

The Exegetical Role of the *Paseq*¹

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The *paseq* has received more attention than other signs accompanying the Biblical text in that many people have noted its occurrence. For example, in prayer books where some Biblical accents are marked, the *paseq* sign is seldom omitted even though other accent signs are not included². However, the exegetical value of the *paseq* has not been much noted, unlike Biblical accents whose value in interpreting Scripture is relatively widely acknowledged. For example, consider Rashi's commentary on Ex. 15:17 *מִקְדָּשׁ ה' כּוֹנֵנֵי יָדֶיךָ*. «מקדש ה'»: The accent on it [the word *מקדש*] is a *zaqef gadol* which serves to separate it from the word expressing the Divine Name [ה'] which follows

¹ This article is based on a chapter of my doctoral dissertation, *The Paseq in the Hebrew Bible: Occurrences in Medieval Manuscripts, Characteristics and Relation to the Accentuation System* (henceforth *The Paseq*), written in the Department of Bible, Bar Ilan University, supervised by Aron Dotan (1990).

² For example, see *Siddur Ha-Gra* (Qol Torah: New York 1954): נשאז נהרות ו; *Siddur Tehilat Ha-Shem, Nusah Ha-Ari* (Merkaz Le-Inyanei Hinukh: New York 1986): בבל ... לשני ו לחכי; and *Siddur La'am*, edited and annotated by Shalom ETYA (Ozar Ha-Moreh: Brooklyn, 1983): שירו לה ו; שיר חדש ...

On the difficulties in marking the signs accompanying the Biblical text, see Joseph OFER, «How is the Bible Quoted» [Heb.], *Leshonenu La'am* (1991) pp. 57-61. We share his wonderment about the lack of «sense in ignoring the various disjunctive accents, strong and weak alike, and marking the *paseq*» (pág. 59), but disagree with his assertion that the «*paseq* is weakest of all». There are instances in which the syntactic power of the *paseq* is greater than that of the disjunctive accent preceding it; for example, *וְאֵל אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְאֵל-אֱיֹהָבֶיךָ וְבְנֵיךָ* (Lev. 10:12). Additional examples are cited in HIMMELFARB *The Paseq* pp. 265ff.

it, so that the translation is ‘The sanctuary which Thy hands have established, O Lord’»³. In this paper, we hope to give the reader an appreciation of the exegetical role of the *paseq*.

The *paseq* is one of the signs accompanying the Biblical text, although it does not belong to the accentuation system. It is marked as a vertical line, inserted in the space between two words. A *paseq* may come after a word having any of the conjunctive accents, and indicates a pause in the reading after that word.

There are a total of 587 *paseq* signs in the (21) prose books and (3) poetical books (*Psalms*, *Proverbs* and *Job*) of the Hebrew bible⁴. Precisely 78, or about one tenth of these signs, occur where they do because of issues in understanding and comprehending a verse⁵, and they comprise the subject of our discussion⁶.

The syntactic system of the accents is based on continuous dichotomous division of a verse. This process of division ends in a «final» unit consisting of two words, where the first word

³ Examples of exegesis based on Biblical accentuation may be found in the booklets written by Michael PERLMAN, *Hug Le-Ta'amei Ha-Miqra'* (Tel Aviv 1973-1975); the chapter entitled «Exegesis and Versions» [Heb.], in R. Mordechai BREUER, *Ta'amei Ha-Miqra' Be-Kaf-Alef Sefarim U-Ve-Sifrei Emet* (Jerusalem 1982) pp. 368-389 [henceforth *Te'amim*]; Moshe AHREND, «Basic Principles of Biblical Accents and their Exegetical Significance» [Heb.], in *Yesodot Be-Hora'at Ha-Miqra'* (Bar Ilan University: Ramat Gan 1988) pp. 100-113; Simcha KOGUT, *Correlations between Biblical Accentuation and Traditional Jewish Exegesis - Linguistic and Contextual Studies* (Jerusalem 1994).

⁴ This is based on our list of the *paseq* as it occurs in the Leningrad Ms. known as B19^a, dating to 1009. This is the most ancient complete manuscript of the entire Bible existing today, and is close to the version of Aaron Ben-Asher.

⁵ We cannot claim for certain to have discovered all instances in which the exegetical rule for the occurrence of a *paseq* is operative. There is no well-defined criterion for recognizing instances of this rule; moreover, interpreting biblical phrases is a subjective matter. Hence, there may be additional instances that fit the rule.

⁶ In the remaining instances in which it occurs, the *paseq* plays other roles. These include: 1) dividing a unit containing two or more conjunctive accents, such as *קָשְׁרָהּ | וְשִׂמּוֹ עַל־יָהּ* (*Num.* 16:7); 2) separating a Holy Name from an adjacent word, as in: *ה' | יְהִי עִב* (*Ps.* 5:7); 3) separating identical or similar words, such as *אֲבָרְתָם | אֲבָרְתָם* (*Gen.* 22:11); 4) separating two words in which the last letter of the first and the first letter of the next are both either *lamed*, *mem*, or *nun*, as in *לְהַגְדִּיל | לְמַעַלָּה* (*I Chron.* 22:5).

has a conjunctive accent and the second one a disjunctive one. However, there are many instances in which the accents combine two words, treating them as a single unit, although in terms of their context in the verse, these words should be separated; in other words, the technical division of the words in a unit does not always reasonably accord with the contents of the unit⁷. In such cases, an external indication is needed in order to improve the system of accentuation, and this function is served by the *paseq*. According to Aaron Ben-Asher's fourth rule in *Diqduqei Ha-Te'amim*, in the chapter on the *paseq* (Section 16), this sign serves: לחקן המלה, שלא תהיה זו עם זו בלולה, ולהפריד מענה: הדבר, i.e., 'to emend a word, so that it will not be slurred into the next, and to distinguish the meaning of a phrase, making it not conjunctive'⁸.

