

# The Hebrew Cantillation System

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**ABSTRACT** – This paper provides a detailed insight into the Hebrew cantillation system, known as *Ta’amei HaMiqra*, an ancient system of musical notation that accompanies the sacred texts of the Tanakh (Old Testament). Hebrew cantillation plays a crucial role in ensuring the correct intonation of sacred texts, serving both musical and grammatical functions to indicate the proper punctuation and phrasing of the text. The study analyses the origin and evolution of this system, preserved to this day, as well as its impact on Jewish religious practice. In a broader context, the research explores how the ritual reading of the Torah was established in the Jewish tradition and how it later influenced other religious traditions, such as Christianity and Islam. From a methodological standpoint, the paper employs a historical and comparative approach, examining biblical sources, medieval manuscripts, and the oral traditions of various Jewish communities. The main cantillation traditions are analysed, including those of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews, as well as those of communities from the Middle East and North Africa, each with its specific peculiarities.

The study emphasizes the importance of the Masoretic system in codifying the musical notation used today, highlighting the complex structure of the cantillation marks (*teamim*). Also discussed are the limitations of the research, due to the loss of oral traditions and the challenges in reconstructing certain ancient musical interpretations. The current state of research indicates a continuity of these practices in Jewish communities, but also influences on Western religious music, including the emergence of neumes in Gregorian notation. This study contributes to a better understanding of a unique musical tradition, with both religious and musicological implications.

**Keywords:** Hebrew cantillation, Ta’amei HaMiqra, teamim, Masoretic tradition, biblical musical notation.

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## 1. Introduction

The public reading of the Torah as an act of worship was established by Ezra around 400 BCE (Nehemiah 8). This Jewish practice was later adopted by Christians and Muslims for their Holy Books. From the very beginning, simply reading or reciting the text was insufficient; it was always meant to be intoned. It is perhaps not surprising that Moses' last address to the people was in Deuteronomy 32 and was called a "song"<sup>1</sup>.

The reading of the Torah was established publicly as part of the religious service on Shabbat and holidays, as well as during the week, on Mondays and Thursdays, to ensure that no more than three days would pass without reading passages from it. In addition to these days, the reading of the Torah is performed on the days of collective fasting and on the arrival of the new moon, Rosh Chodesh.

## 2. Cantillation

The Jewish law requires that before and after the reading of each portion of the Torah, a blessing be recited – *Bracha*. The reading of the Torah is performed from the *bimah* – or pulpit, where the congregants are called up – *oleh laTorah*. This is where the terms related to the reading of the Torah originate, where the one called up is given the title of *oleh* or *karuv*, and where each portion of the Torah is called *Aliyah*.

According to the religious laws, the individual who is called up to the Torah must read the designated Aliyah (passage or section) aloud and clearly from the Torah scroll, which contains only consonants (letters),<sup>2</sup> without vowels or cantillation marks. The difficulty and preparation required to fulfil this obligation have led to the specialization of certain members of the community, who are responsible for reading the texts; they are called *Baal Keriah* (holder of the text) or *Baal Koreh* (reader of the Torah).

A certain order is observed for calling congregants to the Torah: the first *Aliyah* is given to the Cohen – a member of the priestly family –, the second goes to a Levi, and the remaining passages are given to the members of the Yisrael tribes (i.e. Jews who are part of the rest of the tribes, but who have no lineage from the families of the Kohanim or Levites). On Shabbat, the weekly Torah portion is divided into seven *Aliyot*, on holidays there are five or six, and on Rosh Hodesh<sup>3</sup> and Chol Hamoed<sup>4</sup> there are four.

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<sup>1</sup> Tunkel, *The Music of the Hebrew Bible and the Western Ashkenazic Chant Tradition*, 13.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew alphabet consists solely of consonants; vowels are not represented as letters. Ancient Jews referred to the vowels as the "soul of the letters" (which they actually are), and without vowels, the letters are likened to "bodies without souls" (a concept found in some metaphors in the Zohar).

