

# GUIDE TO THE MASORETIC ACCENT SYSTEM

BETHEL SEMINARY



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You are already at home with the vowel markings and several others like the *metheg* and *makkeph*. But there are still a host of other markings in the text. In fact, every word that has not lost its stress or tone has an accent mark of some sort. Your BHS came with a slip card entitled "*Tabula Accentuum*" containing a sizable list of accents. We will not need to concern ourselves with all of them.

NOTES:

## 1 Categories

What you need to notice from that card is that there are two main categories of accents, namely: *Distinctivi vel domini* and *Conjunctivi vel servi*

You will also need to notice that the accenting system changes in the poetic books Psalms, Job, Proverbs.

## 2 Position

The accents generally appear above or below the stressed syllable, usually immediately following the vowel sign. Certain accents are said to be postpositive (post=end posit=place), at the end of a word, or prepositive (pre=first posit=place), at the beginning of a word regardless of where the stressed syllable is.

## 3 Function

The accents function to (1) mark the tone syllable, (2) indicate how the passage should be read (chanted) in the synagog and (3) indicate breaks or connections between words in a sentence, thus helping identify phrases and clauses. The last is the most significant for our purposes and will help us limit the list by focusing on those accents which mainly serve that third

purpose.

#### 4 Conjunctive Accents

Conjunctive accents generally appear to point or lean toward the following word. The primary conjunctive accents we will be interested in are, in descending order, the

NAME	SIGN	EXAMPLE	MEANING
munah	◌ֿ	דָּבָר	erect
mehuppak	◌ֿ◌ֿ	דְּבָר	inverted
'azla	◌ֿ◌ֿ	דְּבָר	
mereka	◌ֿ◌ֿ◌ֿ	דְּבָר	prolongation

#### 5 Disjunctive Accents

Disjunctive accents generally appear either vertical or to lean away from the following word. The primary disjunctive accents we will be interested in are, in descending order:

NAME	SIG	E.g.	MEANING	COMMENT
silluq	⋮	דָּבַר:	Close, cessation	Strongest disjunctive. Always with <i>soph passuq</i> . When <i>silluq</i> 's clause is too short for "servant," it may be preceded by <i>tiphha</i> .
atnah	^	דָּבַר	Breather, pause	Principal divider in a verse.
zaqep qaton	:	דָּבַר	Small upright	Marks important division in <i>silluq</i> 's clause. In short verses it may substitute for <i>athnah</i> .
segolta	*	דָּבַר*	Bunch of grapes	Postpositive. Subordinate accent in <i>athnah</i> 's clause.
'ole weyored (p)	ˆ	דָּבַר	Ascending and descending	Marks main division of verse of poetry.
rebia'	.	דָּבַר	Fourth	Acts as strong pre-tone to <i>zaqeph</i> .
tipha	˘	דָּבַר	Handbreadth	Pre-tone to <i>silluq</i> and <i>athnah</i> . In weakly divided verses, it may substitute for the <i>athnah</i> . In poetry it is called <i>tarha'</i> or <i>dehi</i> .

In the passage below, circle the words that should be read together according to the conjunctive accents and make a colored vertical dividing line between words separated by disjunctive accents as follows: atnah (red), segolta (blue), rebia' or zaqep (green)

1.6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם  
 1.7 וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לְרָקִיעַ  
 וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְרָקִיעַ וַיְהִי־כֵן:  
 1.8 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שְׁנִי פ: