

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Double Issue

63 Note to Readers

Fall 2014

65 *Sophie Bourgault* The Unbridled Tongue: Plato, Parrhesia, and Philosophy

91 *Richard Burrow* Fulfillment in *As You Like It*

123 *Alexandru Racu* Strauss's Machiavelli and Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor

Book Reviews:

163 *Steven H. Frankel* *Leo Strauss and the Crisis of Rationalism: Another Reason, Another Enlightenment* by Corine Pelluchon

171 *Michael Harding* *Political Philosophy Cross-Examined: Perennial Challenges to the Philosophic Life* by Thomas L. Pangle and J. Harvey Lomax

181 *Will Morrissey* *Locke, Science, and Politics* by Steven Forde

Spring 2015

201 *Jonathan Culp* Happy City, Happy Citizens? The Common Good and the Private Good in Plato's *Republic*

227 *Aryeh Tepper* The Problematic Power of Musical Instruments in the Bible

247 *Julien Carriere &*
279 *Steven Berg* Ancients and Moderns under the Empire of Circe: Machiavelli's *The Ass*, Translation and Commentary

313 *Erik S. Root* Liberal Education Imperiled: Toward a Resurrection of Reason and Revelation in Higher Education

Book Reviews:

349 *Fred Baumann* *Leo Strauss on Moses Mendelssohn*, translated and edited by Martin D. Yaffe

359 *Gregory A. McBrayer* *On the God of the Christians (and on one or two others)* by Rémi Brague

367 *Rafael Major* *Shakespeare's Political Wisdom* by Timothy W. Burns

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

- Editor-in-Chief* Hilail Gildin, Dept. of Philosophy, Queens College
- Associate Editor-in-Chief* Timothy W. Burns, Baylor University
- Associate Editors* Daniel Ian Mark • Geoffrey Sigalet
- General Editors* Charles E. Butterworth • Hilail Gildin
- General Editors (Late)* Howard B. White (d. 1974) • Robert Horwitz (d. 1987)
Seth G. Benardete (d. 2001) • Leonard Grey (d. 2009) •
Harry V. Jaffa (d. 2015)
- Consulting Editors* Christopher Bruell • David Lowenthal • Harvey C.
Mansfield • Ellis Sandoz • Kenneth W. Thompson
- Consulting Editors (Late)* Leo Strauss (d. 1973) • Arnaldo Momigliano (d. 1987) •
Michael Oakeshott (d. 1990) • John Hallowell (d. 1992) •
Ernest L. Fortin (d. 2002) • Muhsin Mahdi (d. 2007) •
Joseph Cropsey (d. 2012)
- International Editors* Terence E. Marshall • Heinrich Meier
- Editors* Wayne Ambler • Marco Andreacchio • Maurice
Auerbach • Robert Bartlett • Fred Baumann • Eric
Buzzetti • Susan Collins • Patrick Coby • Elizabeth C'de
Baca Eastman • Erik Dempsey • Edward J. Erler •
Maureen Feder-Marcus • L. Joseph Hebert • Pamela
K. Jensen • Ken Masugi • Carol L. McNamara • Will
Morrisey • Amy Nendza • Susan Orr • Michael Palmer •
Charles T. Rubin • Leslie G. Rubin • Thomas Schneider
• Susan Meld Shell • Nicholas Starr • Devin Stauffer •
Bradford P. Wilson • Cameron Wybrow • Martin D. Yaffe
• Catherine H. Zuckert • Michael P. Zuckert
- Copy Editor* Les Harris
- Designer* Sarah Teutschel
- Inquiries* ***Interpretation, A Journal of Political Philosophy***
Department of Political Science
Baylor University
1 Bear Place, 97276
Waco, TX 76798
- email* interpretation@baylor.edu

The Problematic Power of Musical Instruments in the Bible

ARYEH TEPPER

BEN GURION UNIVERSITY, ISRAEL; AMERICA SEPHARDI FEDERATION

aryeh.tepper@mail.huji.ac.il

1. INTRODUCTION

There is an old political-philosophical tradition dating back to Plato and Aristotle that takes seriously the power of music in shaping, for better or for worse, the character of individuals and societies.¹ In this article I argue that the *Tanakh*, or Hebrew Bible, likewise contains a broad and sophisticated teaching regarding the power of music. To be more precise, the Bible contains a teaching regarding the problematic power of musical instruments. In order to discern that teaching, however, the biblical text needs to be read with both philosophical awareness and literary sophistication.²

¹ See, for example, Plato, *Republic*, bk. 3, and *Laws*, bk. 3; Aristotle, *Politics*, bk. 8; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Essay on the Origin of Languages: In Which Something Is Said about Melody and Imitation"; and Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, The Case of Wagner*, and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*. See also Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 68–81; Carson Halloway, *All Shook Up: Music, Passion, and Politics* (Dallas: Spence, 2008); Matthew Jason Vorhees, "The Musical Public: Music, Reason and Passion in Political Thought" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2005).

² A number of learned treatments of music in the Hebrew Bible have been written over the course of the past century, and it is possible to identify two broad approaches among these works. One approach uncritically uses the Bible as a source for reconstructing musical life in ancient Israel while the other takes a more skeptical view. The first approach is evident in the work of Curt Sachs, a leading twentieth-century musicologist who penned *The History of Musical Instruments* in 1940 and *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World* in 1943, both of which turn to the Bible in order to treat ancient Israelite musical life within the overall context of antiquity. Sachs's student Alfred Sendry advanced and focused his teacher's investigations with his 1969 work *Music in Ancient Israel*. In interpreting the Bible, both Sachs and Sendry isolate biblical texts featuring music and musical instruments and then use their immense musicological erudition to shed light on those texts. The best example of the second, more skeptical, approach is Joachim Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archeological*,

Philosophical awareness means reading the biblical text as, at least in part, a work of reason.³ In the present case, I argue that the Bible implicitly responds to a problem that historically has been treated within the Western political-philosophical tradition, namely, the problematic power of music.

As for literary sophistication, the Bible should be read as a single narrative stretching from Genesis to Kings, with special attention paid to the themes introduced by the text as well as the variations on those themes.⁴ The Bible couches its arguments in narrative form, and it is by carefully attending to the themes and their variations that we can discern the text's overall intention.

