INSTRUMENTS OF THE BIBLE

Shirley M. Rider

Although music and religion have been inseparable down through the ages, this fact has been largely taken for granted resulting in a lack of interest and scholarship in this central area of our life. As a student of music, this has been a genuine source of frustration, and as a Christian music teacher, the source of a deep desire to make even a small contribution in this area of study. Of necessity the scope of this paper has been limited to a specific subject, instruments of the bible. I have chosen this particular area of study because in spite of the importance given to instrumental music in the bible, there seems to be a lack of knowledge upon the part of those expounding the "Word" and those receiving it. To be told that a man earned a denarius for working in a biblical account means nothing to me. But when I am told that a denarius is equal to a day's wages, then I can understand the real meaning of the material in question. There are tables and charts to give me a ready explanation of money and weights and measures. However, this fails to be true as concerns the instruments of the bible. The purpose of this paper then is to shed some light in this area and make a collection of information that will be helpful to all who are interested in the study of sacred instrumental music.

In the study of Biblical instruments the first problem encountered is the lack of material available for study. We find that the Hebrew
people didn't leave monuments or frescoed tombs as was true of the Assyrians and Egyptians. This deprives us of a valuable visual source of examples of instruments and their use as seen through the eyes of the people who actually experienced the musical culture of the biblical period. Although the Hebrews were a migratory people, the chief reason was because of the Mosaic law against graven images and pictures. For this reason the Hebrew people expressed themselves through music and poetry. We do find two actual representations of Hebrew instruments which are believed to be the only ones in existence today. In Rome on the arch of Titus is a sculptured bas relief of two trumpets. These supposedly represent the forms of those used in the temple at Jerusalem and thus the silver trumpets from Herod's temple carried in Titus triumphal procession after the fall of Jerusalem. The example of one of these trumpets is shown on page 16, plate A no. 1. The second example is that of a Hebraic Kinnor (Lyre) found on a Jewish coin 2200 years old. Several of these coins are kept in the British museum. A copy of this Kinnor is shown on page 17, plate B no. 1. The other instruments shown in plates A and B are reproductions of original instruments from ancient Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea and Palestine included in the collection of the music scholar Charles N. Lanphere.

We are however able to find out much valuable information about many of the instruments used in the bible both from the bible itself and even more from scholars who have made a special study of this area of learning. The following information concerning these instruments makes the bible more interesting and understandable.

Shophar: The shophar is the oldest Hebrew musical instrument of
which we have full and positive knowledge. This ram's horn used by the Israelites has neither varied in structure nor capacity through the ages. It is heard today exactly the same as it was in the camps of Israel 3,500 years ago. The November 1975 issue of Reader's Digest (Asia Edition) tells the poignant story of Israel's warrior priest, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Horen as he counsels and cheers the Israeli troops at the height of the Middle East conflict in October 1973. His two "weapons" were the sacred Torah scroll and the shophar. "The very origin of the shophar would justify the veneration in which it is held by the Jews. The hosts of Israel, recently delivered from the oppression of Egypt, were encamped on the plains at the base of Mount Sinai. A divine manifestation had been promised, and on the appointed day a great cloud descended upon the mountain, and from it issued thunders and lightnings and the "voice of the shophar exceeding loud," announcing the presence of Jehovah; and the trembling camp was led forth to hear the commandments of God. Succeeding this tremendous event, the shophar became the national instrument of the Israelites, and it was sounded by them on all official occasions throughout their history. The mere effect of its tone was revered as the voice of the Almighty, and this belief gave rise to the tradition of the Jewish Talmud that the voice of the shophar is the only sound of which Satan is afraid. The shophar was not used in the sense of a melody-producing instrument, although melody is possible on it. Its office was chiefly that of announcement, signal, and alarm, essentially military in its functions. It was sounded to announce the day of Jubilee and the day of Atonement; it was blown in time of danger to assemble the
fighting men; at the siege and taking of Jericho it was blown by
the priests in solemn procession around the doomed city, voicing
the miracle that over-threw the ponderous walls. King Saul had it
sounded throughout the land to announce his victory over the Phill-
istines, and when David and all the house of Israel brought the Ark
of the Covenant up to Jerusalem the voice of the shophar sang
above the shouts of the throng. After the coronation of Solomon the
shophar was blown and all the people responded, "God save King
Solomon!" And thus the shophar became inseparably associated with
the religious and political life of Israel."¹

The head of holding an instrument in high regard did not stop with
the shophar, however, and Mendelssohn for example thought the
trombone was an almost sacred instrument and only used it for the
most solemn occasions.

