

Biblical Hebrew Grammar for Beginners

Accents and Punctuation

The accent in Hebrew often falls on the final syllable or on the syllable before the final.

Accent marks, also referred to as "cantillation marks" or "trope", were added to the Biblical text during the middle ages. Placed below or above the accented syllable, they mark the stress for a word, serving at the same time as punctuation marks that indicate various degrees of connection (conjunctive accents) or separation (disjunctive accents) between words. They are also used as a set of notations for chanting, with each symbol standing for a musical phrase. The main disjunctive accents are the *silluk*, a vertical line under the character, always on the last word of the verse (the end of the verse is also marked by a colon called *sof pasuk*); and the *etnach*, a wish-bone like diacritic under the character, somewhere within the verse (the main break of the verse). Both are highlighted in the text below in red. Secondary in significance are the disjunctive accents *zakef*, two dots arranged vertically above the character, and the *revia*, a rhombus above the character. These are highlighted in the text below in green.

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: ב וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוֹ
וּבְהוֹי וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ג וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי-אֹר: ד וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָרֶץ כִּי-טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל
אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאָרֶץ וּבֵין הַקַּיִשׁ: ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא
לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

To simplify the presentation, in the texts incorporated in examples and exercises in this site we do not use accent marks. For the sake of punctuation, we mark only the *etnach* and the *silluk*: We substitute a semi-colon after the word for the *etnach*, and a period, question mark, or exclamation mark at the end of the sentence for the *silluk* and the *sof pasuk*.

The main conjunctive accents are the *munách*, a backwards L-like diacritic under the character, and the *merchá*, a comma-like diacritic under the character. They are marked in the text below in blue.

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: ב וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֵהוֹ
וְבָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ג וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי־אֹר: ד וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיְבַדֵּל
אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר יוֹם וְאֶת־הַחֹשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

[Accents: Exercise](#)