2. THE PROBLEMATIC ORIGINS OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN THE BIBLE

My reading begins in the beginning, in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve commit one transgression and as a result they are exiled from the garden and the presence of God. Once outside of Eden, Eve gives birth to two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain, jealous of the favor that Abel finds in God's eyes, kills his

Written and Comparative Sources, written in German in 1999 and translated into English in 2002. Braun departs from Sachs and Sendry by casting "serious doubts" on the reliability of the biblical text as a source for understanding musical life in ancient Israel, and he accordingly supplements his study of the Bible with archaeological and iconographic evidence. Like Sachs and Sendry, however, Braun treats biblical texts piecemeal, isolating various references to musical performance and musical instruments and using those texts, together with archaeological and iconographic evidence, to shed light on musical culture in ancient Israel. Braun's approach was taken up by Theodore W. Burgh, *Listening to the Artifacts: Music Culture in Ancient Palestine*, in 2006. Burgh, sharing Braun's doubts regarding the Bible as a historical source, supplements his study of the Bible with archaeology, textual analysis, anthropology, art, and philological and ethnographic studies. Burgh, however, also reads the Bible by isolating various texts and, together with evidence from other disciplines, painstakingly reconstructing a picture of ancient Israelite musical life. A third, functional-historical, approach, initiated by Jonathan Friedman's 2013 study *Music in Biblical Life*, should also be noted. Like Sachs and Sendry, Friedman turns to the Bible to reconstruct musical life in ancient Israel. Unlike Sachs and Sendry, however, Friedman is interested in identifying the functions played by musical production. Yet in making explicit those functions, Friedman, like Sachs, Sendry, Braun, and Burgh before him, focuses on biblical texts in isolation. Most fundamentally, all of these approaches turn to the Bible in order to reconstruct musical life in ancient Israel, while my interest is restricted to understanding the Bible itself.

³ See Yoram Hazony, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–27, 259–73. One need not agree with Hazony's thesis in its strict sense in order to appreciate the tremendous service that he has rendered in reading the Bible as a book that advances arguments about the good life.

⁴ Hazony, *Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*, 68–83; see also Edward Greenstein, "The Torah as She Is Read," in *Essays on Biblical Method and Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), and Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, 8.1.73.

brother. The story thus introduces a theme that will reappear throughout our narrative: where there is jealousy, bloodshed will not be far behind.

As punishment for shedding his brother's blood, Cain is exiled from the earth and condemned to be a wanderer. In other words, Cain's disconnection is now twofold, from God and from the earth. An argument can be made that the disconnection is implicitly threefold, for both the murder itself and Cain's response to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" reflect a profound disconnection from humanity.

When the Bible then tells us in Genesis 4:17 that either Cain himself or his son—the text is ambiguous—builds a city, we should not be surprised. The city, the home of "anonymous humanity," emerges from the threefold disconnection from God, the earth, and other people. The Bible is telling us that the origins of cities are highly problematic. But the line of Cain does not found only the first city. In Genesis 4:21 we are introduced to another of Cain's descendants, Jubal, who is "the ancestor of all who play the lyre (*kinnôr*) and the pipe (*'ûgāb*)." ⁵ According to the Bible, the origins of musical instruments are of a piece with the emergence of urban civilization, and they are also highly problematic. ⁶

At this point it is necessary to note that Cain in particular, and his line in general, represent a type. The elements that characterize this type are jealousy, bloodshed, disconnection from the earth, dwelling in cities, and a connection to musical instruments. It is important to keep these characteristics in mind as we progress in the text, for we will see that the Levites are a variation on the Cainite type. This point will become particularly important when we treat the founding of the Levitical musical service.

It is also helpful at this point to contemplate the point of departure for the Bible's teaching regarding the invention of musical instruments. ⁷ Cainite manners and mores, or if one prefers, the Cainite "attitude" characterized by the threefold disconnection from heaven, earth, and humanity, facilitated the invention of musical instruments. ⁸ Moreover, in delineating the connection

⁵ All translations are from JPS Hebrew-English *Tanakh*, 2nd ed., except where otherwise noted.

⁶ See Isaac Abravanel on the line of Cain's "dissatisfaction with natural things" and proclivity to engage in "superfluous arts," in *Medieval Political Philosophy*, ed. Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 256–68.

⁷ See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1:2.

⁸ A classic statement on the significance of "manners and mores" for political philosophy can be found in Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 2.12.

between Cainite manners and mores and the invention of musical instruments, the Bible is implicitly making an argument that Rousseau explicitly articulated in his first *Discourse* and which he composed in response to the question, “Has the restoration of the sciences and the arts contributed to refining moral practices?” While Rousseau first argues that the sciences and arts corrupt moral practices, in the course of his essay he reverses the trajectory of the problem and ends up arguing that moral corruption leads to the founding of the arts and sciences in the first place.⁹ Parallel to Rousseau’s argument in his *Discourse*, the moral corruption of the Cainite line leads to the founding of urban civilization in general, and musical instruments in particular.¹⁰

In light of the problematic origins of musical instruments in Genesis, we should not be surprised that musical instruments by and large disappear from the biblical narrative between Genesis 4:21 and the end of the book of Judges.¹¹ What is more, two of the three stories explicitly involving musical instruments from the time of Cain until the generation of Samuel and David appear in negative contexts. We should be radically surprised, however, when musical instruments suddenly appear with great frequency in the book of Samuel.

3. MIRIAM’S FRAME DRUM AND THE MEASURE OF RHYTHM

After Genesis 4:21, musical instruments first reappear when Jacob flees from his uncle and father-in-law, Laban. Laban has proven himself to be every son-in-law’s nightmare, deceiving Jacob and abusing his labor for twenty years, so Jacob decides to flee with his wives, children, and wealth. But Laban

⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, in *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 11. Likewise, Roger Shattuck speculates that Cain served as an inspiration for Goethe’s *Faust*, with a special emphasis on “striving.” See Roger Shattuck, *Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996), 102: “In his last speeches, *Faust* sounds like a megalomaniac Cain.”

¹⁰ See Leo Strauss’s comments: “Cain...founded a city, and some of his descendants were the ancestors of men practicing various arts: the city and the arts, so alien to man’s original simplicity, owe their origin to Cain and his race. ...It goes without saying that this is not the last word of the Bible on the city and the arts, but it is its first word. ...One is also tempted to think of the difference between the first word of the first book of Samuel on human kingship and its last word” (Leo Strauss, “Jerusalem and Athens,” in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997], 388). Strauss contrasts the Bible’s first and last word on the city, the arts, and kingship, and thus points to the overall trajectory of the text. He does not note, however, the Bible’s particular concern with musical instruments.

