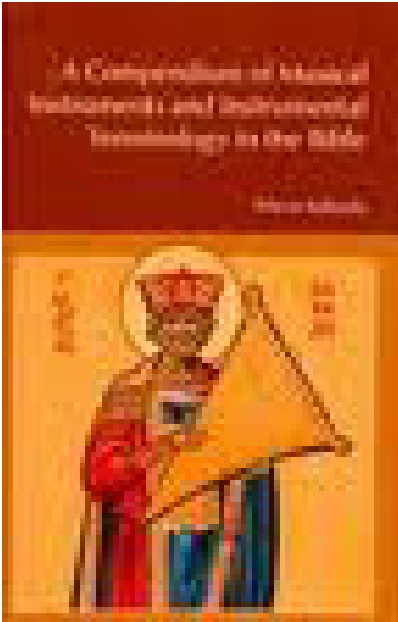


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Kolyada, Yelena

A Compendium of Musical Instruments and Instrumental Terminology in the Bible

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Helen Leneman
Bethesda, Maryland

This book, adapted from Kolyada's PhD thesis published in Russian (Kompozitor, Moscow, 2003) is the first compendium of musical instruments and instrumental terminology in the Bible. There are other books that deal with music in the Bible in a general way. But this compendium, defined as a collection of concise yet detailed information about a subject, is unique. Kolyada considers it "both a reference book and a piece of serious scholarly research based on historical facts, comparative linguistic analysis, and careful musical study" (introduction, 1). This is an accurate description of the book, which includes an astounding amount of information from a wide range of sources in many languages. The depth and breadth of research are both impressive. The goal, in Kolyada's words, is "to give much up to date information about the instruments mentioned in the Bible, and thus to form a contribution to the discipline of biblical musicology" (23). She succeeds admirably in meeting this goal.

There are seven chapters, of which the first and last are historical surveys. The first chapter describes the historical background of Hebrew (Kolyada's term) instrumental music, including its origins, links with neighboring cultures, and the role of music in ancient Israel. Kolyada also discusses the most recent research findings by musicologists and organologists (organology is the science of musical instruments and their classification) working in biblical studies together with archaeologists and philologists.

The final chapter traces the ongoing discussion of “Hebrew” musical instruments in postbiblical times, including in the writings of the church fathers and of medieval and Renaissance commentators.

Chapters 2–6 are a systematic analysis of each instrument mentioned in the Bible. Chapters 2–4 are organized based on the type of instrument discussed, while instruments whose identification is ambivalent are discussed in a separate chapter (5), as are generic or unclear musical terms (6).

The three main classes of instruments are strings, winds, and percussion. These are subdivided into horns and woodwinds, membranophones and idiophones. Physical descriptions of the instruments based on texts of different periods and archaeological finds are followed by a discussion of all the biblical mentions of the instrument, in a wide variety of translations (which are all analyzed). Extensive discussion of etymology of the names of the instruments follows. Theories about the origins of the instrument are discussed, as well as influences on later iconography and hymnography. The modern Hebrew meaning of the word is given at the end of each chapter, and illustrations of the instruments are provided. A bibliographical list of writers and which instrument they wrote about follows each chapter. This makes it easy for the reader interested in further researching any particular instrument.

The book also includes an enormous amount of well-organized material in two appendices, with several charts, indices of terms and personal names, glossaries, lists of historical and literary sources, in addition to a rich bibliography. Among the many valuable supplements is a complete list of every reference to musical instruments in the Bible, plus a table of instrumental ensembles and their names as found in different versions of the Bible—thirty-six versions in twenty languages. The large majority of references is to the Hebrew Bible (primarily Psalms), though there are also several apocryphal and New Testament references. All this supplementary material is an invaluable asset for the researcher studying instruments mentioned in the Bible.

