

דיקוד

section map

Learning Hebrew Grammar



Basic Biblical Hebrew Grammar

Introduction

Unit One: The Alphabet

Unit Two: The Vowels

Unit Three: Syllables

Unit Four: Hebrew Nouns

Unit Five: Adjectives

Unit Six: Pronouns

Unit Seven: Prepositions

Unit Eight: Numbers

Unit Nine: Qal Perfect

Unit Ten: Qal Imperfect

Unit Eleven: Qal Imperative

Unit Twelve: Other Stems

Did Jesus Speak Hebrew? ★

English Grammar (in progress)

Grammatical Terms (in progress)

Basic Word Studies

Additional Resources **NEW!**

Audio Tanakh! ▶



Brief History of Hebrew



Jots and Tittles

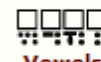


Letter Styles

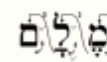


Pictograms

... כוּכָהּ
Consonants



Vowels



Syllables



Nouns



Learning Hebrew Joke
































אתן לאכל מעץ החיים אשר בנן האלהים

"To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

Hebrew Consonants (1.1)

8  Chet ח	7  Zayin ז	6  Vav ו	5  Hey ה	4  Dalet ד	3  Gimmel ג	2  Bet ב	1  Aleph א
70  Ayin ע	60  Samekh ס	50  Nun נ	40  Mem מ	30  Lamed ל	20  Kaf כ	10  Yod י	9  Tet ט
400  Tav ת	300  Shin ש	200  Resh ר	100  Qof ק	90  Tsade צ	80  Pey פ		

Writing Hebrew words in the English alphabet is called "transliteration" and is as much an art as a science. For Hebrew consonants, the following transliteration scheme will be used:











Letter	Pronounced	Transliteration	Letter	Pronounced	Transliteration
	silent letter	' (or none)		l as in look	l
	b as in boy	b		m as in mom	m
	no dot: v as in vine	v		soft form	
	g as in girl	g		n as in now	n
	d as in door	d		soft form	
	h as in hay	h		s as in son	s
	v as in vine	v		silent letter	' (or none)
	z as in zebra	z		p as in park	p
	ch as in Bach	ch (or h)		ph as in phone	ph / f
	t as in time	t (or t̄)		soft form	
	y as in yes	y		ts as in nuts	ts (or s̄)
	k as in kite	k		soft form	
	no dot: ch as in bach	kh		q as in queen	q (or k)
	soft form			r as in rain	r
				sh as in shy	sh (or š)
				s as in sun	s (or š)
				t as in tall	t

Hebrew Consonants – Final Forms (1.2)

Five Hebrew letters are formed differently when they appear as the last letter of a word. These forms are sometimes called "sofit" (pronounced "so-feet") forms. Fortunately, the five letters sound the same as their non-sofit cousins, so you do not have to learn any new sounds (or transliterations); however, you will need to be able to recognize these letters at the end of a word.



The five sofit letters are as follows (click for review):

900	800	700	600	500
				
Tsade	Fey	Nun	Mem	Khaf
				

Notes:

- If you have already studied [Section 1.1](#), you already know how to write these letters. The letter Khaf Sofit, for example, is simply the letter **Khaf** with an altered shape. The shape of the letter does not affect the way the letter is pronounced.
- These letters originally served a punctuation purpose, indicating, for instance, the end of a sentence or a pause in the reading.
- An acronym for remembering these letters is "KHeMNiFaTS."
- Remember: Sofit letters appear at the end of a Hebrew word. The changing of the letter's form does not change its pronunciation, only the way the letter appears.

The Sofit Letters: Summary

Book Print	Name	Block	Cursive	Pronounced	Transliteration
כ	Kaf	כ	כ	k as in kite	k
כּ	Khaf	כּ	כּ	no dot: ch as in bach	kh
כף		כף	כף	sofit form	
מ	Mem	מ	מ	m as in mom	m
מּ		מּ	מּ	sofit form	
נ	Nun	נ	נ	n as in now	n
נף		נף	נף	sofit form	
פ	Pey	פ	פ	p as in park	p
פּ	Fey	פּ	פּ	ph as in phone	ph / f
פף		פף	פף	sofit form	
צ	Tside	צ	צ	ts as in nuts	ts (or s)
צף		צף	צף	sofit form	

Hebrew Consonants – Similar Letters (1.3)

When you are first learning the Hebrew alphabet, some letters may *appear* similar to one another, while other letters *sound* the same. The most readily confused are listed below. Take heart, however: Once you have mastered the alphabet and begun to read Hebrew, these letters will present little difficulty for you.

Similar-Looking Letters

In modern Hebrew orthography, the following letters look somewhat similar:



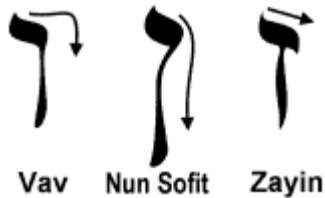
Gimmel has a "foot" whereas Nun does not.



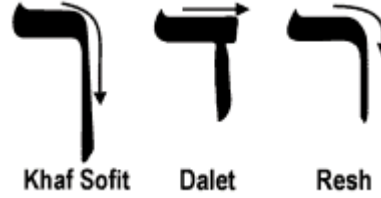
Vet's second stroke extends to the right of the first stroke, whereas Khaf is a single stroke.



Tsade's second stroke comes from the top right, whereas Ayin's comes from the top left.



Zayin's first stroke extends to the right of the vertical stroke, whereas Vav is a single stroke. Nun sofit looks like an extra long Vav.



Dalet's first stroke extends across its second stroke, whereas Resh is a single stroke. Khaf sofit looks like a Resh with a long tail.



Samekh has a rounded second stroke whereas Mem sofit has a square shape.



Hey has a "window" at the top, whereas Chet does not; Tav has a "foot" that points left.



Fey Sofit loops downward, whereas Tsade Sofit loops upward.

Similar Sounding Letters

In modern Hebrew phonetics, the following letters make similar sounds:

א ע (Both are silent)

ב ו (Both sound like v)

ח ט (Both sound like ch)

ט ק (Both sound like k)











צ ת (Both sound like t)

ס ש (Both sound like s)

Note: These orthographical and phonetic differences are *only* difficult for new learners of Hebrew. The same problem exists when learning Arabic script, for example. However, once you have gained some proficiency reading Hebrew the differences between the letters will be obvious to you.

Hebrew Consonants – Guttural Letters (1.4)

The guttural letters **Aleph**, **Hey**, **Chet**, **Ayin** and **Resh**, are created in the throat. Because of the movement of the tongue and throat necessary to pronounce these letters, the normal flow of speech is interrupted whenever these gutturals are spoken.

				
Resh	Ayin	Chet	Hey	Aleph
				

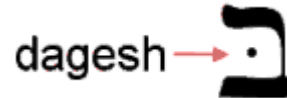
Grammatical Peculiarities

These letters have the following peculiarities:

- They will never take a **dagesh forte** (strong dagesh)
- They receive a composite sheva (chateph forms) beneath them rather than a vocal **sheva** (however, they can (and do) take a sheva nach, or silent sheva).
- They prefer **A-Type vowels** beneath them.
- They affect the conjugation of verbs by “weakening” the shresh (root) of the word.
- Aleph is pronounced more or less like a pause, as in the the opening syllable of the word “o-clock”.
- Hey is the sound of a huff of breath.
- Chet sounds like the German “ch” as in Bach.
- Ayin is pronounced in the back of the throat -- almost as if you were clearing your throat.
- Resh is also pronounced in the back of the throat, lower down than Ayin.

Hebrew Consonants – The Begedkephat Letters (1.5)

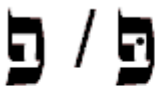
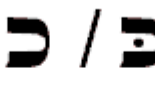




Six Hebrew letters you have studied, namely, **Bet**, **Gimmel**, **Dalet**, **Kaf**, **Pey**, and **Tav** may appear with or without a **dot** placed within them. This dot is called a "Dagesh Kal" (or Dagesh *Lene*). For example:



Collectively these letters are sometimes called "**Bege**d**ke**phat **l**etters" as an acronym for the names of letters: **ב ג ד כ פ ת**

If one of these six letters has a Dagesh Kal mark it will have a hard pronunciation, otherwise it has a softer pronunciation.

However, in modern Hebrew, **only three letters** change their sound when there is no dot inside: Bet, Kaf, and Pey (the other three letters are pronounced exactly the same as their non-dotted cousins). Consequently you only need to remember to pronounce these three letters differently when they do not have the Dagesh Kal mark:

		
Pey / Fey	Kaf / Khaf	Bet / Vet
		

Notes:

- Use the acronym **BaKPak** to remember the three letters that change their sound.
- If you have already studied [Section 1.1](#), you already know these letters and how to write them. The letter Vet, for example, is simply the letter **Bet** without the dot (i.e., Dagesh Kal) inside. The presence or the absence of the dot only affects the way you will pronounce the word.
- Ashkenazi Jews (those Jews of Eastern European descent) tend to pronounce the Aleph-Bet differently than Sephardic Jews (those Jews of Spain, Northern Africa, and Israel). For example, Ashkenazi pronunciation of **Tav** - without the Dagesh Kal - is pronounced as a "s" sound. In this book we will use the Sephardic pronunciation since it is the one used in the land of Israel.
- **Remember:** Only three letters change their sound when there is a dot inside: the other three Bege

Book Print	Name	Block	Cursive	Pronounced	Transliteration
ב	Bet	ב	ב	b as in boy	b
בֿ	Vet	ב	בֿ	no dot: v as in vine	v
כ	Kaf	כ	כ	k as in kite	k
כֿ	Khaf	כ	כֿ	no dot: ch as in bach	kh
פ	Pey	פ	פ	p as in park	p
פֿ	Fey	פ	פֿ	ph as in phone	ph / f

Advanced Grammatical Information

The Dagesh *Kal* only appears in these six letters (Bet, Gimmel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, and Tav) and will only appear:

1. At the beginning of a word or
2. After a **Sheva Nach** (silent sheva)

In other words, it will only appear if it opens a syllable.

Most commentaries are of the opinion that the Dagesh Kal is different than the **Dagesh Chazak**. While the Dagesh Chazak tells us of a missing letter the Dagesh Kal does not. The Dagesh Kal is just another pronunciation of a letter. Its purpose is to form a new sound and not to notify us of any missing letters.

Finally, these Begeedkephat letters may also have a Dagesh Chazak, though the Dagesh Chazak will appear identical to the Dagesh Kal.

The **rule of thumb** is this: if the Begeedkephat letter has a vowel preceding it, the dagesh is Chazak instead of Kal.

In other words, if there is no vowel preceding it (e.g., the letter starts a syllable or word), then the dagesh is Kal and not Chazak. This should be clearer after you have finished

Unit 3.

Hebrew Transliteration (1.6)

Writing Hebrew words in the English alphabet is called "transliteration" and is as much an art as a science. For Hebrew consonants, the following transliteration scheme will be used:

Letter	Pronounced	Transliteration	Letter	Pronounced	Transliteration
◌	silent letter	' (or none)	ל	l as in look	l
ב	b as in boy	b	מ	m as in mom	m
בּ	no dot: v as in vine	v	מֻ	sofit form	
ג	g as in girl	g	נ	n as in now	n
ד	d as in door	d	נֻ	sofit form	
ה	h as in hay	h	ס	s as in son	s
ו	v as in vine	v	ש	silent letter	' (or none)
ז	z as in zebra	z	פ	p as in park	p
ח	ch as in Bach	ch (or h)	פּ	ph as in phone	ph / f
ט	t as in time	t (or t)	פֻ	sofit form	
י	y as in yes	y	צ	ts as in nuts	ts (or s)
כ	k as in kite	k	צֻ	sofit form	
כּ	no dot: ch as in bach	kh	ק	q as in queen	q (or k)
כֻ	sofit form		ר	r as in rain	r
			ש	sh as in shy	sh (or ś)
			שׁ	s as in sun	s (or ś)
			ת	t as in tall	t

Notes:


Because people pronounce things differently, there are no "official rules" for transliterating Hebrew letters and words into the English alphabet. Because there are various transliteration schemes, often you will find different transliterations (and hear different pronunciations) for the same Hebrew word!

For example, Ashkenazi (German and eastern European) pronunciations common in English-speaking countries often shift “a” sounds towards “o,” turn some “t’s” into “s’s,” and accent the next-to-last syllable whereas Israelis accent the last syllable. For example, Ashkenaz say “**Shab•bos**” instead of “Shab•**bat**”; “**Mo•shi•ach**” instead of “Ma•shi•ach”; and “**Tal•lis**” instead of “Tal•lit”.

Of course, Hebrew vowel marks are also transliterated using English vowel letters

(A E I O and U). See [Section 2.9](#) for more information.

On this web site, transliterations will use dots to separate syllables and the accented syllable will be shown in boldface. For example:

Hebrew	Transliteration	Definition
	ab•ba	n. <i>Aramaic</i> . Abba. “Daddy” or “dear Father”; term of endearment (Mark 14:26; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

Advanced Grammatical Note

(You may ignore this information if you are just learning the Aleph-Bet)

The Begedkephat letters are transliterated as indicated in the table above, though you should be aware that the dagesh in any one of these letters may be Chazak (strong) rather than Kal (weak). If the dagesh is Chazak, the Begedkephat letter will be preceded by a vowel; in other words, if the dageshed letter opens a syllable (or word), then you can assume it is Kal, not Chazak. This will become more important in [Unit Three](#) when discussing how to divide Hebrew words into syllables. The Dagesh Chazak “doubles” the consonantal value whereas the Dagesh Kal does not.

Hebrew Numeric Values for Letters (1.7)

Hebrew letters are sometimes used to express numbers. For example, Aleph stands for 1, Bet for 2, and so on. The following table lists numeric values for letters:

Letter	Value	Letter	Value
א	1	ל	30
ב	2	מ	40
ג	3	נ	50
ד	4	ס	60
ה	5	ע	70
ו	6	פ	80
ז	7	צ	90
ח	8	ק	100
ט	9	ר	200
י	10	ש	300
כ	20	ת	400

To avoid confusion with words, letters meant as numbers are sometimes marked with *geresh* (single quote mark) if a single letter is used, or *gerashayim* (double quote mark) if more than one. These marks mean "not a word" and are also used for acronyms and abbreviations:



Gerashayim are normally placed before the last letter in the string.

Examples:

Letters	Value	Letters	Value
י"א	11	ל"ו	36
קכ"ה	125	שמ"ב	342

Note:

The numbers 15 and 16 are not written as you might expect (i.e., as Yod + Hey and Yod + Vav, but rather as Tet + Vav and Tet + Zayin) in order to avoid irreverently writing the sacred Name of God.

יהוה

Taryag Mitzvot

According to the Talmud, 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) are given for the observant Jew to obey. 248 of these are positive commands and 365 are negative ones. The positive *mitzvot* are said to equal the number of parts of the body; the negative *mitzvot* correspond to the number of days in the solar year.

The number 613 is sometimes referred to as



"*taryag*," and the complete set of commandments is referred to as "*taryag mitzvot*," or the 613 commandments.

The Hebrew Year

The Hebrew year begins on Rosh HaShanah (which occurs on the Gregorian calendar in September / October). When a Hebrew year is written using letters, you simply add the values of the letters. Often the year is written with an implied addition of 5,000. So, for example, the year 5763 is written as 763 rather than 5763. Sometimes a prefix with a geresh is used (Hey-geresh) and then the number to indicate an implied 5000 for the date:

Letters	Value
תשס"ג	763
ה' תשס"ג	5763

The year number on the Jewish calendar represents the number of years since creation, calculated by adding up the ages of people in the Tanakh back to the time of creation. To calculate the Jewish Year from our Gregorian calendar, you subtract 1,280 and then add 5,000. For example, if the year is 2004, subtract 1,280 to get 724. Then add 5,000 to obtain the Jewish year of 5724. Note that this works only up to Rosh HaShanah of the current Gregoraian calendar: *after* Rosh HaShanah, add one more year:



Year (5)765

Sofit Letters / Numbers

Although not often used, the Hebrew sofit letters are also assigned numeric values:

Letter	Value	Letter	Value
ד'	500	ף'	800
ם'	600	ץ'	900
ן'	700		

Lamed-Vav Tsaddikim

Thirty six hidden saints believed to keep God from destroying the world on account of their virtue and faith. Note the use of the gerashayim in this word:

ל"ו צדיקים

Gematria




















Gematria is a method of interpretation that involves calculating numerical values to words and names, and looking for correspondences between words which have the same value. This method is often used in mystical interpretations of the Scripture. Think Bible codes.

גמטריא

Hebrew Ancient Pictograms (1.8)

Like other ancient writing systems, the Hebrew alphabet originally was written using a pictographic script. Later, the pictograms evolved into a Hebrew script (sometimes called **Paleo-Hebrew**) that strongly resembled the ancient Phoenician alphabet. This was the Hebrew (*ketav Ivri*) used by the Jewish nation up to the Babylonian Exile (or, according to Orthodox Jews, until the Exodus from Egypt). Examples can be found on coins and clay fragments (called *ostraca*). Today, both the Torah and newspapers use modernized renditions of the Aramaic-style script, though everyday correspondence is written using Hebrew cursive.

Warning: The numeric values (and ancient pictographs) are sometimes used to infer "deeper" meanings from certain Hebrew words found in the Scriptures. While this technique may occasionally offer some interesting insights, it is to be avoided as an exegetical principle since it can lead to speculations and doubtful interpretations. For honest interpretation, the rule of thumb is to first master the *p'shat* (plain historical meaning) before moving on to other "levels" of the Scriptures.

Name	Pictograph	Meaning	Name	Pictograph	Meaning
Aleph		Ox / strength / leader	Lamed		Staff / goad / control / "toward"
Bet		House / "In"	Mem		Water / chaos
Gimmel		Foot / camel / pride	Nun		Seed / fish / activity / life
Dalet		Tent door / pathway	Samekh		Hand on staff / support / prop
Hey		Lo! Behold! "The"	Ayin		Eye / to see / experience
Vav		Nail / peg / add / "And"	Pey		Mouth / word / speak
Zayin		Plow / weapon / cut off	Tsade		Man on side / desire / need
Chet		Tent wall / fence / separation	Qof		Sun on horizon / behind
Tet		Basket / snake / surround	Resh		Head / person / first
Yod		Arm and hand / work / deed	Shin		Eat / consume / destroy
Kaf		Palm of hand / to open	Tav		Mark / sign / covenant

The schema above is sometimes used to infer hidden meanings of Biblical terms. Generally, the process is one of simple substitution, where the ancient pictographic symbol is substituted for some Ashri text (modern book text). For example:

Ancient Hebrew		Modern Hebrew	
Pictograph	Meaning	Hebrew	Meaning
	Strong Leader		Name for God; "Strength." Used 250 times in the <i>Tanakh</i> .
	Strength (of the) house		Father

The Complete Hebrew Aleph-Bet (1.9)

Book Print	Name	Block	Cursive	Pronounced	Transliteration
א	Aleph	א	א	silent letter	' (or none)
ב	Bet	ב	ב	b as in boy	b
בּ	Vet	בּ	בּ	<i>no dot</i> : v as in vine	v
ג	Gimmel	ג	ג	g as in girl	g
ד	Dalet	ד	ד	d as in door	d
ה	Hey	ה	ה	h as in hay	h
ו	Vav	ו	ו	v as in vine ; "consonantal vowel"	v
ז	Zayin	ז	ז	z as in zebra	z
ח	Chet	ח	ח	ch as in Bach	ch (or ḥ)
ט	Tet	ט	ט	t as in time	t (or ṭ)
י	Yod	י	י	y as in yes ; "consonantal vowel"	y
כ	Kaf	כ	כ	k as in kite	k
כּ	Khaf	כּ	כּ	<i>no dot</i> : ch as in bach	kh
כף		כף	כף	<i>sofit form</i>	
ל	Lamed	ל	ל	l as in look	l
מ	Mem	מ	מ	m as in mom	m
מּ		מּ	מּ	<i>sofit form</i>	
נ	Nun	נ	נ	n as in now	n
נּ		נּ	נּ	<i>sofit form</i>	
ס	Samekh	ס	ס	s as in son	s
ע	'Ayin	ע	ע	silent letter	' (or none)
פ	Pey	פ	פ	p as in park	p
פּ	Fey	פּ	פּ	ph as in phone	ph / f
פף		פף	פף	<i>sofit form</i>	
צ	Tsade	צ	צ	ts as in nuts	ts (or ṣ)
ץ		ץ	ץ	<i>sofit form</i>	
ק	Qof	ק	ק	q as in queen	q (or k)
ר	Resh	ר	ר	r as in rain	r
ש	Shin	שׁ	שׁ	sh as in shy	sh (or š)
שׂ	Sin	שׂ	שׂ	s as in sun	s (or ś)
ת	Tav	ת	ת	t as in tall	t

Unit One Summary – (1.10)

The least you should know...

After having studied Unit One, you should have mastered the following material:

The Hebrew Character Set

Print Letters

400	300	200	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Number
ת	ש	ר	ק	צ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א	Letter
ת				פ						כ								ד	ג	ב		Dagesh
				ץ	ף			ן	ם	ך												Sofit
t	s/sh	r	q/k	ts	ph/p	'	s	n	m	l	kh/k	y	t	ch	z	v	h	d	g	w/b	'	Trans.

Script Letters

ת	e	ר	ק	צ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א	Letter
ת				פ						כ								ד	ג	ב		Dagesh
				ץ	ף			ן	ם	ך												Sofit
t	s/sh	r	q/k	ts	ph/p	'	s	n	m	l	kh/k	y	t	ch	z	v	h	d	g	w/b	'	Trans.

Sofit Letters (Final Forms)

Five Hebrew letters are formed differently when they appear as the last letter of a word. The form of the letter does not affect the way it is pronounced:

ץ ף ן ם ך

Note that an acronym to help you remember these letters is "KHeMNiFaTS."

Guttural Letters

The guttural letters are created in the throat. They affect the conjugation of verbs by "weakening" the shresh (root) of the word:

ך ע ר א ה ח ע ר

Begeckephat Letters

Six Hebrew letters may appear with or without Dagesh Kal (or Dagesh Lene). The presence of a Dagesh Kal affects pronunciation only:

ב נ ד כ פ ת

Shin / Sin

In some grammars, Shin and Sin are sometimes construed as two different letters. For our purposes, consider them variants of the same letterform but each having a distinct phonetic value ("sh" and "s", respectively):

ש ש

Aleph-Bet Recitation

Practice reciting the letters of the Hebrew alphabet:



Numeric Values

Hebrew letters are sometimes used to express numbers. For example, Aleph stands for 1, Bet for 2, and so on. When used as numbers, letters are marked with *geresh* (single quote mark) if a single letter is used, or *gerashayim* (double quote mark) if more than one. For example, you should understand that the following represents the number 22:

כ"ב

and that the following number represents (5)763:

תשס"ג

Common Grammatical Functions of the Hebrew Letters (1.11)

Four grammatical categories of letters can be made of the twenty two **consonants** of the Hebrew Aleph-Bet:

1. Root letter only
2. Prefix letter (or root letter)
3. Suffix letter (or prefix letter or root letter)
4. Infix letter (or suffix letter, prefix letter, or root letter)

Category One: Root Letter *Only*

Though all letters of the Hebrew alphabet can be used to form the *shoresh* or root of a word, 12 letters (indicated in the table below as shaded items) can **ONLY** be used as root letters:

ת	ש	ת	ש	ק	ר	פ	צ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ג	ר	ב	א	Letter
ת						פ							כ							ג	ר	ב		Dagesh
					ז	ך				ו	ס	ך												Sofit

Example:

לפֿשֿט Fey, Sin, and Tet are the root letters (the Lamed at the beginning is a prefix letter).

Category Two: Root Letter *OR* Prefix

The four highlighted letters can serve two functions: they may be either a root letter (see above) or they may be a prefix before the first letter of a root letter:

ת	ש	ת	ש	ק	ר	פ	צ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ג	ר	ב	א	Letter
ת						פ							כ							ג	ר	ב		Dagesh
					ז	ך				ו	ס	ך												Sofit

Prefix Letters

Prefix Meanings:

א	I will
ב	in / with
ל	to / for (also: infinitive)
ש	who / that / which

Category Three: Prefix OR Suffix

The five green-highlighted letters can serve two functions: they may be either a root letter (see above) or they may be either prefix before the first letter of a root letter or a suffix:

ת	ש	ש	ק	צ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ג	ב	א	Letter
ת					פ						כ							ג	ב		Dagesh
				ז	י			ו	ס	ל	ד										Sofit

Prefix or Suffix Letters

Prefix/Suffix Meanings:

ה	the (pf); pronomial ending
כ	like / as (pf); pronomial ending
מ	from (pf); masc. pl. sf.
נ	verbal prefix; we sf;
ת	you will; you did

Category Four: Prefix OR Suffix OR Infix

Vav and Yod are undoubtedly the most flexible letters of the Hebrew Aleph-Bet, functioning as root letters, prefixes, suffixes, and infixes.

ת	ש	ש	ק	צ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ג	ב	א	Letter
ת					פ						כ							ג	ב		Dagesh
				ז	י			ו	ס	ל	ד										Sofit

Vav and Yod

ו	prefix or suffix or infix
י	prefix or suffix or infix

Unit One Exercises – (1.12)

Reviewing the Hebrew Consonants

Writing Practice Grid

1. Practice writing the letters in both block text and cursive:

	Aleph
	Bet / Vet
	Gimmel
	Dalet
	Hey
	Vav
	Zayin
	Chet
	Tet
	Yod
	Kaf / Khaf
	Khaf Sofit
	Lamed
	Mem
	Mem Sofit
	Nun
	Nun Sofit
	Samekh
	'Ayin
	Pey / Fey
	Fey Sofit
	Tsade
	Tsade Sofit
	Qof
	Resh
	Shin / Sin
	Tav

The Complete Hebrew Alphabet

2. Completely fill in the alphabet table you have studied:

Book Print	Name	Block	Cursive	Pronounced	Transliteration
ז					
ח					
ט					
י					
כ					
כּ					
ל					
לּ					
מ					
מּ					
נ					
נּ					
ס					
סּ					
ע					
עּ					
פ					
פּ					
צ					
צּ					
ק					

Hebrew Transliterations

3. Transliterate Hebrew letters into English.

Note: Read each Hebrew word from right to left, but write the transliterations from left to right. Say the name of each letter out loud as you write.

1. ברוך מלך שלום בבתך אף

2. חסדים מתן חדשים הימים נשדין

3. השם רבן צין כהנים חמץ

4. פיו פאפ מתן פאפ ארץ

Note: The following lines are all from the Tanakh:

a. אני יהוה ראשון ואת אחרנים אני הוא

b. שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה










c. ואהבת את יהוה אלהיך










Vowels

Hebrew Nikkudot -

Hebrew Vowel Transliteration Table







Writing Hebrew words in the English alphabet is called "transliteration" and is as much an art as a science. For Hebrew vowels, the following transliteration scheme will be used:

Mark	Name	Sound	Trans.
	Qamets	"ah"	a
	Patach	"ah"	a
	Chateph Patach	"ah"	a
	Qamets Hey	"ah"	ah
	Tsere	"ei"	ei / e
	Segol	"e"	e
	Chateph Segol	"e"	e
	Tsere Yod	"ei"	ei
	Segol Yod	"ey"	ey

Mark	Name	Sound	Trans.
	Chireq	"ee"	i
	Chireq Yod	"ee"	i
	Cholem	"oh"	o
	Chateph Qamets	"oh"	o
	Qamets Chatuph	"oh"	o
	Cholem Vav	"oh"	o
	Qibbutz	"oo"	u
	Shureq	"oo"	u
	Sheva'	"e"	e / '

Hebrew Diphthongs

For Hebrew **diphthongs** (combined sounds), the following transliteration scheme will be used:

					
ai	ai	aiy	oy	uy	av



















Unit Two Summary -

The Least you should know...

After studying Unit Two, you should have mastered the following material:

Hebrew Nikkudot (by type)

We can classify the Hebrew vowels according to the basic sound they make (A, E, I, O, and U). The following table summarizes the vowel types:

Sheva	U-Type		O-Type				I-Type		E-Type					A-Type				
																		Nikkud
	UL	S	UL	R	S	L	L	S	UL	UL	R	S	L	UL	R	S	L	Class
'	u	u	o	o	o	o	i	i	ey	ei	e	e	ei	ah	a	a	a	Trans.















Vowel Types

Each type of vowel (A, E, I, O, and U) can function as a long vowel (L), a short vowel (S), a reduced vowel (R), or an unchangeably long vowel (UL). (Note: Some grammars transliterate each of the same-type vowels differently (e.g., "a" with a bar over it for Qamets, "a" with a circumflex over it for a Patach, and so on); since our goal is to read the Hebrew text - not to convert the Hebrew into English characters, I simplified the transliteration scheme accordingly.)

Long vowels can change to other, shorter sounds in a given word. For example, a Qamets can be shortened to a Patach when certain changes are made to the word's morphology. Reduced vowels only appear under guttural letters and replace the function of the vocal sheva for those letters. Grammatically, chateph forms behave just like the sheva.

Hebrew Nikkudot (by class)

An alternate way of classifying the vowels is according to their class (Long, Short, Reduced, or Unchangeably Long). The following table summarizes the vowel classes:

	Unchangeably Long				Reduced				Short					Long						
																		Nikkud		
	UL	L	UL	R		O		E	A	U	O	I	E	A	U	O	I	E	A	Type
'	u	ey	ei	ah		o		e	a	u	o	i	e	a	u	o	i	ei	a	Trans.

Note that there are no reduced forms for the I or U type vowels and that unchangeably long vowels are always "mixed vowels" or "full vowels."

The Sheva

This nikkud mark is the toughest for the beginner to get right. And with good reason: it's somewhat more difficult than the other vowel marks.

The vocal sheva (*sheva na*, or moving sheva) represents the sound of a letter without a vowel. When it opens a syllable it sounds almost as if you were trying to pronounce the letter by itself (usually I will transliterate a vocal sheva with an "e" (or sometimes with an apostrophe); we will not transliterate the silent sheva (*sheva nach*, or resting sheva) at all. A sheva at the end of a word is always considered silent.

There are four cases when the Sheva is **vocal** (*na*):

1. When it begins a word (or syllable)
2. When it is the second of two shevas in a row
3. When it appears under a letter with a Dagesh Forte
4. When it follows a syllable that contains a long vowel.

Correlatively, there are four cases when the Sheva is **silent** (*nach*):

1. When it ends a word (or syllable)
2. When it is the first of two shevas in a row
3. When it closes a syllable
4. When it follows a syllable that contains a short vowel.

Some grammars do not treat the vocal sheva as a separate syllable, but include its sound with the following syllable (as a sort of slurred vocalization before the next syllable). Normally I will treat the vocal sheva as a separate syllable in transliterations (using either an apostrophe character or an "e").



