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THE DUAL ACCENTUATION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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A perpetual source of confusion and misunderstanding has been the dual accentuation found on the Ten Commandments, both in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. For the casual reader of the MT, these accentuations merely reinforce his already strong conviction that the accents are but exotic doodlings, with no serious relationship to the text. For the student, the dual accentuation presents a series of difficulties and contradictions without parallel elsewhere in the accentuation of the MT. And for the bewildered printer, it has provided the raw material for untold errors, omissions, and conflations of versions.

Through a developmental and analytical approach, the existence of dual accentuation of the Ten Commandments will be explained, the two accentuations will be isolated, and an etiology of the alternate versions will be proposed. Our analysis is based on well-known principles of accentuation, some of which are briefly summarized and diagrammed in the Appendix.

Although many explanations for the dual accentuation have been offered, most appear contrived and do not demonstrate adequate knowledge of the Masoretic accents. A serious investigation of the two sets of accents may begin fruitfully by studying the statement of Rabbi Yaakov ibn Ḥabib and cited by Norzi in his Masoretic commentary מנהק:  

The true reason for all this is well known. There are two ways of reading the Ten Commandments: When an individual reads privately, he does not take care to read each commandment separately but, rather, divides the verses in the normal manner of reading. Thus, the second commandment, which is long, he splits into many verses, and similarly with the Sabbath commandment; while the four commandments near the end, which are short, he joins into one verse. But the public reader is obligated to read each commandment separately, whether the commandment is long or whether it is short. This
necessitates a change in accentuation and vocalization, and
in stops and spirants, so that one may differentiate between
the two readings by means of the markings.¹

In order to achieve a special purpose, then, the additional
set of accents ignores the standard criteria of syntax and length,
which influenced the division of the text into verses. These cri-
teria are reflected in the first accentuation, and, indeed, in the
rest of the MT. The public reading of the Ten Commandments,
the symbolic reenactment of that event which called the nation of
Israel into being, was to resemble as closely as possible the ori-
ginal declaration of those words. The public reading was to be
(and still is, in traditional synagogue practice), ישארה
רַעְיָה 'the ten pronouncements'.

It must be pointed out that this latter accentuation, that
reflecting the division into ten statements (henceforth referred
to as the public accentuation) is in fact a secondary accentua-
tion, and not merely a differing tradition, as has been main-
tained by some scholars.² For it is clear that the public accentua-
tion is a reworking of a previous accentuation (henceforth
referred to as the private accentuation), with the fewest possible
number of changes made in order to reflect the new desired verse
divisions. For no other reason would the major dichotomy, which
regularly appears near the middle of a verse (either by word count
or by context),³ appear instead after the forty-fourth of fifty
words of the second pronunciation (Exod. 20:3-6) and in the middle
of the final clause of that pronunciation.

Figure 1 displays three accentuations of the second pronounce-
ment. The first and the second are the public and private accentua-
tions, as found in the MT, while the third is our own hypo-
thesical public accentuation, based solely on the rules of syntac-
tical division as employed in the rest of the MT. In that third
accentuation, the major dichotomy has been placed at the logical
middle of the pronunciation (וא"ב), after the twenty-eighth of
fifty words, separating the three prohibition clauses from the
description of three of God's attributes. As is evident, the
coincidences of internal disjunctive accents between the private
accentuation and the MT public accentuation is considerable, while
the coincidences between the private accentuation and our hypo-
thesical public accentuation are minimal. Thus, it is seen that
the public accentuation is merely a revision of the private accent-
uation and not an independent tradition.

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¹Rabbinic, originally published in ספר בראשית ווישיבא (Mantua,
1742), preceding Exodus 20.

²E.g., C. D. Ginsburg, הגרות יזכור חפכים (London, 1926;

³Miles B. Cohen, The System of Accentuation in the Hebrew
Our investigation of the accents which comprise the dual accentuation of the Ten Commandments must begin with an examination of the standard printed editions. The popular Letteris Bible, reprinted all over the world, records in Exodus 20 the typical dual accentuation (fig. 2). Figures 3 and 4 display a separation of the two Letteris accentuations (with the typographical misprints corrected).