Harp: The harp is another instrument which has held an almost
sacred connotation. The general term harp is rendered by six
different Hebrew names: "kinnor nebel, nebel-astor, psalterium,
sebaca, and the kithros."² "The harps most frequently named in
the Bible are the nebel and the kinnor; these were the accompany-
ing instruments of the Psalms, and the favorite harps of David and
Solomon. The kinnor, believed to have been a small lyre, is referred
to more often than any other instrument except the shophar and,
conjointly with the shophar, it was always considered the national
instrument of the Hebrews. For this reason it appears on ancient
Jewish coins, just as the Celtic harp, as a national emblem was
once stamped on the coins of Ireland."³ The kinnor is shown in
plate B no. 1. The nebel is shown in plate B no. 2.
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This instrument is mentioned repeatedly in the bible and is thought to be the greatest instrument known to the Hebrew people.

The psalterium (psaltery) of the bible isn’t clearly identified, but St. Jerome of the fourth century describes it as a square frame without a sound box and having ten stretched across it. And, Jerome follows the custom of the times in which everything stood for religious symbolism, by stating that the four sides of the frame stand for the four gospels, and the ten strings for the ten commandments. The psaltery is shown in plate B no. 4.

Sebaca: “The sebaca of Nebuchadnezzar’s orchestra was a triangular harp, a fact adduced from the root-meaning of its Chaldaic name; but lacking this information our English translators made a bad guess, and inserted the word “sacbut” - the name of an old English horn.” ¹ The sacbut is an English word derived from the Spanish meaning a pump. This instrument was made in 1350. Pictures of the sebaca and sacbut are found in plate A no. 7 and 8 respectively.

Kithros: This instrument is only mentioned once in the book of Daniel 3: 13 and does not appear in the two English and two Japanese bibles which I have referred to in this paper. However, it is thought to be an improvement on the kinnor.

Ugab: This instrument is the primitive (organ) mentioned in

¹. The First Ten Thousand Years of Music, Music of the Bible Charles N. Lanphere, State University of New York College at Potsdam 1972 p.p.26
². Ibid. p.p.27
³. Ibid. p.p.28
Genesis 4:21 in the story of Jubal. It in plate A no. 2.

Trumpet: "There was another trumpet - the larger trumpet of King Solomon's band - that came into being soon after the shophar, to which it is so closely allied that the two must be considered in conjunction. The book of Numbers says that Moses, by divine command, made two trumpets of silver to be used in calling the assembly and for the journeying of the camps. On the arch of Titus in Rome, erected in the first century to commemorate the victory of Titus Vespasianus over Jerusalem, is a bas relief which represents the Roman plunderers bearing away the treasures of the Holy Temple; and hereon are pictured two trumpets, or buccina, which are believed to represent the silver trumpets of Israel. In the camps of Israel the function of this trumpet was much the same as that of the bugle in modern military service. The original code of signals is given in the book of Numbers." 1 Trumpets were used in the Psalms. The Jewish Talmud tells us that the pauses in the Psalms and their divisions were indicated by blasts of 120 silver trumpets played by Levite priests. The word "selah" which occurs more than 70 times in the Psalms is a musical term and is believed to have been the sign indicating these trumpet interludes. For example, Psalm 46 with only 11 verses has 3 such selahs, (sera) in the Japanese Bible. This instrument is shown in plate A no. 1.

Pipe (Machol): This instrument is found frequently in the bible and is used for banquets, funerals and religious services. The

1. The First Ten Thousand Years of Music, Music of the Bible Charles N. Lanphere, State University of New York College at Potsdam 1972 p.p. 32
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Machol (Pipe) is shown in plate A no. 3.

Double Reed Pipe (Khalil): The Khalil is the pipe most commonly used by the Israelites. It is first mentioned in the story of the regeneration of Saul. It is an instrument of mourning and of joy. The Khalil is shown in plate A no. 4.

Cornet (Keren): This instrument found in the book of Daniel is shown in plate A no. 6. (The ox-horntrumpet is also referred to as Keren in some places.)

Bagpipe (Symphonia): This instrument is mentioned only in connection with the idol worship of ancient Babylon. The Bagpipe is shown in plate B no. 5.

