1. INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTION OF METRE IN BIBLICAL POETRY

I have only two rules in prosody: One is, it goes ta dum ta dum ta dum ta dum ta dum, and the second is, try not to sound like that.[1]

I cannot settle which is worse,
the Anti-Novel or Free Verse.[2]

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. The question of metre in Biblical Hebrew (BH) poetry is canvassed in this introduction. Those new to BH poetry will justifiably want to know what all the fuss is about. For there are other ancient metrical traditions for which the details of the metrical system remain in dispute,[3] but nowhere else has there been such passionate argument and a torrent of spilled ink—for well over a century. The question remains open.[4]

1.1.2. "It will not be denied that a system of Hebrew metre is important if true" (Cobb 1905). The Hebraist consensus, however, is that BH lacks poetic metre as the entries in the authoritative *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (EHLL Khan 2013) underscore (Vance 2013, Watson 2013a). In Part I, the supporting ANTI-METRICAL ARGUMENT, as I will call it, is simply stated (§1.2). My six major objections to the anti-metrical argument can also be simply stated but require some discussion (§1.3).

1.1.3. Further, in Part II it will be demonstrated that it is not the case that the statistical profiles of BH poetry are inconsistent with the phyla of metrical versification. Rather, the biblical profiles are consistent with the observed variation in the major phyla (§1.4). The goal of this

---

[1] Howard Nemerov (cited by Baer 2006: 31).

[2] W. H. Auden, "Doggerel by a Senior Citizen" (1969, cited by Baer 2006: 244).

[3] Broadly, there are two classes of such versification. In the first class, there is no doubt that (a) the verse is metrical and (b) we do have a solid grasp on the phonology. It is just that the exact formal model eludes consensus. Major examples are Old English and the Spanish *verso de arte mayor* (both explored in §1.4).

In the second, more interesting class, there is no doubt that (a) the verse is metrical but (b) the phonology itself has been rendered somewhat opaque by language change. The details of the relevant dialects remain uncertain, including vowel length, syllable weight, and stress assignment. Major examples are Old Latin Saturnian and Buddhist poetry in Pali.

A complicating factor in many cases is that we no longer have access to the related musical traditions. What seems metrically variable and baffling to us might make sense in terms of musical or 'temporal' structure.

[4] "In light of the divergent approaches taken by Vance, DeCaen, Fokkelman, and others, it is clear that the debate concerning the presence or absence of meter in biblical poetry remains unsettled" (Vance 2013: 151).

exercise is to clear the decks, as it were, to make room for the empirical, inductive analysis pursued in chs. 2-4.

PART I

1.2. The Anti-Metrical Argument in Brief

1.2.1. It is a truth generally acknowledged that there can be no metrical poetry between the covers of the Bible, if by POETIC METRE we mean (a) the strict division of the text into POETIC LINES by (b) the formal regulation of the nature, number, and position of syllables. As conventional wisdom insists, this much is obvious to even casual inspection: "biblical Hebrew verse is simply not metrical" (Dobbs-Allsopp 2015: 15).

Hence, this conclusion can then be stated authoritatively in every treatment of the world's versification. In fact, it appears on page one:

> One type of non-metrical poetry [BH poetry] is based not on line length, but on syntactic parallelism, where corresponding lines must be composed of syntactic constituents of the same kind (Fabb & Halle 2008: 1).

1.2.2. Vance (2001) comes in for special treatment for a number of reasons. In this chapter, it is because no-one is so explicit, fulsome and dogged in the defense of the anti-metrical consensus that it is *necessarily* the case that there is no metrical BH poetry. Indeed, Peterson asserts that Vance "convincingly demonstrates" that there is no BH poetic metre (Peterson 2001: vii). This remarkable demonstration of impossibility is accurate to three decimal places.

1.2.3. The conventional anti-metrical argument can be set out in point form as follows.

- The conventional fourfold taxonomy of the world's metrical systems with the parade of examples thereof is exhaustive:
  - QUANTITATIVE (MORAIC): *Iliad*
  - SYLLABIC: Japanese *haiku*
  - ACCENTUAL: *Beowulf*
  - ACCENTUAL-SYLLABIC: Shakespeare's *Sonnets*
- Reconstruct ancient Hebrew phonology—but only once for all genres, regions, and centuries,[5] typically on the basis of
  - Arabic, sometimes as a proxy for Proto-Semitic
  - reconstructed Ugaritic
- Select a restricted number of texts as a "test sample" (Vance 2001: 7)
- Define METRICAL SYLLABLE.[6] There is no exact syllable-count per line in the test sample; therefore, BH poetry is not syllabic.[7]

[5] One might think that those studying biblical poetry through the centuries—ancient vs. early vs. late—would be more alive to this problem.

[6] Conventionally the Cross-Freedman-Stuart method: see quick summary and critique by Longman (1982: 232-238, 248-252); see further Vance (2001: 175-206, 290-292).

- Define METRICAL ACCENT[8]—call it what you will: stress or accent,[9] accentual unit,[10] primary stress unit,[11] word,[12] prosodic word,[13] accented word-complex or Germanic bar,[14] significant term,[15] thought-unit,[16] Tiberian Hebrew moraic foot.[17] There is no exact accent-count per line in the test sample; therefore, BH poetry is not accentual.
- Quod erat demonstrandum.
- Therefore, there is no basis for the emendation of the biblical text *metri causa* 'for the sake of metre'.

1.2.4. Conceivably, it may be true that biblical poetry lacks any metrical regulation in the strictest sense. Indeed, ch. 2 appears to offer some empirical confirmation of the anti-metrical consensus. However, the standard anti-metrical argument as simply stated (§1.2.3) does not establish this concensus position. There is certainly no convincing demonstration that a BH poetic metre cannot exist.

1.2.5. On the other hand, a very great deal is buried in the premises of the anti-metrical argument that requires deeper excavation and consideration. Crucially, it is the final *therefore* that is actually at the heart of the matter and explains the heat and passion surrounding the question.

1.3. Six Objections to the Anti-Metrical Argument

1.3.1. The fourfold taxonomy is not exhaustive, and this in at least four crucial ways.

1.3.1.1. The conventional taxonomy is exclusively LOGOGENIC and completely ignores the MELOGENIC.[18]

---

[7] Fabb & Halle (2008) note that "straight syllable-counting meters of this kind are in a vanishingly small minority among the poetic traditions of the world" (p. 170).
[8] See summary overview by Brogan (1993c).
[9] Conventionally the Sievers system or 'Ley-Sievers-Budde' system. For overview, see Vance (2001: 103-146).
[10] See Vance (2001: 289-290).
[11] "The model is compatible with the phonology and stress patterns of ancient Hebrew insofar as we might reconstruct them … A reconstruction of the phonology of 6th century BCE Hebrew is offered elsewhere [n. 40]. Many unanswered questions remain, and probably always will. The reconstruction of ancient Hebrew phonology is nonetheless a necessary propaedeutic to serious investigation of regularities in ancient Hebrew verse" (Hobbins 2007: 583).
[12] See Vance (2001: 289).
[13] Or 'stress unit' (Hobbins 2007).
[14] Kuryłowicz (1972, 1975), see further Cooper (1976).
[15] Broadribb (1973) cites Oesterley & Robinson (1934) and Robinson (1947, 1950).
[16] Kosmala (1964).
[17] DeCaen (2009) can be re-interpreted as equating the Tiberian foot with an 'accent'.
[18] This music terminology is employed by Jacobson (2017).

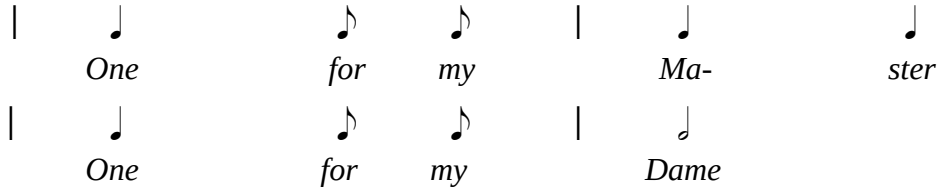
1.3.1.1.1. It is simply assumed that the poetic metre can be read off algorithmically or directly projected bottom-up from the words (*logo*), excluding any type of TEXT-SETTING CONSTRAINT imposed top-down by a tune (*melo*). Roughly the same contrast is drawn by Aroui: there is one type of poetic metre that is projected bottom-up from the linguistic material or text, what he calls PROSODIC METRICS (2009: §4), and a second type of top-down metre that is commonly based on MELODIC-TEMPORAL EQUIVALENCES (STRONG BEATS, etc.) that he denominates ISOCHRONOUS METRICS (2009: §3).

1.3.1.1.2. In a melogenic system, first come the predetermined BARS or MEASURES with DOWNBEATS, then comes TEXT-ALIGNMENT as SCANSION. Traditional English verse is largely a melogenic tetrameter. Take the simple example in (1). The variable syllable count is provided in the margin here as throughout, with a range of {3-6} syllables.

(1)	*Bah, Bah, a black Sheep,*	5
	Have you any Wool,	5
	Yes merry have I,	5
	Three Bags full,	3
	One for my Master,	5
	One for my Dame,	4
	One for the Little Boy	6
	That lives in the lane.[19]	5

1.3.1.1.3. It is because we can 'look ahead' that we can find the correct scansion: four downbeats per line. In brief, the scansion in (2)[20] is automatic since we know what we are looking for in advance. Notice in particular the metrical values of *Dame* and post-tonic *-ster*.

(2)



1.3.1.1.4. The total exclusion of top-down melogenic or isochronous versification from consideration is passing strange because presumably most of the Hebrew hymns, epics, carols, psalms, etc. were actually sung with lyre in hand. "The psalms are for singing", intones Mowinckel, "and singing implies a constriction of the rhythm called metre" (1962, II: 159).[21]

---

[19] Opie & Opie (1997: #55, p. 101).

[20] Here in 2/4 time. It does not matter terribly whether it is 2/4, 4/4, 6/8, etc. etc. However, note that the convention in the generative literature is to standardize to COMMON TIME 4/4 for baseline comparison. The matter arises repeatedly and especially in ch. 4.

[21] Park (2012) expects proof of singing: "there is no solid evidence that Hebrew poetry was for singing" *contra* Mowinckel (p. 5). Admittedly, there are biblical names for (a) musical instruments (lyre, harp, horn, trumpet, pipe, cymbals, tambourine) and (b) names of tunes (for

Traditional verse, as Cammaerts puts it, "is essentially poetical because essentially musical" (cited by Opie & Opie 1997: 2). Further, it is odd in the much broader context of melogenic principles in other venerable traditions conspicuously including the English tradition as will be explained.

1.3.1.2. It is assumed that all metres are consistently and absolutely STRICT (Frost 1939)[22] or PURE (Oliver 1994)[23] instead of also LOOSE or IMPURE to some degree (on 'loose' metre, see first Fabb & Halle 2008: ch. 3). This is the greatest flaw in the argument as will be shown repeatedly. In brief, the argument goes, if there is no exact count of some prosodic unit per line, then the poetry is not metrical.