<sup>3</sup> The beginning of the New Moon.

<sup>4</sup> Intermediate holidays during the week of Pesach (Easter) or Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles), where the rules are more permissive than on the first and last two days of the holidays.

Alongside this required number of individuals called up, on Shabbat and holidays, a final *Aliyah* is read by a *Maftir* – complete, or the one who completes the reading. On holidays, when a *Maftir* is called up, a special portion is read that is relevant to the occasion.

The cantillation marks – *teamim* – have two functions: to indicate the melodic contour (melodic line) that accompanies the Hebrew text, and the punctuation that indicates the correct phrasing of the text. The Hebrew word *taam* (plural: *teamim*) can be translated as taste, flavour, reason or meaning, sense. Cantillation marks, when properly interpreted, provide meaning and clarify the text being read. It is important to note that the *teamim* do not indicate individual notes but rather groups of notes, short melodies, or fragments leading the sentence or phrase to its end (where the *sof-pasuk* marking will appear).<sup>5</sup>

An essential component of *Kiryat Torah* – *Reading the Torah* – is the *cantillation*. Jewish tradition holds that the cantillation marks were given to Moses at Mount Sinai along with the text of the Torah, and that they were passed on orally.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the correct interpretation of the cantillation marks is essential for a proper understanding of the Torah.

The *Baal Koreh*, or the reader of the text, must memorize the “notes” or *teamim*, as well as the correct pronunciation for each word, as these are not written on the scroll from which the Torah is read. Unlike the synagogue cantor, who has the privilege of improvising during prayer and may sometimes repeat certain words to enhance the melody, a *Baal Koreh*, who reads the biblical text, is not allowed to do so. This restriction is in place to ensure that the meaning of the text is not distorted.

Even though the symbols are universally recognized, the way they are interpreted musically differs from one Jewish community to another. The main cantillation traditions are:

- 1) Yemen. This form of cantillation is considered the oldest, retaining elements of the Babylonian notation system (likely from the 7<sup>th</sup> century). While the cantillation marks are acknowledged by this community, some are not in use.
- 2) Middle East: Iran, Iraq Bukhara, Kurdistan, Georgia and northern Iraq. This tradition is also inspired by the Babylonian system, but remains musically different from the Yemeni one.
- 3) Near East: Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey. Known as the “Eastern Sephardic tradition”, it can be found especially in non-Ashkenazi communities in Israel. The musical motifs can be likened to the modes of the Arabic *maqam*.<sup>7</sup>
- 4) North Africa: Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Here, the musical motifs reveal the influence of the African pentatonic scales.
- 5) The European Sephardic world: Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Netherlands.

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<sup>5</sup> Brad, *Israel's Music*, 13.

<sup>6</sup> The first 5 books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

<sup>7</sup> Prager, *Dictionar Enciclopedic de Iudaism*, 137.

- 6) Italy: Rome.
- 7) The Ashkenazim are divided into two categories influenced by the geographical area: Eastern – known as *Lithuanian*, and Western – *German*. Throughout history, the communities that migrated to Israel and America adopted the Eastern Ashkenazi chanting style, which can be still found today in Lithuania, Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and Hungary, whereas the Western Ashkenazi chanting style can be still found mainly in Germany, Great Britain, and other Western European countries.

The most elaborate interpretation is that of the Eastern Ashkenazi Jews.