Systrum (Menaaneim): The Hebraic systrum is the earliest rattle of which we know. It is wrongly translated in the English Bible as "coronet." This instrument is shown in plate B no. 3.

Tambourine (Tabret-Drum) (Toph): This festal tambourine is used with songs and dances. An example is shown in plate B no. 6.

High Sounding Cymbal (Tinkling cymbal): This is the smaller of the two cymbals. Much is not known about them. An example is found in plate B no. 7.

Loud Sounding Cymbal: This instrument is thought to be quite abit larger. Cymbals were used for both religious and military purposes. This cymbal will be found in plate B no. 8.

As we begin to look carefully at the actual ways in which the instruments of the Bible are used, we find that during the reign of


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King Saul music became important in the lives of the people, and the Jewish temple became the center of musical activity. David and Solomon employed court musicians, and David organized choirs for the temple. Music was sung and played, and temple instruments were used when the priests entered. Instruments were used in the crowning of kings and times of triumph of the nation. Music was used in times of worship of God and in the worship of idols. Instruments were used in happy times and for funerals. They were used to proclaim the new year and call people to war or assembly. Instruments were used with singing and dances and for banquets.

Now however, we come to a very difficult area of our study. As we compare biblical passages in various versions of the bible, we find many differences in the ways the names of instruments are translated. I have used the King James Version which I will refer to as K.J.V. and the Revised Standard Version; R.S.V.. I have compared these two English versions with the "Nihon Seisho Kyokai" Japanese Bible and the "Nihon Seisho Kankokai" Japanese Bible (Shinkaiyaku). I will refer to the Japanese Bible as J.B. and to the new bible version (Shinkaiyaku) as N.B.. Following are examples of the problems involved.

1. Genesis 4:21 “His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.” (Kinnor and Ugab)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K.J.V.</th>
<th>R.S.V.</th>
<th>J.B.</th>
<th>N.B.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harp</td>
<td>Lyre</td>
<td>Koto</td>
<td>Tategoto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ</td>
<td>Pipe</td>
<td>Fue</td>
<td>Fue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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2. Genesis 31:27 "Why did you flee secretly, and cheat me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with _tambourine_ and _lyre_?" (Toph and Kinnor)
   K.J.V. Tabret + Harp
   R.S.V. Tambourine + Lyre
   J.B. Tetsuzumi + Koto
   N.B. Tambarin + Tategoto

3. Exodus 15:20 "Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand. And all the women went out after her with _timbrels_ and dancing."
   K.J.V. Timbrel
   R.S.V. Timbrel
   J.B. Tambourine
   N.B. Tambourine

4. Leviticus 23:24 "Say to the people of Israel. in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with a blast of _trumpets_, a holy convocation."
   K.J.V. Trumpets
   R.S.V. Trumpets
   J.B. Rappa
   N.B. Rappa

5. Numbers 10:2 "The Lord said to Moses, make two silver _trumpets_; of hammered work you shall make them; and you shall use them for summoning the congregation, and for breaking camp."
6. Judges 11:34 "Then Jephthah came to his home at Mizpah; and behold, daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances:........"

K.J.V. Timbrel
R.S.V. Timbrel
J.B. Tsuzumi
N.B. Tamborin

7. 1 Samuel 10:5 ".......; and there, as you come to the city, you will meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying." (Psanterin, Toph, Khalil, Kinnor)

K.J.V. Psaltery + Tabret + Pipe + Harp
R.S.V. Harp + Tambourine + Flute + Lyre
J.B. Tategoto + Tetsuzumi + Fue + Hapu
N.B. Koto + Tambarine + Fue + Tategoto

8. 1 Samuel 16:16 "Let our lord now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is skilful in playing the lyre; and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well."

K.J.V. Harp
R.S.V. Lyre
J.B. Koto
N.B. Koto
9. 1 Samuel 18:6 “As they were coming home, when David returned from slaying the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with timbrels, with songs of joy, and with instruments of music.”

