

Second Edition

The **First**
HEBREW
PRIMER
for **Adults**

Biblical and Prayerbook Hebrew

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A self-teaching text designed for people who have not studied in years.

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Chapter 1

The Hebrew Alphabet

Consonants

The First Hebrew Primer for Adults is designed in a simple, straightforward way to teach you this ancient language. In these 33 lessons, you will be given enough information and practice to enable you, with the aid of a Hebrew-English dictionary, to understand most Biblical texts and Hebrew prayers. As you progress, you will discover and delight in the clear, strong rhythms of original Hebrew — a joy unattainable through reading even the best of translations.

Why grammar? Because grammar is the short cut to learning a new language. The rules of grammar, in an almost magical way, make it possible to understand and compose an infinite number of sentences without learning them one by one. For example, if we know that the addition of **s** or **es** to a word changes the sense of the word from one to more than one, we immediately understand the difference between:

dog and dogs wish and wishes

Each language has its own method of organizing and altering words to communicate meaning. Vocabulary is not enough. For instance, a three word sentence in Hebrew requires an eight word sentence to express the same idea in English:

I went to his house in the city.

הִלַּכְתִּי לְבֵיתוֹ בְּעִיר.

In this book we will acquaint you with just enough grammar for you to understand how the Hebrew language works. Vocabulary is also kept to a minimum. Once you understand the organization of the language, you will be able to increase your own vocabulary at will, with the use of a dictionary. It is our intention to present this material in such an uncomplicated way that the language of Hebrew will speak directly to you.

Note to All Students

Students new to Hebrew will need to work carefully through the first three chapters covering the alphabet and the rules for pronunciation. Even those who already know how to read Hebrew are encouraged to study these chapters, both to learn new information and to review what they have previously learned.

Changes in the Second Edition

Nothing has been added and nothing of any importance has been deleted. All the changes in the Second Edition are so small that they will not prevent using this edition of the Primer along with the previous edition.

In spite of our best efforts, we made some mistakes in the first edition of this text. These minor mistakes have been corrected.

In some parts of the text, we found that we had offered too much material for beginners. Instead of deleting this information, we moved it to a separate section. Wherever we removed any information, we placed a note indicating that additional information can be found on page 272.

In some cases we have improved the original presentation by rearranging the placement of items on a page to make that page more readable.

For additional fun and practice in reading Biblical Hebrew, EKS also publishes **Tall Tales Told and Retold in Biblical Hebrew**. The tales start very simply with the grammar and vocabulary of Chapter 10 in this text and progress chapter by chapter with increased complexity.

English Alphabet

1. English is read from left to right.
2. In the English alphabet there are 26 letters: some are vowels (a, e, i, o, u.) some are consonants (b, c, d, g, etc.), and one is both (y).

Hebrew Alphabet

1. Hebrew is read from right to left.
2. In the Hebrew alphabet there are 22 letters, **all** of which are consonants. The vowels are added to the consonants in a special way which we discuss in the next chapter.

The Alphabet Chart

1. In column 1 you will find the pronunciation for each Hebrew letter. In this book we use the Sephardic pronunciation — the pronunciation officially accepted by the State of Israel.
2. In column 2 you will find the letters of the Hebrew alphabet as they will appear throughout the book. This type of lettering is called “Book Print.”
3. In Hebrew, five letters of the alphabet appear in a different form when found at the end of a word. These “final forms” appear in column 3.
4. The names of the Hebrew letters are shown in column 4. We will always refer to a letter by its official name (Bet = **ב**, **בּ**).
5. In columns 5, 6, and 7, you will find the three types of lettering generally used for Hebrew. They are: Book Print, used in printed material; Block Letters, a simplified form of written Hebrew; and Script Letters, the commonly used type of written Hebrew.

In order to read these lessons it is necessary to learn to read Book Print. To write the exercises it will be necessary to learn to write either the Block or the Script Letters.

Final Forms

Five letters have a different shape when they appear at the end of a word, as noted above. They are called final forms, and are shown separately in column 3, and along with their regular forms in columns 5, 6, and 7.