Of the 24 books of the *Tanakh*, 21 have the same cantillation notation system. These 21 books fall into the category of writings, even though they also include poetic passages. The remaining three books – Psalms, Proverbs, and Job – utilize a distinct system (*poetic*) of notating musical symbols. As the Ashkenazi communities have lost their ability to musically render these poetic symbols, they are now used solely for punctuation and phrasing.<sup>8</sup>

The Ashkenazi tradition, both Western and Eastern, includes 6 types of musical interpretations of the same musical signs, depending on the text or the occasion in which it is read. These differences are noticeable in the rendering of various passages, such as: Torah – the Pentateuch; Haftarah – Prophets; the Lamentations of Jeremiah (recited on Tisha B'Av<sup>9</sup>); the three books Song of Songs (Pesah), Ruth (Shavuot) and Ecclesiastes (Sukkot); the Book of Esther (Purim); and the way of chanting the Torah on the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Atonement Day). As an exception, we can mention the holiday that commemorates the giving of the Torah (Shavuot<sup>10</sup>), when the reading of the Ten Commandments is not performed according to the reading of a regular passage from the Torah, but with a specific melody.

The cantillation marks used today were introduced as a form of notation by the Masoretes. The melodies of biblical cantillation are typically learned with the *teamim* and their names. The cantillation marks of the Tiberian system serve three functions: to indicate the stressed syllable, the phrasing of the text, and the melodic motif for each word.

The *Taamei Hamikra* are divided into disjunctives, also referred to as “kings”, which serve as separators between phrases and mark the end of verses, and conjunctives or “servants”, which connect words within sentences.

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<sup>8</sup> Tunkel, *The Music of the Hebrew Bible and the Western Ashkenazic Chant Tradition*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Tisha B'Av represents the day of mourning and fasting that commemorates the destruction of both the First and Second Temples.

<sup>10</sup> Shavuot – the celebration of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

## 2.1. Cantillation marks טעמי המקרא

In the Ashkenazi version we have at least twenty-seven cantillation marks, which, in turn, are divided into two categories: nineteen “kings” (מְלָכִים – melachim) known as טעמים המפסיקים – *teamim ha'mafsikim* (cantillations that cause a pause between the word holding the mark and the following word) – and eight “servants” (מְשֻׁרְתִים) also known as מעטפים – *teamim meatfim* –, or טעמים מחברים, “connected” with the next word, without a pause between the two words.

The nineteen מְלָכִים – kings – are in turn subdivided into four categories. The first category indicates the longest pause between two words (such as the pause between two sentences); the next category represents a pause somewhat shorter than the first category, and so on. Next, we will present each cantillation mark along with its name and graphic symbol.

קיסרים: Categoria 1:		מלכים: Categoria 2:	
א) סוף־פסוק		א) סגול	∴
ב) אתְנַחְתָּא	⸀	ב) זקף־קטן	:
		ג) זקף־גדול	⋮
		ד) טפחא	⸏
		ה) רביעי	⸌
משנים: Categoria 3: (שרים)		שלישים: Categoria 4:	
א) ירקא	~	א) פזר	⸒
ב) פשטא	∨	ב) קרני־פרה	∞
ג) תביר	⸑	ג) תלישא־גדולה	∞
ד) תיב	<	ד) אזלא־גרש	⸑
ה) שלשלת	⸔	ה) אזלא	⸑
		ו) גרשיים	⸑
		ז) פסיק	(⸑ linie verticală între două cuvinte)

Fig. 1. Kings – מְלָכִים

### 1st Category: קיסרים (Emperors)

- סוף פסוק (*Sof Pasuk*) – “End of verse” (equivalent to a full stop in a sentence).
- אתנחתא (*Etnahta*) – “Pause, rest” (indicates a main pause in the middle of the verse, similar to a comma or semicolon).

### 2nd Category: מלכים (Kings)

- סגול (*Segol*) – “Bunch” (a melodic accent used in cantillation).

- זקף קטן (*Zakef Katan*) – “Small upright” (an accent indicating a slightly ascending intonation).
- זקף גדול (*Zakef Gadol*) – „Full upright” (a stronger variation of *Zakef Katan*).
- טפחה (*Tipcha*) – “Blow” (an accent indicating a smaller pause than *Etnahta*).
- רביעי (*Revi'i*) – “The fourth” (an accent that marks a moderate pause in the verse).