1.3.1.2.1. For every IAMB, however, there is an ANAPEST as a possible substitution, and for every TROCHEE, a DACTYL. Even a PAEON is a possible substitution at the extreme: *duh duh duh dum*. There is also a variety of EXTRAMETRICAL features afforded by different languages.[24] Indeed, in this light there is no accentual metre *per se*, rather stricter and looser versions of accentual-syllabic metre. Alternatively, it is all accentual or STRESS VERSE on a spectrum of strictness (Brogan 1993, Hillyer 1960: 27).

1.3.1.2.2. The "stretched metre of an antique song"[25] in that vast treasure trove of English FOLK VERSE (vs. ART VERSE)—carol, ballad, sea chanty, Elizabethan song,[26] riddle, hymn, metrical psalters, children's rhyme,[27] Romantic verse,[28] slogans, jingles, and so on and on—spans the spectrum of accentual-syllabic verse. Compare two extreme points on this spectrum: the strict Shakespearean tetrameter in (3) and his loose tetrameter with the considerable range of {6-12} syllables in (4).

(3)	*Those lips that love's own hand did make*	8
	Breathed forth the sound that said 'I hate',	8
	To me, that languished for her sake;	8
	But when she saw my woeful state,	8
	Straight in her heart did mercy come,	8

---

instance *According to the Lilies* Pss 45, 69). "Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise" (Ps 33:2f). All true, he concedes, "however, this does not prove that all Hebrew poetry was for singing" (p. 6).

[22] "All that can be done with words is soon told. So also with meters—particularly in our language where there are virtually but two, strict iambic and loose iambic" (cited by Fabb & Halle 2008: 67). It is argued that the Spanish *arte mayor* is loose anapestic (Piera 2008).

[23] "They may be "pure" or they may have some variation and be "impure"" (Oliver 1994: 50).

[24] For example, SYNALOEPHA (adjacent vowels scanning as one in the Romance languages as also in Chaucer).

[25] *Sonnets* 17.12. Bisyllabic *stretchèd*.

[26] For example, Duffin (2004).

[27] See the reference work Opie & Opie (1997).

[28] E.g., infamously Coleridge's "Christabel" (Coleridge 1951: 24-42). The poem figures prominently in the discussion in §2.3.3.6.

Chiding that tongue that, ever sweet, 8
Was used in giving gentle doom, 8
And taught it thus anew to greet: 8
'I hate' she altered with an end 8
That followed it as gentle day 8
Doth follow night, who like a fiend 8
From heaven[29] *to hell is flown away.* 8
'I hate' from 'hate' away she threw, 8
And saved my life, saying 'not you'. (*Sonnets* 145) 8

(4) *It was a lover and his lass,* 8
With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino, 12
That o'er the green corn-field did pass, 8
In spring-time, the only pretty ring-time, 10
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding a ding,[30] 9
Sweet lovers love the spring. 6

Between the acres of the rye, 8
With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino, 12
These pretty country folks would lie, 8
In the spring time, &c.

This carol they began that hour,[31] 9
With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino, 12
How that a life was but a flower, 9
In the spring time, &c.

And therefore take the present time, 8
With a hey and a ho and a hey nonino, 12
For love is crowned[32] *with the prime,* 8
In the spring time, &c. (*As You Like It* 5.3.15-38)

1.3.1.2.3. Notice the difficulty in (4) in scanning lines 16, 19 and 20. In line 16, initial *With* does not pick up a fifth beat as otherwise might be expected bottom-up. In 19, *ding a ding a ding* is a tetrasyllabic paeon. In line 20 with its missing ANACRUSIS (initial upbeat), *Sweet* alone bears the required fourth beat unexpectedly. The minimal pair *Swéet lóvers* versus *Sweet lóve* (*Sonnets*

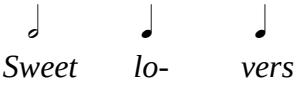
[29] Reading *heav'n*. Even in the strictest metre there are classes of syllables that are optionally extrametrical: they do not 'count' in the metrical calculation.
[30] Reading with Duffin (2004: 222) *hey ding a ding a ding* verus the gold standard Arden edition *hey ding a ding, ding.*
[31] Bisyllabic *hower*, rhyming with *flower*. See, e.g., *Those hours that with gentle work did frame* (*Sonnets* 5.1).
[32] Bisyllabic variant *crownèd*.

56.1) underscores the difficulty.[33] However, since we can look ahead, the analysis in (5) is straightforward.

(5) (a)

(c)

(b)



1.3.1.2.4. It must be emphasized at the outset that even the strictest metre admits some variation in the raw syllable-counts. In fact, Shakespeare's pentameter—the paradigm of accentual-syllabic metre—has an observed range of {9-14} syllables per line,[34] of which more below. Consider for now the perfectly metrical lines of "All the World's a Stage" in (6). The extrametrical syllables that bump up the raw syllable-count are in bold. Note that a bottom-up algorithm would incorrectly scan lines 143 and 165 as hexameters.[35]

(6)

His acts be**ing** seven a**ges**. At first, the in**fant**,	13
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms …	10
Is second childishness, and mere obli**vion**;	12
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.	10

(*As You Like It* 2.7.143f, 165f)

1.3.1.3. Hebrew syllable and 'accent' do not exhaust the TIMING UNITS in the PROSODIC HIERARCHY. Missing are (a) the MORA[36] and MORAIC FOOT, (b) the PHONOLOGICAL WORD and (c) the PHONOLOGICAL PHRASE.

1.3.1.3.1. In fact, DeCaen (2009) argues that as a first approximation the PHONOLOGICAL PHRASE in the Tiberian Hebrew (TH)[37] PROSODIC HIERARCHY (Dresher 1994) is the relevant timing unit,

---

[33] Curiously, the arrangements by Kines (1964) and Duffin (2004) reads a variant line *Sweet lovers love the spring in spring-time*, in which case the scansion is the expected *Sweet lóvers*.

[34] In theory, a lower limit of five syllables. For example, there is King Lear in dying: *O, o, o, o, o* (though there are textual variants here) (*King Lear* 5.3.308).

[35]

His ácts beíng sevén agés. At fírst, the ínfant
Is sécond chíldishnéss, and mére oblívión

[36] On the mora, see, e.g., Broselow (1995).

[37] Tiberian Hebrew is the dialect of the canonical reading of the received biblical text. For an exhaustive analysis thereof, see Khan (2020).

in turn governing the number of feet and syllables in a principled manner.[38] Thus, if by poetic metre we mean the organization of the text into lines by the regulation of the nature and number of syllables, then Psalm 111 is metrical *stricto sensu*.[39]

1.3.1.3.2. One among several difficulties in DeCaen (2009) is that the many MUSICAL TRANSFORMATIONS of the poetic system of cantillation (Price 2020: Part II) obscure for the non-specialist an otherwise straightforward account. However, much BH poetry is—ironically—supplied with the so-called 'prose' system of TH cantillation, and transformations are largely though not completely eliminated therein.

The prose cantillation eliminates the opacity in Lam 5, to take one example where this cantillation analysis 'works'. The tropes *(mahpak) pashta (munach) zaqeph* (lines a) and *(mereka) tiphcha (mereka) silluq* (lines b) characterize 42 of 44 lines: a respectable 95% regularity in this analysis.[40] As we will see, it is no coincidence that the exceptional *pashta zaqeph* lines have four accents: *revia mahpak pashta zaqeph* (5:17a) and *azla legarmeh pashta zaqeph* (5:21a). Thus, if by metre we mean the organization of the text into lines by the regulation of the nature and number of syllables, then Lam 5 is also metrical *stricto sensu* with or without minor variation.

1.3.1.4. Finally, Aroui (2009: §4.1.2) constructs a taxonomy that has both a COUNTING and a PATTERNING version for *every* prosodic constituent, extending the proposal of Fabb (1997: 56-87). The counting taxon simply counts undifferentiated prosodic units like beads on a string, while patterning overlays differentation of the prosodic units: stressed/unstressed, heavy/light, etc. Then, add into the mix the the strict/pure vs. loose/impure contrast (§1.3.1.2). On this view, the anti-metrical assumption of a simple fourfold contrast is far too coarse. The combinations and permutations create a much larger search space to defend against.

1.3.2. There is the vexing problem of the phonological reconstruction of the several Hebrew dialects—regional and diachronic—behind BH poetry. If we do not know the actual prosodic input, how do we know a metrical analysis is precluded? This question has at least three aspects.

1.3.2.1. There is the unquestioned assumption that the canonical Tiberian reading cannot serve as a basis for any historical reconstruction of ancient phonology because they are separated by too many centuries. This is methodologically unsound.

1.3.2.1.1. "The reconstruction of ancient Hebrew phonology is … a necessary propaedeutic to serious investigation of regularities in ancient Hebrew verse" (Hobbins 2007: 583). TH is readily dismissed as medieval and derivative: the so-called "native tradition" (O'Connor 1980: 52 *et passim*). Further, it is only one of several different though related reading traditions. However,

---

[38] Harshav (1972, 2014: ch. 3) followed by Hobbins (2007) posits a VERSET analogous to the phonological phrase. However, versets need not coincide with TH phonological phrases marked by disjunctive accents (Hobbins 2007: 571). Further, Harshav and Hobbins are not proposing a metrical analysis in the strictest sense.

[39] Ultimately, the analysis fails when extended because of (a) enjambment that cuts against the grain of phrasing and (b) instances of five or more TH feet.

[40] Vance (2001) sets the bar at 97% regularity for more complex metres (pp. viii, 35, 39, 287).

this is to ignore the deep roots of the prestige Tiberian dialect in the Second Temple period and the extreme conservatism of all such scribal traditions.

1.3.2.1.2. It is certainly true that "no one reads Classical Hebrew as a native language" (O'Connor 1980: 4), but this has no bearing on the value of TH. On its face, this is akin to saying that modern English is not adequate for reconstructing the dialect behind *The Canterbury Tales*. It is true that no-one reads Middle English as a native language. Methodologically, however, it is enough to ask, *what must be true* of Chaucer's metre, assuming the lines are metrical and assuming Chaucer can count? One quickly converges on the written *e* for missing beats moderated by SYNALOEPHA, perfectly in line with its French and Italian models. Not infrequently, but unlike French, one heavy syllable does duty for two: the syllable is metrically heavy.

1.3.2.1.3. Counterintuitively, it follows that it does not really matter *how* Middle English was pronounced, or even whether the *e* was actually vocalized as schwa (but see, e.g., Burrow & Turville-Petre 1996).[41] Of great theoretical interest in this light, the case of modern French poetry with its problematic *e caduc* 'dropped *e*' or *e muet* 'silent *e*' supplies a concrete—or rather, a highly abstract—model (Fabb & Halle 2008: §5.1). French verse raises the fascinating question of just how far a metrical system can be removed from its phonetic surface (Hayes 1988: §12.3). In the case of French, the realization of *e* is further complicated by the effects of tempo, style and text-setting constraints (Dell & Halle 2009: §3). The point is directly relevant to the metrical interpretation of the Hebrew schwa.

1.3.2.2. There seems to be no awareness of the honed scientific methods of historical linguistics, specifically of the art of INTERNAL RECONSTRUCTION: working only with the language's own resources independent of related languages and dialects: in this case, working from the TH dialect alone. There is no impediment to launching a study of BH metre from the internal reconstruction of TH. In the event, the detailed phonological description of TH (Khan 2020) and its internal reconstruction are sufficient for biblical metrical analysis.

