

RABBI SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH'S USE OF BIBLICAL ACCENTUATION IN HIS COMMENTARY ON PSALMS

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The impact on biblical interpretation of the biblical accents' role as punctuation marks has long been acknowledged.¹ Graphical signs in the Bible serve the purpose of denoting the verse's primary and secondary divisions. While the biblical accents clearly indicate a specific way of understanding the verse, the interpretive stance implied by them requires further explanation and analysis. Indeed, much can be learned through examining the consonance between the interpretation suggested by the biblical accents' division of the verse, and other interpretations of the Bible throughout different historical periods.²

In this paper, I detail the explicit connection between Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's nineteenth-century commentary and the biblical accentuation system, as it is expressed in his commentary on Psalms.

Hirsch lived in Frankfurt on the Main from 1808 to 1888 and wrote his Bible commentary in German. His translation and commentary on Psalms was

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¹ The two other roles played by biblical accents also sometimes impact biblical interpretation. Thus, for instance, the accents function as cantillation signs for chanting the Hebrew Bible. See, Yehiel Shukron, "The Psychological Significance of the *Shalshet* Accent," *Morashtenu* 13 (1999): 27-31 [Heb.]. The accents also usually indicate the accented syllable in the word. See, for instance, Rashi's comment on Gen 41:35: אָ-תֶּ-לֶ-לְ-אֵ-לֶיךָ "all the food" – "This is a noun; therefore, its accent is on the 'aleph', and it is vocalized with a *pattach katan*, but אֹ-לֶיךָ, which is a verb, e.g., "for whoever eats (אָ-ל) fat" (Lev 7:25), is accented on the final syllable, on the *khaf*, and is vocalized with a *kamatz katan*."

² On the correlation between Biblical accentuation and exegesis, see, for instance, M. B. Cohen, "Masoretic Accents as a Biblical Commentary," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 4,1 (1972): 2-11; M. Perlman, *Hug le-Ta'amei ha-Miqra* (Tel Aviv 1973-1975); M. Breuer, *Ta'amei ha-Miqra be-Kaf-Alef Sefarim u-ve-Sifrei Emet* (Jerusalem 1982): 368-389; S. Kogut, *Correlations between Biblical Accentuation and Traditional Jewish Exegesis: Linguistic and Contextual Studies*, Jerusalem 1994 [Heb.]; L. Himmelfarb, "The Commentary by Nechama Leibowitz on the Bible and Its Relation to *Ta'amei ha-Mikra*," in M. Arend, G. Cohen and R. Ben-Meir (eds.), *Pirkei Nechama – Prof. Nechama Leibowitz Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem 2001): 53-69 [Heb.]; eadem, "The Status of Biblical Accentuation in the *Da'at Mikra* Commentary on the Torah," *Beit Mikra* 52,1 (2007): 103-116 [Heb.]; S. Leonora, "Accentuation: A Tool for Interpreting the Text of the Hebrew Bible," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 33,3 (2005): 174-183.

published in 1882, and was later translated into Hebrew by Yechezkel Lifshitz in 1949 and into English by Gertrude Hirschler in 1960.³ I choose to examine Hirsch's commentary on Psalms and not his commentary on the Pentateuch,⁴ because his latter commentary has been studied extensively,⁵ while the former has not been subject to any academic analysis. Further, the independent biblical accentuation system for the three 'Poetical Books' (Job, Proverbs, and Psalms) has not been subject to the sustained research as has been the biblical accentuation system for the other twenty-one books.⁶ Indeed, the biblical

³ *Die Psalmen - übersetzt und erläutert von Samson Raphael Hirsch* (Hermon Verlags-Aktiengesellschaft: Frankfurt am Main 1924); *The Psalms: translation and commentary by Samson Raphael Hirsch*, translated by Gertrude Hirschler, (Feldheim: Jerusalem 1976); Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Sefer Tehillim im peirush ha-Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch*, translated by Y.Z. Lifshitz (Jerusalem 5731).

⁴ S. R. Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch - übersetzt und erläutert*, Frankfurt am Main (Genesis 1867; Exodus 1869; Leviticus 1873; Numeri 1876; Deuteronomium 1878); *Hamishah Humshei Torah im Targum Onkelos u-Peirush Rashi ve-im Peirush ha-Gaon ha-Rav Shimshon ben ha-Rav Rabbeinu Refael Hirsch, ve-nilveh alav Tiferet Tzvi*, translated from the German by Rabbi Mordechai the son of our Master Rabbi Samson Breuer (Jerusalem 1965); S. R. Hirsch, *The Pentateuch, Translated and Explained by Samson Raphael Hirsch*, rendered into English by I. Levy (New York 1971); S. R. Hirsch, *The Hirsch Chumash: the Five Books of the Torah*, English translation by D. Haberman (Jerusalem 2010); Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, *Hamishah Humshei Torah im Targum Onkelos u-Peirush Rashi ve-im Peirush ha-Gaon Moreinu ha-Rav Rav Shimshon ben ha-Rav Rabbeinu Refael Hirsch*, Frankfurt: in a new Hebrew translation (New York 5772).

⁵ For instance, M. Breuer, "Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's Commentary on the Pentateuch," *Mahanaim* 4 (1993): 348-359 [Heb.]; Idem., "The Torah Commentary by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch," *Asif - mi-Pri ha-Et ve-ha-Et* (Jerusalem 5759): 296-311 [Heb.]; A. Frisch, "Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's Method in the Issue of the 'Ancestors' Sins," in: M. Ahrend and S. Feuerstein (eds.), *Biblical Studies and Teaching* (Bar-Ilan University Press: Ramat-Gan 1997): 181-197 [Heb.]; N.M. Bronznick, "Rabbi Samson R. Hirsch as Bible Commentator," in: M.A. Shmidmam (ed.), *Turim - Studies in Jewish History and Literature, presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, Vol. 1, (New-York 2007): 29-56; S. Chertok, *An Old Flask of New Wine - Innovation and Conservatism in Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's Biblical Commentary* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad: Tel Aviv 2010) [Heb.]; M. Del, "Rabbi Shimshon Ben Raphael's Perception of Withdrawal from the Community and his Commentary on the Torah," In: M. Kahana, O. Samet and M. Rachimi (eds.), *Oreshet - A Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 1, (Elkana-Rehovot 2010): 67-82 [Heb.]; T. Ganzel, "Explicit and Implicit Polemic in Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's Bible Commentary," *HUCA*, Vol. 81, (Cincinnati 2010): 171-191 ; A. T. Levenson, "Samson Raphael Hirsch's Bible Project : a liberal appreciation," *CCAR Journal* 57, 4 (2010): 68-83; J. Jonathan, "Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch as a Peshat Commentator: Literary Aspects of His Commentary on the Pentateuch," in: *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, 15,2 (2012): 190-200.

⁶ Thus, for instance, Breuer (n. 2 above) commented on the interpretive significance of the accents on thirty verses from the twenty-one other books alone (368-389); Kogut (n. 2 above) only presented three examples from the Poetical Books in his book (45-46: Psalms 83:24; 94: Psalms 84:11; 53-54: Proverbs 36:33), but 130 examples from the other twenty-one books. An article that brings examples solely from the three Poetical Books is my, "The Impact of Biblical Accents Upon English Translations of the Bible," *The Bible Translator*, 64, 3 (New Zealand 2013): 254-265.

The issue of biblical accentuation system for the twenty-one books in Hirsch's Torah commentary is addressed by Yishay-Chay Rosenberg's doctoral dissertation, *Rabbi S. R.*

accentuation system on the three Poetical Books has been largely marginalized in academic research, justifying the focus of the current essay.

Further, Hirsch showed an especially close relationship with the accentuation of the three Poetical Books. In an approbation written for R. Yitshak [Zeligman] Be'er's book, *Torat Emet*,⁷ Hirsch wrote that "the laws of the accentuation of the three Poetical Books" are the prerequisite for entering "the holy [sanctum]," for understanding "the proverb and the epigram (*mashal u-melitzah*)," as well as "the words of the wise and their riddles." Indeed Hirsch concludes, "only via the divisions of the accents can we understand the Bible," underlying his great appreciation for the "masters of the accents." Hirsch also states that he learned the rules of the accents for Job, Proverbs and Psalms from his uncle, who was the author of several Hebrew works, including *ha-Rechasim la-Bikah*,⁸ so we expect Hirsch to evidence special knowledge and diligence when writing about the accents in these books.

At the very beginning of his German commentary on Psalms, Hirsch chooses to provide a list of disjunctive and conjunctive accents which occur in the three Poetical Books.⁹ This decision attests to the significance he attached

Hirsch's Educational Worldview, as Reflected in His Torah Commentary, Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University 2013, 103-110 [Heb.], as he undertakes a detailed analysis of six verses of which Hirsch examined their accents. He asserts that Hirsch's "familiarity with the accentuation rules was overarching and sometimes he erred in his understanding of the principles for dividing the verse and his remarks were off the mark. Sometimes Hirsch only dealt with the biblical accents in so far as they pertained to the verse's cantillation by the Torah reader in the synagogue, and his comments stemmed from the influence of the melody popular among these readers." (p. 103).

Yonah Emanuel also addresses the accentuation system associated with the twenty-one books in Hirsch's Torah commentary ["The Biblical Accents in the Ashkenazic Tradition," *ha-Ma'ayan* 4 (5762), 37-50. Heb.]. When he notes that "an analysis of the biblical accents is clearly evident in Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's Torah commentary" (45), we may assume that he is referring to the multiple references to the accents (see a partial listing in Rosenberg's dissertation [p. 103, n. 471]). His remarks however on two verses (Exod 25:33 and Deut 25:3) regarding which Hirsch mentions the accents are inaccurate. My own comprehensive study of Hirsch's approach to the accents in the twenty-one books is forthcoming.

⁷ *Torat Emet* ("The True Law"), Rödelheim 1852 (on the accentuation of the three Poetical Books, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job). An enlarged edition of this treatise in German, together with *Masoretische Uebersichten*, was added as an appendix to the first edition of Delitzsch's Commentary on the Psalter (Vol. II, Leipsic 1860).

⁸ See below, p. 6, and n. 21; Y.L. Shapira, *ha-Rechasim la-Bikah*, Altona 5585.

⁹ The list contains the names of the biblical accents and their forms, distinguishes between those accents that are similar in form but different in function. The list also contains guidelines for determining the main stress, and defines some of the accents' relative strengths in dividing the text. Hirsch notes that this list is based on Heidenheim's 1825 list. Presumably, he is referring to the *Safah Berurah* prayer book (published in 1825), to which Heidenheim added the book of Psalms. In order to aid those praying with his prayer book, Heidenheim added the list of the accents of the three Poetical Books. Apparently, even Heidenheim, who was enormously learned in the field of biblical accents and published the important work *Mishpetei ha-Te'amim* [*The Laws of the Accents*] (Rödelheim 1808) on the accents of the twenty-one books, was not always accurate in his portrayal of the accentuation of the three Poetical Books.

to the accents in general and to their importance as a tool necessary for studying, interpreting and comprehending the Biblical text.