Examination of the public accentuation (fig. 3) reveals several difficulties. Most obvious is the fact that the section is divided into only nine (1) verses—no 17 appears after the word יָהָ֣ד, which ends the first pronouncement (line 2). Not only does the first pronouncement not comprise a verse of its own, but also the internal accentuation of that pronouncement is ex-
tremely difficult. For what is clearly a syntactical division within a clause, is represented by an accent of a disjunctive level higher than that accent which ends the clause (in blatant contradiction to the rule of hierarchy of disjunctives). The third word, סָפַר, is accented with יֶסָפָר (d1) while the end of the clause, מָסָר, is accented merely with מָסָר (d2). Figure 5 contrasts the present accentuation with the accentuation of the nearly identical clause in Lev. 26:13, where the corresponding word סָפַר, accented with יֶסָפָר (d2), is followed by מָסָר, accented with the stronger disjunctive, קָנָנָה (d0).

Exod. 20:2

Lev. 26:13

That יֶסָפָר on the word סָפַר presents a further problem, in that it precedes יָסָר, on the word מָסָר (fig. 3, line 6). For if this accentuation is to be maintained, then it would be the only instance of יָסָר following יֶסָפָר in the entire MT.

This popular version, then, must be regarded with much suspicion. Other printed editions, from the earliest to the most recent, have not been able to present even this problematic version accurately, reproducing old typographical errors and conflations, and introducing new ones. These must of necessity be dispensed with.

Thus, the investigation must be begun anew, and our attention is now directed to the Ben Asher tradition as reflected in many manuscripts, and, amongst the printed editions, Biblia Hebraica7 in both Exodus and Deuteronomy, and the Letzteris text in Deuteronomy. Figure 6 illustrates a normative Ben Asher accentuation, as reflected in many manuscripts with strong Ben Asher tendencies.

![Figure 6](image-url)

Fig. 6. Normative Ben Asher version: Dual accentuation

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7R. Kittel and P. Kahle, eds. (Stuttgart, 1937). Fig. 6 actually reproduces this printing with the following corrections made on the basis of readings found in a number of manuscripts:

- line 2: יָסָר for יָסָר; line 2: יָסָר for יָסָר;
- line 3: יָסָר for יָסָר; line 3: יָסָר for יָסָר;
- line 3: יָסָר for יָסָר; line 10: יָסָר for יָסָר;
- line 10: יָסָר for יָסָר; line 10: יָסָר for יָסָר;
- line 11: יָסָר for יָסָר; line 15: יָסָר for יָסָר.

The reading of יָסָר for יָסָר (line 9) corrects an omission in Biblia Hebraica, not supported by the Leningrad Codex (cf. Deut. 5:13).

8With the exception of the extraneous יָסָר on the word מָסָר in the first pronouncement.

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The accentuation of the word יִשְׂרָאֵל at the end of the first pronunciation (line 1) with both קָנָה and פָּנוּס in the Ben Asher tradition is the origin of the misunderstanding which gave rise to the inferior version discussed previously (fig. 3), as well as several other versions. Early readers, in attempting to separate the two accentuations, were influenced by a rabbinic midrash where the opinion is found that the first two pronouncements were spoken to the people directly by God himself, rather than by Moses. Thus, when confronted with the dual accentuation on the word יִשְׂרָאֵל at the end of the first pronunciation, the accentuation with קָנָה was naturally chosen for the public reading, since it connected the first two pronouncements together, in accordance with the above midrash. Of course, once the first clause is concluded with קָנָה (d0), it is now automatic that the פָּנוּס (d1) on the word יִשְׂרָאֵל is construed to be part of this accentation.10 Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the public and private accentuations as understood by such Masoretes as Menahem Lonzano who, in his Masoretic commentary on אֶרֶץ הָיִשְׂרָאֵל,11 cites the above-mentioned midrash to support his separation of the accents.

The public accentuation resulting from this separation, however, was apparently seen to be problematic. Two difficulties are evident: (1) It is an unthinkable distortion of the principles of biblical accentuation to allow a single verse to harbor two קָנָה accents,12 as appear here on יִשְׂרָאֵל (line 1) and פָּנוּס (line 6); and (2) פָּנוּס nowhere in the MT is found after קָנָה has already appeared in the verse,13 which is here the case with קָנָה on יִשְׂרָאֵל (line 1) and פָּנוּס on פָּנוּס (line 4).