**3rd Category: שלישים (Shelishim) – “Those of the third level”**

- זרקא (*Zarka*) – “Throw” (a melodic-intonational accent).
- פשטא (*Pashta*) – “Stretching out” (an accent marking a minor pause).
- תביר (*Tevir*) – “Broken” (indicates a break in reading).
- יתיב (*Yetiv*) – “Resting or sitting” (an accent that prepares a continuation).
- שלשלת (*Shalsholet*) – “Chain” (a rare accent, with a unique repetitive intonation).

**4th Category: פקידים (Pekidim) – “Administrators”**

- פזר (*Pazer*) – “Lavish or scatter” (a strong accent that emphasizes the word).
- קרני פרה (*Karnei Para*) – “Cow-horns” (an accent with a distinct melody).
- תלישא גדולה (*Telisha Gedolah*) – “Great tearing” (indicates a pause with inflection).
- אזלא-גרש (*Azla-Geresh*) – “Expulsion and driving out” (a two-part accent).
- אולה (*Oleh*) – “Going up” (an accent that raises the intonation).
- גרשום (*Gershayim*) – “Double geresh” (an accent that marks a special sentence).
- פסיק (*Pasek*) – “Separator” (a vertical line between two words, indicating a separation).

א) מנח	⌋	ה) תְּלִישָׁא־קִטְנָה	⊕
ב) מַה־פָּךְ	<	ו) מֶרְכָּא	⌋
ג) קִדְמָא	⌋	ז) מֶרְכָּא־כְּפוּלָה	”
ד) דְּרָגָא	⌋	ח) יֶרַח־בְּנֵי־יִזְמוּ	⌋

Fig. 2. Servants – מְשֻׁרְתִּים

- א מנח – “**Munach**” – Resting (a melodic accent that connects words).
- ב מהפך – “**Mahpak**” – Turning round (an accent that changes the direction of intonation).
- ג קדמא – “**Qadma**” – To progress, advance (an accent indicating a melodic rise).
- ד דרגא – “**Darga**” – Steps (an accent that creates a connection between two words).
- ה תלישא קטנה – “**Telisha Qetana**” – Small tearing (an accent that raises the intonation).
- ו מרכא – “**Mercha**” – Lengthener (a transitional accent between words).



תָּקַע אֶת־אֹהֳלוֹ בְּהָר (בראשית לא, כה) [פרשת ויצא]  
 אַרְבַּע־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה בְּשֵׁתֵי בְּנֹתָיִךְ (בראשית לא, מא) [פרשת רגא]  
 וַתֵּצֵא דִינָה בַת־יִלְאָה (בראשית לד, א) [פרשת וישלח]  
 חָשְׂקָה נַפְשׁוֹ בְּבָתְּכֶם (בראשית לד, ח) [פרשת וישלח]  
 בְּהִמּוֹל לָנוּ כָּל־זָכָר (בראשית לד, כב) [פרשת וישלח]  
 וַיַּחְנוּ בְּרִפְדִּים (במדבר לג, יד) [פרשת מסעי]

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Fig. 3. *Pashta*.

Hebrew words are generally stressed on the last syllable. If the stress falls on the penultimate syllable and we place the graphic sign *Pashta* on it, we will not be able to differentiate between the two Teamim: פִּשְׁטָא – קַדְמָא. If the stress is on the penultimate syllable, an additional *Pashta* is placed on the stressed syllable to distinguish it from *Kadma*:

קַדְמָא

*Kadma* (“to progress, advance”) is placed at the beginning of a phrase, and its shape gives the impression that it leans forward.