Hebrew for Christians

The Complete Hebrew Vowel List

Mark	Name	Sound	Hebrew	Trans.	Class	Type
◌ְ	Qamets	"a" as in aqua	קָמֶץ	a	Long	A-Type
◌ַ	Patach	"a" as in aqua	פָּתַח	a	Short	
◌ָ	Chateph Patach	"a" as in aqua	חֶטֶף פָּתַח	a	Reduced	
◌ֶה	Qamets Hey	"a" as in aqua	קָמֶץ הֵא	ah	Long	
◌ֵ	Tsere	"e" as in they	צֵרֵי	e	Long	E-Type
◌ִ	Segol	"e" as in they	סֶגוֹל	e	Short	
◌ֵ	Chateph Segol	"e" as in they	חֶטֶף סֶגוֹל	e	Reduced	
◌ֵי	Tsere Yod	"ei" as in eight	צֵרֵי יוֹד	ei	Long	
◌ֵי	Segol Yod	"ey" as in obey	סֶגוֹל יוֹד	ey	Long	
◌ִ	Chireq	"i" as in machine	חִירֶק	i	Short	I-Type
◌ִי	Chireq Yod	"i" as in machine	חִירֶק יוֹד	i	Long	
◌ֹ	Cholem	"o" as in yellow	חֹלֶם	o	Long	O-Type
◌ֹ	Chateph Qamets	"o" as in yellow	חֶטֶף קָמֶץ	o	Reduced	
◌ֹ	Qamets Chatuph	"o" as in yellow	קָמֶץ חֲטוּף	o	Short	
◌ֹו	Cholem Vav	"o" as in yellow	חֹלֶם וָו	o	Long	
◌ֻ	Qibbuts	"u" as in blue	קִבּוּץ	u	Short	U-Type
◌ֻ	Shureq	"u" as in blue	שׁוּרֶק	u	Long	
◌ֶ	Sheva'	<i>Vocal:</i> short "e" <i>Silent:</i> no sound	שְׁוָא	e	(vocal) Short	

Combined Sounds

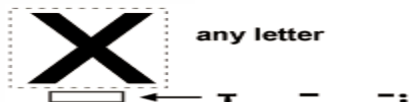
◌ַי	◌ֵי	◌ֵי	◌ֵי	◌ֵי	◌ֵי
'ai	'ai	'aiy	'oy	'uy	'av
(long)	(long)	(long)	(long)	(long)	(long)

Hebrew Diphthongs

A diphthong is a cluster or combination of vowels acting as a unit and producing a unique sound. From the point of view of word division, a diphthong represents a distinct syllable in Hebrew. Note also that diphthongs are considered long vowels.

Simple A-Type Vowels

This first vowel group you will learn is sometimes called the "A-type" because it indicates a "ah" sound (as in "yacht" or "aqua") when combined with a letter. The "simple" A-type vowels have the following pattern:



Note that the "X" refers to any Hebrew letter (for example Aleph, Bet, and so on) and the rectangular box below the letter refers to a one the following types of vowel marks (*nikkudim*):

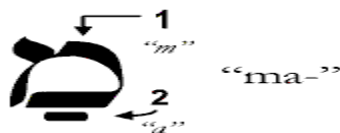
Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Trans.	Class
◌ֶ	Qamets	"a" as in aqua	a	Long
◌ַ	Patach	"a" as in aqua	a	Short
◌ָ	Chateph Patach	"a" as in aqua	a	Reduced

Notes:

- Although these vowel marks look different, they all represent an "ah" sound.
- Note which vowel is **long** (Qamets) and which are **short** (Patach, Chateph Patach).
- The Chateph Patach is sometimes called a "half vowel" and is the shortest of all vowels: it can *only* appear under the **guttural letters** (and is usually part of the following syllable).

Basic Syllables

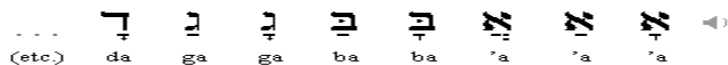
A syllable is called "open" when it does not end with a "stopping" sound:



A syllable is called "closed" when it ends with a "stopping" sound:



Open Syllables:



Closed Syllables:



Full A-Type Vowel

In addition to the three simple A-type vowels you have studied, there is a "full-vowel" variation that you should be aware of: Qamets can have a silent Hey following it (the Hey, a *mater*, is not pronounced but is considered part of the vowel):



Note that the "X" refers to any Hebrew letter (for example Aleph, Bet, Gimmel, and so on) and the rectangular box below the letter refers to a vowel mark location. When the letter Hey follows a letter with a Qamets or Patach, it functions not as a consonant, but as a vowel letter. This is called a "consonantal vowel" and the result is called a "mixed" or "full" vowel.

Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Trans.	Class
◌ֶה	Qamets Hey	"a" as in aqua	ah	Long

Notes:

- This vowel also represents an "ah" sound.
- This vowel normally marks the end of a word.
- If there is a dot inside of the following Hey, it is considered a consonant and not part of the full vowel (the dotted Hey is called a *mappiq*).
- This vowel is always considered a long vowel.

Examples:

שְׁנָה לְמָה חוּה אֶתָּה עָשָׂה חוּה ◀

sha-nah la-mah cha-vah at-tah 'a-sah cha-yah

Practice Readings

Two syllables:

שֶׁר שֶׁלַח רַב־בַּת מַעַל דַּעַת בַּעַל אַחַת

sha-'ar sha-lach rab-bat (*) ma-'al da-'at ba-'al 'a-chat

Three syllables:

וַיָּשָׁב הָאֶחָת בָּרַעַב הָאָדָם הַנֶּעַר וַיַּעַשׂ

va-ya-shav ha-'a-chat bara-'av ha-'a-dam han-na-'ar va-ya-'as





Four syllables:

הַצִּלַּחַת בַּצָּרָתָהּ הָאֲדָמָה הָרַחֲמָה

ha-tsa-la-chat ba-tsa-ra-tah ha-'a-da-mah ha-ra-cha-mah

* The dot (*dagesh*) in the **Bet** indicates a “doubling” of the letter, causing the previous syllable to be closed (*dagesh chazak*).

Quick Summary:

			
Qamets <i>(long)</i>	Patach <i>(short)</i>	Chateph Patach <i>(short)</i>	Qamets Hey <i>(long)</i>
sound: “a” as in aqua			

Hebrew Vowels -

Simple E-Type Vowels

The next vowel group you will learn is sometimes called the "E-type" because it indicates an "e" sound (as in "red" or "eight") when combined with a letter. The "simple" E-type vowels have the following pattern:



Note that the "X" refers to any Hebrew letter (for example Aleph, Bet, and so on) and the rectangular box below the letter refers to one of the following types of vowel marks (*nikkudim*):

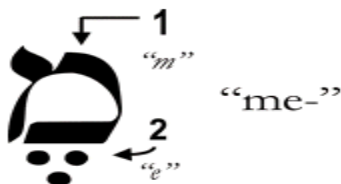
Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Trans.	Class
	Tsere	"ei" as in eight "e" as in they	ei / e	Long
	Segol	"e" as in they "e" as in red	e	Short
	Chateph Segol	"e" as in red	e	Reduced

Notes:

- Although these vowel marks look different, they all represent an "e" sound.
- Note which vowel is **long** (Tsere) and which are **short** (Segol, Chateph Segol).
- The Chateph Segol is sometimes called a "half vowel" and is the shortest of all vowels: it can *only* appear under the **guttural letters**.
- There is a slight difference in pronunciation between Tsere and Segol (Tsere has a longer "e" (as in *they*) sound, whereas Segol has a slightly shorter sound).

Basic Syllables

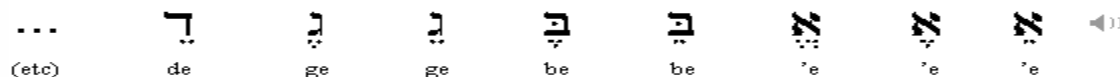
A syllable is called "open" when it does not end with a "stopping" sound:



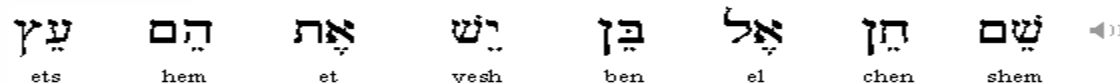
A syllable is called "closed" when it ends with a "stopping" sound:



Open Syllables:



Closed Syllables:



Full E-Type Vowel

In addition to the three simple E-type vowels, there are two variations that you should be aware of: Both Tsere and Segol may have a Yod immediately following it (the Yod then functions not as a consonant, but as a vowel letter):

The "X" refers to any Hebrew letter (for example Aleph, Bet, and so on) and the rectangular box below the letter refers to a vowel mark location. When the letter Yod follows a letter with a Tsere or Segol, it functions not as a consonant, but as a vowel letter. This is called a "consonantal vowel" and the result is called a "full" vowel.

Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Trans.	Class
	Tsere Yod	"ei" as in eight	ei	Long
	Segol Yod	"ey" as in obey	ey	Long

Practice Readings

One syllable:

								▶▶
lev	hen	khen	hem	'el	shem	'ets	'et	
								▶▶
shem	'et	ven	'el	zeh	meh	ben	pen	

Two syllables:

							▶▶
'e-nah	che-ma	'e-met	'e-nash	'e-lah	he-ve	'e-mar	
							▶▶
che-sed	me-'al	'e-led	ye-tse	he-chel	me-'ets	ha-shem	

Three syllables:

						▶▶
ye-'akhel	le-chatser	he-ha-shev	la-le-khet	va-ye-fet	me-'e-rets	
						▶▶
'ed-dad-dem	le-'a-yef	he-'a-rel	'e-ka-ved	she-sha-mem	'e-qa-desh	

Quick Summary Card

Tsere e ⁱ / e (long)	Segol e (short)	Chateph Segol e (short)	Tsere Yod e ⁱ (long)	Segol Yod e ^y (long)
sound: "e" as in red long: "e" as in they				

More Practice
Pages **NEW!**

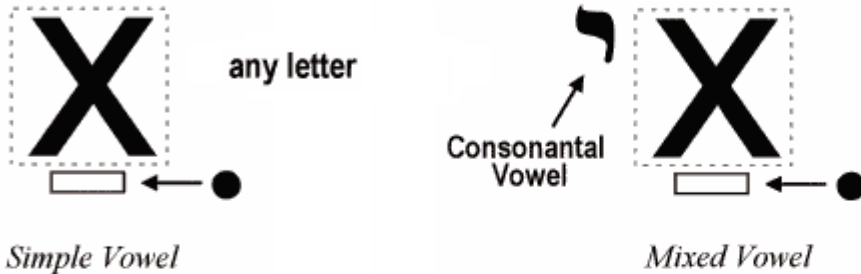
Transliteration Practice:

Word	Transliteration	Word	Transliteration
	(earth)		(name)
	(bread)		(God)
	(sun)		(heart)
	(truth)		(between)



Hebrew Vowels -

Simple I-Type Vowels

The next vowel group you will learn is called the "I-type" because it indicates an "ee" sound (as in "siesta" or "green") when combined with a letter. The I-type vowels have the following pattern:



Note that the "X" refers to any Hebrew letter (for example Aleph, Bet, and so on) and the rectangular box below the letter refers to a one the following types of vowel marks (*nikkudim*):

Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Trans.	Class
	Chireq	"ee" as in green	i	Short
	Chireq Yod	"ee" as in green	i	Long

Notes:

- Although these vowel marks look different, they both represent an "ee" sound.
- Note which vowel is **short** (Chirik) and which is **long** (Chirik Yod).


Basic Syllables

A syllable is called "open" when it does not end with a "stopping" sound:

A syllable is called "closed" when it ends with a "stopping" sound:




Open Syllables:

... גַּי גֵּי בֵּי בִּי אֵי אִי 

(etc) gi gi bi bi i i

Closed Syllables:

בֵּיל כִּז קִס צִית אִשׁ מִין מִן 

bil kiz kis tsit 'ish min min

Practice Readings

One syllable:

רִיב אִישׁ פִּי אִם מִן מִי לִי טִי 

riv 'ish fi 'im min mi li ki

הָא עִיר בִּב פֶּד קֵת אֵד זֵר עִם 

hi 'ir viv pid kit 'id zir 'im

Two syllables:

תִּקַּח מִגָּן נִסִּי קִצִּי מִמִּי חֵכִי מִבֵּן 

ti-qach mi-gan ni-si ki-tsi mi-mi chik-ki mib-bin

הִנֵּה יָרֵב תִּתֵּן שְׁלַח יִחַד כִּכָּר מִיָּד 

hi-neh yi-rev ti-ten shi-lach yi-chad kik-kar mi-yad

Three / more syllables:



צִיּוֹתַי חַמֶּשֶׁה אֵימָנָה וַיִּצֵר וַיִּפַּח וַיִּתֵּן 

tsi-vi-ti cha-mi-shah 'ei-mi-nah va-yitser va-yip-pach va-yi-ten

חֲבַאתֶיהָ מְמַרֵם מֵרֵאשִׁית יִלָּבֵת מְמֹת רִמְתִּי 

cha-ve-ti-ha mi-me-rem me-re'-shit yi-la-vet mi-ma-vet ri-mi-ti

Quick Summary Card

		
Chireq <i>i</i> (short)	sound: "ee" as in green	Chireq Yod <i>i</i> (long)

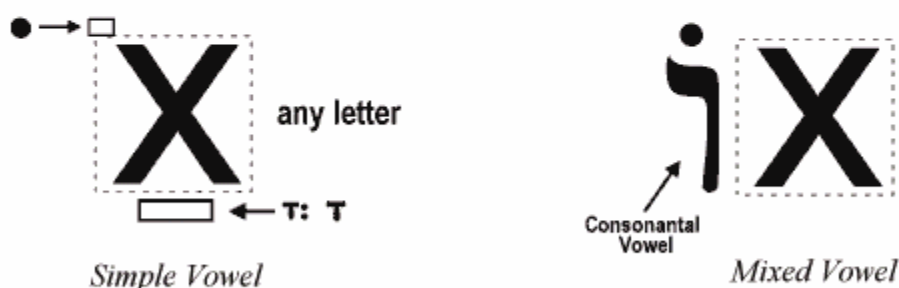
Transliteration Practice:

Word	Transliteration	Word	Transliteration
אָנִי (I)	'ani	הִיא (she)	
נִסִּי (my banner)		עִיר (city)	
חֶטֶה (wheat)		דָּוִד (David)	
הַשְּׂמֵר (you watch)		שִׁיר (song)	





Hebrew Vowels -

Simple O-Type Vowels

The next vowel group you will learn is called the "O-type" because it indicates an "oh" sound (as in "roll" or "yellow") when combined with a letter. The O-type vowels can have the following vowel patterns:



Note that the "X" refers to any Hebrew letter (for example Aleph, Bet, and so on) and the rectangular box below the letter refers to one of the following types of vowel marks (*nikkudim*):

Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Trans.	Class
	Cholem	"o" as in yellow	o	Long
	Cholem Vav	"o" as in yellow	o	Long
	Chateph Qamets	"o" as in yellow	o	Reduced
	Qamets Chatuph	"o" as in yellow	o	Short

Notes:

- Although these vowel marks look different, they all represent an "oh" sound.
- **By far the most common of these vowels is Cholem and Cholem Vav** (i.e., Chateph Qamets appears only under the guttural letters and Qamets Chatuph is somewhat rare).
- Note that both Cholem and Cholem Vav are **long** vowels (Cholem is actually a "defective spelling" of Cholem Vav), Chateph Qamets is a **reduced** vowel (i.e., a "half vowel" that can only appear under the guttural letters), and Qamets Chatuph is a **short** vowel.
- The "Qamets Chatuph" is an O-Type vowel that looks identical to the regular A-Type Qamets vowel. When you see a Qamets, you must ask 1) is it in a closed syllable? (i.e., a syllable that ends in a stopping sound) and 2) is the syllable *unaccented*? (most Hebrew words are accented on the last syllable). If *both* conditions are met, the Qamets is *Chatuph* and should be pronounced as an "o" sound.

Basic Syllables

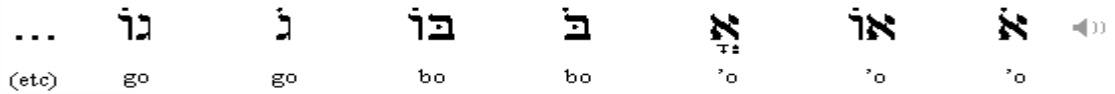
A syllable is called "open" when it does not end with a "stopping" sound:



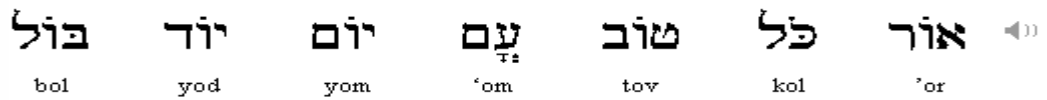
A syllable is called "closed" when it ends with a "stopping" sound:



Open Syllables:



Closed Syllables:



Practice Readings

One syllable:



Two syllables:




Three / more syllables:



Quick Summary:

פּוֹ	אֹו	פּוֹ	פּוֹ
Cholem	Cholem Vav	Chateph Qamets	Qamets Chatuph
(long)	(long)	(short)	(short)
sound: "o" as in yellow			

A note about Shin / Sin and Cholem:

-  The dot of the Cholem after a Shin can look like the left-sided dot of the Sin; and the dot of the Cholem after a Sin may overlap with the Sin's dot.

Transliteration Practice:

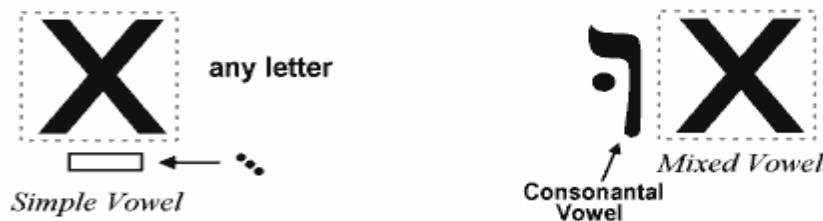
Word	Transliteration	Word	Transliteration
שְׁלוֹם (peace)	shalom	אוֹת (sign)	
כֹּל (all)		אוֹר (light)	
לֹא (no)		אֲנִי (ship)	
רֹאשׁ (head)		אֹהֶלָה (his tent)	

2.6 U-Type Vowels



Hebrew Vowels -

Simple U-Type Vowels

The last vowel group you will learn is sometimes called the "U-type" because it indicates an "oo" sound (as in "blue" or "clue") when combined with a letter. U-type vowels can have the following vowel patterns:



Note that the "X" refers to any Hebrew letter (for example Aleph, Bet, and so on) and the rectangular box below the letter refers to a one the following types of vowel marks (*nikkudim*):

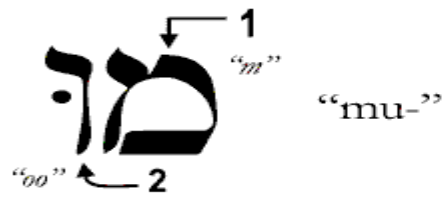
Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Trans.	Class
	Qibbuts	"u" as in blue	u	Short
	Shureq	"u" as in blue	u	Long

Notes:

- Although these vowel marks look different, they both represent an "oo" sound.
- Note which vowel is **short** (Qibbuts) and which is **long** (Shureq).
- Unlike** other vowels, Shureq is sometimes used to start a word.

Basic Syllables

A syllable is called **"open"** when it does not end with a "stopping" sound:



A syllable is called **"closed"** when it ends with a "stopping" sound:



Open Syllables:

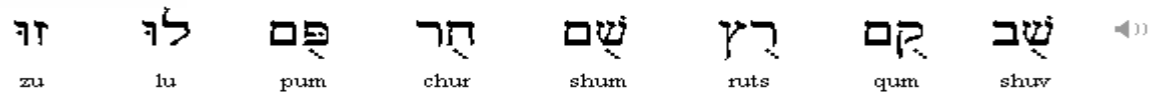


Closed Syllables:



Practice Readings

One syllable:





Two syllables:



Three / more syllables:



Quick Summary:

 Qibbutz <small>u</small> <i>(short)</i>	sound: "u" as in blue	 Shureq <small>u</small> <i>(long)</i>
---	-----------------------	---

Transliteration Practice:

English	Hebrew	Transliteration	English	Hebrew	Transliteration
Joseph	יוֹסֵף	yo seph	Job	אִיּוֹב	
Sarah	שָׂרָה		Saul	שָׂאוּל	
Jonah	יוֹנָה		Cain	קַיִן	
Nathan	נָתָן		Daniel	דָּנִיֵּאל	
Aaron	אַהֲרֹן		Elijah	אֵלִיָּהוּ	
Abel	הָבֶל		Moses	מֹשֶׁה	
Eli	עֵלִי		Eden	עֵדֶן	

2.7 The Sheva

Hebrew Vowels -

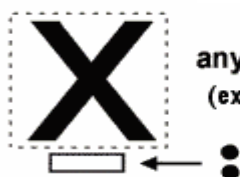
Introduction to the Sheva

The sheva is a mark placed under a letter that does not have a vowel. The sheva directly affects how to divide a Hebrew word into syllables.

Vowel Mark	Name	Sound	Hebrew	Transliteration
Ⲁ	Sheva	<i>Vocal</i> : short "e" <i>Silent</i> : no sound	שֵׁן	vocal: e (or ') silent: none

Notes:

- The Sheva may be **vocal** or **silent**:
 - The **vocal sheva** (*sheva na*, or moving sheva) represents the sound of a letter without a vowel. When it opens a syllable it sounds almost as if you were trying to pronounce the letter by itself. Usually we will transliterate a vocal sheva with an "e" (or sometimes with an apostrophe).
 - The **silent sheva** is used to provide a stop to a syllable. We will not transliterate the silent sheva (*sheva nach*, or resting sheva) at all.
- The Hebrew guttural letters cannot take a vocal sheva but use chateph forms instead (the Chateph forms are really a combination of the sheva with one of the other vowel signs). Hebrew gutturals can take a silent Sheva.
- A sheva at the end of a word is always considered silent.



any letter
(except gutturals)

Opens syllable? **Vocal**

Closes syllable? **Silent**

The Vocal Sheva

There are four cases when the Sheva is vocal:

1. When it *begins* a word:

בְּרַכָּה			Hebrew
בְּ	רַ	כָּה	
(3)	(2)	(1)	
khah	ra	be	

2. When the second of two in a row:

מִשְׁפָּטֵי			Hebrew
מִשְׁ	פָּ	טֵי	
(3)	(2)	(1)	
tei	pe	mish	

3. When under a Dagesh Forte letter:

הַמְּלָנִים				Hebrew
הַ	מְ	לָ	נִים	
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	
nim	la	me	ham	

4. When following a long vowel:

כֹּתְבִים			Hebrew
כֹּ	תְ	בִים	
(3)	(2)	(1)	
vim	te	ko	

Note: When a Sheva is not vocal, it is silent.

Readings

Case 1: At the beginning of a word

מֵאֵד	שְׁמַע	כְּתַב	בְּרֵאשִׁית	בְּלִי	קְדוֹשׁ	▶▶
me'od	she-ma'	ke-tav	be-re-shit	be-li	ke-dosh	

Case 2: Second of two in a row:

יְכַתְּבוּ	שִׁבְתֶּךָ	רַגְלֶיכֶם	יִשְׁמְרוּ	קֹדֶשְׁךָ	▶▶
yikh-te-vu	shiv-te-kha	rag-le-khem	yish-me-ru	kod-she-kha	

Case 3: Under a Dagesh Forte letter:

הַמְּלָנִים	עַמְּךָ	נִנְתַּקָּה	יְתִיצְבוּ	בַּמְּלָאכָה	▶▶
ham-me-la-nim	'am-me-kha	ne-nat-te-qah	yit-yats-tse-vu	bam-me-la-khah	

Case 4: When following a long vowel:

לְבַבְךָ	בְּעֵנַיִ	וּבְנֵיהוּ	זוּלָלִים	הַיְתָה	▶▶
le-va-ve-kha	be'ane-yi	u-ve-na-yahoo	zo-le-lim	ha-ye-tah	

The Sheva is also vocal when it is the first of two of the same sounding letters, such as in the word "hallelujah" (hal-**le**-lu-yah).

הַלְּלוּיָהּ				Hebrew
הַ	לְ	לְ	יָהּ	
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	Syll #
yah	lu	le	ha	Trans.

Exercise 1

Each word below has one or more sheva. For each word, identify the type of sheva (vocal or silent) and provide a transliteration. The first two words are done for you.

בְּמִדְבָּר	תְּרַפָּה	פְּלִשְׁתִּים	תְּפִלָּה	word
		vocal / silent	vocal	sheva type
		pe-lish-tim	te-fil-lah	transliteration
וְכַבְּשָׁה	לְמַמְשֵׁלָת	לְהַבְדִּיל	לְבַלְתִּי	word
				sheva type
				transliteration
וְנִשְׂאוּ	מִרְחֻשֵׁת	שְׂרָצוּ	הִיְתָה	word
				sheva type
				transliteration

Exercise 2

Read the following words aloud until you can do so fluently:

אַרְבַּע	אַנְחָנוּ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אַבְרָהָם	מִלְכָנוּ
בְּדִיקָה	בְּבִקְשָׁה	אַתְרוּג	אַשְׁכְּנֹז	אַרְבַּעִים
בְּרוּךְ	מִצּוּה	בְּנֵי	בְּמִדְבָּר	בְּלָהָה
גְּדֻלָּה	גְּבוּרָה	בְּשׂוּרָה	בְּרֻכּוֹת	בְּרִית
דְּנִיָּאל	דְּבָרִים	דְּבִיר	גְּמָרָה	גְּלִילָה

Hebrew Vowels -

Hebrew Diphthongs

A diphthong is a cluster or combination of vowels acting as a unit and producing a unique sound. From the point of view of word division, a diphthong represents a distinct syllable in Hebrew. The most common diphthongs are listed here:

						
'ai (long)	'ai (long)	'aiy (long)	'oy (long)	'uy (long)	'av (long)	
Hebrew Diphthongs						

Diphthong Readings:

					
'e-lo-hai	mits-vo-tai (note that Vav takes cholem here)	chai	'e-lai	shad-dai	
					
chai-yai	ve-rag-lai	si-nai	'a-do-nai	sa-rai	
					
chai-yim	mayim	'ei-nai-yim	ma-tai-yim	bayit	
					
'e-lav	pa-nav	huy	'o-ye-vai	goy	

Unit Two Exercises -

Reviewing the Hebrew Vowels

Vowel Identification Grid

For each vowel type, identify the vowel mark's name, sound, transliteration, and class (Long, Short, Reduced, or Unchangeably Long):

Mark	Name	Sound	Hebrew	Trans.	Class	Type
◌ֶ			קֶמֶץ			A-Type
◌ִ			פֶּתַח			
◌ֵ			חֶטֶף פֶּתַח			
◌ֹ			קֶמֶץ הָא			
◌ִי			צִירִי			E-Type
◌ִי			סְנוּל			
◌ִי			חֶטֶף סְנוּל			
◌ִי			צִירִי יוֹד			
◌ִי			סְנוּל יוֹד			
◌ִי			חִירֶק			I-Type
◌ִי			חִירֶק יוֹד			
◌ִי			חֹלֶם			O-Type
◌ִי			חֶטֶף קֶמֶץ			
◌ִי			קֶמֶץ חֲטוּף			
◌ִי			חֹלֶם נוֹ			
◌ִי			קֶבוֹץ			U-Type
◌ִי			שׁוּרֶק			
◌ִי			שׁוּא			

Unit Three - Learning Hebrew Syllables

אָנְכִי אֶלֶף וְתוֹ רֵאשׁ וְסוֹף

In order to properly pronounce a Hebrew word, you will need to understand how the word is divided into syllables (i.e., units of distinct sound).



Objective:

- After studying this unit, you should be able to begin reading, writing, and reciting Hebrew words. Start with Section 3.1 and down move through the list.

UNIT THREE CONTENTS

- 3.1 The Two Rules
- 3.2 Syllable Classification
- 3.3 Hebrew Accent Marks
- 3.4 Dotted Letters
- 3.5 Vocal Sheva (na)
- 3.6 Silent Sheva (nach)
- 3.7 Furtive Patach
- 3.8 Quiescent Letters
- 3.9 The Maqqef (hyphen)
- 3.10 Qamets Chatuph
- 3.11 Summary Page
- 3.12 Unit Three Exercises

Hebrew Syllables - The Two Rules for Syllabification

In order to properly pronounce a Hebrew word, you will need to understand how the word is divided into syllables (i.e., units of distinct sound). There are two basic rules for dividing a Hebrew word into syllables, as explained below.

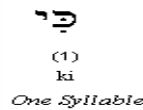


Rule 1: # Syllables = # Vowels

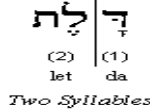
A syllable always begins with a consonant (except when a word begins with Vav, which is a form of conjunction) and may end with either a consonant or another vowel. Since there is one vowel per syllable, the number of syllables in a word is the same as the number of vowels.

We will indicate word division by drawing a line between the syllables and then placing the numbers (1), (2), and so on, directly below (or sometimes above) each consecutive syllable:

One Vowel:



Two Vowels:



Three Vowels:

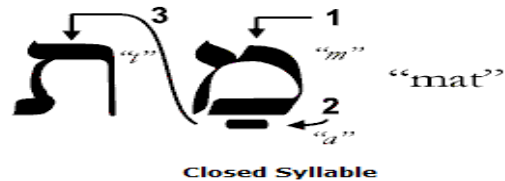
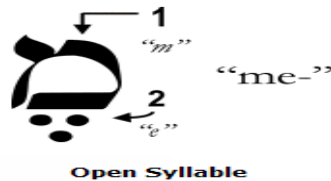


Four Vowels:



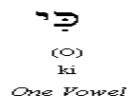
Rule 2: Syllables can be "Open" or "Closed"

Open syllables end with a vowel sound and closed syllables end with a letter without a vowel:



We will indicate open syllables with (O) and a closed syllable with (C):

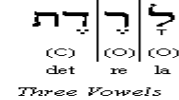
One Syllable:



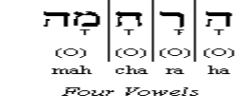
Two Syllables:



Three Syllables:



Four Syllables:



General Rule: Vowels are normally long in open syllables (i.e., ba, be, bo) and short in a closed syllables (ab, eb, ob).

Hebrew Syllables - Basic Syllable Classification

Hebrew syllables can be classified as either:

1. Open or Closed
2. Long or Short (or Reduced)

Open or Closed

A syllable is called "open" when it does not end with a "stopping" sound; otherwise it is "closed" (thus "ma" is an open syllable but "mat" is a closed syllable). We will indicate the status of open syllables with an (O) and a closed syllables with a (C).

Long or Short (or Reduced)

Hebrew vowels can be either long, short, or reduced. (Some grammars divide between "unchangeably long" vowels (full vowels) and regular long vowels. Thus Cholem Vav would be an unchangeably long vowel whereas a Cholem would be called a regular long vowel.) Reduced vowels are really a type of sheva, and may be considered as *either* part of the following syllable or as a syllable on their own. In some cases it is perhaps easier to divide the word's syllables with the vocal sheva as its own syllable - though in actual practice you should consider the sheva (and its chateph cousins) as part of the following syllable).

Divide and Conquer

Here are a few examples of how you might analyse a Hebrew word and classify its syllables.

Example 1

Here we know there are two syllables, since there are two vowels. The first syllable is Lamed with Segol. We know Segol is a short vowel. The first syllable is an open syllable since it does not end with a consonant. We transliterate the syllable as "le-".

The second syllable is Chet with a Segol ending with a final Mem. Thus we know that this is a short, closed syllable. We transliterate it as "chem".

Together, the word is transliterated "le-chem" or "lechem."

לֶחֶם		Hebrew
(2)	(1)	Syll #
לֶ	חֶם	
chem	le	Trans.
segol	segol	Vowel
short	short	Class
(C)	(O)	Status
lechem		English

Example 2

Here again we know there are two syllables, since there are two vowels. The first syllable is Nun with Cholem Vav - a long vowel. The first syllable is an open syllable since it does not end with a consonant. We transliterate the syllable as "no-".

The second syllable is Tav with a Tserere ending with a final Nun. Thus we know that this is a long, closed syllable. We transliterate it as "ten".

Together, the word is transliterated "no-ten" or "noten."

נוֹתֵן		Hebrew
(2)	(1)	Syll #
תֵּן	נוֹ	
ten	no	Trans.
tsere	chol-vav	Vowel
long	long	Class
(C)	(O)	Status
noten		English

Example 3

In this word we know there are three syllables, since we count three vowels. The first syllable is Aleph with Chateph Segol - a reduced (short) vowel. The first syllable is an open syllable since it does not end with a consonant. We transliterate the syllable as "e-".

The second syllable is Lamed with a Cholem. Thus we know that this is a long, open syllable. We transliterate it as "lo".

The third syllable is Hey with Chireq Yod ending with Mem sofit, so we know it's a closed long syllable. We transliterate it as "him".

Together, the word is transliterated "e-lo-him" or "elohim."