In this study, there is no historical reconstruction per se. Instead, there is more of an *undoing* by metrical induction of the late, superficial TH phonological rules and derivations. It has been widely observed that other metrical systems only scan if some or all of the derivational rules are 'undone' in this manner. Hayes (1988) cites Latvian, Old Norse, Turkish, Vedic Sanskrit, Old Irish, Sephardic Hebrew,[42] and especially Finnish and the national epic, the *Kalevala*—undone "to an astonishing depth" (pp. 228f).[43] Ancient Greek probably belongs here, too.[44]

---

[41] "Yet there is no agreement as to how Chaucer used this sounded *e*. The vowel seems to have been sounded or not sounded, according to whether a line would or would not scan without it" (Hobsbaum 1996: 24). This opportunism is conspicuously characteristic of Shakespeare's verse, too. On Shakespeare's schwa, see discussion in Kökeritz (1953: 255ff). There is no reason to expect Hebrew verse to be any less opportunistic.

[42] Malone (1983) but see the superior analysis by Hoberman & Manaster Ramer (1999).

[43] This we may take as the conventional view and it seems reasonable to me. However, it is important to be aware of the strongest objections of Hoberman & Manaster Ramer (1999). "We know of very many poetic traditions which make use of phonemic distinctions, whereas there is

1.3.2.3. Furthermore, Arabic and Ugaritic are definitely not reliable guides to Hebrew vowel length and syllable weight.

1.3.2.3.1. In the history of Hebrew, innovating lexical and pausal lengthening rules have been taken on board. For example, lexical lengthening distinguishes the ABSOLUTE STATE (FREE) of the noun from the CONSTRUCT STATE (BOUND). Thus, there is the fundamental contrast between, e.g., /jɔd/ → /jɔ:d/ [jɔ:ð][45] 'hand' (lengthened by lexical rule) and /jɔd/ [jað] 'hand of' (construct) elsewhere. Further, the same lengthening applies to pausal forms in prosodically prominent positions. There is a significant prosodic difference between TH /kɔtɔ́b/ [kʰɔ:θá:v] 'he wrote' and /kɔtɔ́bɔ/ [kʰɔ:θvɔ́:] 'she wrote' and the pausal counterparts /kɔtɔ́b/ → /kɔtɔ́:b/ [kʰɔ:θɔ́:v] and /kɔtɔ́bɔ/ → /kɔtɔ́:bɔ/ [kʰɔ:θɔ́:vɔ:]. The problem is addressed methodologically in ch. 5.

1.3.2.3.2. In the early days, Arabic was understandably the unquestioned basis for reconstructing Hebrew, and specifically for reconstructing its vowel length and syllable weight. All that changed with the discovery of Ras Shamra (Ugarit) in 1928 and its precious treasure of poetic texts. Scholars moved from the observation of the striking similarity of the poetry to the unjustified conclusion that the two phonological systems are for practical purposes the same.

> The consensus that pre-exilic Hebrew and Ugaritic verse are similar leads to an important clue for further extrapolation. Insofar as the verse works in the same way in the two corpora, a description of Hebrew verse will have to describe Ugaritic verse. Any description capable of fulfilling this task will have to refer largely to features common to the dialects (O'Connor 1980: 25).

1.3.2.3.3. Thus, for many scholars, the phonologies of the related Canaanite languages, Ugaritic and ancient Hebrew dialects, must effectively be the same. O'Connor (1980) draws a different conclusion, however. He adopts an extreme agnosticism on the comparative reconstruction of the phonologies and morphologies of these two Northwest Semitic languages. All we have are the common formal features, he emphasizes, and these are "essentially syntactic" (p. 25). "It is (according to one's point of view) either a wonderful piece of luck or a wise provision of God's, that poetry which was to be turned into all languages should have as its chief formal characteristic one that does not disappear … in translation" (Lewis 1958: 12).

---

only a small number of cases where a poetic tradition has been claimed to make use of deeper, more abstract distinctions. Moreover, most of the latter have involved languages and traditions of versification which are now extinct (Vedic Sanskrit, Skaldic Icelandic, Bardic Irish, Kalevala Finnish, pre-sixteenth century Latvian) and only a few are claimed to be found in living systems (Modern French, Turkish, Mandarin, and German rhyme and Irish alliteration) and in any event almost all of the examples cited, living or dead, have already been refuted" (p. 216).

[44] Suchard (p.c.) draws attention to Greek *muta cum liquida* stemming from syllabic resonants and refers to van Beek (2022) for details.

[45] The IPA transcription follows the majesterial Khan (2020) with one exception. The acute accent here indicates a TH 'accent' while the grave accent indicates the use of the secondary *metheg* diacritic.

1.3.2.3.4. It is this latter position, ISOSYNTACTIC, as it were, that has captured a broad Hebraist consensus. "As a replacement for this notion [of the conventional Ley-Sievers-Budde accentual system], O'Connor offers syntactic constraints determining how many elements of discourse can enter a line of verse" (Dion 1992: 5). However, from the perspective of generative syntax and semantics, this isosyntactic and idiosyncratic theory has little to recommend itself, despite its scientific pretensions.

Fundamentally, the length of a word (let alone full syntactic phrases) has no principled limit. From a syntactic point of view, there is no difference at all between the prepositional phrase in (7a) and that in (7b). In the first, there are six syllables,[46] in the second there is the lonely one. It should be obvious, then, that syntax cannot deliver an identifiable mean, median and mode of syllables with a narrow range of syllables.

(7) (a) בְּמַעַלְלֵיהֶם
[bamà:ʕa:lale:hέ:m]
'with their inventions' (Ps 106:29a)

(b) בָּם
[bɔ́:m]
'upon them' (Ps 106:29b)

1.3.3. There are apparently no pure counting metres as envisaged in the anti-metrical argument with the exception of the English adaptation of *haiku*.[47] Regardless, for different reasons, as will be explained (§1.4), the three parade examples in Vance (2001)—Japanese, French and Old English—are not 'pure counting' metres. In other words, the raw count of syllables and accents per line is not exact. Consequently, these metrical traditions cannot be used to exclude the possibility of BH syllablic or accentual metre.

1.3.4. Quantitative and accentual-syllabic metres are completely and incorrectly excluded from consideration on at least three grounds. Since the anti-metrical argument rests on the exclusion of *all four types* of versification—quantitative, syllabic, accentual, accentual-syllabic—the failure to exclude two of the four major types sinks the argument as framed.

1.3.4.1. There is the seeming *non sequitur* that the "scholarly community has, in effect, rejected both quantitative and accentual-syllabic metrical systems for classical Hebrew poetry, having

[46] An oddity is Hobbins's 'prosodic word' of one to six syllables, in obvious violation of his expounded system of twos and threes (2007: 577; cf. Fabb & Halle 2008). However, a TH prosodic foot is typically one to three surface syllables. Taking onboard this intervening timing unit would bring his entire *twos-and-threes* system into line.

[47] Fabb (2002) notes the syllable-counting metre of Welsh *englyn penfyr* (pp. 51-53). On his analysis, this metre is of the 'patterning' type: there is higher-order metrical organization into feet. His evidence for metrical feet comes from the rhyming scheme (p. 53). There are other syllable-counting metres, but they do not count undifferentiated syllables like pearls on a string. Whether it is Vedic hymns (Fabb & Halle 2008: §8.1) or Latvian *dainas* (§9.1), e.g., there are always metrical feet that hierarchically govern the nature and position of syllables. In any case, Fabb & Halle note that "straight syllable-counting meters of this kind are in a vanishingly small minority among the poetic traditions of the world" (p. 170).

offered no new theories in either category in over a century" (Petersen 2001: vii). "The quantitative and accentual-syllabic approaches to the question of meter in Hebrew Bible are dead. No one utilizes them any longer" (Vance 2001: 221). "The active, chiefly European advocates of a precisely defined metrical component are of no concern here because after a century of research, they have no scientifically usable conclusions, i.e., no one of them can consistently reproduce another's results" (O'Connor 1980: 37). However, the fact that a quantitative metre has *not yet* been uncovered cannot ipso facto exclude the possibility.

1.3.4.2. Further, it is claimed that the ancient Hebrew dialects are not "suited" to either of these metres. Rather, for the pioneering German scholars with Romantic tendencies, the Hebrew language is 'purely accentual' just like the primitive Germanic dialects. "Given the highly stressed character of Hebrew,[48] it is only natural and proper" that the metre would be accentual if anything (Vance 2001: 97).

It does not follow that the metre must be accentual if the language is 'highly stressed'. This misses the rejoinder that syllable weight or quantity is relevant in all stages of highly stressed English including the present dialects. Crucially, syllable weight does play a role in Old English verse. Hungarian, with both its heavy initial word-stress and its syllable weight, is a parade example of a language that makes two metres available: the strict iambic traditional verse and the literary quantitative verse based on classical models.

As is the case with English, from Proto-Germanic to present, syllable weight is a feature of Hebrew, from Proto-Semitic (cf. Arabic) to Proto-Hebrew down to Tiberian Hebrew (TH), the canonical medieval dialect of liturgical declamation (DeCaen 2008, Khan 2020). It is strange, therefore, for Hebraists to continue to opine that "enough is known of Hebrew vocalization to reject quantitative meter as a real possibility" (Vance 2001: 95).

1.3.4.3. Finally, recovering quantitative and accentual-syllabic metres is declared impossible because of the combinatorial explosion engendered by metrical feet. Both of these metres "are the most complex of the four categories. In the absence of any tradition … of such meters … it would be a monumental task to reconstruct the catalogue of feet, the allowable substitutions, and the like" (Vance 2001: 221). However, students of both these metres know very well that such complete agnosticism regarding a catalogue of feet is unwarranted. The math is not that bad. It is not a monumental task.

1.3.5. A great flaw in all methodology is the phrase 'count per line'. As O'Connor repeatedly and correctly emphasizes, the line remains the great "undefined unit" (1980: 52). "Few scholars who work with Biblical Hebrew poetry have defined this important term since defining colon depends on a scholar's point of view concerning the meter of Biblical Hebrew poetry" (Park 2012: 20).

1.3.5.1. If metrical poetry is defined as the systematic division of a text into lines according to a poetic metre, but the presence of BH poetic metre itself be in dispute, how then is the unambiguous lineation or colometry arrived at? "Since meter entails the counting of phonological events per line, it follows that determining the line divisions is crucial to any analysis" (Vance 2001: 7).

[48] Hebrew is "a heavily stress-oriented language" (Park 2012: 101).

1.3.5.2. To begin to see the problem, consider first how a Hebraist would scan *Sonnets* 116.1-4 in (8a) against the metrical lineation in (8b). The Hebraist would say, yes, the lines in (8a) are approximately of the same length, yet what they share is not metre but a rhythm of "regular irregularity" (Harshav 2014: 51).

(8) (a) *Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments;* 16
Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, 14
Or bends with the remover to remove. 10

(b) *Let me not to the marriage*[49] *of true minds* 10
Admit impediments; love is not love 10
Which alters when it alteration[50] *finds,* 10
Or bends with the remover to remove. 10

1.3.5.3. To understand the problem concretely, compare the analyses in (9). The Tiberian scribes chant Job 3:26 as in (9a). From first principles, so too would DeCaen (2009) and Park (2012), following the TH accentuation. However, the alternative delineation in (9b) immediately suggests itself.

(9) (a) לֹא שָׁלַוְתִּי וְלֹא שָׁקַטְתִּי וְלֹא־נָחְתִּי
וַיַּבֹא רֹגֶז׃
ló: ʃɔ:lá:vtʰi: való: ʃɔ:qá:ttˁi: vàlo:-nɔ́:ħtʰi: 13
vaɟɟó:vo: ʁó:ʁɛz 5
'I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet:
yet trouble came' (Job 3:26)

(b) לֹא שָׁלַוְתִּי וְלֹא שָׁקַטְתִּי
וְלֹא־נָחְתִּי וַיַּבֹא רֹגֶז׃
ló: ʃɔ:lá:vtʰi: való: ʃɔ:qá:ttˁi: 9
vàlo:-nɔ́:ħtʰi: vaɟɟó:vo: ʁó:ʁɛz 9
'I was not in safety, neither had I rest,
neither was I quiet: yet trouble came'

1.3.5.4. Apparently, there are only two biblical schemes of unambiguous lineation. One is a RESPONSORIAL scheme that comes in two varieties: (i) lines are isolated by refrains (which are also lines), e.g., 'for his mercy endureth forever' (Ps 136 throughout; also Ps 118:1-4) or 'he is their help and their shield' (Ps 115:9b, 10b, 11b) and (ii) the expression [hà:lalú:hu:] 'praise (ye) him!' that combines with half-lines (Ps 148:1-4a, 150:1-5a).

In the second scheme (iii), an ALPHABETIC ACROSTIC isolates individual lines (typically, an acrostic isolates only larger verses or stanzas).[51] This second scheme is instantiated only in Ps

[49] Probably trisyllabic *marr-i-age*.
[50] Possibly the metrical resolution of pentasyllabic *al-ter-a-ti-on* (Kökeritz 1953: 270).
[51] "It is a pattern, a thing done like embroidery, stitch by stitch, through long, quiet hours, for love of the subject and for the delight in leisurely, disciplined craftmanship" (Lewis 1958: 52).

111 and 112 for a grand total of forty-four lines. Only those lines thus unambiguously isolated by (i) - (iii) amount to an outrageously small 'test sample' to work with.[52]

1.3.5.5. Ironically, one of the more reliable ways to demarcate poetic lines is the regular syllable count. As Dion correctly notes, poetic lines "often comprise equal or rather, nearly equal numbers of syllables" (1992: 9). Notice how he checks himself mid-sentence. To take his example, Lam 2:19 in (10) "divides easily into four short lines of reasonably equal lengths; this makes up for the poverty of parallelism" (p. 10). The TH syllable count is added in the margin. The siglum '>>' indicates the problematic run-on syntax.

(10) קוּמִי רֹנִּי בַלָּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אַשְׁמֻרֹּות
שִׁפְכִי כַמַּיִם לִבֵּךְ נֹכַח פְּנֵי אֲדֹנָי
שְׂאִי אֵלָיו כַּפַּיִךְ עַל־נֶפֶשׁ עֹולָלַיִךְ
הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרָעָב בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חוּצֹות׃

qú:mi: rˤó:nni: vallá:jlɔ:	laʁó:ʃ ʔaʃmu:ʁó:θ >>	7+5
ʃifχí: χammá:jim libbé:χ	nó:χaħ pané: ʔaðo:nó:j	7+7
siʔí: ʔe:lɔ́:v kʰappʰá:jiχ	ʕal-né:fɛʃ ʕò:lɔ:lá:jiχ	7+7
hɔ:ʕatˤu:fí:m baʁɔ:ʕɔ́:v	baʁó:ʃ kʰɔl-ħu:sˤó:θ	7+5

'Arise, cry out in the night:
pour out thine heart like water
lift up thy hands toward him
that faint for hunger
in the beginning of the watches >>
before the face of the LORD:
for the life of thy young children,
in the top of every street' (Lam 2:19)

One might be forgiven for thinking there is some regulation of the lines in (10), but do not believe your eyes. Like every student of biblical poetry, Dion hastens to add that this iso-syllabism "does not by any means amount to a keystone of Hebrew "metrics," but it contributes to the bonding of small units of verse" (p. 9). "All that seems to be demonstrated is that the lines (cola, verses, or whatever) are approximately the same length. But this has never been disputed and hardly points conclusively to some underlying meter" (Vance 2001: 184).

1.3.5.6. The characteristic parallelism of BH lines is often determinative. However, as Dion aptly alliterates, there is the great problem of the "poverty of parallelism" in some verse. Attempting to sort out the hoary and vexed analysis of BH parallelism in its mountain of tomes is beyond the remit of the present study. See, e.g., the overview in Watson (1986: ch. 6) and his sources. It is sufficient to note here that parallelism is not a necessary feature of poetic lines.

1.3.5.7. Again ironically, another reasonably reliable means of demarcating the lines is the TH cantillation (DeCaen 2009, Park 2012).[53] As Dresher (1994) cogently argues, the TH prosody,

[52] There are related schemes. One conspicuous example is the phrasing 'For three transgressions of *X* and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof' (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 2:1, 4, 6). However, it is not clear whether the phrasing itself is metrical.

[53] Park (2012) concludes that medieval cantillation is a completely reliable guide to ancient poetic colometry, assuming of course that he has identified poetry vs. prose in the first place and that his reconstruction of one Hebrew dialect is correct. His unmotivated adaptations of Fabb &

i.e., the natural music of the spoken language, is logogenically projecting the cantillation: it is a true chant vs. song *per se*. The logogenic systems of cantillation are picking out constituents of various sizes in the prosodic hierarchy.

1.3.5.8. It is curious that Vance (2001) includes only the complete biblical acrostics in his test sample, but not the mangled acrostics in Nahum 1:2-8 and Ps 9-10.[54] The latter demonstrate the regular practice of biblical remix, which is a matter for lower and higher criticism. Cutting and pasting is a perfectly reasonable method of poetic composition: e.g., in 1 Chr 16:8-36.[55] However, it does cast a shade over the reliability of the acrostic principle in proper lineation elsewhere. If the mixed snippets are written in different metres, statistical analysis would be unreliable.

1.3.5.9. Moreover, the acrostic texts are not automatically free of textual difficulties. On the contrary, difficulties in the acrostics come in any number of forms. The following list is not exhaustive.

- There are six departures of the reading tradition from the consonantal text in Lam 5. In four instances, the reading imposes a coordinating conjunction (3b, 5b, 7a, 7b) and twice a verbal suffix (1b, 21a). In all six cases, the reading tradition increases the syllable-count by one.[56]
- An editorial gloss 'and a portion to her maidens' considerably extends Prov 31:15b. The cantillation treats the comment as a separate poetic line 15c.[57]
- Pious substitutions can throw off the rhythm. An interesting case is the substitution of [jiʁʔaθ ʔaðoːnɔ́ːj] 'that feareth the LORD' in Prov 31:30b for [navoːnɔ́ː] 'intelligent, discerning': an increase of two or three syllables, but a decrease in the status of women.
- In some instances, there is no way to avoid obvious scribal mistakes. It is the second word [zaʕmoː] 'his indignation' that begins with [z] in the *zayin*-line (Nah. 8:6a).
- A more drastic instance is the elimination of Ps 25:1b by commonplace parablepsis (the jumping of the scribe's eye from same to same). The upshot is a *beth*-line beginning with *aleph*.[58]

Halle (2008) show how a colon by definition is a colon by definition. His statistical analysis of stresses per colon is intended to prove that there are identifiable differences between early and late BH poetry. It seems to me that at best he shows that there is more than one metrical scheme in the biblical texts.

[54] Vance (2001) gives the full list of biblical acrostics in n. 29 (p. 7). He includes Pss 9-10, but this text is omitted from subsequent discussion and analysis. He concedes that "perhaps" Nahum 1:2-8 is an acrostic. There is the obvious line-initial sequence *beth* through *kaf*. Surprisingly, he excludes non-acrostic Lam 5 from the list—correctly—but then *adds* this text to his database anyway, thereby *conceding* that the acrostic principle is not necessary for proper lineation.

[55] 1C 16:8-22 || Ps 105:1-15; 1C 16:23-33 || Ps 96:1b-13; 1C 16:34-36 || Ps 106:1, 47-48.

[56] Curiously, it appears that Q's system of conjunctions, best viewed as grammatical hypercorrection, is instantiated in the K of Ps 2, where the conjunctions are unwanted *metri causa*.

[57] Vance reads 15a and 15b as one line, and the gloss as the second line in a bilinear verse (2001: 372). Obviously, this skews the counts against a regular metre: specifically, the ranges.

- Intercalation of material is obvious in a disrupted acrostic, e.g., lines 2c-3b, at variance with the rhythm in Nahum 1, are inserted between the *aleph*-line (2a-2b) and the *beth*-line (3b-3c).
- Cutting off the acrostic at the *kaf*-line in Nahum 1 renders the lineation and metrical status of the subsequent verses 9ff problematic.
- "Hebrew poetry exhibits a number of linguistic features unknown to everyday parlance and even to artistic prose" (Dion 1992: 34). These include the "avoidance of prosaic particles" (p. 34). Thus, it is a commonplace that scribes will regularly insert these particles as a grammatical hypercorrection, e.g., the object marking [ʔεθ] in Ps 112:1a[59] or the definite article [ha] in Deut 32:1a.

1.3.6. No serious philologist will object to the foregoing list as the basis for possible emendation *metri causa* 'for the sake of metre'.

1.3.6.1. One might wonder, then, why there is such an animus against such emendation among Hebraists. "Having posited a theory of Hebrew meter, the scholars were wont to use it as the basis for exegetical decisions such as emending the text (even where there was no textual support for the proposed emendation) or for classifying the text as prose or poetry. However, if meter is, in fact, not an element integral to Hebrew poetry, then such exegetical decisions have no foundation" (Vance 2001: 489).

1.3.6.2. It seems that the ulterior objection is to the hatchet job that the theorists of BH poetic metre have made of texts in the past. Previous theories of BH poetic metre had required "numerous, often nearly systematic, emendations to work" (O'Connor 1980: 37). A whole generation was staggered by their instructors' nonchalance in deleting and inserting words in the divine oracles. Kosmala's *cri de coeur* perfectly captures that stunned reaction.

> In my student years metrical studies in the Hebrew Bible were much *en vogue* in Germany, and there were few lectures on the books of the prophets in which texts were not examined metrically. Sometimes it was like this: one line was considered to be too short, so a word or two had to be added, whilst another line seemed to be too long, so a word a word or two had to be removed. The actual text as handed down seemed to be a minor concern. Duhm's commentary on Isaiah which appeared in its third and last edition in 1914 can serve as an illustration of that method of scanning Hebrew poetry. This method could not possibly lead to sound results. Not what the prophet meant to express and indeed had expressed in the text preserved to us, but rather what he ought to have said and how the text, therefore, ought to be emended,

---

[58] Perhaps one of the stranger features of Vance's analysis, which after all is intended to *eliminate* all textual emendations *metri causa*, is the *inclusion* of a textual emendation to make sense of the missing line *metri causa* (2001: 382), with the tendentious distortion of the count ranges.

