

Haftarah of VaYera (2 Kings 4:1-37)
chantable English version by Len Fellman

based on the translations of Aryeh Kaplan, the Stone Edition Tanach, , JPS 1917, W. Gunther Plaut, and The
Jerusalem Bible

modeled on the haftarah chanting by Moshe Haschel in 'Navigating the Bible II':

<http://bible.ort.org/books/haftarotd4.asp?action=displaypage&book=1&chapter=4&verse=1&portion=4>

ד א ואשה אחת מנשי בני הנביאים צעקה
אל אלישע לאמר עבדך אישיל מת ואתה
ידעת כי עבדך היה ירא את יהוה והנשה
בא לקחת את שני ילדי לו לעבדים:
ב ויאמר אליה אלישע מה אעשה לך
הגיד לי מה יושלך לך לבי בבית ותאמר אין
לשפחתך כל בבית כי אם אסוד שמן:
ג ויאמר לךי שאליך כלים מן החוץ
מאת כל שכניך שכנכי כלים רקים
אל תמעיטי:
ד ובאת וסגרת הדלת בעדך ובעד בניך
ויצקת על כל הכלים האלה והמלא
תסיעי:
ה ותלך מאתו ותסגר הדלת בעדה ובעד
בניה הם מגישים אליה והיא מיצקת
מוצקת: ו והיא במלאת הכלים ותאמר
אל בנה הגישה אלי עוד כלי ויאמר אליה
אין עוד כלי ויעמד השמן: ו ותבא ותגד
לאיש האלהים ויאמר לךי מכרי את השמן
ושלמי את נשיך נשיכי ואת בניך בניכי
תחיי בנותר: ו והי היום ויעבר אלישע
אל שונם ושם אשה גדולה ותחזקבו
לאכל לחם ויהי מדי עברו יסר שמה
לאכל לחם:

4:1 [There was a woman] of one of the wives [of the sons of the prophets] who cried out to Elisha,
[saying this], “[Your servant], my husband is dead, and you do know [that this] [your servant]
did fear YHWH, [but the creditor] [surely is coming]
[to take away] [the only two] [children of mine] for himself as his bondmen.”
2 He said to her—Elisha, “[What can I] [do for you]? [Will you] [tell me], what you have in the house?”
[And she replied], “[There is not] by your servant a thing in the house, [except for] a jar of oil.”
3 [Then he said], “Go—[seek for yourself] vessels outside, [from all] of your neighbors;
jars that are empty, [not too few of them].
4 [And when you have come in], [you must close] the door [behind you] and your sons.
[Then you will pour the oil] into all of the vessels [that you have gathered],
[and when they are filled], [take them away].”
5 She departed [from him], and closed the door [behind herself] and behind her sons,
[who then brought] the vessels to her, and she kept on pouring.
6 [And it came to pass], [when she had filled] [all of the vessels], she said to her son,
“Bring to me another jar.” He replied to her, “There are no more jars.” [And then stopped] [the flow of oil].
7 [Then she came] [and told this] to the man of God. [And he said], “[Go now], and sell the oil,
[and pay off] [what you owe]. And your sons can live [on what remains].”
8 It happened one day, [there passed] Elisha [by the town of Shunam],
where [there was a woman] of stature, [who urged him] [to eat some food].
Later, when he [would pass by], he would turn to that place [to eat a meal].

ט ותאמר אל-אישה הנה-נא ידעתי כי איש אלהים קדוש הוא עבר עלינו תמיד: **ו** נעשה-נא עלית-קיר קטנה ונשים לו שם מטה ושלחן וכסא ומגורה והיה בבא אלנו יסור שמה: **יא** והיה היום ויבא שמה ויסר אל-העליה וישכב-שמה: **יב** ויאמר אל-גיחזי נערו קרא לשונמית הזאת ויקרא-לה ותעמד לפניו:

יג ויאמר לו אמר-נא אליה הנה חרדת אלינו את-כל-החרדה הזאת מה לעשות לך היש לדבר-לך אל-המלך או אל-שר הצבא ותאמר בתוך עמי אנכי ישבת:

יד ויאמר ומה לעשות לה ויאמר גיחזי אבל בן איזלה ואישה זקן: **טו** ויאמר קרא-לה ויקרא-לה ותעמד בפתח: **טז** ויאמר למועד הזה כעת חיה אתי את חבבת בן ותאמר אל-אדני איש האלהים אל-תכזב בשפחתך:

יז ותהר האשה ותלד בן למועד הזה כעת חיה אשר-דבר אליה אלישע:

יח ויגדל הילד והיה היום ויצא אל-אביו אל-הקצרים: **יט** ויאמר אל-אביו ראשי ראשי ויאמר אל-הנער שאהו אל-אמו:

4:9 She said to her husband, "I surely know [that this indeed] is a man of God—a holy man is he, who passes by us continually.

