

# Introduction

This is a version of the Chumash that is designed to highlight the way the trope (ta'amim) divide up the verses of the Torah, and help us understand how to read it.

## Basic Principles

- There are two types of ta'amim: dividers (מפסיקים) and connectors (משרתים). Roughly speaking, each word has one ta'am.
- But if a word is connected to the following word by a maqaf (like על-פני), only the last word has a ta'am: they are effectively combined into a single word.
- The מפסיקים tell us how the posuk is organized. Each one separates a phrase into two: the words before and including the word with the ta'am, and the words after it. That former half of the phrase is also called the "realm" (מלכות) of the מפסיק.
- On the other hand, a משרת (connector) doesn't divide. It connects a word that has it to the next מפסיק in the phrase.
- There are four levels of מפסיקים. Rav Mordechai Breuer called them Caesar, Melech, Mishneh, and Shlish. I'll just call them levels 1, 2, 3, 4.
- Level 1 is the strongest, and there are only two: sof pasuk and esnachta. They divide the whole verse in two.
- Within those halves, if there are Level 2 מפסיקים, each would divide that half into two more halves. And so on for Level 3, which divide the malkhus of Level 2, etc.
- Each level only appears before a level one above it. That is, a Level 1 malkhus is always divided by Level 2 and not any level below, and so on.
- However, there can be more than one of a given level in the "realm" of the next higher level. So there may be several Level 2 מפסיקים within the Level 1 malkhus. In that case, the division goes from right to left: The first Level 2 (when read from right to left) divides the Level 1 malkhus into two parts, then the next one *divides what is left*, etc.

# The Ta'amim

The various משרתים, and each one's level - and the מפסיקים:

Levels	Ta'amim	Names
1	אָ : אַ	סוף פסוק\סילוק, אתנחתא
2	אֶ אֵ אִ אִי אִי	טפחא, זקף קטן, זקף גדול, סגול, שלשלת
3	אֲ אֳ אִי אִי אִי	רביע, פשתא, יתיב, תביר, זרקא
4	אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי	גרש\אזלא, גרשיים, קרני פרה, תלישא גדולה, פזר, מונח לגרמיה
-----	אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי	מרכא, מונח, מהפך, דרגא, קדמא, תלישא קטנה, מרכא כפולה, ירח בן יומז

## How it works

Let's take an example of a posuk with a lot of structure and see how the ta'amim help to elucidate it. This one is similar to B'reishis, 1(9) [but not actually a real posuk].



Note how the posuk is divided into nested boxes. The outermost (yellow) nesting is Level 1: אתנחתא and סוף פסוק - you can see how the posuk is divided by them into two boxes. The division is by meaning, not by length: Here the second box is only one (or two) words long!

Inside the first of them, the posuk is further divided by two orange boxes; these are the Level-2 זקן קטן and טפחא. As they are on the same level, they are read from right to left: First the זקן קטן divides that section into וַתֵּרָאָה יַבְשָׁה and וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ מַיִם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַיִם אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד. After that, the טפחא divides the second (remaining) section into וַתֵּרָאָה and יַבְשָׁה.

And so on: The Level-3 (green) רביע and פשתא divide up the first orange section, with the רביע going first. Finally, the Level-4 (blue) גרש divides וַיִּקְוּ מַיִם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַיִם in two.

This same procedure can be followed for any posuk in the Torah.

Each malkhus (box) often contains משרתים - connecting ta'amim - as well, in the words before the main מפסיק. These are all the words that do *not* complete a box. Here, for example, the ta'am (munach) on אֶל־מָקוֹם is a משרת.

## Further reading

For much more information on the subject, see Mechon-Mamre's set of notes on [Hebrew cantillation](#) by Helmut Richter, and the Wikipedia article [Cantillation](#). The canonical text on this topic is by Rav Mordechai Breuer z"l (1981, טעמי המקרא בכ"א ספרים, ובספרי אמ"ת, Jerusalem).