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Concerning: Dissertation Thesis of Jiří Hedánek

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**Statement concerning the Dissertation of JIŘÍ HEDÁNEK,
*Phonology of Masoretic Hebrew, 2011***

The thesis submitted is the first part of a project which comprises another three parts to be finished in the near future (p. xii-xiii, 302-203). The first part, the thesis submitted, asks for the phonology (definition on p. 2-3), to be precise the early development of the vowels and accents in written and spoken Biblical Hebrew (in the TN"K). What was (or: is) the original purpose of this system? The author refutes the traditional view in scholarship which restricts the purpose of the accents to a kind of sheet music for the liturgical reading in the synagogue. The author believes that there was a development for the accent system as it is known that the vowel system needed about 300 years for its development. In its beginnings the system of vowels and accents (the so-called melodemes) supported the oral level, i.e. the spoken language. Consequently, the author analyses the meaning of the system in detail (see the results in p. xi-xii, 288-289, and more).

Method: The author is well advised not to restrict himself to computer analysis of the data in question which were written by hand (in Jewish tradition until the present day). In addition to algorithmic analysis he devotes himself to an "attentive and knowledgeable" reading. Consequently, the almost unreadable clusters of the transliterations belong to the system developed by the author for his special purposes. It expresses more than is possible by the traditional transliteration systems. However, in view of the fact that the thesis will be published one day in a printed version the author still has to find out a way to improve the communication with his reader.

Some of the results are already known (e.g. the virtual gemination mainly of ך and other letters). *Most of the results on p. xi-xii are new and will become an innovation in the history of the Hebrew language.* However, it is disappointing within the abstract (p. xii) that the author finds two or three historic layers of the "accents" but the reader is not informed which and in which time. In addition to that the abstract should list the ancient sources (Leningradensis, Aleppo Codex, Secunda etc.) used in this investigation in detail.

Statement: The author of this statement will not go into detail but it seems convincing that the system of accents had its development in history. This implies that they might have indicated something else than sheet music. But at this point it must be distinguished between the 21 books on the one hand and the psalms on the other hand as the canonical Psalms were sung in the Second Temple liturgy (and became mere written texts to be edited one day). The "stories" from the Pentateuch and from the Deuteronomistic History show many traces of performance which were not noted in any of the written accent and vowel systems (e.g. the lack of the indication of the changes of subjects in Gen 32:23-33 or in Ex 4:24-26).

What about the original prophetic utterances? Isaiah 5:1 introduces the following poetic composition by "*Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard*". It is well known that the pre-exilic and exilic prophets used the form of the *qinā* - was it spoken or sung? So it is necessary to differentiate. To sum up, the intention of the author fills a gap in Old Testament scholarship and the History of Jewish religion in late antiquity and early Middle Ages. But: What is the benefit of these results for the (theological) understanding of the Hebrew texts concerned? The author should give at least three convincing examples.

At the first glance it is disappointing that the author has analysed only 59 % of the Hebrew Old Testament (p. x, fn. 3). On the other hand the results of this thesis obviously rely on an enormous amount of meticulous work.

To sum up, the author of this statement recommends accepting this thesis. It should become subject of an academic disputation.

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