[59] This is not to say that /ʔet/ [ʔé:θ] ~ [ʔεθ] is not required *metri causa* on rare occasions. Pss 106 and 115, e.g., require the object-marker *metri causa*. Then too, [ʔεθ] is employed to make an *aleph*-line in Ps 119:8a. Furthermore, just to make things interesting, there is the homophonous preposition /ʔitt/ [ʔé:θ] ~ [ʔεθ] 'with' that is obviously not subject to such interplay.

> seemed to have become the all-important object of critical scholarship (Kosmala 1964: 423).

Therefore, there can be no formal metre in BH poetry in order to forestall this exegetical apocalypse.

1.3.6.3. Further, it is not simply such cavalier treatment of words constituting philological malpractice that generates passion. It must always be remembered that these are not just any words but the inspired words of God. Accordingly, for many students of BH poetry, such cavalier treatment of God's words is also theological malpractice and completely unacceptable. However, it is a great virtue of the metrical theory that will be advanced here that suggested emendations, with a handful of exceptions, are marginal, trivial, and crucially, do not affect biblical exegesis. In any case, if the original hand be divinely guided, there is no reason why a second or third hand could not also be divinely guided in augmenting, glossing and commenting.

PART II

1.4. Statistical Profiles and Controls

1.4.1. The specific anti-metrical argument pursued by Vance (2001) is essentially a statistical argument. It is founded on the concepts of STATISTICAL PROFILE and STATISTICAL CONTROL.

1.4.1.1. The STATISTICAL PROFILE is based on the painstaking counting of prosodic units per line. From these raw counts may be generated the mean, median and mode of prosodic units per line together with the SIGNIFICANT RANGE[60] and standard deviation.

1.4.1.2. The specific corpus of the present study is characterized by a mean, median and mode of eight syllables per line, hence OCTOSYLLABIC, with a significant range of seven to ten syllables (§2.2.4). Other corpora can be identified by similar profiles. For example, Lam 1-4 is characterized by a mean, median and mode of seven syllables. The fact that such distinctions are even possible weighs heavily in the direction of a metre of some kind.

1.4.1.3. A STATISTICAL CONTROL is the statistical profile generated by a poem that is definitely *known* to be metrical. In this sense, Vance (2001) designates Japanese *haiku* as the statistical control for a syllabic metre. Vance (2001) helpfully includes the control of prose texts. The anti-metrical argument is deceptively simply: the BH statistical profiles are clearly inconsistent with any of the statistical controls. However, I will show just the opposite: the limited range in BH raw syllable-counts is consistent with all the major phyla of metrical versification.

1.4.1.4. It is ironic, then, that Vance should chide Hebraists for being "neither poets nor critics of poetry" (with the possible exception of Robert Alter) and for not "deal[ing] with the poetry of

[60] The 'significant range' is a fundamental concept in the analysis of Culley (1970). Roughly speaking, it is the bell curve with the tails clipped off. Poems may be distinguised stylistically by the nature of these tails.

other languages" (2001: 11). For it is certain that a Hebraist insisting on a strict or pure metre as he emphatically does, has not dealt with the poetry of other languages including English.

1.4.2. Japanese *haiku*. To be clear, the anti-metrical argument rests primarily on Japanese *haiku* as the statistical control for syllabic metre.

1.4.2.1. Other supposed syllabic systems such as the classical French *alexandrin* are simply more Japanese, the reasoning goes. Furthermore, Japanese is by extension the paradigm of accentual-syllabic metre, since the latter is effectively syllable-counting in its statistical profile. For example, it is assumed that a Shakespearean sonnet counts out exactly ten syllables per line.[61] Consequently, to eliminate Japanese as a statistical control for the syllabic metre is to blow a major hole in the anti-metrical argument.

1.4.2.2. It is a brute fact that Japanese *haiku* is not syllable-counting. Surprisingly and paradoxically, Japanese is the syllabic-counting system universally cited in poetry handbooks. Nevertheless, Japanese does not actually count syllables, rather it counts moras.[62] Japanese is thus weight-sensitive or QUANTITY-SENSITIVE and its poetry is QUANTITATIVE. It is comparable in this respect to classical Greek and Latin metre and the Sanskrit mora-counting *āryā*.[63] Its raw syllable-count per line actually varies. Accordigly, Japanese must be eliminated as the statistical control for syllabic metre.

1.4.2.3. Admittedly, the quirky English experimentation with Japanese form is purely syllabic and undoubtedly this is the actual model poetic theorists have in mind. And admittedly, *haiku* typically conform to the heptakaidecasyllabic pattern 5-7-5.[64] One of the most famous *haiku* by the master Matsuo Bashō (17th cent.), "generally considered the most influential figure in the history of the genre" (Ueda 1991: v), is the *Frog Pond* presented in (11). The syllable count is always supplied in the right margin.

(11)

furuike ya	5	
kawazu tobikomu	7	
mizu no oto	5	= 17

the old pond—
a frog jumps in,
water's sound (Ueda 1991: 140)

1.4.2.4. Nevertheless, I have found a syllable-count as low as thirteen (12) and as high as eighteen (13) in master Bashō.

---

[61] *Sonnets* 145 is the lone exception, counting eight syllables per line.

[62] Park (2012) is apparently alone among Hebraists in knowing that Japanese *haiku* is not syllabic (n. 32).

[63] Isaacs (1918) founds an analysis directly on the *āryā* and Tiberian Hebrew syllable weight. Alas, he does not pursue a metrical analysis but passes on to appreciating the rhythms in general. I am indebted to Hobbins (p.c.) for pointing out this obscure work.

[64] Vance's control dataset consists of four 5-7-5 *haiku* pulled from "Forms in English Haiku" (nd) (2001: 232, n. 690).

(12)	*samidare ya*	5	
	ryūtō aguru	5	
	bantarō	3	= 13

long seasonal rain—
lighting dragon candles
a municipal guard (Ueda 1991: 40)

(13)	*tsuki zo*[65] *shirube*	6	
	konata e irase	7	
	tabi no yado	5	= 18

the moon will guide you—
this way, traveler; please come
into the inn here (Ueda 1991: 21)

1.4.2.5. The simple explanation of the variable syllable-count is that Japanese does not count syllables. To reiterate, Japanese poetry counts moras just as classical Greek and Latin do. There is no mystery here: Japanese phonology is quantitative or weight-sensitive. Thus in (12), trisyllabic *bantaro* is metrically pentamoraic *ba-n-ta-ro-o*, identical in metrical weight to pentasyllabic *tabi no yado* in (13). Consequently, when weight is factored into the calculation, the theoretical lower limit of the *haiku* is ten syllables. In brief, the master Bashō permits a considerable range of syllables {13-18} that is not inconsistent but rather consistent with the BH ranges of syllables.

1.4.3. French and Middle English. Classical French will be the other language cited as syllable-counting. Despite conventional wisdom, there are a number of excellent reasons why French poetry is not strictly syllable-counting. The French and Italian models inspire the Middle English of Chaucer.

1.4.3.1. Formally, French carries forward medieval stress-assignment and syllable structure. Arguably there are iambic metrical feet (Fabb & Halle 2008: §5.3) comparable to English feet. Further, in this connection, there is a word boundary (main lexical stress) that is mandatory (caesura) in the dodecasyllabic *alexandrin*. In brief, the French metre belongs to the 'patterning' versus 'counting' taxon (§1.3.1.4). French syllables do not enter the metrical computation undifferentiated. Moreover, syllables are regularly extrametrical by position. The schwa *e* is regularly extrametrical by SYNALOEPHA (the metrical merging of two syllables into one).

1.4.3.2. Thus is it possible that the dodecasyllabic stanza by Baudelaire in (14) does not have one line of twelve syllables—unless you know how to 'count' syllables. The raw syllable-count is supplied in the margin. This count is surprising, given the Japanese model, since it is assumed that the raw syllable-count per line is *always* twelve. I am introducing here the useful notational convention of Fabb & Halle (2008) of employing a downward projecting asterisk for those syllables that 'count', and the delta as a dummy placeholder for those that do 'not count'

[65] Presumably, *zo* is extrametrical.

(extrametrical). The parenthesis marks off the French iambic foot for clarity. The pipe marks the mandatory medial caesura.

(14) *Sans cesse à mes côtés s'agite le Démon;* 13
* *) Δ * *) * *) | * *)* *) * *)
Il nage autour de moi comme un air impalpable; 15
* *) Δ * *) * *) | * Δ *) * *) * *) Δ
Je l'avale et le sens qui brûle mon poumon 13
* *) * Δ *) * *) | * *) * *) * *)
Et l'emplit d'un désir éternel et coupable. 13
* *) * *) * *) | * *) * *) * *) Δ

The Demon is always nagging at my side,
swirling round me like untouchable vapour.
As I gulp this down it sears my lungs
and fills my breast with never-ending, guilty lust.[66]

1.4.3.3. A choice iambic pentametric line by Petrarch (Piera 2008: (61), p. 113)—sixteen syllables in a supposedly ten/eleven-syllable line—is added in (15) to illustrate the possibilities in the many Romance metres.[67]

(15) *fiór', fróndi, hérbe, ómbre, ántri, ónde, áure, soávi* 16
* *) Δ * Δ * *) Δ * Δ *) Δ * *) **) Δ
'Flowers, foliage, grasses, shade, grottos, waves, soft breezes.'

1.4.3.4. Chaucer's metre is constructed on the Romance pentametric model in (16). This is originally the metre of the *Chanson de Roland* with its early caesura 2+3 (see Fabb & Halle 2008: §5.6). Chaucer observes the convention of synaloepha, though he may depart from it whenever it suits him *metri causa*. The major difference is that Chaucer not infrequently admits heavy syllables as one foot (an option not available in the Romance languages): *prill* in the first line and *half* in the eighth. Less than half of the lines have a raw syllable-count of ten syllables in this regular pentameter.

(16) *Whan that A***prill**[68] *with his shoures soote*[69] 10
)* *) * *) ! *) * *) * *) Δ
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote, 13
* *) Δ * *) Δ * *) * *) * *) Δ
And bathed every veyne in swich licour 12
* *) * *)Δ * *) Δ * *) * *)
Of which vertu engendered is the flour; 11
* *) * *) * *) Δ * *) * *)

[66] The first stanza of "La destruction", *Fleurs du mal* CIX (transl. Scarfe 2012: 247).
[67] In linear order, two syllables that count as one metrical syllable: *e o, e a, i o,* and *e a*. The *h* is silent, so *i he* also count as one syllable. The line-final post-tonic syllable is also extrametrical.
[68] As if *Aprille*.
[69] The text is drawn from *The Riverside Chaucer* ed. Benson (1987: 23).

Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth 10
)* *) * *) * *) * *) * *)
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth 11
* *) * *) * *)Δ* *) * *)
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne 11
)* *) * *) * *) * *) * *) Δ
Hath in the Ram his **half** *cours yronne* 10
* *) * *) * *) ! *) * *) Δ

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root, and all
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power
As brings about the engendering of the flower,
When also Zephyrus with his sweet breath
Exhales an air in every grove and heath
Upon the tender shoots, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of the *Ram* has run[70]

1.4.3.5. By reconstruction, the Hebraist counts a syllable at the same value at all times. There is no room for positional variation or extrametricality of any kind. But once positional variation and extrametricality are admitted, the raw syllable-counts per line can vary within limits. Thus, if French and related metres be considered the statistical control for syllabic metre in lieu of Japanese, the profiles are still consistent with BH variation.

1.4.4. Spanish *arte mayor*. In connection with the Romance traditions, the possibility of a 'loose' anapestic metre makes for both great entertainment in scanning and an important statistical control.[71]

[70] Transl. Coghill (1977).
[71] The anapest is a group of three syllables with stress falling on the third: *duh duh dum*. This metre that trips merrily along is employed by Dr. Seuss to great effect. Notice that missing syllables are licensed at the beginning of the line, here *the sun*.

> *The **sún** did not **shíne**. It was **tóo** wet to **pláy**.*
> *So we **sát** in the **hóuse** all that **cóld**, cold wet **dáy**.*
> (from *The Cat in the Hat*)

The metre can be adapted to a higher literary register. Notice how the weight of three syllables falls like a hammer on *Oh*, extending the syllable into a true wail.

> ***Óh!** for the **vé**teran **héarts** that were **wá**sted*
> *In **strífe** with the **stórm**, when their **bát**tles were **wón**—*
> *Then the **Éa**gle, whose **gáze** in that **mó**ment was **blá**sted,*
> *Had **stíll** soar'd with **éyes** fix'd on **víc**tory's **sún**!*
> ("Napoleon's Farewell" ll. 13-16 (Byron 1996: 355))

1.4.4.1. Whereas the range of a loose iambic metre is generally {1-3} syllables per foot, that of the loose anapestic metre is {1-4} syllables per foot—and recall that this count does not even include the many syllables that are rendered extrametrical by position. While the ideal is twelve syllables per line (four anapests), the theoretical range is {4-16} syllables; synaloepha can push it higher.

1.4.4.2. As another statistical control dataset, then, I offer the anapestic tetrameter *verso de arte mayor* of Juan de Mena. Representative lines in (17) have been lifted from Piera (2008: (81)-(84), (88)-(89), pp. 120-122). The tonic syllables that head feet are marked with the acute accent. The line in (17a) is metrically ideal. Note the feet of four syllables in (17g) and (17h), and the monosyllabic initial foot in (17i).[72] Here then is a vitally important statistical control for accentual-syllabic metre that is consistent with BH verse.

(17) (a) *Aris**tó**tiles **cér**ca del **pá**dre Pla**tón*** 12
* * *)* * *) * * *) * * *)
'Aristotle besider Father Plato' (l. 939)

(b) *su**plíd** cobdi**ián**do mis inconve**niént**es* 12
* *) * * *) * * *) * * *) *
'kindly make up for my shortcomings' (l. 48)

(c) *er**má**no de a**quél buén** ar**ché**ro de **Ró**ma* 13
* *) * Δ * *) * * *) * * *) *
'brother of that fine archer of Rome' (l. 698)

(d) *y los qu'en tu **ruéda** que**xós**os fa**llá**mos* 13
* *) * * *) * * *) * * *) *
'and those unhappy ones we find on your wheel' (l. 12)

(e) *por **ú**so **só**lo de la su ri**qué**za* 11
* *) * *)* * *) * * *) *
'just to make use of their riches' (p. 1790)

(f) *a**qué**sta co**mién**ça de proce**dér*** 10
* *) * * *) * *) * * *)
'this one can be traced back to' (l. 373)

(g) *tan **bién** en las **á**guas **bí**vas como **muér**tas* 12
* *) * * *) * *)* * * *) *
'in water with tides and water without' (l. 403)

[72] In Piera's ingenious analysis, once the main stresses are marked off, one counts from right to left up to three. Whenever a line-internal)*) is generated thereby, the rightmost bracket is deleted. This applies in the case of (17g) and (17h):)*)***) →)****). It also applies in (17c), where the metrical stress on *buén* has been knocked out:)*)**) →)***). Note that the rule cannot apply in (17i), the monosyllabic foot *) remains.

(h) *de los que de**mué**stran y de los demon**strá**dos* 13
* *) * * *) * * * *) * * *) *
'the strong masts quavered on a calm sea' (l. 1028)

(i) ***ó**ras sil**ván**do **có**mo dra**gón*** 9
*) * * *) * *) * * *)
'now hissing like a dragon' (l. 1965)

1.4.5. *Beowulf*. Vance's use of Old English *Beowulf* as a control is problematic in at least three ways.

1.4.5.1. I reject the conventional approach to Germanic metre of Sievers (1893). I agree with Getty (2002) that "the understanding of the structure of Old English poetry associated with the names Sievers, Kuhn, Bliss, and Cable, rests on assumptions which generative linguists find wholly unpalatable" (p. 4). He continues, "my approach puts forward explicit points of congruity with Modern English and Finnish metres" (p. 6) to which I agree.

What analysis should provide the statistical control for accentual metre, then? And is it not problematic that the Hebraist approach to accentual metre is founded squarely on Sievers's own analysis of BH poetry (1901-1919)?

1.4.5.2. Further, for controls to be useful in the statistical anti-metrical argument, syllable-counts and word-counts should also be provided. Yet for *Beowulf*, only the count of ACCENTUAL UNITS in the baroque sense of Ley-Sievers-Budde accentual systems (Vance 2001: 289-290) are provided. Why no independent counts to create a complete statistical profile?

1.4.5.3. Consider as a statistical control, then, lines 4-19 in (18). Word stress is indicated in **bold**, and the alliteration is underlined.[73] The syllable-count is in the margin. Notice carefully the median and mode of 9 syllables (mean 9.6) and the narrow range of {9-11} syllables.

(18)

Oft Scyld Scē*fing*	**scea***þena* **þrēa***tum,*	9
mo*negum* **mæg***þum*	**meo***do-***set***la* **of***tēah;*	11
eg*sode* **Eor***le,*	**syð***ðan* **ǽ***rest* **wearð**	10
fēa*sceaft* **fun***den;*	**hē** *þæs* **frō***fre ge***bād***:**	10
wēox un*der* **wol***cum,*	**weorð-mun***dum* **þāh,**	9
oð*þæt him* **æg***hwylc*	**þā***ra* **ymb-***sittendra*	11
o*fer* **hron-rā***de*	**hȳ***ran* **scol***de,*	9
gom*ban* **gyl***dan:*	**þæt** *wæs* **gōd cy***ning!*	9

There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes,
a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes.
This terror of the hall-troops had come far.
A foundling to start with, he would flourish later on
as his powers waxed and his worth was proved.
In the end each clan on the outlying coasts
beyond the whale-road had to yield to him

[73] Initial vowels indiscriminately alliterate.

and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king!

Đǣm ea*fera* **wæs**	**æf***ter* **cen***ned*	9
geong *in* **gear***dum,*	**þo***ne* **God sen***de*	9
fol*ce tō* **frō***fre;*	**fy***ren*-**ðear***fe* **on***geat,*	11
þæt **hīe ǣr dru***gon*	**al***dor*-**lēas***e*	9
lang*e* **hwī***le;*	**him** *þæs* **Līf-frēa**,	9
wul*dres* **Weal***dend,*	**wo***rold*-**ār***e for***geaf***;*	9
Bēo*wulf wæs* **brē***me*	—**blæd wīde sprang**—	9
Scyl*des* **ea***fera,*	**Sced***e*-**lan***dum* **in**.	10

Afterwards a boy-child was born to Shield,
a cub in the yard, a comfort sent
by God to that nation. He knew what they had tholed,
the long times and troubles they'd come through
without a leader; so the Lord of Life,
the glorious Almighty, made this man renowned.
Shield had fathered a famous son:
Beow's name was known through the north.
(Heaney 2000: lines 4-19)

1.4.5.4. I am providing no formal analysis here. I am simply making a point. Exactly how many 'accentual units' are there per line? How do you define the accentual units, how do you count them?[74] Should we read *þæt wæs* ***gōd cyn****ing* or ***þæt*** *wæs* ***gōd*** *cyning*?[75] And is this any less problematic than the analogous counting of accentual units in BH? Where does the alliteration fall? Does alliteration actually occur four times?

1.4.5.5. Then consider. Is this *Beowulf* versification in (18) actually the statistical profile envisaged by Hebraists and Vance (2001) in particular? I do not think so. No real metrical system works like the Hebraist fabrication of a 'strict accentual' metre, where there are always four easily identified accents and there is no variation or positionality involved. Rather, the point is that BH poetry is entirely consistent with the rhythms, beats, accents and syllable-counts of the Old English lines in (18) (without the alliteration, of course). I conclude that *Beowulf* cannot close the door on BH accentual metre.

1.4.6. Quantitative. No-one considers quantitative metre relevant to the question of BH metre. I think that is a fateful mistake. For it is certainly true that BH poetry is not Homeric verse but equally, it is not clear that syllable weight plays no role at all in biblical verse.

---

[74] For the conventional two 'accents' per colon (four per line), Vance (2001: 235) arrives at 100.000% regularity for the A colon and 99.654% for the B colon. Vance assumes that there are eleven B cola out of a grand total of 6,364 cola (3,182 lines) = 99.827% that are missing an accent, citing Pope (1942: 4) as his source (n. 674, p. 223).

[75] My answer:

gomban gyldan	*þæt wæs gōd cyning*
(* * (* *	(* * (* * *
* *	* *

1.4.6.1. In any case, Vance (2001) does not offer a statistical control for syllables, accents, etc. to compare with biblical verse. The snippets in (19) and (20) are offered as further controls against which to evaluate the BH statistical profiles. The syllable count varies slightly because one heavy syllable typically 'counts' as two light syllables.

(19)	*mênin áeide, theà, Pēlēïádeō Achilêos*	16
	ouloménēn, hḕ myrí Achaioîs álge éthēke,	15
	pollàs d' iphthímous psychàs Aïdi proïápsen	14
	hērṓōn, autoùs dè helṓria teûche kýnessin	15
	oiōnoîsí te pâsi, Diòs d' eteleíeto boulḗ,	16
	ex hoû dḕ tà prôta diastḗtēn erísante	14
	Atreïdēs te ánax andrôn kaì dîos Achilleús.	15

Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion,
feasts for the dogs and birds,
and the will of Zeus was moving toward its end.
Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,
Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles. (*Iliad* 1.1-7; translation Fagles 1990)

(20)	*Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris*	15
	Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniaque venit	16
	litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto	16
	vi superum saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram;	15
	multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem,	15
	inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum,	16
	Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae.	15

Wars and a man I sing—an exile driven on by Fate,
he was the first to flee the coast of Troy,
destined to reach Lavinian shores and Italian soil,
yet many blows he took on land and on sea from the gods above—
thanks to cruel Juno's relentless rage—and many losses
he bore in battle too, before he could found a city,
bring his gods to Latium, source of the Latin race,
the Alban lords and the high walls of Rome. (*Aeneid* 1.1; translated by Fagles 2006)

1.4.6.2. Clearly, in classical quantitative meter, the raw syllable-count remains within an extremely narrow band: in (19), the range is {14-16} syllables per line; in (20), {15-16}. However, recall the quantitative metre in Japanese *haiku* (§1.4.2) with its broader range of {13-18} syllables. Thus, if it is Japanese *haiku* rather than Homeric Greek that is taken as the quantitative control, then the slightly variable syllable-counts of biblical verse are still consistent with the quantitative profile.