Tsade	Pey	Nun	Mem	Kaf	
צ	פ	נ	מ	כ	Regular
ץ	ף	ן	ם	ך	Final

The Pronunciation of the Shin ש

There are two ways to pronounce a shin ש. When the dot is on the right side שׁ, it is pronounced **sh** as in **ship**; and when it is on the left שׂ, it is pronounced **s** as in **sun**.

Alphabet Chart

(1) Pronunciation	(2) Book Print	(3) Final Form	(4) Name of Letter	(5) Book Print	(6) Block	(7) Script
Silent letter	א		Aleph	א	א	א
B as in Boy V as in Vine	ב		Bet	ב	ב	ב
G as in Girl	ג		Gimmel	ג	ג	ג
D as in Door	ד		Dalet	ד	ד	ד
H as in House	ה		Hey	ה	ה	ה
V as in Vine	ו		Vav	ו	ו	ו
Z as in Zebra	ז		Zayin	ז	ז	ז
CH as in BaCH	ח		Chet	ח	ח	ח
T as in Tall	ט		Tet	ט	ט	ט
Y as in Yes	י		Yod	י	י	י
K as in Kitty CH as in BaCH	כ	ך	Kaf	כך	כך	כך
L as in Look	ל		Lamed	ל	ל	ל
M as in Mother	מ	ם	Mem	מם	מם	מם
N as in Now	נ	ן	Nun	נן	נן	נן
S as in Sun	ס		Samech	ס	ס	ס
Silent letter	ע		Ayin	ע	ע	ע
P as in People F as in Food	פ	ף	Pey	פף	פף	פף
TS as in NuTS	צ	ץ	Tsade	צץ	צץ	צץ
K as in Kitty	ק		Qof	ק	ק	ק
R as in Robin	ר		Resh	ר	ר	ר
SH as in SHape S as in Sun	ש		Shin	ש	ש	ש
T as in Tall	ת		Tav	ת	ת	ת

The Dagesh and the BeGeD-KeFeT Letters

The dagesh is a dot in the center of a letter. The dagesh performs various functions in Hebrew. The first function that we will learn concerns the letters referred to in Hebrew as the BeGeD-KeFeT letters. The word BeGeD-KeFeT **בגד כפת** – **בגד** is simply a memory device made from the sounds of six letters: bet **ב**, gimmel **ג**, dalet **ד**, kaf **כ**, pey **פ**, tav **ת**. It is useful to remember these letters together because they all follow the same rules in relation to the dagesh. Three of these letters change their pronunciation when a dagesh is added. At one time, all the BeGeD-KeFeT letters were sounded one way with a dagesh and another way without it. Today in Sephardic Hebrew the pronunciation changes in only three of the six letters.

With a Dagesh	Without a Dagesh
B as in Boy = ב	V as in Vine = ב
K as in Kitty = כ	CH as in BaCH = כ
P as in People = פ	F as in Food = פ

The pronunciation of the other three letters remains the same, with or without the dagesh.

With a Dagesh	Without a Dagesh
G as in Girl = ג	G as in Girl = ג
D as in Door = ד	D as in Door = ד
T as in Tall = ת	T as in Tall = ת

The Throaty Five – א, ה, ח, ע, ר

There are five letters — aleph **א**, hey **ה**, chet **ח**, ayin **ע**, and resh **ר** — which were, at one time, all sounded in the throat. It is almost impossible for speakers of English to pronounce all these sounds. Most speakers of English pronounce these letters as follows:

The **א** aleph and **ע** ayin are silent letters.

The **ה** hey is pronounced like the English H.

The **ח** chet is pronounced like the guttural German **ch** as in **Bach**.

The **ר** resh should be trilled in the throat, but most speakers of English pronounce it like the English R.

The important thing to remember about the throaty five letters — **א**, **ה**, **ח**, **ע**, and **ר** — is that a dagesh can **never** be added to them. These are the **only** letters in the Hebrew alphabet that cannot take a dagesh.