K.J.V. Tabrets + Instruments of music
R.S.V. Timbrels + Instruments of music
J.B. Tetsuzumi + Mitsu ito no koto
N.B. Tambarin + San gen no koto

10. 2 Samuel 6:5 “And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. (Menaaneim = Systrum mistranslated Cornet)

K.J.V. Instruments made of fir wood + Harps + Psalteries + Timbrels + Cornets + Cymbals
R.S.V. Songs + Lyres + Harps + Tambourines Castanets + Cymbals
J.B. Koto + Tategoto + Tetsuzumi + Suzu + Shimbaru
N.B. Tategoto + Hapu + Timburgeru + Castanetto + Shimbaru

11. 1 Chronicles 16:5 “......, and Jeiel, who were to play harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals.”

K.J.V. Psalteries + Harps + Cymbals
R.S.V. Harps + Lyres + Cymbals
J.B. Tategoto + Koto + Shimbaru
N.B. Jugen no koto + Koto + Shimbaru
12. 2 Chronicles 15:14 “They took oath to the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with horns.”

K.J.V. Trumpets + Cornets
R.S.V. Trumpets + Horns
J.B. Rappa + Tsuno bue
N.B. Rappa + Tsuno bue

13. Psalm 33:2 “Praise the Lord with the lyre, make melody to him with the harp of the strings!”

K.J.V. Harp + Psaltery + Instrument of the strings
R.S.V. Lyre + Harp of ten strings
J.B. Koto + Jugen no tategoto
N.B. Tategoto + Jugen no koto

14. Psalm 33:3 “Sing to him a new song, play skilfully on the strings with loud shouts.”

K.J.V. New song + Play skilfully with a loud noise
R.S.V. Sing to him a new song + Play skilfully with a loud noise
J.B. Koto o kakinarase
N.B. Gen o kakinarase

15. Psalm 7:22 “I will also praise thee with the harp for thy faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to thee with the lyre,.....”

K.J.V. Psaltery (really a Nebel) + Harp
R.S.V. Harp (Kinnor) + Lyre
J.B. Tategoto + Koto
N.B. Rokugen no tategoto + Tategoto

16. Psalm 137:2 “Oh the willows there we hung up our lyres.”
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(Kinnor)

K.J.V. Harps
R.S.V. Lyres
J.B. Koto
N.B. Tategoto

17. Psalm 150: 3-5 “Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!. Praise him with timbrel and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let every thing that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!”

K.J.V. Trumpet + Psaltery + Harp + Timbrel +
Stringed instruments + Organs + Loud cymbals + High sounding cymbals
R.S.V. Trumpet + Lute + Harp + Timbrel +
Strings + Pipe + Sounding cymbals + Loud clashing symbols
J.B. Rappa + Tategoto + Koto + Tsuzumi +
Ogoto + Fue + Ne no takai shimbaru +
Narihiniku shimbaru
N.B. Tsunobue + Jugen + Tategoto + Tambarin +
Ogoto + Fue + Ne no takai shimbaru +
Narihikoku shimbal

18. Isaiah 5:12 “They have lyre and harp, timbrel and flute and wine at their feasts;”

K.J.V. Harp + Viol + Tabret + Pipe
R.S.V. Lyre + Harp + Timbrel + Flute
J.B. Koto + Tategoto + Tsuzumi + Fue
N.B. Tategoto + Jugen no Koto + Tambarin + Fue

19. Isaiah 14:11 "....., the sound of your harps;"
   K.J.V. Viol
   R.S.V. Harp
   J.B. Koto
   N.B. Koto

20. Daniel 3:5 "that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music ......"
   K.J.V. Cornet + Flute + Harp + sackbut (really a Sebaca) + Psaltery + Dulcimer
   R.S.V. Horn + Pipe + Lyre + Trigon + Harp + Bagpipe
   J.B. Tsunobue + Yokobue + Koto + Sankaku goto + Tategoto + Kazabue
   N.B. Tsunobue + Nikan no fue + Tategoto + Sankakugoto+Hapu + Kazabue

21. 1 Corinthians 13:1 "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."
   K.J.V. Sounding brass + Tinkling cymbal
   R.S.V. Noisy gong + Clanging cymbal
   J.B. Yakamashii kane + Nyo hachi
   N.B. Yakamashiidora + Urusai shimbaru

Conclusion

Although there have been necessary limitations to this study and much further intensive work is in order, still it is possible to gain a degree of knowledge about the instruments themselves and their
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usage. This is necessary to any further study and to realize the actual need for further research. If this study helps in this awareness, it will be a direct influence on further translations the Bible.

* Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD! Psalms 150:6 *
Plate A

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Plate B

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