To investigate the nature of Hirsch's overt regard for the accents, and their role for him in the interpretive process, I have collected all the verses in which he makes explicit mention of the accents in his commentary on Psalms¹⁰ – more than twenty verses analyzed in the original German and in both Hebrew and English translations.¹¹ My findings are divided into four categories, and the examples in each are examined with two questions in mind. The first is, how did Hirsch regard the biblical accents he mentions in his commentaries? That is, does he regard them as possessing binding authority or view them as merely proposing an interpretative path? The second is, does Hirsch, in his readings, base his interpretations correctly on the accents, without diverging in any way from the readings the accents imply? I choose examples for analysis here that can illuminate different aspects of the rules of verse division and the rules of the “*Ta'amei Emet*” [= three Poetical Books] accentuation system.¹² The examples below are arranged according to methodological considerations relating to the poetical accentuation system.

1. Verses in which Hirsch introduces a single interpretation that is based on the biblical accents:

1.1 Hirsch bases his interpretation on an *etnach* preceded by an *oleh ve-yored*

¹³(Ps 4:9) בְּשָׁלוֹם יִחַדְדוּ אֲשַׁכְּמָה וְאִישׁוֹן כִּי-אַתָּה ה' לְבַדְּד לְבִטָּח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי

Hirsch's translation:

... for Thou, O Lord, wilt give me a place of safety and of peace.

¹⁰ As far as I can tell, he did not address the biblical accents in his commentary on Proverbs. See: S. R. Hirsch, *From the Wisdom of Mishle*, rendered into English by K. Paritzky-Joshua (Jerusalem 1976).

¹¹ Several minor differences have been discovered between both the English and the Hebrew translations and the German original. I have noted these. See, for instance, n. 14, n. 31 and n. 41.

¹² On the rules of the “*Ta'amei Emet*” accentuation system, see W. Wickes, *Two Treatises on the Accentuation of the Old Testament* (New York 1970), 24-95; Breuer, n. 2 above, 211-319; I. Yeivin, *The Biblical Masorah - Studies in Language* 3 (Jerusalem 2003), 191-199.

¹³ I have used the CD that accompanies the *ha-Keter* edition as the source of these verses. This is an electronic version of the *Revised and Augmented Scientific Edition of 'Mikra'ot Gedolot' based on the Aleppo Codex and Early Medieval MSS*, created in Bar Ilan University by Professor Menahem Cohen's team. Ginsburg's edition [C.D. Ginsburg, *The Writings - Diligently Revised According to the Massorah and the Early Editions with the Various Readings from Manuscript and the Ancient Versions* (London 1926)] provided no evidence of different versions. Unless otherwise specified, all commentaries are cited from the *Keter* CD-ROM.

Hirsch's commentary:

לבדד is “set apart”, as if surrounded by a wall, so that no harm can come near me.¹⁴ לבטח is “full of confidence”, without fear. לבדד is outer security; ...Thou wilt prepare for me a situation, a destiny that will bring me security and peace. Since the וַאֲשֶׁן עוֹלָה וַיִּוֹרֵד has preceded, the אַתְּנָה under לבדד does not have the effect of separating the two parts of the sentence.

Hirsch begins by commenting on the word לבדד - set apart. He explains that the experience of being set apart grants one a sense of security, since it functions like a wall, preventing danger from approaching, effectively thwarting the enemy's approach. He applies the adjective “set apart” to the author of the Psalm and proposes that it parallels the verbal expressions to be “full of confidence,” as in the verse "וַיִּשְׁכֵּן יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בְּדָד" (Deut 33:28).

Hirsch seems here to follow Rashi who interprets the word in a similar fashion: “לבדד - alone is a synonym of ‘secure and quiet’ (Deut 33:28) he need not post security guards with him.”¹⁵ Herczeg and Kamenetsky,¹⁶ commenting on Rashi's interpretation, point out that while in other contexts, for example, Jeremiah 15:17, the word בדד possesses the negative connotation of desolation and solitude, Rashi rejects that meaning here.

Briggs offers a similar observation, translating the verse as: “for Thou makest me dwell apart, in safety.”¹⁷ In his commentary (p. 29), he brings two examples that indicate בדד functions as an adverb, denoting dwelling “apart” or “solitariness”: הָיָה-עִמָּם לְבַדָּד יִשְׁכֹּן. There is a people that dwells apart (Num 23:9); שְׁכֵנֵי לְבַדָּד they who dwell apart (Micah 7:14). Others, however, explain that the word בדד modifies the word ה', adjacent to it. Thus, for instance, Radak writes, “and the explanation of ה' – אַתָּה ה' – לבדד, by yourself you will do this, and in You I trust, and in no other.”

Among the modern commentators, Weiser offered: “for thou alone, O Lord, makest me dwell in safety,” going on to explain that the psalmist “knows that it is only in God's arm that he is well sheltered.”¹⁸ Those interpretations also accord well with the textual variant לְבַדָּד, which is found in a small

¹⁴ In the Hebrew translation, which is closer to the German original, the wall prevents the enemy's approach.

¹⁵ The translation is taken from Mayer I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms*, (Brill: Leiden Boston 2004), 186. According to the *ha-Keter* edition [*Mikra'ot Gedolot 'ha-Keter' Revised and Augmented Scientific Edition of "Mikra'ot Gedolot" based on the Aleppo Codex and Early Medieval MSS*, ed. Menahem Cohen, (Bar-Ilan University: Ramat-Gan 1992)], the first part of the Rashi cited is in brackets, reflecting the fact that it is an addition.

¹⁶ *Tehillim with Rashi's Commentary*, Y.I.Z. Herczeg and Y. Kamenetsky (Jerusalem 2009), 23.

¹⁷ C. A. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms* (ICC), Vol. 2, Edinburgh 1907, 29.