Letters That Look Alike

Some letters look alike and may be confused by the beginning reader. You must learn to distinguish between each of the letters in the following groups.

צ - א	כ - ב	ן - ך - ד	ג - נ
ט - מ	י - ו - ז	ת - ח - ה	כ - נ
ע - צ	ס - ם	ן - ו - י	ד - ר

Letters That Sound Alike

Notice that the following letters in the Hebrew alphabet sound alike:

S as in Sun	—	ש	ס	V as in Vine	—	ו	ב
K as in Kitty	—	כ	ק	silent letter	—	ע	א
T as in Tall	—	ט	ת	CH as in BaCH	—	כ	ח

Note: Be careful not to confuse the letters ח and ח. Though we have no English equivalent for the ח, it should not be sounded like the English H. Remember, the letter ח sounds like the German guttural **ch**, found in the name of the composer **Bach**.

Exercises

The exercises included in each chapter are designed to help you learn the material. It will be of great benefit to you to complete all the exercises before you go on to the next chapter. Choose either block or script letters to use for all the exercises in this book. We have chosen block letters.

Section A

The first eight letters: א, ב, ג, ד, ה, ו, ז, ח

Exercise 1A. Write a line of each of the first eight letters. Name the letter and sound it as you write. Example: aleph א א א א א א א א א א א א א א א א
bet ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב ב

Exercise 2A. Repeat aloud the Hebrew names of the following letters:

ג, ח, ה, ו, ז, א, ב, ד, ב

Exercise 3A. Rearrange the letters in each group so that they are alphabetically ordered.

1. ב, א, ג, ד 2. ו, ז, ה 3. ז, ח, ו 4. ה, א, ג, ב, ד 5. ו, ד, ז, ח, ה

Exercise 4A. Write an English word beginning with the sound of the following Hebrew letters:

Examples: goat — ג dog — ד ג, ד, ה, ו, ב, ו, ב

Section B

In this section you will be practicing the next group of letters: ט, י, כ, ל, מ, נ.
 Three of these letters have a different shape when they appear at the end of a word.

regular — נ, מ, כ
 final form — ן, ם, ך

Here are some examples:

מלכה, לך; שמה, שם; נר, בן

Exercise 1B. Write a line of each of the second group of letters, including the final forms. Name the letter and sound it as you write.

Example: tet

... ט ט ט ט ט ט ט ט

Exercise 2B. Repeat the Hebrew names of these letters. ל, כ, נ, ט, י, מ

Exercise 3B. Rearrange the letters in each group so that they are alphabetically ordered.

1. כ, י, ט
2. מ, ל, נ
3. י, ל, ט, ן, מ, כ
4. ד, ט, ו, ח, י, ה, ך, ז, ל
5. ג, א, כ, ז, ב, ם, ד, ל, ה, ח, י, ו, ט

Exercise 4B. Write an English word beginning with the sound of the following Hebrew letters. Examples: can — כ near — נ פ, נ, ט, מ, ל, י

Section C

In this section we learn the end of the alphabet: ס, ע, פ, צ, ק, ר, ש, ת.
 Two of these letters have a different shape when they appear at the end of a word.

regular — פ, צ
 final form — ף, ץ

Here are some examples:

טפל, טף; רצה, רץ

Remember that the letter ש can be pronounced two ways, depending on where the dot on top of the letter appears.

ש — sh as in ship

ש — s as in sun

Exercise 1C. Write a line of each letter from this group. Name the letter and sound it as you write.

Example: samech

... ס ס ס ס ס ס ס ס

Exercise 2C. Repeat aloud the following letters. ש, ר, פ, ס, ק, ת, צ

Exercise 3C. Rearrange the letters in each group so that they are alphabetically ordered.

1. צ, ע, ס, פ
2. ת, ש, ר, ק
3. ע, פ, ץ, ס
4. ש, ת, ס, ע, ר, ף, ק, צ

Exercise 4C. Write an English word beginning with the sound of the following Hebrew letters:

Examples: pan - פ river - ר פ, ר, ש, פ, ק, ת, ש, ס

Exercise 5C. Fill in the missing letters so that each group of letters is alphabetically arranged.