אֱלֹהִים			Hebrew
(3)	(2)	(1)	Syll #
הִים	לֹ	אֱ	
him	lo	e	Trans.
chir. yod	cholm	c-segol	Vowel
long	long	short	Class
(C)	(O)	(O)	Status
elohim			English

Example 4

In this word we again detect there are three syllables, since we count three vowels. The first syllable is Ayin with Tserere Yod - a long vowel. The first syllable is an open syllable since it does not end with a consonant. We transliterate the syllable as "ei-".

The second syllable is Nun with a Tserere Yod. Thus we know that this is a long, open syllable. We transliterate it as "nei".

The third syllable is Khaf with Segol ending with Mem sofit, so we know it's a closed short syllable. We transliterate it as "khem".

Together, the word is transliterated "ei-nei-khem" or "eineikhem."

עֵינַיְכֶם			Hebrew
(3)	(2)	(1)	Syll #
כֶּם	נַי	עֵי	
khem	nei	ei	Trans.
segol	t-yod	t-yod	Vowel
short	long	long	Class
(C)	(O)	(O)	Status
eineikhem			English

3.3 Hebrew Accent Marks

Hebrew Syllables -

Hebrew Accent Marks

Most Hebrew words are generally accented on the **last syllable** of the word:

ha-ish·shah הַאִישׁ־שָׂה

However, some words (segolate nouns, furtive patach nouns, certain verb forms) accent the next to last syllable. In the vocabulary sections of the units, I will indicate non-standard accents by using the symbol "<" above the accented syllable:

Accent Mark
↓
ko·he·let קוֹהֵלֶת

Syllable (Phonetic) Classification

Some Hebrew grammars identify syllables according to the following scheme:

ko·kha·vim כּוֹחַ־בַּיִם

3 2 1
בַּיִם | כּוֹ | כּוֹ
↑ ↑ ↑
Tonic Pretonic Propretonic

The "tonic" syllable is the syllable that receives the stress or accent; the "pretonic" syllable is the syllable before the tonic syllable, and the "propretonic" syllable is the syllable before the pretonic. Don't let this nomenclature intimidate you: in the Scriptures, accented syllables are usually identified with one or more accent marks (see below).

The Masoretes and the Masoretic Text

Between the 7th and 9th centuries A.D, a group of Jewish scribes called the Masoretes added vowel signs (*nikkudot*), cantillation symbols and accent marks (*ta'amim*) to the text. This process came to be known as the *Masorah* (tradition). The marked text was called the Masoretic Text and became the standard text for the Jews around the world.

טעמים

Accents of the Masoretic Text

Every word in the Tanakh (except those joined by a hyphen or maqqef) carries an accent mark on its "tonic" syllable (i.e., the syllable that receives the stress). In the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia there are 27 prose and 21 poetic accent marks used in the text. These marks (like the vowel marks) may appear above or below the word.

Three Main Accent Marks

Most accent marks can be classified according to whether they are disjunctive (pausal) or conjunctive (connecting).

Disjunctive Accents

Disjunctive accents mark a pause or break in the reading of the text, and function something like commas, semicolons, and colons in English. There are 18 disjunctive accent marks you might see in the Masoretic text, but the two most important are:

- o **Atnach** - Placed under the last word of the first half of a verse.
- o **Silluq** - Placed under the last word of the second half of a verse.

אֲתַנַּח סִלּוּק
Atnach *Silluq*

Conjunctive Accents

Conjunctive accents connect two words in the text. There are 9 conjunctive accent marks you might see in the Masoretic text, but the most important is:

- o **Munach** - Placed under a word that is connected with a following word.

מוֹנַח
Munach
מוֹנַח

The following shows Genesis 1:1 as you might see it in a typical Masoretic text:



Note: You do not need to memorize the names of these accent marks; however, when you see one of them in your reading of the Tanakh, accent the syllable where the mark appears (for example, the silluk in the last word of the *pasuk* (verse) tells us to accent the pretonic syllable: ha-a-rets).

The mark at the end of the *pasuk* (:) is called a **Sof Pasuk**, and simply indicates the end of the verse (somewhat like a period in modern English writing).

The Least You Should Know...

In general, unless otherwise indicated by some sort of accent mark, assume that the Hebrew word you are looking at is accented on the last syllable.

Vowels are normally long in open syllables (i.e., *ba, be, bo*) and short in a closed syllables (*ab, eb, ob*).

Reference: The Rules of Stress

The following information is provided for reference purposes only:

1. If the last syllable has a long vowel, it usually has the stress:

לֹי

2. A long vowel in a closed syllable gets the stress:

זָפוֹן

3. A closed unaccented syllable must take a short vowel:

אֶלֶף

4. The Sheva (or chateph form) never receives the stress.

אִשְׁרָ

5. Verbs are often accented on the second syllable

שָׁמַרְתִּי

6. If a word has a Maqqef (hyphen), the stress usually shifts away from the preceding word and attends to the following word.

בֶּן-אָדָם ← בֶּן אָדָם

In the example above, the words *ben adam* means "son of man." With the Maqqef, the phrase still means "son of man," but the accent moves to the word *adam*, resulting in a closed, unaccented syllable for the first word. The vowel therefore changes from Tseret (long) to Segol (short), according to rule 3, above.

Note: You may also be interested in Helmut Richter's article regarding **Hebrew Cantillation** marks (special accent tags used for chanting the Torah).

3.4 Dotted Letters and Syllables

Hebrew Syllables -

Introduction to the dagashim

Any Hebrew letter (except the **gutturals**) can have a dot inside of it called a "dagesh mark" (dagesh means "emphasis"). There are basically two kinds of *dageshim* that you need to know: the dagesh lene (*kal*) and the dagesh forte (*chazak*).

The Dagesh Lene (Kal)

Six Hebrew letters you have studied, namely, Bet, Gimmel, Dalet, Kaf, Pey, and Tav may appear with or without a dot placed within them. This dot is called a "Dagesh Lene." If one of these six letters has a Dagesh Lene mark it will have a hard pronunciation, otherwise it has a softer pronunciation.

Collectively these letters are sometimes called "**Begedkephat letters**" as an acronym for the names of letters:

ב ג ד כ פ ת

The Dagesh Forte (Chazak)

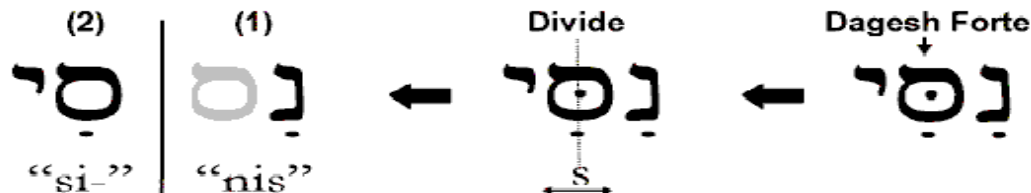
All of the Hebrew letters (except the gutturals) - including the Begedkephat letters - can take a dot that looks exactly like the Dagesh Lene but is called a Dagesh Forte. The dagesh forte can appear in ANY Hebrew consonant *except* a guttural letter:

ת	ש	ש	ר	ק	פ	ע	נ	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א	Letter
ת	ש	ש		ק	פ	ע	נ	נ	מ	ל	כ	י	ט		ז	ו		ד	ג	ב		Dagesh

In the list above, notice that every Hebrew letter (except the gutturals Aleph, Hey, Chet, Ayin, and Resh) can appear with a dot inside - a dagesh forte.

The Purpose of the Dagesh Forte

A dagesh forte "emphasizes" a letter and thereby affects a word's syllabification by *doubling the value of the consonant*. A letter with a dagesh forte always causes the previous syllable (if any) to be closed and in effect "divides" the syllable at the letter:

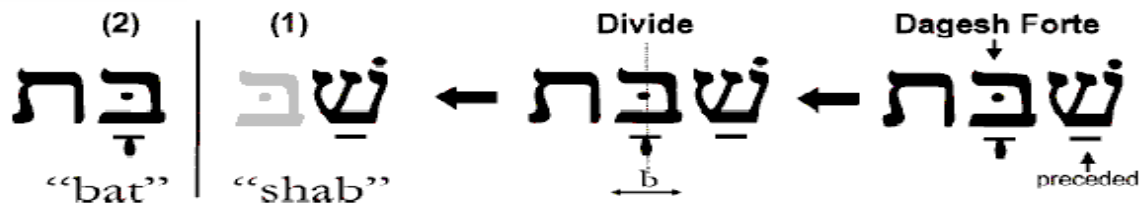


In the example above, we notice first that the word has a dagesh forte in the Samekh. The value of this letter is "doubled," and we thus count the first "s" as a closing sound of the previous syllable (i.e., **nis**) and the second "s" as the first sound of the following syllable (i.e., **si**). We would transliterate the word as **nis-si**.

Lene or Forte?

As you can see in the list of letters above, the **Begedkephat** letters can take *either* a dagesh lene or a dagesh forte. Since the dots appear identical in the letters, how can we tell if a given Begedkephat letter has a lene or a forte dot?

The rule goes like this: the dagesh in a Begedkephat letter is **chazak (forte)** only if it is preceded by a **vowel** (otherwise it is lene). Thus:



In the example above, notice first that the word has a dagesh in the Bet. Now, is this a dagesh lene or forte? Since it is preceded by a vowel (i.e., the Patach of the first syllable), the Bet must have a dagesh forte.

Thus we divide the word into two closed syllables and transliterate as: **shab-bat** (note that if a Begedkephat letter has a dagesh forte, it is pronounced exactly the same as if it had a dagesh lene: the presence of a forte only "doubles" the value of the letter).

In the example above, notice first that the word has a dagesh in the Bet. Now, is this a dagesh lene or forte? Since it is preceded by a vowel (i.e., the Patach of the first syllable), the Bet must have a dagesh forte.

Thus we divide the word into two closed syllables and transliterate as: **shab-bat** (note that if a Begeedkephat letter has a dagesh forte, it is pronounced exactly the same as if it had a dagesh lene: the presence of a forte only "doubles" the value of the letter).

The General Rule...

If there is a "dot" inside a letter, "double" its value; but if it is a Begeedkephat letter, double the value *only if* it is preceded by a vowel.

Examples:

עֲמוּד	צַדִּיק	צִוָּה	דִּבֶּר	דָּבַר	word	א
forte	forte	forte	lene / forte	lene	dagesh type	
'am-mud	tsad-diq	tsiv-vah	dib-ber	da-var	transliteration	
הַגִּיד	בִּגְדֶּךָ	שִׁשָּׁה	אַתָּה	אַהֲבֵתָּ	word	ב
forte	lene	forte	forte	lene	dagesh type	
hig-gid	be-ged	shish-shah	'at-tah	'ahav-ta	transliteration	

Summary:

- Any letter (except a guttural) can have a dot called a dagesh forte (chazak).
- This dot "doubles" the value of the consonant and causes the previous syllable (if any) to be closed.
- A dot in a Begeedkephat letter is forte only if it is preceded by a vowel (otherwise it is lene).

Advanced Grammatical Note:

The pronunciation of Resh in Hebrew is "fricative," and a plosive pronunciation for Resh is not known. However, in 14 places in the Tanakh there is a Resh with a dagesh. The translators of the Septuagint knew of the pronunciation of the Resh with a dagesh - the evidence is that they wrote the name Sarah with a double R.

The Vocal Sheva - Understanding the Sheva Na

There are four cases when the sheva is vocal (i.e., opens a syllable):

1. When it *begins* a word:

בְּרָכָה			Hebrew
כָּה	רָ	בְּ	
(3)	(2)	(1)	
khah	ra	be	

2. When the second of two in a row:

מִשְׁפָּטֵי			Hebrew
טֵי	פְּ	מִשְׁ	
(3)	(2)	(1)	
tei	pe	mish	

3. When under a Dagesh Forte letter:

הַמְּלָנִים				Hebrew
נִים	לְ	מְ	הַ	
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	
nim	la	me	ham	

4. When following a long vowel:

כֹּתְבִים			Hebrew
בִּים	תְּ	כֹ	
(3)	(2)	(1)	
vim	te	ko	

Examples:

1. At the beginning of a word:

מֵאֵד	שְׁמַע	כְּתַב	בְּרֵאשִׁית	בְּלִי	קְדוֹשׁ	א
me'od	she-ma'	ke-tav	be-re-shit	be-li	ke-dosh	

2. Second of two in a row:

יְכַתְּבוּ	שִׁבְתֶּךָ	רְגַלְכֶם	יִשְׁמְרוּ	קוֹדְשֶׁךָ	ב
yikh-te-vu	shiv-te-kha	rag-le-khem	yish-me-ru	kod-she-kha	

3. Under a Dagesh Forte letter:

הַמְּלָנִים	עַמְּךָ	נְנַתְּקָהּ	יְתִיצְבוּ	בַּמְּלָאכָה	ג
ham-me-la-nim	'am-me-kha	ne-nat-te-qah	yit-yats-tse-vu	bam-me-la-khah	

4. Following a long vowel:

לְבַבְּךָ	בְּעֵנַיִ	וּבְנֵיָהּ	זוֹלְלִים	הַיְתָה	ד
le-va-ve-kha	be-'ane-yi	u-ve-na-yahoo	zol-le-lim	ha-ye-tah	

NOTE: There is another case wherein you will pronounce a sheva as vocal, and that is when it immediately precedes the same Hebrew letter (or similar sounding letter) in a word. For example:

הַלְלוּיָהּ				Hebrew
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	Syll #
יָהּ	לוּ	לְ	הַ	
yah	lu	le	ha	Trans.
haleluyah				English

The Silent Sheva - Understanding the Sheva Nach

On the other hand, there are four cases when the sheva is silent or *resting*:

1. When it *ends* a word:

מֶלֶךְ Hebrew

לֶךְ	מֶ
(2)	(1)
lekh	me

2. When the first of two in a row:

מִשְׁפָּטִי Hebrew

טִי	פִּי	מִשְׁ
(3)	(2)	(1)
tei	pe	mish

3. When it *closes* a syllable:

מַלְכָּה Hebrew

כָּה	מַלְ
(2)	(1)
kah	mal

4. When following a *short* vowel:

פָּרְעָה Hebrew

עָה	פָּרְ
(2)	(1)
'oh	par

Examples:

1. At the *end* of a word:

מֶלֶךְ	אֵךְ	דֶּרֶךְ	מַתְ	חֶרֶתְ	לֶךְ	בֶּךְ	אֵ
me-lekh	akh	de-rekh	mat	charat	lakh	bakh	

2. *First* of two in a row:

יִכְתְּבוּ	שִׁבְתֶּךָ	רַגְלֵכֶם	יִשְׁמְרוּ	קֹדְשֶׁךָ	ב
yich-te-vu	shiv-te-kha	rag-le-khem	yish-me-ru	kod-she-kha	

3. Closing a syllable:

מִלְחָמָה	שִׁמְךָ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	נַפְשֶׁךָ	אֲהַבְתָּ	ג
mil-cha-mah	shim-kha	yis-ra'el	naf-she-kha	'a-hav-ta	

4. Following a *short* vowel:

מִרְמוֹת	פָּרְעָה	מַלְכָּה	אֲסַפְתִּי	מַרְפֵּא	ד
mir-mot	par-'oh	mal-kah	'a-saf-ti	mar-pe'	

3.7 Furtive Patach

Hebrew Syllables - Understanding the Furtive Patach

Normally, you sound out a syllable by first pronouncing the letter sound and then adding the vowel sound. There an exception to this rule, however: when a word ends in a Chet, an Ayin or a dotted Hey (*mappiq*) and has a Patach vowel mark, you first pronounce the vowel sound and then add the letter sound. Thus,

(2)	(1)	syllable #	(3)	(2)	(1)	syllable #
<i>Furtive Patach</i>			<i>Furtive Patach</i>			
“ach”	“ru-”	trans.	“a”	“shu-”	“ye-”	trans.
patach	shureq	vowel	patach	shureq	tsere	vowel
short	long	class	short	long	long	class
(C)	(O)	status	(O)	(O)	(O)	status

Readings:

Accent note: When a furtive patach appears under a Chet, Ayin, or dotted Hey, the accent falls on the *preceding* syllable (e.g., RU-ach, ye-SHU-a).

נַח רוּחַ מְנוּחַ לְשׁוּחַ בְּרוּחַ יְשׁוּעַ

יֹדֵעַ

yo·de·a'

שָׂרוּעַ

sa·ru·a'

מַדּוּעַ

mad·du·a'

פֹּשְׁעַ

po·she·a'

יְשׁוּעַ

ye·shu·a'

מֹשִׁיעַ

mo·shi·a'

מְשִׁיחַ

ma·shi·ach

שָׂמֵחַ

sa·me·ach

שְׁלִיחַ

sha·li·ach

שַׁבָּח

shab·be·ach

לָנוּחַ

la·nu·ach

בֹּטֵחַ

bo·te·ach

צְבוּעַ

tsa·vu·a'

כְּשֹׂמֵעַ

kish·mo·a'

הַמְּשִׁיחַ

ham·ma·shi·ach

Hebrew Syllables - Understanding the Hebrew Quiescent Letters

The letters **Aleph**, **Hey**, **Vav**, and **Yod** can sometimes be “quiescent,” that is, silent under certain circumstances:

׃	וּ	הּ	אֵ
Yod	Vav	Hey	Aleph
ʔ		הּ	C

Quiescent Letters

Examples:

רֵאשֶׁהוֹן

The Aleph in the word above is quiescent. This word would be transliterated as *reishohon* (the sheva is vocal since Tseret is long).

בְּרוֹשׁ

Again, the Aleph in the word above is also quiescent. This word would be transliterated as *berosh* or *b'rosh*.

אֱלוֹהַי

The letter Yod in the word above is also quiescent. This word would be transliterated as *elohav*.

From a syllabification point of view, the quiescent letter becomes incorporated as part of the syllable of the *preceding* vowel.

Hebrew Syllables - Understanding the Maqqef

The word Maqqef means "binder," and functions much like a hyphen in English. That is, two words of a word pair are joined together to form a new word, and changes in the vocalization of the word unit often occurs.



If a word has a Maqqef (hyphen), the stress shifts away from the preceding word and attends to the following word.



In the example above, the two words *ben* and *adam* together mean "son of man." With the Maqqef, the stress moves away from the word *ben* toward the word *adam*, resulting in a closed, unaccented syllable for the first part of the (hyphenated) word. Since closed, unaccented syllables must take a short vowel, the vowel in *ben* changes from Tseré (long) to Segol (short).




Likewise in the example above, *kol am* means "all of the people". But when the Maqqef is used the accent shifts away from *kol* to the word *am*, and since the first syllable is now a closed, unaccented syllable, the cholem under the Kaf must change to Qamets Chatuph.

If you are new to the study of Hebrew, don't be overly concerned with this information. Your aim is to gain some proficiency in reading and sounding out the words you see. Just remember that when you see a Maqqef, the vowels you were expecting in a given word might change.

Hebrew Syllables - Understanding Qamets Chatuph

One vowel that might cause some trouble is the "Qamets Chatuph," a short O-Type vowel that looks identical to the regular Qamets (long A-type) vowel:

Vowel Mark	Vowel Name	Sound	Hebrew	Trans.	Class
	Qamets Chatuph	"o" as in yellow	קָמֶץ חָטוּף	o	Short

Qamets Chatuph appears 630 times in the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and occurs only in closed, unaccented syllables:

כָּל

Qamets or Qamets Chatuph?

When you see a Qamets, you must ask 1) is it in a closed syllable? (i.e., a syllable that ends in a stopping sound) and 2) is the syllable unaccented? (most Hebrew words are accented on the last syllable). If both conditions are met, the Qamets is Chatuph and should be pronounced as an "o" sound. For example:


vai ya kom

In the example above, the last syllable is closed (it ends in Mem) and is unaccented, and thus the vowel is Qamets Chatuph: kom.

Generally speaking, whenever you see the Qamets vowel mark you should assume that it is pronounced "ah." In ambiguous cases, sometimes a small vertical mark (called a **Meteg** mark) appears just to the left of the Qamets to indicate that it is an open syllable and should be pronounced "ah" and not "o":


ve ra chats ta

Unit Three Summary -

The Least you should know...

After studying **Unit Three**, you should have mastered the following material:

The Two Rules for Dividing Hebrew Words

There are **two basic rules** for dividing a Hebrew word into syllables:

1. *The Number of Syllables = the Number of Vowels*
Since there is one vowel per syllable, the number of syllables in a word is the same as the number of vowels. Indicate word division by drawing a line between the syllables and then placing the numbers (1), (2), and so on, directly above / below each consecutive syllable. Identify the type of vowel and its class for each syllable:
2. *Syllables can be "Open" or "Closed."*
Open syllables end with a vowel sound and closed syllables end with a letter without a vowel. Indicate open syllables with (O) and a closed syllable with (C).

Hebrew Accent Marks

Most Hebrew words are generally **accented** on the last syllable of the word. However, some words (segolate nouns, furtive patach nouns, certain verb forms) accent the next to last syllable. In the vocabulary sections of the units, I will indicate non-standard accents by using the symbol "<" above the accented syllable.

The "tonic" syllable is the syllable that receives the stress or accent; the "pretonic" syllable is the syllable before the tonic syllable, and the "propretonic" syllable is the syllable before the pretonic.

Dotted Letters and Word Division

A **dagesh forte** "emphasizes" a letter and thereby affects a word's syllabification by doubling the value of the consonant. A letter with a dagesh forte always causes the previous syllable (if any) to be closed and in effect "divides" the syllable at the letter.

The dagesh in a **Begeedkephat** letter is forte only if it is preceded by a vowel (otherwise it is lene).

The general rule for dotted letters is this: If there is a "dot" inside a letter, "double" its value; but if it is a Begeedkephat letter, double the value only if it is preceded by a vowel.

The Sheva and Syllables

There are four cases when the *Sheva* is vocal (*Na*):

1. When it begins a word (or syllable)
2. When it is the second of two shevas in a row
3. When it appears under a letter with a Dagesh Forte
4. When it follows a syllable that contains a long vowel.

Correlatively, there are four cases when the *Sheva* is silent (*Nach*):

1. When it ends a word (or syllable)
2. When it is the first of two shevas in a row
3. When it closes a syllable
4. When it follows a syllable that contains a short vowel.

Some grammars do not treat the vocal sheva as a separate syllable, but include its sound with the following syllable (as a sort of slurred vocalization before the next syllable). Normally I will treat the vocal sheva as a separate syllable in transliterations (using either an apostrophe character or an "e").

Furtive Patach

When a word ends in a Chet, an Ayin or a dotted Hey (mappiq) and has a Patach vowel mark, you first pronounce the vowel sound and then add the letter sound. This is called a "furtive Patach." When a furtive patch appears under a Chet, Ayin, or dotted Hey, the accent falls on the preceding syllable.

Quiescent Letters

The letters Aleph, Hey, Vav, and Yod can sometimes be "quiescent," that is, silent under certain circumstances.

The Maqqeph

The word *Maqqef* means means "binder," and functions much like a hyphen in English. That is, two words of a word pair are joined together to form a new word, and changes in the vocalization of the word unit often occurs.

Qamets Chatuph

Qamets Chatuph appears 630 times in the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and occurs only in closed, unaccented syllables. It is the only form of the short "O-Type" vowel and may appear as a result of changes in vocalization of Hebrew words (for example, vocalic "reduction," where a long vowel is reduced to its corresponding short form).

Nu, What's Next?

The aim of the first three units is to help you "pronounce Hebrew," not "read Hebrew." This distinction is important. In the Hebrew language itself, the verb "to read" is *kara'* ("kah-RAH"), which is often translated into English as "to call". What this means is that the concept of "reading" in the Hebrew mindset was something you did with your *mouth and also with your eyes*, not something you did exclusively with your eyes.

If this material is now clear, you may ahead to **Unit Four** and begin learning about Hebrew nouns and adjectives. You may also perform a self-check by working through **Unit Three exercises** and **vocabulary**.

Unit Three Exercises -

Reviewing the Hebrew Syllables

The goal of the first three Units of this grammar is to help you “pronounce Hebrew,” not just to read it. This distinction is worth mentioning. In Hebrew, the verb “to read” is *kara* (“kah-RAH”), which is often translated into English as “to call.” In the Hebraic mindset, “reading” is something more like reciting rather than something done (silently) with your eyes. So, with this distinction in mind, go ahead and “call out” the following words. Say them aloud, and then check yourself by clicking on the speaker icon that follows the exercise.

One syllable Readings:

Indicate whether the syllable is open (O) or closed (C), and whether the syllable’s vowel is long or short:

אָז עֵץ מָה אִם פֶּד פֵּא לִי שֵׁם
עִיר רֵץ אֶל זֹאת שׁוּב שָׁב טוֹב זֶה

Two Syllable Readings:

For each of these words, draw a vertical line between the syllables and indicate whether each syllable is open (O) or closed (C) and whether the vowel is long, short, or reduced:

כָּלֵם שָׂאוּל אֶלֶף שֶׁלַח יְרוּם מֶלֶךְ עֶשֶׂר שׁוּבִי
אִשָּׁה הִנֵּה קוֹלִי יוֹשֵׁב מִגֵּן דְּרִים יַחַד שְׁלוֹם

Three Syllable Readings:

For each of these words, draw a vertical line between the syllables and indicate whether each syllable is open (O) or closed (C) and whether the vowel is long, short, or reduced:

עָמְלוֹ הַבָּשָׂר לִלְכֹת נִיתַן הַמִּשָּׁה אֶכְבֵּד צִיּוֹתֵי
יָשׁוּבוּ אוֹדֶךָ אֱלֹהִים שְׂאֵלוּ נְבִהוּ מִמֶּנּוּ הָאֲחַת

Three or More Syllable Readings:

For each of these words, draw a vertical line between the syllables and indicate whether each syllable is open (O) or closed (C) and whether the vowel is long, short, or reduced:

אֲדַלְּנֵנוּ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַמְּשִׁיחַ חֲבַאֲתִיהַּ הַשָּׁמַיִם
הַמְּלָנִים אֲבָרְהָם וּבְנֵיהוּ לְבָבֶךָ הַדְּבָרִים

Sheva Identification:

For each of the following words, identify the sheva type (vocal, silent) and transliterate the word into syllables:

א	מַלְכֵנוּ	אַבְרָהָם	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אַנְחֵנוּ	אַרְבַּע
	mal'ke-nu				
ב	אַרְבַּעִים	אַשְׁכְּנֹז	אַתְרוּג	בְּבִקְשָׁה	בְּדִיקָה
ג	בְּלָהָה	בְּמִדְבָּר	בְּנֵי	מִצּוּה	בְּרוּךְ
ד	בְּרִית	בְּרִכּוֹת	בְּשׂוֹרָה	גְּבוּרָה	גְּדֻלָּה
ה	גְּלִילָה	גְּמָרָה	דְּבִיר	דְּבָרִים	דְּנִיָּאל
ו	דְּרָשָׁה	הִנְנִי	הַשְּׁנָחָה	הַתְּנַלּוֹת	וַיִּקְרָא
ז	זְכָרְיָה	זְלָפָה	טוֹמָאָה	טְרַפָּה	יְהוּדָה

Fluency Readings:

Read the following verses from the Tanakh until you feel comfortable with them.

Genesis 1:1

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

Psalms 25 1-3

לְדָוִד אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה יְהוָה נַפְשִׁי אֶשָּׂא
אֱלֹהֵי בָּהּ בְּטַחְתִּי אֶל-אֲבוֹשָׁה אֶל-יַעֲלֹצוּ
אִיבֵי לִי גַם כָּל-קִנְיֶיךָ לֹא יִבְשׂוּ
יִבְשׂוּ הַבּוֹגְדִים רִיקָם

אָנְכִי אֶלֶף וְתוֹ רֵאשִׁי וְסוֹף

Just as in English, a Hebrew noun is a name of a person, place, or thing. This section will introduce you to the Hebrew noun: its morphology and basic usage.



Objective:

- After studying this unit, you will understand the basic grammar of the noun in biblical Hebrew, as well as the definite article, the conjunction, and the use of Hebrew “word pairs” (construct chain). You also should be able to begin using a Hebrew lexicon to begin learning common noun forms you will see in the Tanakh.

UNIT FOUR CONTENTS

- 4.1 Noun Properties
- 4.2 Masculine Nouns
- 4.3 Feminine Nouns
- 4.4 Plural Nouns
- 4.5 Pluralization Rules
- 4.6 The Definite Article
- 4.7 The Conjunctive Vav
- 4.8 The Construct Chain
- 4.9 Summary Page

4.1 Noun Properties

Grammatical Overview: Noun Properties

A noun is a name (*nomen*) given to a person, place, or thing. Nouns have the following properties: 1) gender, 2) number, 3) person, and 4) case.

1. Gender

Gender is a property that indicates the sex of the referent (masculine or feminine). In Hebrew, however, the correlation between the gender of a noun and its referent is generally accidental. For example, the word *Torah* in Hebrew is feminine, but that does not imply anything about the nature of the Torah itself. Unlike Greek, there is no “neuter” gender in Hebrew.

2. Number

Number is the property that indicates whether one or more than one object is referenced when using the word. Hebrew has singular nouns (one object), plural nouns (more than one object), and dual nouns (a pair of objects). For plural nouns, there are regular plurals, irregular plurals, dual plurals, and plurals functioning as singular nouns.

3. Person

Person refers to the relationship between the noun and the speaker. A noun can be in the first person (I, *John*, am here), second person (*Oh, John!*), or third person (*John is here*). Normally these distinctions apply to the study of pronouns, but they are implicit in the grammar of the noun as well.

4. Case

Case indicates the grammatical function of the noun in a sentence. The noun can be a subject of a sentence (*Hebrew is fun*), an object in a sentence (*John loves Hebrew*), or in a possessive relationship with an object (*John’s Hebrew book*). For possessives, Hebrew uses a “construct state” where one of two (or more) Hebrew nouns appear as a chain in a sentence (more later).

In general Hebrew uses *endings* to indicate these various properties of nouns. By learning the root of the noun and its endings, you will begin to understand the way nouns function in Hebrew sentences.

Study Tip: When first learning a noun, I recommend writing out a flash card with the gender, singular form, plural form and construct form on the front, and the definition on the back. You might also want to include a sentence that uses the noun in your definition.

4.2 Masculine Singular Nouns

Section Vocabulary

Jesus	ישוע	word, thing	דָּבָר
David	דָּוִד	father	אָב
Moses	מֹשֶׁה	man	אִישׁ
king	מֶלֶךְ	young man	נָעַר
(he) ruled, reigned	מָלַךְ	son	בֶּן
God	אֱלֹהִים	(he) heard, obeyed	שָׁמַע
house	בַּיִת	(he) guarded, kept	שָׁמַר
the (article)	הַ	(he) remembered	זָכַר

Hebrew Masculine Singular Nouns

In Hebrew, nouns have *gender*: they can be masculine or feminine. Nouns also have *number*: they can refer to one thing (singular) or more than one thing (plural). In the list above, all the nouns are masculine singular (except for the word *elohim*, which is masculine plural in form but singular in meaning).

In this section of Unit Four, we will consider masculine singular nouns.

Hebrew Noun Sentences

A simple sentence in Hebrew can be constructed by simply joining two nouns together. For example,

Jesus (is) a king. ישוע מֶלֶךְ

Moses (is) a man. מֹשֶׁה אִישׁ

Jesus (is) God. ישוע אֱלֹהִים

A father (is) a man. אָב אִישׁ

These are complete sentences. In English, we supply the “copula” verb form (“is”) to aid us in our translation, but in Hebrew, no such verb is required.

Notice also that there is **no indefinite article** in Hebrew. For example, the word *av* means “a father” (or just “father”, depending on the context). Proper nouns (i.e., names of persons or titles of things, such as Jesus or Jerusalem) are considered definite by nature (that is, we do not say “A Jesus” but rather “(the) Jesus”).

Introduction to the Verb

A **verb** is an "action" word that describes the action of a sentence. In the vocabulary list above, I have included a few common Hebrew verbs so that we could practice simple sentences using a verb. In Hebrew, a complete sentence can also be formed by using a noun and a verb together:

Jesus ruled. יְשׁוּעַ מָלַךְ

Jesus ruled. מָלַךְ יְשׁוּעַ

A man heard. אִישׁ שָׁמַע

A son remembered. בֶּן זָכַר

Notice that the second sentence reverses the word order of the subject (Jesus) and the verb (ruled). In Biblical Hebrew, the verb often appears before the subject term.

