

Hebrew Masoretic Accents

In Biblical Hebrew, the “accent markings” are called טעמים (te‘amim), also known in English as cantillation marks or **Masoretic accents**.

The **Masoretes** were Jewish scholars and scribes active roughly between the 6th and 10th centuries AD, whose primary task was the preservation, transmission, and standardization of the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh).

The Masoretic Text includes: **Torah** (Law), **Nevi'im** (Prophets), **Ketuvim** (Writings) Tanakh

What Are the Masoretic accents.?

The Masoretic accents are a system of small symbols placed above or below Hebrew words in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible. They were standardized by the Masoretes (**6th–10th centuries AD**) to preserve:

Correct reading, Proper chanting, and Intended syntax and meaning

For interpretation and teaching, the Masoretic accents function like punctuation and phrasing markers:

In this sense, Masoretic accents act like a blend of:

Commas, Semicolons, Colons, Periods, and Parenthetical markers

Comparison to Greek Hebrew: Meaning is guided by accent hierarchy and phrasing
Greek: Meaning is guided by morphology, tense, voice, and particles

Both systems preserve meaning—but by very different mechanisms.

1. No Written Accents in Ancient Manuscripts

All pre-Masoretic Hebrew manuscripts — including:

The Dead Sea Scrolls (ca. 250 BC–70 AD)

Early synagogue scrolls

Paleo-Hebrew and early square-script texts do not contain: Vowel points or Accent marks, Consonants only.