¹¹ As Abraham Z. Idelsohn notes, the *šōpār* and *h^ašōš^erā* are used in the Bible for signaling purposes. It is thus fitting that, as Idelsohn also notes, the *šōpār* and *h^ašōš^erā* were played by priests and not the Levites. David, however, charges the Levites with playing musical instruments in the Temple. See Abraham Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music* (New York: Dover, 1992), 9–11.

sets out after Jacob, finally reaching him and complaining, “Why did you flee in secrecy and mislead me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with festive music, with frame drum (*tōp*)¹² and lyre (*kinnôr*)” (Gen. 31:27). Laban, the first character connected to musical instruments since the corrupt line of Cain, wants Jacob to believe that, contrary to twenty years of experience, he would have sent Jacob off, “with festive music,” if only Laban would have known that Jacob was leaving. Consistent with Laban’s character and the problematic origins of musical instruments, Laban would use musical instruments to fashion a false emotional reality, to steal the hearts of Jacob and his wives, as it were.

After the reference to musical instruments by Laban, the next case involving musical instruments is Miriam’s frame drum accompanying the song at the sea, a story to which we will return shortly. The final mention of musical instruments prior to the book of Samuel appears in the story of the sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter in the book of Judges. Once again the context is negative. Jephthah vows to offer the first thing to come out of his home as a burnt offering to the Lord if he is successful in battle, and the first thing to appear is “his daughter...coming out towards him with frame drums (*tupîm*) and with dances” (Judg. 11:34). In the case of Jephthah and his daughter, musical instruments appear in a context of excessive emotionalism that ends in human sacrifice.

The context surrounding the story of Miriam’s frame drum is, however, positive, and it requires explanation. It is the only case in which a musical instrument appears in a positive context from the emergence of the line of Cain until the sudden appearance of musical instruments in the book of Samuel. The story preceding Miriam’s musical performance is well known. After the splitting of the sea and the death of Pharaoh and his armed forces, Moses leads the Israelites in praising the Lord in what is traditionally known as “the song of the sea.”¹³ Miriam follows Moses by leading the women: “Miriam the prophetess...took a frame drum (*tōp*) in her hand, and all the

¹² I have translated *tōp* as frame drum in line with Doubleday’s translation in V. Doubleday, “The Frame Drum in the Middle East: Women, Musical Instruments, and Power,” *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (1997): 101–35.

¹³ The Bible implicitly distinguishes vocal music, often in the form of rhythmic chanting, from instrumental music. This distinction is explicitly found in the Islamic tradition, as Doubleday points out: “In Muslim cultures, a broad distinction is often made between ‘musical instruments’ and ‘singing’” (“Frame Drum in the Middle East,” 103). See also 2 Chron. 29:27 and the distinction between “the instruments of David” and “the song of God” (my emphases). The phrase “the (musical) instruments of God” nowhere appears in the Bible.

women went out after her in dance with frame drums (*tupîm*). And Miriam chanted for them: Sing to the Lord” (Exod. 15:21). How are we to understand this exception?

One interesting ethnographic parallel to Miriam’s drumming can be found in a story connected to Jerusalem’s ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi community in the nineteenth century. In the middle of the century, the leader of the community, Rabbi Meir Auerbach, ruled that musical instruments should be banned from wedding parties. The basis for Rabbi Auerbach’s ban was a message he claimed to have received in a dream according to which the excessive passion animating Jerusalem’s wedding parties was responsible for a cholera epidemic then ravaging the community.¹⁴ Rabbi Auerbach ruled, however, that one kind of musical instrument was permissible at wedding parties, namely, drums.¹⁵ The parallel to the Bible’s suspicion of musical instruments, excepting the drums played by Miriam and the women of Israel, is remarkable.

More remarkable, and even more precise, is a parallel found in the Islamic Salafi tradition. Salafi Islam is characterized by a puritanical and originalist approach to interpreting Islam. The aspiration that animates Salafi Islam is to imitate the model of Muhammad as passed down by Muhammad’s companions and found in reliable traditions of oral law. There are Salafis of both activist and quietist stripes, but both groups strive to jealously, zealously preserve the purity of what the Salafis perceive to be authentic Islam. With regard to musical instruments, Salafi scholars consider them to be *haram*, forbidden.¹⁶ Moreover, this ban is not purely theoretical. When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan they implemented the ban on musical instruments, and Salafi Jihadis in Mali recently did the same.¹⁷ One clear articulation of the Salafi view is set out in a late twentieth-century English-language text

¹⁴ The ban is still observed in Jerusalem today in certain Ashkenazi Jewish circles.

¹⁵ See Rabbi Aharon Kahn, “Music in Halakhic Perspective,” *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 9 (1986–87): 22–24.

¹⁶ A helpful introduction to intra-Islamic polemics regarding the permissibility of music is Amnon Shiloah, “Music and Religion in Islam,” *Acta Musicologica* 69, no. 2 (1997): 143–55. Especially interesting in the present context are Shiloah’s comments regarding the line of Cain: “Ibn al-Jawzi refers to a tradition reported by the historian al-Tabari (d. 922) according to which the inventor of musical instruments is a descendant of Kabel [Cain] named Tubal, who constructed pleasure-giving instruments. ...The descendants of Cain used them to divert themselves” (154).

¹⁷ On the Taliban’s ban on music, see Nicholas Wroe, “A Culture Muted,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 13, 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/13/afghanistan.books>. As for the ban on music in Mali, see Robin Denselow, “Mali Music Ban by Islamists ‘Crushing Culture to Impose Rule,’” *The Guardian*, Jan. 15, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jan/15/mali-music-ban-islamists-crushing>.

composed by a Salafi scholar, Abu Bilal Mustafa Al-Kanadi, *The Islamic Ruling on Music and Singing*.¹⁸ In his text, Al-Kanadi cites a distinction made by the Medieval authority Ahmad Ibn-Hanbal between “rhythmic chanting,” which is permissible, and “affected melodies,” which are forbidden.¹⁹ In the same spirit, Al-Kanadi writes that there is agreement among scholars that “all musical instruments are forbidden.”²⁰ There is, however, one exception to this rule, which Al-Kanadi cites in a footnote: “other than the simple hand drum known as the *daff* (*dap*),” an Arabic term etymologically related to the Hebrew *tōp* which Miriam and the women of Israel played after crossing the sea.²¹ Moreover, Al-Kanadi writes that the *dap* must be devoid of rattles, a commandment that matches Braun’s description of the biblical *tōp*.²² Finally, the hand drum is to be played *by women* on specific, ceremonial occasions.²³ The parallel to the biblical text is clear.