According to Aron Dotan, Ben-Asher's remarks constitute «explicit acknowledgement of an *emendation* in the syntactic system of accentuation. Thus, due to considerations of meaning and understanding, a *paseq* is inserted to separate words that according to the accents should be conjunctive»⁹. Similarly, R. Moshe Aryeh wrote that it «serves to insert a break in the meaning of the matter at hand, and is like a disjunctive accent»¹⁰.

⁷ On the instances in which other arguments were considered to override the exegetical rule, see our article, «*Paseq's* Characteristics in Units of Three or More Words» [Heb.], *Masoretic Studies* 7 (1989) pp. 23*-33*: p. 32*.

⁸ *The Diqduqei Ha-te'amim of Aharon Ben Moshe Ben-Asher*, ed. by A. DOTAN (Jerusalem 1967) p. 135 [henceforth *Diqduqei*], based on ancient manuscripts, with a critical edition of the original text from new manuscripts.

⁹ DOTAN *Diqduqei* p. 245.

¹⁰ *Sefer Ha-Diqduq Qatan* (Vilna and Horadna 1933) p. 21. Contrary opinions are expressed by R. Wolf HEIDENHEIM: «Although the *psiq* indicates a pause between יהו"א and בג"ד כפ"ח, it does not have disjunctive force regarding meaning, but only regarding speech» ('*Ein Ha-Qore*' from *Me'or 'Einayim* [Redelheim 1919-1921] end of *Deuteronomy*); Samuel David LUZZATTO, who claims that the *paseq* «has no force in the matter of parsing phrases» (on *Gen.* 18:21); and S. Y. WEINFELD, who writes that «it does not serve as a disjunction, either in the subject matter or in the meaning of Scripture» (*Te'amei Ha-Miqra* [Jerusalem 1981] p. 22). Even R. Samson Raphael HIRSCH wrote, «One must doubt whether a *paseq* which occurs after a *munaḥ* has the force of a full stop, enabling it to make a word such as כלה into a sentence on its own; cf. 19:14 ...» (commentary on *Gen.* 18:21). Note that *Gen.* 19:14, אֶל־חֲתָנִי לִקְחֵי בְנֹתָי, cannot be used to prove his point, since the vertical line which appears here after the *munaḥ* is not a *paseq*; rather, it is a sign that

One may ask why, instead of altering the accents of a verse, a *paseq* was inserted to emend the meaning implied by the syntactic division given by the accents. The answer is apparently related to the stage at which the *paseq* was determined. The accents of the Biblical text were not determined at a single moment, but rather evolved in several stages. The disjunctive accents are the most ancient, and the conjunctive ones more recent¹¹. Presumably, the system of disjunctive accents was known, firmly set, and not to be changed. When it came to perfecting and refining the system, the only option was to add another graphic sign, the *paseq*.

The examples which we shall present below, and many others of similar nature, support the assumption that the *paseq* emends the parsing of a unit according to the accentuation system when the context requires that two words be separated. In some instances, a *paseq* is inserted to preclude an interpretation which might follow from parsing a unit according to the accents, and in others it helps to clarify the meaning.

To ascertain whether a *paseq* occurs according to the above rule, first we examined each example to see what interpretation follows, or would follow, from parsing the unit according to the accents. Then, we checked whether the *paseq* suggests an alternative parsing from that of the accents which would point to a different interpretation or preclude the interpretation that might follow from the accents. In the examples in which we ascribe exegetical significance to the *paseq*, we have attempted to substantiate our position by citing the *Midrashim*, the *Targumim*, and Biblical exegesis.

forms a new accent, *munah legarmeh*; whereas a *paseq* does not alter the significance of the conjunctive (*munah*) that precedes it. This ambiguity regarding a vertical line poses a problem, since the sign itself does not tell the reader which purpose it serves – a *paseq* or a disjunctive accent. Indeed, many people wrongly confuse the two accents. For ways of distinguishing these two signs, see HIMMELFARB *The Paseq* pp. 3-4.

¹¹ Cf. A. DOTAN, «On the History of the Emergence of the Accentuation System» [Heb.], in *Mehqarim Be-Lashon*, ed. Moshe BAR-ASHER, Vols. II-III (Jerusalem 1987) pp. 355-365, for a study of the chronological development of the Tiberian system of accentuation. Also, cf. R. Mordechai BREUER's response, «On the Emergence of the Accentuation System» [Heb.], *Leshonenu* 53 (1990) pp. 203-213.

Perhaps our exegetical rule should have been stated more broadly, to include a *paseq* that alludes to the existence of homilies on the unit whose component words are separated by the *paseq*. Such a use of the *paseq* is implied by the note in the *Masorah Magna* of the Leningrad manuscript (known as B19^m), with regard to the *paseq* in אֶרְפַּכְשֵׁד וְשֵׁם (I Chron. 1:24): «Why are the accents on this phrase different from the others? To indicate that Shem was a Priest»¹². We have not extended our rule in the wake of this masoretic note, since this note might simply be a homiletical interpretation¹³; moreover, a rule stating that a *paseq* is inserted to allude to a homiletical interpretation would create an extremely broad category, subsuming the vast majority of instances of the *paseq*¹⁴.