Each page of this volume is densely packed with information. However, Kolyada occasionally deviates from the straight description of instruments to theories of their place and use. For example, in chapter 1 she discusses the phenomenon of a system of musical education in ancient Israel. She considers the *nayyot*, which she translates as “schools of prophets” (lit. “huts”), to be the first step. It is impossible to understand what word she is translating here, without Hebrew letters or a biblical citation. She states that those with either a prophetic gift or musical talent came here to be taught music with which they would accompany sacrifices (7; citing 1 Sam 9:12; 10:5; 1 Kgs 3:2; and others). She also states that these schools of music came to replace the schools of prophets. The

Levites supposedly received thorough training in professional performance, especially in liturgy (7). Kolyada's rather modern concept of musical education in the ancient world seems to have no textual basis. The rest of the chapter explores music's social function in the biblical world.

Among the fascinating tidbits to be found in this chapter's endnotes are a discussion of why the lute was probably the only instrument popular in Egypt that never became popular among the Israelites (26 n. 17) and the legend of Job as a patron of musicians that originated in the apocryphal Testament of Job (26 n. 22).

Every chapter is densely packed with an amazing amount of fascinating information, though much of it is highly technical. The inclusion of modern Hebrew words that derive from biblical terminology is particularly interesting. One example in chapter 2 of a word derivation not commonly known is the instrument פסנטרין mentioned in the book of Daniel, where it is one of the string instruments (50). It has been translated numerous ways, since no one knows what it really was. But the word jumped out for this reviewer, since the modern Hebrew word for piano, פסנטר, is clearly derived from פסנטרין.

The history of shofar blasts in chapter 3 is very well outlined and includes numerous interesting musical examples. Kolyada even cites two British oratorios (of 1873 and 1903) that include the shofar (72). The author might have been interested to know of a much more recent inclusion. American composer George Crumb, in his 2001 collection of Appalachian songs, includes the shofar in the song "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," a very appropriate use.

Kolyada frequently discusses other cultures' use of various instruments mentioned in the Bible. This is particularly interesting in her discussion in chapter 4 of פעמנים (tinkling bells) attached to clothes, a usage that goes back to very ancient times (Assyria, Egypt, and India). This practice is still found today in shamanic cultures, where as in the past the bells function to keep away evil spirits. The usage in the Bible could well reflect "a remnant of pagan magic" (119).

Chapters 5 and 6 are a discussion of the etymology of ambivalent, generic, and uncertain musical terms. Words are included that may not necessarily even be instruments. Kolyada even discusses words (שלשים and נחילות) that appear in the Bible only one time (137-38), an impressive degree of thoroughness. The discussion of the puzzling word סלה (162) is very complete and enlightening.

The final chapter delves into the discussion of biblical instruments found in the Talmud. Kolyada explains how the appearance of these instruments in talmudic literature "are

both a witness to and a bearer of the developing musical practices of many centuries” (175). Instruments described in later literature, both medieval and Renaissance, are transformed in various ways due to these cultures’ temporal and geographical distance from the Bible (183). These transformations are also due in large part to the discrepancies in translations over the centuries. Each culture replaced unfamiliar names with more familiar ones, so that contemporary readers would better relate to the musical descriptions (196). One of the most amusing examples is an eighteenth-century illuminated Bible in which the court ensemble accompanying King David’s anointing ceremony is a band of Russian folk instruments (206 n. 67).

Kolyada has done an admirable job of bringing together a vast body of research in this field into one volume, where previously much of the information was not very accessible. This is particularly true of the many Russian sources she used that have probably never before been translated into English.

In spite of the thoroughness and preciseness manifested in this volume, there are inaccuracies throughout the book reflecting gaps in Kolyada’s knowledge or understanding of Hebrew and Jewish culture. Though none of these errors is connected to music, they nonetheless could have been avoided with more editorial attention.

Kolyada occasionally uses terms without defining them. For example, she discusses “some Jewish haggadahs” (39), which could confuse the reader into thinking she is talking about a Passover haggadah. The more correct term would have been *midrash haggadah* or simply rabbinic legend from the Talmud. She is sometimes inconsistent with her identification of sources. Abraham Ibn Ezra is identified variously as a Jewish philosopher (34), rabbinic scholar (53), talmudic teacher (54, 133), talmudic exegete (161), and Jewish exegete (162). While it may be argued that he was all of the above, the inconsistency could be confusing for the reader unfamiliar with his name.