An examination of scores of relevant Bible manuscripts, model codices, and Geniza fragments in the collections of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and of the British Museum,14 indicates that two solutions to these problems were widespread. In the first solution, as found in dozens of Yemenite manuscripts, the attempt to reflect the midrash in the accentuation (by connecting the first and second pronouncements) was abandoned. Figure 9 illustrates this accentuation, where the קָנָה on יִשְׂרָאֵל has been replaced by פָּנוּס.15 Now only the single קָנָה, on יִשְׂרָאֵל (line 6), remains, and the פָּנוּס (line 4) therefore no longer follows an קָנָה. However, this accentuation introduces a new problem, namely, the absence of an קָנָה in the first pronunciation. For it has been demonstrated that when the major division is followed by six or more words, the major dichotomy, as indicated by קָנָה, always appears.16

A corollary of the rule of hierarchy of disjunctives (see n. 5 above) applied to a proper definition of קָנָה (see Cohen, pp. 30-31).

13Wickes, p. 85, n. 1.

14Microfilm collection of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

15Accompanied by the required change in conjunctive accent, קָנָה instead of פָּנוּס.

16Wickes, p. 64, n. 7. Note that the exceptions cited by Wickes do not occur in manuscripts of the Ben Asher tradition.

9Babylonian Talmud, Makkot 23b-24a: אחר רב המנהיג מיא קא לארח ותודה
בצר לעי כשקה וורשה וחור הרב חברו איתא חד וריבי היא קרוי
לפי הפרוזה השמעון.

10According to the hierarchy of disjunctives. See n. 5 above.

11Berlin, 1745, p. 1la.
In the second solution demonstrated by the manuscripts, the influence of the midrash on the accentuation remained. In order to eliminate the troublesome קֵנְנֵךְ at the end of the first pronunciation while at the same time combining the first two pronouncements into a single verse, a new accentuation was created. The end of the first pronunciation was reaccented by analogy with the practice followed when the several verses (private accentuation) of the next pronouncement were combined into a single long verse (public accentuation). Figure 10 illustrates this accentuation, where the sequence שָׂרָא בִּלְבָּלָה הַגֹּלֶל מִדֶּלֶדֶת followed by לִשְׁנָה phrase is substituted at the end of the first pronouncement, just as it appears at the end of the first two verses of the second pronouncement. This, it will be noticed, is the actual accentuation found in Exodus 20 in the Letteris text (fig. 3) and in many other printed versions. As outlined above, the problems with this accentuation are twofold: (1) the division of a מִשָּׂרָה (d2) phrase that ending with מִשָּׂרָה, by יָדֵי-פַּל (d1) on נִצְבָּה (fig. 3, line 2), and (2) the precedence of יָדֵי-פַּל on וּבִרְדָּע on קֵנְנֵךְ (line 6).

In summary, not only is the standard separation of the Ben Asher dual accentuation which reflects the midrash (figs. 7 and 8) problematic, but also the attempted corrections of that separation have clearly not improved the matter.

Returning to the original Ben Asher dual accentuation (fig. 6), it will now be demonstrated that, given a proper separation of the two accentuations, no problems are apparent. Figures 11 and 12 illustrate the proper separation of accents into the public and private accentuations. It should be noted that, contrary to what has been assumed previously, the accentuation with קֵנְנֵךְ belongs to the private accentuation, while it is the accentuation with יָדֵי-פַּל which appears in the public accentuation. In other words, the first pronunciation is, according to the private accentuation, only a part of the first verse. But that one verse of the private accentuation contains more than one pronunciation should be no cause for question: the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth pronouncements are all contained in a single verse according to the private accentuation (fig. 4). In general, long pronouncements are divided into several verses in the private accentuation, while short pronouncements, such as the first, are combined with others to comprise a verse of the private accentuation.

The difficulties encountered with the previous separations and emended versions are not to be found in this separation (figs. 11 and 12): (1) According to both the public and the private accentuations, the disjunctive accent on קֵנְנֵךְ (line 1), marking the division within the clause, is no longer of a higher level than that disjunctive accent which concludes the clause. In the public reading the accentuation is קֵנְנֵךְ (d0) followed by יָדֵי-פַּל (d0), while in the private reading the accentuation is יָדֵי-פַּל (d1) followed by קֵנְנֵ�ךְ (d0). (2) There are no lengthy pronouncements without קֵנְנֵךְ. (3) No longer does קֵנְנֵךְ appear in any verse more than once. (4) יָדֵי-פַּל on the word פָּרָה (line 4) no longer follows either יָדֵי-פַּל or קֵנְנֵךְ in the same verse.

