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THE BEGINNING OF THE ALPHABET

Students new to Hebrew will need to work carefully through the first three chapters, which cover the alphabet and the rules for pronunciation. Even those who already know how to read Hebrew are encouraged to review Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3 is particularly important for **all** students because it provides basic information specific to Biblical Hebrew.

Hebrew and English

English Alphabet

1. English is read and written from left to right.
2. In the English alphabet, there are 26 letters: some are vowels (a, e, i, o, u), and some are consonants (b, c, d, g, etc.)
3. Letters in the English alphabet may be capital or lowercase.
4. English letters are not written differently when they appear at the end of a word.
5. It is impossible to learn to read English without knowing the meaning of words, because letters and letter combinations can be pronounced in many ways. Example: the letter **c** in the words **cat** and **circle**.
6. English is pronounced differently in various countries, such as England, Australia, and the United States.

Hebrew Alphabet

1. Hebrew is read and written from right to left.
2. In the Hebrew alphabet, there are 22 letters, all of which are consonants. Vowels are dots and dashes added below and beside the consonants.
3. Letters in the Hebrew alphabet have only one form.
4. Five Hebrew letters have a different form when they appear at the end of a word.
5. Hebrew consonants and vowels are nearly always pronounced the same. Therefore, it is possible to learn to read Hebrew without knowing the meaning of words.
6. Hebrew also has various pronunciations. This book uses the Sephardic, or Middle Eastern, pronunciation.

1 Pronunciation	2 Book Print	3 Final Form	4 Block	5 Script
Silent letter	א		א	א
B as in Bo y V as in Vi ne	ב ב		ב ב	ב ב
G as in Gi rl	ג		ג	ג
D as in Do or	ד		ד	ד
H as in Ho use	ה		ה	ה
V as in Vi ne	ו		ו	ו
Z as in Z ebra	ז		ז	ז
CH as in BaCH	ח		ח	ח
T as in T all	ט		ט	ט
Y as in Ye s	י		י	י
K as in Ki tty CH as in BaCH	כ כ	ך	כ ך	כ כ
L as in Lo ok	ל		ל	ל
M as in Mo on	מ	ם	מ ם	מ ם
N as in No w	נ	ן	נ ן	נ ן
S as in S un	ס		ס	ס
Silent letter	ע		ע	ע
P as in Pa rk F as in Foo d	פ פ	ף	פ ף	פ ף
TS as in NuTS	צ	ץ	צ ץ	צ ץ
K as in Ki tty	ק		ק	ק
R as in Ro bin	ר		ר	ר
SH as in SH e S as in S un	ש ש		ש ש	ש ש
T as in T all	ת		ת	ת

The Alphabet Chart

Column 1: the English pronunciation for each Hebrew letter.

Column 2: the letters of the Hebrew alphabet as they are printed in books. We call this type of lettering **Book Print**.

Column 3: the five final letters in Book Print.

Column 4: the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (including final letters) in Block style, a simplified form of written Hebrew.

Column 5: the letters (including final letters) in Script style, the commonly-used form of written Hebrew.

The names of the Hebrew letters appear on page 414.

Learning to Write Hebrew

While we stress reading and pronunciation, one very helpful way of learning a language is to write it. In order to read the lessons in this book, it is necessary to learn how to read Book Print. To write the exercises, you will need to learn either the Block or the Script letters. We recommend that you do all the written exercises.

1 Pronunciation	2 Book Print	3 Final Form	4 Block	5 Script
Silent letter	א		א	א
B as in Boy V as in Vine	ב ב		ב ב	ב ב
G as in Girl	ג		ג	ג
D as in Door	ד		ד	ד
H as in House	ה		ה	ה
V as in Vine	ו		ו	ו
Z as in Zebra	ז		ז	ז
CH as in BaCH	ח		ח	ח
T as in Tall	ט		ט	ט
Y as in Yes	י		י	י
K as in Kitty CH as in BaCH	כ כ	ך	כך כך	כך כך
L as in Look	ל		ל	ל
M as in Moon	מ	ם	מם מם	מם מם
N as in Now	נ	ן	נן נן	נן נן
S as in Sun	ס		ס	ס
Silent letter	ע		ע	ע
P as in Park F as in Food	פ פ	ף	פף פף	פף פף
TS as in NuTS	צ	ץ	צץ צץ	צץ צץ
K as in Kitty	ק		ק	ק
R as in Robin	ר		ר	ר
SH as in SHe S as in Sun	ש ש		ש ש	ש ש
T as in Tall	ת		ת	ת

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The First Six Letters and Two Vowels

Silent letter	א	א	א
B as in Boy V as in Vine	ב ב	ב ב	ב ב
G as in Girl	ג	ג	ג
D as in Door	ד	ד	ד
H as in House	ה	ה	ה
V as in Vine	ו	ו	ו

- א is a silent letter. You can pronounce the vowel after the א, but not the א itself.
- ב and ב are the same letter, although ב is pronounced **B** as in **Boy** and ב is pronounced **V** as in **Vine**.
- The letters ב and ו are pronounced the same way: **V** as in **Vine**.
- When ה comes at the end of a word and is not followed by a vowel, it is silent.
- Hebrew letters sometimes have dots in the middle, but there are only a few cases in which the dot changes a letter's pronunciation. You have learned one of these.

Two Hebrew Vowels

Vowels are shown by adding dots and dashes below or beside consonants. Two vowels are shown below. Both are added below consonants, and both are pronounced in the same way.¹ The X represents any Hebrew consonant.

a as in yacht X X

When a vowel is written below a consonant, pronounce the consonant first and then the vowel. When a vowel appears below an א, pronounce the vowel only.

ב = X + ב
א = X + א

← Always read Hebrew from right to left.

Look-Alike Letters

Some letters look alike and may confuse the beginning reader. Notice the differences.

ה ה פ פ כ ב י ז ו

Checkup Words

In many examples in this book, Hebrew letter and vowel combinations are shown with English words that have the same sound. This will make it easier for you to check your pronunciation of new Hebrew letters and vowels as you learn them.

ha ha! הָא-הָא Bob בּוֹב odd אֹד bog בּוֹג
 aha! אָהָא key כֵּי heat הֵט Bach בַּח
 easy אֵזִי yacht יַט eat אֵט

Exercises

Every chapter ends with exercises. It may seem that we have included too many, but we urge you to do them all. In learning a language, as in learning to drive a car, practice is the most important part.

1. Pronounce the letters below. Circle the letters in each line that are the same as the letters in the box.

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------|----|
| י | ו | י | ו | ז | י | ה | ו | ב | <input type="checkbox"/> | .1 |
| ב | כ | ו | ב | פ | פ | ה | ב | כ | <input type="checkbox"/> | .2 |
| כ | ו | ה | ה | ו | ה | ב | ה | ה | <input type="checkbox"/> | .3 |
| פ | ט | ט | ה | ה | ב | ט | כ | פ | <input type="checkbox"/> | .4 |
| ה | ו | א | ד | ה | ג | א | פ | ט | <input type="checkbox"/> | .5 |
| ה | ד | י | ט | ד | כ | ט | ג | א | <input type="checkbox"/> | .6 |
| ז | א | י | ט | ט | ז | ו | ד | פ | <input type="checkbox"/> | .7 |

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THE LAST HALF OF THE ALPHABET

Listed below are the next six letters of the Hebrew alphabet, plus two more vowels.

L as in Look	ל	ל	ל
M as in Moon	מ	מ	מ
N as in Now	נ	נ	נ
S as in Sun	ס	ס	ס
Silent letter	ע	ע	ע
P as in Park	פ	פ	פ
F as in Food	פ	פ	פ

ay as in hay אָ אֲ eh as in bed אֵ

1. The letter ע, like the letter א, is silent. Pronounce the vowel following the ע, but not the ע itself.
2. פ and פ are the same letter, although פ is pronounced P as in People, and פ is pronounced F as in Food.
3. The new vowel אָ may be written in two ways:
as two dots under a consonant אָ, or
as two dots under a consonant followed by ׳ as אֲ. There is no difference in the pronunciation of אָ and אֲ. Both sound like the English word hay.
4. The new vowel אֵ is pronounced e as in bed and is infrequently followed by a ׳.

Look-Alike Letters

נ כ נ ג מ ט

Checkup Words

safety	ספטי	ate	עט	less	לס
meal	מיל	say	סי	bed	בד
maybe	מיבי	peg	פג		

Reading Practice

1. לל לט אל על לס לה לע למ
2. מט מד מס מיל מל מד מג מפד
3. נד נב נל נט נה נל נו נקה
4. סל סד סיה סח סו סיב סד סכה
5. עד עז עט עז על עיס עו עני
6. פא פב פג פיל פד פיה פו פפה
7. כי יט טט בט סט לס לט
8. כס פס פל סל סד לב עד לד
9. סא סע סי מד עז פז טז דז
10. מט מט סט סט לט דל דט מא
11. נע גי נא פב פט פז פס עז
12. גיל פיל סיל טיל דיל היל חיל

The Last Five Letters and Two Vowels

Listed below are the last five letters of the Hebrew alphabet and two new vowels.

TS as in NuTS	צ	ץ	ץ
K as in Kitty	ק	ך	ך
R as in Robin	ר	ך	ך
SH as in SHe S as in Sun	שׁ שׂ	שׁ שׂ	e e
T as in Tall	ת	ת	ת

o as in low אָ אֹ

oo as in zoo אֻ אֹ

- שׁ and שׂ are the same letter, although שׁ is pronounced SH as in SHape, and שׂ is pronounced S as in Sun.
- ת and ט are both pronounced the same way: T as in Tall.
- ך and כ are both pronounced the same way: K as in Kitty.
- שׁ and ס are both pronounced the same way: S as in Sun.
- The new vowel אָ appears to the left of the letter and may be written in two ways: as a dot at the top of the ך appearing to the left of a consonant אֹ, or as a dot to the upper left of a consonant אֻ. The sound is the same whether the vowel has the ך with the dot אֹ, or just the dot אֻ.

ode עוד ode עד

- The second new vowel אֹ may be written in two ways: as the letter ך with a dot in the middle appearing to the left of consonant אֹ, or as three dots underneath a consonant אֻ. Both vowels have the same sound.

root רות root רת

7. The ך is **not** a vowel and a consonant at the same time. When a ך functions as a vowel, sounded o ךX or oo ךX, it does **not** have the sound of V as in Vine.

With a dot above it, the ך sounds like o as in row: ךו

With a dot in its center, the ך sounds like oo as in pool: ךו

With a vowel under it, the ך sounds like V as in Vine with its vowel sound:

vale ךל vet ךט Viva! ךיה veal ךיל

8. When the vowel X appears next to a ש, the dot from the ש usually combines with the vowel X.

ישב = י ש ב משה = מ ש ה

Look-Alike Letters

ד ר צ ע ח ת א צ

Checkup Words

Coca Cola קוקה קולה rule רול coat קות note נט
 Betsy בצײ toot תת Sue שׂו show שׂוא

Reading Practice

1. צג צו צא צוב צי צח צע צפה
2. קוב קד קט קב קוו קו קז קקו
3. רוט רוו רב רק רק רע רי ריא
4. שׂוא שׂוז שׂת שׂח שׂע שׂיט שׂוב
5. שׂוא שׂול שׂס שׂק שׂיד שׂו שׂא
6. תׂוא תׂוב תׂג תׂד תׂה תׂו תׂז תׂיק
7. מׂות לׂמות עׂור אׂור קׂור וׂתק דׂוד דׂוד

The Five Final Letter Forms

Five Hebrew letters have a different shape when they are written at the end of a word. The regular and final forms of a letter are still the same letter, and they are pronounced in the same way.

CH as in BaCH	כ	ך	ך	ך
M as in Moon	מ	ם	ם	ם
N as in Now	נ	ן	ן	ן
F as in Food	פ	ף	ף	ף
TS as in NuTS	צ	ץ	ץ	ץ

At the End
of a Word

In the Beginning
or Middle of a Word

לָהּ, כְּמוֹךָ	שָׁכַב, זָכַר	.1
אִם, יוֹם	מָה, אֲמִי	.2
אִמּוֹ, בֵּן	נִעַר, בָּנָה	.3
אָף, כָּף	נִפְלַל, שָׁפַט	.4
עֵץ, רֵץ	צִדִּיק, מִצָּה	.5

- The final form ך is usually written with two dots inside it ך. These dots have no sound. Sometimes the vowel X appears inside the final form ך. This is pronounced **cha**.

Reading Practice

לָהּ קָף אֶלֶף עֶלֶף בְּנִיָּה צַד מִצַּב	.1
מִים עִם אִם מִצָּה שָׁמַר בִּם צָפוֹן	.2
בֵּן שָׁנָה נִין נִטַּע נָתַן לוֹן אֶפֶס	.3

Summary of Possible Pitfalls

Here is a review of all the look-alike letters in the alphabet.

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

Here is a review of all the letters that sound alike.

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

Exercises

- Write the last 13 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the five final letters ten times each. Write each (excepting the final letters) first without vowels, then with vowels. As you write, say the sounds aloud. Be sure to include all the vowels you have learned.
- Practice reading the following words aloud. Be careful not to confuse the letters that look alike but sound different.

גז — גז	קו — קו	דם — דם
עם — עם	פך — לך	שכר — שבר
נהר — נחם	עיר — לץ	גם — גם
אב — צב	מום — טום	תשע — חדש
היה — תיה	פנה — פנה	סוס — שוס

3. The following Hebrew letters form English words and they have no meaning in Hebrew. Find the English word in the list below that matches each Hebrew form.

					Example: odd	אָד
קָר .25	כֵּיב .21	בֵּיד .17	גַּם .13	פֶּד .9	יֵט .5	אָד .1
מִית .26	דָּף .22	טָר .18	רַד .14	לוֹן .10	גֵּט .6	סָד .2
זוּם .27	רִיט .23	תָּא .19	נָת .15	הֵית .11	דוּז .7	שֵׁיץ .3
קִיא .28	לוּם .24	עוּ .20	טֵל .16	עֵץ .12	בָּד .8	סִין .4

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

4. Read the names of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet aloud. They are listed in alphabetical order. The initial letter of each word will tell you which letter is being named. Write all the forms of all the letters in the Hebrew alphabet and copy the correct letter-name next to each one.

אָלף בֵּית גַּמֵּל דָּלֶת הֵא וּו זַיִן חֵית
 טֵית יוֹד כָּף לָמֵד מֵם נוּן סָמֵךְ עֵיִן
 פֵּא צָדִי קוֹף רִישׁ שֵׁיִן תּוֹ

5. Read the following combinations and write out the two that sound alike.

1. מָרוֹם מְדִים מְנוֹס מוֹדֵם שָׁלוֹם
2. נִתָּן גֵּאֵל גֶּפֶן גֵּב נִפֵּל גוֹנִיו
3. יַחַד יוֹסֵד הוֹדוּ הֶמוֹן יָכַד חֲזָק
4. אָרוּ צָבֵא צָרָה עָרַב אָצֵל עֲשֵׂה
5. רָצוֹן דְּרוֹט דֶּרֶךְ דוֹרוֹת רָשַׁע שֵׁם
6. סִפֵּר שָׂרָה שָׁמַר שָׂמַח שִׁפֵּר

6. The following are all real Hebrew words. Read them aloud until you can read them easily.

1. אָדוֹן אֶלֶף בְּנִים בְּגָד שֶׁבֶת לֵךְ זָרַע חוֹן
2. חֶרֶף טָהוֹר יוֹם כֵּן לָחֵם מֶלֶךְ נִשְׂא סְרוּ
3. עֵץ אָדוּם פַּעַם בְּרוּךְ טוֹבִים צָפוּן רָחֵם קוֹ
4. רָחֵץ קָדָם אֵף אַח יֵין כָּנָף לֹוי מָגֵן רֵד
5. שָׂרָה אָהֵב נָתַן אָכַל סוּר אָמַר עָבַר אָסַף
6. אֶרֶץ שָׂאֵל שָׁנָא שָׁנָה זוּלְתוֹ הוּא נֵר עִם
7. זֶז וְלָד לֵבָב צָרָה מִתְנָה רֹאשׁ שָׁבֵץ עֵגֶל
8. אָקוּם שְׁמֵשׁ טַבַּעַת חֲמִץ לָרְדַת שְׁוֹה בָּם עִם
9. קוּם זִיתִים מְקוּם נָתַן סוּף אִין סִתָּר תוּדָה
10. תֵּן שׁוֹפָר אָבֵן בְּקָר יָמָה בְּשָׁר כֹּה דָמִים
11. חֲדָשׁ יוֹם כֹּל כֶּסֶף אֲתָה בְּנוֹת דוּרוֹת לֵץ
12. עוֹף עָפָר פֶּה צֵאן שֶׁבֶת שְׁלוֹם בִּימָה שָׁרִים
13. רָשַׁע רַע אַחֲרַת שׁוֹמֵר סֶפֶר רַבּוֹת מֵאָה
14. עוֹלָם בּוֹא עָלָה בְּנָה הָיָה זָכַר חֲזַק לָקַח

7. Write out the first four lines of Exercise 6. If you need extra practice, write out all of Exercise 6.

8. Read and enjoy.

סִי בְּתִי עֵת. עֵת, בְּתִי, עֵת.
 סִי בְּתִי עֵת כִּישׁ. עֵת כִּישׁ, בְּתִי, עֵת כִּישׁ.
 סִי בָּב עֵת בְּתִיזוֹ כִּישׁ. סִי בְּתִי בֵּית בָּב.

The Sheva in the Middle of a Word

When a sheva appears alone in the middle of a word, it usually falls at the end of a syllable and is not pronounced.²

concave קִנְיָב carpool כַּרְפוּל meatloaf מֵטְלוֹף

Read the following words aloud.

יִשְׁתֶּה נִפְלְנוּ מְנַחֵה אֲבָנָה אֲנִשִּׁי שְׁמֵתָם

Whenever two shevas appear side by side in the middle of a word, the first sheva is silent, and the second is pronounced with a short, slurred sound.

consummate קִנְסִימִית

Read the following line aloud.

יִכְתְּבוּ קִדְשֶׁךָ יִשְׁמְרוּ תִלְבְּשׁוּ רַגְלְכֶם

Reading Practice

Read the following lines aloud. Each sheva is a silent vowel.

יִשְׁמַר יִזְכֹּר יִפְקֹד מְלָכִי אֲנִשִּׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מְנִין אֲרָצִי יִכְתֹּב כְּנָפֵי עֲבָדֵי יִגְדֹל

Each sheva in these lines must be pronounced with the short, slurred sound.

דְּמִי פְרִי מְלֵא וְדוֹר לְשֵׁם שְׁמִי קְדוֹשׁ
יִסוּד בְּנֵי שְׁמֵר וְגַד כְּתוּבָה בְּלִי יָמֵי

In each of these words the first sheva is silent, and the second sheva is pronounced with the short, slurred sound.

יִשְׁפֹּטוּ תִמְצְאוּ שְׁבִתָּה תִבְטְחוּ נִכְרָתוּ
תִשְׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפָּחוֹת לְכִתְּבָה יִשְׁמְחוּ
מִזְבְּחוֹת נִזְכְּרוּ נִמְצְאוּ מִמְלָכוֹת

Combination Vowels

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

When the sheva appears next to the vowel \underline{X} or the vowel \underline{X} , it sounds like a hurried \underline{X} or \underline{X} .

e as in bed = \underline{X} = \underline{X}

a as in yacht = \underline{X} = \underline{X}

Ed = עֵד = עֵד

odd = עֵד = עֵד

When a sheva appears next to the vowel \underline{X} , it sounds like the o in low.

ode = עוֹד = עוֹד

o as in low = אוֹ = אוֹ

Read the following line aloud.

אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה חֻק הַדָּס אֲנִי נֹעֲמִי
אֲדוֹן אֲמֶת עֲנִי

Syllables

A Hebrew syllable always begins with a consonant (א and ע are considered consonants). It consists of either:

- a **consonant** plus a **vowel**: sha שָׁ
- a **consonant** plus a **vowel** plus a **consonant**: teesh תֵּשׁ

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

הַאֲרֵץ = הָ - אָ - רֵץ תְּמִיד = תָּ - מִיד
שׁוֹמְרֵת = שׁוּ - מְ - רֵת אֱלִים = אֵ - לִים

Syllables and Sheva

1. In most cases a silent sheva \dot{X} indicates the end of a syllable.

יֵשׁ-רָ-אֵל מֵשׁ-פֶּט יֵצֵ-קָק

2. When the sheva \dot{X} appears at the beginning of a word it is a syllable by itself.

בֵּי-בֵי-תִי לֵה-הָדָ-לִיק גֵּדוּ-לָה

3. When two shevas $\dot{X}\dot{X}$ appear in a row, the second is a syllable by itself and is not silent.

תֵּת-תֵּבִי יֵז-כֵּרוּ מֵשׁ-פֵּחֹת

Accents

Hebrew words are normally pronounced with the accent on the last syllable. If the accent is not on the last syllable, we will show an accent mark \acute{X} over the syllable that should be accented when we present the vocabulary.

Accent on other than last syllable:

Accent on the last syllable:

וְ-אֶ-נַח-נוּ יֵ-עֶ-קֵב אֶבֶר-רָ-קָם
 יֵ-רוּ-שׁ-לֵם מֵשׁ-לֵי-כִים אֶדֶבֶר

Odd Vowels

Last Letter ח

When the last letter of a word is ח, and the vowel underneath is \dot{X} , the combination is pronounced **ach**, and not **cha**.³

roo-ach רוֹחַ ko-ach כּוֹחַ

Read the following line aloud.

נַח שַׁח שַׁח מְשַׁח שְׁלִיחַ סוֹלַח

The Vowel X and the י

When the vowel X is followed by the letter י, the combination יX is pronounced **ai** as in **aisle**.

my מי bowtie בתי

Read the following line aloud.

עלי בני אבותי די עיני חי

The Vowel o and the י

When the vowel o is followed by the letter י, the combination יo is pronounced **oi** as in **boil**.

soil סויל boy בוי

Read the following line aloud.

גוי גוים הוי אויב אויבי אבוי

The Dagesh

A dagesh is a dot in the center of a letter. It may appear in most letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and should be thought of as part of the spelling of a word. There are definite rules concerning the uses of every dagesh, but for the purposes of this text, we will discuss only the most important ones.

The Beged Kefet Letters

The words **Beged Kefet** are used as a memory device for the combined letters in the Beged Kefet group. **ב** and **ג** and **ד** make Beged, **כ** and **פ** and **ת** combine to make Kefet. At one time, all six of these letters were pronounced one way with a dagesh and another way without a dagesh. Today, only three of these letters (the **ב**, the **כ**, and the **פ**) change their pronunciation when a dagesh is added. However, all six of the Beged Kefet (**בגד כפת**) letters continue to act as a group. A dagesh never changes the meaning of the word when it changes the pronunciation.

The Vowel X and the י

When the vowel X is followed by the letter י, the combination Xי is pronounced **ai** as in **aisle**.

my מי bowtie בתי

Read the following line aloud.

עלי בני אבותי די עיני חי

The Vowel א and the י

When the vowel א is followed by the letter י, the combination אי is pronounced **oi** as in **boil**.

soil סויל boy בוי

Read the following line aloud.

גוי גוים הוי אויב אויבי אבוי

The Dagesh

A dagesh is a dot in the center of a letter. It may appear in most letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and should be thought of as part of the spelling of a word. There are definite rules concerning the uses of every dagesh, but for the purposes of this text, we will discuss only the most important ones.

The Beged Kefet Letters

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Two Spelling Rules

At the beginning of a word, a Beged Kefet letter usually takes a dagesh.

בית גדול דוד כתב פרי תורה

At the end of a word, a Beged Kefet letter usually does **not** take a dagesh.

אב חג בגד מלך אף אמת

The Five Gutturals

The only letters in the Hebrew alphabet that cannot take a dagesh are **א, ה, ח, ע,** and **ך**. These letters are called **Gutturals** and were once sounded in the throat. Because they cannot take a dagesh, these letters upset normal spelling rules and create exceptions in grammar. We will discuss these exceptions as they arise. It is important to memorize these five letters as a group.

Exercises

1. Below are some examples of words divided into syllables. Pronounce each syllable. Then read the new word.

1. שֵׁ - נַנְ - תָּם = שְׁנַנְתָּם

2. הַ - מְתַ - נַ - שָׂא = הַמְתַּנְשָׂא

3. לְ - הַד - לִיק = לְהַדְלִיק

4. מַ - מְשַׁ - פַּח - תּוּ = מְמַשְׁפַּחְתּוּ

5. הַת - פַּ - לְלִ - תָּם = הַתְּפַלְלִתָּם

6. אַ - נַ - שִׁים = אַנְשִׁים

7. הַ - מְשַׁ - פְּ - טִים = הַמְשַׁפְּטִים

8. בָּ - רָא - שֵׁ - נִים = בָּרָאשֵׁנִים

2. Write out each of the following words in syllables. Then pronounce them.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| מְשַׁפְּחוֹת .13 | דְּרָכִים .9 | יִכְתְּבוּ .5 | אֲבָרְהֶם .1 |
| מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים .14 | וּבְלִכְתָּהּ .10 | הִלְכֹתִי .6 | יְהוּדָה .2 |
| הַבָּאִים .15 | מַעֲשֵׂיכֶם .11 | וְאֶהְבֶּתְּ .7 | הוֹצֵאתִי .3 |
| הַמּוֹצִיא .16 | נוֹתָנִים .12 | וְצַדִּיקָה .8 | הַדְּבָרִים .4 |

3. Read the following words with odd endings. If you have trouble pronouncing them, review the endings on pages 19 and 20.

1. כַּח פּוֹתַח שְׂבַח שׁוֹכַח נוֹחַ נִיחוּחַ לוֹקַח
2. בְּנֵי דוּדֵי יְדֵי חַיִּים אוֹלֵי נְעֻלֵי אֵיל בֵּיתִי
3. בֵּית מַיִם גּוֹי גּוֹיִם חַיִּי לִילָה עֵינַי חַי
4. שָׁנִים אֲלֵפִים יְמֵי כַפֵּי אָבוֹתֵי עֵינַיִם

4. List the letters which always take a dagesh at the beginning of a word. What two words do we use as a memory device for remembering these letters?

5. Put the dagesh in the following words whenever necessary.

1. כָּל אָבוֹתֵי בָא עֶגְלָה גְדוֹל דָּבָר כָּבוֹד
2. פָּעַל דוּדִים תָּמִיד בֵּית דְּרָכִים לְפָנַי
3. בָּנָה וּבָנָה אֵיל חָרַב בְּרִית בְּבָרִית
4. פָּרוֹת גְּבוּל וּבְגְבוּל צֶאֱן עֶפְרָת דוּר
5. דָּמִים הָר כֹּהֵן לְכָבוֹד יָם תוֹרָה כֹּה

6. List the five letters which do not take a dagesh. What do we call them as a group?

7. Find the silly English sentences hidden in the Hebrew.

1. הִיר טֵד פְּלִי בַח. אֹר אַר יו טוֹנְדָה?
2. פֶּרֶק מִי קָר נָת טָא נִיר מִי בוֹט.
3. מִי בּוֹי עֵץ רָד מִית טוֹדִי. הִיא עֵת טוֹנָה תּוּ.
4. יו דּוּ נָט תַק כּוּל קוֹקָה קוֹלָה טוּ אַ קַרְפֵּל.

8. Write these silly sentences with Hebrew letters as many ways as you can.

1. She said to Ted: "Go to bed! Do not read!"
2. Oh my dear, take off your party shoes before Papa sees you.
3. She sells sea shells by a seashore.
4. He said to Ned, "I hate to be late to consummate a deal on Tuesday."

9. The following words are all real Hebrew words. Read them aloud until you can read them easily.

1. אֲדָמָה אֶהָבָה אֲמַת אֲנַחְנוּ אֶת בְּרָכָה בְּטָרָם
2. בָּרְכוּ בְּבֵית גְּאֻלָּה גְּדֻלָּה גּוֹיָה גִּנּוּב גְּמֻרְתִּי
3. דְּרָפִי דְּבוּרָה דְּרָשָׁה הַמְּלִיכוּ הַלְּכָה הֶלְיִכוֹת
4. וְדַבֵּר וְאֵלֶּךְ וְזֶה וְאֶחָד זְכָרְתִּי זְלָפָה זִמְזֵם
5. זְקֵנָה חֲדָשָׁה חֲטָא חֲסָדִים חֲבָלִי חֲפָצוֹ טַעְמוֹ
6. טַפְּכֶם טוֹפְלֵי טוֹב יְדַבֵּר יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂדֵי
7. כְּתַבְתֶּם כְּאֲשֶׁר כְּתַבָּה כְּהַנִּים לְפָנַי לְהַדְּלִיק
8. מַעֲשֵׂה מַצּוּה מַשְׁפָּחָה מְאֻדָּה נֹאמֵר רַחֲמִים
9. נְעָמִי סֵלַח סְפָרִים סִסְרָא סִנְחָרִיב עֲלִיוֹן
10. עֲזָרָה פְּרִי פָּנַי פְּלִשְׁתִּים פְּעָמִים צְדָקָה
11. צְלָמוֹת קִדְשָׁנוּ קִדְשׁ קִשְׁתּוֹ נְאֻמָּן

- .12 רְגִלֵינוּ שׁוֹמְרֵי שְׁבִיעֵי שְׁכִינָה שְׁלָךְ שְׂרָפִים
- .13 שׁוֹנְאֵי תַפְאֶרֶת תְּהִלָּה תִלְמוּד תְּשׁוּבָה אֲדִיר
- .14 הַמְּבָרֵךְ חֶלֶק טֹטֶפֶת יִצִיר פְּכָלוֹת נִקְדִישׁ
- .15 יִצְחָק לְבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד נִשְׁמָה נְבִיאִים
- .16 בְּלִי דְבָרִים הֵלֵם וְלֵךְ יָדַיִם טְהוֹרָה יְהוּדָה
- .17 עֲרָבִים עֲבָדִים צְבָאוֹת יִצִיק בּוֹאֲכֵם גּוֹמֵל

Caution

Do not be disturbed if you are still reading Hebrew words haltingly. In Chapters 1 through 3 it is our intention to simply acquaint you with the letters and pronunciation. Reading Hebrew will come more easily as you learn the language. However, if you want to improve your reading skills, we recommend Teach Yourself to Read Hebrew, available with or without audio tapes from EKS Publishing.

4

NOUNS AND VERBS: MASCULINE

Oral Review

Read the following words aloud.

1. אַבְרָהָם, אַהֲרֹן, דָּוִד, יוֹסֵף, לְאָה, מֹשֶׁה, יִצְחָק
2. יִשְׂרָאֵל, מוֹאָב, מִצְרַיִם, פְּרָעָה, רוּת, נְעֻמִי, שָׂרָה
3. שְׁלוֹם, בַּיִת, בֵּן, אִישׁ, דְּבָר, הוּא, זָכָר, נֶעַר
4. מֶלֶךְ, מִלְּךָ, בַּת, עָמֵד, שָׁמַע, שָׁמַר, בְּהֵמָה, נֶעְרָה
5. אִשָּׁה, מִשְׁפָּחָה, דֶּרֶךְ, אֶרֶץ, בְּתוּךְ, רוּחַ, לִפְנֵי
6. לֶחֶם, צֹאן, גְּבִלָה, עָמְדוּ, לִילָה, מְלָכוֹ, בְּדֶרֶךְ
7. הָאָב, הַבֵּן, הַבַּת, הַדְּבָר, הַמֶּלֶךְ, הָאִישׁ, הַנֶּעַר
8. בָּתִּים, בָּנִים, דְּבָרִים, מְלָכִים, נְעָרִים, עָרִים
9. אָבוֹת, בָּנוֹת, בְּהֵמוֹת, מִשְׁפָּחוֹת, נְעָרוֹת, אֵת
10. אֲנָשִׁים, אֶרְצוֹת, נָשִׁים, דְּרָכִים, עֲבָדִים, עַמִּים
11. שָׁמַרְתִּי, שָׁמַרְתָּ, שָׁמַרְתָּ, שָׁמַר, שָׁמְרָה, שָׁמְרוּ
12. אֲנִי, אַתָּה, אַתָּה, הוּא, הִיא, אֲנַחְנוּ, אַתֶּם, הֵם
13. הָאֲחִים, מִמְּצָרִים, שָׁמְעוּ, מָה, שְׁעָרִים, הַשַּׁעַר
14. אֲדוֹן, אֲדוֹנִים, יָד, יָדַיִם, רֹאשׁ, רֹאשִׁים, שֵׁם
15. שְׁמוֹת, אֶהָל, אֶהָלִים, כֹּהֵן, כֹּהֲנִים, כְּלִי, כְּלִים
16. מִדְּבָר, נִפְשׁ, נִפְשׁוֹת, שָׂר, שָׂרִים, פָּנִים, עוֹד
17. כֶּתֶב, זָהָב, דָּם, דָּמִים, כֶּסֶף, עוֹלָם, עֵץ, עֲצִים
18. מִצְאוֹ, כֶּתֶבְנוּ, פִּתְחוֹת, קָרְאתָ, זָכְרָה, שָׁמַע

Each chapter from now on includes a vocabulary list. Each word in the vocabulary lists has been selected because it appears frequently in the Bible. Memorize the vocabulary words.

Vocabulary

remembered	זָכַר	Abraham.....	אַבְרָהָם
ruled, reigned	מָלַךְ	man	אִישׁ
king	מֶלֶךְ	house	בַּיִת
young man	נָעַר	son	בֶּן
stood	עָמַד	word, thing.....	דָּבָר
heard, listened	שָׁמַע	David	דָּוִד
guarded, kept.....	שָׁמַר	he, it	הוּא

In the vocabulary for each chapter, words that are not accented on the last syllable will be shown with an accent mark \acute{X} . The words **בַּיִת**, **מֶלֶךְ**, and **נָעַר** are all accented on the first syllable.

The Hebrew Sentence

In both English and Hebrew, a sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought.

<i>David remembered</i>	David remembered.	דָּוִד זָכַר .
<i>Abraham guarded his son</i>	He stood.	הוּא עָמַד .
<i>A man stood in a house</i>	A man heard.	אִישׁ שָׁמַע .
<i>He heard a word</i>	A king ruled.	מֶלֶךְ מָלַךְ .
<i>A boy kept a house</i>	Abraham guarded.	אַבְרָהָם שָׁמַר .

Remember that Hebrew reads from right to left.

In English the verb normally follows the subject.

David remembered. He stood.

In Hebrew the verb usually precedes the subject, but may also follow it.

David remembered. דָּוִד זָכַר .
 David remembered. זָכַר דָּוִד .
 He stood. הוּא עָמַד .
 He stood. עָמַד הוּא .

The Subject of a Sentence

The **subject** of a sentence is a noun or pronoun that performs the action in the sentence. A **noun** is a word that names a person, place, object, or idea. The nouns in the vocabulary of this chapter are:

word, thing.....	דָּבָר	Abraham.....	אַבְרָהָם
David.....	דָּוִד	man.....	אִישׁ
king.....	מֶלֶךְ	house.....	בַּיִת
young man.....	נָעַר	son.....	בֶּן

A **pronoun** is a word used in place of a noun. For example, the words **he**, **she**, and **it** are pronouns. The vocabulary of this chapter introduces the pronoun **הוא** **he**.

Verbs

A verb is a word that describes the action of the subject of a sentence. In the sentence **David remembered**, the verb is **remembered**. The verbs in this chapter are:

stood.....	עָמַד	remembered.....	זָכַר
heard.....	שָׁמַע	ruled.....	מָלַךְ
guarded, kept.....	שָׁמַר		

The Meaning of the Perfect Tense

English verbs describe action in past, present, and future tenses. biblical Hebrew has only two tenses: **perfect**, which describes completed action; and **imperfect**, which describes action which is not complete.

All the verbs shown above are shown in the perfect tense. In Biblical Hebrew, the perfect tense is sometimes used to describe present completed action or even future completed action, as well as past completed action. In this book, however, the perfect tense will be treated as if it were equivalent to the English past tense.

In English there are many ways to describe action in the past. In Hebrew there is only one way. The Hebrew sentence דָּוִד שָׁמַר can be translated into English as shown below.

David guarded. David did guard. David was guarding. } דָּוִד שָׁמַר.
 David has guarded. David had guarded.

The Definite Article

In English there is an indefinite article: **a** or **an**, as in **a man** or **an eye**. In Hebrew there is **no** indefinite article. Therefore, מֶלֶךְ can mean either **king** or **a king**, depending on the context. In both English and Hebrew there is a definite article. In English, the definite article is a separate word: **the**. In Hebrew, the definite article is attached to a noun and cannot stand alone. The definite article הַ usually has a **◊** under it, followed by a **dagesh** in the next letter.

the = הַ◊

הַמֶּלֶךְ the king	מֶלֶךְ king
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Definite Noun	=	Indefinite Noun	+	Definite Article
הַנְּעָר the young man	=	נְעָר young man	+	הַ◊ the
הַדָּבָר the word	=	דָּבָר word	+	הַ◊ the
הַבֶּן the son	=	בֶּן son	+	הַ◊ the
הַבַּיִת the house	=	בַּיִת house	+	הַ◊ the

The Definite Article and the Five Gutturals

When the definite article comes before a word that begins with one of the five guttural letters (א, ה, ה, ע, ר) the הַ◊ may change to הֶ or הֵ, and there is **no** dagesh in the following letter.⁴

the man.....	הַ	אִישׁ	man	אִישׁ
the city	הֶ	עִיר	city.....	עִיר
the cities.....	הֵ	עָרִים	cities.....	עָרִים

Remember that the meaning stays the same whether or not there is a dagesh.

Nouns That Are Definite by Nature

Some nouns are definite by nature. In English, we call them **proper nouns**. They include the names of specific people and specific places. The definite article is not usually used before a proper noun.

The man remembered.הָאִישׁ זָכַר.
Abraham remembered.אַבְרָהָם זָכַר.
 The king stood.הַמֶּלֶךְ עָמַד.
David stood.דָּוִד עָמַד.

Exercises

1. Vocabulary Drill. Read and translate the following words.

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|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| דָּבָר .11 | בַּיִת .6 | עָמַד .1 |
| זָכַר .12 | אַבְרָהָם .7 | בֵּן .2 |
| מֶלֶךְ .13 | מֶלֶךְ .8 | הוּא .3 |
| נָעַר .14 | שָׁמַר .9 | שָׁמַע .4 |
| הַנָּעַר .15 | דָּוִד .10 | אִישׁ .5 |

2. Read and translate the following.

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|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| עָמַד בַּיִת. .7 | בֵּן עָמַד. .4 | אַבְרָהָם עָמַד. .1 |
| נָעַר זָכַר. .8 | שָׁמַר דָּוִד. .5 | שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם. .2 |
| שָׁמַר אִישׁ. .9 | הוּא מֶלֶךְ. .6 | מֶלֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ. .3 |

3. Read and translate the following pairs of sentences.

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|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| דָּוִד זָכַר דָּבָר. .5 | אִישׁ שָׁמַר. .3 | נָעַר שָׁמַע. .1 |
| הָאִישׁ זָכַר דָּבָר. | הָאִישׁ שָׁמַר. | הַנָּעַר שָׁמַע. |
| הוּא שָׁמַר בַּיִת. .6 | מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ. .4 | עָמַד בֵּן. .2 |
| הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁמַר בַּיִת. | מֶלֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ. | עָמַד הַבֵּן. |

4. Add the definite article הַ to the following words. Don't forget to add the **dagesh** when you add the definite article as necessary.

נָעַר בַּיִת בֵּן דָּבָר מֶלֶךְ

5. Translate the following sentences into Hebrew.

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|---|--|
| 1. A young man heard.
The young man heard. | 4. The man guarded.
The man was guarding. |
| 2. A king ruled.
The king ruled. | 5. The young man was guarding.
A young man had guarded. |
| 3. The son stood.
The son remembered. | 6. A king remembered.
The king did remember. |

6. Read and translate into English.

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 6. זָכַר הוּא בַּיִת. | 1. אֲבָרְהָם שָׁמַע דְּבָר. |
| 7. שָׁמַע הָאִישׁ דְּבָר. | 2. מֶלֶךְ דְּיוֹד. |
| 8. הַבַּיִת עָמַד. | 3. זָכַר הַנְּעָר דְּבָר. |
| 9. הַמֶּלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ. | 4. בֶּן שָׁמַר. |
| | 5. עָמַד הַמֶּלֶךְ. |

7. Translate into Hebrew.

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. The man stood. | 6. The son heard. |
| 2. The man guarded a house. | 7. A king guarded. |
| 3. David heard a word. | 8. The house stood. |
| 4. He ruled. | 9. The young man remembered. |
| 5. Abraham remembered a thing. | 10. The king heard. |