

THE MASORETIC DIVISIONS (*SEDARIM*)  
IN THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS AND HAGIOGRAPHHA

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In the masoretic MSS the whole of the Bible is divided into sections (*sedarim*). While the principle for the arrangement of the divisions in the Pentateuch is known (being based on the triennial reading of the Torah), the rationale of the masoretic divisions in the books of the Prophets and Hagiographa has not been discovered.

Examination of the ancient Tiberian masoretic MSS shows that the division of the sections is consistent, and that there are not many divergences in these divisions among the MSS. The divisions are evidently based on two types of reading cycles. The first, the reading cycle of the Prophetic books, would have about 205 portions, and the second, that of the Hagiographa, about 77 portions, excluding the Scrolls. These figures reveal the difference between the length of the sections, those in the Hagiographa being longer than those in the Prophetic books. However, the length of the sections in both the Prophetic and Hagiographic books conform to a clear pattern.

In the placing of the divisions, we notice that two principles are followed: In the first, the section opens with a verse having a beneficent content, such as a good act or a benediction, and in the other, the sections open with the verse preceding the commencement of a new theme. We found that some 54 percent of the sections open with a beneficent verse, and 42 percent with the terminal verse of the preceding subject.