In summary, not only is the standard separation of the Ben Asher dual accentuation which reflects the midrash (figs. 7 and 8) problematic, but also the attempted corrections of that separation have clearly not improved the matter.
Careful examination of precise manuscripts and printings reflecting the Ben Asher tradition adds further support to this separation of accentuations. In such sources great care is taken wherever possible to position the accent of the private reading to the right of that of the public reading. In the Masorah of some manuscripts, the private accentuation is referred to by the term סְכַּנְנִים 'former accents', while the public accentuation is referred to as סְכַּנְנִים 'latter accents'. In figure 6 one can find several words in which two accents are placed both above or both below the same letter. For example, נֵבֶר and נֵבֶר (line 4) both appear first with קָהָד and then with קָהָד, and קָהָד (line 6) appears first with קָהָד and then with קָהָד, all in accordance with the separation in figures 11 and 12. It can be seen in particular that the accentuation of the word נֵבֶר at the end of the first pronunciation (line 1) is with קָהָד first (i.e., in the private accentuation) and נֵבֶר second (i.e., in the public accentuation). It is helpful to contrast this word to the word נֵבֶר (line 6), where the order of the accents is reversed, indicating that the קָהָד on נֵבֶר belongs to the public accentuation, while the נֵבֶר is part of the private accentuation.

In conclusion, the following have been shown: (1) The second accentuation is a modification of the basic syntactical accentuation, and allows the reader at public gatherings to recite the Ten Commandments as ten individual pronunciations. (2) The Ben Asher dual accentuation was misunderstood, resulting in a separation of accents which was problematic. (3) The "corrected" accentuations offered by many manuscripts and most popular editions also contain problems and anomalies not found elsewhere in the MT. (4) The Ben Asher accentuations, when correctly separated, satisfactorily fulfill all the requirements of both the private and the public readings, while presenting no difficult or unprecedented configurations of accents.

APPENDIX

Summary of Fundamentals of Accentuation in the Masoretic Text

disjunctive accents

\[ d_0 \text{ (disjunctive accents of the highest level):} \]
\[ נֵבֶר, קָהָד \]
\[ d_1 \text{ (disjunctive accents of the second level):} \]
\[ קָהָד, יֶרְבָּרָה, בֶּרְבָּרָה \]
\[ d_2 \text{ (disjunctive accents of the third level):} \]
\[ בֶּרְבָּרָה, אָלָיתָו, אֶלְיוֹן \]
\[ d_3 \text{ (disjunctive accents of the lowest level):} \]
\[ אֶלְיוֹן \]

conjunctive accents

\[ לֶבֶנֶר, קָהָד, בֶּרְבָּרָה, אָלָיתָו, אֶלְיוֹן \]

Principle of continuous dichotomy: The verse is divided into two parts, those parts are then further divided into two parts each, and so on. The process is repeated until each subdivision consists of at most two words.

Principle of hierarchy of disjunctive accents: The disjunctive accent which divides a phrase is of one level lower than the disjunctive accent which marks the end of that phrase.

Accentuation diagrams

All divisions are represented by vertical lines, the height of the line being determined by the relative importance of the division. The attached horizontal line indicates the range of the phrase terminated by that division.

Gen. 1:4

```
d0
  | d1
  | לֶבֶנֶר אָלָיתָו בֶּרְבָּרָה
  | קָהָד
Gen. 12:19
```

Gen. 12:19

```
d0
  | d1
  | לֶבֶנֶר אָלָיתָו בֶּרְבָּרָה
  | קָהָד
Gen. 12:19
```

For a more complete description, see Miles B. Cohen, The System of Accentuation in the Hebrew Bible (Minneapolis: Milco Press, 1969).
NOTES

1. See some of the titles in my Prolegomenon to W. Wickes, Two Treatises on the Accentsation of the Old Testament (New York, 1970), pp. XXXII-XXXIII.


7. S. Frensdorff, Das Buch Ochliah W‘ochliah (Hannover, 1864) [henceforth: Ochli].


10. Graetz, p. 357.


15. Graetz, p. 351.


18. Cf. his words in an editor's remark to Weil's article in Textus (ibid.), note 11a.


21. Translation by Skoss in the above-mentioned (note 20) article, p. 293.


24. Found in several sources among which also an ancient masoretic chapter published by S. Baer and H. L. Strack in their edition of Dikduke ha-Mamim (Leipzig, 1879) as § 36, but which certainly does not belong to that treatise.


