.g. read (present tense) and read (past tense);

Homophone – words that are pronounced identically but have distinctly different spellings and meanings at a given stage and dialect in a language's history e.g. read (past tense) and red.

It is not unusual for sound shifts to lead to the development of homophones from words which were not so in earlier stages in the language. Thus the modern English words *knight* (Anglo-Saxon *cniht*) and *night* (Anglo-Saxon *niht*) became homophones when the initial *k* in *knight* ceased to be pronounced.

I should note that reading a biblical text with a reconstructed pre-exilic will reveal or strengthen some similarities between words and reveal that others, found due to either Tiberian graphemes or due to modern pronunciations imposed on Tiberian graphemes, [are unlikely to have existed in the minds of the authors or original audiences](#).

a) Example of a Full Homonym

[See my discussion of שכח](#)

b) Original Homograph Becomes Full Homonym

i) Homophones formed Due to sound Shift $h > \text{ħ}$

Herzberg discusses a number of cases of possible and probable [polysemy](#) (multiple meanings) i.e. where either ħrb or $h\text{rb}$ is intended as the primary meaning while the reader or listener is meant to hear echoes of the other root's meaning³. A key point to bear in mind, is that from the earliest times both [ħ and h have been denoted by n](#) in Hebrew and, **some time after the third century BCE** /ħ/ [x] shifted to /ħ/ [ħ] in pronunciation thus merging with the already existing /ħ/ [ħ]. Thus until **at least** the late third century BCE the polysemy would have been apparent only to the reader, not to the listener. After the [sound shift](#) $h > \text{ħ}$, it would have been apparent to both the reader and the listener.

In Ugaritic $h\text{rb}$ “sword” while ħrb “dry”. Both roots are well attested in Hebrew i.e. (MT followed by [*EBHP](#)): ħrb /ħar**b**/ “sword”; ħrb /ħa're:b/ “dry”. In some forms they overlap e.g. $\sqrt{h\text{rb}}$ in the *qal* “to massacre” and in the *niphal* “to fight one another” while $\sqrt{\text{ħrb}}$ in the *qal* “to dry up” and in the *niphal* “to be laid waste”

ii) Homophones formed Due to sound Shift $g > c$

Both [c and g were denoted by y in Hebrew](#) and, **some time after the third century BCE** /g/ [y] shifted to /c/ [ç] in pronunciation thus merging with the already existing /c/ [ç]. Herzberg discusses the roots \sqrt{ncm} “goodness” and \sqrt{ngm} “melody, music” and shows probable polysemy⁴.

c) Examples where Reconstructing the Probable Original Pronunciation Resulting in More Convincing Wordplay

For the sake of convenience, I have reviewed the examples of wordplay presented in the book [Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature](#) edited

by Scott B. Noegel ([Noegel 2000](#)) and have selected a number of cases that, in my opinion, would be strengthened by substituting a reconstruction of the original pronunciation.

In *Puns and Pundits* the [MT](#) is transliterated using a form of the [conventional scholarly transcription of TH](#) (*TH_{CST}*) generally of the [TH_{SBL}](#) variety. [Elsewhere I have outlined its unsuitability for this, or most other scholarly uses](#). Nb. When accepting Tiberian vocalization, one has to assume that the hearer will respond to similar sounds without regard to their historical origin.

From the paper "Wordplay in Biblical Hebrew: an Eclectic Collection" by Gary A. Rendsburg :

- **Gen 1:1** (p. 137) **Num. 16:30** (pp. 140-1)

Masoretic Text (MT)		<p>בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא Gen 1:1</p> <p>“In the beginning God created...”</p> <p>בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא Num. 16:30</p> <p>“(God a) creation creates”</p>
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	bērêšît bārâ - bēri`āh yibrā`
	/TH/ *	bərešit bārâ - bəri`ā yib`râ
	*[TH]	bəre:šî:θ bə:ro: - bəri:”ɔ: yiv`ro:
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/ ⁺⁶	bəɾêšît ba`ra` - bəri`â yib`ra`
Possible phonetic reconstruction of pre-exilic BH pronunciation	[EBHP] ⁷	bəre:ʃi:t be`re` - bəri:ʕe: yib`reʃ