In Hebrew, verbs also have gender and number, and every verb must agree with its subject in gender and number. Therefore, masculine singular nouns must take a masculine singular verb form. The vowel pattern for the three letter *shoresh* (root) of a (Qal perfect) verb in the third person masculine singular is:

X X X

Notice the vowel marks under the root letters of the verb (denoted with **XXX** in the pattern). This pattern is the basic vocalization for the masculine verbs in the Qal perfect. This form of the verb (3ms Qal perfect) is also the lexical form of the verb (that is the form you look up in a Hebrew dictionary):

If you are new to Hebrew, do not be overly concerned about this information at this time. Just remember that verbs have specific vowel patterns to agree with the gender and number of the subject (if you can understand how the four verbs in the vocabulary list all use this vowel pattern, *mazel tov!*, you are beginning to understand some Hebrew grammar!).

Introduction to the Definite Article

The word "the" in Hebrew functions as a prefix to Hebrew words. That is, to make a Hebrew word definite, you add a **Hey** before the noun. Normally the letter following the Hey will take a **dagesh forte**:

הַ-אֵל

For example:

the king הַמֶּלֶךְ = מֶלֶךְ + הַ-אֵל

the word הַדָּבָר = דָּבָר + הַ-אֵל

the son הַבֶּן = בֶּן + הַ-אֵל

Notice that when the article is added to the noun, the first letter of the noun takes the dagesh mark (in the case of *davar* and *ben*, the dagesh changes from a dagesh kal to a dagesh chazak).

Recall that a **guttural letter** cannot take a dagesh mark. If a noun begins with a guttural letter, then when the article is added, the **patach** under the Hey is changed to a different vowel. For example:

the man הָאִישׁ = אִישׁ + הָ-אֵל

Notice that since the Aleph cannot take a dagesh, the patach under the Hey "compensates" and lengthens to a **qamets**.

More information about the grammar of the article is found in **Section 4.6**.

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns are definite by definition, and therefore do not use the definite article. The vocabulary lists three proper nouns you should memorize: Yeshua, Moshe, and David.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. Practice writing basic sentences using these words
3. Summarize the rules of the definite article on a small flashcard

Note: In Hebrew, cities, countries, team names, etc., are generally feminine in gender, whereas the names of the months and seasons are masculine in gender.

4.3 Feminine Singular Nouns

Section Vocabulary

Jerusalem.....	ירושלים	blessing.....	ברכה
Israel.....	ישראל	mother.....	אם
Sarah	שרה	land.....	ארץ
queen	מלכה	shabbat.....	שבת
family	משפחה	daughter	בת
wife, woman	אשה	people, nation	עם
truth.....	אמת	(she) heard, obeyed	שמעה
young woman	נערה	(she) guarded, kept.....	שמרה
sing. end (f).....	תא- / תא-	(she) remembered	זכרה

Hebrew Feminine Singular Nouns

Every Hebrew noun is either masculine or feminine in gender and singular or plural in number. In the vocabulary list above, all the nouns are feminine singular.

Note that a noun's gender (masculine or feminine) sometimes refers to the sex of the referent (as the word *bat* refers to a daughter, and *ben* refers to a son), but often it does not. For example, the word for land (*eret*) is feminine and the word for house (*bayit*) is masculine. However there is nothing male or female about land or a building! You must learn the gender of a noun as part of the noun's definition.

Singular Noun Endings

Sometimes it helps to see patterns in the way words are formed. These patterns are sometimes called inflections. For Hebrew singular nouns, the pattern looks like this:

Noun Endings		
F.	M.	
תא- / תא-	---	<i>Singular</i>

The table above shows typical endings for singular nouns. For masculine singular nouns, there is no characteristic ending added to the base stem of the word. Feminine singular nouns often end with a Hey or a Tav.

We can see how the patterns appear in the following examples:

Feminine

wife, woman	אשה
young woman	נערה
queen	מלכה
daughter	בת
truth.....	אמת

Masculine

man	איש
young man	נער
king.....	מלך
son.....	בן
word, thing	דבר

Notice in the list above that the feminine nouns end in either Hey or Tav, but the masculine nouns show no regular pattern to their endings. Notice also that the word for truth, *emet*, is feminine and the word for thing, *davar*, is masculine (there are no masculine inflections for *emet* or feminine inflections for *davar*). Finally, be aware that most names of streets, cities and countries are feminine in Hebrew (for example, Jerusalem and Israel are both feminine nouns).

Hebrew Noun Sentences

A simple sentence in Hebrew can be constructed by simply joining two nouns together. For example,

Sarah (is) a queen. שרה מלכה
 Israel (is) a land. ישראל ארץ

These are complete sentences. In English, we supply the "copula" verb form ("is") to aid us in our translation, but in Hebrew, no such verb is required.

Feminine Singular Verb Forms

In Hebrew, verbs have gender and number, and every verb must agree with its subject in gender and number. Therefore, feminine singular nouns must take a feminine singular verb form. The vowel pattern for the three letter *shoresh* (root) of a (Qal perfect) verb in the third person feminine singular is:

הַ X X X

Notice the vowel marks under the root letters of the verb (denoted with **XXX** in the pattern). This pattern is the basic vocalization for feminine singular verbs in the Qal perfect. Here are some examples:

Sarah remembered. שָׂרָה זָכְרָה
 A mother kept. אִם שָׁמְרָה

If you can see how the three verbs in the vocabulary list all use this vowel pattern, mazel tov!, you are beginning to understand some Hebrew grammar!

Third Person Singular Verb Patterns

Sometimes it helps to see patterns in the way verbs are formed. These patterns are sometimes called conjugations. For Hebrew singular verbs in the third person ("he, she, it"), the pattern looks like this:

Verb Patterns	
F.	M.
הַ X X X <small> T T T</small>	X X X <small> T</small>

3rd Person Singular

Here are some examples of the vowel changes:

3rd Pers Fem Sing

(she) heard שָׁמְעָה
 (she) guarded שָׁמְרָה
 (she) remembered זָכְרָה

3rd Pers Masc Sing

(he) heard שָׁמַע
 (he) guarded שָׁמַר
 (he) remembered זָכַר

Note again that the subject and verb must agree in gender and number:

Sarah heard שָׂרָה שָׁמְעָה	David heard דָּוִד שָׁמַע
A queen guarded מַלְכָּה שָׁמְרָה	The king guarded הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁמַר
The daughter	The son
remembered הַבַּת זָכְרָה	remembered הַבֵּן זָכַר

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. Practice writing basic sentences using these words
3. Understand the difference between masculine and feminine noun forms (called inflections)

4.4 Plural Nouns

Section Vocabulary

servant (m)	עֶבֶר	day (m)	יוֹם
city (f)	עִיר	way (m)	דֶּרֶךְ
mountain (m)	הָר	women (f)	נָשִׁים
brother (m)	אָח	men (m)	אֲנָשִׁים
torah (f)	תּוֹרָה	daughters	בָּנוֹת
animal (f)	בְּהֵמָה	(he) sent	שָׁלַח
father (m)	אָב	(he) crosses over	עָבַר
plural ending (m)	אִים-	plural ending (f)	אות-
dual ending (m/f)	אִים-	heaven	שָׁמַיִם

Hebrew Plural Nouns

Like English, Hebrew nouns can be either singular or plural in number. In English, plural forms of a noun are normally formed by adding “-s” or “-es” to the end of the singular form of the word (for example, cars, boxes). In Hebrew, nouns are made plural by adding אִים- or אות- to the end of a singular noun. Often there are vowel changes that occur when these endings are added, since an extra syllable is added to the word.

Plural Noun Endings

Sometimes it helps to see patterns in the way words are formed. These patterns are sometimes called inflections. For Hebrew plural nouns, the pattern looks like this:

Noun Endings

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
אות-	אִים-	<i>Plural</i>

The table above shows typical (or “regular”) endings for plural nouns. For masculine plural nouns, אִים- is added to the base stem of the word; for feminine אות- is added.

You can see how the patterns appear in the following examples:

feminine		masculine	
<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>
אֲרָצוֹת lands	אֶרֶץ land	מְלָכִים kings	מֶלֶךְ king
בְּהֵמוֹת animals	בְּהֵמָה animal	דְּבָרִים words	דָּבָר word
מִשְׁפָּחוֹת families	מִשְׁפָּחָה family	אֲחָיוֹת brothers	אָח brother
נְעָרוֹת young women	נְעָרָה young woman	יָמִים days	יוֹם day

Notice in the list above that the feminine plural nouns end in אִית-, but the masculine nouns end in יִם-. All of these nouns are "regularly formed," meaning that there are consistent changes made to the vowels when the endings are added (more information about vowel changes is provided below).

Irregular Plural Nouns

Some Hebrew nouns do not follow the standard pattern when forming their plural. These cases of noun are sometimes called "irregular," since they are not the usual form you might expect (English also has irregular plural forms, for example, the plural of foot is *feet*, or the plural of child is *children*). In the case of irregular Hebrew plurals, you simply have to memorize the forms.

Here are some examples of irregular plural noun forms:

feminine		masculine	
<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>
נָשִׁים women	אִשָּׁה woman	אֲנָשִׁים men	אִישׁ man
בָּנוֹת daughters	בַּת daughter	בָּתִּים houses	בַּיִת house
עִירִים cities	עִיר city	אֲבוֹת fathers	אָב father

Notice that the plural for woman (*nashim*) shows a Nun infix and a masculine plural ending. The Nun infix also appears in the plural of man (*anashim*) and in the plural for daughter (*banot*). The word for fathers (*avot*) is masculine even though it has the feminine plural ending. The word for cities (*irim*) and women (*nashim*) are feminine, even though they show a masculine plural ending. It's important to keep this in mind, since adjectives and verbs must agree with the nouns they modify in gender and number.

3rd Person Plural Verb Forms

In Hebrew, Plural nouns must take a plural verb form. The vowel pattern for the three letter shoresh (root) of a (Qal perfect) verb in the third person plural is:

Verb Pattern

F.	M.	
פ X X X פ X X X פ X X X		3 rd Person Plural

Note that this pattern is used for both masculine and feminine plural (i.e., common gender plural) subjects. Here are some examples of the pattern:

The kings heard	הַמְּלָכִים שָׁמְעוּ	(they) heard	שָׁמְעוּ
Brothers guarded	אֶחָיו שָׁמְרוּ	(they) guarded	שָׁמְרוּ
Families remembered	מִשְׁפָּחוֹת זָכְרוּ	(they) remembered	זָכְרוּ
The daughters sent	הַבָּנוֹת שָׁלְחוּ	(they) sent	שָׁלְחוּ
Fathers walked	אֲבוֹת הֵלְכוּ	(they) walked.....	הֵלְכוּ

"Dual" Nouns

Some nouns form their plural using a "dual" form. This form is used most often to indicate a pair of something (eyes, hands, feet, and ears) that come in pairs. It is also used to denote undifferentiated plurality (e.g., heaven, water).

Dual Endings

F.	M.	
אֵימָ֑	אֵימָ֑	Dual

Notice that this ending is similar to the regular plural ending for masculine nouns, though it is actually a diphthong with the accent over the patach (pronounced *ayim*). Note also that both masculine and feminine "dual" nouns use the same ending.

<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>	
(two) ears	אָזְנַיִם	(two) days	יוֹמַיִם

Summary Chart: Noun Endings

Keeping in mind that some masculine nouns take feminine plural endings (e.g., *avot*) and some feminine nouns take masculine plural endings (e.g., *nashim*), the following chart summarizes the most common noun endings encountered in Biblical Hebrew:

Noun Endings

F.	M.	
אָת- / הָת־	---	Singular
אוֹת-	אֵימָ֑	Plural
אֵימָ֑	אֵימָ֑	Dual

The **lexical form** of a word is the spelling of the word as it appears in a dictionary. Be advised that the lexical form of a word is always the *singular* spelling. For example, suppose you see the word *nashim* and wish to look it up in a Hebrew dictionary. You will need to remember that the singular form of *nashim* is actually *isha* and then look up the entry there!

Because of this, I recommend that when first learning a new noun, write out a flash card with the gender, singular form, plural form and the construct form on the front, and the definition on the back.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. Memorize the noun endings table
3. Understand that some nouns use irregular noun endings

4.5 Pluralization Rules

Hebrew Noun Pluralization Rules

As mentioned in section 4.1, Hebrew adds *endings* to the basic noun form (shoresh or stem) to express gender and number. These endings can be summarized as follows:

Dual	Plural	Singular	
ים־	ים־	(none)	Masculine
ים־	ות־	ת־ ת־	Feminine

When endings are added to Hebrew nouns, vowel changes, accent changes, and changes in spelling may occur. This section lists some of the more common changes.

Case 1: No Vowel Change

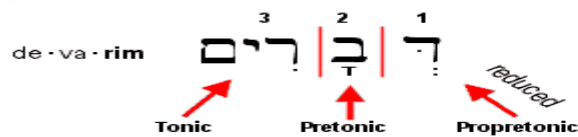
This class of noun does not produce any sort of change apart from the addition of the plural endings. Often these nouns are monosyllabic or have a reduced first syllable.

<i>plur</i>		<i>sing</i>
שירים	←	שיר
אותות	←	אות
תלונות	←	תלום
רחובות	←	רחוב

In the examples above, there is no change to the vowels when the endings are added to the singular form of the word. For example, *shir* (song) uses a Chireq and the Chireq is retained after the ending is added to the word. (As you will see, this is often not the case.)

Case 2: Propretonic Reduction

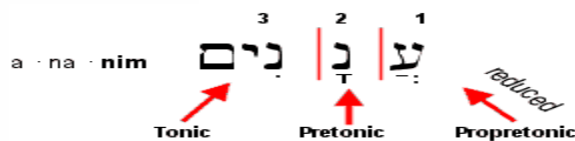
Many nouns that have a Qamets or Tseres vowel as their first syllable undergo "propretonic reduction" when the plural endings are added to the word:



In the example above, when the word *davar* has been pluralized, the first syllable (Qamets) is reduced to Sheva when the plural ending is added to the word.



In the example above, when the word *levav* (heart) has been pluralized, the first syllable (Tseres) is reduced to Sheva when the plural ending is added to the word.



In the example above, when the word *anan* (cloud) has been pluralized, the first syllable (Qamets) is reduced to Chateph Patach when the plural ending is added to the word (remember that a guttural letter cannot take a vocal sheva).

Case 3: Segolate Nouns

For our purposes, Segolate nouns may be defined as two syllable nouns that are accented on the first syllable (often both syllables contain the Segol vowel, though not always). Basically, segolate nouns form their plural by undergoing "propretonic reduction" and lengthening the second syllable when the plural endings are added to the word.



The word *melekh* (king) is a segolate noun (Mem-Segol-Lamed-Segol-Khaf). When it is pluralized, however, the first vowel is reduced to sheva and the second vowel lengthens to Qamets. This same pattern occurs for *nefesh* (soul), *sefer* (book), and *zera* (seed), among many others.

The word *melekh* (king) is a segolate noun (Mem-Segol-Lamed-Segol-Khaf). When it is pluralized, however, the first vowel is reduced to sheva and the second vowel lengthens to Qamets. This same pattern occurs for *nefesh* (soul), *sefer* (book), and *zera* (seed), among many others.

Case 4: Geminate Nouns

A "geminate" noun has a hidden twin letter that does not appear in the singular form. The hidden letter reappears in the plural form with a strong dagesh mark:

-ֿXX ← (X)XX

In the diagram above, the (X) character refers to the hidden letter that has been dropped in the singular form but reappears in the plural, after the endings are added.

<i>plur</i>		<i>sing</i>
עַמִּים ←		עַם
חַצִּים ←		חֵץ

In the first example, the word *am* (people, nation) reveals the hidden third letter of the root when the plural form is shown. In the second example, the word *chets* (tree) likewise reveals its hidden third letter in the plural.

Case 5: Irregular Plurals

As you studied in section 4.4, some Hebrew nouns do not follow the standard pattern when forming their plural. These cases of noun are sometimes called "irregular," since they are not the usual form you might expect (English also has irregular plural forms, for example, the plural of foot is feet, or the plural of child is children). In the case of irregular Hebrew plurals, you simply have to memorize the forms.

- Most city names are feminine (even if formed with a masculine ending) (*Yerushalayim*)
- Most country names are feminine (*mitsrayim* - Egypt)
- Some words are always "dual" - (*shamayim, mayim*)
- Some words evidence "defective spelling" of their vowels (full vowels with dropped Vav or Yod)
- Some plural forms use infix letters (*anashim* - people)
- Some plural forms use the opposite ending than expected (*avot* - fathers, *irim* - cities)

See [section 4.4](#) for specific examples.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the basic rules for pluralization and provide one or two examples
2. Syllabify and identify the tonic, pretonic, and propretonic syllables of some plural nouns you know.
3. Understand how to pronounce segolate nouns

4.6 The Definite Article

The Hebrew Definite Article

The word "the" in Hebrew functions as a prefix to Hebrew words. That is, to make a Hebrew word (of either gender) definite, you add a **Hey** before the noun. Sometimes the vowel under the Hey changes, depending on whether the noun begins with a regular letter or a guttural letter.

CASE 1: Added to a word beginning with a non-guttural letter

The basic form of the article is a Hey pointed with a patach followed by a **dagesh forte** in the following (non-guttural) letter:

הַאֵ-

For example:

the king	הַמֶּלֶךְ	=	מֶלֶךְ	+	הַאֵ-
the word	הַדָּבָר	=	דָּבָר	+	הַאֵ-
the son	הַבֵּן	=	בֵּן	+	הַאֵ-

Notice that when the article is added to the noun, the first letter of the noun takes the dagesh mark (in the case of *davar* and *ben*, the dagesh changes from a dagesh kal to a dagesh chazak).

CASE 2: Added to a word beginning with a guttural letter

Recall that a **guttural letter** cannot take a dagesh mark (i.e., refuse to be "doubled"). If a noun begins with a guttural letter, then when the article is added, the patach under the Hey "compensates" and lengthens to a **qamets**:

הָאֵ-

א, ע, ר,

For example:

the man הָאִישׁ = אִישׁ + הָאֵ-

Note, however, that before the guttural letters Hey or Chet, there is no change in the normal vowel under the article:

הַאֵ-

ה, ח,

For example:

the darkness	הַחֹשֶׁךְ	=	חֹשֶׁךְ	+	הַאֵ-
the temple	הַהֵיכָל	=	הֵיכָל	+	הַאֵ-

Finally, if the first letter of the noun is a guttural beginning with a Qamets, the article changes to Hey with Segol:

הֶאֵ-

ק, ט, ע,

For example:

the dust הַעָפָר = עָפָר + הֶאֵ-

Note also that some vowel changes may occur within the word when the article is appended. This is common for words that include gutturals or geminate (hidden) letters.

the earth	הָאָרֶץ	=	אָרֶץ	+	הָאֵ-
the nation	הָעָם	=	עָם	+	הָאֵ-
the mountain	הַהָר	=	הָר	+	הַאֵ-
the ark	הַתְּאֵרֶךְ	=	תְּאֵרֶךְ	+	הַאֵ-

The Indefinite Article

There is no indefinite article in Hebrew. For example, the word *davar* means "word" or "a word," depending on the context.

Proper Nouns

Proper nouns (the specific names of persons or places) are definite by definition, and therefore do not use the definite article.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the basic rules for adding the definite article to nouns beginning with non-guttural consonants
2. Memorize the basic rules for adding the definite article to nouns beginning with guttural consonants
3. Explain the difference between a proper noun and a common noun

4.7 The Conjunctive Vav

Introduction to the Hebrew Conjunction

Like the definite article, the word "and" in Hebrew functions as a prefix to Hebrew words. To make a Hebrew word (of either gender) part of a connecting sequence, you add a **Vav** before the noun. Sometimes the vowel under the Vav changes, depending on the consonant that appears at the beginning of the word. This function of the Vav is often referred to as the "Conjunctive Vav."

CASE 1: The Basic Form

The basic form of the conjunction is a Vav pointed with a simple **Sheva**:

וְ

For example:

and a slave	וְעֶבֶר	=	עֶבֶר	+	וְ
and a father	וְאָב	=	אָב	+	וְ
and the king	וְהַמֶּלֶךְ	=	הַמֶּלֶךְ	+	וְ
and the man	וְהָאִישׁ	=	הָאִישׁ	+	וְ

In these cases, notice that when the conjunctive Vav is added to the noun, there are no vowel changes. Note also that the Vav can be joined to a noun with the definite article.

CASE 2: Before "BMP" letters

When the Conjunctive Vav is prefixed to words beginning with Bet, Mem, or Pey ("BMP letters"), the **dagesh** is lost (since the letter is now preceded by a vowel sound), and the conjunction takes the form of a **Shureq**:

וְ

ב, מ, פ (lose dagesh)

For example:

and between וּבֵין = בֵּין + ׀
 and a king וּמֶלֶךְ = מֶלֶךְ + ׀
 and Pharaoh וּפַרְעֹה = פַּרְעֹה + ׀
 and a place וּמְקוֹם = מְקוֹם + ׀

In addition, the Conjunctive Vav may form as Shureq before all consonants that are pointed with a simple Sheva (except for Yod, see below):

and female וּנְקֵבָה = נְקֵבָה + ׀

CASE 3: Before Gutturals with Chateph Forms

When the Conjunctive Vav is prefixed to a guttural letter that has a reduced (chateph) vowel, the vav will take the corresponding unreduced vowel as its vowel:

-X׀
 ↑
 ע, ח, ה, א (guttural with chateph)

-X׀ -X׀ -X׀
 ט: ץ: ך:

For example:

and truth וְאֱמֶת = אֱמֶת + ׀
 and sickness וְחֹלִי = חֹלִי + ׀

Notice how the Chateph Segol of the Aleph (in *emet*) transfers its corresponding unreduced form (Segol) to the Vav, and how the Chateph Qamets (in *choli*) transfers its unreduced Qamets to the Vav.

Since Chateph vowels are a form of vocal Sheva, you can see that by adding a Conjunctive Vav you would have two vocal shevas in a row -- which is forbidden in Hebrew. This vocalic transfer is sometimes called the Second Rule of Sheva.

There is an exception to this rule for the Name of God, *elohim*:

and God וְאֱלֹהִים = אֱלֹהִים + ׀

When the Vav is added, the Chateph Segol of the Aleph (in *elohim*) transfers its corresponding unreduced form (Segol) to the Vav but in this case the Aleph goes **quiescent**. The Vav "compensates" by lengthening from Segol to Tsere. *Phew!* Better to just remember the form (this one is hardly confused with other words, anyway).

CASE 4: Before Monosyllabic (single-syllable) words

In the case of single syllable words (as well as some segolate nouns) the vowel under the Conjunctive Vav is Qamets:

-X׀
 ץ

Example:

and a sheep וְצֹאן = צֹאן + ׀

CASE 5: Before Yod with Sheva

In the case of a word that begins with a Yod having a Sheva, the Conjunctive Vav combines to form a Chireq Yod vowel:

$$\text{יְי} = \text{יְ} + \text{יְ}$$

Examples:

and Jerusalem יְרוּשָׁלַיִם = יְרוּשָׁלַם + יְ

and Judah וְיְהוּדָה = וְיְהוּדָה + יְ

The First Rule of Sheva

The last examples illustrate a phonetic pattern that occurs so often that grammarians have dubbed it a "rule." The first rule of Sheva states that two shevas at the start of a word results in Chireq in a closed syllable:

$$\text{XX} = \text{X} + \text{X}$$

Thus:

to/for prophets לְנָבִיאִם = נְבִיאִם + לְ

for covenant לְבְרִית = בְרִית + לְ

Assorted Examples of the Conjunctive Vav

<i>A son and daughter</i>	בֶּן וּבַת
<i>A word and truth</i>	דָּבָר וְאֱמֻנָה
<i>David and Abraham</i>	דָּוִד וְאַבְרָהָם
<i>David, Abraham, and Ruth</i>	דָּוִד וְאַבְרָהָם וְרוּת
<i>Abraham and Issac</i>	אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק
<i>Abraham and Isaac and Jacob</i>	אַבְרָהָם וְיִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב

Section Exercises

1. Infer additional Hebrew vocabulary from the examples provided on the page. Use your Hebrew dictionary and write out a new flashcard for each word.
2. Memorize the basic rules for adding the Conjunctive Vav to nouns beginning with non-guttural consonants
3. Memorize the basic rules for adding the Conjunctive Vav to nouns beginning with guttural consonants

4.8 The Construct Chain (word pairs)

Introduction to the Hebrew Construct Chain

When two (or more) nouns appear together (either by juxtaposition or by means of a *maqef*), they are said to be in a "construct relation" to one another. For example:



The first noun of the pair (*d'var*) is said to be in "construct" relationship with the following noun (*ish*), which is said to be in the "absolute" state. When two nouns appear in a row like this, the relationship expressed between them is one of possession, and the first word of the pair should be translated with "of" following it (*d'var*: word **of**, and *ish*, a man).

A pair of words in the construct state is considered a single unit. Phonetically, the accent shifts *away* from the first noun to the absolute noun, and this loss of stress causes changes in the word's vowels. For example, *davar* changes to *d'var*.

The lexical form (or dictionary definition) of a noun is always listed in the singular absolute form (for example, the word *davar* is listed as a masculine singular noun). However, you will need to be familiar with the construct spelling of Hebrew nouns (both in the singular and in the plural) since the construct relation is common in the Scriptures. Unfortunately, the vowel changes are hard to master; fortunately, if you have memorized the absolute form, you shouldn't have too much trouble recognizing the construct form when you see it.

The nouns we have learned so far are all in the absolute state. A word in the absolute state may stand alone; on the other hand, a word in the construct state never stands alone (it's always seen as the first word of the pair).

Morphology: Masculine Singular Construct Forms

When a **masculine singular noun** is in the construct state, it may or may not undergo vowel changes.

Consider the following examples, all of which have masculine singular nouns in the construct state:

<i>translation</i>	ms constr +word	ms abs
a king of peace	מֶלֶךְ שָׁלוֹם	מֶלֶךְ
a word of God	דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים	דָּבָר
the house of Israel	בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל	בַּיִת
a hand of a man	יָד אִישׁ	יָד

In the first example, *melekh* (king) does not change its vowels when it appears in the construct (*melekh shalom*). In the second example, however, the word *davar* does change its vowels (*d'var*). In the third example, the vowels for *bayit* (house) change when acting as a construct (*bet*), as does the last example *yad* (hand). (Note that the third example is made definite since the absolute noun is also definite [see below]).

Note that "a hand of a man" is not really great English; we could translate this phrase as "a man's hand" without misrepresenting the Hebrew.

There are a lot of complicated rules that help to make sense of these vowel changes, but the easiest thing to do is to simply try to memorize the construct form along with the absolute form -- or minimally to be aware that the absolute form's vowels might change when the noun appears in the construct relation (I'll have more to say about the way I remember the vowel changes below).

Morphology: Feminine Singular Construct Forms

When a **feminine singular noun** is in the construct state, it may or may not undergo vowel changes, but if the word ends in a Hey, it changes to Tav.

Feminine Singular Ends

<i>constr</i>	<i>abs</i>
-אָתְּ	אָתְּ / הָאָתְּ

Consider the following examples, all of which are feminine singular nouns in the construct state:

<i>translation</i>	fs constr + word	fs abs
a beast of a field	בְּהֵמַת שָׂדֵה	בְּהֵמָה
a family of peace	מִשְׁפַּחַת שְׁלוֹם	מִשְׁפָּחָה
a woman of heart	אִשְׁתֵּ לֵבָב	אִשָּׁה
a man's mare	סוּסַת־אִישׁ	סוּסָה

In each case above, the characteristic feminine singular noun ending (Hey-) is replaced with the Tav and the vowels have been modified in the construct forms. Note also that the last example uses a maqqef between the nouns.

Morphology: Masculine Plural Construct Forms

When a masculine plural noun is in the construct state, the ending changes to Tseré Yod and there may be vowel changes in the word.

Masculine Plural Ends

<i>constr</i>	<i>abs</i>
יָ-	יָם-

Consider the following examples, all of which are masculine plural nouns in the construct state:

<i>translation</i>	mp constr + word	mp
the people of Israel	אֲנָשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֲנָשִׁים
the sons of Israel	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	בָּנִים
the hands of Jesus	יְדֵי יֵשׁוּעַ	יָדַיִם
a man's horses	סוּסֵי־אִישׁ	סוּסִים

In each case above, the characteristic masculine plural noun ending is replaced with the Tseré Yod and the vowels have been modified in the construct forms. Note again that the last example uses a maqqef between the nouns.

Morphology: Feminine Plural Construct Forms

When a feminine plural noun is in the construct state, the characteristic feminine plural ending (Cholem Tav) does not change (it is a long, unchangeable vowel), though there may be vowel changes in the word.

Feminine Plural Ends

<i>constr</i>	<i>abs</i>
אות-	אות-

Study the following examples, all of which are feminine plural nouns in the construct state:

<i>translation</i>	fp constr + word	fp
families of a nation	משפחות עם	משפחות
names of fathers	שמות אבות	שמות
a man's daughters	בנות איש	בנות
fathers of a nation	אבות עם	אבות

In each case above, the characteristic feminine plural noun ending is retained but the vowels have been modified in the construct forms.

Summary of the Noun Endings

The following table shows the noun endings you have learned, along with the construct form endings:

<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>		
construct	abs	construct	abs	
את-	ת- / ת-	---	---	<i>Singular</i>
אות-	אות-	אי-	אים-	<i>Plural</i>

Note: **Dual forms** use the same endings as the Masculine Plural construct.

Definite Nouns and Construct Chains

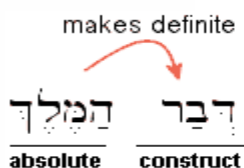
When the *second* word in the pair (the absolute noun) is definite, the entire construct is considered definite (and conversely, if the second word is indefinite, the entire pair is indefinite). In other words, the “definiteness” of the entire chain is determined by the absolute noun’s state. If the noun is definite (i.e., has the **definite article** or is a proper noun), then the chain is definite as well.

For example, the following word pair has an indefinite absolute noun (no article):



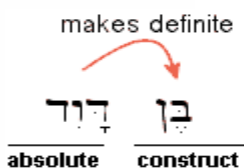
We would translate this word pair as “a word of a king.”

However, if the absolute noun is made definite, we would translate it as “the word of the king”:

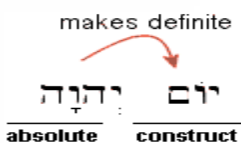


Notice that we would not translate this pair as “the word of a king” (other constructions in Hebrew would be used for that meaning). Remember: if the absolute noun is definite, the construct noun is made definite as well.

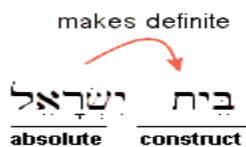
In the next three examples, each word pair is definite since the absolute noun is a proper noun:



“The son of David.”



“The day of the LORD.”



“The house of Israel.”

Note: One implication of this grammatical relationship is this: A noun in the construct state never takes the definite article (i.e., whether it is definite or not depends solely on the absolute noun to which it is joined).

Irregular Construct Forms

Finally, some construct forms are “irregular” in their spelling and must simply be memorized. Here is a list of the more common ones you will encounter in the Scriptures.

	construct	abs	
house	בֵּית־	בֵּית	sing
	בְּתֵי־	בְּתִים	plur
son	בֶּן־	בֶּן	sing
	בְּנֵי־	בְּנִים	plur
day	יוֹם־	יוֹם	sing
	יָמֵי־	יָמִים	plur
people	עַם־	עַם	sing
	עַמּוֹת־	עַמִּים	plur
man	אִישׁ־	אִישׁ	sing
	אֲנָשִׁי־	אֲנָשִׁים	plur
woman	אִשְׁת־	אִשָּׁה	sing
	נְשֵׁי־	נָשִׁים	plur
father	אָבִי־	אָב	sing
	אֲבוֹת־	אֲבוֹת	plur

Note especially the last example. This is not a typo. You will see this irregular form also appear in other words (such as *akh*, brother).