We begin our analysis with the example cited by Aaron Ben-Asher in his section on the *paseq* אֶלֶי הַבָּאָה הַכַּצְעֵקְתָהּ הַבָּאָה אֶלֶי (Gen. 18:21). If one reads this verse according to its accents (without the *paseq*), the unit עָשׂוּ כְלָה can be interpreted in several ways:

1. עָשׂוּ כְלָה can be the subject of the verb עָשׂוּ. Indeed, Saadia Gaon, Ibn Ezra and Sforino interpret כְּלָה as meaning כּוֹלָם, i.e., ‘all of them’. As Ibn Ezra writes, «I believe it to mean, ‘Let me see whether they all have done such evil as this’»¹⁵.

2. כְּלָה can be the object of the verb עָשׂוּ, where כְּלָה is taken to mean ‘annihilation’ (כִּילּוּן) and ‘destruction’, as in כִּי אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּלָה in

¹² In the genealogies in *I Chronicles*, Chapter 1, the names of the progenitors from Adam to Noah and from Shem to Abraham (as well as the names in seven other verses where we find three names in a row) are accented with a sequence of *merka*, *tippeha silluq*, as in אָדָם שָׁה אָנוֹשׁ (I Chron. 1:1). Only one verse, אֶרְפַּכְשֵׁד וְשֵׁם (v. 24), has a *paseq* after שֵׁם. The Masorah questions the reason for this, and answers that it is to indicate that Shem was a Priest. Indeed, various sources identify «Malkhi-Zedek king of Shalem ... priest of God the Most High» (Gen. 14:18) with Shem son of Noah; for example, cf. *Tosafot* on TB-*Nedarim* 32b.

¹³ On notes in the Masorah which are homiletical exegesis, see the doctoral dissertation by J. S. PENKOWER, *Jacob Ben Hayyim and the Rise of the Biblia Rabbinica* (Jerusalem 1982) pp. 140-144.

¹⁴ For example, see the exegetical notes of R. I. A. SHAPIRA, *Ya'er Ha-Psiq* (Jerusalem 1982).

¹⁵ A similar approach is taken by the King James translation [the Authorized Version, henceforth AV] and the Revised Standard Version [henceforth

בְּכֹל-הַגּוֹיִם | «For I will make a full end of all the nations» (*Jer.* 46:28). Dotan says that the inhabitants of Sodom «wrought destruction, עשו כלה, as implied by the parsing of the accents (without the *paseq*) ...»¹⁶. Abarbanel comments, «the text means ... עשו כלה, i.e., ‘they wrought destruction upon their souls ...’» (end of v. 20)¹⁷.

3. עשו כלה can be an adverb describing the verb עשו, as Luzzatto interprets it, meaning ‘totally, utterly’: «... they have done altogether ... as in כָּרַח אֶת-כָּל-הַבָּרִיָּה, ‘he shall thrust you out hence altogether’ (*Ex.* 11:1)»¹⁸.

The exegetical opinions cited above are consonant with the parsing of the verse according to the accents.

It seems to us that the *paseq* has been inserted to preclude various interpretations that might follow from parsing according to the accents, and indicates a different interpretation from that documented by the accents¹⁹. The *paseq* indicates that what we have here is not a single phrase, עשו כלה, but rather a

RSV], both of which render this word as ‘altogether’. Luzzatto rejects this interpretation, for «according to this reading there would be no sense in Abraham asking, “Wilt thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?”. For how could it be that He would destroy the righteous with the wicked after having decided to investigate whether all had sinned?».

¹⁶ *Diqduqei* p. 245.

¹⁷ R. Samson Raphael HIRSCH interprets the passage similarly: «... Had they sinned so much that they led to their own annihilation ...». Y. L. KERINSKY cites Abarbanel (only where he says «one may interpret»): «“So then, you, the angels, bring about destruction, that is to say, you cause destruction and utter annihilation to Sodom and Gomorrah, whence you have been sent”; according to this interpretation, the word עשו is a plural command, that they bring about destruction, even though the pointing of the vowels does not go along with this, and should have been with a *hataf patah*» (*Qarnei 'Or*, an explication of Ibn Ezra’s commentary, Pentateuch with *Mehoqaqei Yehudah* commentary on Ibn Ezra [Bnei Braq 1961] p. 28).

¹⁸ So, too, we find in E. A. SPEISER, *Genesis*² (Anchor Bible) (New York 1964): ‘at all’. Sforino, however, cites this verse as proving his interpretation in the sense of ‘all of them’.

¹⁹ In Luzzatto’s opinion, «The *paseq* serves to provide a space between the two words, so that כלה not be understood as the object of the verb, ... but as the adverb». We find Luzzatto’s remark puzzling. Whether כלה is an object or an adverb, it should still be connected with the verb, not separated from it; so his explanation that the *paseq* provides a break between the two words seems somewhat out of place. R. BREUER follows Luzzatto’s interpretation of the verse, but does not take up his explanation of the role of the *paseq*. In

conditional statement, in which עֵשׂר belongs to the conditional clause and כִּלָּה is the response to the condition. A similar structure is found in the continuation of the verse אֲדַעְךָ וְאִם-לֹא, ‘And if not, I will know’ (even though the *tippeha* which appears as a foretone accent has no syntactic significance). On this verse, Ben-Yehuda wrote in his dictionary, «כִּלָּה ... stands on its own as an interjection, meaning ‘I shall destroy and annihilate’»²⁰. Perhaps the *dagesh* in כִּלָּה is further evidence that these words were traditionally separated.

Further support for our approach may be found in the *Midrash*: «The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “I shall go down and see, whether it is as her cry that comes up to me –if the people of Sodom have indeed done as this maiden has cried, I shall overturn [Sodom so that] her foundations are up and her face down”»²¹.