10 Let us make a walled attic—[a little room]—and put [for him] [in that place] a bed and a table, a chair and a lampstand. [Then it will be, that when he comes to visit us, he can "turn in" there.

11 [It happened one day, that [he arrived there], he turned into the attic, [and lay down there].

12 He said to Gehazi his servant, "[Call her now], that Shunammite woman."

[And when he called her], [she stood there] [before him].

13 He said [to his servant], "[Say now] [to the woman],

'You have taken [all this trouble for us], [with all the care] [that we get here].

What [can we do] for you? [Should we put in a word] [on your behalf] to the king?

[Or perhaps] to the captain of the army?" "

[She answered], "Among my people alone, [is where I dwell]."

14 [To his servant he said], "[What then] [is to be done] for her?" Replied Gehazi,

"[The truth is this]: She has no child, and her husband is quite old."

15 [Elisha said], "[Summon her]." [And when he called her], she stood in the doorway.

16 [And this is what he said], "At this season, [when the time] [comes around],

[You will yourself] embrace a son. "[And she responded],

"[Please, my lord], thou man of God, [do not deceive me], [your handmaid]."

17 But the woman conceived, and bore a son at that season, [when the time] came around,

just as was told her, by Elisha.

18 [And he grew up]—the child. And there came the day, he went out to his father, among the harvesters.

19 He said to his father, "My head! | O my head!"

[And said the father] to his servant, [carry him] to his mother."

ב וישאֵהוּ ויביאהוּ אֶל־אִמּוֹ וישָׁב
עַל־בְּרֵכֶיהָ עַד־הַצָּהֳרַיִם ויָמָת:
בא וַתַּעַל וַתִּשְׁכְּבֵהוּ עַל־מִטַּת אִישׁ
הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּסְגֵר בְּעַדוֹ וַתִּצָּא:
בב וַתִּקְרָא אֶל־אִישָׁהּ וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחָה נָא
לִי אֶחָד מִן־הַנְּעָרִים וְאָחַת הָאֶתְנָנוֹת
וְאֶרְנֹצָה עַד־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶשׁוּבָה:
בג וַיֹּאמֶר מְדוּעַ אֶתִּי אַתְּ הַלַּכְתִּי הַלַּכְתִּי
אֵלָיו הַיּוֹם לֹא־חָדַדְשׁ וְלֹא שָׁבַת וַתֹּאמֶר
שְׁלוֹם: **בד** וַתַּחְבֵּשׁ הָאֶתְנוֹן וַתֹּאמֶר
אֶל־נַעֲרָהּ נָהֵג וְלֹךְ אֶל־תַּעֲצָר־לִי לְרֹכֵב כִּי
אִם־אֶמְרָתִי לָךְ: **כה** וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבֵא אֶל־אִישׁ
הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל־הַר הַפְּרָמִל וַיְהִי כִּי־אָוֹת
אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים אֶתְהָ מִנְּגִד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־גִּיחִזִּי
נַעֲרוֹ הִנֵּה הַשׁוֹנְמִית הַלְזוּ: **כא** **כו** עָתָה
רוֹצֵנָא לְקַרְאָתָהּ וְאֶמְרָלֶּהָ הַשְּׁלוֹם לָךְ
הַשְּׁלוֹם לְאִישׁךָ הַשְּׁלוֹם לְיָלֶד וַתֹּאמֶר
שְׁלוֹם: **כז** וַתָּבֵא אֶל־אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים
אֶל־הַר וַתַּחֲזֹק בְּרַגְלָיו וַיִּגֶשׁ גִּיחִזִּי לְהַדְפֹּה
וַיֹּאמֶר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים הֲרַפְה־לָּהּ כִּי־נִפְשָׁה
מָרָה־לָּהּ וַיְהוּהָ הַעֲלִים מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא הִגִּיד לִי:
כח וַתֹּאמֶר הַשְּׂאֵלְתִי בֶן מֵאֵת אֲדֹנָי הֲלֹא
אֶמְרָתִי לֹא תִשְׁלָה אֶתִּי: **כט** וַיֹּאמֶר לְגִיחִזִּי
חַגֵּר מִתְנַיֶּה וְקַח מִשְׁעֲנָתִי בְיָדְךָ וְלֹךְ
כִּי־תִמְצָא אִישׁ לֹא תִבְרַכְנּוּ וְכִי־יִבְרַכְךָ
אִישׁ לֹא תִעַנְנּוּ וְשִׁמַּת מִשְׁעֲנָתִי עַל־פְּנֵי
הַנְּעָר:

4:20 [He picked him up] [and brought him] to his mother.
[And he sat there] [on her lap] until noon, [and he then died].
21 [She got up] [and she laid him] [upon the bed] of the man of God,
shut the door behind him, [and went out].
22 [She then called] [for her husband]. [To him she said], “Send now to me one of the servants
and with him [one of the donkeys], [so I can rush] to the man of God, and return.”
23 [To which he said], “[For what purpose] [are you] going to him today?
[There is neither New Moon], nor the Sabbath.” [And she replied], “[All will be well].”
24 She saddled a donkey and said to her servant,
“[Lead on], now go! [Do not draw rein] for me [unless it be] that I should tell you.”
25 [And so she departed], [and she went] to the man of God at Mount Carmel.
[And it came to pass], when he saw—[the man of God] [saw her] approaching—
he said to Gehazi his servant, “[Look there!] It’s that Shunammite woman.”
26 [Go therefore quickly], and hurry [towards her], [and ask of her], “[Are things] [well with you]?
[Is it well with your husband?] [Is it well [with the child]?”” [And she replied], “[It is well].”
27 [When she arrived] at the man of God on the mountain, [she took hold] of his feet.
[And came Gehazi] [to push her away]. [But then said] the man of God, “[Leave her alone],
[since her soul] [was bitter within her]. YHWH has hidden it [from me]. God told it not, [to me].”
28 [And she said], “Did I request a son from my master?
Did I not say, ‘Do not [deceive me].’”
29 He said to Gehazi, “Gird [up your loins], and take my staff [in your hand] and go.
[If you meet] any person, you must [not greet him], [If you are greeted by anyone], do not reply.
You must place my staff, on the face of the lad.”

ל ותאמר אם הנער חי־יהוה וחי־נפשי
 אס־אעזבך ויקם וילד אחריה:
לא וגחזי עבר לפניהם וישם
 את־המשענת על־פני הנער ואין קול ואין
 קשב וישב לקראתו ויגדלו לאמר לא
 הקיץ הנער: **לב** ויבא אלישע הביתה
 והנה הנער מת משכב על־מטתו:
לג ויבא ויסגר הדלת בעד שניהם ויתפלל
 אליהוה: **לד** ויעל וישכב על־הילד וישם
 פיו על־פיו ועיניו על־עיניו וכפיו על־כפו
 ויגהר עליו ויחם בשר הילד: **לה** וישב
 וילד בבית אחת הנה ואחת הנה ויעל
 ויגהר עליו ויזורר הנער עד־שבע פעמים
 ויפקח הנער את־עיניו:
לו ויקרא אל־גחזי ויאמר קרא
 אל־השנמית הזאת ויקראה ותבא אליו
 ויאמר שאי בגד: **לז** ותבא ותפל
 על־רגליו ותשתחו ארצה ותשא את־בנה
 ותצא:

4:30 [Then said] the mother of the boy, “As YHWH lives and your soul lives, [I will not leave you].”
 [So Elisha arose] and followed her.
 31 [Now, Gehazi] had [gone on before them] and placed the staff on the face of the boy,
 but there was no sound, nor any response. So he returned [to meet his master], and told him thus:
 “He has not awakened—the child.”
 32 [When Elisha came] [into the house], [there was] the child dead, [lying there] on his bed.
 33 [And so he went in], and shut the door behind [the two of them], [and he prayed] to YHWH.
 34 [He climbed on the bed], and lay [upon the child], [and he placed] his mouth on the boy’s mouth,
 his eyes [on his eyes], and his hands [on his hands], [and stretched himself out] upon him.
 [And it grew warm]—the flesh of the child.
 35 [Then he withdrew] and walked [about the house], once [this way] and once [that way],
 [and went back up], [and bent down] [over him].
 Then sneezed the boy [as many as seven] times, and opened by the child [were his eyes].
 36 He called Gehazi, and said, “Summon the Shunammite woman.” [So he called her],
 [and when she came] [to him], [he said to her], “Take up your son.”
 37 [She went in], and fell at his feet, [and bowed down] to the ground.
 [end-of-reading melody] She picked up her son, [and she then departed].

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresht gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresht, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
(Renew our days)	(She weeps bitterly).	(a fire-offering to God)

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)