Why is the *dap* permissible? Because, according Al-Kanadi, “it sufficiently satisfies the need for proclamation, provides moderate rhythm which enlivens, and results in joy for the partakers.”²⁴ The key term is “moderate.” Al-Kanadi, like Rabbi Auerbach, and, I would argue, like the Bible from Genesis through the end of the book of Judges, is wary of how “instrumental color” can lead to emotional excess. While drums have the power to enliven, they also provide measure while constituting a less emotionally expressive power.²⁵

¹⁸ Abu Bilal Mustafa al-Kanadi, *The Islamic Ruling on Music and Singing in Light of the Quraan, the Sunnah and the Consensus of Our Pious Predecessors* (Bilal M. Al-Kanadi & Brothers, 1985). Al-Kanadi’s book can be downloaded at Islamhouse, http://d1.islamhouse.com/data/en/ih_books/single_en_Music_and_Singing.pdf.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22 (pagination added).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29n136; Joachim Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archeological, Written, and Comparative Sources*, trans. Douglas W. Scott (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 30. See also Henry George Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2001), 14.

²² Al-Kanadi, *Islamic Ruling*, 43; Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine*, 30.

²³ Al-Kanadi, *Islamic Ruling*, 47n238; see also 33–35: “it is permissible to let the women and young girls sing and beat upon the *daff* (*dap*) during the wedding feast. ...[According to] a number of traditions... a woman made a vow to beat upon the *daff* (*dap*) in the Prophet’s presence if he arrived safely from one of his military expeditions.” See also Doubleday, “Frame Drum in the Middle East.”

²⁴ Al-Kanadi, *Islamic Ruling*, 43.

²⁵ This assessment of the relationship between drums and musical instruments in general will sound strange to readers raised in the postrock era and who instinctively associate rhythm with primitivism and excess, but the fear of “affected melodies” and the insistence upon the moderating character of rhythm also appeared in the heart of the European classical music scene in the late nineteenth century, namely, in Friedrich Nietzsche’s critique of Richard Wagner. In short, Nietzsche considered Wagner to be a “decadent” because, as Nietzsche argued in both *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, Wagner’s music aimed for emotional effect. In particular, Nietzsche claimed that

4. THE APPEARANCE OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN ISRAEL

After the absence of musical instruments from Genesis through the end of the book of Judges, musical instruments appear with a sudden and surprising frequency in the book of Samuel. Musical instruments appear shortly after Samuel's secret coronation of Saul; when David plays the lyre for Saul; after David returns from battle; when Saul pursues David into the wilderness; and as David brings up the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (1 Sam. 16:23; 18:6–7; 19:18–24; 2 Sam. 6; 1 Chron. 13–16). It should also be noted that according to the book of Chronicles, David founds the Levitical musical service at the same time that he brings the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 16:1–6).

In order to understand the radical change in the role played by musical instruments, it is necessary to note the crisis in Israelite life that preceded the change, or in other words, to note the point of departure for what would become perhaps the greatest revolution in ancient Israelite life. Ancient Israel, as portrayed in the book of Judges, was intensely tribal and politically fluid. Warrior-saviors occasionally rose up to defend tribes against external threats, but God ruled over the tribes without a permanent human intermediary (see esp. Judg. 8:22–23). That world did not sustain itself, however, and the book of Judges concludes with the story of the Levite's concubine and the dissolution of the tribal confederation and civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin is almost completely destroyed (Judg. 19–21). The book of Samuel begins, in turn, by portraying the corruption of the tabernacle at Shilo (1 Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25). To make matters worse, the Ark of the Covenant, the cultic object that went out to battle with the Israelites and that embodied God's presence in Israel, is stolen by Israel's archenemies, the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11–22). The text is portraying the collapse of the foundations of Israelite life: the dis-

the effect of Wagner's "infinite melody" was to overpower his audience and undermine their self-possession. Most significantly for present purposes, the flip side of "infinite melody" was "chaos in place of rhythm." It was in light of the overpowering effect of Wagner's extreme expressiveness, purchased at the price of rhythmic chaos, "degeneration of the sense of rhythm," that Nietzsche called Wagner "a danger." Why was rhythm so important for Nietzsche? Rhythm provides measure, which Wagner's music lacks. Listening to his infinite melodies, "one walks into the sea, gradually loses one's secure footing, and finally surrenders oneself to the elements without reservation: one must swim." By way of contrast, Nietzsche celebrated Bizet's *Carmen* by noting, "It approaches lightly, supplely, politely. It is pleasant. It does not sweat. 'What is good is light; what is divine moves on tender feet.'" See *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 157, 184; *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 665–67. See also Albert Murray's letter to Ralph Ellison in *Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray*, ed. Albert Murray and John F. Callahan (New York: Random House, 2000), 212: "I also pointed out that jazz represented CONTROL not abandon."

solution of the tribal confederation, the corruption of the tabernacle, and the loss of the Ark of the Covenant.²⁶

A new age begins, however, with Samuel and David. And one of the defining aspects of this new age will be the use of musical instruments. One of the turning points of the new age occurs when God commanded Samuel “to heed the demand of the people” and to appoint a king (1 Sam. 8:7). Unlike the world portrayed in the book of Judges, the connection to God would now be mediated by a permanent political structure. God chooses Saul to be the first king of Israel, and after Samuel secretly anoints Saul, Samuel tells the new monarch:

You are to go on to the Hill of God, where the Philistine prefects reside. There, as you enter the town, you will encounter a band of prophets coming down from the shrine, preceded by harps (*nebel*), frame drums (*tōp*), flutes (*hālil*), and lyres (*kinnôr*), and they will be speaking in ecstasy. The spirit of the Lord will grip you, and you will speak in ecstasy along with them. (1 Sam. 10:5–6)

True to Samuel’s word, a band of prophets appears on the scene and Saul, gripped by the spirit of God, speaks in ecstasy with them. What is most significant for present purposes is the musical character of the event, which is unprecedented in the Bible.