Study Tip

When I write a vocabulary card for a Hebrew noun, I will include the four forms listed above (as well as the gender) on the front of the card, and the definition of the noun on the back. It’s a bit tedious to do it that way, but it helps you master the various changes in spelling you will see when reading from the Scriptures.

Section Exercises

1. Infer additional Hebrew vocabulary from the examples provided on the page. Use your Hebrew dictionary and write out a new flashcard for each word
2. Memorize the basic rules for using the construct relation and how the construct form appears for various nouns you know
3. Memorize the noun endings chart that includes the construct endings

Unit Four Summary -

The Least you should know...

After studying [Unit Four](#), you should have mastered the following material:

General Properties of nouns

A noun is a name (nomen) given to an person, place, or thing. Nouns have the following properties:

1. Gender (masculine or feminine)
2. Number (singular, plural, or dual)
3. Person (first, second, or third)
4. Case (subject, object, or construct-possessive)

In general Hebrew uses *endings* to indicate these various properties of nouns. By learning the root (or stem) of the noun and its endings, you will begin to understand the way nouns function in Hebrew sentences.

Noun Endings

Keeping in mind that some masculine nouns take feminine plural endings (e.g., *avot*) and some feminine nouns take masculine plural endings (e.g., *nashim*), the following chart summarizes the most common noun endings encountered in Biblical Hebrew:

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
תַּח- / חַהְ-	---	<i>Singular</i>
תֹּת-	אִים-	<i>Plural</i>
אִיםְ-	אִיםְ-	<i>Dual</i>

When endings are added to Hebrew nouns, vowel changes, accent changes, and changes in spelling may occur. Review [Section 4.5](#) for more information.

The **lexical form** of a word is the spelling of the word as it appears in a dictionary. Be advised that the lexical form of a word is always the singular spelling.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Initially I was planning to include a vocabulary list for each Section of the online grammar, but upon further reflection, I have decided against doing so. The reason is technical: it simply takes too much time to make graphic images of the word lists (and, if I did do this, the pages would load slowly on your computer). For example, here is a list of a few nouns from a decent Hebrew dictionary:

- אָב father; אָבִי ms constr; אָבוֹת plural
- אֶבֶן stone (fs); אֲבָנִים plural; אֲבָנֶיךָ plural constr.
- אֲדוֹנָי lord; master; sir; אֲדוֹנָיִם Lord (plural)
- אָדָם Adam; man; בְּנֵי אָדָם (sons of man; mankind)
- אֲדָמָה Land; earth; humus; אֲדָמֹת fs. constr.; אֲדָמֹתָם plural

At this point in your studies, you should buy either a good Hebrew-English dictionary or use a Biblical Hebrew word frequency list. I'm sorry, but re-creating such a listing for all the words in Biblical Hebrew would be an enormous project that would really be re-inventing the wheel, anyway. Besides, you will want a good Biblical Hebrew dictionary when you are reading from the Scriptures.



For beginners, the *Langenscheidt's Pocket Dictionary - Hebrew to English* - is a good value and will complement this web site nicely. [Click here](#) to order one.

The Definite Article

The basic form of the article is a Hey pointed with a patach followed by a dagesh forte in the following (non-guttural) letter:

הָאֵל

If a noun begins with a guttural letter, then when the article is added, the patach under the Hey "compensates" and may change. Some vowel changes may also occur within the word when the article is appended (see [Section 4.6](#) for more information).

There is no indefinite article in Hebrew and proper nouns are definite by definition.

The Conjunctive Vav

Like the definite article, the word "and" in Hebrew functions as a prefix to Hebrew words. To make a Hebrew word (of either gender) part of a connecting sequence, you add a Vav before the noun. Sometimes the vowel under the Vav changes, depending on the consonant that appears at the beginning of the word. This function of the Vav is often referred to as the "Conjunctive Vav."

The basic form of the conjunction is a Vav pointed with a simple Sheva:

וְ

When the Conjunctive Vav is prefixed to words beginning with Bet, Mem, or Pey ("BMP letters), the dagesh is lost (since the letter is now preceded by a vowel sound), and the conjunction takes the form of a Shureq.

When the Conjunctive Vav is prefixed to a guttural letter that has a reduced (chateph) vowel, the Vav will take the corresponding unreduced vowel as its vowel.

There are other vowel changes that occur with the conjunctive Vav. See [Section 4.7](#) for more information. (There are also other uses of the Vav that will be discussed, IY'H, later in this grammar.)

The Construct Chain

When two (or more) nouns appear together (either by juxtaposition or by means of a maqfef), they are said to be in a "construct relation" to one another.

The first noun of the pair is said to be in "construct" relationship with the following noun, which is said to be in the "absolute" state. When two nouns appear in a row like this, the relationship expressed between them is one of possession, and the first word of the pair should be translated with "of" following it.


A pair of words in the construct state is considered a single unit. Phonetically, the accent shifts away from the first noun to the absolute noun, and this loss of stress causes changes in the construct form's vowels.

You identify the construct noun in a word pair by means of *endings*:

<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>		
construct	abs	construct	abs	
אֶת-	אֵת- / אַתְּ-	---	---	<i>Singular</i>
אוֹת-	אוֹת-	אֵי-	אִים-	<i>Plural</i>

Definite Nouns and Construct Chains

When the second word in the pair (the absolute noun) is definite, the entire construct is considered definite (and conversely, if the second word is indefinite, the entire pair is indefinite). In other words, the "definiteness" of the entire chain is determined by the absolute noun's state. If the noun is definite (i.e., has the definite article or is a proper noun), then the chain is definite as well.

makes definite


יֹם
יְהוָה

 absolute construct
 "The day of the LORD"

Irregular Construct Forms

Finally, some construct forms are "irregular" in their spelling and must simply be memorized.

	construct	abs	
woman	אִשְׁת־	אִשָּׁה	sing
	נְשִׁי	נָשִׁים	plur

Review [Section 4.8](#) for additional details of the Hebrew construct chain.

Unit Five - Learning Hebrew Adjectives

אָנְכִי אֶלֶף וְתוֹ רֵאשׁ נְסוּף

An adjective is a word that is used to describe or qualify a noun. Hebrew adjectives function similarly to English adjectives.

טוֹב

Objective:

- After studying this unit, you should be able to understand the basic grammar of the adjective in biblical Hebrew and begin identifying various adjectival phrases and constructions in the scriptures.

UNIT FIVE CONTENTS

- 5.1 Properties of Adjectives
- 5.2 Patterns of Inflection
- 5.3 Attributive Usage
- 5.4 Predicate Usage
- 5.5 Substantive Usage
- 5.6 Comparative Usage
- 5.7 Demonstrative Adjectives
- 5.8 Adjectives and Word Pairs
- 5.9 Hebrew Participles
- 5.10 Summary Page

5.1 Properties of Hebrew Adjectives

Adjective Properties

An adjective is a word used to “modify” or “qualify” the meaning of a noun:

a **big** man
a **holy** people
a **great** nation

In the example phrases above, the words **big**, **holy**, and **great** are all adjectives.

In English, adjectives appear *before* the noun they modify, but in Hebrew adjectives often appear *after* the noun they modify:

translation	adj	noun
a good son	טוֹב	בֶּן
a wise father	חָכָם	אָב

Like the nouns they modify, adjectives have certain properties:

- **Gender**
Gender is a property that indicates the sex of the referent (masculine or feminine). In Hebrew, a masculine noun requires a masculine adjective, and a feminine noun requires a feminine adjective (i.e., an adjective must agree with its noun in gender). Note that the gender of an adjective does not change its meaning, only its form.
- **Number**
Number is the property that indicates whether one or more than one object is referenced when using the word. Hebrew has singular nouns (one object), plural nouns (more than one object), and dual nouns (a pair of objects). An adjective must agree with its noun in number: Plural nouns require plural adjectives, and singular nouns require singular adjectives. Note that adjectives that are plural in form are singular in translation (for example *tall boys*; the word *tall* in Hebrew would appear in the plural form but would be translated as a singular term).

- **Definiteness**

Nouns can either be definite (either by taking the definite article or by being a proper noun) or indefinite. Attributive adjectives must agree with their nouns in definiteness, and therefore may appear with the article.

Since there are two possible genders and two possible numbers, there are four forms for every adjective, to agree with the four possible forms of nouns. Happily, the endings for adjectives parallel the endings you have already learned for nouns, so learning the inflections for adjectives is relatively easy.

Note: The **lexical form** of an adjective is always the masculine singular form (this is unlike nouns that can be either masculine or feminine).

Adjective Usage

There are four basic ways adjectives are used:

1. **Attribute Usage**

Adjectives that directly modify a noun are called "attributive" because they attribute a certain characteristic to a noun. For example, in the phrase "tall boy," the adjective "tall" is being attributed to the word "boy." In Hebrew, attribute adjectives appear directly *after* the noun and agree in gender, number, and definiteness.

2. **Predicate Usage**

When you say "the boy is tall," you are predicating or ascribing the quality "tall" to the subject, "boy." Predicate adjectives use the word "is" with the adjective to form the predicate of a complete clause (subject+verb). In Hebrew, predicate adjectives appear *before* the noun and agree in gender and number (but not definiteness). Note that predicate adjectives never take the definite article.

3. **Substantive Usage**

An adjective can stand alone and function as a noun. For example, you could say "the tall are boys," the word "tall" could mean "tall *ones*." Substantive adjectives always have a definite article (i.e., they are definite in form).

4. **Comparative Usage**

Adjectives may be used to make comparative statements. In English, we do this by adding -er or -est to the end of an adjective (round, **rounder**, **roundest**). In Hebrew, a construction with a preposition "from" (*min*) is used to make comparatives.

Note: Compared to some other languages, Hebrew uses very few adjectives, in part because nouns in the **construct state** are often used in place of adjectives, and because Hebrew often uses participles in place of adjectives.

5.2 Adjective Inflectional Patterns

Section Vocabulary

great, big	גָּדוֹל	upright	יָשָׁר
old	זָקֵן	holy	קָדוֹשׁ
new	חָדָשׁ	small	קָטָן
strong	חָזָק	evil, wicked	רָע
wise	חָכָם	perfect, complete	תָּמִים
beautiful	יָפֵה	good	טוֹב
very (adv)	מְאֹד	much, many	רַב

Hebrew Adjective Inflectional Patterns

Since adjectives must agree with the noun they modify in gender and number, every adjective can take four possible forms: two for masculine nouns (singular and plural), and two for feminine nouns (singular and plural). These forms are changed by means of adding endings to the stem of the word, much in the same manner as endings are attached to nouns.

Basic Adjective Endings

The table below shows the most common adjective endings (called inflectional endings):

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
חָ- תְּ	---	<i>Singular</i>
אֹת-	אִים-	<i>Plural</i>

These endings are identical to the regular **noun endings** you studied.

For example, here are the inflections for the adjective *tov*:

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
טוֹבָה	טוֹב	<i>Singular</i>
טוֹבוֹת	טוֹבִים	<i>Plural</i>

Notice how the endings (indicated in red) are appended to the stem of the word to form the various gender and number properties of the adjective.

Noun - Adjective Agreement

Adjectives must agree with the nouns they modify in gender and number. For example, consider the following adjective phrases:

a good daughter בַּת טוֹבָה a good son בֶּן טוֹב
 good daughters בָּנוֹת טוֹבוֹת good sons בָּנִים טוֹבִים

Notice that the adjective *tov* is inflected to match the gender and number of the noun it is modifying. Note further that the gender of an adjective does not change its meaning, only its form. Finally note that adjectives that are plural in form are singular in translation (for example *good sons*; the word *good* in Hebrew would appear in the plural form (*tovim*) but would be translated using a singular term, *good*).

The agreement between a noun and an adjective must occur, even if the noun uses irregular endings. For example,

a good city..... עִיר טוֹבָה a good father אָב טוֹב
 good cities..... עָרִים טוֹבוֹת good fathers אָבוֹת טוֹבִים

Patterns of Inflection

Generally, adjectives are inflected in the same way as nouns, with vowel changes that occur based on the types of consonants that comprise the root of the word.

Case 1: No Vowel Change

This class of adjective does not produce any sort of change apart from the addition of the plural endings. Often these nouns are monosyllabic or have an unchangeably long vowel in the first syllable.

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
טוֹבָה	טוֹב	<i>Singular</i>
טוֹבוֹת	טוֹבִים	<i>Plural</i>

Case 2: Propretonic Reduction

Many adjectives that have a Qamets or Tseré vowel as their first syllable undergo "propretonic reduction" when the plural endings are added to the word:

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
יִשְׁרָה	יִשָּׁר	<i>Singular</i>
יִשְׁרוֹת	יִשְׂרִים	<i>Plural</i>

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
גְּדוּלָה	גְּדוּל	<i>Singular</i>
גְּדוּלוֹת	גְּדוּלִים	<i>Plural</i>

Note that this adjective has an unchangeably long vowel (Cholem Vav) in the second syllable.

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
חֻכְמָה	חֻכָּם	<i>Singular</i>
חֻכְמוֹת	חֻכְמוּם	<i>Plural</i>

Notice that adjectives with an initial guttural consonant cannot take vocal sheva, but are reduced to a chateph form.

Case 3: Adjectives that end in Hey

For adjectives whose roots end in Hey, when the endings are added to the root, the Hey drops off from the word:

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
יִפְהֵ	יִפְה	<i>Singular</i>
יִפְוֹת	יִפְוִים	<i>Plural</i>

When you see a plural such as *yaphim*, you need to remember that it might come from an adjective that has dropped its final Hey in the root.

Case 4: Geminate Adjectives

A "geminate" adjective has a hidden twin letter that does not appear in the masculine singular form. The hidden letter reappears in the plural form with a **strong dagesh** mark:

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
רְבֵה	רְב	<i>Singular</i>
רְבוֹת	רְבִים	<i>Plural</i>

In the example above, the root actually is Resh, Bet, and Bet, but the doubled Bet does not show up in the masculine singular.

Finally, there can be vowel changes for some geminate adjectives that have **guttural** letters:

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
רְעֵה	רְע	<i>Singular</i>
רְעוֹת	רְעִים	<i>Plural</i>

In the example above, the Ayin cannot accept a dagesh, and the Patach vowel "compensates" by lengthening to a Qamets.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. Write out the inflections for each adjective given in the vocabulary
3. Summarize the rules of inflection on a small flashcard

5.3 Attributive Usage of Adjectives

The Attributive Usage of Adjectives

When an adjective is used to directly modify a noun, it is said to be used *attributively*. A noun with an attributive adjective is said to comprise an adjective phrase (for example, *good man*, where the adjective *good* modifies the noun *man* and the two words comprise a phrase).

Attributive adjectives have the following properties:

1. They **follow** the noun they modify
2. They **agree with the noun** they modify in:
 - o Gender (masc / fem)
 - o Number (sing / pl)
 - o Definiteness (if the noun is definite, the adjective must be, too)

Examples:

גָּדוֹל בַּיִת
ms, indef ms, indef



The masculine singular noun *bayit* ("a house") is modified by the masculine singular adjective *gadol* ("big"). Since both the noun and the adjective match in gender, number and definiteness, we translate the phrase as "a big house."

הַגָּדוֹל הַבַּיִת
ms, def ms, def



The definite noun *habayit* is modified by the definite adjective *haggadol*. Since both the noun and the adjective match in gender, number, and definiteness, we would translate the adjective phrase as "the big house."

הַגָּדוֹלִים הַבַּיִתִּים
mp, def mp, def



This example again shows that the noun and adjective agree in gender, number, and definiteness.

Translation: "The big houses."

The Standard Attribute Adjective Paradigm

We can use the adjective *tov* with *melekh* (a masculine noun) and *melakhah* (a feminine noun) for our paradigmatic examples.

The following table lists the adjective forms when these nouns are indefinite:

Indefinite	
Feminine	Masculine
a good queen מְלָכָה טוֹבָה	a good king מֶלֶךְ טוֹב <i>s</i>
good queens מְלָכוֹת טוֹבוֹת	good kings מְלָכִים טוֹבִים <i>pl</i>

The following table lists the adjective forms when these nouns are definite (i.e., take the definite article):

Definite	
Feminine	Masculine
the good queen הַמְּלָכָה הַטוֹבָה	the good king הַמֶּלֶךְ הַטוֹב <i>s</i>
the good queens ... הַמְּלָכוֹת הַטוֹבוֹת	the good kings .. הַמְּלָכִים הַטוֹבִים <i>pl</i>

In each case, notice how the adjective agrees with the noun's gender, number, and definiteness.

Additional Examples:

הָאָבוֹת הַחֲכָמִים
mp, def mp, def

Note that the irregular masculine plural noun *ha'avot* takes the regular masculine plural adjective *ha-chakhamim*. Translation: "The wise fathers."

דָּוִד הַזָּקֵן
ms, def ms, def
proper noun

The proper noun David is masculine singular (and definite by definition), and the adjective *hazzaken* is likewise masculine singular and definite. We would translate this phrase as "old David."

מִצְרַיִם הַגְּדוֹלָה
fs, def fs, def
proper noun
[Egypt]

The proper noun *Egypt* is a feminine singular noun, and the adjective here matches. We would translate this adjective phrase as "great Egypt."

Section Exercises

- Memorize the standard attribute adjective patterns.
- Summarize the rules of attributive adjectives on a small flashcard (e.g., that they follow the noun and must agree in gender, number, and definiteness).
- From the vocabulary you already know, create simple adjective phrases, such as "a good woman," "the good woman," "good women," and "the good women." Do this for the following nouns:

woman
man
city
Jesus
Moses
land
people

Combine these nouns with the following adjectives:

good
great
old
new
perfect
holy

5.4 Predicate Usage of Adjectives

The Predicate Usage of Adjectives

In English, a predicate adjective is a modifier that follows a linking verb (i.e., "is") and describes the subject. For example in the sentence, "John is *tall*", the adjective tall is being predicated about the subject, John.

In Hebrew, predicate adjectives can appear *before or after* the noun and agree in gender and number -- but *not* definiteness. In other words, if a noun is definite and the adjective is indefinite, the adjective is a predicate adjective. Note that a noun with a predicate adjective comprises a complete clause (in fact a complete sentence may be expressed with a predicate adjective and a noun, as you will see below).

Predicate adjectives have the following properties:

1. They appear **before or after** the noun they modify
2. They **agree with the noun** they modify in:
 - o Gender (masc / fem)
 - o Number (sing / pl)
 - o but **not** in definiteness

Examples:

זָקֵן הָאִישׁ
ms indef ms def

Notice that though both the noun and the adjective are masculine singular, they do not agree in definiteness. We would translate these words as "The man *is* old," supplying the linking verb "is" in our translation.

הָאִישׁ זָקֵן
ms def ms indef

Notice that in this example, the adjective appears before the noun - the converse of the above example. We would again translate this as "The man *is* old" (or "Old *is* the man").

הַזָּקֵן הָאִישׁ
ms def ms def

The masculine singular definite noun *ha-ish* ("the man") is modified by the masculine singular definite adjective *hazzaken* ("the old"). Since both the noun and the adjective match in gender, number *and* definiteness, we translate the phrase as "the old man." Note that this is an attributive - not predicative - usage of the adjective.

Predicate Adjective Paradigm

We can use the adjective *tov* with *melekh* (a masculine noun) and *melakhah* (a feminine noun) for our paradigmatic examples.

The following table indicates the predicate adjective function for definite nouns:

<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Masculine</i>
the queen is good הַמְּלָכָה טוֹבָה	the king is good הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב
the queen is good טוֹבָה הַמְּלָכָה	the king is good טוֹב הַמֶּלֶךְ
the queens are good.... הַמְּלָכוֹת טוֹבוֹת	the kings are good... הַמְּלָכִים טוֹבִים
the queens are good.... טוֹבוֹת הַמְּלָכוֹת	the kings are good... טוֹבִים הַמְּלָכִים

Important note: Predicate adjectives never take the article. That is, you can have a definite noun with a definite adjective (in which case the adjective functions attributively), or an indefinite adjective with a definite noun (in which case the adjective functions predicatively), or an indefinite noun with an indefinite adjective (in which case the adjective's function is determined by context), but you cannot have a definite adjective with an indefinite noun:

Adjective	Noun	Usage
definite (הַטוֹב)	definite (הָאִישׁ)	<i>Attributive</i> (the good man)
indefinite (טוֹב)	definite (הָאִישׁ)	<i>Predicative</i> (the man is good)
indefinite (טוֹב)	indefinite (אִישׁ)	<i>Either</i> (good man) or (a man is good)
definite	indefinite	<i>does not occur</i>

Note that generally an attributive adjective follows a noun (*ha-ish ha-tov*), whereas a predicate adjective may appear either before or after the noun (*ha-ish tov* or *tov ha-ish*).

Additional Examples:

יֵשׁוּעַ יָפֵה
ms def ms indef

Here the masculine singular adjective *yafeh* appears with the proper noun *Yeshua*. Translation: "Jesus is beautiful" (a true statement, as well).

הַבָּנִים חֲכָמִים
mp indef *mp def*

The masculine plural noun *habbanim* appears with the masculine plural adjective *chakhamim*. The words agree in gender and number but not in definiteness, so the adjective functions predicatively: "The sons are wise."

אִשָּׁה זָקְנָה
fs indef *fs indef*

In this case, though both the noun and the adjective agree in gender and number, they are both indefinite, so we can translate attributively as "an old woman" or predicatively "a woman is old," depending on the context.

טוֹב וְיָשָׁר יְהוָה
ms def *ms indef [compound]*

In this example, two adjectives are combined to form a compound predicate adjective. We translate: "Good and upright is the LORD" (Psalm 25:8).

זָקֵן הָאִישׁ וְכָבֵד
ms indef *ms def* *ms indef*

In this example, notice that there are two adjectives that are both modifying the same noun (*old* and *heavy*). We would translate: "The man is old and heavy" (1 Sam. 4:18). Note that *kaved* means "heavy."

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the standard predicate adjective paradigm.
2. Summarize the usage of predicate adjectives on a small flashcard (e.g., that they must agree in gender, number, but not definiteness). Provide simple examples to help you remember the rules.
3. From the vocabulary you already know, create simple adjective phrases, such as "a woman is good," "the woman is good," "the man is wise," "Moses is old," and "the kings are evil."

5.5 Substantive Usage of Adjectives

Section Vocabulary

she / it (3fs pronoun)	היא	he / it (3ms pronoun).....	הוא
they (3fp pronoun).....	הן / הנה	they (3mp pronoun)..	הם / הנה
young (adj).....	צעיר	black (adj)	שחור
boy (ms noun).....	ילד	white (adj)	לבן
girl (fs noun).....	ילדה	name (m noun)	שם / שמות
heavy, weighty (adj)	כבד	living, alive (adj)	חי

Note: The third person subject pronouns are listed here for your reference, but will not be studied until Unit Six.

The Substantive Usage of Adjectives

An adjective can stand alone and function as a noun. When it does so, it may function as the subject or object of a verb, and it always appears with the definite article.

When you encounter a definite adjective that does not seem to modify a noun within a sentence, it may be a substantive adjective. Translate the adjective with an implied "one" (for singular forms) or "ones" for plural forms.

Substantive Adjective Paradigm

We can use the adjective *tov* for our paradigmatic examples:

<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>	
the good (one)	הטובה	the good (one)	הטוב <i>s</i>
the good (ones)	הטובות	the good (ones)	הטובים <i>pl</i>

Examples:



In this example, the 3rd person singular masculine personal pronoun ("he" or "it") is used with the definite masculine singular adjective *hattov*. The adjective here functions substantively and we translate: "He is the good (one)."

הַטּוֹבָה הִיא
fs def *fs pers. pron*

In this example, the 3rd person singular feminine personal pronoun ("she" or "it") is used with the definite feminine singular adjective *hattovah*. The adjective here functions substantively and we translate: "She is the good (one)."

הַחֲכָמִים הֵמָּה
mp def *mp pers. pron*

The third person masculine plural pronoun ("they") functions as the subject of this clause. The adjective is definite masculine plural used substantively, so we translate: "They are the wise (ones)."

שָׁמַר הַחֲכָם
3ms Qal *ms def adj*

Here the adjective (*he-chakham*) is used substantively as the subject of the verb *shamar*. We translate: "The wise man guarded."

זָכְרָה הַזְּקֵנָה
3fs Qal *fs def adj*

Here the adjective (*hazzakenah*) is used substantively as the subject of the verb *zakhrah*. We translate: "The old (woman) remembered."

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page).
2. Summarize the usage of substantive adjectives on a small flashcard (e.g., that they stand alone and function as nouns and that they always appear with the definite article). Provide simple examples to help you remember the rules.
3. From the vocabulary you already know, create simple substantive adjective sentences by selecting a noun (as a subject term) or a definite adjective.

5.6 Comparative Usage of the Adjective

Section Vocabulary

from (<i>preposition</i>)..... מִן	gold (<i>ms</i>)..... זָהָב
from (<i>prefix</i>) מִן- / מִן-	tent(s) (<i>m</i>)..... אֹהֶל / אֹהֶלִים

Note: The grammar for the preposition *min* (and the prefix forms of *min*) will be studied in more detail in Unit 7.

The Comparative Usage of the Adjective

Adjectives may be used to make comparative statements. In English, we do this by adding -er to the end of an adjective (round -> rounder). For example:

The dog is bigger than the cat.

In the sentence above, the dog is being compared to the cat in regard to “bigness” or size. The cat provides the standard of the comparison (the object of “than”), and it is predicated that the dog is “bigger than” the cat.

In Hebrew, comparisons are formed by adding the preposition (*min*) to the word that acts as the object of the comparison.

Example 1:

ms def *ms indef* *ms def*
הַבַּיִת גָּדוֹל מִן הָאֹהֶל
the tent *big* *the house*

Since the word house is definite (*habayit*) and the adjective big is indefinite (*gadol*), the adjective *gadol* is functioning predicatively, so we translate *habayit gadol* as “the house is big.” The next word is the preposition *min*, which means “from.” The object of the preposition is the definite noun *haohel*, the tent. Literally the sentence reads: “The house is big from the tent.” To use proper English, we would say “The house is bigger *than* the tent.” Notice that the adjective *gadol* changes in meaning from “big” to “bigger” by means of this construction.

Tip: When *min* is used this way, think of it as meaning “than” regarding the word that follows it. “The house is big(ger) than the tent.”

Example 2:

<i>ms def</i>	<i>fs indef</i>	<i>fs indef</i>
מִזְהָב	חִכְמָה	טוֹבָה
gold	wisdom	good

Since the adjective *tovah* and the noun *chakhmah* are both indefinite, the adjective may be functioning attributively or predicatively. However, since the context here is one of comparison, we would initially translate predicatively “wisdom is good.” Next, the noun *zahav* has the prefix “mi-” added, so we translate “from gold.” Literally the sentence reads “Wisdom is good from gold.” Using proper English would render this as “Wisdom is better than gold.” Again, notice that the adjective *tov* changes in meaning from “good” to “better” by means of this construction.

Tip: When *min* is used this way, think of it as “than” regarding the word that follows it. “Wisdom is better than gold.”

Example 3:

<i>mp def</i>	<i>mp indef</i>	<i>mp def</i>
הַאֲבוֹת	מִן הַבָּנִים	גְּדוֹלִים
the fathers	big	the sons

This sentence literally reads, “The sons are big from the fathers.” However, since we are dealing with a comparative adjective phrase, we would translate it as “The sons are bigger than the fathers.”

The Superlative Usage of the Adjective

Adjectives may be also be to make superlative statements. In English, we do this by adding -est to the end of an adjective (round -> roundest). For example:

The biggest dog...

In English we can also use the adverb "most" to form superlatives:

The most beautiful girl...
The most holy of holies...

In Hebrew, the superlative is often formed by simply using the definite article.

Example 1:

fs def
הַיְפֵּה
the beautiful

The word above shows a definite adjective. In the proper context, this could be functioning substantively, attributively, or as a superlative. If the context indicates superlative usage, the word would be translated as "the most beautiful."

Example 2:

ms def *prep* *ms def* *prep*
מִן הַקָּטָן עַד הַגָּדוֹל
the great *to* *the small* *from*

(Note the word *ad* means "to" or "as far as" here.) This sentence reads "From the small to the great" but is better translated as "from the smallest to the greatest."

Example 3: Use of the adverb "meod"

The superlative can also be formed by placing the adverb *meod* ("very") after an adjective:

טוֹב מְאֹד
very *good*

Depending on the content, we could translate this phrase as "very good" or "the best."

Example 4: Use of the Construct Relation

mp def *ms indef*
קֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדוּשִׁים
holy (things) *a holy (thing)*
of

Finally, note that the superlative can also be formed by a **construct chain**. In the example above, we would translate the words as "the most holy of holies" or "the holiest."

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page).
2. Summarize the usage of comparative adjectives on a small flashcard.
3. Summarize the usage of superlative adjectives on a small flashcard.
4. Write some simple examples to help you remember the rules.
5. From the vocabulary you already know, create simple comparative adjective constructions.

5.7 Demonstrative Adjectives

Section Vocabulary

this (<i>adj / pronoun</i>).....	זֶה	that (<i>adj / pronoun</i>).....	הוּא
new (<i>adj</i>)	חדש	understanding (<i>f</i>)	בינה
fire (<i>m</i>)	אש	place, abode (<i>m or f</i>)	מקום
priest (<i>m</i>).....	כהן	voice (<i>m</i>).....	קול
horse (<i>m</i>)	סוס	prophet (<i>m</i>)	נביא
light (<i>m</i>).....	אור	righteous, just (<i>adj</i>).....	צדיק

Introduction to Demonstrative Adjectives

In English, a demonstrative adjective answers the question “which?” by directly pointing to a noun or pronoun. For example:

This dog is sleeping. (singular) [“This” directly points at the dog.]

These dogs are sleeping. (plural) [“These” directly points at the dogs.]

and

That dog is barking. (singular) [“That” directly points at the dog.]

Those dogs are barking. (plural) [“Those” directly points at the dogs.]

The first pair (this-these) points to something near at hand, whereas the second pair (that-those) points to something relatively distant or remote from the speaker:

<i>plural</i>	<i>singular</i>	
these	this	<i>near</i>
those	that	<i>remote</i>

Note: the definite article is actually a form of demonstrative adjective, since it likewise points to the object. E.g., compare: “a dog” with “the dog.”

In Hebrew, demonstrative adjectives function in much the same way as they do in English. Moreover, they follow the same basic usage rules for adjectives that you have already learned.

Hebrew Demonstrative Paradigms

Here is the paradigm for the "this-these" pair:

<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>	
this	זֹאת	this	זֶה <i>s</i>
these	אֵלֶּה	these	אֵלֶּה <i>pl</i>

(Note that the plural form is the same for both genders.)

And here is the paradigm for the "that- those" pair:

<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>	
that	זֹאת	that	זֶה <i>s</i>
those	הַזֵּה / הַזֵּה	those	הַזֵּה / הֵם <i>pl</i>

(These forms are identical to third-person personal pronouns which we will study in Unit 6.2. Note that the plural for both genders take two different forms.)

Usage of Demonstrative Adjectives

Demonstrative adjectives follow the same rules as other adjectives, and can be used either attributively or predicatively.

1. Attributive Usage

When a demonstrative adjective is used to directly modify a noun, it is said to be used *attributively*. A noun with an attributive adjective is said to comprise an adjective phrase (for example, *this man*, where the adjective *this* modifies the noun *man* and the two words comprise a phrase).

Attributive adjectives have the following properties:

1. They **follow** the noun they modify
2. They **agree with the noun** they modify in:
 - o Gender (masc / fem)
 - o Number (sing / pl)
 - o Definiteness (if the noun is definite, the adjective must be, too)

Examples:

<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>	
this woman	הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת	this man	הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה <i>s</i>
these women	הַנְּשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה	these men	הַאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה <i>pl</i>
<i>Feminine</i>		<i>Masculine</i>	
that woman	הָאִשָּׁה הַהִיא	that man	הָאִישׁ הַהוּא <i>s</i>
those women	הַנְּשִׁים הַהֵנָּה	those men	הַאֲנָשִׁים הָהֵם <i>pl</i>

In these examples, notice how the demonstrative adjectives appear **after** their nouns with which they agree in gender, number, and definiteness. In each case the adjective is being used attributively.