1. ע, , צ, ק
2. ק, ר, , ת
3. , ס, , פ, , ק, , ש, ,
4. כ, ל, , נ, , ע, פ, , ש, ,
5. ה, ו, , ט, , כ, , נ, ס, ע, , ק, , ש, ,
6. א, ב, ג, , ה, , ח, ,

Exercise 6C. Alphabetize the following words according to the first letter of each word.

טוב, מות, חטא, כל, רק, נאל, תורה, צד, למה, שמים, עלה,
בחר, אב, נתן, פנים, דרך, זקן, יד, ספר, וו, קול, הנה

Exercise 7C. List the five letters that cannot take a dagesh.

Exercise 8C. Which three letters are pronounced differently with and without a dagesh?

Exercise 9C. Which five letters have a different shape at the end of a word?

Exercise 10C. Copy each of these words into script or block print, whichever you have chosen.

_____ רגל	_____ כבוד	_____ אשה
_____ שלום	_____ לאה	_____ בית
_____ תפלה	_____ מספר	_____ גדול
_____ אנחנו	_____ נביא	_____ דודה
_____ ברית	_____ ספר	_____ ההיא
_____ גבור	_____ עבדה	_____ זקן
_____ דרך	_____ פנים	_____ חדש
_____ הר	_____ צוה	_____ טוב
_____ זרע	_____ קדוש	_____ יעקב

Chapter 2 Vowels

In Hebrew the vowels are added to the consonants by means of dots and dashes. Usually these are found written below the letter, but sometimes you may see one written above or to the side of a letter. The following chart shows the sounds of the vowels. When discussing the vowels, we will use the sign **X** as a substitute for the consonant, which could be any Hebrew letter.

Name	Vowel Sound	Vowel Sign
qamets	a as in yacht	X̄
patach	a as in yacht	X̆
chireq	ee as in bee	Ẋ
chireq with yod	ee as in bee	י̇X
tsere	ay as in hay	Ẍ
tsere with yod	ay as in hay	י̈X
segol	eh as in bed	X̉
cholem	o as in row	˘X
cholem with vav	o as in row	ו̆X
qamets chatuf	o as in dog	X̄*
qibbutz	oo as in pool	X̄̄
shureq	oo as in pool	ו̄̄X

Vowel names are listed for your information only. You need not memorize them.

*Rarely used.

How to Read the Vowel Signs with the Consonants

A. The vowel signs in Hebrew usually appear below the consonant, as in **דָּ**. One utters first the sound of the letter, and then the sound of the vowel. The sound produced is thus d + a = **da**.

B. The vowels **וּ** and **וֹ** are placed after the consonant. Remember that Hebrew is read from right to left. These vowels are sounded with the letters that precede them.

Example: **רוּת** is pronounced **root** — the Hebrew name for Ruth.

Vowel-letters — the Vav and the Yod

In English, the letter **y** can be either a consonant as in **yellow**, or a vowel, as in **pretty**. In the same way, the Hebrew letter vav **ו** can function as a consonant or a vowel. When the vav is a consonant, it sounds like **v** as in **vine**, and usually has a vowel sign under it.

- וּ** the consonant with the vowel **eh**, as in **veteran**
- וֹ** the consonant with the vowel **ay**, as in **vacation**
- וֵ** the consonant with the vowel **ee**, as in **veal**

When the vav functions as a vowel, it has the sound of **o** as in **row** or the sound of **oo** as in **pool**.

The vav is **not** a vowel and a consonant at the same time. When a vav functions as a vowel, sounded **o** or **oo**, it does not have the sound of **v** as in **vine**.

With a dot above it, the vav sounds like **o** as in **row**: **וּ**

With a dot in its center, the vav sounds like **oo** as in **pool**: **וֹ**

Note: This dot in the center of the vav is not a dagesh.

The yod **י** is a consonant, and may also function as **part** of a vowel. When it is a consonant it has the sound of **y** as in **yellow**, and is pronounced together with the vowel under or beside it:

- יָ** the consonant with the vowel **a**, as in **yacht**
- יַי** the consonant with the vowel **ay**, as in **yea**
- יֵי** the consonant with the vowel **e**, as in **yell**
- יִי** the consonant with the vowel **oo**, as in **you**

The Vowel Sounds

Not all of the words in the following exercises are actual Hebrew words.

The vowel sound a— X , X .

The vowel sound **a**, as in **yacht**, is shown by the signs X or X . At one time, the vowel X was pronounced as a longer sound than the vowel X . However, most people today do not distinguish between these vowels. Exercises for X and X . Read the following.

רַק, בַּת, רֵץ, הֶמָּה, זָכַר, כַּמָּה, הִבָּה, חֲזַן, תָּלָה, שָׁלַח, שֶׁבֶת, קָיָם

The vowel sound ee— X , X .

The vowel sound **ee**, as in **bee**, is shown by the signs X or X . The addition of the yod does not change the sound of the vowel. There is no difference in the pronunciation of עִיר and עָר. Both sound like the English word **ear**. Exercises for X , X , X , and X .

שָׁשִׁי, מְלִים, חַיִּים, אִמָּא, לִבָּם, בְּמָה, גְּלִי, סִרְהָ, דְּפִים, צְעִיר, מִים, בֵּית

The vowel sound ay— X , X .

The vowel sound **ay**, as in **hay**, is shown by the signs X or X . The addition of the yod does not change the sound of the vowel. There is no difference in the pronunciation of שָׁם and שֵׁם. Both sound like the English word **shame**. Exercises for X , X , X , X , X , and X .

שָׁם, עֵת, קֵץ, עֵין, אֲשֶׁר, אַחַר, עֲצִים, בֵּין, רַבִּי, דְּבַר, עֵינִי, לָתֵת, אִיהָ, הִרְגָּה

The vowel sound eh— X .

The vowel sound **eh**, as in **bed**, is shown by the sign X . The Hebrew form שֶׁד is pronounced **shed**. Exercises for X , X , X , X , X , and X .

אֶל, שֶׁקֶל, עֶבֶר, פָּרַח, אֲשֶׁר, קִשָּׁר, קִבֵּר, פָּתַח, סָדַר, אֶחָד, אֵין, בַּתִּי, עוֹר

The vowel sound o— X , X .

The vowel sound **o**, as in **row**, is shown by the sign X or X , and appears after the letter. The sound is the same whether the vowel has the **vav** with the dot, or just the dot. Therefore, both עוֹד and עָד sound like the English word **ode**.

Exercises for X , X , X , X , X , X , X , X , and X .

לֹא, מוֹלִי, יוֹם, גֶּרֶן, בּוֹאִי, תּוֹרַת, שְׁלוֹם, בְּעוֹ, בִּקְרָה, בּוֹרָא, כּוֹתֶבֶת, אִם, בֵּיתִי

The vowel sound oo— וּ, װ.

The vowel sound oo, as in pool, is shown by the signs וּ or װ. The vowel sign וּ is written after the consonant; the vowel sign װ is written beneath it. Both vowels have the same sound. There is no difference in pronunciation between רוּת and רֹת. Both sound like the English word root. Exercise for all the vowels.

סְפוּת, אַחִין, חֲנֻכָּה, הֵהוּא, הֲרָגָה, בְּרוּר, קִדְּשׁ, סוּפוּת, אִימָה, שְׂדֵה
אֶמֶר, מוּמוֹ, כְּפִים, יוֹלֵד, סֵלֶם, עֶבֶד, נֶעַם, תּוֹרָה, יוֹמִים, וְעַד, תְּמִיד, שׁוֹפֵט

The Silent Letters — אַ and ױ

Since the letters אַ and ױ are silent, they take the sound of the vowels that are either under or beside them. Here are some English words written in Hebrew letters to show you how to sound the vowels with the silent letters. These words will help you read the sounds correctly.