- P. 138 – [Song 4:4](#) - example of alliteration

Masoretic Text (MT)		בְּנוֹי לְתִלְפִיּוֹת אֶלֶף הַמִּגֵּן תְּלוּי עָלָיו “... built in courses; on it hang a thousand bucklers”
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	lětalpiyyôṯ ... ’elep ... tālûy
	/TH/+	lətalpiy’yot - ’εlep - tā’luy
	*[TH]	lətelpiy’yo:θ - ’ε:lɛf - to:’lu:y
Phonetic transcription of reconstructed post-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/+	latalpi:’yōt - ’alp - ta’lūy

Comment - The point is stronger with the *EBHP in which talpi:’yo:t and talu:y have ‘tal’ in common, while talpi:’yo:t and ’alp have ‘alp’ in common

P. 141 – “...in **1 Sam 2:36**, where the rare verb *s-p-h* is used in the form סַפְּחֵנִי *səfāḥēnī* "attach me." The five letters of this name include both the four letters of *ḥopnī* "Hophni" and the five letters of *pinḥās* "Phineas," the names of the two sons of Eli...”.

Masoretic Text (MT)		פִּינְחָס - חֹפְנִי - סַפְּחֵנִי
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	THsBL	səpāḥēnî - ḥofnî - pînḥās
	/TH/	səpâ'həni - ḥop'ni - pin'hās
	*[TH]	səfo:'hə:ni: - ḥof'ni: - pin'hə:s
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	s <u>u</u> pu'hini: or spu'hini: - ḥup 'ni: - pi:n'hɑ:s

Comment- A rather cerebral wordplay which is weakened by the fact that the פ /p/, in Tiberian Hebrew is pronounced as [p] in [pin'hə:s] and as [f] in [ḥof'ni:] and [səfo:'hə:ni:]. However, [in EBHP it would always be pronounced p](#).

P. 149 – Genesis 49:6

בְּסוּדָם אֶל־תִּבְא נַפְשִׁי בְקַהְלָם אֶל־תִּתְּנֵם לָבֹדִי – “Let my soul not **enter/desire** their council”

P. 149 – Job 3:6

אֶל־יְיָ בְיָמֵי שָׁנָה – “Let it not be **united with/rejoice** in the days of the year”

Comment- The polysemy of reading תִּתְּנֵם and תִּתְּנֵם as both from the root *y-h-d* = “unite with” and from the root *h-d-y* = “rejoice would have worked as a visual level before the sound shift *h > ḥ* after 300 BCE and would have also worked orally after that sound shift.

From the paper "Wordplay and Puns as a Rhetorical Device in the Book of Samuel" by Moshe Garsiel⁶

Pp. 182-183. The author explores the linking effect of the phoneme /p/ in 1 Samuel chapters 1 and 2. He draws on the words:

לפני-פני; ופניחם; לפננה – פננה

Masoretic Text (MT)		לפני-פני; ופניחם; לפננה – פננה
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	pənin̄nāh - lipnin̄nāh - ūp̄in̄hās - pənē - lipnē
	/TH/	pənin'nâ - lipnin'nâ - upin'hās - p,ne - lip,ne
	*[TH]	pənin'no: - lifnin'no: - u:fin'hɔ:s - pə,ne: - lif,ne:
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	pənin'nâ - ləpənin'nâ - wəpi:n'hɑ:s - pə,nay - ləpə,nay

Comment- The *EBHP differs from the Tiberian pronunciation in that all the vowels are identical in the first syllable. The recognition that [in pre-exilic times פ was always realized as ip](#) [is](#) necessary to make the wordplay work on the oral level.

P. 185 – re. 1 Samuel 1:18 (1:17 in the Hebrew) and 1:20

וְאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְּנֵן אֶת־שְׁלֹתְךָ אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתָּ מֵעַמּוֹ

"... may the God of Israel **grant** you (*šēlātēk*)

what you have **asked** (*šā'alt*) of him."

וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁמוּאֵל כִּי מִיהוָה שָׁאַלְתִּיו

"She named him Samuel, meaning, "I **asked** (*šē'iltiw*) the Lord for him."

Masoretic Text (MT)		שְׁלֹתְךָ - שְׁאַלְתָּ - שְׁאֲלֹתִיו
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	šēlātēk - šā'alt - šē'iltiw
	/TH/	šəla'tək - ša"alt - š'il'tiw
	*[TH]	šəlo:'θe:x - šo:"elt - šə'il'ti:w
Phonetic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	<p>1. <i>standard</i></p> <p>še:la'te:k - ša"alt - ša'il'ti:w</p> <p>2. <i>possible archaic/dialect</i></p> <p>/še:la'tiki⁹ - ša"alti¹⁰ - ša'il'ti:hu'</p>

Comment—The possible archaic/dialect reconstruction differs from the Tiberian in that: (1) All 3 words are penultimately stressed; (2) All words end in a vowel; (3) All words have the long vowel *ī/i:* either stressed or immediately post-stress.

- p. 198 – In 2 Samuel 24:13

דְּבַר בְּאַרְצֶךָ עֵתָּה דַע וּרְאֵה מִה־אָשִׁיב שְׁלֹחֵי דְבַר – “Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what **answer** I shall return to the one who sent me.”

Masoretic Text (MT)		דְּבַר – דְּבַר
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	deber - dābār
	/TH/	'dɛbɛr - dɑ'bɑr
	*[TH]	'dɛ:vɛr - dɑ:'vɑ:r
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	'dabr - da'ba:r

Comment - The *EBHP differs from the Tiberian pronunciation in that: (1) All vowels are short or long *a*; (2) The first word has a single syllable and the second has two. This may serve to heighten the tension.

- p. 200 2 Samuel 1

נְפִלּוּ נִפְלְאָתָהּ נְפִלּוּ the author says that this creates a contrast between a wonderful past and a dark present.

Masoretic Text (MT)		נְפִלּוּ נִפְלְאָתָהּ נְפִלּוּ
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	nāplû - niplē'atāh - nāplû
	/TH/	nāpə'lu - niplə''atâ - nāpə'lu
	*[TH]	נכ:פə'lu: - niflə''e:θכ: - נכ:פə'lu:
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	<p>1. <i>standard</i></p> <p>na'paḷū - nipla''atâ - na'paḷū</p> <p>2. <i>possible archaic/dialect</i></p> <p>na'paḷū - napla''atâ - na'paḷū</p>

Comment -

1. By using the hybrid III-h/III-' form נִפְלְאָתָהּ, rather than the expected נִפְלְאָתָא (Ps. 118:23) or נִפְלְאָתָא (Deut. 30:11) the poem is saying at once your love was wonderful and you (Jonathan) were wonderful.
2. The *EBHP *na'paḷu: - nipla''ata: - na'paḷu:* with stressed pre-tonal syllables *pa- la- pa* is more striking than the Tiberian *נכ:פə'lu: - niflə''a:θכ: - נכ:פə'lu: .*
3. The possible archaic/dialect *napla''atâ* results in initial syllables *na-na-na*.

ii) *From the paper "Between Science and Magic: The Function and Roots of paronomasia in the Prophetic Books of the Hebrew Bible" by Stefan Schorch¹¹*

p. 201 1 Samuel 6:7

וַעֲתָה קָחוּ וַעֲשׂוּ עֲגָלָה חֲדָשָׁה אֶחָת וּשְׁתֵּי פָרוֹת עֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עָלָה עֲלֵיהֶם עֹל
וְאָסְרוּתָם אֶת-הַפָּרוֹת בְּעֲגָלָה וְהָשִׁיבֵם בְּנֵיהֶם מֵאֲחֵרֵיהֶם הַבַּיִתָּה:

“Therefore, get a new **cart** (*ᶜăḡālāh*) ready and two **milch** (*ᶜālôt*) cows that have not **borne a yoke** (*ᶜālā ᶜălêhem ᶜōl*), **harness** (*ᶜōl*) the cows to the **cart** (*ᶜăḡālāh*), but take back indoors the calves that follow them...”

