

Summary

TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSCRIPTION OF HEBREW – THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM

Transliteration and transcription of Hebrew into Latin script presents a number of difficulties for a Czech native speaker. Unlike the speakers of major European languages, the Czech milieu manifests strong linguistic purism and requires the transliteration or transcription system to communicate faithfully the specific features of Hebrew phonology. Simultaneously, the Czech editors often resist to the use of the Hebrew script even in scholarly publications, emphasizing the necessity of respecting the larger public.

The present study addresses the fundamental problems of transliterating and transcribing Hebrew into Czech. We deal with those phonologic patterns of various layers of Hebrew that do not have their direct equivalent in Czech phonology (e.g. the gutturals *ʿayyin* or *het*) and focus the issues that are subject of frequent discussions in the Czech academic circles (the fluid character of *shewah mobile* and its transcription).

So far the problem of transfer of Hebrew into Czech was never dealt with systematically. Various systems were suggested *ad hoc* for the purpose of particular publications. Such systems were never accepted as generally applicable norm because they did not meet the multifaceted needs of authors, translators and editors of various texts.

The present study therefore represents the first attempt to address the problem from systemic and functional perspective. As such, it is necessarily conceived as tentative. We propose five inter-related and mutually compatible systems: (1) Transliteration of consonants is convenient for Biblical studies or philological discourse in general. Faithfully communicates the Hebrew text without the vowels. (2) Vocalic transliteration adds the Hebrew vowels according to Masoretic vocalic system. (3) Homiletic transcription is a simplified (2). Consonants are faithfully transliterated, allowing for etymologic transparency. On the contrary, the vowels are simplified and punctuation is added so to enable the oral performance of the text. It is intended especially for pastoral office. (4) Philological transcription is addressing the needs of widest academic public. The consonants are faithfully distinguished. The quantity of

vowels is ignored and the original Masoretic system is assimilated to Czech system of vowels (*a, e, i, o, u*). (5) Simplified phonetic transcription may serve the non-scholarly purposes (journals, belles-lettres). The Hebrew phonology is simplified so that no special signs are supplemented to the Czech orthographic system.

Key words: Hebrew; transliterations; transcription

PAVEL ČECH, Ústav srovnávací jazykovědy FF UK, Praha,
pavel.cech@ff.cuni.cz

PAVEL SLÁDEK, Ústav Blízkého východu a Afriky FF UK, Praha,
pav.sladek@gmail.com