This event replays itself, with a twist, in Samuel 19. There the story is told how Saul, in a fit of paranoia, seeks to capture David, but he and his messengers are thwarted by “prophets speaking in ecstasy” who are being directed by Samuel: “The spirit of God came upon [Saul] too; and he walked on, speaking in ecstasy, until he reached Naioth in Ramah. Then he too stripped off his clothes and he lay naked all that day and all night” (19:23–24). Musical instruments are not explicitly mentioned in this passage, but in light of the preceding event in 1 Samuel 10, it is reasonable to conclude that the ecstasy was once again engendered by the prophets’ music making. What is more, Saul’s extreme response in which he stripped off his clothes and lay naked for an entire day is behavior that characterizes a musically triggered trance.²⁷ As for David, he is secretly anointed by Samuel to be king after Saul sinned by sparing the king of Amalek along with the choicest part of the Amalekite spoils (1 Sam. 15:7). In the very next scene, Saul’s courtiers recom-

²⁶ See Hazony, *Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*, 146–49.

²⁷ On music and trance, see Judith Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion and Trancing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), and Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

mend that the depressed monarch find someone “skilled at playing the lyre” who will musically drive out the evil spirit of God, and one of the courtiers recommends David, “skilled in music...a stalwart fellow and a warrior, sensible in speech, and handsome in appearance, and the Lord is with him” (16:18). The plan works: “Whenever the [evil] spirit of God came upon Saul, David would take the lyre and play it; Saul would find relief and feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him” (16:23).²⁸

It is important to pause and note the different ways in which Saul and David relate to music. David is in control of the musical experience. He plays for Saul and in so doing enables Saul to undergo a fundamental transformation. Saul, however, is consistently overcome by the musical experience. First, after being anointed king, the prophets’ music moves him to speak in ecstasy. Then he is fundamentally moved by David’s playing the lyre for him. He is later overcome by jealousy when the women musically celebrate David’s achievements on the battlefield. And finally, in pursuing David, Saul falls into what appears to be a musically induced trance.

I would argue that the different ways in which Saul and David respond to the musical experience correspond to Saul’s failure as political leader and David’s success. Saul is overcome by the musical experience in the same way that he is overcome by his emotions, from his fear of the people, to his need for recognition, to his jealousy, to his paranoia, to his elementally wild fear.²⁹ David, by contrast, knows how to stop on a dime and control, and sometimes transcend, his emotions, a response that parallels his control of the musical experience.³⁰ For instance, after Nathan the prophet tells David the story of the rich man who stole the poor man’s lamb, a veiled metaphor for David’s sin with Uriah and Bathsheba, David exclaims that the rich man deserves to die. When Nathan then turns to the king and pointedly says, “You are that man!” David responds with, “I stand guilty before God” (2 Sam. 12:5, 13). Likewise, the Lord punishes David’s sin by afflicting the child born from his union with Bathsheba. David desperately wants the boy to survive, and he prays, fasts, and spends his nights lying on the ground for the infant’s sake (12:16–17). When David learns that his entreaties have failed and that the baby has

²⁸ For an examination of the various theories regarding the musical encounter between David and Saul, see Rouget, *Music and Trance*, 154–58.

²⁹ See 1 Sam. 16:24; 16:30; 18:8; 20:30, 33; 28:8–20.

³⁰ This contrast is further heightened when we consider that according to 2 Chron. 7:6, David invented musical instruments. While it is possible to interpret David’s invention of musical instruments along the lines of Solomon’s “building of the temple,” it seems to me reasonable to conclude, based upon the overall context, that David actually invented these instruments himself.

died, he gets up, bathes, anoints himself, prostrates himself before the Lord, and eats. When his confused courtiers ask David to explain his behavior, David responds, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought, ‘Who knows? The Lord may have pity on me, and the child may live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall never come back to me” (12:22–23). In the next scene, David, so far from indulging his own emotions, consoles Bathsheba. The child born from that union will be Solomon. David is a passionate man, but once he discerns the will of God he refuses to let his passions master him.

But the most politically and religiously charged event involving musical instruments in David’s life remains to be considered, namely, when David brings up the Ark of Covenant to Jerusalem amid what appears to be a “holy rolling” good time. The story of how the ark was brought to Jerusalem is told twice, once in the book of Samuel and again in Chronicles. According to the book of Samuel, as the cart was being guided to Jerusalem, “David and all the House of Israel danced before the Lord to [the sound of] all kinds of cypress wood [instruments] (*‘ašê b’erôšîm*), with lyres (*kinnôrot*), harps (*n’bālîm*), frame drums (*tupîm*), sistrums (*m’na’an’îm*) and cymbals (*šeš’lîm*)” (2 Sam. 6:5). A disaster occurs, however, when Uzza, entrusted with guiding the cart, is struck down by God for touching the ark. David ends the procession and houses the ark with a man named Obed Edom.

When David is told after three months that Obed Edom has been blessed by God, the ark is brought up to Jerusalem again in a festive procession in which “David whirled with all his might before the Lord” (6:14). This time the ark makes it to its destination in “the city of David.” Meanwhile, David’s wife Michal, the aristocratic daughter of Saul, has been watching her husband the king “leaping and whirling before the Lord” and she despises him for it (6:16). We will return to the significance of Michal’s response in the last section of this paper, but first it is necessary to note a very important detail that is added to the story in Chronicles.³¹ There the story of Uzza’s death is also told, but when David brings up the ark to Jerusalem a second time he also uses the occasion to establish the Levitical musical service. We are left to wonder: what is the connection between the tribe of Levi and music? And why did the author of Chronicles choose to tell the story of David’s establishing the

³¹ Aside from the differences in the instruments recorded in 1 Chron. 13:8.

Levitical musical service in this context?³² We turn our attention to these questions in the following two sections.

