

Using Masoretic Accents as an Aid to Reading

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Knowledge of some of the accents in the Hebrew text of the Bible can aid in reading. Two systems of accents are used. The more common one (used in all books except Psalms, Proverbs, and Job) enables readers to break sentences into phrases. One need not learn the entire system, but only the more important features, especially the stronger *disjunctive accents*. (The two types of accents are *disjunctive* and *conjunctive*.)

Sôph Pāsûq ("end of Verse") The end of every verse is marked by two dots that look somewhat like a colon (:).

The last word in every verse is mark with a *sillûq*, a vertical stroke on the accented syllable. (דְּבַרִּי)



















The *ʾatnāḥ* marks the major division within a verse, dividing it into two parts based on syntax or phraseology (דְּבַרִּי).

These accents tend to lengthen short vowels and vocal schwas in syllables. This is probably due to the reader pausing at these important breaks, changing his intonation. Words with these accents and lengthened vowels are called *pausal forms*.










TABULA ACCENTUUM

I. Accentus communes (in libris XXI)

A. Distinctivi vel domini

1.  *Sillûq*, semper notat finem versus (*Sôph pāsûq*), ut in . . . : דְּבַרִּי
2.  *ʾAtnāḥ*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
3.  *S'gôltā* (postpositivus), ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
4.  *Šalsēlet*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
5.  *Zāqēp parvum*, ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
6.  *Zāqēp magnum*, ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
7.  *R'ḥi'*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
8.  *T'ipḥā* (ante *ʾAtnāḥ* et *Sillûq*), ut in דְּבַרִּי
9.  *Zarqā* (postpositivus; ante *S'gôltā*), ut in דְּבַרִּי
10.  *Paštā* (postpositivus), ut in si sonus apud paenultimam . . . , ut in דְּבַרִּי
11.  *J'itḥ* (praepositivus), nonnunquam pro *Paštā*, ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
12.  *T'ḥit*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
13.  *Gêreš* vel *Têres*, ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
14.  *Garšājim*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
15.  *Pāzēr*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
16.  *Pāzēr magnum* vel *Qarnē pārā* (cornua vaccae), ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
17.  *T'lišā magnum* (praepositivus), ut in דְּבַרִּי
18.  *L'garmēh* (*Mūnāḥ* cum *Pāsēq*; ante *R'ḥi'*), ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי

B. Conjunctivi vel servi

19.  *Mūnāḥ*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
20.  *Mahpāk* vel *M'huppāk*, ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
21.  *Mêr'kā*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
22.  *Mêr'kā k'pālā* (*M. duplex*), ut in דְּבַרִּי
23.  *Dargā*, ut in דְּבַרִּי
24.  *ʾAzlā* (cum *Gêreš*: *Qadmā*), ut in דְּבַרִּי
25.  *T'lišā parvum* (postpositivus), ut in דְּבַרִּי
26.  *Galgal* vel *Jêrah*, ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי
27.  *Māj'lā*, sed cf. I 8, ut in . . . דְּבַרִּי

If a verse is subdivided further, the next level of division is marked by one of the following:

Sěgôltā 'looks like and upside down *sěgôl* (three dots forming a triangle) above the accented syllable (דְּבִרְךָ)

Šalšalet is a jagged line above the accented syllable.

The word is followed by a verticle line (דְּבִרְךָ |)

Zāqēph qātōn appears as two vertically written dots above the accented syllable (דְּבִרְךָ).

The *zāqēph gādôl* adds a short vertical stroke to the left of the dots (דְּבִרְךָ).

Rěbîa 'is a larger single dot above the accented syllable (דְּבִרְךָ)

Usually one of these accents will appear between the beginning of the verse and the *ʾatnāh* and a second one will appear between the *ʾatnāh* and the *sillûq*. However, in shorter verses none may appear, and in longer verses more than one may be used before or after the *ʾatnāh*.

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5. *Zāqēp parvum*, ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
6. *Zāqēp magnum*, ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
7. *R'ēbîa*, ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
8. *Tîpḥā* (ante *ʾAtnāh* et *Sillôq*), ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
9. *Zarqā* (postpositivus; ante *S'gôltā*), ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
10. *Paštā* (postpositivus), ut in si sonus apud paenultimam . . . דְּבִרְךָ
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12. *T'ēḥ*, ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
13. *Gēreš* vel *Tēres*, ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
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B. Conjunctivi vel servi

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26. *Galgal* vel *Jērah*, ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ
27. *Māj'lā*, sed cf. I 8, ut in . . . דְּבִרְךָ

Using the disjunctive accents to guide in the phrasing of 1 Samuel 1:1–2 yields:

שמואל א ב SAMUEL I II

ס
ב. ג. ד. ה. ו. ז. ח. ט. י. יא. יב. יג. יד. טו. טז. יז. יח. יט. כ. כא. כב. כג. כד. כה. כו. כז. כח. כט. ל.
1
2
3

וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד^a מִן־הַרְמָתִים צוֹפִים^b מֵהַר אֶפְרַיִם וּשְׁמוֹ
 אֶלְקָנָה בֶן־יִרְחָם^c בֶּן־אֵלִיהוּא בֶן־תָּחוּ בֶן־צוּף אֶפְרָתִי^d : וְלוֹ שְׁתֵּי
 נָשִׁים שֵׁם אֶחָת^a חַנָּה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פְּנִינָה וַיְהִי לְפְנִינָה יְלָדִים וּלְחַנָּה
 אֵין יְלָדִים³

There was a man from the hills of Zophim, from the hill country of Ephraim, [*'atnāḥ*] and his name was Elkanah, son of Yeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, and Ephrathite. [*sillûq* and *sôph pāsûq*] And he had two wives. [*zāqēph qātōn*] The name of one was Hannah, [*zāqēph qātōn*] and the name of the other was Peninnah. [*'atnāḥ*] Now Peninnah had children, [*zāqēph qātōn*] but Hannah had no children. [*sillûq* and *sôph pāsûq*]