Similar interpretations are found in Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra (citing «others») and Radak. We read in Rashi: «הַבְּאֵר» “אֵלַי עָשׂוּ: ‘Whether they have done [according to the cry of her] which is come unto me’ –If they persist in their rebellious ways, an end (כִּלָּה) will I make of them ... For this reason, there is a נְקֻדָּה הַפְּסֵק –a pause punctuated by a *nequdah*²²– between עָשׂוּ and כִּלָּה, in order to separate one word from the other»²³.

his opinion, «The *paseq* indicates that the expression is a *hapax legomenon*» (*Te’amim* p. 133).

²⁰ See the entry בִּלָּה, Part 3, p. 2378.

²¹ *Pirquei R. Eliezer Ha-Gadol* (Warsaw 1852; Jerusalem 1963) Chapter 25; also see *Genesis Rabbah*, ed. Ch. ALBEK (Jerusalem 1965) Chapter 49.6.

²² In Rashi’s terminology *nequdah* –a ‘dot’– refers to a sign. Dots are used to indicate *paseq* signs in texts pointed according to the Palestinian Vocalization System (cf. HIMMELFARB *The Paseq* pp. 59-60), but one should not assume that Rashi had this in mind.

Elazar TOUTOU says, «The remark about the accentuation system is taken from Rashbam’s commentary: “A *paseq* is inserted to separate the words”». («Concerning the Presumed Original Version of Rashi’s Commentary on the Pentateuch» [Heb.], *Tarbiz* 56 [1987] pp. 211-242: p. 220).

²³ Luzzatto disagrees with Rashi: «Rashi’s argument based on the accent between עָשׂוּ and כִּלָּה is not valid, for even if it were *legarmeh*, it is still the least of the disjunctives, and how could it have greater force than the *tippeha*? Moreover, it is not a *munah legarmeh*, for it is not followed by another *munah*; hence it is none other than a *paseq*, which has no force in the matter of parsing phrases, but was inserted to instruct one to pause in the read-

The *Targumim* on this verse confirm that interpretations based on the accents or the *paseq*, which prevailed in the Middle Ages, also were current in earlier times. The Jerusalem *targumim* read עשו כלה together as a phrase meaning ‘they have made a complete end’. *Targum Onqelos* separates the words and reflects the instruction of the *paseq*: «if they have wrought as their complaint which has come up before me, I shall do utterly with them».

In the next group of examples the *paseq* separates the «said» from the actual content of the utterance.

1. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי (כתוב) לוֹ (קרי) לֹא²⁴. (*I Sam.* 2:16)
2. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי לֹא. (*I Kings* 11:22).
3. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי. (*I Kings* 1:36).

In all these examples, reading according to the accents contradicts the logical phrasing, since a disjunction is called for between the «said» and the contents of the utterance. The *paseq* emends the parsing of the accents and indicates that one should separate the words so that the reading fits the accepted rules of syntax.

In the first two examples, reading ויאמר or ואמר –‘and he said’– in conjunction with the word לֹא, as is indicated by the accents, is likely to sound like לוֹ –‘to him’– the more frequent phrase in Scripture. Thus, there could be a misunderstanding, since לֹא and לוֹ are pronounced alike. As R. Judah ibn Ḥayūḡ

ing, for private reasons». Luzzatto’s approach should be rejected, we believe, in view of the accumulated evidence indicating that the *paseq* does play a role in parsing phrases. As for Luzzatto’s interpretation of the verse, he too agrees that «the deeper meaning of Scripture is none other than as Rashi says, ... however, in my opinion, the deduction does not follow by explicit indication, but only by way of intimation ...».

²⁴ The accents here diverge from the rules of accentuation. In general, a *pashta* will not occur before a *yetiv* unless a *revia* precedes both; yet here we have: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי לֹא כִּי עֲתָה הִתְּקֵן. The *Miqra’ot Gedolot* (Pardess), for example, place a *zaqef* on the word לוֹ, thus making it fit the rule of accentuation. As R. BREUER notes (*Ha-Nusah U-Meqorotav, I Sam.* 2:16, in *Bible with Da’at Miqra Commentary* [Jerusalem 1981]), «Version 7 [= *Miqra’ot Gedolot* edited by Jacob BEN ḤAYYIM] as it is here (with a *merka zaqef* on לוֹ) is a hybrid version».

writes: «R. Judah the Grammarian said we cannot distinguish between the pronunciation of לא with an *aleph* and לו with a *waw* or *heh*»²⁵.

In these examples, the context also makes לו a possible reading. For example, in *I Sam.* 2:16, regarding the man offering the sacrifice it is written, וְקָטְרוּ בָּיָמָם הַחֵלֶב וְקָחֵהוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר תִּצְוֶה, נִפְשֶׁךָ, 'Let them first burn the fat, and then take as much as thy soul desires'. According to the *ketiv*, Scripture say לו, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ, 'and he said to him', i.e., to the man offering the sacrifice. Indeed, this is how it is rendered in *Targum Jonathan*; and Radak notes, «It is written with a *waw*, but the reading (*qere*) is with an *aleph*, and both are correct in the context».

The *paseq* separates the «said» from the negative, «no», in order to preclude the interpretation that would follow from parsing according to the accents. The pause in the reading, due to the *paseq*, underscores that the word in question is the negative לא, 'no', and not the preposition לו, 'to him'²⁶.