27. J. B. Segal, ibid., p. 9.

THE MASORETES AS EXEGETES: SELECTED EXAMPLES

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The accentuation of the MT represents an early exegetical commentary on the Bible. For the accents indicate a syntactical division of a verse, combining words into phrases and showing the relationship of component phrases to each other. Thus, the accentuation often reveals the Masoretes' understanding of a verse as clearly as if they had written a commentary in words. Most often, the accentuation demonstrates the simple meaning of the verse, but at times the accentuation reflects an intriguing alternate interpretation, even that of a rabbinic midrash.

Three verses have been chosen in which the accentuation is crucial to understanding the verse. The accentuations will now be compared and contrasted to other exegeses of the verses to illustrate the potential of the accents as an exegetical tool. Our analysis is based on well-known principles of accentuation, some of which are briefly summarized and diagrammed in the Appendix.

A fine example of the accents reflecting an interpretation other than that most commonly accepted is found in Isa. 56:9. The accentuation found in the Leningrad and Cairo manuscripts is reproduced in figure 1. The accepted translation of this verse is: 'All animals of the field, come to eat! Likewise, all you animals in the forest!' The basis of this translation is clear. Contextually, this verse has been deemed by scholars to be the beginning of a unit of prophecy which denounces the incompetent leaders of the people. The prophet, in an allegory which alludes to the people who were defenseless owing to the lack of leaders, invites wild beasts to devour the flocks which were left unprotected by their wicked shepherds. This logically satisfying interpretation finds additional support in the demands of parallelism within the verse and linguistic considerations within the various units of prophecy.²


²S. D. Luzzatto, Commentary on the Book of Isaiah (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1970), pp. 371-72.
put rather as the conclusion of the previous section. Accordingly, following the promise of rewards for those who pursue justice and keep the Sabbath (56:1-8) comes a further reassurance: the animals of the field (the weak animals) shall eat the animals of the forest (the strong animals). Various commentators assign different identities to the symbolic field and forest animals, but the spirit remains unchanged: the righteous shall prosper, while the wicked shall suffer.

With the intent of the accentedation of the MT understood, it remains to confront a difficulty in the accentuation of the last three words of the verse. As seen in figure 1, the accentedation with the disjunctive accent נַגְּלָה on the second occurrence of the word נַגְּלָה indicates that the word נַגְּלָה is an adjectival modifier: 'the animals who are in the forest', which is not parallel to נִקְצָר נַגְּלָה 'field-animal', a construct form, at the beginning of the verse. Apparently, the early accentedators did not understand the second נַגְּלָה as part of a construct since it is followed by a prepositional prefix 'י; therefore, they accented the second נַגְּלָה with a disjunctive accent, as if it were an absolute form. Later grammarians did in fact understand this phrase as a construct, and in accordance with that understanding, a new accentedation appeared, preferred by Luzzatto and found in a few printed editions. As seen in figure 3, the second נַגְּלָה was instead accented with the conjunctive accent נַגְּלָה, and the 'י of נַגְּלָה was spirantized accordingly, indicating the construct form and providing a true parallel to נִקְצָר נַגְּלָה. That a construct form may indeed contain a prepositional prefix was shown by Kimḥi in such cases as Judg. 8:11. Figure 4 displays the construct phrase נִקְצָר נַגְּלָה, where נַגְּלָה is accented with the conjunctive accent נַגְּלָה, and the second word contains the prepositional prefix 'י.

3Or, alternately:


5Luzzatto, p. 371.

The interpretation suggested by this version is identical to the interpretation suggested by fig. 2.
When preparing his Bible, Letteris\textsuperscript{9} was apparently persuaded by the evidence at hand and sought to present the same version that Luzzatto preferred. Unfortunately, although he succeeded in properly portraying the accents, he neglected to make the corresponding change in vocalization, namely, the spirantization of the ה in יִנָּה, yielding his reading (fig. 5), the only reading which can truly be called "ridiculous" and "far-fetched."

