Accents and Punctuation

The accent in Hebrew often falls on the final syllable or on the syllable before the final.

Accent marks, also referred to as "cantillation marks" or "trope", were added to the Biblical text during the middle ages. Placed below or above the accented syllable, they mark the stress for a word, serving at the same time as punctuation marks that indicate various degrees of connection (conjunctive accents) or separation (disjunctive accents) between words. They are also used as a set of notations for chanting, with each symbol standing for a musical phrase. The main disjunctive accents are the silluk, a vertical line under the character, always on the last word of the verse (the end of the verse is also marked by a colon called sof pasuk); and the etnach, a wish-bone like diacritic under the character, somewhere within the verse (the main break of the verse). Both are highlighted in the text below in red. Secondary in significance are the disjunctive accents zakef, two dots arranged vertically above the character, and the revia, a rhombus above the character. These are highlighted in the text below in green.

To simplify the presentation, in the texts incorporated in examples and exercises in this site we do not use accent marks. For the sake of punctuation, we mark only the etnach and the silluk: We substitute a semi-colon after the word for the etnach, and a period, question mark, or exclamation mark at the end of the sentence for the silluk and the sof pasuk.

The main conjunctive accents are the munách, a backwards L-like diacritic under the character, and the merchá, a comma-like diacritic under the character. They are marked in the text below in blue.
א בֵּרָאֹשֵׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹֽיִי אֶת שָׁמַיִם וְאֶת אֶרֶץ׃ בְּרָא אֶת שָׁמַיִם וְהָיָה אָדָם יְהֹוָה חָדָשׁ.

וַיִּשָּׁקֶה עַל-פָּנֵי זַרְתָּם אֱלֹֽיִי מַרְחֵט עַל-פָּנֶיךָ הַמַּיִם׃ וְנָפֶשׁ אֱלֹֽיִי אֶת אֱלֹֽיִי אֲשֶׁר בִּתְחִיבוּ נֻבֶּל אֱלֹֽיִי בָּרָא אֱלֹֽיִי אֲשֶׁר בִּתְחִיבוּ נֻבֶּל אֱלֹֽיִי בָּרָא אֱלֹֽיִי אֲשֶׁר בִּתְחִיבוּ נֻבֶּל אֱלֹֽיִי אֲשֶׁר בִּתְחִיבוּ נֻבֶּל אֱלֹֽיִי אֲשֶׁר בִּתְחִיבוּ

לָלוּיָה יְהוָה עָבַר בִּי נֵבֶר יְמֵי אָדָם.

**Accents: Exercise**