5. VARIATION ON THE LINE OF CAIN: THE LEVITICAL MUSICAL SERVICE

In the book of Genesis, Leah is deeply jealous of Jacob's love for her sister Rachel. With each of her births, Leah hopes to earn her husband's affection. The text tells us that this jealousy especially informs the birth of her third son, Levi, as Leah declares, "This time my husband will become attached to me, for I have borne him three sons" (Gen. 29:34). It is as if all of Leah's jealous hopes are invested in Levi's birth. Jealousy will accordingly characterize Levi and all of his descendants, and as we learned from Cain's jealousy of Abel, when there is jealousy, bloodshed will not be far behind. The Bible does not disappoint. Levi is a variation on Cain, but, as we will see, not only with regard to jealousy and bloodshed.

Levi's jealous character clearly emerges five chapters later when Levi's sister Dinah is raped and kidnapped by Shechem, the son of Hamor. Shechem falls in love with Dinah after raping her and Hamor attempts to purchase Dinah for his son by proposing to the sons of Jacob that the tribes unify. The brothers feign agreement but demand circumcision as the price for unification. Three days later, after all the men in Hamor's tribe circumcise themselves and when the pain of circumcision is especially intense, Levi and Simon "took each his sword, came upon the city unmolested, and slew all the males" (Gen. 34:25).³³ Jacob is disturbed by his sons' response, and at the end of the book of Genesis, Jacob "blesses" his sons Levi and Simon in the following words: "When angry they slay men. ...Cursed be their anger so fierce, and their wrath, so relentless. I will divide them in Jacob, scatter them in Israel" (49:6–7).

At this point it seems that Levi has failed. We are thus surprised to read in the beginning of the book of Exodus, after the children of Israel slipped into Egyptian bondage, that "a certain man from the house of *Levi* went and

³² I read Chronicles as a *midrash*, or commentary, on the history stretching from Genesis to Kings. In the present case, in delineating the founding of the Levitical musical service by David, the chronicler was responding to, and supplementing, the scheme of the general history that drew a parallel between the Levites and the line of Cain.

³³ Simon, it should be noted, is also Dinah's full brother. The manner in which the tribe of Levi later distinguishes itself from the tribe of Simon will be treated later in this article.

married a *Levite* woman. The woman conceived and bore a son” (Exod. 2:1–2, emphasis added). The text does not tell us the names of the Levite man and woman, only that they are Levites. That is, of course, what the text wants us to note. In light of what we read in Genesis, the bells should be ringing: soon there will be bloodshed. And again the Bible does not disappoint. The son born to the Levite man and woman is Moses, and the first thing he does when he steps on the stage is to slay an Egyptian he sees beating a Hebrew. It seems that while the Levite quality of zealous jealousy is a vice in a certain context, it becomes a virtue in another context. Moses proceeds to intervene in a dispute between two Hebrews, and after fleeing Egypt to Midian, he rises to the defense of Midianite women, a fight in which he has no personal interest. Cain and Levi were, in different degrees, jealous for their own, but Moses is jealous for justice in general.³⁴ Likewise, he will teach his fellow Levites to channel their zealous jealousy from the love of their own to the love of God.

The first step in this education occurs after Moses comes down from the mountain and finds the people worshipping the golden calf. After shattering the tablets, making the Israelites drink the ashes of the calf, and interrogating Aaron, Moses stands in the gate of the camp and calls out, “Whoever is for the Lord, come to me” (Exod. 32:26).³⁵ His fellow Levites gather around him, and Moses commands them to slay those who worshipped the calf (32:27; see Deut. 33:8–9). The Levites comply. They are jealous for the Lord at Moses’s command, and as we know, when there is jealousy, bloodshed is not far behind. Ultimately Moses charges the Levites with attending to the Tabernacle. The Levitical jealousy for the Lord is on display again in the book of Numbers when Phineas spontaneously takes a spear and kills a Moabite woman and Zimri, a chieftain from the tribe of Simon who had been consorting with her.³⁶

³⁴ This emphasis on Moses’s concern for justice in general is based on Ahad Ha’am, “Moshe,” in *Kol Kitvei Ahad Ha’am* (Jerusalem: Hozaah Ivrit, 1947), 342–47.

³⁵ What is the meaning of the *kol anot* that Moses hears in 32:18? Moshe sees dancing (*meholot*) in the camp in 32:19. If *kol anot* signifies music, as Ibn Ezra reasonably suggests, then perhaps this is another case where music is connected to moral corruption. It is not clear, however, according to Ibn Ezra’s interpretation, that musical instruments were involved.

³⁶ While Levi and Simon had led the massacre at Schechem and were condemned together by Jacob, Phineas’s zealous action in this context formally separates the tribe of Levi from the tribe of Simon. In time, the image of the jealous Levite who defends the honor of the Lord by rising to fight foreign oppression and internal corruption would become a kind of cultural trope in Israel, an internal tradition to which the Hasmoneans, who were Levites, appealed when they rose up in rebellion against the Greeks and the Jewish Hellenizers. Lest we forget, Judah Maccabee called the countrymen to his side by echoing Moses’s cry, “Whoever is for the Lord, come to me” (1 Macc. 2:27).

We noted that the line of Cain and the Levites share a family of characteristics. One of those characteristics is jealousy that issues in bloodshed. By the time we get to the end of the book of Numbers, however, what began as the Levites' jealous love of their own becomes the jealous love of the Lord. In addition to jealousy that issues in bloodshed, both the Cainites and the Levites are also characterized by their disconnection from the earth and dwelling in cities. Here too, however, the Levites correct the Cainite flaw. Cain is exiled from the earth as punishment for murdering his brother, while the Levites do not receive a portion in the land of Israel because they are wholly dedicated to the Lord.³⁷ Where will they live instead? The first city was founded by a Cainite, and the Levites are likewise allocated cities to live in, including the cities of refuge, the places where accidental and, one assumes, sometimes not so accidental murderers fled out of fear of the enraged blood avengers.³⁸

But the element missing from this series of parallels between the line of Cain and the Levites is music. This element will reappear when David brings up the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and, according to Chronicles, institutes the Levitical musical service. The Bible carefully delineates Cainite qualities along with their Levitical parallels; the book of Chronicles fills in a lacuna in the Bible's overall structure by telling the story of the founding of the Levitical musical service.³⁹

David establishes the foundations of a new order in Israel, and in the following section I will turn to the connection between monarchy, music, and friendship. First, however, I will attempt to answer the question of why David chose the Levites to be the temple musicians. One likely answer is that since the origins of musical instruments were so problematic, only those fully committed to the Lord could be trusted to wield this power. David himself knew how to do it, and he considered the Levites, the spiritual elite of Israel, to be fitting as well.

Another possible answer is that David appointed the Levites to be the temple musicians in order to tone down, as it were, the Levitical zealous, jealous ardor.⁴⁰ If this is the case, then David's political wisdom would resemble the Arcadian wisdom described by Polybius in his *Histories*. There, in book 4,

³⁷ Perhaps political wisdom also informed this decision. What might happen if Levitical jealousy were to be connected to a piece of land?

³⁸ It is possible that the Bible imagines the cities of refuge functioning as centers for "anger rehabilitation," with the Levites playing the role of group leaders.

³⁹ See note 32, above.

⁴⁰ It is worth recalling that the anger of a Levite set off the civil war at the end of Judges.

Polybius asks why alone among the Arcadians, the Cynaetheans had become so brutal, lawless, and altogether savage. His answer is that although the Arcadians are known as a whole for moral virtue, the Cynaetheans “were the first and only Arcadians to abandon an excellent practice that had been instituted by their forebears.”⁴¹ The excellent practice in question was musical education:

Making music...is beneficial for everyone, but for Arcadians it is a necessity. We should not regard music...as a human invention designed to merely beguile and charm. ...Nor should we suppose that the earliest Arcadians had no good reason for incorporating music into Arcadian life so thoroughly that not only children, but also young men up to the age of thirty, are required to make it their constant companion, even though in all other respects their lives are very harsh. ...It seems to me that the old men who introduced these practices had a very good reason for doing so. They did not consider music a superfluous luxury. ...It was because they wanted to soften and temper the inflexibility and insensitivity of the Arcadian character that they introduced all these practices. ...In short, the sole purpose for which they were striving was to introduce practices that tamed and mitigated Arcadian obduracy.⁴²

If we only read Genesis, it would be reasonable to conclude that music is indeed “a human invention designed to merely beguile and charm.” However, the Bible also tells us how David revolutionized the role of music and entrusted the Levites with playing musical instruments. But we should not assume that David’s intention was limited to creating a musically inspired experience for those who would ascend to Jerusalem. I would argue that David, like the Arcadian elders, understood one of the benefits of music to be its power to “tame” a harsh character. We already saw this principle in action when David used music to soothe Saul’s troubled soul. David’s musical appointment of the Levites likewise would be the general application of this therapeutic musical treatment, using music to “tone down” the zealous, jealous Levites.

6. MUSIC, MONARCHY, AND FRIENDSHIP

Prior to the founding of its monarchy Israel existed as a loose confederation of tribes. However, by the end of the book of Judges the confederation

⁴¹ Polybius, *Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 240. Cf. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 1.4.

⁴² Polybius, *Histories*, 240–41.

degenerated into civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely wiped out. In his role as monarch, David needed to moderate the tribal bonds and fashion a center for pantribal loyalty, and I would suggest that one of the ways he created this new community was through music. In beginning to think about how music can contribute to the cultivation of community and why David was uniquely qualified to initiate that process, it is necessary first to think about friendship and the role it played in the lives of David's ancestors, as well as in David's own life.

The first thing to note regarding friendship is that there aren't many friends in the Bible. This claim is liable to sound strange to some readers—there are plenty of people in the Bible who “like” each other—but friendship in this context means something more than mutual affection. One helpful place to begin is Allan Bloom's remarks regarding the complex character of friendship in his extended study, *Love and Friendship*: “The Greeks invented friendship...the free choice of total association without consideration of family or other legal ties. Friendship involves the possibility of conflict between itself and family, each bidding for the higher place.”⁴³ Friendship refers not to ties of affection between people, as such, but to ties that transcend family or tribe, to association with others than one's own, or to love of something other than one's own. In other words, friendship transcends traditional loyalties and as such is politically threatening. It is thus no wonder that we find so few friends in the tribal society of the Bible. Bloom, however, also notes that “David, his ancestors and heirs, are remarkably and distinctively free in their attitude toward family, tribe, and even nation.”⁴⁴ Bloom does not explain why David is “remarkably and distinctively free” in his attachments, but we will, and the answer is connected to music.

As for David's ancestors, the first example of friendship is Yehuda's relationship with Hira the Adullamite, delineated in Genesis 38. Yehuda turns to Hira after he and his brothers sell Joseph into slavery. The two elements are connected: after having sold a brother, Judah connects up with someone outside the family. The chapter begins, “About that time, Judah left his brothers and camped near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah” (Gen. 38:1). In the ensuing narrative, Hira plays a significant supporting role after Judah impregnates his daughter-in-law Tamar, believing her to be a cult prostitute. Tamar goes on to give birth to twins, the first of whom, Peretz, is David's

⁴³ Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 438.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

ancestor. Peretz's descendant, Boaz, will later have a child with the most famous "friend" in the Bible, Ruth. Ruth was born a Moabite, but in a remarkable act of love she leaves her people to follow Naomi the Israelite, declaring, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). And the child born to Ruth and Boaz is Obed, Jesse's father and David's grandfather.

As for David himself, the Bible delineates in detail his friendship with Saul's son Jonathan. Jonathan's love for David is so strong that he is willing to renounce his right to the throne, while David famously laments Jonathan's death at the hands of the Philistines: "I grieve for you, my brother Jonathan. You were most dear to me. Your love was wonderful to me, more than the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26; see 1 Sam. 27:2). Why is it so important that David's ancestors and David himself were uniquely capable of friendship? David's capacity for friendship, a capacity inherited from his ancestors, was crucial in establishing the monarchy, for David needed to create bonds of affection that transcended tribal loyalty. I propose that David's musicality, his playing and his use of music, enabled him to create these new bonds. In other words, monarchy, friendship, and music go together. We visibly see this threefold connection in the story of the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

The bringing of the ark is marked by a festive musical spirit as David "whirled with all his might before the Lord" (2 Sam. 6:14). All of Israel celebrates with the king that day, with one important exception: David's wife, Michal. So far from celebrating with the king, she greets David with a rebuke, "Didn't the king of Israel do himself honor today—exposing himself today in the sight of the slavegirls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself?" (6:20). David's answer is pointed, and it points to the liminal element of this event, "David answered Michal, 'It was before the Lord who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the Lord's people Israel! I will dance before the Lord and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own esteem; but among the slavegirls that you speak of I will be honored'" (6:21). Note how hierarchies are overturned in David's speech: David is dishonored while the slave girls are respected. One can imagine how strange and wondrous the festive procession must have appeared to an ancient Israelite, the king ecstatically dancing with the slave girls as the mixed multitude accompanied the Ark of the Covenant. How did David ease the tension that naturally accompanies the meeting of different social classes? Through music. David ushered in a new age by staging a musically charged

event in which hierarchies were leveled while the people, as one, brought Israel's most important cultic object to the tribes' new center.⁴⁵