1.4.7. English Verse

1.4.7.1. Shakespeare. Vance (2001) employs the most artificial of the artificial forms of verse, the strictest of the strict metres, as his model of the accentual-syllabic system: Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. He is essentially conflating a strict syllabic metre (counting) with the classical accentual-syllabic metre (patterning): both supposedly have an identical raw syllable-count per line. To correct this conflation, two representative examples of the Bard's iambic metrical art are offered in exhibit.

1.4.7.1.1. Consider, then, iambic Exhibit A: the representative lines by Prospero (*The Tempest* 1.2.95-106) in (21): a very tempest of syllables. Less than half the lines have ten syllables. I scan the lines 103-105 as in (22).[76] The variable syllable count is in the margin with a range of {10-14} syllables. Notice how the prosodic pause licenses the post-tonic syllables: *-tion*[77], *-yalty,* and *-gative*.

(21)

A falsehood in its contrary as great	10
As my trust was, which had indeed no limit,	11
A confidence sans bound. He being thus lorded,	12
Not only with what my revenue yielded	11
But what my power might else exact, like one	11
Who, having into truth by telling of it,	11
Made such a sinner of his memory	10
To credit his own lie, he did believe	10
He was indeed the duke, out o' th' substitution	14
And executing th' outward face of royalty	13
With all prerogative. Hence his ambition growing—	14
Dost thou hear?	
Your tale, sir, would cure deafness.	10

(22) *He was indeed the duke, out o' th' substitution*
* *) * *) * *) * Δ Δ *) * *)ΔΔ

---

[76] The extrametricality might seem odd, but it sounds alright to the ear in major pause. Accordingly, the phenomenon may naturally be incorporated into a rhyming scheme. Take the following rhymes, for example.

> *Her favourite science was the mathem**atical**,*
> *Her noblest virtue was her magnan**imity***
> *Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was **Attic all**,*
> *Her serious sayings darkened to subl**imity**.*
> *In short in all things she was fairly wh**at I call***
> *A prodigy. Her morning dress was d**imity**,*
> *Her evening silk, or in the summer, muslin*
> *And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.* (*Don Juan* I.12 (Byron 1973: 49))

[77] Bisyllabic *-ti-on* (with Middle English) or *-tion* by resolution (Kökeritz 1953: 270).

And executing th' outward face of royalty
* *) * *) * Δ *) * *) * *) Δ Δ
With all prerogative. Hence his ambition growing—
* *) * *) Δ Δ * *) * *)Δ* *) Δ

1.4.7.1.2. Consider iambic Exhibit B in (23): the first and last stanzas of a Shakespearean song in traditional tetrameter (see again §1.3.1.2.2). The expectation is two syllables per foot and eight syllables per line. However, the observed range is {1-4} syllables per foot (recall the Spanish range of {1-4} in §1.4.4)[78] and {8-11} syllables per line. Crucially, lines 381, 384 and 400 would naturally scan as pentameters. It is only because we know 'in advance' that the lines are tetrameters that we can find the correct text-alignment.

(23) *Whén that I wás and a líttle tiny bóy,* 11
*) * * *) * * *) * * * *)
With héy, hó, the wínd and the ráin, 8
* *) *) * *) * * *)
A fóolish thíng was bút a tóy, 8
* *) * *) * *) * *)
For the ráin it ráineth évery dáy. 9
* * *) * *) * *) * *)

A gréat while agó the wórld begún, 9
* *) * * *) * *) * *)
With héy, hó, the wínd and the ráin, 8
* *) *) * *) * * *)
But thát's all óne, our pláy is dóne, 8
* *) * *) * *) * *)
And we'll stríve to pléase you évery dáy. 10
* * * *) * *) * *) * *)
(*Twelfth Night* 5.1.381-384, 397-400)

1.4.7.1.3. It is important to underscore that the four-syllable paeon *da da da dum* is unobjectionable in the melogenic variety of traditional English metre. Consider the analysis of the 4+3 BALLAD METRE in (24).

(24) *Blow, blow, thou winter wind, thou art not so unkind,* 12
* *) * * * *) * *) * * * *)
As man's ingratitude 6
* *) * *) * *)

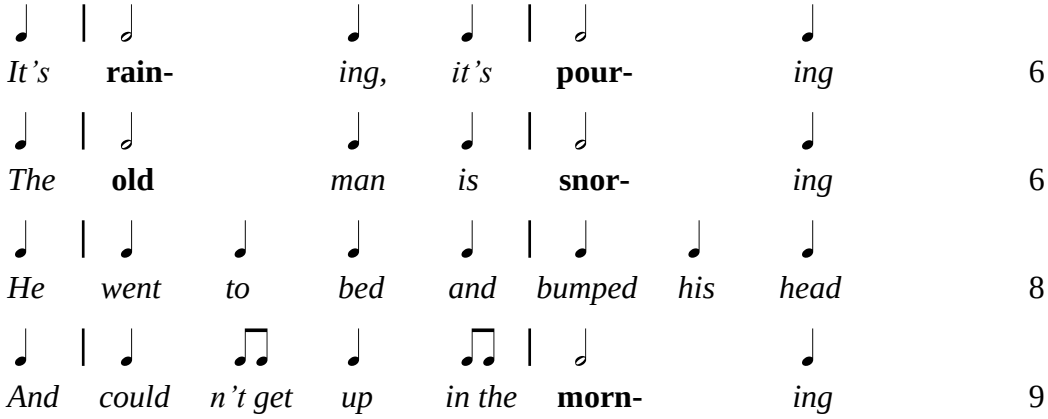
[78] The tetrasyllabic foot here is known as a QUARTUS PAEON or FOURTH PAEON because it is the final fourth syllable that is stressed: *da da da dum*.

Thy tooth is not so keen, because thou art not seen,[79] 12
* *) * * * *) * *) * * * *)
Although the breath be rude. 6
* *) * *) * *)
(*As You Like It* 2.7.174-179)

1.4.7.2. Traditional English Verse. Chaucer and Shakespeare are mountain heights on the metrical landscape. They do not, however, exhaust the many wonders of English versification.

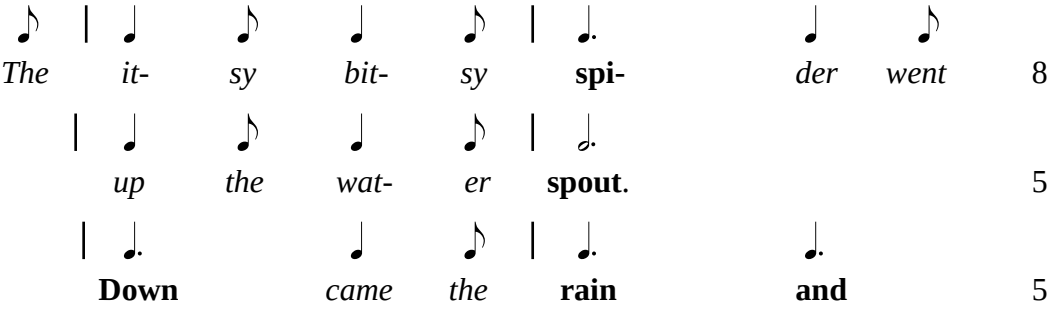
1.4.7.2.1. A parade example of traditional English verse is the children's song in (25). Notice the considerable range of {6-9} syllables per line and especially the treatment of the post-tonic *-ing* in lines 1 (*bis*), 2 and 4. Notice further the dramatic shift in rhythm half-way through. Students of ancient Greek metre will enjoy the dactyls 𝅗𝅥𝅘𝅥𝅘𝅥𝅘𝅥.

(25)

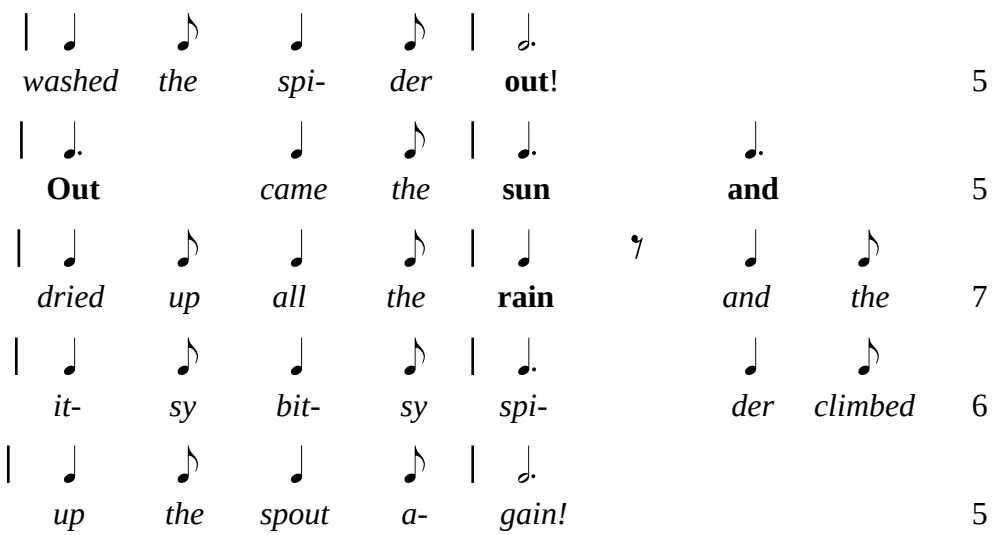


1.4.7.2.2. The additional verse in (26) highlights another property of this sort of verse. Notice the variable treatment of *spider, spout, and* and *out*. Hebraists will look for the one and only one way of scanning some prosodic item, but the fact is that metrical values may vary by position and not absolutely.

(26)

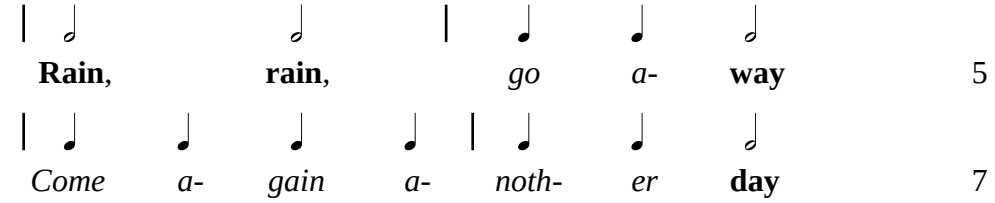


[79] Alternatively
Thy tooth is not so keen, because thou art not seen,
* *) * * * *) * * *) * * *)

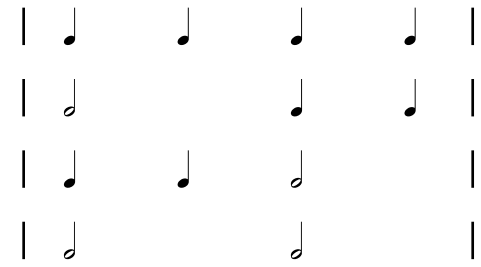


1.4.7.2.3. A last exhibit in (27) makes a final point. Here we see the equivalence of different types of bars. The distribution of beats again varies by position. To summarize, the four basic bars available in English verse are presented in common time in (28).