Fig. 5. Letteris text

A second example of a verse whose accentuation is essential to its interpretation is Judg. 6:24. After stating that Gideon built an altar to God, the verse continues, יִנָּה לְיהוָה עַל בָּן יָהוּדָה. The simple meaning of this clause is 'and he called it "God is Peace"'. However, the accentuation of this clause (fig. 6), with

Fig. 6. MT accentuation

the disjunctive מִנָּה on the Tetragrammaton, does not reflect this simple meaning; furthermore, it does not accord with the typical accentuation for the naming of holy places. That typical accentuation can be seen in figure 7, yielding 'and Abraham called the

Fig. 7. Gen. 22:14

name of that place "God Will See"'. Or, referring to Moses's building an altar, figure 8 yields 'and he called its name "God Is My Banner"'. From these and other examples\textsuperscript{10} it may be seen that when a holy place is given a two-word name, the first word of

Fig. 8. Exod. 17:15

which is the Tetragrammaton, the Tetragrammaton is accented with a conjunctive accent and is followed by a |ṣ|. Thus, it is an unusual accentuation in Judg. 6:24, which is nonetheless found in all early manuscripts and printed editions.

As was his practice, Wickes emended the accentuation of this verse on the basis of a few manuscripts, by giving the Tetragrammaton a conjunctive accent, מִנָּה (fig. 9).\textsuperscript{11} He then further suggests, on the basis of the parallel passages, that a |ṣ| is required, although there is no support from manuscripts and although the addition of this |ṣ| would contradict Masora lists which keep careful count of occurrences of the |ṣ|. We need not take

Judg. vi. 24. Note Cold. — Os. 13. 2374; Harr. 5773: Ehr. 2—and the Soncino ed. point מִנָּה מִנָּה יִנָּה יִנָּה, and this is no doubt correct; except that, according to the Poseq rules, we ought to have מִנָּה מִנָּה, comp. Ex. xvi. 13; Ezek. xviii. 35.

\textsuperscript{9} This too is what is meant in Midrash rabba on Leviticus, Par. 9.

Fig. 9. Wickes, p. 132

issue with Wickes's procedure of emending accentuations which are well attested in all accurate manuscripts and early printings, in order to match his theoretical understanding of the accents. However, we must object to his citing of a rabbinic midrash (as seen in the footnote reproduced in fig. 9) as support for his emendation, when it is precisely this midrash which led to the anomalous accentuation (fig. 6) in the first place. That midrash reads:

"Great is peace, for the name of the Holy One, blessed is He, is Peace, as that which is written in the Scriptures, 'יִנָּה וּלְהוֹדָה וְהִנְיוֹל' 'and he called God, Peace'."\textsuperscript{12} It can plainly be seen that it is this midrash which prompted the original accentuation, which connects the object to the verb, rather than to the following word (fig. 6). On the other hand, the typical accentuation, the one found in all the similar passages (figs. 7 and 8), does not reflect this homily. There is no view that מִנָּה or מִנָּה is considered a name of God. Again, the rabbis, using this midrash,

\textsuperscript{9} London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1866.

\textsuperscript{10} Jer. 23:6, 33:16; Ezek. 48:35.

\textsuperscript{11} Wickes, p. 132.

\textsuperscript{12} Leviticus Rabbah 9:9.
conclude that the word אֵלָה, like the other names of God, may
not be uttered in a bathhouse. But there is no such law regard-
ing אֵל or אֵלָה. It is therefore obvious that the cited midrash
is reflected in the unique and special, original accentuation of
this verse, and not, as claimed by Wickes, in the emended version
which matches all similar verses.

It is curious to note the strange accentuation of this verse
found in the Snaith Bible. We have demonstrated that, despite
the editor's claim to the contrary, the Snaith text is merely a
poor revision of the Letteris Bible, with many of the misprints
of the latter reproduced anew. For this verse, British Museum
Manuscript Or. 2626-28, the fine, accurate manuscript which Snaith
claims to have used as the basis of his text, displays the ori-
ignal and widely attested accentuation discussed above. Snaith's
real basis, however, was primarily the Letteris Bible. Beginning
with Letteris's version (fig. 10), Snaith changed the קָשַׁם on
דָּמָם to a קָשִׁים, and the נֶפֶשׁ on the Tetragrammton to a
ןֶפֶשׁ, on the basis of the manuscript reading. However, Snaith

![Fig. 10. Letteris text](image1)

neglected to remove the קָשַׁם which Letteris had inserted in his
text in order to match the parallel passages. But since a קָשַׁם
may not follow a disjunctive accent, the Snaith text is left
with an extraneous קָשַׁם (reproduced in fig. 11). The reading
chosen by Wickes might be called untraditional, since it ignores
a longstanding rabbinic and Masoretic tradition, but only the
reading which appears in the Snaith text must be deemed impossible
and in need of emendation.