¹⁸ A. Weiser, *The Psalms - A Commentary (OTL)*, translated by Herbert Hartwell from the German (London and Tonbridge 1971), 119; M. Dahood [*Psalms I 1-50: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (The Anchor Bible: New York 1965), 22] offers a similar translation.

number of manuscripts according to *BHS* and *BHK*.¹⁹ Amos Hiram simply explains, in a footnote, that *בדד* modifies “O Lord.”²⁰ He notes that the “masters of the accents” appears to agree to this reading evidenced in their having joined the word *לבדד* to “O Lord,” thus instructing the reader to pause between the word *לבדד* and the word *לבטח*.

Curiously, Hirsch also mentions the accents at the end of his commentary even though he does not use the word *בדד* as an adverb to modify “O Lord.” Presumably, he did so because he believed that the accents supported his interpretation of the word *בדד* to mean *בטח* or secure. As he wrote, since the *עולה ויורד* *on ואישן* appears first in the verse, the *אתנה* under *לבדד* does not have the effect of separating the two parts of the sentence. However, as we know, from the established rules of Biblical accentuation, an *etnach* preceded by an *oleh ve-yored* loses its primacy as the main disjunctive in the verse to the *oleh ve-yored*; however, it still plays the role of a disjunctive in dividing the unit to the left of the *oleh ve-yored*. Thus, Hirsch erred in relying on the accents to support his interpretation.

Interestingly, this error also appears in the list of biblical accents that Hirsch borrowed from Heidenheim, as when the accents’ relative strength in dividing the text are delineated, he writes: “*etnach* has a separating effect only (as in the other books of Scriptures) if it is not preceded by an *oleh ve-yored* in the same sentence.”

Hirsch adopting the same approach in the beginning of his commentary on Ps 11:1 —

לְמַנְצֵחַ לְלֹדֵד בְּה' חֲסִיתִי אֵיךְ תִּאמְרוּ לְנַפְשִׁי [לְוֹדוֹ] נֹדִי הֲרַגְתֶּם צָפוֹר

There he writes:

My great-uncle ר' לייב פ"פ זצ"ל [R. Löb Frankfurter, of blessed memory] the author of the scholarly work entitled *הרכסים לבקעה*, was the first to call my attention to the fact that an *אתנה* over the word *לנפשי* has already preceded the *עולה ויורד* of the word *לדוד* so that the *אתנה* cannot divide the sentence.²¹

As I have argued, even here Hirsch errs in basing his interpretations on his understanding of this type of *etnach*; for the assertion that the *etnach* cannot divide the sentence is not entirely accurate. While the unit governed by the *etnach* indeed relates to the latter part of the verse and not the former, the latter unit (*איך...צפור*) clearly should be read with the main pause by the *etnach*: *איך*

¹⁹ *Biblia Hebraica*, eds. R. Kittel - P. Kahle, Stuttgart 1951; *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. K. Ellinger et al., Stuttgart 1983.

²⁰ A. Hakham, *Psalms with Da'at Mikra Commentary*, Vol. 1, (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2003), p. 15, n. 8. Hakham also mentions that R. Saadiah Gaon interpreted the verse this way. In his principal commentary, Hakham addressed the matter of interpreting *לבדד* as *בטח*.

²¹ Perhaps Hirsch mentioned his granduncle, Löb Frankfurter, as a gesture of gratitude to him for teaching him one of the three Poetical Books’ accentuation rules.

איך תאמרו לנפשי נודי, תאמרו לנפשי, נודי הרכם צפור, and not as Hirsch writes: “Therefore we should not read this verse as איך תאמרו לנפשי נודי, הרכם צפור but as איך תאמרו לנפשי נודי, הרכם צפור.”

1.2 Hirsch bases his interpretation on a *tarcha* and a *munach* before a *siluk*

אֱלֹהֵי בְרִכָּב וְאֱלֹהֵי בְּסוּסִים וְאֶנְחֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם-ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכֵּיר (Ps 20:8)

Hirsch's translation:

Some see God in chariots, and others in horses, but as for us, we remember our God by the name of “The Lord.”

Hirsch's commentary:

אֱלֹהֵינוּ – The accentuation of אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכֵּיר separates the word אֱלֹהֵינוּ from נִזְכֵּיר and thus ties the latter word with אֱלֹהֵינוּ. We remember our God by the name of “The Lord.” Therefore the thought יִזְכִּירוּ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם should be added to the phrase אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּסוּסִים וְאֶנְחֵנוּ... Other nations behold their god in chariots and horses, but we behold Him in His true nature as “The Lord.”

In this instance, Hirsch bases his interpretation on two accents, the *tarcha* sign, and the *munach*:

A. In Hirsch's opinion, the *tarcha* sign found under the word אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשֵׁם-ה' instructs the reader to separate that hyphenated word from אֱלֹהֵינוּ. However the *tarcha* (located below the accented syllable) functions as a conjunctive accent in the three Poetical Books.²²

Perhaps Hirsch was misled by the similarity between the *tarcha*'s form and that of two other disjunctive accents: the *dechi*, one of the accents appearing in the three Poetical Books, which is located before the accented word and appears in the domain of the *etnach*, and the *tipcha*. The latter is, one of the other twenty-one biblical books' accents, located under the accented syllable and appears, as is well-known, as the last disjunctive accent before the *etnach* and the *siluk*.