Let us examine the third example: וַיִּשֶׁן בְּנֵיהוּיָדָע בֶּן-יְהוֹיָדָע אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר אָמֵן בֶּן יְהוֹיָדָע הוּא אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָגֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ. Reading according to the accents, the words of Benaiah son of Jehoiada comprise two independent sentences. The first is «Amen», and the second, «So say the Lord». The syntactic structure given by the accents implies an interpretation like the one found in the New English

²⁵ Ibn Ezra comments on *Ex.* 21:8, beginning with אִם רָעָה: «Also cf. the *Mishnah*, *Sotah* 5:5: יְהוּ-יִקְטְלוּ לוֹ אִיחָל 'Though, he slay me, yet will I look with hope to Him'. But it is still ambiguous whether this means "I am looking to him (לו)" or "I am not (לא) looking"».

²⁶ Aside from the *paseq*, Ben-Naphtali puts a dagesh in the lamed of לא in two places, *Josh.* 5:14 and *Judg.* 12:5 (according to Mishael BEN UZZIEL, *Sefer Ha-Hilufim: Kitāb Al-Khilāf* ... [Jerusalem 1965] pp. 24-25). R. BREUER believes that «the *dagesh*, ... too, is inserted to make a separation or distinction» («Towards Answering Problems in Accentuation and Vocalization of the Bible» [Heb.], *Leshonenu* 44 [1980] pp. 243-262: p. 259). Similarly, in three instances –*Judg.* 12:5, *I Kings* 2:30, and *II:22*– there is a *ga'yah* in the second syllable of the וַיֹּאמֶר which is followed by לא. Israel YEIVIN believes that, «the accentuators wished to separate the two words in the phrase, as well as to draw a distinction between this unit of two words and the more frequent phrase, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ. They were not satisfied with the *paseq* between the two words, and added a *ga'yah* at the end of the first word or a *dagesh* at the beginning of the second» (*The Aleppo Codex of the Bible: A Study of its Vocalization and Accentuation* [Jerusalem 1968] p. 191).

Bible translation [henceforth NEB]: «Benaiah son of Jehoiada answered the king, “*It shall be done. And may the Lord, The God of my lord the king, confirm it!*”»²⁷ (emphasis ours). Rashi’s commentary, «Amen, may Solomon live», also implies that «Amen» is a separate and distinct utterance.

These interpretations are consonant with the characteristic way in which accentuation makes a syntactic distinction in Scriptural renditions of speech between one utterance and two utterances. In a single utterance, the primary division of the phrase is after the introduction; in two utterances, the primary division is between the two utterances²⁸. So, too, in the verse at hand the primary division, indicated by the *atnah*, does not follow the introductory word, ויאמר, but rather the first utterance, אמן.

Perhaps the *paseq* precludes the interpretation that follows from parsing by the accents, and indicates a different grouping of the words: אמן כן יאמר ה' אלהי ארני המלך | אמן כן יאמר | ... ויען. In other words, אמן is associated with the phrase that follows it, and indicates neither an affirmative response nor Benaiah’s consent to what the king had said; rather, אמן כן יאמר ה' means ‘Would the Holy One, blessed be He, give his confirmation and consent to what the king has said’. This agrees with Ralbag’s comment, «אמן כן יאמר ה' ... is a prayer that it would be the will of the blessed Lord that the issue be settled thus ...»²⁹.

²⁷ A similar rendition is given by J. GRAY, *I and II Kings* (OTL) (London 1964).

²⁸ On syntactic division of speech in the Bible, see *Igrot Shadal*, published by S. A. GRABER (Cracow 1893) Part 8, pp. 1208, 1222; Michael PERLMAN, the introduction to *The Book of Joshua according to the Biblical Accentuation* [Heb.] (Tel Aviv 1984) pp. 48-55; BREUER *Te'amim* pp. 355, 360. According to Sarah AVINON, «Syntactic, Logical, and Semantic Aspects of Masoretic Accentuation Signs» [Heb.], *Leshonenu* 53 (1989) pp. 157-192: pp. 172-173, we may presume that due to the relatively great length of this phrase (7 words) it was parsed in the characteristic manner of the accentuation system, which is different from the division according to its immediate components.

²⁹ Compare: ויאמר ירמיה הנביא אמן כן יעשה ה' (Jer. 28:6). According to the parsing of the accents, this is a single utterance, since the primary division is on the word with the *zaqef katan* («prophet»). This means that Jeremiah was not answering «Amen» to the words of Hananiah, which were the prophetic utterance of a false prophet, but rather it was expressing the hope that אמן כן יעשה ה', that the Lord would indeed do so. Also see Malbim’s commentary on this verse.

In the next group of examples, the *paseq* separates two items in a list.

1. וְהַצֹּרֹרֹת וְהַחֲתָהּ (Josh. 15:25).
2. וְהַשֶּׁרֶף וְהַחֶשֶׁן (Deut. 8:15).
3. הַחֲרִיץִים וְהַכְּרִיזִים (Ezra 7:17).
4. עֲוֹרֵיקָם וְבְכָרוֹ (I Chron. 8:38, 9:44).

When these words are read according to the accents, one might think that each pair together constitute one item. The absence of the conjunction *waw* before the second word is likely to reinforce this impression. The *paseq* precludes the reading that would follow from parsing according to the accents, and indicates a pause between the two words in order to stress that Scripture is listing two items.

In the first example, the *paseq* separates two items in a list of place names. If one were to combine וְהַצֹּרֹרֹת with חֲתָהּ, as indicated by the accents without the *paseq*, one might think that the reference is to a single city, Hazor, having the adjective חֲתָהּ, 'New'. Indeed, this is Loewenstamm's understanding: «The name of a place in the Judean Desert, ... meaning New Hazor»³⁰. The *paseq* indicates that the text is listing two places, one of them Hazor, and the other, Hadattah³¹.