Examples: ear—אֵר, עֵר eat—עֵיט, אֵט odd—אֵד, עֵד
egg—אֵג, עֵג co-ed—קוֹעֵד, קוֹאֵד

The following are examples of English words spelled with Hebrew letters. Practice reading the sounds correctly.

coat	—	קוֹת	rain	—	רֵין	mama	—	מָמָה
rule	—	רֵל	need	—	נֵיד	red	—	רֵד
suit	—	סוֹט	goat	—	גֵּט	shame	—	שָׁם

Exercises

Exercise 1. Combine each letter of the alphabet with each of the vowel signs, sounding the letters with the vowels as you write them.

Example: אֵ אִ אֶ אֹ אֻ אֲ אֳ אִּ אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי אִי
etc. בֵּ בִּ בֶּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ בִּ

Exercise 2. Read the following words aloud. Copy them down and then read aloud the words that you have written.

בָּנִים, דוֹד, רָעַב, רָגַל, חֹדֶשׁ, בַּת, יָד, נֵר, אֵל, פְּעַם, קוּם, חֲנֻכָּה, נֵעַר

Exercise 3. In each of the following groups of three words, one word does not sound like the other two. Pick out the word that is different.

1. נֵעַר, נֵעַר, דוֹר
2. סוּכָּה, לְמָה, שְׂקָה
3. שׁוֹפֵט, שְׁפִית, שְׁלוֹם
4. אֵם, עֵים, אֵם
5. תְּמִיד, תְּמָר, תְּמָד
6. עֵכֶן, אַחִין, אֵכֶל

Exercise 4a. In each of the following pairs of words, there is one word in which the vav is a consonant, and another in which it is a vowel. Pick out the word in which the vav is a consonant.

1. מֹות - לְמות .2. עֹנר - אור .3. קום - ותָקם .4. דֹוד - דוד

Exercise 4b. In each of the following pairs of words, there is one word in which the yod is a consonant, and another in which it is part of a vowel. Pick out the words in which the yod is a consonant.

1. קים - הָקים .2. מין - מים .3. ילד - לין .4. בית - בֵית .5. יש - איש

Exercise 5. In each of the following words there are letters that have a dagesh. Circle only those letters in each word whose sound changes by the addition of the dagesh.

בנות, אשה, ותָקם, גבור, פָקד, כָלה, שָלם, הָמה

Exercise 6. Circle the letters in the following words that never take a dagesh.

בָעו, רות, לָחם, ותָהם, גָרן, אִיפָה, תַחת, עָמי, רָאָה

Exercise 7. Practice reading the following words aloud. Be careful not to confuse the letters that look alike but sound different.

גו	—	נד	פן	—	קו	דָם	—	רָם
צָם	—	עָם	לָן	—	כָך	שָכָר	—	שָכָר
נָחם	—	נָהר	לָץ	—	עִיר	גָם	—	גָבס

Exercise 8. The following Hebrew forms approximate actual English words. However, they have no meaning in Hebrew. Practice reading and pronouncing the Hebrew. Find the English word in the list below which matches each Hebrew form.

קָר	.25	כֵיב	.21	בֵיד	.17	נָם	.13	פָד	.9	יַט	.5	אָד	.1
מֵית	.26	דָף	.22	טָר	.18	רָד	.14	לֹן	.10	גָט	.6	סָד	.2
זוּם	.27	רֵיט	.23	תָא	.19	נָת	.15	הֵית	.11	דוּז	.7	שֵיץ	.3
קֵיא	.28	לֹום	.24	עוּ	.20	טָל	.16	עֵץ	.12	בָד	.8	סִין	.4

English Words: tell, yacht, loom, name, pod, car, bed, key, tar, doze, bead, lone, seen, raid, sheets, goat, hate, two, seed, odd, cave, deaf, meat, rate, zoom, net, ooze, oats

Exercise 9. Write the following English words using Hebrew letters and vowels. Many words can be written several ways.