*Kadma* (קַדְמָא) is typically not positioned above the last letter of a word. Instead, it appears on the first stressed letter of a syllable within the word. Since *Kadma* does not belong to the Kings category, it serves to connect the word featuring this cantillation mark to the next word. Also, if *Kadma* appears on a word whose last letters are some of the ׁאָ, ׂבָּ, ׃גָּ, ׄדָּ, ׅכָּ, ׆קָּ, then that letter will not receive that קַל (·) “sound-point”<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Transliteration and text translation Fig. 3: Genesis 12:8 (Parashat Vayeira) “Tika et-oholo bahar” – He pitched his tent on the mountain.; Genesis 31:41 (Parashat Vayeitzei) – “Arba esre shana bishtei venoteicha” – Fourteen years for your two daughters.; Genesis 34:8 (Parashat Vayishlach) – “Haška nafsho be-vitchem” – His heart is set on your daughter.; Genesis 34:22 (Parashat Vayishlach) – “Behimol lanu kol-zahar” – On the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are.; Genesis 33:14 (Parashat Vayishlach Massei) – “Ve-ithanu birfidim” – And they camped at Refidim.

<sup>14</sup> Gellis and Gribetz, *The Glory of Torah Reading*, 38.

וַיִּפְצְרוּ בְּאִישׁ בְּלוֹט מְאֹד (בראשית יט, ט) [פרשת וירא]  
בֶּן־שָׁנָתוֹ תָּמִים אֶחָד לְעֹלָה (במדבר ו, יד) [פרשת נשא]  
אֶל־נָא תִשֶׁת עָלֵינוּ חֲטָאת (במדבר יב, יא) [פרשת בהעלותך]

Fig. 4. *Kadma*.<sup>15</sup>

If *Kadma* is placed on the last letter of the word, the following method is used to differentiate it from *Pashta*: *Pashta* is always placed on the left side of the letter, whereas *Kadma* is always placed above the stressed syllable, centred on the letter.

וַיִּקְרָא (בראשית א, י)

מְאֹרֹת (בראשית א, יד) Genesis 1:14.<sup>16</sup>

מְהַפֵּךְ – יְתִיב

These cantillation marks are represented by the same sign (<). Although the marks are almost identical, they differ in melody, in their position relative to the word, and in the fact that מְהַפֵּךְ is מְלֶכֶךְ (King) whereas מְאֹרֹת (servant).

מְהַפֵּךְ – *Mahpach* usually appears after the *Pashta* and is placed on the stressed letter of the word. As a *Servant*, it connects the word with the cantillation mark to the next word. Also, if the last letter of the word on which it is placed is one of the: ׁ, ׂ, and the first letter of the next word is one of the ׃-ד׃, then that letter will not receive that ׃ (·) “sound-point”.

יְתִיב – *Yetiv* (resting or sitting; may be followed by a short pause) is a repositioning of *Pashta* when the stress is on the first syllable of the word. This sign (<) is placed at the bottom right side, just before the first letter of the word. It belongs to the מְלָכִים category, so it creates a pause between this word and the next. If *Yetiv* appears on a word whose last letter is one of the ׁ, ׂ, and the first letter of the next word is one of the ׃-ד׃, then that letter will not receive that ׃ (·) “sound-point”.

<sup>15</sup> Transliteration and text translation Fig. 4: Genesis 19:9 (Parashat Vayeira) – “Vayifzzeru va-ış be-Lot meod” – Then they pressed hard against the man Lot.; Exodus 6:14 (Parashat Naso) – “Beyom ŧenato tamim ehad le-ola” – One male lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering.; Exodus 12:11 (Parashat Beha’alotcha) – “El na taŧet aleinu hata” – I beg you, do not lay this sin upon us.

<sup>16</sup> Transliteration and text translation Fig. 5: Genesis 1:5 “Vayikra” – And He called.; Genesis 1:14 – “Meorot” – Luminaries.

then that letter will receive that דָּגֵשׁ קָל (·) “sound point”. In Italian tradition, it is referred to as *yetiv Shofar*, meaning “resting horn”.