Perhaps the accentuators thought that Hazor Hadattah was a single place, since the list –וְהַצֹּרֹרֹת וְהַחֲתָהּ– does not break after the first item, even though the accentuators tended to join an item without a conjunctive *waw* to an item which follows with a conjunctive *waw*; for example, הַקָּוֶן גְּבֻעָה וְחֲמִנָה (Josh. 15:57). However, this is only a conjecture. Another possibility is that the accentuators preferred to divide the unit in a ratio

³⁰ See חֲתָהּ חֲצוֹר in the *Encyclopedia Miqravit* (Jerusalem 1965) Vol. III p. 270. The same is found in various exegetical works (notably Malbim on Josh. 15:32; Y. ELITZUR and J. A. ZEIDMAN, *The Book of Joshua*² [Jerusalem 1953]; J. A. SOGGIN, *Joshua* (OTL) [London 1972]; R. G. BOLING, *Joshua* (AB) [New York 1982]; in the RSV and NEB translations (*Hazor-hadattah*); and in dictionaries of the Bible (KBL p. 324, and BDB p. 347).

³¹ This interpretation is given by *Ba'al Ha-Metzudot*, by Y. KAUFMAN, in *The Book of Joshua* (Jerusalem 1966), and by the AV.

of the greater part to the lesser part (2:1), in order to make this list resemble the structure of most of the lists in the section ³².

In the next two examples, the *paseq* separates two items in lists of animals. In Example 2, if one were to read נחש, 'snake,' with שרף, as indicated by the accents without the *paseq*, one might think that שרף is an adjective describing *snake*, as indeed one finds in *Targum Onqelos* and *Targum Jonathan*: 'venomous serpents'. Also compare הנחשים השרפים (Num. 21:5) ³³.

The *paseq* here, however, indicates that the text is referring to two animals, one of them a נחש, a snake, the other a שרף, a specific kind of snake; note, for comparison אפעה ושרף מעופף (Isa. 30:6).

In Example 3, תורין דכרין might be taken as one sort of animal: a male bull, since דכרין in Aramaic can mean either *male* or *ram* ³⁴. However, since a bull is by definition male, logic would indicate that the word in question must mean *ram*. This conclusion is supported by the *paseq*, which groups the words so as to indicate that we are dealing with two kinds of animals, bulls and rams. Also cf. יבגי תורין ודכרין ואמרין (Ezra 6:9).

In Example 4, the *paseq* separates two items in a list of people, indicating that these are two names, not one. If one reads according to the accents without the *paseq*, the name בכרו might be viewed as the adjective בכרו, 'his first-born', describing עזריקם as one reads in the next verse: אולם בכרו, 'Ulam was his first-born' (I Chron. 8:39) ³⁵.

³² On the accentuation system parsing lists, see Y. L. BEN-ZE'EV, *Talmud Lashon 'Ivrit* (Vilna 1912) p. 366.

³³ This is a common interpretation of such phrases in the Septuagint ('a biting snake'), in the AV ('fiery serpents'), in the NEB ('poisonous snakes'), in dictionaries of the Bible (BDB p. 977), and in certain exegetical works (S. R. DRIVER, *Deuteronomy* [ICC] [New York 1916]).

Perhaps this is the interpretation intended by the accentuators. But it could also be that the list ושרף ועקרב נחש divides the words in a ratio of 2:1, even though the last item has a conjunctive *waw*, because of the closer association of the first two items: cf. יששקר וביגן וביגמן (Ex. 1:3).

³⁴ On the double meaning of this word, see BDB p. 1088. Also cf. ויש בעדרו (Mal. 1:14). *Targum Jonathan* says: «and there is a דכר (*male* or *ram*) in his flock»; Ibn Ezra and Radak interpreted this to mean 'male', but Rashi says, «a *ram* fit for sacrifice».

³⁵ This is also the rendition given in the Septuagint and in *Bible de Jérusalem*, translated into French under the direction of l'École Biblique de Jérusalem.

In the next set of examples, the presence of the *paseq* can be explained by rules other than that of exegesis.

1. וְטָמֵא וְטָמֵא (Lev. 13:45).
2. וְעָטָה וְטָמֵא וְטָמֵא (Isa. 21:8)³⁶.
3. כָּל הַקָּרֵב וְהַקָּרֵב (Num. 17:28).

The first example comes from a passage discussing laws of the leper: וְהִצְרוּעַ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ הִגִּיעַ בְּגָדָיו יִהְיוּ פְרָמִים וְרֹאשׁוֹ יִהְיֶה פְרוּעַ וְעַל-שֵׁפָם יִקְרָא וְטָמֵא וְטָמֵא. According to the accents the repeated word should be understood as the utterance that the leper is to say. *Targum Onqelos* says, «“Do not make yourselves impure; do not make yourselves impure”, he shall call out»; *Targum Jonathan* says, «The herald shall proclaim, “keep away, keep away from the impure”».

The *paseq* has been inserted here to tell us not to parse the verse according to the accents, but rather as follows: וְטָמֵא וְטָמֵא וְטָמֵא וְטָמֵא. In other words, the subject of the sentence is וְטָמֵא, and the object, וְטָמֵא. Indeed, this is the interpretation of *Sifra* (*Nega'im* 12): «וְטָמֵא וְטָמֵא means ‘keep away’». We only have explicit reference to this [lepers]; so how do we know [the text] includes other unclean persons as well? We learn it from, “the unclean shall cry unclean”». Malbim comments on *Sifra*, «The repetition

salem (Paris 1973), which says, «Azrikam son premier-né». We take exception to the approach of these translations since they do not adhere to the vocalization of Scripture and are based on a hypothetical emendation of the vocalization (lower criticism).