1. cots	3. date	5. seam	7. Bach	9. bell	11. mean	13. pane
2. so	4. head	6. goof	8. nose	10. room	12. got	14. yes

Chapter 3

Syllables

More Vowels and Odd Endings

Hebrew Syllables

A syllable in Hebrew never begins with a vowel. It always consists of either:

A. a **consonant** plus a **vowel** Example: sha שָׁ

B. a **consonant** plus a **vowel** plus a **consonant** Example: teesh תֵּשׁ

It is often easier to read Hebrew words that have many letters when they are broken down into syllables.

Examples:	ta/meed	תָּ/מִיד	=	תְּמִיד
	ay/leem	אֵ/לִים	=	אֵלִים
	sha/lom	שָׁ/לֹום	=	שָׁלוֹם
	ha/a/rehts	הָ/אֵ/רֵחַ	=	הָאֵרֵחַ
	sho/meh/reht	שׁוֹ/מֵ/רֵחַ	=	שׁוֹמֵרֵחַ

The Sheva

A sheva is a half-vowel written as two vertical dots under the consonant X. It is called a half-vowel because it is pronounced so quickly that it is hard to hear.

A. The Sheva at the Beginning of a Word

When the sheva appears under the first letter of a word, it has a short, quick sound, like the **a** in **among** or the **o** in **occur**. We call this a **short-sound sheva**.

Examples: k'tov כְּתוֹב d'var דְּבַר sh'ma שְׁמַע

B. The Sheva in the Middle of a Word

1. When a sheva appears under the second consonant of a consonant-vowel-consonant syllable such as תֵּשׁ, it marks the end of that syllable and is not pronounced. This sheva is called a **silent sheva**.

Examples: teesh/mor תֵּשׁ/מֹר = תֵּשׁמֹר yeeg/dal יֵג/דַּל = יֵגְדַל

Occasionally a sheva in the middle of a word is a short-sound sheva. We will point out these special cases when they occur.

2. When two consecutive consonants in the middle of a word both have a sheva, the first sheva is always a silent sheva, and the second is always a short-sound sheva.

Examples: yeesh/m'roo יֵשׁ / מְרוּ = יִשְׁמְרוּ
teech/t'voo תֵּעַ / תְּוּ = תִּכְתְּבוּ

C. The Sheva at the End of the Word

Sometimes the sheva appears at the end of a word; when it does, the sheva is silent.

Examples: at אַתְּ
ay/naych עַי / נַיְךְ = עֵינַיְךְ
do/da/taych דּוּ / דַּ / תַּיְךְ = דּוֹדְתְּךְ

Sheva Reading Exercises

זמן, תלמודי, לבד, כלי, מלכה, בלי, תוך, יכתבו, למי, שמלה, מרבים

Rules About BeGeD-KeFeT Letters and the Dagesh

A. BeGeD-KeFeT Letters at the Beginning of a Word

When a BeGeD-KeFeT letter ב, ג, ד, כ, פ, ת begins a word, it **always** takes a dagesh.

Examples: bayn בַּן
pa/neem פַּנִּים = פָּנִים
ga/dol גָּדוֹל = גְּדוֹל
de/rech דֶּרֶךְ = דָּרֶךְ

B. BeGeD-KeFeT Letters in the Middle of a Word

When a BeGeD-KeFeT letter appears in the middle of a word, it takes a dagesh if it is preceded by a silent sheva. If you see a dagesh in a BeGeD-KeFeT letter following a sheva, you know that this sheva is a silent sheva.

Examples: ehch/tov אַכְתֵּב = אָכַתְבַּת
leesh/pot לֵשׁ / פֹּט = לִשְׁפֹּט
teev/kehh תֵּב / כֵּה = תִּבְכֶּה

C. BeGeD-KeFeT Letters at the End of a Word

When a BeGeD-KeFeT letter appears at the end of a word it rarely takes a dagesh.

Exercise for BeGeD-KeFeT Letters

In the following words, add a dagesh to the BeGed-KeFet letters where required by the BeGeD-KeFeT rule. All shevas here are silent shevas. When you have finished, practice reading the words aloud.

כּוֹס, פְּנִים, תּוֹרָה, לְזֹכֵר, דְּבָר, אִישׁ, תְּכַתֵּב, בְּרוּךְ, יִגְדֵּל

Combination Vowels

Of the **throaty five** — א, ה, ח, ע, ר — the א, ה, ע and ח are difficult to pronounce with sheva. In words where these four letters have a sheva, a full vowel is added to this sheva to make it easier to sound the syllable.

Only three full vowels may be added to the sheva to form a combination vowel. The combination vowels are $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}$, $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}$ and $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ע}}}$. The combination vowel $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}$ sounds like the $\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}$, the combination vowel $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}$ sounds like the vowel $\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}$, but the combination vowel $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ע}}}$ is pronounced **o** as in **dog**.

Examples:	eh/meht	$\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}/\underset{\cdot}{\text{מ}} = \underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{מ}}}$
	a/cha/ray	$\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}/\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}/\underset{\cdot}{\text{ר}} = \underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ר}}}$
	o/nee	$\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}/\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{נ}}} = \underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{א}}}\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{נ}}}$

Combination Vowel Exercises

Circle the combination vowel in the following words, and read the word aloud.

1. עֲבוּדָה 2. אָנוּשׁ 3. לְעִמּוּד 4. אָנִיָּה 5. שׁוֹאֵלִים 6. לְאָכַל

Odd Endings

The Furtive Patach— $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}$

You have learned that the vowel sign appearing under a word is read **after** the consonant. However, this rule does not apply when the last consonant of a word is ח and the vowel underneath it is $\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}$ — ח. When you see ח at the end of a word, the vowel is pronounced first: **ach** not **cha**.

Examples:	roo/ach	$\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}/\underset{\cdot}{\text{ר}} = \underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ר}}}$
	ko/ach	$\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}/\underset{\cdot}{\text{כ}} = \underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{ח}}}\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{\text{כ}}}$

Additional information on this subject can be found on page 272, note 1.

The “Eye” Ending

When the last vowel of a word is the X vowel followed by a yod—יֵ, the two are pronounced together to form the vowel sound **eye** as in **tie**.

Examples: do/die דוֹ/דֵי = דוֹדֵי a/lie אֵ/אֵי = אֵלֵי

Exercises

Exercise 1. The following words have been broken down into syllables. Read them aloud and copy them without the syllable divisions.

1. אֵשׁ/תוֹ 2. מַחֵ/לוֹן 3. מוֹ/אָב 4. מֶ/קוֹם 5. מֵשׁ/פָּ/חָה
6. נֵ/עַר 7. יֵל/בֶּשׂוּ 8. וָ/קֵנִ/תִּי 9. אֵ/לֵי/מֶ/לֶךְ 10. מוֹ/אָ/בִי

Exercise 2. Divide the following words into syllables.

1. בְּנוֹת 2. מֵתִים 3. שֹׁפֵט 4. נָשׁוּב 5. אֶכְתֹּב
6. אֲבָרָהֶם 7. אֶרֶץ 8. יִכְתְּבוּ 9. הוֹלֵכֵת 10. יַעֲקֹב

Exercise 3. The following are the names of Hebrew letters written in Hebrew. Write them in alphabetical order.

דָּלֵת, רֵישׁ, מֶם, שֵׁן, הָא, לָמֵד, נוּן, בֵּית, יוֹד, תּוֹ, סָמֶךְ, גִּמְלָל, וַיֵּן, אֶלֶף,
פֶּא, חֵית, נוּ, צָדִי, טֵית, קוֹף, עֵין, פֶּף

Exercise 4. Read aloud the opening sentence from the book of Ruth.

וַיְהִי בִימֵי שֹׁפֵט הַשִּׁפְטִים וַיְהִי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ.

Exercise 5. Read aloud the following blessing from the prayerbook which is recited when the Torah is taken from the Ark.

בְּרוּךְ שְׁנַתֵּן תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Exercise 6. If you have a prayerbook or Bible available, practice reading Hebrew as much as possible.