B. While the word אֱלֹהֵינוּ is accented by a *munach*, a conjunctive accent, Hirsch's assertion that אֱלֹהֵינוּ is clearly tied to נִזְכֵּיר is not entirely accurate: As is well known, the system of biblical accents for both the other twenty-one books and the three Poetical Books are based on continuous dichotomous division of the individual verse. The process ends when there are only two words left: the first word is accentuated with a conjunctive and the second with a disjunctive. There are many instances in which the rules of the systems are undermined and the units contain three or more words, as they are not divided

²² In the list (mentioned above p. 3 and n. 9), the distinction between the accents that are similar in form but different in function is correct.

by a disjunctive.²³ In the current example, two or more conjunctive accents are placed before the word accented by the disjunctive. Conventionally, according to the rules of the accents of the other twenty-one books, the two conjunctive accents do not indicate the place where the unit is to be divided: sometimes the middle word joins the preceding word and is separated from the following one, while sometimes the opposite is the case. However in the accentuation system of the three Poetical Books, if two conjunctives precede a *siluk*, the unit is always to be divided at the word next to the *siluk* – because of the additional rule that the *revi'a mugrash* cannot precede the *siluk*.

In our context, in the unit וַאֲנִי־הוֹדוּ בְשֵׁם-ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר (where the [large] *shalsholet gedola* is located) and the secondary division should be at אֱלֹהֵינוּ (by the *munach*), which is the word preceded by the word with the *siluk*.

Hirsch's interpretation of the verse וַאֲנִי־הוֹדוּ בְשֵׁם-ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר את אלקינו (– “we remember our God” – using the name ה') - requires the division of the unit to occur on the word בְשֵׁם-ה', in which case it would have been accented by a *revi'a mugrash*.

The biblical accents indicate that the verse means that “we will be saved by calling בְשֵׁם-ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ.” Thus, TNK translates: “but we call on the name of the Lord our God.”²⁴ Likewise, we find two divine names in Briggs' translation: “But by Yahweh our God are we strong.”²⁵

However, Dahood translates the verse: “But we through the name of our God are strong.” He proposes omitting the word ה' because it confuses the meaning.²⁶ The Aramaic Targum similarly only mentions one divine name,²⁷ as does the Septuagint Codex Alexandrinus, according to BHS.²⁸ Curiously, Rashi commented, “And we in the name of the Lord will call.”²⁹

Thus, we may conclude that Hirsch based his interpretation on the accents, but he erred. Hirsch's error is especially surprising because his reading, which differentiates between two divine names, allows a mistaken (indeed heretical) impression to arise – that there are two deities.

1.3 Hirsch bases his interpretation on the *legarmeh* accents

רִאֲתָהּ כִּי-אֲתָהּ עֲמָל וְכַעַס׃ תִּבְיֹט לְתַת בְּיָדְךָ עֲלֶיךָ יַעֲזֹב חֲלָכָהּ לְתוֹם אֲתָהּ הִיִּת עֲזָרָךְ׃ (Ps 10:14)

²³ See, for instance, my Ph.D. dissertation: L. Widawski, “The Paseq in the Hebrew Bible: Occurrences in Medieval Manuscripts, Characteristics and Relation to the Accentuation System” (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University 1990 [Heb.]); p. 247 ff.

²⁴ *Tanakh, a New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society: 1985). All the Bible translations were taken from Bible Works 6.

²⁵ Note 17 above, p. 176.

²⁶ Note 18 above, p. 129.

²⁷ A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, Vol III, Brill: Leiden 1973.

²⁸ Note 19 above.

²⁹ Perhaps Rashi was influenced by the biblical language used in our chapter in verse 6: “And in the name of our God.” However, Herczeg and Kamenetsky (n. 16 above) translated the phrase as, “But we pray in the Name of Hashem, our God” (133-134).

³⁰ Two notes concerning the version: A. In the German original and the English translation of Hirsch's book, there is another vertical line, following רִאֲתָהּ ׀. This version is completely

Hirsch's translation:

For Thou hast indeed seen it; for Thou metest out misery and care with Thy hand...

Hirsch's commentary:

עמל, כי אתה תביט לתת בידך עמל וכעס, כי אתה וגו'. The object of this sentence, עמל, is separated from אתה and תביט by means of the מהפך לגרמיה and the אזלא לגרמיה thus receiving particular stress as an interposed object...No man suffers affliction without God being aware of it. Trouble can strike man only if the Lord looking on (תביט), even from afar, has sent it to him with a "hand" that either chastises man or tests him, even as it cleanses him.

Hirsch explains this unit by altering the order of its words³¹ because he understood the *mahpach legarmeh* and the *azla legarmeh* to be, figuratively speaking, opening parentheses, creating a parenthetical expression, and thereby separating the accented words with a *legarmeh* from the words surrounding them. Perhaps Hirsch was influenced, in offering this reading, by the vertical line that accompanies the *mahpach*.

However, according to the rules of biblical accents, the *mahpach legarmeh* divides the unit of the *zinorit*. The flow of the verse indicates that "misery and care" modify the verb "seen." However, Hirsch reads these words as modifying the predicate "sent": According to Hirsch the unit indicates that "No man suffers without God being aware of it...The Lord has sent עמל וכעס to man with his 'hand.'"

In the examples discussed I have examined thus far, Hirsch offers only one possible interpretation of the verse based on the accents. We will now investigate another way in which Hirsch uses the biblical accents - in which he proposes two possible readings.

2. Hirsch's commentary mentions two possible ways of reading and interpreting the verse, one of which is supported by the biblical accents

inaccurate as the vertical line of the *paseq* is only found after a conjunctive and the *pazer* is a disjunctive. B. In the Hebrew translation of Hirsch's commentary, the word כִּי-אתה is accented by the *azla legarmeh*. This is also the case in Ginsburg's edition (n. 13 above) and in a long list of manuscript and print versions that he cites. There is also support in Ginsburg for accenting the word with the *mahpach legarmeh*, which is found in the German original and the English translation of Hirsch's commentary, as well as in the Aleppo Codex and other related manuscripts.