זָקֵף-קָטוֹן

Often, these cantillation marks appear together. *Zakef* – זָקֵף belongs to the מְשָׁרְתִים (*Servants*) category and always appears beneath the word. *Katon* – קָטוֹן belongs to the מְלַכִּים (*Melachim*) category and is always placed above the word. In most cases, this combination comes after the *Pashta*. *Zakef* may also appear without a *Katon*, in which case it is called *Munach* – מְנַחֵם and is found in the מְשָׁרְתִים – *Servants* category. In this case, all the rules for the *Servants* category apply.

מֶרְכָּא – טִפְחָא

These two cantillation marks always appear beneath the word. מֶרְכָּא – *Mercha* belongs to the *Servants* category, whereas טִפְחָא – *Tipcha* belongs to the *Kings* category. מֶרְכָּא usually comes in pairs with טִפְחָא. However, it may also appear in other combinations, but will always belong to the מְשָׁרְתִים (*Servants*) category and will follow the corresponding rules. *Mercha* can be translated as “lengthener” because it prolongs the melody of the word that follows. In modern usage, it sometimes means comma, but this usage is taken from cantillation. *Tipcha* – טִפְחָא may also appear without a preceding מֶרְכָּא (*mercha*). However, regardless of the context in which it appears, it will belong to the מְלַכִּים – *Kings* category. Thus, טִפְחָא – *Tipcha* (“diagonal”, or “hand-breath”) follows all the rules applicable to the *Kings* category. In ancient manuscripts, it was written as a straight diagonal line. In recently printed books, it is curved and resembles a mirror image of *Mercha*, with which it is typically associated (together, they could be considered to form a legato). The name “tipcha” may be an allusion to a hand gesture.

אַתְנַחֲתָא – סוּף פְּסוּקִים:

אַתְנַחֲתָא (*Etnachta* = pause, rest, because it divides the verse or phrase in two) always appears beneath the letters and marks the end of a sentence, whereas סוּף פְּסוּקִים: (*Sof Pasuk* = end of the verse, is the cantillation mark that ends the verse) concludes the phrase. אַתְנַחֲתָא is usually preceded by טִפְחָא (*Tipcha*) and מֶרְכָּא (*Mecha*).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gellis și Gribetz, *The Glory of Torah Reading*, 45.

### מְנַח – רְבִיעַ

*Munach* and *Revi* typically appear as a pair. מְנַח (*Munach*) appears beneath the letter and is a מְשָׁרֵת (*Servant*), whereas רְבִיעַ (*Reviit*) is positioned above the letter and is a מְלִכִים (*King*). In certain cases, the two cantillation marks appear separately. רְבִיעַ (*Reviit*) is often preceded by two consecutive מְנַח (*Munach*). In this case, the two מְנַח marks are separated by a vertical line called *Pesik* ( | ), which indicates a pause between the two words. Thus, the first מְנַח is considered *King*, and the second מְנַח remains *Servant*. So, if within the first מְנַח the last letter belongs to אָהוּ"וּ, and the first letter of the next word is one of the בְּגִ"ד-כֶּפֶ"ת, then that letter will receive that דְּגֵשׁ קָל ( · ) “sound point” whereby the consonant will be pronounced with greater emphasis.

### קַדְמָא – וְאַזְלָא

Most of the time, these cantillation marks appear together, always above the letters. קַדְמָא (*Kadma*) resembles a פֶּשְׁטָא (*Pashta*), but will always remain in the *Servants* category. וְאַזְלָא (*VeAzla* = advancing, because it is often at the end of the phrase *Kadma ve'Azla*; it belongs to the *King* category) resembles a mirror image of the preceding קַדְמָא. Each *teamim* follows the rules of pronunciation and phrasing of the category it belongs to.

### אֶזְלָא-גֶרֶשׁ

אֶזְלָא (*Azla*) can appear independently, without being preceded by קַדְמָא (*Kadma*), and when this happens, it is called אֶזְלָא-גֶרֶשׁ (*Azla Geresh*). Like *Azla*, *Azla Geresh* is placed above the letters, belongs to the *King* category, and has the same melody as *Azla* when paired with *Kadma*. *Azla Geresh (King)* adheres to the rules of the respective category.