In her discussion of the horn or קֶרֶן, Kolyada attributes the images of Moses with horns in western European Renaissance art to be a reflection of the “power, might and supernatural strength of the horn” (67). This is a significant mistake. The images of Moses with horns are due to the mistranslation of the original Hebrew text. The word קֶרֶן in Exod 34:29 is a verb meaning “radiated,” but Jerome in his Vulgate translation vocalized it as קֶרֶן, which led to its incorrect translation as “horns.” Far from reflecting strength, these horns on Moses were later used in anti-Semitic diatribes and caricatures that demonized Jews.

Strange usage of a word is found in the sentence discussing a talmudic passage about the need to hire at least two חליל (flute) players: “The performers, when necessary, could even

be goyim” (92). Kolyada has clearly translated the passage straight from the Talmud without understanding that the word *goyim*, though meaning Gentiles in both ancient and modern Hebrew, has an entirely different sense today. It is widely used as a Yiddish word and has a disparaging and slangy tone. It would have been more appropriate to say “Gentiles” or “non-Jews.”

Her etymology of the Hebrew שופר as deriving from the two words שוא (hollow, empty) and פר (*par*, bull) (68) is very unconvincing. Her assertion that the seven blasts of “seven shofars [*sic*]” described in Josh 6:3–6 “may well be considered a historical fact” (70) is completely unfounded. She even repeats this claim later in the chapter, saying that the possibility of this event having occurred “has been confirmed in modern times by a scholarly experiment” (80), but in her endnote, no such experiment is described. Instead, she offers several examples from ancient cultures that ascribe supernatural qualities to musical instruments (102 n. 31).

The most serious errors are in the area of liturgy. The statement “Modern shofars, for instance, in American Jewish communities since the 1940s, also have removable metal mouthpieces which make blowing them a lot easier” (70) is inaccurate and misleading. Use of this mouthpiece is by no means a common practice; it would have been acceptable to say that modern shofars *may* have removable mouthpieces. Kolyada gives no citations for this unfounded statement. She also writes that on the second day of Rosh Hashannah, when the story of the Akedah is read from the Torah, it is read “to the accompaniment of shofar blasts” (76). Dramatic as that would be, no Torah reading is ever accompanied. The blowing of the shofar occurs at a different point in the service.

Another error related to liturgical practice is in the glossary at the beginning of the book, where Kolyada describes the holiday of Shavuot as the holiday commemorating God’s giving the Torah to Israel, which in ancient times “also” signified the bringing of the first fruits to the temple. This definition is backwards: as is the case for many Jewish holidays, the origins lay in agriculture, with the religious overlay added much later by the rabbis.

A more serious error is in chapter 6, where Kolyada connects the ancient Hebrew root מן (*mn*) to modern Hebrew words meaning melody, such as מנגן (*menaggen*; 162). The root of this word is נגן (*ngn*), and the מ at the head of the word is part of its conjugation. Though this is the only significant Hebrew error in the book, it should have been caught.

As to the format of the book, though it is a matter of personal preference, for me the use of endnotes instead of footnotes is a serious distraction. Most of the numerous endnotes are lengthy and complex, and the continual flipping back and forth makes it difficult to retain any sense of continuity. Another technical quibble is with the illustrations.

Presumably for cost-cutting motives, all illustrations (over sixty) are line drawings done by the author's husband, Anatoly Morozov. The only original illustration is the one that adorns the cover of the book, and it highlights how much is lost in the reduction to simple black-and-white drawings. These drawings are accurate representations of the wide variety of ancient instruments discussed and are valuable contributions for this reason. Nonetheless, the book would have been richer with even a few color plates or at least photographs of the original sources.

In spite of these flaws, this book is highly recommended for biblical scholars or musicologists interested in exploring a little-known area of music history and the role of music in the Bible. This excellently researched book will be a welcome addition to many libraries.