³¹ Unlike the original German, in Hirsch's Hebrew translation, a few explanatory words appear before the quote: "as if it says," to clarify that the word order has been changed. The English translation provides an additional unit: "the object of this sentence"; it stresses that the words "misery and care" function as a complement in the unit.

Hirsch's translation:

Let Him who comes be blessed with the Name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the House of the Lord.

Hirsch's commentary:

הַבָּא is separated from בְּשֵׁם by the accentuation. Verse 26 does not mean “Blessed be the one who comes in the Name of the Lord,” but “Let Him who comes be blessed with the Name of the Lord.” Actually it is not “*in* the Name of the Lord,” but rather “*with* the Name of the Lord.”

At first, Hirsch focuses on the biblical accents: “הַבָּא is separated from בְּשֵׁם by the accentuation.” The two interpretations of בְּרוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם ה' which Hirsch offers are dependent on the answer to the following syntactical question: Do the words בְּשֵׁם ה' describe the subject הַבָּא or do they complete the predicate בְּרוּךְ?³²

According to the first interpretation of “Blessed be the one who comes in the Name of the Lord,” one comes with the Name of the Lord, that is to say, with the Name of the Lord on his lips. Hirsch, however, rejects this reading for it would require the following division: בְּרוּךְ // הַבָּא / בְּשֵׁם ה'. That is to say, the word בְּרוּךְ would have to be accented by a *large reviv'a* which indicates a longer pause than that of the *dechi* accentuating the word הַבָּא.

This explanation is similar to Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's interpretation, for he argues that the beginning of the verse refers back to the previous verse.³³ Leslie C. Allen³⁴ takes a similar approach, translating the verse as follows: “Blessed is the one who comes with Yahweh's name!” Allen notes that while “MT's accentuation links בְּשֵׁם ה' with בְּרוּךְ,” based on the earlier context

פְּתַחוּ-לִי שַׁעֲרֵי-צְדָק אֲבֹא-בָם אֲנִי ה' (Ps 118:19)

— “Open for me the gates of righteousness that I may enter them and thank the Lord” – he prefers to interpret the verse as indicating that the main speaker comes with a song of praise on his lips.

³² See S. H. Blank, “Some Observations Concerning Biblical Prayer,” *HUCA* 32 (1961): 75-79.

³³ As he writes: “And behold the *heh* of הַבָּא – modifies the previous...and this is the meaning: “אֲנִי ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה עִתָּה וְהַצְלִיחָה עִתָּה הַבָּרּוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם ה'”. (Lord, please, save us now and grant us success now, the blessed one who comes in the Name of the Lord.) Along with the re-ordering of the words in the verse so that it reads: הַבָּרּוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם ה' (the blessed one who comes in the Name of the Lord). This teaches us that the one who comes arrives with the blessing of God.

³⁴ *Psalms III*, WBC, T. Nelson: Nashville 2002, n. 26a. According to Herczeg and Kamenetsky (n. 16 above), p. 782, n. 28 Rashi understands “in the name of Hashem” as modifying “he who comes.”

The second interpretation suggested by Hirsch is in consonance with the division – ה' ברוך הבא בשם ה' and the accentuation system, as the word ברוך, accented by a *munach*, is joined to הבא. This reading teaches that those who come will receive a blessing that is given by the Lord: “Let him who comes be blessed with the Name of the Lord.” This interpretation creates parallelism with the second half of the verse, ה' ברכנוכם מבית ה'. Indeed, the Meiri and R. Isaiah of Trani offered this interpretation.³⁵ Amos Hakham notes that the interpretation is in consonance with the accents. He was correct when he noted that “the masters of the accents joined the words ‘ברוך הבא’ with an **accent**.”

Hirsch instructs his readers to pay attention to the biblical accents, but in basing his argument on the disjunctive (*dechi*) accenting the word הבא, he is deliberately obscure – because the word הבא is accentuated with a disjunctive in the two competing readings. The difference between the two readings lies in the accent on the word ברוך – either הבא with a *revia* or הבא with a *munach*.

2.2 אֲשַׁכִּילָהוּ בְּדֶרֶךְ תְּמִים מְתִי תָבוֹא אֵלַי אֶתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתֵם-לִבִּי בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי
(Ps 101:2)

Hirsch's translation:

In the path of moral integrity, therefore, do I direct my reason to when Thou wilt come to me; I shall walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.

Hirsch's commentary:

אֲשַׁכִּילָהּ is... “to direct one's reason” toward a certain end. In those instances where it is employed in this manner, the object to which the reason is directed is not preceded by a preposition and takes the accusative form... Thus the object of אֲשַׁכִּילָהּ is not תְּמִים.³⁶ Moreover אֲשַׁכִּילָהּ is supplied with the separating accent לגרמיה and thus the object is מְתִי וגו'. David says: It is in this path that I direct my spirit to the moment when Thou wilt come to me; I strive to come constantly near to spiritual and moral perfection, and thus I await the moment when Thou wilt deem me worthy of having Thy ‘holy spirit’ come to me. Cf... “And God came to Balaam” (Num 22:9).

³⁵ The latter wrote: 'והבא, הוא ברוך בשם ה', שהרי ברכנוכם מבית ה' (“And the one who comes, he is blessed in the Name of the Lord, for we have blessed you from the House of the Lord.”)

³⁶ In the German original Hirsch used the word “object.” In the Hebrew translation, the text reads “the predicate of אֲשַׁכִּילָהּ.” Hirsch would have used the word “Prädikat” had he meant this. The English translator also used the word “object”; however, in English the word “object” can refer to either a predicate or an object, so we can only surmise what the translator intended. This notwithstanding, in several other places, the English translator treated the word “object” as a complement (see n. 30 above).