### דְּרָגָא – תְּבִיר

דְּרָגָא (*Darga*) is a מְשָׁרֵת (*Servant*), and תְּבִיר (*Tevir*) is a *King*. Thus, when the last letter of the word that has the cantillation mark דְּרָגָא is one of the אָהוּ"וּ, and the first letter of the next word with the cantillation mark תְּבִיר is one of the בְּגִ"ד-כֶּפֶ"ת, then that letter will receive that דְּגֵשׁ קָל ( · ) “sound point”, where the consonant will be pronounced with greater emphasis. *Darga* (דְּרָגָא) is also referred to as “trill” due to the sound it produces, or “step” based on its shape. תְּבִיר (*Tevir*) can be translated as “broken” because it indicates a pause in reading (in some traditions, there is a large downward leap between the first and second notes).

זָרְקָא – סֵגוֹל

These cantillation marks appear together; here the sign is placed on the last letter of the word, and זָרְקָא (*Zarka*) always appears before סֵגוֹל (*Segol*). The two cantillation marks belong to the *Kings* (מְלָכִים) category and follow the rules of pronunciation and phrasing of the words.

זָקֵף גָּדוֹל

The cantillation mark known as זָקֵף גָּדוֹל (*Zakef Gadol*) appears only in this combination and is placed above the letters. It belongs to the *Kings* (מְלָכִים) category, so it causes a pause between this pair of words and the next word, generating the “sound point”, where the consonant will be pronounced with greater emphasis, specifically for the letters בּגְד־כֶּפֶת

תְּלִישָׁא קֵטָנָה

The graphic sign תְּלִישָׁא קֵטָנָה (*Telisha Ketana*) appears above the word. Typically, the last syllable of the word is the stressed one, so the sign is placed above the last letter of the word, in a position similar to the *Pashta*. In words where the stress falls on the penultimate syllable, some editions follow the practice of using two תְּלִישָׁא קֵטָנָה cantillation marks in the same word, as in the case of *Pashta*, with the additional one being placed above the stressed syllable.<sup>18</sup> Some editions do not use this measure, requiring the Baal Koreh (the Torah reader) to rely on his knowledge and understanding to accentuate that word correctly. תְּלִישָׁא קֵטָנָה (*Tlisha Ketana*) belongs to the *Servants* (מְשֻׁרְתִים) category and follows the corresponding rules for the pronunciation of the next words, as well as for the pronunciation of the next word, without a pause. In most cases, תְּלִישָׁא קֵטָנָה will be followed by וְאִזְלָא (*ve'azla*), and thus וְאִזְלָא will form a triple combination.

תְּלִישָׁא גְדוֹלָה

The cantillation mark appears above the word, on its first letter. However, this does not necessarily mean that the syllable on which it appears must be the stressed one. In words where the stress falls on another syllable, some editions will show two תְּלִישָׁא גְדוֹלָה (*Tlisha Ghedola*), one on the stressed syllable, and the other on the first letter of the word. The symbol on the right indicates the name of the cantillation, whereas the symbol in the middle of the word indicates the emphasized syllable. תְּלִישָׁא גְדוֹלָה (*Tlisha Ghedola*)

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<sup>18</sup> Gellis and Gribetz, *The Glory of Torah Reading*, 56.

belongs to the *Kings* (מְלָכִים) category and adheres to the corresponding rules regarding the letters אָהוּ"י and בְּגִ"ד-קָפָ"ת; it always appears individually, without combination with other cantillation marks.