(27)



(28)

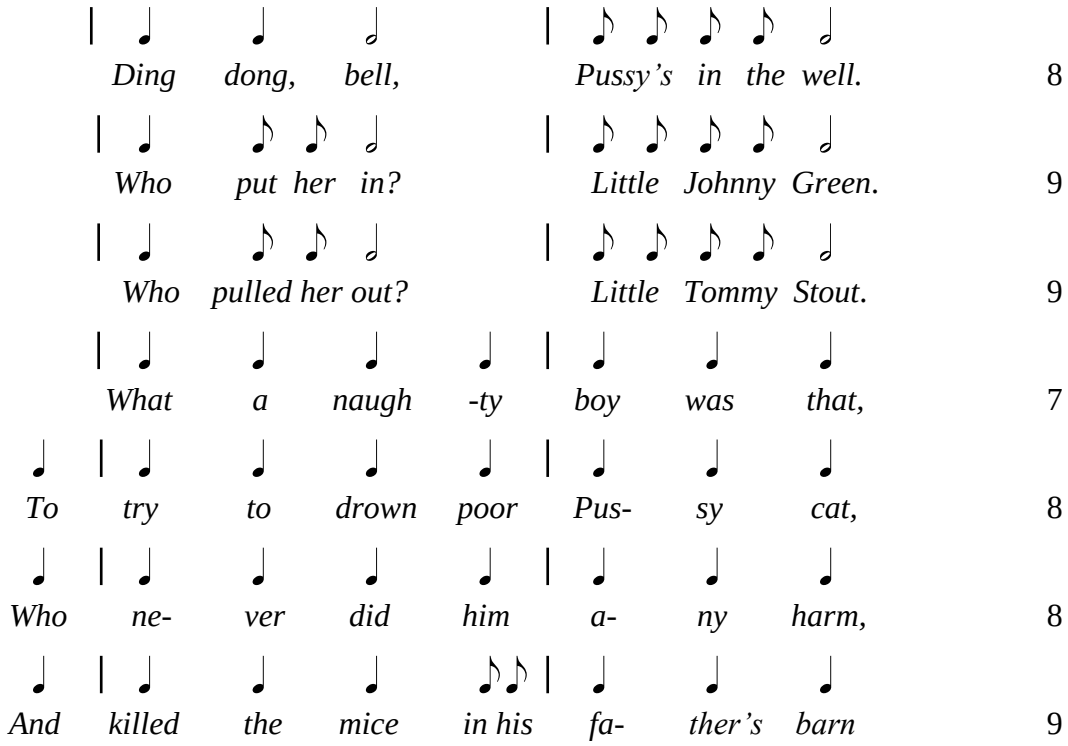


1.4.7.2.4. The nature of the English syllables bearing the half-note is also worth pondering. As Hobsbaum (1996) insightfully notes, there is a stark, three-way contrast among the English heavy syllables, e.g., *loss* /CVC/, *rose* /CVVC/, and *woe* /CVV/ (p. 71). As we will, see it is the *rose* that receives special attention in Hebrew verse (although there is also a fair amount of biblical *woe*).

1.4.7.2.5. A word must also be said about what appear to be mixed metres (HETEROMETRIC) within compositions (see §1.5.6). Consider the remarkable scenario in (28). Both in the traditional lay-out (Opie & Opie 1997: #134, p. 174) and in the analysis by Fabb & Halle (2008:

(25), p. 76), there is a transition from trimeter to tetrameter after *Stout*. But we know that cannot be right in light of traditional versification. We know in advance that a melogenic tetrameter is imposed top-down in traditional verse, and so we arrive at the correct scansion in (28). What we have here is hetero-rhythmic verse as was already observed in §1.4.7.2.1.

(28)



1.5. Summary and Prospect

1.5.1. My central claim is that the question of metre in BH poetry has been incorrectly framed. The conventional anti-metrical argument against BH poetic metre can be simply stated. My several objections can also be simply stated. I have provided extended discussion of these objections. In brief, the Hebraist house has been built upon metrical sand though mistaken for rock.

1.5.2. In my view, the fundamental mistake is the claim that a poetic metre must be absolutely strict or pure in its raw counts of prosodic units per line. The mistaken syllable-counting analysis of Japanese provides the paradigmatic mistake. Consequently, it is no surprise that century after century of counting syllables and counting accents has revealed no such absolutely strict BH metre.

1.5.3. The secondary mistake is the misrepresentation of TH phonology and by extrapolation the earlier and relevant stages of the Hebrew language as input to metrical analysis. TH phonology is quantitative and vowel length is contrastive lexically. This mistake will become clearer in the sequel. Recourse to the gold standard of Khan (2020) should serve to correct the understanding of TH phonology.

1.5.4. Remember the foundational problem: the "fundamental nature of every language determines its meter (the underlying rhythmic structure of its poetry) … Different languages use different methods to create their sonic patterns" (Baer 2006: 18). I will claim that the internal reconstruction of Hebrew phonology from the Tiberian baseline is sufficient for the exploration of BH poetry.

1.5.5. In the second part of the chapter, I offered the following list of statistical controls. My contention is that these controls are entirely consistent with the BH statistical profiles and in particular their raw syllable-counts. What appears to be irregular at first glance becomes regular when the several metrical principles are understood: both how to count and how to align.

- Quantitative: Japanese (§1.4.2., §1.4.6.2)
- Syllabic: French (§1.4.3)
- Accentual: problematized *Beowulf* (§1.4.5)
- Accentual-syllabic: Spanish (§1.4.4), English (§1.4.7)

1.5.4. On its face, the proposition that ancient Hebrew lyrics are without poetic metre, if by metre we mean the division of the text into lines by the regulation of the number, nature and position of syllables, may strike students of comparative prosody as bizarre. "Every poem is music," notes acclaimed poet Mary Oliver (cited by Baer 2006: 11). As Hillyer emphasizes, "in every literature, great poetry precedes great prose, sometimes, as in Greece, by centuries" (1960: 9). All types of ancient song, carol, and psalm, he continues, "have their origin in religious practice and ritual … Poetry emerged with the chant and the dance". As Sapir puts it, "Poetry everywhere is inseparable in its origins from the singing voice and the measure of dance" (1921: n. 11, p. 229). "Poetry and music are sister arts" (Hirsch 1999: 16).

1.5.5. I reject the non-metrical consensus. However, I think that this consensus does make good sense to Hebraists for at least two reasons.

1.5.5.1. There is always the *other* non-metrical verse as *the* model to fall back on: the modernist experimentation in *vers libre*. Obviously, biblical poetry is just more 'free' verse, the reasoning goes. Anything goes. This makes sense to the degree that the Hebraist is unfamiliar with free verse. We are to imagine the ancient musician in the sacred precincts with lyre in hand, pounding out deliberately broken metres à la Ezra Pound (apparently the only experimenter in such verse). In other words, the ancient Hebrew poet was "playing tennis with the net down" (Frost, cited by Hillyer 1960: 7).

1.5.5.2. I believe that the main reason that the non-metrical analysis makes so much sense is that biblical poetry is read principally *in prose translation*: until recently, always in that magical King James translation. Read enough psalms in the delicious dialect of Shakespeare, and an isosyntactic analysis begins to make very good sense. Indeed, it is a tremendous irony that Walt Whitman's free verse is inspired by just these irregular Jacobean cadences. Arguably, biblical poetry in English translation is the genesis of English free verse. In this study, however, biblical poetry is read in Hebrew in IPA transcription (Khan 2020).

1.5.6. Relatedly, it surprises me that Hebraists have not cottoned onto HETEROMETRIC versification by which is meant verse that is subject to a strict metre overall but in which the individual lines have a variable structure and foot-count. It is the repeating sequence of variants that gives rise to stanzas. The stanzas of the great poetess Sappho come to mind (Page 1965). No doubt the rejection of classical quantitative metre renders the phenomenon uninteresting.

However, there is a homegrown English counterpart in strict iambic metre. The metaphysical poets such as Donne and Marvell experiment along these lines: an original 'free verse' of sorts. Donne enjoys creating random stanzas on the fly but he nevertheless sticks to the repeating pattern once created (Donne 2006). In Marvell's "The Coronet", there is a loose, rickety stanzaic pattern held together by variable rhyming schemes (Marvell 1994: 11).

Finally and to the point, there are the poems in which the line-lengths vary randomly, as if the entire poem were one long stanza, yet variable rhyming introduces some structure. Donne's "The Apparition", e.g., falls into the last category (Donne 2006: 36) as does Marvell's "On a Drop of Dew" (Marvell 1994: 10f). Of course, Vance (2001) entirely rejects the concept of an "irregular metre" as an "oxymoron" (p. 39), but in what sense? The English verse does conform to a *strict* iambic metre.

1.5.7. I emphasized at the outset that the problem posed by BH poetry is by no means unique (§1.1.1). Neither is the solution across multiple traditions: TEXT-SETTING, the alignment of the text to a preset metrical grid (n. 3). Of the problem and its solution in Hausa poetry, e.g., Schuh (1988) writes:

> Examination of just the linguistic text of oral poetry would suggest that no rules govern its scansion. 'Lines' and 'stanzas' vary in length; more often than not, there are no obvious recurrent patterns of syllable types; rhyme, if it exists at all, is sporadic. *The key to 'scanning' oral poetry is in its instrumental accompaniment, with which the linguistic text must align* (p. 219, emphasis mine).

1.5.8. Despite conventional wisdom, a large proportion of what is considered poetry is metrical in the strictest sense: a division of the text into lines by the regulation of syllables. This is true in Job, Proverbs, and Psalms—the three so-called 'poetic' books and the object of the present study. The simple and well-understood text-setting principles that govern such BH poetry are all and only those principles that govern traditional English verse, for example.

1.5.9. English verse, from *Beowulf* to the Bard and all points in between, especially the melogenic traditional verse, is the best match with BH poetry. It is also the best jumping-off point for two reasons.

1.5.9.1. Prosodically, there is the broad overlap typologically with the loose iambic rhythm of ancient Hebrew and its prominent main stress. The statistical profiles of English verse, established in the survey of metrical traditions above, are a very good fit with the several profiles observed in BH.

1.5.9.2. Second, "most studies on the topic [of poetic metre] are preoccupied exclusively with English verse and songs" (Rodríguez-Vázquez 2010: 296). Hence, the analytical path has already been well trodden. The analytical machinery is already available for application to prosodically

similar languages with similar statistical profiles.[80] The Appendices present a first attempt at analysis along these lines. It will require several chapters to get there and years to quibble over the details.

[80] Rodríguez-Vázquez suggests "Ugandan folk music, Japanese traditional music, Scottish traditional music" (2010: 302).