The beginning of the verse can be explained in two possible ways, depending on how the phrase *בדרך תמים* is understood, or to put it differently, depending on what complement *אשכילה* takes.

First, Hirsch presents an interpretation and explains why he rejects it: the phrase *בדרך תמים* cannot be the object of the verb *אשכילה*. When *אשכילה* is used to mean “to direct one’s reason towards something specific,” it will not be followed by a preposition and here, the phrase *בדרך תמים* begins with a preposition – *ב*. Thus Rashi explained the verse: *אשכילה - אתן לב על דרך התמים*.³⁷

Hirsch goes on to provide an additional reason to reject this interpretation – the accents: the word *אשכילה* is accented with a *mahpach legarmeh*. He does not explain, however, why this is significant, perhaps because he had already explained it elsewhere in his commentary. Indeed, he does note elsewhere that when a word is accented with *legarmeh* it means that the word is separated from the words surrounding it.³⁸

Indeed Hirsch in his second commentary separates *אשכילה* from the words following it, and interprets: *אשכילה...מתי תבוא*. Hirsch believes that the predicate that *בדרך תמים* modifies is *מתי תבוא* (when Thou wilt come). Thus, the beginning of the verse reads – “It is in this path I direct my reason to when Thou wilt come to me,” to the moment, the Psalmist says, in Hirsch’s rendering, “that God finds me worthy of resting Your Holy spirit on me.” In support of this reading, Hirsch cites other verses in which the verb *בוא* (come) is used to depict God’s revelation: thus, for instance, “And God came [ויבא] to Balaam” (Num 22:9). We find a similar explanation in R. Abraham Ibn Ezra’s commentary, in which he cites a second interpretation in the name of Rabbi Moshe:³⁹ *מתי תבוא* (When wilt thou come to me) – as in “And God came to Balaam” (Num 22:9): “that the Divine spirit should rest upon him in his house...”

In the example from Psalms 101:2, the accents are not the source of Hirsch’s interpretation. He merely cites them to support his reading, and indeed, based upon the foregoing, does not employ them correctly.

3. Hirsch openly contradicts the interpretation suggested by the biblical accentuation system

⁴⁰*לֹלֵא הָאֱמֻנָתִי לְרֵאוֹת כְּטוֹב-הוּא בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים (Ps 27:13)*

³⁷ Similarly, see Radak: *אתן לבי להשכיל בדרך שהוא תמים* (“I will direct my heart to a path of moral integrity”). While Rashi designates *הדרך הישרה להתהלך בה* (“the path of integrity to take”) as the subject of *תבוא* (“wilt come”), Radak designates the predicate as *רוח קדושך* (“Thy holy spirit”).

³⁸ See Ps 10:14 (see above p. 8).

³⁹ According to Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra’s first interpretation, *הדרך* is the subject of the verb *תבוא*. He maintains that “whichever interpretation one chooses is correct.” Meiri also mentions both of these interpretations.

⁴⁰ In the Masoretic text as it appears in the manuscripts of the Bible, there is a dot above each of the letters of the word *לולא*; See for example M. Breuer, “ha-Nosah u-Mekorotav,” 31-59 in Hakham’s *Psalms* (above n. 20), p. 38. On the phenomenon of points, see, for instance, R. F. Butin, *The Ten Nequdoth of the Torah*, 2nd edition by S. Talmon (New York 1969); see too the bibliography in Yeivin, *Masorah* (n. 12 above), 46. Briggs (n. 17 above) commented on

Before looking at Hirsch's translation and commentary on this verse, it is important to note that in his Psalms, in both the German original and the English and Hebrew translations, לולא is accented with a conjunctive - a *munach* - not a disjunctive, as is the case in the Aleppo Codex and other manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible related to it, as well as in Ginsburg's edition.

Hirsch's translation:

Had this not been, then I would have believed to look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.⁴¹

Hirsch's commentary:

לולא... "if not" as in לולא התמהמהנו (Gen 43:10). According to the accent and also to the commonly used construction of the לולא with the verb following, it would seem that here, too, the meaning of the phrase would be "had I not believed". However, we have no postscript here. Accordingly, it would seem that the thought would be completed by the addition of the phrase "and my enemies would have thrown me down had I not held fast to my faith that I would look upon the goodness of the Lord one day in the land of eternal life," that is, in the world to come... For all the places in the Scriptures where occur, very definitely do not speak of an abode of future eternal life in the Great Beyond, but of a place of earthly life here below... Therefore we believe that the word לולא as used here would indicate a thought as follows, "If this had not been, if the עדי חמס שקר ויפה חמס had not risen up against me, then I would have believed that I would be able to look upon the Lord's goodness here below, during my life on earth, and not only after my departure from earthly existence."

Hirsch begins his commentary by presenting an alternative phrase that might have been used instead of לולא: "אם לא" (if not), bringing the following example to support his claim: לולא התמהמהנו (Gen 43:10). In this case, the word לולא is joined to the word following it. Hirsch considers the accents in his version of the text that join the two words, לולא and האמנתי, and he proposes an interpretation based on them: "had I not believed." The problem with this

the points in our verse (244-245): "marked as doubtful in MT by extraordinary points." However, in the Ancient Targums, such as the Septuagint, the word is not translated. See further in M. Weiss, "Psalms 22," *Tarbiz* 64 (1995): 323-330, especially p. 320, n. 51 [Heb.]; Cf. Herczeg and Kamenetsky (n. 16 above) p. 173, n. 23: "The dots over the word indicate that the force of the message of the verse is reduced in some sense. Here they teach that despite his profession of belief, David was not sure that he personally would see the goodness of Hashem." According to Hirsch, the points (referred to in the English translation as "the vocalization showing limitation") indicate that the good in the world is reduced by the false tale bearing and suspicions that cause David pain.