Masoretic Text (MT)		עֲגָלָה-עֲלוֹת-עָלָה-עֲלֵיהֶם-עֹל
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	ᶜăḡālāh - ᶜālôt - ᶜālā - ᶜălêhem - ᶜōl - ᶜăḡālāh
	/TH/	ᶜăḡá'lâ - ᶜâ'lot - ᶜâ'lâ - ᶜâlê'hem - 'col - ᶜăḡá'lâ
	*[TH]	ᶜăḡɔ:'lɔ: - ᶜɔ:'lɔ:θ - ᶜɔ:'lɔ: - ᶜâlɛ:'hɛ:m - 'cɔ:l - ᶜăḡɔ:'lɔ:
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/*	ᶜaga'lâ - ᶜā'lôt - ᶜa'lâ ᶜalay'him 'cull ᶜaga'lâ

- p. 208 - [Is. 22:18](#)

צָנוֹף יִצְנֹף יִצְנֵפָה – “whirl you round and round”

Masoretic Text (MT)		צָנוֹף יִצְנֹף יִצְנֵפָה
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	ṣānôf yiṣnopkā ṣēnēpkāh
	/TH/ *	ṣâ'noṗ yiṣnoṗ'ká ṣne'pâ
	*[TH]	ṣo:'no:f yiṣnoṗ'xɔ: ṣəne:'fo:
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/ *	ṣa'nōp yaṣnu'pika(:) (or yiṣnu'pika(:)) ṣani'pâ

Comment- The pre-exilic *ṣa'no:p - yaṣnu'pika:* - *ṣani'pa:* with the initial syllable *ṣa* joining the first and last words and the final vowel *a:* joining the second and third words is superior to the [\[TH\]](#) *ṣo:'no:f yiṣnoṗ'xɔ: ṣəne:'fo:* .

p. 208 - [Is. 22:29](#)

אֶרֶץ אֶרֶץ אֶרֶץ – “land, land, land...”

Masoretic Text (MT)		אֶרֶץ אֶרֶץ אֶרֶץ
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	'ereṣ 'ereṣ 'āreṣ
	/TH/*	"eɾeṣ "eɾeṣ "āreṣ
	*[TH]	"e:ɾeṣ "e:ɾeṣ "ɔ:ɾeṣ
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	"arṣ "arṣ "arṣ

Comment- The reconstructed pronunciation differs from the TH in that: (1) All vowels are identical; (2) The words are mono-syllabic.

p.209 - Is. 14:22

שֵׁם וְשָׂר וְנִין וְנֶכֶד – “name and remnant, offspring and posterity”

Masoretic Text (MT)		שֵׁם וְשָׂר וְנִין וְנֶכֶד
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	šēm ûšš'ār wēnîn wāneked
	/TH/ *	'šēm uš"ār w'nin wā'nεkεd
	*[TH]	'šɛ:m u:šə"ɔ:r wə'ni:n wɔ:'nε:χεð
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/ *	'še:m w <u>a</u> ši"ɑ:r wə'nīn wə'nikd

- p.209 - Is. 24:6

אֵלֶּה אֲכָלָה אֶרֶץ – “a curse devours (the) earth”

Masoretic Text (MT)		אֵלֶּה אֲכָלָה אֶרֶץ
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	'ālā 'ākəlāh 'ereš
	/TH/ *	'ā'lā 'āk'lā "εεš
	*[TH]	'ɔ:'lɔ: 'ɔ:kə'lɔ: "εεš
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/ *	'a'lā 'a'kəlā "arš

Comment- The reconstructed pronunciation differs from the Tiberian in that: each word begins with the syllable *ʾa* and all vowels are short or long *a*.

p. 210 - Jer. 48:3; Isa. 51:19, 59:7, 60:18

שׁוֹד וְשֹׁבֵר – “Desolation and destruction”