Other Examples:

This place	הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה
This land	הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת
These words	הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
This good man	הָאִישׁ הַטוֹב הַזֶּה
This good Torah	הַתּוֹרָה הַטוֹבָה הַזֹּאת
Those good women	הַנְּשִׁים הַטוֹבוֹת הַהֵנָּה
This righteous judge	הַשֹּׁפֵט הַצַּדִּיק הַזֶּה
That new book	הַסֵּפֶר הַחֲדָשׁ הַהוּא

Notice especially that a demonstrative adjective will occur *after* any other attributive adjectives that might modify the noun in a phrase (for example, in the phrase *ha-ish hattov hazzeh*, the demonstrative adjective appears *after* the adjective *hattov*.)

2. Predicate Usage (Demonstrative Pronouns)

Recall that predicate adjectives have the following properties:

1. They appear **before** the noun they modify
2. They **agree with the noun** they modify in:
 - o Gender (masc / fem)
 - o Number (sing / pl)
 - o but **not** in definiteness

When a demonstrative adjective functions this way, it is actually behaving substantively as a pronoun (which we call a demonstrative pronoun).

Examples:

<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Masculine</i>
this is the woman זאת האשה	this is the man זה האיש <i>s</i>
these are the women אלה הנשים	these are the men אלה האנשים <i>pl</i>
<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Masculine</i>
that is the woman היא האשה	that is the man הוא האיש <i>s</i>
those are the women הנה הנשים	those are the men הם האנשים <i>pl</i>

In these examples, notice how the demonstrative pronouns appear **before** their nouns with which they agree in gender, number -- but *not* in definiteness.

Other Examples:

This is the house זה הבית
 This is the good man זה האיש הטוב
 These are the good people אלה האנשים הטובים
 That is the good word הוא הדבר הטוב
 These are the words אלה הדברים
 This is the day זה היום
 The LORD is God יהוה הוא האלהים

Notice that a demonstrative pronoun appears *before* any other attributive adjectives that might modify the noun in an adjective phrase (for example, in the phrase *zeh ha-ish hattov*, the demonstrative pronoun appears *before* the entire adjective phrase).

<i>plural</i>		<i>singular</i>		
<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	
אלה		זאת	זה	<i>near</i>
הן	הם	היא	הוא	<i>remote</i>

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page).
2. Summarize the usage of demonstrative adjectives on a small flashcard.
3. Write some simple examples to help you remember the rules.
4. From the vocabulary you already know, create simple constructions using the demonstrative adjectives and pronouns.

5.8 Adjectives and Word Pairs

Adjectives and Word Pairs

As you learned in [Unit 4.8](#), when two (or more) nouns appear together (either by juxtaposition or by means of a maqqef), they are said to be in a “construct relation” to one another. Nouns in a construct relationship are *never* separated but always stand as a distinct grammatical unit. Therefore, if either of the nouns is modified by an adjective, the adjective is placed *after the pair* in order to keep the nouns together.

Examples:

makes definite

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
absolute construct

The diagram shows the word 'בֵּית' (absolute) followed by 'יִשְׂרָאֵל' (construct). A red arrow points from the text 'makes definite' to the 'יִשְׂרָאֵל' part of the pair.

This is a simple word pair meaning “the house of Israel” (the pair is definite, of course, because the noun *Yisrael* is a proper noun). So far so good.

Note: if this is unclear to you, please review [section 4.8](#).

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל
ms def ms def

The diagram shows the words 'בֵּית', 'יִשְׂרָאֵל', and 'הַגָּדוֹל'. A red arrow points from 'הַגָּדוֹל' to 'בֵּית', with 'ms def' written above both words.

In this example, the adjective *haggadol* is masculine, singular, and definite, and therefore (since adjectives must agree with their nouns) modifies the word *bet*. We translate this as “the *great* house of Israel.”

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה
fs def fs def

The diagram shows the words 'בֵּית', 'יִשְׂרָאֵל', and 'הַגְּדוֹלָה'. A red arrow points from 'הַגְּדוֹלָה' to 'יִשְׂרָאֵל', with 'fs def' written above both words.

In this example, note that the adjective *hagedolah* is feminine singular definite, and therefore modifies the word *Yisrael*. We would translate this phrase as “the house of *great* Israel.”

Here are some more examples:

מַלְכֵי הָעִיר

In the example above, we have a simple construct relationship between the masculine plural noun *malkhei* (kings of) and the feminine singular definite noun *ha'ir* (the city). We would translate the Hebrew as “the kings of the city.”

מַלְכֵי הָעִיר הָרָעָה

Notice that the adjective here (*hara'ah*) is feminine singular definite, and therefore modifies the noun *ha'ir*. We translate: the kings of the *evil* city.

מַלְכֵי הָעִיר הָרָעִים

Notice in this example that the adjective *hara'im* now agrees with the masculine plural noun *malkhei*, and we translate “the *evil* kings of the city.”

Ambiguous Cases

In both sets of examples given above, it is easy to see which noun in the word pair is modified by the adjective, since the adjective matches the noun in gender, number, and definiteness. However, there are cases where it is not so clear. For example, consider the following:

בְּנֵי הָעַמּוֹם הַטוֹבִים

In cases such as this, it is not clear which noun is being modified by the adjective, since both nouns share the same gender and number. This phrase could therefore be translated either as "The *good sons* of the people," or "The sons of the *good people*."

In such cases, you will need to rely on context and logic to make a sound exegetical decision.

More Examples

Here are some examples taken from the *Tanakh*:

the son of this woman
(1 Ki 3:19)

בֶּן־הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת

the voice of the Living God
(Deut 5:26)

קוֹל אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים

the great day of the LORD
(Zeph. 1:14)

יוֹם־הַהוֹרָה הַגָּדוֹל

Section Exercises

1. Summarize the usage of adjectives in relation to a word pair on a small flashcard.
2. Write some simple examples to help you remember the rules.

5.9 Hebrew Participles

Section Vocabulary

Active Participle Form XXוX	Passive Participle Form XוXX
to guard / keep שֹׁמֵר	to eat אֹכֵל
to give נָתַן	to learn לֹמֵד
to finish גָּמַר	to write כָּתַב
to walk / go הֹלֵךְ	to say אָמַר
to stand עֹמֵד	to give birth יָלַד
to kill קָטַל	to sit יָשַׁב
to know יָדַע	to love אָהַב
to hear שָׁמַע	to bless בָּרַךְ
to send שָׁלַח	to judge שָׁפַט
to see רָאָה	to build בָּנָה

Introduction to Hebrew Participles

Hebrew participles are “**verbal adjectives**,” meaning that they function like adjectives though they are constructed from verbs. Participles use the same endings you have learned for nouns and adjectives, so learning their inflections is easy.

Hebrew participles have the following properties:

1. Gender: (masculine or feminine)
2. Number: (singular or plural)
3. Definiteness: (article or no article)
4. Voice: (active or passive)

The **active voice** indicates that the subject is the doer of the action:
“John *hits* the ball.” (John acts, namely, by hitting the ball)

The **passive voice** indicates that the subject is acted upon by the verb:
“John *was hit* by the ball” (John is acted upon)

Notice that in English the voice of the verb changes the form of the verb: *hits* --> *was hit*. The same sort of thing happens in Hebrew, where you will see spelling changes for passive voice participles (in Biblical Hebrew, most participles you will encounter are Qal active participles (the simple or base form of a Hebrew verb is referred to as *Qal* (light)). Passive participles are relatively less used).

1. Active Participles

Like adjectives, participles must agree with the noun they modify in gender and number, and therefore can take four possible forms: two for masculine nouns (singular and plural), and two for feminine nouns (singular and plural). These forms are changed by means of adding endings to the stem of the word, in the same manner as endings are attached to nouns.

The basic pattern for the active participle is as follows:

XXוX

F.	M.	
תX- / חX-	---	<i>Singular</i>
ותX-	יםX-	<i>Plural</i>

Notice that these are **the same endings** you studied for nouns and adjectives. What is different, however, is the schema showing "XXX" with a characteristic vowel pattern. These X's refer to the root letters of a given verb, and the Cholem Vav after the second letter is the characteristic "sign" of the qal active participle (note that the Cholem often appears instead of the Cholem Vav in the pattern, and this is known as defective spelling). An example should make this clear:

guarding שמר

F.	M.	
שמרת	שמר	<i>Singular</i>
שמרות	שמרים	<i>Plural</i>

The vowel pattern for the root letters can vary depending on the "class" of verb (strong or weak) being inflected. For instance, the pattern for *shamar*, to guard is as follows:

XXX

F.	M.	
תXXX	XXX	<i>Singular</i>
ותXXX	יםXXX	<i>Plural</i>

There may be slight variations in spelling that you will see with participle forms of verbs, but the Cholem (or Cholem Vav) between the first and second root letters remains constant throughout the inflections.

Additional Examples:

learning

F.	M.	
לֹמַדָּת	לֹמֵד	<i>Singular</i>
לֹמַדוֹת	לֹמְדִים	<i>Plural</i>

In this example, the root letters are Lamed, Mem, and Dalet. Notice how the participles are inflected according to gender and number.

walking / going

F.	M.	
הֹלֶכֶת	הֹלֵךְ	<i>Singular</i>
הֹלְכוֹת	הֹלְכִים	<i>Plural</i>

In this example, the root letters are Hey, Lamed, and Dalet. Again, notice how the vowel pattern applies to these root letters to form the active participle forms.

writing

F.	M.	
כּוֹתֶבֶת	כּוֹתֵב	<i>Singular</i>
כּוֹתְבוֹת	כּוֹתְבִים	<i>Plural</i>

Notice that in this example, the feminine singular (fs) ending is Hey rather than Tav. This is fairly common. But note that the Cholem remains constant throughout the inflections.

hearing

F.	M.	
שׁוֹמְעָת	שׁוֹמֵעַ	<i>Singular</i>
שׁוֹמְעוֹת	שׁוֹמְעִים	<i>Plural</i>

In the example above, the third letter of the root is Ayin, a guttural letter. This is known as a "weak" verb and vowel changes occur as a result (III-Guttural type verbs prefer a furtive Patach under the last letter). You will also see this pattern with the verb *yadah*, "to know."

building

F.	M.	
בּוֹנֶה	בּוֹנֵה	<i>Singular</i>
בּוֹנוֹת	בּוֹנִים	<i>Plural</i>

seeing

F.	M.	
רוֹאֶה	רוֹאֵה	<i>Singular</i>
רוֹאוֹת	רוֹאִים	<i>Plural</i>

In the examples above, notice that the third letter of the root is a Hey, a guttural letter. Verbs with a third root letter that is Hey (III-Hey) drop out before endings are added, and vowel changes result. This is something you will just have to memorize. However, notice again that the characteristic Cholem Vav remains between the first two root letters throughout the inflections.

In short, you will need to be able to recognize the Qal active participle form for a verb when you are reading from the Tanakh. Often this is not as difficult as it may seem, since the form of the word you see in the text will indicate noun/adjective ending on a verb. In cases where you are unsure, you will need to resort to your lexicon to confirm the morphology of the word in question.

Uses of the Participle

Participles may be used in the following ways:

- As an adjective (a *loving* man); agrees with noun in gender, number, definiteness
- As a substantive (*The one who loves is good*); stands alone
- As a verb (*The man loves the woman*); subject normally precedes the participle

Adjectival Usage

When a participle is used as an adjective, it will modify a noun (or pronoun) with which it agrees in gender, number, and definiteness. These are the same rules as other Hebrew adjectives.

<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Masculine</i>
sitting queen מְלִכָּה יוֹשֶׁבֶת	sitting king מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב
sitting queens ... מְלָכוֹת יוֹשְׁבוֹת	sitting kings מְלָכִים יוֹשְׁבִים

Examples:



In the example above, notice that the participle follows the noun and agrees in gender, number, and definiteness. We would translate this as "a sitting man" or "a man who is sitting."



In this example, notice that the participle follows the noun and agrees in gender, number, and definiteness. We would translate "the sitting woman" or "the woman who is sitting."

Substantival Usage

When a participle is used as a substantive, it will act like a noun. Note that participles can also function in word pairs, so they can take the characteristic "construct form" endings you will see on nouns.



Here the masculine singular participle stands in construct relation to the noun *shalom*. We would translate this "a guarder of peace."

Often participles will function as a noun meaning "the one(s) who."

Verbal Usage

A participle can also function as a verb in a clause. When so used, the participle will *not* agree with a noun in definiteness nor will it take the article. Present active participles express a “continuous” aspect regarding the action of the verb (but the tense or sense of time of the action is determined solely by context).

The king is sitting המלך יושב

The queen is sitting המלכה יושבת

2. Passive Participles

The Qal passive participle occurs much less frequently than the active participle. It’s basic pattern is as follows:

X:XX

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
תX- / חX-	---	<i>Singular</i>
ותX-	יםX-	<i>Plural</i>

Notice again that these are **the same endings** you studied for nouns and adjectives. What is different, however, is the schema showing “XXX” with a characteristic vowel pattern. These X’s refer to the root letters of a given verb, and the Shureq after the second letter is the characteristic “sign” of the qal passive participle (note that a Qibbuts may appear instead of the Shureq in the pattern). An example should make this clear:

written כתוב

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
כתובה	כתוב	<i>Singular</i>
כתובות	כתובים	<i>Plural</i>

In general, the vowel pattern for the root letters can vary depending on the "class" of verb (strong or weak) being inflected, but in every case you will see the Shureq (or Qibbutz) between the second and third letters of the root of the word.

X־XX

F.	M.	
X־XX	X־XX	Singular
X־XX	X־XX	Plural

Qal Passive Participle Paradigm

The passive participle is used in the same way as an active participle: as an adjective, a substantive, or as a verb:

- The written word (adj) הַכְּתוּב הַדָּבָר
- The word is written (verb) כָּתוּב הַדָּבָר
- That which is written (noun) הַכְּתוּב
- The one who is blessed (noun) הַבְּרוּךְ

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the verbs listed in the section vocabulary at the top of the page. Create flashcards to help you recall the meanings (note that these forms are listed in the 3ms Qal Perfect form, the "lexical form" for the verbs).
2. For each verb in the list, write out the four qal active participles forms (i.e., ms, mp, fs, and fp). Use a lexicon to confirm your work.
3. Write a flashcard with the basic vowel patterns for the qal active and passive participle forms. Write the characteristic vowel for each (i.e., Cholem Vav for Qal Active, Shureq for Qal Passive).
4. Memorize the qal passive participle forms for the verb *katav*.
5. Write some simple examples to help you remember the rules.

Unit Five Summary - The Least you should know...

After studying [Unit Five](#), you should have mastered the following material:

General Properties of adjectives

An adjective is a word used to “modify” or “qualify” the meaning of a noun (or pronoun). Adjectives have the following properties:

1. Gender (masculine or feminine)
2. Number (singular, plural, or dual)
3. Definiteness

The **lexical form** is the spelling of the word as it appears in a dictionary. Be advised that the lexical form of an adjective is always the masculine singular spelling.

Adjective Inflections

Since adjectives must agree with the noun they modify in gender and number, every adjective can take four possible forms: two for masculine nouns (singular and plural), and two for feminine nouns (singular and plural). These forms are changed by means of adding *endings* to the stem of the word, much in the same manner as endings are attached to nouns.

The table below shows the most common adjective endings (called inflectional endings):

<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	
הַX-	---	<i>Singular</i>
אוֹת-	יֵX-	<i>Plural</i>

As explained in [Unit 5.2](#), there are some changes that occur in the spelling of the Hebrew adjective when these endings are added.

Attribute Usage

Adjectives that directly modify a noun are called “attributive” because they attribute a certain characteristic to a noun. Attributive adjectives have the following properties:

1. They **follow** the noun they modify
2. They **agree with the noun** they modify in:
 - o Gender (masc / fem)
 - o Number (sing / pl)
 - o Definiteness (if the noun is definite, the adjective must be, too)

Example:

“A big house”

Additional examples are provided in [Unit 5.3](#).

Predicate Usage

In Hebrew, predicate adjectives can appear before or after the noun and agree in gender and number -- but *not* definiteness. Predicate adjectives use the word "is" with the adjective to form the predicate of a complete clause (subject+verb).

Predicate adjectives have the following properties:

1. They appear **before or after** the noun they modify
2. They **agree with the noun** they modify in:
 - o Gender (masc / fem)
 - o Number (sing / pl)
 - o but **not** in definiteness

Example:

זָקֵן הָאִישׁ
ms indef ms def



"The man **is** old."

Additional examples are provided in [Unit 5.4](#).

Substantive Usage

An adjective can stand alone and function as a noun. When it does so, it may function as the subject or object of a verb, and it always appears with the definite article. When you encounter a definite adjective that does not seem to modify a noun within a sentence, it may be a substantive adjective. Translate the adjective with an implied "one" (for singular forms) or "ones" for plural forms.

Example:

הַטּוֹב הוּא
ms def ms pers. pron



"He is the good **one**."

Additional examples are provided in [Unit 5.5](#).

Comparative Usage

Adjectives may be used to make comparative statements. In Hebrew, comparisons are formed by adding the preposition (*min*) to the word that functions as the object of the comparison.

Example:

ms def *ms indef* *ms def*
הַבַּיִת גָּדוֹל מִן הַאֹהֶל
the tent *big* *the house*



"The house is bigger **than** the tent."

Tip: When *min* is used this way, think of it as meaning "than" regarding the word that follows it. "The house is big(ger) than the tent."

Additional examples are provided in [Unit 5.6](#).

Demonstrative Adjectives

In Hebrew, demonstrative adjectives ("this-these" / "that-those") function in much the same way as they do in English. Moreover, they follow the same basic usage rules for adjectives that you have already learned. The basic inflections are as follows:

<i>plural</i>		<i>singular</i>		
<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	
אֵלֶּה		זֹאת	זֶה	<i>this - these</i>
הֵן	הֵם	הֵיא	הוּא	<i>that - those</i>

Attribute Usage

When a demonstrative adjective is used to directly modify a noun, it is said to be used *attributively* (follows the noun and agrees in gender, number, and definiteness). A noun with an attributive adjective is said to comprise an adjective phrase (for example, *this man*, where the adjective *this* modifies the noun *man* and the two words comprise a phrase).

Example:

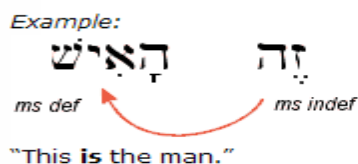
הַזֶּה הָאִישׁ
ms def *ms def*



"This man"

Predicate Usage (demonstrative pronouns)

When a demonstrative adjective functions predicatively, it is actually behaving substantively as a pronoun (which we call a demonstrative pronoun). Predicate demonstratives may either appear before or after the noun and agree in gender, number, but *not* definiteness).



Additional examples of both attributive and predicate usage of demonstrative adjectives are provided in [Unit 5.7](#)

Adjectives in Word Pairs

As you learned in [Unit 4.8](#), nouns in a construct relationship are never separated but always stand as a distinct grammatical unit. Therefore, if either of the nouns is modified by an adjective, the adjective is placed *after the pair* in order to keep the nouns together.



Additional examples are provided in [Unit 5.8](#).

Hebrew participles

Hebrew participles are "verbal adjectives," meaning that they function like adjectives though they are constructed from verbs. Participles use the same endings you have learned for nouns and adjectives, so learning their inflections is easy.

Active Participles

Like adjectives, participles must agree with the noun they modify in gender and number. Forms are changed by means of adding endings to the stem of the word, in the same manner as endings are attached to nouns.

The basic pattern for the active participle is as follows:

XXוX

F.	M.	
אֲת- / אֲהַ-	---	Singular
אֲתִים-	אֲהִים-	Plural

Passive Participles

The Qal passive participle occurs much less frequently than the active participle. It's basic pattern is as follows:

XוXX

F.	M.	
אֲת- / אֲהַ-	---	Singular
אֲתִים-	אֲהִים-	Plural

Examples for both active and passive participles are provided in [Unit 5.9](#).

Unit Seven - Learning Hebrew Prepositions

אַנְכִי אֶלֶף וְתוֹ רֵאשׁ וְסוֹף

A preposition is a connecting word that indicates a relationship between one word (called its object) and another word (called its antecedent).



Objective:

- After studying this unit, you should be able to understand the basic grammar of the preposition in Biblical Hebrew and begin identifying various prepositional phrases and constructions in the Scriptures.

UNIT SEVEN CONTENTS

- 7.1 Properties of Prepositions
- 7.2 Independent Prepositions
- 7.3 Inseparable Prepositions
- 7.4 The Preposition *min*
- 7.5 Compound Prepositions
- 7.6 Prepositions with Suffixes
- 7.7 Indicating Possession
- 7.8 Summary Page

7.1 Introduction to Hebrew Prepositions

Introduction to Prepositions

A *preposition* is a connecting word that indicates a relationship between one word (called its *object*) and another word (called its *antecedent*). A *prepositional phrase* is composed of the preposition, its object, and all the object's modifiers. If the prepositional phrase modifies a noun or pronoun, it functions adjectivally (as an adjective phrase); if the phrase modifies a verb, it functions adverbially (as an adverbial phrase). Some examples will make this clear.

Simple Prepositions

1. **Prepositions of Position (spatial relations)** -- These include words like "over," "under," "above," "below," "on," "off," "between," "beside," "near," "around," "across," etc. For example:



In the sentence above, the *object* of the preposition "under" is determined by asking "under what?" (Answer: under the old maple tree.) A prepositional phrase is composed of the preposition (under), its object (tree), and all the object's modifiers. In our diagram, the prepositional phrase "under the old maple tree" is used to modify its antecedent (grass) by indicating its position.

2. **Prepositions of Direction** -- These include words like "to," "toward," "from," "up," "down," "at," etc. For example:

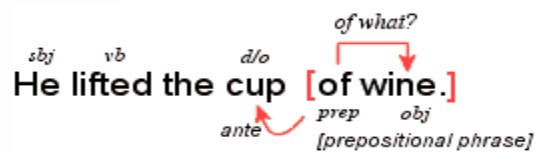


3. **Prepositions of Time (temporal relations)** -- These include words like "before," "during," "after," "until," "till," etc. For example:



Here the *object* of the preposition "after" is determined by asking "after *what?*" (Answer: after the *service*), and the prepositional phrase is used adverbially to modify the antecedent (prayed) by indicating the time of the verb's action.

4. **Prepositions of Source, Agency, or Cause** -- These include words like "of," "for," "with," "about," "regarding," etc. For example:



Here the *object* of the preposition "of" is determined by asking "of *what?*" (Answer: of *wine*), and the prepositional phrase is used adjectivally to modify the antecedent (cup). Other examples of this sort of preposition include: "a gift *for* Ruth," "a boy *with* freckles," and "a book *about* kings," etc.

Compound Prepositions

A compound preposition is formed when two or more words are combined and considered a single prepositional unit. In English, some examples would include: "along side of," "in case of," "in addition to," "on account of," and so on.

Hebrew Prepositions

Hebrew prepositions grammatically function similarly to English prepositions, though the morphology and syntax is of course different. In particular, Hebrew has the following kinds of prepositions:

1. **Independent Prepositions** -- Many prepositions stand alone as a separate word in a prepositional phrase. Independent prepositions are simply separate words that stand in front of their objects. So-called "Maqqef prepositions" are simply prepositions that are directly joined to their objects by means of a maqqef (hyphen).
2. **Inseparable Prepositions** -- These are prepositional prefixes attached to their objects. They are called "inseparable" prepositions because they cannot stand alone as independent prepositions. There are some rules you will need to learn about how the vowels change when these prepositional prefixes are added to other words.
3. **The Preposition *Min*** -- This preposition is perhaps the most versatile, appearing in independent, maqqef, and inseparable forms. In addition, *min* is used to form comparative, superlative, and other grammatical constructions.
4. **Compound Prepositions** -- A compound preposition is formed when two or more words are combined and considered a single prepositional unit. In Hebrew some compound prepositions are formed from two other prepositions (or from a noun+preposition combination).
5. **Prepositions with Pronomial Suffixes** -- Hebrew prepositions can take pronomial suffixes to function as prepositional phrases.
6. **Indicating Possession with Yesh and Ein** -- Hebrew does not have a word to express "have," or "don't have." Therefore (in the present tense) possession (or the lack of it) is expressed by the formula:
 - o There is to me x = I have x
 - o There is not to me x = I don't have x

7.2 Independent Prepositions

Section Vocabulary

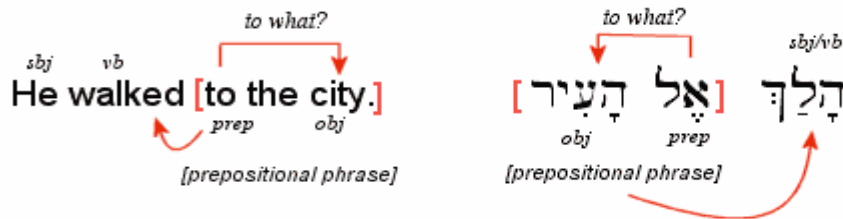
before, in front of.....	לפני	to, toward, into	אל
with.....	עם	upon, on, above, about	על
until, unto.....	עד	between	בין
after, behind	אחרי / אחר	under, instead of.....	מתחת
beside, near.....	אצל	from, out of.....	מן
with.....	את	within, in the midst.....	בתוך

Note that the preposition *et* (with) looks identical to the **definite direct object marker**. Context determines the usage as either a preposition or as a marker.

Independent Prepositions

Many Hebrew prepositions stand alone as a separate word in a prepositional phrase. These prepositions are simply separate words that stand in front of their objects, and you will translate them by "reading them off the page" as a separate word.

For example, compare these two sentences:



Notice that the Hebrew preposition *el* (to, toward) functions like the English preposition *to* does: it takes an object (*ha'ir*), and the prepositional phrase modifies the verb (*halakh*), indicating the direction of the verbal action. In other words, the Hebrew preposition simply stands in front of its object as a separate word, and the preposition and its object constitute a prepositional phrase.

Examples:

He walked from the city.	הלך מן העיר
He sat inside the house.	ישב בתוך הבית
He went before the king.	הלך לפני המלך
He sat under the tree.	ישב מתחת העץ
The king is sitting between the trees.	המלך יושב בין עץ

In each of these examples the preposition stands alone as a separate word in the sentence, and translation is simply a matter of replacement of the English equivalent.

Additional Examples:

between the light and between the darkness. בין האור ובין החושך

In this example phrase (from Genesis 1:4), note that the second instance of the preposition *ben* (between) loses the dagesh because the conjunctive Vav is added before a "BMP" letter.

and the tree of life was in the midst of the garden. ועץ החיים בתוך הגן

In this phrase (from Genesis 2:9), note that the prepositional phrase modifies the **construct chain** adjectivally.

Maqqef Prepositions

Maqqef prepositions are simply independent prepositions that are directly joined to their objects by means of a **maqqef** (or hyphen). This is a common occurrence in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Examples:

He walked **from** the city. הלך מן-העיר

He walked **on** the land. הלך על-הארץ

forever (until eternity). עד-עולם

Notice that in the examples above, the preposition is attached to the object by means of the maqqef. On account of the maqqef, the preposition is now no longer "independent," since it is morphologically connected to the object that follows.

Although there may be vowel and/or stress changes that occur in the object, we will translate the maqqef preposition just as we would an independent preposition.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. Using vocabulary you already know, create simple prepositional phrases by combining prepositions with nouns.

7.3 Inseparable Prepositions

Section Vocabulary

like, as	כִּי	in, on, by	בִּי
place	מִקוּם	to, toward, for	לִי
battle	מִלְחָמָה	temple, palace	הַיְכָל

Prepositional Prefixes

Like the **definite article** Hey and the **conjunctive Vav**, three additional letters can function as a prefixes to Hebrew words. These are Bet (meaning "in," "on," or "by"), Kaf (meaning "like," or "as"), and Lamed (meaning "to," or "for"). These prefixes are sometimes called "inseparable" prepositions because they cannot stand alone as independent prepositions.

In Hebrew, you may add one of these prefixes before a noun to indicate that the noun is the object of a prepositional relationship. For example, the word *melekh* simply means "king," but the word *lemelekh* means "for a king" (note how the prefix immediately renders the noun as the object of the preposition).

Sometimes the vowel under the prefix will change, depending on the consonant that appears at the beginning of the word. Many of the vowel changes you will see here correspond with those of the Conjunctive Vav prefix you studied in **Unit 4.7**.

CASE 1: The Basic Form

בִּי- לִי- כִּי-

These prefixes normally join to their object using the Sheva:

in a place	בְּמִקוּם	=	מִקוּם	+	בִּי
in a field	בְּשָׂדֵה	=	שָׂדֵה	+	בִּי
like a place	כְּמִקוּם	=	מִקוּם	+	כִּי
like a king	כְּמֶלֶךְ	=	מֶלֶךְ	+	כִּי
for a place	לְמִקוּם	=	מִקוּם	+	לִי
for a battle	לְמִלְחָמָה	=	מִלְחָמָה	+	לִי

In each of these cases, the prefix (with the Sheva) is simply appended to the word to form the prepositional phrase. No vowel changes or other spelling changes occur.

CASE 2: Before Begedkephat Letters

When these prefixes precede the **Begedkephat** letters, they lose their **dagesh lene**.



Every time a Begedkephat letter begins a word, it takes a dagesh lene. But when a prefix is added, however, such a letter will lose its dagesh (since it no longer begins the word). For example:

in a house בֵּית = בֵּית + ב

for a covenant לְבָרִית = בְּרִית + ל

(Note that the second example (*livrit*) undergoes a vowel change that will be explained in Case 3, below.)

CASE 3: Before Letters with Sheva

The first rule of Sheva states that two shevas at the start of word result in Chireq in a closed syllable:

$$\underset{\cdot}{\underset{\cdot}{X}}X = \underset{\cdot}{X} + \underset{\cdot}{X}$$

When we add a prepositional prefix to a word that begins with a Sheva, the prefix therefore takes a Chireq vowel:



For example:

for Solomon לְשֹׁמֵן = שֹׁמֵן + ל

like Solomon כְּשֹׁמֵן = שֹׁמֵן + כ

for a covenant לְבָרִית = בְּרִית + ל

Exception: If the word begins with Yod, the Sheva is dropped altogether:

for Judah לְיְהוּדָה = יְהוּדָה + ל

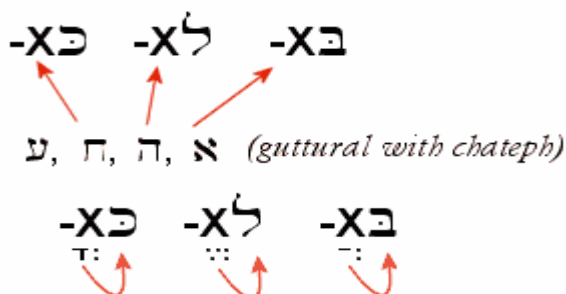
in Jerusalem בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם = יְרוּשָׁלַיִם + ב

CASE 4: Before Guttural Letters

If a prefix is joined to a guttural letter having a compound sheva, the prefix takes the simple form of the vowel:

CASE 4: Before Guttural Letters

If a prefix is joined to a guttural letter having a compound sheva, the prefix takes the simple form of the vowel:



For example:

in truth	בְּאֵמֶת	=	אֵמֶת	+	ע
like a lion	כְּאֵרִי	=	אֵרִי	+	ט
for a sickness	לְחֹלִי	=	חֹלִי	+	ל

Notice how the Chateph Segol of the Aleph (in *emet*) transfers its corresponding unreduced form (Segol) to the Bet, and how the Chateph Patach (in *ari*) transfers its unreduced Patach to the Kaf. You should be able to understand the transference for the last example, *choli*.

Since Chateph ("reduced") vowels are a form of vocal Sheva, you can see that by adding an inseparable preposition you would have two vocal shevas in a row -- which is forbidden in Hebrew. This vocalic transfer is sometimes called the **Second Rule of Sheva**.