⁴¹ The Hebrew translation has *yitakhen* (it might be), which expresses more doubt than the English version, which is closer to the original German.

interpretation is that if the verse is read in this manner the psalmist's thought remains incomplete; the verse only contains the first part of the conditional sentence, and not its fulfillment in its consequent.

Hirsch, perhaps strikingly, proposes completing the second half of the verse with material from the previous verse: "My enemies would have thrown me down, if I had not believed to look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."⁴² However, Hirsch himself admits that this interpretation is problematic because the term *Eretz ha-Hayyim* (the land of the living) in the Bible refers to earthly life, not eternal life in the world to come. Furthermore, the context does not indicate that the world to come as a possible referent. Therefore, Hirsch was compelled, or at least persuaded, to offer an interpretation that contradicted the implied interpretation of the biblical accents in his edition of the text. Hirsch chose to isolate the word לולא from the rest of its verse, breaking the bond between לולא and האמנתי, and having לולא relate back to the previous verse: לולא – "had this not been" – if not, as Hirsch would have it, for what was depicted in the previous verse.⁴³ For Hirsch therefore, the meaning of the verse is rendered as follows: "If false witnesses had not risen against me then I would have believed that I would be able to look upon the Lord's goodness here below, during my life on earth, and not only after my departure from earthly existence."

In both of Hirsch's interpretations, he completes the thought process described in our verse with material taken from the previous verse. However, while according to the first interpretation the two words לולא האמנתי are joined by the biblical accents (in Hirsch's version) and refer to the unit "to look upon the Lord's goodness," his second interpretation separates those two words—explaining that לולא relates back to the previous verse while האמנתי refers to the current verse.

Curiously the words לולא and האמנתי are only joined by the biblical accents in Hirsch's edition of the Psalms. According to the version in the Aleppo Codex and in the versions found in other manuscripts related to it, the word לולא takes a disjunctive accent – a *large revī'a* that separates it from the word האמנתי.⁴⁴ Hirsch's interpretation happens to correlate with that of the most prevalent version of biblical accentuation on this verse. He believed, however, that he was providing an interpretation that contradicted the implicit interpretation of the accents – because he had a different combination of accents in the text before him.

Hirsch provides a homiletical interpretation for the biblical accentuation

וְאַתָּה ה' מָגֵן בְּעַדִּי וּמְרִים רֵאשִׁי (Ps 3:4)

⁴² The translation follows the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*.

⁴³ Rashi also relates this phrase back to the previous verse. Cf. Gruber (n. 15 above), p. 277: "Were it not that I trusted in the Holy-One-Blessed-be-He, those false witnesses would have attacked me and put an end to me."

⁴⁴ Ginsburg (n. 13 above) also notes that in most of the books and manuscripts לולא is accented by a *revī'a*. A minute number of variants accent לולא with a *munach*.

Hirsch's translation:

But Thou remainest the Lord, a shield about me, yea, my glory, and even now Thou raisest my head.

Hirsch's commentary:

Wherever the accent רביע מוגרש occurs, it lends special emphasis to the word over which it is placed; i.e., "Yea, my glory."

Here, Hirsch ignores the rules of the accentuation of the three Poetical Books and instead chooses to explain the *revi'a mugrash* homiletically.

Conclusion

Hirsch's admiration for the accentuation of the three Poetical Books is expressed both in his declaration that "through the divisions reflected in the biblical accents we will understand the Bible," as well as in his frequent mention of the accents in his commentary on Psalms. Hirsch further expressed his fealty to the accents, as we have seen, preferring interpretations in consonance with the biblical accents over other possible ones.

Hirsch's decision to provide a list of the accents reveals that he believed his readers were unfamiliar with the accents of the three Poetical Books and needed to be taught them so that he could make use of them in analyzing the Psalms.

Why did Hirsch feel it necessary to mention the biblical accents in his commentary so many times and often base his commentary upon them? One possible answer may be related to Hirsch's decision to write his commentary in German. Worried that the link with the Hebrew source would be lost, he chose to use the biblical accents so that the reader would have to read and examine the original Hebrew.⁴⁵ Alternatively, Hirsch's integration of the biblical accents may be a reflection of his enlightenment zeitgeist. Throughout the Enlightenment period the first step that any yeshiva student interested in contemporary thought took was to study the Hebrew language and its grammar. Therefore, it was important for Hirsch to emphasize that Orthodox Bible study also incorporated one of the elements of grammar—biblical accents. Moreover, in an era where tradition was under attack, the Sages' traditions gained credence through the study of the Masorah, of which biblical accentuation is a part. As for the inaccuracies that crept into Hirsch's commentary because of his incomplete knowledge of the accentuation of the three Poetical Books, in nineteenth century in Ashkenaz even the greatest

⁴⁵ On Hirsch's use of linguistics in his commentary, see M. Clark, *Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew: based on the commentaries of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch* (Jerusalem-New York 1999); A.H. Lesser, "Samson Raphael Hirsch's Use of Hebrew Etymology," In: *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda*, ed. W. Horbury (T&T Clark: Edinburgh 1999), 271-278. There have been, to my knowledge, no further studies dedicated to Rabbi S. R. Hirsch's attitude towards the science of linguistics.

scholars in the biblical accentuation field clearly lacked a full understanding of the accentuation of the three Poetical Books.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ One might remark that while Hirsch's knowledge was insufficient, his great-grandson R. Mordecai Breuer achieved great proficiency in this very field.