Masoretic Text (MT)		שׁוֹד וְשֹׁבֵר
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	šōd wāšeber - haššōd wāhaššeber
	/TH/+	'šod wā'seβer - haš'sod wāhaš'seβer
	*[TH]	'šo:ð wə:'še:vɛr - həš'so:ð wə:həš'se:vɛr
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	'šudd wa'sabr - haš'sudd wahaš'sabr

p. 210 – Ezek. 5:17; 28:23; 38:22

וְדָבַר וְדָם – “plague and blood”

Masoretic Text (MT)		וְדָבַר וְדָם
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	wědeber wādām
	/TH/ *	w'dɛbɛr wɑ'dɑm
	*[TH]	wə'ðɛ:vɛr wɑ:'ðɑ:m
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	wa'dabr wa'da:m

Comment - The reconstructed pronunciation differs from the Tiberian in that: (1) all the vowels are long or short *a*; (2) each word of two syllables beginning with the syllable *wa*; (3) each word is stressed on the final syllable.

p. 210 – Isa. 24:17

פַּחַד וּפְחַת וּפָחַ – “Terror, and (the) pit, and (the) snare”

Masoretic Text (MT)		פַּחַד וּפְחַת וּפָחַ
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	paḥad wāpaḥat wāpāḥ
	/TH/*	'paḥad wā'paḥat wā'pāḥ
	*[TH]	'peḥeð wo:'feḥeθ wo'fə:ḥ
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	'paḥd or 'paḥd wa'paḥt wa'paḥḥ

Comment - The reconstructed pronunciation differs from the Tiberian in that: (1) all the vowels are identical; (2) each noun is of one syllable; (3) both [ḥ](#) and [ḥ](#) are represented.

p. 210 – Isa. 29:5

לְפֶתַע פְּתָאִים – “suddenly”

Masoretic Text (MT)		לְפֶתַע פְּתָאִים
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	lěpeta ^c pit'ōm
	/TH/*	l'pɛta ^c pit'om
	*[TH]	lə'fɛ:θe ^c piθ'o:m
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	lɛ'pit ^c pit'o:m

Comment- The reconstructed pronunciation differs from the Tiberian in that each noun is of two syllables beginning with *pit*.

p. 210 – Isa. 34:6

זָבַח ... וְטָבַח - “sacrifice...slaughter”

Masoretic Text (MT)		זָבַח ... וְטָבַח
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	zəbɑḥ - wəṭəbɑḥ
	/TH/*	'zɛbɑḥ - w'ɛbɑḥ
	*[TH]	'zɛ:vəḥ - wə'ɛ:vəḥ
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/	'zabḥ - wa'tabḥ

Comment- The reconstructed pronunciation differs from the Tiberian in that: (1) all the vowels are identical; (2) each noun is of 1 syllable; (3) the final consonant is [ḥ](#) in *zabḥ* and [ḥ](#) in *waṭabḥ*.

p. 216 – Jer. 6:1

וּבְתִקוֹעַ תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר – “and in Tekoa blow the horn”

Masoretic Text (MT)		וּבְתִקוֹעַ תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר
Transcriptions and reconstructions of MT	TH_{SBL}	ûbitqôă ^c tiq ^c û šôfâr
	/TH/+	u _{bit} 'qoa ^c tiq ^c u šo'pâr
	*[TH]	u:viθ'qo:e ^c tiq ^c u: šo:'fo:r
Phonemic transcription of reconstructed pre-exilic BH pronunciation	*/EBHP/+	wabatj'qo:c t'qu ^c û šaw'pa:r

¹ “Serious difficulties such as might have arisen from incorrect copying, dictation, or interpretation of archaic documents written in the orthography and calligraphy of a previous age, may often be resolved by recasting the piece in question into its assumed original orthography and stichometry. **It is best to reconstruct a text to its original and (in the case of the Semitic alphabetic languages) more ambiguous form both morphologically and semantically as one goes back in time. This provides a minimally interpreted base from which to proceed without influence from later and sometimes provincial traditions of interpretation, including that of the Masoretes.**” [Stuart](#) p. 21