CASE 5: Before the Definite Article Hey

Finally, if a prefix is joined to a noun with the definite article, a contraction occurs: the Hey drops out and the prepositional prefix takes the vowel that was under the Hey:



Examples:

in the land	בְּאֶרֶץ	=	הָאֶרֶץ	+	ב
in the day	בְּיוֹם	=	הַיּוֹם	+	ט
like the king	כְּמֶלֶךְ	=	הַמֶּלֶךְ	+	ט
for the word	לְדָבָר	=	הַדָּבָר	+	ל
in the fire	בְּאֵשׁ	=	הָאֵשׁ	+	ט
to the cities	לְעָרִים	=	הָעָרִים	+	ל

In each of these cases, notice how the Hey prefix of the definite noun drops and is replaced with the prepositional prefix.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. Determine the result of adding the following prefixes to the nouns:

for a son	=	בֵּן	+	לְ
in peace	=	שָׁלוֹם	+	בְּ
like spirit	=	רוּחַ	+	כְּ
for the spirit	=	הַרוּחַ	+	לְ
in the place	=	הַמָּקוֹם	+	בְּ
in the cities	=	הָעָרִים	+	בְּ
for the truth	=	הָאֱמוּנָה	+	לְ

3. Using your lexicon (and vocabulary you already know), append the three inseparable prepositions to both definite and indefinite nouns.

7.4 The Preposition Min

Section Vocabulary

from, out of (prefix)	מִן	from, out of (preposition)	מִן
wine (m)	בַּיַּיִן	sword, knife (f)	חֶרֶב
gold (m)	זָהָב	altar	מִזְבֵּחַ
fruit (m)	פְּרִי	vine (m)	גֶּפֶן

The Preposition Min

The preposition *min* ("from," "out of") is perhaps the most versatile of the Hebrew prepositions, appearing both as an independent preposition and as an inseparable preposition. In addition, *min* is used to form comparative, superlative, and "partitive" grammatical constructions.

As an Independent Preposition

In Unit 7.2 you learned that the preposition *min* can stand alone as an independent (or maqqef) preposition in a prepositional phrase. For example:

He walked **from** the city. מִן־הָעִיר

In this case, *min* occurs directly before its object and is simply translated "off the page" as "from," or "out of" (note that before definite nouns, *min* is usually joined to its object with a maqqef).

As an Inseparable Preposition

Like the other inseparable prepositions you studied in Unit 7.3, the letter Mem can function as a prefix to Hebrew words. For example, the word *melekh* simply means "king," but the word *mimelekh* means "from a king" (note again how the prefix immediately renders the noun as the object of the preposition).

Sometimes the vowel under the Mem prefix will change, depending on the consonant that appears at the beginning of the word; however, the rules for the vowel changes are really pretty simple:

CASE 1: The Basic Form

The inseparable form of the preposition *min* is actually a contraction of sorts. When *min* is added to a word, the Nun drops off and the first letter of the following word takes a dagesh (if possible):

מִן־

↑ *Nun drops;*
Dagesh next letter

For example:

from a place	מִמְּקוֹם	=	מִ	מְּ	קוֹם	+	מִן
from a king	מִמְּלֶכֶךְ	=	מִ	מְּ	לֶכֶךְ	+	מִן
from a house	מִבֵּית	=	מִ	בֵּ	יֵת	+	מִן
from a hand	מִיָּד	=	מִ	יָ	ד	+	מִן

In each of these cases, *min* is added to the word, but the Nun drops off and becomes a Dagesh in the first letter of the original word (the dagesh appears to "compensate" for the loss of the Nun (note that in the third example, the dagesh in Bet changes from Lene to Forte).

CASE 2: Before Guttural Letters

When *min* is added to a word that begins with a *guttural* letter (or the letter Resh), the Nun drops off, but, since a guttural cannot take a dagesh, and the Mem prefix vowel is lengthened (from Chireq to Tsere) to compensate:

מִן-א
↑ ↘ *lengthens*
א, ה, ח, ע
and ר

Here are some examples:

from man מִן־אָדָם = אָדָם + מִן
from a sword מִן־חֶרֶב = חֶרֶב + מִן
from a city מִן־עִיר = עִיר + מִן

Note that in some cases when *min* is added to a noun that begins with Chet, the Dagesh Forte is rejected but the vowel is *not* lengthened:

from outside מִן־חוּץ = חוּץ + מִן

Before the Definite Article

When *min* is added to a definite noun, the Hey prefix is *not* dropped (as it is with the other inseparable prepositions), and the Mem prefix vowel is lengthened:

from the place מִן־הַמָּקוֹם = הַמָּקוֹם + מִן
from the house מִן־הַבַּיִת = הַבַּיִת + מִן
from the morning מִן־הַבֹּקֶר = הַבֹּקֶר + מִן
from the city מִן־הָעִיר = הָעִיר + מִן

Since Hey is a guttural letter, this change is what you would expect, given the rule listed above.

The Comparative Use of Min

As you have already studied in [Unit 5.6](#), comparisons are formed by adding *min* to the word that acts as the object of the comparison (i.e., the thing being compared to).

Example 1:

ms def *ms indef* *ms def*
הַבַּיִת הַגָּדוֹל מִן הַאֹהֶל
the house big the tent
from

Literally this sentence reads: "The house is big *from* the tent" (the tent is the object of comparison or the thing being compared to). To use proper English, we would say "The house is bigger *than* the tent." Notice that the adjective *gadol* changes in meaning from "big" to "bigger" by means of this construction.

Tip: When *min* is used this way, think of it as "than" regarding the word that follows it. "The house is big(ger) than the tent."

Example 2:

ms def *fs indef* *fs indef*
טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִזָּהָב
good wisdom gold
from

Literally this sentence reads "Wisdom is good from gold." Using proper English would render this as "Wisdom is better *than* gold." Again, notice that the adjective *tov* changes in meaning from "good" to "better" by means of this construction.

Example 3:

fs indef *ms indef* *ms indef*
טוֹב מִיַּיִן חֲכָמָה
(is) wisdom from wine good
(than wine) (better)

In this sentence, the Mem prefix attaches to the object of comparison, wine. "Good than wine is wisdom," or "Better than wine is wisdom" (notice the shift in word order here, which is common in Hebrew).

The Superlative Use of Min

Recall from Unit 5.6 that the superlative form of an adjective can also be constructed using the preposition *min*.

Example:

שְׂמוּאֵל הַגָּדוֹל מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים
from the men the great(est) Samuel

Literally this sentence reads, "Samuel (is) the great from the men," but we render it as "Samuel is the greatest of the men" to form a better English construction.

The Partitive Use of Min

Min can also be used to express that its object is a part of something. Context is the key to determining this usage of the preposition.

Example:

מִפְּרִי
*from a fruit
(some fruit)*

Depending on the context, this could mean "some of the fruit," or a part of the fruit, etc. The partitive use of *min* will be studied later using explicit examples from the Tanach.

Section Exercises

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. Determine the result of adding the Mem prefix to the nouns:

from a son	=	בֶּן	+	בֵּן
from the son	=	הַבֶּן	+	בֵּן
from spirit	=	רוּחַ	+	בֵּן
from the spirit	=	הַרוּחַ	+	בֵּן
from the place	=	הַמָּקוֹם	+	בֵּן
from the cities	=	הָעָרִים	+	בֵּן
from truth	=	אֱמוּנָה	+	בֵּן
from the truth	=	הָאֱמוּנָה	+	בֵּן

3. Using your lexicon (and vocabulary you already know), append the Mem prefix to both definite and indefinite nouns.
4. Summarize the different uses of the Mem prefix on a flash card and provide examples from the Tanach.

7.5 Compound Prepositions

Section Vocabulary

from upon.....	מֵעַל	face(s)	פָּנֵה / פָּנִים
from under	מִתַּחַת	before	לִפְנֵי
from with / from the.....	מֵאֵת	away from.....	מִפְּנֵי
on account of.....	עַל-דְּבַר	in front of.....	עַל-פְּנֵי

Hebrew Compound Prepositions

A compound preposition is formed when two or more words are combined and considered a single prepositional unit. In Hebrew, compound prepositions are formed by adding two prepositions together or by adding a preposition and a noun together.

CASE 1: Compounds formed from two prepositions

Two prepositions may be (morphologically) joined to form a distinct preposition. For example:

from upon	מֵעַל	=	עַל	+	מִן
from under	מִתַּחַת	=	תַּחַת	+	מִן
from with	מֵאֵת	=	אֵת	+	מִן

In the examples above, the preposition *min* has been added to other prepositions to form compound prepositions (if you do not understand the vowel changes, please review Unit 7.3). (Note that *me'at* (the third example above) may also indicate the preposition *min* joined with the **direct object marker** (and meaning "for the."))

Example 1 (Genesis 1:9)

אֶחָד	אֶל-מְקוֹם	הַשָּׁמַיִם	מִתַּחַת	הַמַּיִם	יִקָּוּ
to one place		the heaven	from under	the waters	be collected!

"Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place" (KJV).

Example 2 (Genesis 4:14)

הַאֲרָצָה	פְּנֵי	מֵעַל	הַיּוֹם	אֶתִּי	גֵרַשְׁתָּ	הֵן
the face of the earth	from upon	this day	me	you have	behold	cast out

“Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth” (KJV).

Example 3 (Psalm 108:4[5h])

תְּסַדֵּךְ	מֵעַל־שָׁמַיִם	כִּי־גָדוֹל
is your	from upon the	for great
chased	heavens	

“For thy mercy is great above the heavens” (KJV).

CASE 2: Compounds formed from a preposition and a noun

A preposition and a noun may be conjoined to form a different preposition. For example:

because of	עַל־דָּבָר	=	דָּבָר	+	עַל
in the midst of	בְּתוֹךְ	=	תוֹךְ	+	בְּ
to the midst of	אֶל־תוֹךְ	=	תוֹךְ	+	אֶל
before	לִפְנֵי	=	פְּנִים	+	לְ
before the face of	עַל־פְּנֵי	=	פְּנֵי	+	עַל

In the examples above, notice how the preposition is added directly to the noun to form a distinct grammatical construction. In some cases a maqef is used to join the preposition to the noun; in other cases the preposition is directly prefixed to the noun.

Example 1: (Psalm 79:9)

עֲזָרֵנוּ	אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵנוּ	עַל־דָּבָר	כְּבוֹד־שִׁמְךָ
Help us!	God of our salvation	because of	the glory of your Name

(Note that the first syllable of the first word uses a Qamets Chatuph since it is a closed, unaccented syllable.) “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name” (KJV).

Example 2: (Genesis 6:11)

וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
God before the earth was corrupt

"The earth also was corrupt before God" (KJV).

Example 3: (Exodus 14:23)

וַיֵּלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵימָוֶת
the sea to the midst of

Section Exercises

This goal of this unit is rather modest: to help you become aware of some additional forms of prepositions you might encounter while studying the Tanakh. However, these forms are quite common in the Scriptures, so it is recommended that you:

1. Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page)
2. On your flash cards for these compound prepositions, write out a few examples from the Tanakh of their usage.

7.6 Prepositions with Suffixes

Prepositions with Pronomial Suffixes

Introduction

As you have already learned, **pronomial suffixes** can be attached to singular nouns (Unit 6.7) and plural nouns (Unit 6.8). In this unit you will see that they may be attached to prepositions as well.

Prepositions are neither singular nor plural, but some prepositions take the suffixes added to singular nouns (called "Type I" endings) while others take the suffixes added to plural nouns (called "Type II" endings). The type of endings attached to a given preposition must be learned on a case-by-case basis (fortunately, in either case they are easy to recognize when you see them).

Type I Pronomial Endings

Some prepositions take the pronomial suffixes you have learned for singular nouns. Following academic convention, I will refer to these as "Type I" pronomial endings:

<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	
אִי	אִי	1c my ___
אִיךָ	אִיךָ	2s your ___
אִיהָ	וֹ	3s his/her ___
אִנּוּ	אִנּוּ	1c our ___
אִכּוֹן	אִכּוֹם	2p your ___
אִנּוֹן	אִנּוֹם	3p their ___

In the paradigm given above, note that the "X" refers to the last letter of the preposition.

You will need to memorize these suffixes so that when you see a preposition with one of these endings, you will understand that an objective personal pronoun is "embedded" into the meaning of the word.

Example Paradigm: Type I Preposition

Consider the inseparable preposition Lamed and note how the Type I endings are directly applied:

	<i>fem.</i>	<i>masc.</i>	
Singular	לִי		1st (to me)
	לְךָ	לְךָ	2nd (to you)
	לְהָ	לוֹ	3rd (to him/her)
Plural	לִּנּוּ		1st (to us)
	לְכּוֹן	לְכּוֹם	2nd (to you)
	לְהוֹן	לְהוֹם	3rd (to them)

Note that the only exception to the pronomial endings you have studied for singular nouns is in the case of the 2fs where the Tseret has changed to a Qamets.

Other prepositions that take Type I endings include:

<i>Fem</i>	<i>Masc</i>	<i>meaning</i>
בִּי		<i>1cs in me</i>
בְּךָ	בְּךָ	<i>2s in you</i>
בָּהּ	בוֹ	<i>3s in him/her/it</i>
בְּנוֹ		<i>1cp in us</i>
בְּכֶן	בְּכֶם	<i>2p in you</i>
בָּהֶן	בָּהֶם	<i>3p in them</i>

<i>Fem</i>	<i>Masc</i>	<i>meaning</i>
עִמִּי		<i>1cs with me</i>
עִמָּךְ	עִמָּךְ	<i>2s with you</i>
עִמָּהּ	עִמּוֹ	<i>3s with him/her/it</i>
עִמָּנוּ		<i>1cp with us</i>
עִמָּכֶן	עִמָּכֶם	<i>2p with you</i>
עִמָּהֶן	עִמָּהֶם	<i>3p with them</i>

Tip: When learning the prepositions, you might want to note what type of pronomial endings it takes. For example, when creating a flashcard for the preposition *'im*, you might want to indicate that it takes Type I pronomial endings.

Type II Pronomial Endings

Other prepositions take the pronomial suffixes you have learned for plural nouns. Again, following academic convention, I will refer to these as "Type II" endings:

<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	
אֲי	אֵי	1c my ___
אֲיָךְ	אֵיָךְ	2s your ___
אֲיָהָּ	אֵיוּ	3s his/her ___
אֲיֵנוּ	אֵינוּ	1c our ___
אֲיֵכֶן	אֵיכֶם	2p your ___
אֲיֵהֶן	אֵיהֶם	3p their ___

Again, in the paradigm given above, note that the "X" refers to the last letter of the preposition.

Example Paradigm: Type II Preposition

Consider the preposition 'al and note how the Type II endings are directly applied:

	<i>fem.</i>	<i>masc.</i>	
<i>Singular</i>	עָלַי		1st (on me)
	עָלַיְךָ	עָלַיְךָ	2nd (on you)
	עָלֶיהָ	עָלָיו	3rd (on him/her)
<i>Plural</i>	עָלֵינוּ		1st (on us)
	עָלֵיכֶן	עָלֵיכֶם	2nd (to you)
	עָלֵיהֶן	עָלֵיהֶם	3rd (on them)

These prepositions take the same endings you have studied for plural nouns, so you should not have too much difficulty recognizing them when you see them. Other prepositions that take Type II endings include:

<i>Fem</i>	<i>Masc</i>	<i>meaning</i>
אֵלַי		1cs to me
אֵלַיְךָ	אֵלַיְךָ	2s to you
אֵלֶיהָ	אֵלָיו	3s to him/her/it
אֵלֵינוּ		1cp to us
אֵלֵיכֶן	אֵלֵיכֶם	2p to you
אֵלֵיהֶן	אֵלֵיהֶם	3p to them

<i>Fem</i>	<i>Masc</i>	<i>meaning</i>
אַחֲרַי		1cs after me
אַחֲרֶיךָ	אַחֲרֶיךָ	2s after you
אַחֲרֶיהָ	אַחֲרָיו	3s after him/her/it
אַחֲרֵינוּ		1cp after us
אַחֲרֵיכֶן	אַחֲרֵיכֶם	2p after you
אַחֲרֵיהֶן	אַחֲרֵיהֶם	3p after them

Tip: When learning the prepositions, you might want to note what type of pronomial endings it takes. For example, when creating a flashcard for the preposition *achar*, you might want to indicate that it takes Type II pronomial endings.

Section Exercises

- Memorize (or review) the Type I and Type II endings for prepositions.
- For each of the prepositions you already know, determine whether they take Type I or Type II endings (use your lexicon). Note this on your flashcards.
- Inflect each preposition you know according to person, gender, and number (use the tables above as a guide).

7.7 Indicating Possession

Section Vocabulary

There is.....	יש	There is not.....	אין
There will be	יהיה	There was	היה
Blessing (fs).....	ברכה	No, not	לא

Introduction

Since Hebrew does not have a word to express the idea of "have" (or "don't have"), the idea of possession (or the lack of it) can be expressed by the formula:

- *There is to me x* (for "I have x")
- *There is not to me x* (for "I don't have x")
- *There is to you x* (for "you have x")
- *There is not to you x* (for "you don't have x")
- and so on

Grammatically, the particles *yesh* (there is) and *ein* (there is not) are combined with the Lamed prefix to form these sorts of constructions.

The use of *Yesh* - There is

The word *yesh* means "there is," or "there are."

There is a man in the field. יש איש בשדה

There are people in the field. יש אנשים בשדה

Note that the word *yesh* functions as a "particle" in Hebrew, and means "there is/are" without regard to gender and number of the other words in the sentence or clause. In other words, when you see *yesh* you will simply substitute "there is/are."

To indicate possession (in the present tense), *yesh* is combined with the inseparable preposition Lamed:

There is to me a son (I have a son). יש לי בן

There is to the man a son (The man has a son). יש לאיש בן

There is to him a son (He has a son). יש לו בן

There is to us a son (We have a son). יש לנו בן

In the Scriptures:

יסר בנך כי־יש תקוה
for **there is** hope your son discipline

Discipline your son, for there is hope (Proverbs 19:18).

יש דרך ישר לפני־איש ואחריתה דרכי־מוֹת
the ways of death but the end of it before a man right a way **there is**

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12, KJV).

The use of *Ein* - There is not

The word *ein* means "there is not," or "there are not."

There is not a man in the field. אין איש בשדה

There are not people in the field. אין אנשים בשדה

Note that the word *ein* functions as a "particle" in Hebrew, and means "there is/are not," without regard to gender and number of the other words in the sentence or clause. In other words, when you see *ein* you will simply substitute "there is/are not."

There is not to me a son (I don't have a son). אין לי בן

There is not to the man a son. אין לאיש בן

There is not to him a son (He hasn't a son). אין לו בן

There is not to us a son (We haven't a son). אין לנו בן

In the Scriptures:

אין עשה-טוב

who does good There
 is none

There is none who does good (Psalm 14:3).

Possession in the past and future

Possession in the past can be expressed by the verb *hayah* combined with the inseparable preposition Lamed:

There was to me a son (I had a son). היתה לי בן

There was not to me a son (I didn't have a son). לא היתה לי בן

Possession in the future can likewise be expressed by forms of the verb "to be" with the inseparable preposition Lamed:

There will be to me a son (I will have a son). יהיה לי בן

There will not be to me a son (I will not have a son). לא יהיה לי בן

Note: The verb "to be" will be covered later in the section on verbs. For now, be familiar with its use in these simple Hebrew constructions.

Section Exercises

- Memorize the section vocabulary (top of the page).
- Understand the basic rules for using *yesh* and *ein*.
- Understand the various ways to show possession in Hebrew (construct relation, pronomial suffixes on nouns and pronouns, using *yesh* and *ein*, and using forms of the verb "to be").
- Using vocabulary you already know, construct simple sentences (in the present tense) using *yesh* and *ein*.

Unit Seven Summary -

The Least you should know...

After studying **Unit Seven**, you should have mastered the following material:

1. General Properties of Prepositions

In **Unit 7.1** you learned that a *preposition* is a connecting word that indicates a relationship between one word (called its *object*) and another word (called its *antecedent*). A *prepositional phrase* is composed of the preposition, its object, and all the object's modifiers. If the prepositional phrase modifies a noun or pronoun, it functions adjectivally (as an adjective phrase); if the phrase modifies a verb, it functions adverbially (as an adverbial phrase).

A simple preposition is a word used to indicate spatial relations ("over," "under," "above," "below," etc.), direction ("to," "from," "up," "down," etc.), temporal relations ("before," "during," "after," etc.), or causal relations ("by," "of," "for," etc.).

A compound preposition is formed when two or more words are combined and considered a single prepositional unit. In English, some examples would include: "along side of," "in case of," "in addition to," "on account of," and so on.

2. Independent Prepositions

In **Unit 7.2** you learned that many Hebrew prepositions stand alone as a separate word in a prepositional phrase. These prepositions are simply separate words that stand in front of their objects, and you will translate them by "reading them off the page" as a separate word.

Examples:

He walked from the city.	הֵלֵךְ מִן הָעִיר
He sat inside the house.	יָשַׁב בְּתוֹךְ הַבַּיִת
He went before the king.	הֵלֵךְ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
He sat under the tree.	יָשַׁב תַּחַת הָעֵץ
The king is sitting between the trees.	הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב בֵּין עֵץ

In each of these examples the preposition stands alone as a separate word in the sentence, and translation is simply a matter of replacement of the English equivalent.

Maqqef Prepositions

Maqqef prepositions are simply independent prepositions that are directly joined to their objects by means of a **maqqef** (or hyphen). This is a common occurrence in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Examples:

He walked **from** the city. מִן־הָעִיר הָלַךְ
He walked **on** the land. עַל־הָאָרֶץ הָלַךְ
forever (until eternity). עַד־עוֹלָם

Prepositional Prefixes

In **Unit 7.3** you learned that three additional letters can function as a prefixes to Hebrew words. These are Bet (meaning "in," "on," or "by"), Kaf (meaning "like," or "as"), and Lamed (meaning "to," or "for"). These prefixes are sometimes called "inseparable" prepositions because they cannot stand alone as independent prepositions.

In Hebrew, you may add one of these prefixes before a noun to indicate that the noun is the object of a prepositional relationship. For example, the word *melekh* simply means "king," but the word *lemelekh* means "for a king" (note how the prefix immediately renders the noun as the object of the preposition).

Sometimes the vowel under the prefix will change, depending on the consonant that appears at the beginning of the word. Many of the vowel changes you will see here correspond with those of the Conjunctive Vav prefix you studied in **Unit 4.7**.

CASE 1: The Basic Form

בִּ- לִ- כִּ-

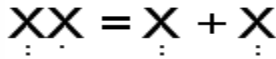
CASE 2: Before Begeckephat Letters

When these prefixes precede the **Begeckephat** letters, they lose their **dagesh lene**.



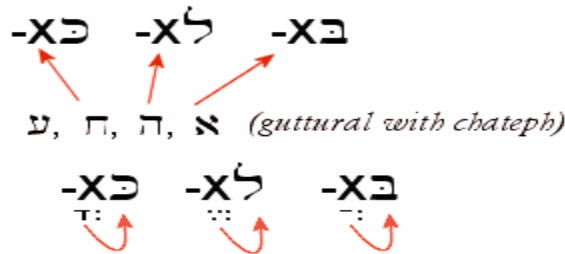
CASE 3: Before Letters with Sheva

When we add a prepositional prefix to a word that begins with a Sheva, the prefix takes a Chireq vowel in a closed syllable:



CASE 4: Before Guttural Letters

If a prefix is joined to a guttural letter having a compound sheva, the prefix takes the simple form of the vowel:



CASE 5: Before the Definite Article Hey

Finally, if a prefix is joined to a noun with the definite article, a contraction occurs: the Hey drops out and the prepositional prefix takes the vowel that was under the Hey:



4. The Preposition Min

In Unit 7.4 you learned that the preposition *min* ("from," "out of") is perhaps the most versatile of the Hebrew prepositions, appearing both as an independent preposition and as an inseparable preposition. In addition, *min* is used to form comparative, superlative, and "partitive" grammatical constructions.

o **As an Independent Preposition**

In Unit 7.2 you learned that the preposition *min* can stand alone as an independent (or maqqef) preposition in a prepositional phrase. For example:

He walked **from** the city. מִן־הָעִיר הֵלֵךְ

In this case, *min* occurs directly before its object and is simply translated "off the page" as "from," or "out of" (note that before definite nouns, *min* is usually joined to its object with a maqqef).

o **As an Inseparable Preposition**

Like the other inseparable prepositions you studied in Unit 7.3, the letter Mem can function as a prefix to Hebrew words. For example, the word *melekh* simply means "king," but the word *mimelekh* means "from a king" (note again how the prefix immediately renders the noun as the object of the preposition).

CASE 1: The Basic Form

The inseparable form of the preposition *min* is actually a contraction of sorts. When *min* is added to a word, the Nun drops off and the first letter of the following word takes a dagesh (if possible):

-מִן־

↑ *Nun drops;*
Dagesh next letter

CASE 2: Before Guttural Letters

When *min* is added to a word that begins with a *guttural* letter (or the letter Resh), the Nun drops off, but, since a guttural cannot take a dagesh, and the Mem prefix vowel is lengthened (from Chireq to Tsere) to compensate:

-מִן־

↑ *lengthens*

ע, פ, ה, שׁ

and ך

CASE 3: Before the Definite Article

When *min* is added to a definite noun, the Hey prefix is *not* dropped (as it is with the other inseparable prepositions), and the Mem prefix vowel is lengthened.

5. Prepositions with Pronominal Suffixes

In Unit 7.6 you learned that some prepositions take the pronominal suffixes you have learned for singular nouns. Following academic convention, I will refer to these as "Type I" pronominal endings:

<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	
אִי	אִי	1c my ___
אִיךָ	אִיךָ	2s your ___
אִיהָ	וֹ	3s his/her ___
אִנּוּ	אִנּוּ	1c our ___
אִכּוֹן	אִכּוֹם	2p your ___
אִנּוֹן	אִנּוֹם	3p their ___

Other prepositions take the pronominal suffixes you have learned for plural nouns. Again, following academic convention, I will refer to these as "Type II" endings:

<i>f</i>	<i>m</i>	
אִי	אִי	1c my ___
אִיךָ	אִיךָ	2s your ___
אִיהָ	אִיוֹ	3s his/her ___
אִינוּ	אִינוּ	1c our ___
אִכּוֹן	אִיכּוֹם	2p your ___
אִיהוֹן	אִיהוֹם	3p their ___

6. Showing Possession with Yesh

In Unit 7.7 you learned that Hebrew does not have a word to express the idea of "have" (or "don't have"), so the idea of possession (or the lack of it) is often expressed by the formula:

- o *There is to me x* (for "I have x")
- o *There is not to me x* (for "I don't have x")
- o *There is to you x* (for "you have x")
- o *There is not to you x* (for "you don't have x")
- o and so on

Grammatically, the particles *yesh* (there is) and *ein* (there is not) are combined with the Lamed prefix to form these sorts of constructions.

There is to me a son (I have a son). יש לי בן

There is to the man a son (The man has a son). יש לאיש בן

There is to him a son (He has a son). יש לו בן

There is to us a son (We have a son). יש לנו בן

The word *ein* means "there is not," or "there are not."

There is not to me a son (I don't have a son). אין לי בן

There is not to the man a son. אין לאיש בן

There is not to him a son (He hasn't a son). אין לו בן

There is not to us a son (We haven't a son). אין לנו בן

Unit Eight - Learning Hebrew Numbers

אֲנֹכִי אֶלֶף וְתוֹ רֵאשׁ וְסוֹף

A number is a sort of adjective that defines the quality of quantity.

אחד

Objective:

- After studying this unit, you should be able to understand the basic grammar of the numbers in Biblical Hebrew and begin identifying various numerical constructions in the Scriptures.

UNIT EIGHT CONTENTS

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Letters as Numbers
- 8.3 Hebrew Cardinal Numbers
- 8.4 Hebrew Ordinal Numbers
- 8.5 Hebrew Gematria
- 8.6 Summary Page



The Keys to the Bible.
Bible Codes. Gematria.
Equidistant Letter
Sequences. **NEW!**

[Click for details](#)

8.1 Introduction to Hebrew Numbers

Hebrew Numbers

A number is a sort of adjective that defines the quality of quantity. In Hebrew, there are mainly two kinds of numbers:

1. **Cardinal Numbers** tell how many things there are (in a set), for example, one, two, three, and so on.
2. **Ordinal Numbers** tell the order or priority of elements in a series, for example, first, second, third, and so on.

A **numeral** is a symbolic representation of a number. Biblical Hebrew does not use any Arabic numerals in the modern sense but instead uses the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to express quantities. Often distinct words are used to describe larger numbers, such as *ma'ah* for 100 and *elef* for 1,000.

In the Jewish scribal arts, Hebrew letters (as numbers) are used for counting things like chapters (*perekim*) and verses (*pasukim*) of the Tanakh, page numbers, and footnote references in annotated sacred texts such as the Talmud.

Properties of Numbers

In Hebrew, numbers have their own gender, masculine and feminine. This means that you will need to be familiar with two sets of numbers, one set that modifies masculine nouns and the other that modifies feminine nouns. Like other adjectives, then, the gender of the number must agree with the noun it modifies.

To make things a bit more murky, Hebrew uses characteristically feminine endings for the first three masculine numbers, and conversely. This will be explained in [Unit 8.3](#).

Gematria

It seems obvious that the Bible uses numbers in patterns, and there is significance in many of these patterns. For example, the number seven recurs throughout the Hebrew calendar in regular intervals and multiples (think of *Shabbat*, *Shemittah*, *Yovel*, and the weeks of years in Daniel's prophecy). The study of these sorts of patterns is called *Numerology*.

Gematria is a type of numerological study that may be defined as a system for calculating the numerical equivalence of letters, words, and phrases in a particular Hebrew text. This system is used for the purpose of gaining insight into interrelating concepts and for finding correspondences between words and concepts. Although not identical, gematria is also in the same orbit as the so-called "Bible Codes" and "Equi-distant Letter Sequences" (ELS) that have become fashionable recently.

Since each letter of the alphabet has a numeric value, it is child's play to add up each letter to determine the numeric value for a given word found in the Tanakh. For example, consider the sacred name YHVH:

Yod = Y

Hey = H

Vav = V

Hey = H

In gematria, YHVH it adds up like this:

Yod = 10

Hey = 5

Vav = 6

Hey = 5

TOTAL = 26 or (10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26)

26 is thus the number of YHVH (called the "Total"). Additionally, practitioners of gematria speak of the "Sum" which is simply the addition of the respective digits of the numbers (irrespective of their power). For example, the "Sum" of 26 is 2 + 6 = 8.

Practitioners of this craft often claim that words that have the same numeric value are considered to be somehow connected. Therefore it is a matter of some concern to identify other words that equal the Total (and/or Sum) for the Name of the LORD. Often this leads to speculations that fall outside the pale of standard Biblical exegesis.

In short, gematria has to do with the letters of the Hebrew words throughout the Tanakh considered from the point of view of their numeric values rather than their normal, denotative and historic meaning. We will take a brief look at this subject in [Unit 8.5](#).

8.2 Hebrew Letters as Numbers

Hebrew Letters used as Numbers

In some cases, especially in dates and in Bible references, Hebrew letters can function as numbers. For example, Aleph can stand for the number 1, Bet for 2, and so on. For a review of the numeric values for letters, [click here](#).

I created the following matrix to help you easily identify numbers when expressed using Hebrew letters:

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	<i>Multiples of 10</i>	
ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א	י	10
יט	יח	יז	טז	טו	יד	יג	יב	יא	כ	20
כט	כח	כז	כו	כה	כד	כג	כב	כא	ל	30
לט	לח	לז	לו	לה	לד	לג	לב	לא	מ	40
מט	מח	מז	מו	מה	מד	מג	מב	מא	נ	50
נט	נח	נז	נו	נה	נד	נג	נב	נא	ס	60
סט	סח	סז	סו	סה	סד	סג	סב	סא	ע	70
עט	עח	עז	עו	עה	עד	עג	עב	עא	פ	80
פט	פח	פז	פו	פה	פד	פג	פב	פא	צ	90
צט	צח	צז	צו	צה	צד	צג	צב	צא	ק	100
קט	קח	קז	קו	קה	קד	קג	קב	קא	ר	200
רט	רח	רז	רו	רה	רד	רג	רב	רא	ש	300
שט	שח	שז	שו	שה	שד	שג	שב	שא	ת	400
תט	תח	תז	תו	תה	תד	תג	תב	תא		

Note:

The numbers 15 and 16 are not written as you might expect (i.e., as Yod + Hey and Yod + Vav, but rather as Tet + Vav and Tet + Zayin) in order to avoid irreverently writing the sacred Name of God. This includes larger numbers such as 115, 216, and so on.