³⁶ It is generally assumed (for example cf. BREUER *Te'amim* pp. 137-140) that the vertical line here is a *paseq*, inserted because it was needed, but incidentally occurring with a *munah* a conjunctive accent before a *revia'*, and thus becoming *legarmeh*, as determined by the Masorah. Aron DOTAN suggests that this vertical line adjacent to a *revia'* be termed a «technical *munah legarmeh*» since it lacks some of the characteristic features of a *munah legarmeh*. For example, *munah legarmeh* is considered a disjunctive accent governed by the *revia'*, whereas a technical *munah legarmeh* occurs in a unit consisting of two words, which, by the rules of accentuation, does not allow for any additional disjunctive accent. Moreover, in contrast to the regularity governing the occurrence of disjunctive accents, including the *munah legarmeh*, the occurrence of the technical *munah legarmeh* is not regularly determined and cannot be predicted. We have found (cf. HIMMELFARB *The Paseq* pp. 4-5, 238) that only about two thirds of the instances of a technical *munah legarmeh* are compatible with the accepted rules for placement of a *paseq*.

of *unclean*, *unclean* and the line indicating a pause [*paseq*] inserted after the first *unclean* by the accentuators has been explained by the Sages to mean that the first *unclean* is the subject, and the next the predicate; in other words, every unclean person shall cry and announce that he is unclean» (s. 155). Thus, in view of the *paseq*, the word *וּטְמֵא* does not refer to the leper, the subject of the unit governed by the *atnah*, but rather is a subject without a definite article, and indicates any unclean person³⁷.

This *paseq* also fits another rule, which requires that two words which are alike be separated.

Now let us look at the second example: וַיִּקְרָא אֲרִיָּה עַל-מִצְפָּה ה' אֲנֹכִי עֹמֵד הַמִּיד יוֹמָם. If one reads according to the accents without the *paseq*, one might think³⁸ that the phrase under consideration is a construct state, even though *עַל-מִצְפָּה* is vocalized as independent. Indeed, this is how Luzzatto interprets the verse: «I am the one who stands day and night on the watch-tower of the Lord', where *מִצְפָּה* is dependent on the following noun, contrary to its vocalization³⁸». This meaning is likely to be viewed as blasphemous, as Luzzatto points out: «The masses found it difficult to view God as having a watch-tower, as if He must stand on a watch-tower to see what is transpiring on Earth».

The *paseq* precludes the interpretation that follows from the accents and indicates a different way of parsing the phrase: וַיִּקְרָא אֲרִיָּה עַל-מִצְפָּה ה'. In other words, one should read ה' as a word of address, belonging to the remainder of the verse, as Rashi explains: «“עַל-מִצְפָּה ה'”: ‘Lord (ה'), my God, I stand on the watch-tower all day long’»³⁹.

Perhaps the *paseq* has been inserted to indicate that *עַל-מִצְפָּה* should be read with the words preceding it: וַיִּקְרָא אֲרִיָּה עַל-מִצְפָּה ה'. Such a reading accords with Radak's commentary: «“וַיִּקְרָא”:

³⁷ This is also the approach of *Ha'ameq Davar*. R. Uziel holds that the doubling, «וּטְמֵא טְמֵא יִקְרָא» ... has two meanings» (TB-*Mo'ed Qatan* 5a); one, «an allusion of the Pentateuch to marking graves», (*ibid.*) and that every unclean person «must announce his distress to the public, and the public ask mercy on him» (TB-*Sotah* 32b).

³⁸ The same is implied by the NEB translation: «All day long I stand on the Lord's watch-tower».

³⁹ G. B. GRAY, *The Book of Isaiah* (ICC), I (New York 1912), also interprets the verse in this way, as the AV and RSV translations do.

The watchman called, “Lion on the watch-tower”, comparing Media and Persia to a lion standing on the watch».

There is another rule that can be cited to explain this occurrence of the *paseq*: that a *paseq* is inserted to separate the Holy Name from a word adjacent to it.

Let us take a close look at the last example: **כָּל הַקָּרֵב וְהַקָּרֵב אֶל־מִשְׁכַּן ה' יָמוּת**. Parsing according to the accents, the double words indicate repetition for reinforcement, as understood by *Targum Onqelos*: «כל דקריב מיקרב»: «Whoever approaches closely»⁴⁰.

The *paseq* has been inserted to preclude the understanding of the verse that follows from parsing according to the accents, as Ha-Neziv writes: «There is a disjunctive sign between **הַקָּרֵב** and **הַקָּרֵב** to teach us that these two words do not have the same meaning»⁴¹. The *paseq* indicates a different parsing of the phrase: **כל הקרב | הקרב אל משכן ה' ימות**.

Rashi comments, «We are all entitled to enter the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting, but he who brings himself closer than his fellows and enters the Tent of Meeting shall die». Two supercommentators have elaborated on Rashi's remark. R. E. Mizrahi points out that there are two distinct verbs here: «The first **הַקָּרֵב** is interpreted as drawing near to the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting, and the second **הַקָּרֵב** as drawing near within the tent». The Maharal (*Gur Aryeh*), in contrast, attributes each of the words to a different subject: «What he means to say is, “of all those who draw near, he who draws nearer than his fellow”; for we are all entitled to enter, but he who brings himself closer shall die».