As previously mentioned, the book of Chronicles links the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem to the founding of the Levitical musical service, and this connection is consistent with our narrative (1 Chron. 6:16; 16:4). After musically escorting the ark to Jerusalem and temporarily creating a radically egalitarian community, David instituted the Levitical musical service which served *all* Israel in the temple in Jerusalem (6:17). In other words, I would also suggest, based on the timing of its founding, that the Levitical musical service was intended, in part, to cultivate this sense of transtribal community. Further literary evidence for this claim lies in the musical superscriptions attached to the Psalms; the superscriptions that explicitly connect certain Psalms to David and his Levite contemporaries; and the appeals to serve God with musical instruments found within the Psalms themselves.⁴⁶ These elements are then reflected, for instance, in the transtribal atmosphere described in Psalm 122, "A song of ascents. Of David": "I rejoiced when they said to me, 'We are going to the House of the Lord.' Our feet stood inside your gates, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem built up, a city knit together, to which tribes would make pilgrimage" (1–3).⁴⁷ And the musical dimension is articulated in the superscription and body of Psalm 92, "A psalm, a song; for the Sabbath day": "It is good to praise the Lord, to sing hymns to Your name, O Most High...with a ten-stringed harp, with voice and lyre together" (1–4).⁴⁸

How far we have come from Genesis! There, the line of Cain founded the first city and invented musical instruments in order to fill the absence created by the disconnection from God, earth, and fellow human beings. By Chronicles, however, David has established the Levitical *musical* service in his new capital *city* in order for *all* of Israel to serve God.

⁴⁵ Present-day concertgoers know how a live musical performance can level routine hierarchies and create a temporary sense of intense *communitas*.

⁴⁶ According to scholars, these superscriptions are later additions. There is also a question how many Psalms were actually sung in the Temple. See J. A. Smith, "Which Psalms Were Sung in the Temple?," *Music & Letters* 71, no. 1 (1990): 167–86. But the question of historical veracity is irrelevant from a literary perspective. What is important is that the text's editors decided to explicitly connect seventy-three Psalms to David. These attributions are consistent with the *Tanakh's* teaching regarding instrumental music as a whole.

⁴⁷ See Smith, "Which Psalms Were Sung," 175.

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 176; *Babylonian Talmud, Tamid* 7:4, *Rosh HaShana*, 31a.

7. CONCLUSION

I have tried to show in this article that the Bible contains a sophisticated teaching regarding the problematic power of musical instruments. That teaching comes to light when the biblical narrative is read globally, from Genesis through Samuel and complemented by Chronicles. That teaching also comes to light when the Bible is read as a book of reason. In short, the Bible teaches that although the origins of musical instruments are highly problematic, they can aid in creating community, shaping character, and serving God. In delineating the low origin but elevated end of musical instruments, the Bible carves a middle path between those who would ban musical instruments altogether, as in the Muslim Salafi tradition, and those who romanticize music making.⁴⁹

In addition, important figures in the classical political-philosophical tradition, such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Nietzsche, also treated the problematic power of musical instruments, and I believe that the Bible deserves to be brought into dialogue with this tradition. I hope that this article will contribute to that end.

That said, much work remains to be done in fully explicating the Bible's teaching. For instance, what is the Bible's teaching regarding the role of particular musical instruments? In this article I treated the case of the frame drum (*tōp*). But, to take one thought-provoking example, what about the *nēbel*, often translated as "harp" or "lyre"? As Braun notes, "The Hebrew and Akkadian derivative *nābāl* can mean 'to degenerate; ritually impure, wicked, obscene; villain; carcass,' as well as 'flame.'" Braun also notes that "such associations between musical instruments and idioms of scorn or disparagement occur in other contexts as well," but one is left to wonder how the Bible understands this strangely named instrument that played an important role in the Levitical musical service.⁵⁰

Lastly, I claim that the biblical model can shed light on our contemporary context. It is an amazing fact and a cause for wonder that in the Bible,

⁴⁹ See Eva Mary Grew, "Martin Luther and Music," *Music & Letters* 19, no. 1 (1938): 67–78. Grew quotes Luther as saying, "Music is a fair gift of God, and near allied to divinity." See also Arthur Ware Locke and E. T. A. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," *Musical Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1917): 123–33. Hoffmann writes: "That inspired composers have raised instrumental music to its present height is certainly not due to the improvement in the medium of expression, the perfecting of the instruments, or the greater virtuosity of the performers, but comes rather from the deeper spiritual recognition of the peculiar nature of music" (127).

⁵⁰ Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine*, 22. The term appears eleven times in Chronicles 1 and 2.

the spiritual elite of Israel are temple musicians.⁵¹ This rather startling fact about the Bible should, however, ring familiar to modern Westerners who are familiar with the outsized role that music plays for many in shaping their notions of identity.⁵² And not only identity. Many Westerners, religious and secular alike, turn to music for spiritual sustenance—to get the “big feeling.” The *Tanakh* validates the authenticity of these experiences—Israel’s spiritual elite were temple musicians—but it resists the temptation to idealize them. That combination is not completely in tune with contemporary sensibilities, and it is thus a helpful place to start thinking about the problematic character and potential nobility of music.⁵³

⁵¹ See also Judah HaLevi, *The Kuzari*, 2:64

⁵² See Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, 68–81.

⁵³ Popular twentieth-century rock operas such as *Tommy* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* explored the messianic role that musical megastars sometimes play for their fans. A helpful place to begin thinking deeply about the relationship between artist and audience in a broadly modern context is Thomas Mann’s monumental *Doctor Faustus*. Mann implicitly critiques the romantic notion that, in Hoffmann’s words, “we should honor only that which is inspired and that everything else comes from evil,” by having the novel’s protagonist, the classical composer Adrian Leverkühn, get his inspiration from the devil himself. In so doing Mann takes us back to the beginning—to the problematic origins of music. See note 9, above.