² See [Ashkenazi](#), [Sephardi](#), [Yemenite](#), [Sanaani](#), [Tiberian](#), [Mizrahi](#), [Samaritan Hebrew](#)

³ See *Polysemy in the Hebrew Bible* by Walter Herzberg. Unpublished PhD dissertation NYU 1979, pp. 19-24. The following is from pp. 23-24 –

The final, and perhaps most convincing example of double meaning occurs in [Zc. 13:7](#) and reads:

חֲרֹב עוֹרֵי עֹלָרָעִי וְעַל-גִּבְרַעַמִּיתִי נֹאֵם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
הַרְ אֶת־הָרֶעָה וְתִפְּצִין הַצֹּאֵן וְהִשָּׁבֹתִי יְדֵי עַל־הַצֹּרִים

"Awake, O sword, against My shepherd,

And against the man that is near unto Me,...

Smite the shepherd...

The meaning "sword" for חָרֵב is accepted by the translators and fits the context well. Nevertheless, the meaning "heat" also fits the context because the verse speaks of the shepherd, who as noted above in Gn. 31:40 and Zc. 11:17, was afflicted by "heat" and "cold." Therefore, the translation, "Awake, O heat, against My shepherd . . ." would be an acceptable one. A double meaning phenomenon is most likely to have been intended in this verse and is further supported by the subsequent two verses. [Zc. 13:8](#) reads: פִּי־שָׁנִים בָּהּ יִכָּרֵת "Two parts therein shall be cut off..."; the "sword" (חָרֵב) will do the "cutting." [Zc. 13:9](#) reads: וְהִבַּאתִי אֶת־הַשְּׁלִשִׁית בְּאֵשׁ "And I will bring the third part through the fire..."; the "heat" (חָרֵב) will do the burning. So the author cleverly sets up the double meaning of חָרֵב in Zc 13:7 to refer to 13.8 and 13:9.

⁴ See Herzberg pp. 24-29. The following is from pp. 27-29 –

In [II Sa. 23:1](#), the verse reads:

מְשִׁיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וְנָעִים זִמְרֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל

JPS renders the verse "...The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet singer of Israel," while *The Jerusalem Bible* renders the verse "... the anointed of the God of Jacob, the singer of the songs of Israel." JPS treats נָעִים as an adjective meaning "sweet"; *The Jerusalem Bible* treats נָעִים as a noun meaning "singer."

... Supporting the musical meaning of נָעִים in II Sa. 23:1 is the fact that in the text the phrase

מְשִׁיחַ אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב

is parallel to

וְנָעִים זִמְרֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל

"the anointed of the God of Jacob" is parallel to "the singer of the songs of Israel." In other words, the noun construct מְשִׁיחַ is parallel to the noun construct נָעִים meaning "singer" or "composer."

...Due to the homonymous nature of the root נָעַם, its two meanings, like the two meanings of חָרֵב ... at times operate simultaneously

⁵ In *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* by Scott B. Noegel (Editor), Capital Decisions Ltd (March 2000), ISBN-10: 1883053498. P.p. 137-162.

⁶ See [Phones and Phonemes](#).

⁷ **Note, in reconstructed [EBHP] transliterations and sound files -**

1. there is no spirantization of the *bgdkpt* consonants;

2. [vowel qualities are outlined here](#);

3. I use the most probable form. Where no one form stands out as most probable, I select the one closest to the MT vocalization.

4. when multiple forms are possible, the form used is underlined.

⁸ In *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* by Scott B. Noegel (Editor), Capital Decisions Ltd (March 2000), ISBN-10: 1883053498. P.p. 181-202.

⁹ [Beyer 1969](#) p. 40.

¹⁰ [Beyer 1969](#) p. 58.

¹¹ In *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* by Scott B. Noegel (Editor), Capital Decisions Ltd (March 2000), ISBN-10: 1883053498. P.p. 205-222.