![Fig. 11. Snaith text](image2)

Our final example is the accentuation of Isa. 3:24:

Our final example is the accentuation of Isa. 3:24:

The verse is usually rendered:

And it shall come to pass, that
Instead of spices there shall be rottenness;
And instead of a girdle, rags;
And instead of curled hair, baldness;
And instead of a garment, sackcloth;
Burning instead of beauty.

The word "ד" is usually explained to mean 'burning', a form
of the word רֶפֶס, found in Exod. 21:24. Preferring this inter-
pretation, Luzzatto believed he found the accentuation needed for
this interpretation in a few late manuscripts, among them, three
Erfurt manuscripts, where the word "ד" is accented with the
disjunctive accent קָשַׁם (fig. 12).

![Fig. 12. Luzzatto's accentuation](image3)

However, a more careful analysis of the verse reveals that
the accentuation does not really support the rendering of "ד"
'burning'. For if the final three words were intended to be merely
the fifth in a series of parallel expressions, a totally dif-
ferent accentuation would have been required for the verse. When-
ever a series of parallel elements is to be divided by the ac-

13Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 10a-b.
15"The Snaith Bible: A Critical Examination of the Hebrew
Bible Printed for the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1958,"
HUCA 45 (1974).
16Wickes, p. 120.
17Luzzatto, p. 49.
cents, the division is in the middle; if an odd element remains, it is generally assigned to the first half. Figure 13 demonstrates the typical division of a verse with five parallel expressions, where the major dichotomy is placed after the third expression.

Fig. 13. Isa. 1:17

Thus, if 'burning' was intended in the original accentuation of the verse, the accentuation would have appeared as in figure 14, where the major dichotomy is placed after the third element. Clearly, the placement of the major dichotomy after the fourth element was the result of a differing interpretation of the verse.

Fig. 14. Hypothetical accentuation

That differing interpretation is reflected in the seemingly strange accentuation found in the overwhelming number of manuscripts and printed editions (as illustrated in fig. 15), where the disjunctive קַדְמָן is placed on the word מָחָר. Two interpretations Ibn Ezra offers reflect this accentuation of the verse. First, he quotes Saadia as translating מָחָר מַהָר יְהוָה 'for (ך) the contrary (מָחָר) is more appropriate (ך) for them.' Ibn Ezra then offers another interpretation: for (ך) instead of (מָחָר) beauty (ך), the above-mentioned disasters shall be'.

Two interpretations accord with the standard accentuation for two reasons: (1) The final expression, יְהוָה מַהָר יְהוָה, is now a separate unit, being in opposition to the rest of the verse; therefore, the placement of the major dichotomy immediately before it is appropriate. (2) The placement of a disjunctive accent on מָחָר, rather than on יְהוָה, syntactically connects these two words, according well with the understanding of יְהוָה as a coordinating conjunction.

When יְהוָה was later interpreted as a noun, it was given the disjunctive accent קַדְמָן. However, the later accentors did not complete the reaccentuation necessary for their new interpretation, which would have required relocating the major dichotomy, as demonstrated above.

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We now turn our attention to the attempts of the modern printed editions and scholarly texts to present this verse. According to Norman Henry Snaith, the Letteris Bible has a close relationship to Erfurt Manuscript 3. It appears, then, that Letteris confronted the same evidence that Luzzatto did and also opted for the accentuation which indicates that יְהוָה is a noun, 'burning'. Unfortunately, Letteris failed to make all the necessary changes in order to present this reading correctly, and printed instead the version reproduced in figure 16, with the disjunctive קַדְמָן located on יְהוָה, but with a spirantized יְהוָה, as if יְהוָה were still syntactically connected to מָחָר.

Fig. 16. Letteris text

20Also reflected in the Targum, Rashi, Kimhi, and Abarbanel.
Worse yet are the egregious errors found in *Biblia Hebraica* and also in the new *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Examination of the Leningrad and Cairo manuscripts reveals that the reading of figure 15 is easily discernable in both manuscripts. The נֵם under the א and the -ןנָּנ connecting א and נֵם are readily visible, and the absence of the מָצֵה in the א accords with the clear מָצֵה stroke above the א.