### פָּזֵר

פָּזֵר (*Pazer*) always appears alone, with no other combinations. It is placed above the stressed syllable of the word. It belongs to the מְלָךְ (*Kings*) category and follows the same rules as the other cantillation marks in the מְלָכִים category.<sup>19</sup>

### גֵּרְשָׁיִם

This *teamim* גֵּרְשָׁיִם (*Gershayim*) appears above the word, on the stressed syllable. It always appears individually, with no other combinations. גֵּרְשָׁיִם (*Gershayim*) is also a מְלָךְ (*King*).

### שְׁלִשְׁלֵת

שְׁלִשְׁלֵת (*Shalsholet*) appears individually, above the word, on the stressed syllable of the word. The word that has this cantillation mark is followed by a *Psik* – פְּסִיק ( | ), placed between the two words. The purpose of the *Psik* – פְּסִיק ( | ) is to highlight the fact that a pause should be made.

שְׁלִשְׁלֵת (*Shalsholet*) belongs to the *Kings* category. It appears only four times in the Pentateuch. An interesting aspect of this cantillation mark is that it reflects the hesitation of the person referred to in the text (for example: Lot hesitated when leaving Sodom, Eliezer, Abraham's servant, hesitated while searching for a wife for Jacob, Yosef experienced hesitation when Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him, and Moses hesitated when preparing the ram for the consecration of the Mishkan (the Tent of Meeting in the wilderness)).

### מֶרְכָּא קְפוּלָה

מֶרְכָּא קְפוּלָה (*Mercha kefula*) belongs to the *Servants* (מְשֻׁרְתִּים) category and is placed beneath the word, on the stressed syllable. It appears 5 times in the Torah.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gellis and Gribetz, *The Glory of Torah Reading*, 60.

<sup>20</sup> Gellis and Gribetz, *The Glory of Torah Reading*, 62.

יְרַח בֶּן יוֹמָן

This *teamim* יְרַח בֶּן יוֹמָן (*Yerech ben Yomo*) appears only once in the Torah, belongs to the *מְשֻׁרְתִּים* category, and is placed beneath the word, on the stressed syllable. Graphically, it resembles the inverted אֲתַנְחַתָּה cantillation mark.

קַרְנֵי פָּרָה:

This cantillation mark appears only once in the Torah. It belongs to the *מְלִכִּים* (*Kings*) category and is placed above the stressed syllable. קַרְנֵי פָּרָה: (*Karnei Fara*) is a combination of תְּלִישָׁא־קַטְנָה and תְּלִישָׁא גְדוּלָה and contains the melody of both. When the *Baal Koreh* chants this *teamim*, he will first chant the תְּלִישָׁא־קַטְנָה and then immediately the תְּלִישָׁא גְדוּלָה – both on the same word.

## Conclusions

Perhaps when the early Christians distanced themselves from the synagogue service, they adopted the existing Hebrew synagogue service, the only one they knew, in which the Book of Psalms was a main element, along with the melodic lines used for chanting or reciting these texts. The first Christians in Jerusalem continued to attend the Temple service, probably until at least 60 AD.<sup>21</sup>

The Christian Church adopted many biblical texts, responsorial and antiphonal singing, along with various other Eastern musical techniques. The cheironomic accents and signs were also taken from the signs called *neuma* (which in Greek means “hand signal”), etymologically related to the Hebrew word *ne’ima*, meaning tune, melody. These signs emerged in the early second millennium of the Christian era and became the first musical notation indicating accurately both the pitch and duration of sounds underlying the writing of a melody. Already in early Western music, these signs or accents did not represent standalone “notes” in the modern sense, but a series of sounds that created a melodic pattern, whose rhythmic form was determined by the rhythm of the words in the text. The vague nature of the sonic significance of the early musical signs led different Christian communities in various regions to interpret them in diverse ways, just as the old biblical accents used in different centers of the Jewish diaspora received diverse interpretations. The earliest Christian neumes are believed to have originated around the same time as the establishment of the Hebrew system.

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<sup>21</sup> Abramovitch, *The Jewish People, Past and Present*, 526.

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