It seems to us that the first **הַקָּרֵב** is a participle, and the second **הַקָּרֵב**, a verb. This is also how Luzzatto interprets the verse: «This is not a repetition of the same word, but is like the phrase, “should the one who falls fall from it”, or like “should a dying person die on him”, ... likewise, here the meaning is

⁴⁰ Similarly, M. NOTH, *Numbers* (OTL) (London 1968), renders this verse: «Every one who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of the Lord ...».

⁴¹ Likewise, *Ha-Ketav Ve-Ha-Kabbalah* writes, «This should not be interpreted as a repetition of the verb in order to strengthen the meaning, ... since there is a *paseq* after the first **הַקָּרֵב**».

whoever comes close (whoever that may be), if he comes close to the Tabernacle of the Lord ...».

At the end of his remarks, Luzzatto rightly notes, «one cannot deny that this interpretation does not agree with the cantillation», since his commentary suits the reading indicated by the *paseq*, which emends the parsing according to the cantillation, i.e., the accents.

This occurrence of the *paseq* can also be explained by another rule, which states that a *paseq* is required in a «non-final» unit, i.e., in a unit having two or more conjunctive accents before a disjunctive accent, which needs further division by a disjunctive accent.

In summary, in the examples presented above, as in many other similar instances of the *paseq*, we did not hesitate to present interpretations based on the *paseq*, when these are supported by the *Midrashim*, *Targumim*, and exegetical works. It seems to us that one should prefer interpretations of Scripture based on written signs, i.e., on the accents and the *paseq*. This preference is based on two factors:

1. The generally accepted supposition that in setting the accents and *paseq* signs in the text, the accentuators documented an ancient reading of Scripture⁴²; and that this reading itself also indicates a way of interpreting the text.

2. «This interpretation, which expresses one of the seventy faces of the Torah, is attested by the giver of the Torah or its Sages; whereas the veracity of all other interpretations is subject to doubt»⁴³.

We conclude with the words of R. Elias Levita, in praise of Scriptural exegesis according to the accents:

... רוב כח אנשי זה המעשה, או בשבריא מתגוררת ...
גם השעמים היו שמים, לחיות בם חורה נפתרת;

⁴² As Luzzatto wrote in the introduction to his commentary on *Isaiah* (Padua 1845-1897; Tel Aviv 1970) p. 10: «The accents are the accepted reading, transmitted orally until the time of the Sages in the Second Temple period». Also cf. Aron DOTAN, «Masorah», *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem 1971) Vol. XVI cols. 1412-1413; BREUER *Te'amim* p. 368.

⁴³ BREUER *Te'amim* p. 368.

כי לולי שעמי הפסוק, הבנתו לא נכרת;
 כי הם ידעו באור המקרא, מכל גולה הנשארת;
 לכן פירוש נגד שעמו, נחשב כסיג או כנעורת...⁴⁴

RESUMEN

Es bien sabido que los acentos bíblicos cumplen una función exegetica en la interpretación de la Escritura. Muchos autores han prestado atención a los casos de *paseq* –una línea vertical entre dos palabras que no pertenece al sistema de acentuación–, pero pocos se han dado cuenta de su importancia exegetica en la Escritura. Este artículo analiza el valor exegetico del *paseq*, es decir, los casos en los que se utiliza por razones de significado y comprensión. Según la opinión de Aarón Ben-Ašer, cuando por el significado dos palabras de un versículo se deben entender separadamente, el *paseq* viene a modificar el análisis que según los acentos tendría ese versículo. En los ejemplos que ilustran nuestra hipótesis analizamos, en primer lugar, la interpretación que se deduce del análisis según los acentos; después, considerando la existencia del *paseq*, sugerimos una división distinta de las palabras y demostramos cómo este nuevo análisis nos lleva a una interpretación diferente o contradice aquella que corresponde a la acentual. En los ejemplos en los que el *paseq* tiene una relevancia exegetica intentamos apoyar nuestro punto de vista con citas de los *midrašim* y *targumim* y de la exégesis bíblica. Comenzamos con el caso de עשו וכלה (Gén 18:21), al que siguen tres grupos de ejemplos. En el primero, el *paseq* separa el verbo «dijo» de aquello que se dice; en el segundo, separa dos elementos de una enumeración; y en el tercero, el *paseq* puede explicarse por otras funciones distintas de la exegetica.

SUMMARY

It is well-known that the Biblical accents have an exegetical value in interpreting Scripture. The occurrences of the *paseq* –a vertical line which is inserted in the space between two words but does not belong to the accentuation system– have been noted by many scholars, but few are aware of its exegetical value in Scripture. This article discusses the exegetical role of the *paseq*, i.e., instances in which a *paseq* appears because of questions of meaning and understanding. Following Aaron Ben-Asher, we assume that the *paseq* emends the parsing of a verse according to the accents, where two words must be separated due to the meaning. In the examples illustrating our hypothesis, first we examine the interpretation that follows from parsing according to the accents. Then, in view of the appearance of a *paseq*, we suggest a different division of the words and show how the new parsing implies a different interpretation or precludes the interpretation that follows from the accents. In the examples in which the *paseq* is given exegetical significance, we attempt to sub-stantiate our position by citations from *Midrashim*,

⁴⁴ *Massoreth Ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita*, with an English translation and critical notes by C. D. GINSBURG (New York 1968) pp. 88, 90.

Targumim, and Biblical exegesis. We begin with the example of עֵשׂוֹ וְכַלְהָה (Gen. 18:21), followed by three groups of examples. In the first group, the *paseq* separates «said» from the actual content of an utterance. In the second group, the *paseq* separates two items in a list. In the third group, the *paseq* can be explained by other rules aside from the exegetical one.