Notwithstanding, *Biblia Hebraica* presents the reading reproduced in figure 17, with a מָצֵה in the א. Where Letteris, whose accentuation demands a מָצֵה, neglected to insert one, this edition has inserted an extraneous מָצֵה! Furthermore, a reader who does not have a facsimile of the Leningrad manuscript handy, would not readily identify this reading as a mere misprint. For to make matters worse, there is a note in the upper apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica* referring to א (reproduced in fig. 17) reading ‘thus in Cairo and Leningrad manuscripts, and in Second Rabbinic Bible of Bomberg’, thereby claiming distinguished support for this reading, although in fact none of these sources do support this foolish misprint. Compounding the error, the apparatus offers a most absurd emendation, also reproduced in figure 17. The reading proposed calls for both the disjunctive מָצֵה on the word א and a -ןנָּנ connecting it to the next word, in addition to א (instead of מָצֵה) as the conjunctive accent on the word נֵם, preceding מָצֵה. As a final touch, the א of נֵם has been given a מָצֵה.

We may attempt to reconstruct the intentions of the editors of *Biblia Hebraica*. They chose to present the standard accentuation in the body of the text. The note in the apparatus, which should have appeared as in figure 18, was to suggest that although א מָצֵה נֵם

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23 R. Kittel and P. Kahle, eds. (Stuttgart, 1937).


APPENDIX

Summary of Fundamentals of Accentuation in the Masoretic Text

Disjunctive accents

d0 (disjunctive accents of the highest level):

דָּהָק , דַּעְקָה

d1 (disjunctive accents of the second level):

קָדָשׁ , קָדָשׁ-יַכְרָא , קָדָשׁ-הַפָּר עַבְרָא

d2 (disjunctive accents of the third level):

וֹכֶר , הַפָּר עַבְרָא

d3 (disjunctive accents of the lowest level):

נְעָרָא , נְעָרָא-יַכְרָא

Conjunctive accents

נַעֶרָא , נַעֶרָא-יַכְרָא , נַעֶרָא-הַפָּר עַבְרָא , נַעֶרָא

Principle of continuous dichotomy: The verse is divided into two parts, those parts are then further divided into two parts each, and so on. The process is repeated until each subdivision consists of at most two words.

Principle of hierarchy of disjunctive accents: The disjunctive accent which divides a phrase is of one level lower than the disjunctive accent which marks the end of that phrase.

Accentuation diagrams

All divisions are represented by vertical lines, the height of the line being determined by the relative importance of the division. The attached horizontal line indicates the range of the phrase terminated by that division.

Gen. 1:4

For a more complete description, see Miles B. Cohen, The System of Accentuation in the Hebrew Bible (Minneapolis: Milco Press, 1969).

A STUDY OF THE OLDEST DATED ORIENTAL BIBLE TEXTS

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1. The present study is a by-product of an Anglo-American manuscript project, which was first announced in the London Times of 23 May, 1963, as forming a Corpus of dated Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts. Ours is the oldest research project of this kind, whilst there is a later more limited Franco-Israeli project and a new Leiden book on Hebrew scripts. Our project has been proceeding slowly, since in many respects the required preliminary studies are missing to the present day.

2. Here I want to limit myself to two aspects only: The oldest dated Ben-Asher Codex of 895 and some Chinese Torah scrolls, one of which has been claimed to be a thousand years old.

There are four principal Ben-Asher Codices according to Kahle: The Cairo Codex of 895, the British Museum MS. 4445, the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad codex B 198. The last was used for the Stuttgart Biblia Hebraica. The first has only recently become accessible in a facsimile edition by Makor Publishers in Jerusalem entitled the "Codex Cairo of the Bible from the Karaite Synagogue (1) at Abbasiya" with a short introduction by Dr. S. Lowinger. The codex comprises the Latter Prophets only. In the English introduction Dr. L. complains that "the origin of the Cairo manuscript has...been doubted, but this is part of a general trend among scholars." Concerning this codex two diametrically opposed views exist, that of Kahle and that of Lipschütz, his pupil. Kahle writes that the Cairo codex is "written and provided with punctuation and Masora in A.D. 895 by Moshe Ben Asher, Ahron's father." The oldest member of the Ben Asher family we know lived in the second half of the 8th century and the last, Aaron, in the former half of the 10th. Dr. Lipschütz in a gathering at the Bonn Bible congress of 1962 declared the colophon to be a forgery. What does the internal evidence show?


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