יהוה

Note:

The Hebrew sofit letters are also assigned numeric values: Kaf (500), Mem (600), Nun (700), Fey (800), and Tsade (900) as part of mispar gadol gematria..

Examples:

Number	Combination
7	Zayin
19	Yod (10) and Tet (9)
93	Tsade (90) and Gimmel (3)
115	Qof (100), Tet (9) and Vav (6)
613	Tav (400), Resh (200), Yod (10), and Gimmel (3)
757	Tav (400), Shin (300), Nun (50), and Zayin (7)

To avoid confusion with words, letters meant as numbers are sometimes marked with *geresh* (single quote mark) if a single letter is used, or *gerashayim* (double quote mark) if more than one. These marks mean "not a word" and are also used for acronyms and abbreviations:



For example, the number 613 is sometimes referred to as "*taryag*," and the complete set of commandments is referred to as "*taryag mitzvot*," or the 613 commandments. This would be referred to as:

תרי"ג

The Hebrew year

The Hebrew year begins on Rosh Hashanah (which occurs on the Gregorian calendar in September / October). When a Hebrew year is written using letters, you simply add the values of the letters. Often the year is written with an implied addition of 5,000, so, for instance, the year 5765 is written as 765 rather than 5765:

תשס"ה

Chapters and Verses in the Tanakh

In some Jewish reference works, Hebrew letters are used to express numbers. For example, in modern editions of the Chumash (the *Torah* in codex form), chapters (*perekim*) and verses (*pesukim*) are indicated by means of Hebrew letters:

Pesukim *Perek* *Book*
 א:א:א:ד בראשית

פרשת בראשית ----- *Parashah Name*

א:ב בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתְּהָ תֵהוֹ
 וְבָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:
 ג:ד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי־אֹר: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב
 וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:

The page header indicates that *Bereshit* chapter 1 (perek Aleph) verses 1-4 (pesukim Aleph-Dalet) are displayed on this page. In addition, the weekly Torah portion (parashah) is listed as a header above the running text. The right margin indicates the pesuk(im) for each line of the text (for example, the first line shows pesukim (Aleph-Bet), or verses 1-2). Each verse ends with a sof pasuk (:) mark. Many Tanakhs include a running commentary at the bottom of the page that include comments from various Jewish sages such as Rashi and Ramban.

In order to recognize chapters and verses you will need to recall how Hebrew letters can be used as numbers and compute the values accordingly. Here are some examples:

Verses	Chp.	Book Name															
<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">כג</td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">א</td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">א</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">20+</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	כג	א	א				20+	1	1	3			<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 50px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">א</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </table>	א		1	<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">בראשית</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Bereishit</i></p>
כג	א	א															
20+	1	1															
3																	
א																	
1																	
Pesuqim 1-23	Pereq 1:																

<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 150px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">טו</td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">ד</td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">א</td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">ג</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">9+</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">10+</td> </tr> </table>	טו	ד	א	ג					9+	4	1	3	6		1	10+	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 50px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">ג</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </table>	ג		1	<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">ויקרא</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>Vaiyiqra</i></p>
טו	ד	א	ג																		
9+	4	1	3																		
6		1	10+																		
ג																					
1																					
Pereq/Pasuq 4:15	Pereq/Pasuq 3:11																				

The Psalms

The Psalms (*Tehillim*) are referenced by citing Mizmor number. For example, *Mizmor Aleph* is Psalm 1, *Mizmor Bet*, Psalm 2, and so on.

Mizmor	Book
א	תהלים

1 / א	Pasukim
<p>א אֲשֶׁר־יְהִי־אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר׃ לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רָשָׁעִים וּבְדַרְכֵי חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד</p> <p>אִיב וּבְמוֹשָׁב לְצִים לֹא יָשָׁב׃ כִּי אִם בְּתוֹכָת יְהוָה חָפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ</p> <p>בג יְהוָה יוֹמָם וּלְיַלְהָה׃ וְהָיָה כַּעֲץ שָׁתוּל עַל־פְּלִי מַיִם אֲשֶׁר פָּרְיוֹ׃</p> <p>גד יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ וְעִלְהוּ לֹא־יִבּוֹל וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה וְצִלֵּית׃ לֹא־כֵן הִרְשָׁעִים</p> <p>דה כִּי אִם־כַּמֶּץ אֲשֶׁר־תִּדְפְּנוּ רוּחַ׃ עַל־כֵּן לֹא־יִקְמוּ רָשָׁעִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט</p> <p>הז וְחַטָּאִים בַּעֲדַת צְדִיקִים׃ כִּי־יִזְהַע יְהוָה דַּרְכֵי צְדִיקִים וּדְרֹךְ</p> <p>רָשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד׃</p>	<p>א</p> <p>אִיב</p> <p>בג</p> <p>גד</p> <p>דה</p> <p>הז</p>

Section Exercises

- Understand how to convert numbers to Hebrew letters (and vice-versa). Use the matrix at the top of the page, if necessary.
- Write the current Hebrew year using Hebrew letters.
- Find a chumash or Tanakh and locate various passages. Write down the perek and pesukim for some of your favorite Scripture passages.
- Explain the use of the geresh / gerashayim. When is it used? Provide an example or two.

8.3 Hebrew Cardinal Numbers - Misparim

Hebrew Cardinal Numbers

A cardinal number (*mispar*) tells how many things there are (in a set), for example, one, two, three, and so on. These are the numbers (*misparim*) we use for regular counting.

Properties of Cardinal Numbers

Cardinal numbers have two properties that you will need to learn:

1. Cardinal numbers take both masculine and feminine forms. Masculine numbers modify masculine nouns, and feminine numbers modify feminine nouns.
2. Cardinal numbers can occur in the **construct state** to indicate a link between the number and the noun it modifies. Construct numbers are translated as "one of something," "two of something" and so on (apart from the construct state of number 2, they are used rather inconsistently in the Tanakh).

The Numbers 1-10 (with feminine nouns)

The following lists the first ten cardinal numbers for the feminine gender:

Zero	אפס	▶▶
One	אחת	
Two.....	(שת-) שתים	
Three.....	(שלש-) שלוש	
Four	ארבע	
Five	חמש	
Six	שש	
Seven	(שבע-) שבע	
Eight.....	שמונה	
Nine	(תשע-) תשע	
Ten	עשר	

The Numbers 1-10 (with masculine nouns)

The following lists the first ten cardinal numbers for the masculine gender:

Zero	אֶפֶס	⏮
One	(אֶחָד) אֶחָד	
Two	(שְׁנַיִם) שְׁנַיִם	
Three	(שְׁלוֹשָׁה) שְׁלוֹשָׁה	
Four	(אַרְבָּעָה) אַרְבָּעָה	
Five	(חֲמִישָׁה) חֲמִישָׁה	
Six	(שֵׁשֶׁה) שֵׁשֶׁה	
Seven	(שִׁבְעָה) שִׁבְעָה	
Eight	(שְׁמוֹנָה) שְׁמוֹנָה	
Nine	(תְּשַׁע) תְּשַׁע	
Ten	(עֲשָׂרָה) עֲשָׂרָה	

The Numbers 3-10 and Gender

The numbers 3-10 use "opposite" gender endings than you would expect. In the masculine numbers (3-10), you will notice the characteristic "-ah" ending, but not so with the feminine numbers. Thus, masculine nouns are actually modified by numbers that appear feminine; and conversely, feminine nouns are modified by numbers that appear masculine. Note this is true only for the numbers 3-10; after this, they work as expected.

For example, since Hebrew months (and seasons) are masculine in gender, we have Tish'ah B'Av for Av 9.

Construct Forms

Each of these numbers has a construct form. Construct forms that are spelled differently than the normal forms are shown in parentheses. They are translated as "one of something," "two of something" and so on.

The Number 1

The number one follows the noun and agrees in gender, number, and definiteness with the noun it modifies:

one daughter..... בַּת אֶחָד

one son בֶּן אֶחָד

Note that the construct form precedes noun:

one of the daughters. אֶחָת הַבָּנוֹת

one of the sons..... אֶחָד הַבָּנִים

The Numbers 2 through 10

These numbers may follow or precede noun (unless they are in construct):

three daughters	בנות שלוש
three sons	שלשה בנים
five daughters	חמש בנות
seven sons.....	שבעת בנים

Note also that **pronomial suffixes** may be added to the construct form of the number:

two of them	שתיהם
three of us (m)	שלשתנו

Note: These numbers are sometimes classified as nouns in Biblical Hebrew grammars since they often do NOT agree in gender with the nouns they modify.

The Numbers 11 through 19

These are formed as a combination of a number with 10. Basically you add the construct form of the number to an altered form of number ten:

(and) ten (f)	עשרה
(and) ten (m)	עשר

Examples:

Eleven (f)	אחת עשרה
Eleven (m).....	אחד עשר
Twelve (f).....	שתי עשרה
Twelve (m)	שני עשר
Eighteen (f)	שמונה עשרה
Eighteen (m)	שמונה עשר

The Numbers 20 through 90

These numbers are basically plural forms of the regular (feminine) cardinal numbers.

Twenty (dual of ten).....	עשרים
Thirty.....	שלשים
Forty	ארבעים
Fifty.....	חמשים
Sixty.....	ששים
Seventy.....	שבעים
Eighty	שמונים
Ninety	תשעים

Note that the number 20 is the dual form of the (f) number 10.

The Numbers 21 through 99

These are formed by first using the larger number and then using the conjunction with the smaller number.

Twenty one.....	עשרים ואחת
Thirty two.....	שלשים ושתים
Thirty three.....	שלשים ושלש
Ninety nine	תשעים ותשע

Cardinal Numbers from 100+

Here are common Hebrew numbers from 100 up:

100	מאה
200 (dual of 100).....	מאתים
300 (<i>fcs</i> + <i>me'ot</i>).....	שלש מאות
400	ארבע מאות
1000.....	אלף
2000 (dual of 1000)	אלפים
3000 (<i>mcs</i> + <i>alafim</i>).....	שלשת אלפים
10000 (or multitude)	רבבם
20000 (dual of 10000)	רבותים
30000 (<i>fcs</i> + <i>ribbot</i>)	שלש רבות
1000000 (<i>modern</i>)	מיליון

Note: The numbers 300-900 are formed by using the feminine numbers 3-9 in their construct state before the word *me'ot*, whereas the numbers 3000-9000 are formed by using the masculine numbers 3-9 in their construct state before the word *alafim*.

Section Exercises

- Memorize the feminine and masculine numbers from 0 to 10.
 - Understand how to construct numbers from 11-99.
 - Memorize how to construct numbers from 100-90,000.
 - Understand how the numbers 3-10 work with different Hebrew nouns
-

8.4 Hebrew Ordinal Numbers

Hebrew Ordinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers tell the “order” or priority of elements in a series, for example, first, second, third, and so on.

Properties of Ordinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers have two properties that you will need to learn:

1. Ordinals take both masculine and feminine forms. Masculine numbers modify masculine nouns, and feminine numbers modify feminine nouns.
2. Ordinal numbers function as **attributive adjectives**, which means they follow the noun they modify and agree in gender, number, and definiteness.

Masculine Ordinals

First.....	רִאשׁוֹן	◀
Second.....	שֵׁנִי	
Third.....	שְׁלִישִׁי	
Fourth.....	רְבִיעִי	
Fifth.....	חֲמִישִׁי	
Sixth.....	שֵׁשִׁי	
Seventh.....	שְׁבִיעִי	
Eighth.....	שְׁמֹנִי	
Ninth.....	תְּשִׁיעִי	
Tenth.....	עֲשָׂרִי	

Note that the first form, *rishon*, comes from the shoresh for head (*rosh*), meaning chief or beginning (of a series). The other forms share the same shoresh with their corresponding cardinal number and end in Chireq Yod.

Feminine Ordinals

First.....	ראשונה	«
Second.....	שנית	
Third.....	שלישית	
Fourth.....	רביעית	
Fifth	חמישית	
Sixth.....	ששית	
Seventh	שביעית	
Eighth.....	שמינית	
Ninth	תשיעית	
Tenth.....	עשירית	

Note that all the forms (except the first form) end in a Tav. In fact, these feminine forms are the same as their masculine counterparts except for the Tav ending.

Usage of Ordinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers behave like attributive adjectives, which means they follow the noun they modify and agree in gender, number, and definiteness.

Examples:

the first day (day is <i>ms</i>).....	ביום הראשון
the sixth day	יום הששי
and He rested on the seventh day.....	וישבת ביום השביעי
on the eight day a sabbath	וביום השמיני שבתון
the ninth year (year is <i>fs</i>).....	השנה התשיעת
until the tenth month (month is <i>ms</i>).....	עד חודש העשירי

Jewish Days of the Week

The Hebrew day (*yom*) begins at sundown, when **three stars** become visible in the sky (the rabbis reasoned that the day begins at sunset based on the description of God's activity in creation, "and the evening and the morning were the first day," Genesis 1:5).



The Jewish week (*shavu'a*) begins on Sunday and ends on Shabbat:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
יום ראשון	יום שני	יום שלישי	יום רביעי	יום חמישי	יום שישי	יום שבת
Yom Rishon	Yom Sheni	Yom Sh'lishi	Yom Revi'i	Yom Chamishi	Yom Shishi	Yom Shabbat

Ordinals Beyond Tenth

Hebrew does not provide distinct terms for ordinals greater than the tenth place, but uses cardinal numbers instead.

In the 11th year ובשנת האחת עשרה

In the 37th year בשלשים ושבע שנה

Section Exercises

- Memorize the feminine and masculine numbers from first to tenth.
- Be able to recite the Hebrew names of the days of the week.
- Understand how ordinals greater than "tenth" are formed.

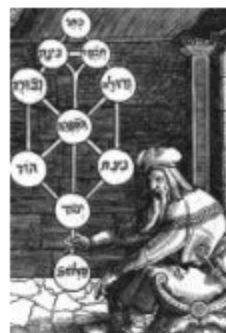
Hebrew Gematria -

Finding numerical relationships between words and phrases

Within the earliest Jewish traditions, groups of Jewish scholars counted the number of times each letter appeared in the Scriptures (as well as the number of words, verses, paragraphs, etc.). These textual specialists were called **Soferim** (counters). The Soferim ensured that every Torah scroll (and the other books of the Tanakh) were identical, noting any unusual words and spellings and replicating them exactly through their scribal arts. Many Jews believe that Ezra the Scribe instituted many of the practices of the Soferim.

In the medieval mystical text called *Sefer Yitzirah: The Book of Creation*, the letters of the Alphabet are described as the stones used to build a house. They are called the “twenty two letters of foundation.” This doctrine highlights the belief in the essential relationship between letters, words and the creative process.

Gematria is a type of numerological study that may be defined as one of more systems for calculating the numerical equivalence of letters, words, and phrases in a particular Hebrew text. These systems are used for the purpose of gaining insight into interrelating concepts and for finding correspondences between words and concepts. Although not identical, gematria is also in the same orbit as the so-called “Bible Codes” and “Equi-distant Letter Sequences” (ELS) that have become fashionable recently.



According to most practitioners, there are several **methods** used to calculate the numerical value for individual words and phrases. When converted to a number, words/phrases can then be compared to other words/phrases and similarities drawn. I list the most common Hebrew gematria methods below.

The Standard Method

Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is given an assigned number, beginning with one for Aleph, two for Bet, and so on. The tenth letter, Yod, is numerically equivalent to 10, and successive letters equal 20, 30, 40, and so on. The letter Kaf near the end of the alphabet, equals 100, and the last letter, Tav, equals 400. This method is sometimes called “Ragil.” Using this method, you simply add up each letter of a given word (or phrase) to determine its numerical value:

100 = ק	10 = י	1 = א
200 = ר	20 = כ	2 = ב
300 = ש	30 = ל	3 = ג
400 = ת	40 = מ	4 = ד
	50 = נ	5 = ה
	60 = ס	6 = ו
	70 = ע	7 = ז
	80 = פ	8 = ח
	90 = צ	9 = ט

Examples:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $300+30+6+40 = 376$.

The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $10+5+6+5 = 26$.

Note: In the *Mispar Mussafi* method, the value of a word (or phrase) is the standard gematria value *plus* the number of letters in the word (or phrase). For example, the value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $300+30+6+40+4$ or 380, and the value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $10+5+6+5+4$ or 30.

Mispar Gadol Method

The *mispar gadol* method is the same as the standard method (above) but counts the final forms (sofit) of the Hebrew letters as a continuation of the numerical sequence for the alphabet. These sofit letters are assigned from 500 to 900, respectively:

100 = ק	10 = י	1 = א
200 = ר	20 = כ	2 = ב
300 = ש	30 = ל	3 = ג
400 = ת	40 = מ	4 = ד
500 = ך	50 = נ	5 = ה
600 = ם	60 = ס	6 = ו
700 = ם	70 = ע	7 = ז
800 = ף	80 = פ	8 = ח
900 = ץ	90 = צ	9 = ט

Example:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $300+30+6+600 = 936$.

The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $10+5+6+5 = 26$.

Mispar Katan Method

The *mispar katan* method calculates the value of each letter as its standard value but simply truncates all of the trailing zeros. Thus the Gematria of Chet is 8, Tet is 9, but Yod is 1 (not 10), Kaf is 2 (not 20), etc., Peh is 8, Tsade is 9, Qof is 1, Resh is 2, and so on:

1 = ק	1 = י	1 = א
2 = ר	2 = ט	2 = ב
3 = ש	3 = טז	3 = ג
4 = ת	4 = מז	4 = ד
5 = ך	5 = נו	5 = ה
6 = ם	6 = סס	6 = ו
7 = ץ	7 = עע	7 = ז
8 = ף	8 = פפ	8 = ח
9 = ץ	9 = צצ	9 = ט

$$3 = 30 = 5$$

Examples:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $3+3+6+6 = 18$.

The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $1+5+6+5 = 17$.

Ordinal Value Method

Using this method, each of the 27 Hebrew letters is assigned an ordinal value from one to twenty-two. For example, Aleph (the first letter) equals 1, Bet (the second letter) equals 2, and so on up to the final Tsade (the last letter), which equals 27:

19 = ק	10 = י	1 = א
20 = ר	11 = ט	2 = ב
21 = ש	12 = טז	3 = ג
22 = ת	13 = מז	4 = ד
23 = ך	14 = נו	5 = ה
24 = ם	15 = סס	6 = ו
25 = ץ	16 = עע	7 = ז
26 = ף	17 = פפ	8 = ח
27 = ץ	18 = צצ	9 = ט

Examples:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $21+12+6+24 = 63$.

The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $10+5+6+5 = 26$.

At Bash Method

Using *at Bash*, each letter (of a word or phrase) is exchanged with its "opposite" letter and then the result is calculated. "Opposite" letters are determined by substituting the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (Aleph) with the last letter (Tav), the second letter (Bet) with the next to last (Shin), and so on. The table below shows the values of individual letters:

4 = ק	40 = י	400 = א
3 = ר	30 = ט	300 = ט
2 = ש	20 = ש	200 = ג
1 = ת	10 = מ	100 = ד
	9 = ו	90 = ה
	8 = ס	80 = ו
	7 = ע	70 = ז
	6 = פ	60 = ח
	5 = צ	50 = ט

Examples:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $2+20+80+10 = 112$.

The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $40+90+80+90 = 300$.

Mispar HaKadmi Method

With the *mispar hakadmi* method, each letter is the sum of the all the standard gematria letter values preceding it. Therefore, the value of Aleph is 1, the value of Bet is $1+2=3$, the value of Gimmel is $1+2+3=6$, and so on.

The table below shows the values of individual letters:

595 = ק	55 = י	1 = א
795 = ר	75 = ט	3 = ט
1095 = ש	105 = ל	6 = ג
1495 = ת	145 = מ	10 = ד
	195 = ו	15 = ה
	255 = ס	21 = ו
	325 = ע	28 = ז
	405 = פ	36 = ח
	495 = צ	45 = ט

Examples:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $1095+105+21+145 = 1366$.

The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $55+15+21+15 = 106$.

Mispar HaPerati Method

With *mispar haperati*, the value of each letter is *the square* of its standard gematria value. Therefore, the value of Aleph is $1^2=1$, the value of Bet is $2^2=4$, the value of gimmel is $3^2=9$, and so on. The table below shows the values of individual letters:

10000 = ק	100 = י	1 = א
40000 = ר	400 = ט	4 = ט
90000 = ש	900 = טע	9 = ג
160000 = ת	1600 = נ	16 = ד
	2500 = נ	25 = ה
	3600 = ס	36 = ו
	4900 = צ	49 = ז
	6400 = פ	64 = ח
	8100 = צ	81 = ט

Examples:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $90000+900+36+1600 = 92536$.
The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $100+25+36+25 = 186$.

Note: the *Mispar HaKellali* method takes the standard gematria value of a word or phrase and squares its value. For example, the value for the word of Shalom (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $300+30+6+40$ or 376 . Squaring that value yields $141,376$.

Mispar Shemi Method

Millui or full-letter filling - The value of each letter is equal to the value of its name (the spelling of the name of the number comes from the Talmud). Therefore, the value of the letter Aleph is $(1+30+80) = 111$, Bet is $(2+10+400) = 412$, etc.

186 = קוף	20 = יוד	111 = אלף
510 = ריש	100 = כף	412 = בית
360 = שיץ	74 = למד	73 = גמל
416 = תיו	80 = מם	434 = דלת
	106 = נון	6 = הא
	120 = סמך	22 = ויו
	130 = עיץ	77 = זיין
	81 = פא	418 = חית
	104 = צדי	419 = טית

Examples:

The value of the word *shalom* (Shin, Lamed, Vav, Mem) is $360+74+22+80 = 536$.
The value of the word *chen* (Chet, Nun) is $418+106 = 524$.
The value of the Name YHVH (Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey) is $20+6+22+6 = 54$.

Unit Eight Summary -

The Least you should know...

After studying [Unit Eight](#), you should have mastered the following material:

1. General Properties of Hebrew Numbers

In [Unit 8.1](#) you learned that a number is a sort of adjective that defines the quality of quantity. In Hebrew, there are mainly two kinds of numbers:

- a. **Cardinal Numbers** tell how many things there are (in a set), for example, one, two, three, and so on.
- b. **Ordinal Numbers** tell the order or priority of elements in a series, for example, first, second, third, and so on.

In Hebrew, both types of numbers have their own gender, masculine and feminine. This means that you will need to be familiar with two sets of numbers, one set that modifies masculine nouns and the other that modifies feminine nouns. Like other adjectives, then, the gender of the number must agree with the noun it modifies.

Note: A **numeral** is a symbolic representation of a number. Biblical Hebrew does not use any Arabic numerals in the modern sense but instead uses the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to express quantities. Often distinct words are used to describe larger numbers, such as *ma'ah* for 100 and *elef* for 1,000 (in modern *Ivrit*, however, Arabic numerals are used in everyday writing).

2. **Letters as Numbers**

In **Unit 8.2** you learned that in some cases, especially in dates and in Bible references, Hebrew letters can function as numbers. For example, Aleph can stand for the number 1, Bet for 2, and so on.

You also learned how to use the Geresh/Gerashayim to read Hebrew dates and understand various Scripture references.

3. **Hebrew Cardinal Numbers**

In **Unit 8.3** you learned that a cardinal number (*mispar*) tells how many things there are (in a set), for example, one, two, three, and so on. These are the numbers (*misparim*) we use for regular counting. After studying this unit, you should be able to identify any Hebrew number from zero to one million.

4. **Hebrew Ordinal Numbers**

In **Unit 8.4** you learned that Ordinal numbers tell the "order" or priority of elements in a series, for example, first, second, third, and so on. Ordinal numbers have two properties that you will need to know:

1. Ordinals take both masculine and feminine forms. Masculine numbers modify masculine nouns, and feminine numbers modify feminine nouns.
2. Ordinal numbers function as **attributive adjectives**, which means they follow the noun they modify and agree in gender, number, and definiteness.

5. **Hebrew Gematria**

In **Unit 8.5** you learned that Gematria is a type of numerological study that may be defined as one of more systems for calculating the numerical equivalence of letters, words, and phrases in a particular Hebrew text. These systems are used for the purpose of gaining insight into interrelating concepts and for finding correspondences between words and concepts.

You learned that there are several methods to calculate the numerical value for individual words and phrases, and when converted to a number, words/phrases can then be compared to other words/phrases and similarities drawn.

אַנְכִי אֶלֶף וְתוֹ רֵאשׁ וְסוּף

A verb is a word used to describe an action or state of being. Hebrew is essentially a verbal language, since most of its words derive from verbal roots.



Po'el

Objective:

- After studying this unit, you should be able to understand the basic grammar of the Qal ("light") verbal stem.

UNIT NINE CONTENTS

- 9.1 Introduction to Verbs
- 9.2 Qal Perfect - Strong Verbs
- 9.3 Qal Perfect - Stative Verbs
- 9.4 Qal Perfect - Weak Verbs
- 9.5 Qal Perfect - Geminate Verbs
- 9.6 Qal Perfect - Biconsonantals
- 9.7 Qal Perfect - Summary
- 9.8 Qal Perfect Paradigms

9.1 Overview of the Hebrew Verbal System

Hebrew Verbs - An Overview of the Hebrew Verbal System

Biblical Hebrew is primarily a verbal language. In fact, an average verse of Scripture from the Tanakh contains no less than three verbs!

Verbs (as well as nouns) are derived from "roots." Roots are (usually) tri-consonantal groups that comprise the "essence" of the word's meaning. Note that roots themselves are abstractions that do not exist in Hebrew; instead, from a given cluster of consonants, any number of words can be derived that share the same root. For example:



Notice that the three words shown (*melekh*, *malkhut*, and *malakh*, respectively) all derive from the same **three-letter cluster of consonants** (Mem, Lamed, Kaf). This tri-consonantal cluster is called the *shoresh*, and identifying the shoresh of a given word is one of the fundamental tasks you will face as you begin to read Hebrew with comprehension.

Identifying Root Letters

When working with verbs, we will often need to refer to the letters that make up the root. The Hebrew name for verb is *po'al*, derived from a root meaning "do, perform":

פִּעַל = do, perform

Each of the three letters of any verb root is sometimes assigned one of the three letters, (Pey, Ayin, or Lamed) depending on whether it is the first of the letters (the Pey of the root), the second (the Ayin of the root), or the third (the Lamed of the root).

For example, consider the verb root :

מ.ל.ך

the פ of the root is מ

the ע of the root is ל

the ל of the root is ך

Note that other grammars refer to these as "positions" and refer to them simply as position I, position II, and position III, respectively.

Properties of Verbs

Like other parts of speech you have learned, Hebrew verbs have a number of grammatical properties with which you must be familiar:

1. **Person** - Expresses the relationship between the verb and the speaker. A verb can be in the first person ("I," "we"), second person ("you," "y'all"), or third person ("he/she/it," "they").
2. **Number** - Number is the property that indicates whether one or more than one subject is referenced when using the verb. Verbs can be singular (referring to one subject - I hit) or plural (referring to more than one object - We hit).
3. **Gender** - Gender is a property that indicates the sex of the referent (masculine, feminine, or common). Hebrew verbs agree with their subjects - not only in person and number - but also in gender. Thus the Hebrew verb in the two sentences "The boy ruled" and "The girl ruled" would look different because the genders of the two subjects are different.
4. **Voice** - The voice of a verb denotes the relationship of the action of the verb to the subject of the verb. Hebrew (like Greek) includes three voices:
 1. Active voice (the subject is agent of verb (I hit))
 2. Passive voice (the subject is acted upon by verb (I was hit))
 3. Middle voice - reflexive action (the subject both acts and is acted upon by the verb (I hit myself))

5. **Aspect (Mode)** - The *kind* of action expressed by a verb is called is aspect (or mode). Hebrew uses the following three aspects:
1. Simple action (e.g., to hit)
 2. Intensive action (e.g., to pound to pieces)
 3. Causal action (e.g., to cause to be hit). Hebrew verbs, unlike English verbs, are inflected for "causation." You can look at a Hebrew verb form and tell if the subject of a sentence is "causing" something to happen to something else.
6. **Tense** - Whereas English verbs indicate tense by means of spelling changes or through the use of "helping verbs" (e.g., I talk. I talked. I *shall* talk), Hebrew verbs are *not* marked for tense. You cannot tell - just by looking at a verb form without context - *when* the action occurs.
7. **Strong/Weak Verbs** - Verbs can be either strong or weak. A strong verb has all regular consonants in its stem; a weak verb has one (or more) guttural letters as part of its stem (for more, see below).

These properties of verbs are all expressed by means of *patterns of inflection*. That is, the person, number, gender, etc. of the verb is indicated by changes in the spelling of the verb.

Perfect / Imperfect

Hebrew has two main verb forms: the Perfect and the Imperfect:

- The Perfect is a suffixed form
- The Imperfect is a prefixed form



The perfect describes completed action ("I ran") whereas the imperfect expresses incompleting or progressive action ("I was running"). This is called "aspect." Hebrew often uses a form of the verb "to be" (or an adverb) to indicate a sense of time.

About Hebrew Verb Stems

A verb stem is an offshoot of the root that is used to indicate the properties of voice and aspect. In Hebrew there are seven major stems, each with its own characteristic spelling of the root that you will learn:

1. Qal Stem - Simple action, active voice
2. Nifal Stem - Simple action, passive voice
3. Piel Stem - Intensive action, active voice
4. Pual Stem - Intensive action, passive voice
5. Hifil Stem - Causal action, active voice
6. Hofal Stem - Causal action, passive voice
7. Hitpael Stem - Intensive action, reflexive voice

Note: The Qal stem is basic, the other stems are derived from it. Nearly 70% of verbs are Qal.



The shoresh is the root form of all of the verb stems

These verb stems can be summarized using the root Qof-Tet-Lamed as follows:

III II I
 ק.ט.ל Stem vowel = pos. II

Stem	Type Action	Form	Identifiers	
Qal	Simple active	קָטַל	unaugmented	He killed
Niphal	Simple passive	נִקְטַל	נִ prefix; patach stem vowel	He was killed
Piel	Intensive active	קָטַל	Chireq-Tsere vowel pattern	He destroyed
Pual	Intensive passive	קִטַּל	Qibbutz-Patach vowel pattern	He was destroyed
Hiphil	Causative active	הִקְטִיל	הִ prefix; Chiriq-Yod stem vowel	He caused death
Hophal	Causative passive	הִקְטַל	הִ prefix; patach stem vowel	He was caused to kill
Hitpael	Intensive reflexive	הִתְקַטַּל	הִתְ prefix; Tsere stem vowel	He killed himself

Note: This table is presented only to show you how the three-letter root changes to indicate the aspect of the verb (i.e., stems). More detailed information will be provided later on each of these stems, IY”H.

Strong and Weak Verb Stems: *The Gizrah*

Verbal roots are divided into groups (known as a גִּזְרָה (*gizrah*) based on whether it is regular or irregular with respect to one or more of its letters. Completely regular verbs have all non-guttural consonants and are called “Strong Verbs.” Irregular verbs include one (or more) guttural letters and are called “Weak Verbs.”

Weak verbs are classified according to which of the three letters is “weak”:

III II I
 X X X

קטל - Strong verb

עמוד - Type I Guttural

נאל - Type II Guttural

ברח - Type III Guttural

עלה - Doubly Weak

Note: In addition to these common verb types, verbs can also be made weak when either a Yod or a Nun appears in position I.

This information is provided here to make you aware that not all verbs will be conjugated (inflected) in the same way if there are guttural letters in the stem. We will provide specific examples of weak verbs and their changes as we encounter them in the lessons ahead.

III II I
 ל ע פ

Note: Some grammars refer to positions I, II, and III with the letters Pey, Ayin, and Lamed, respectively (*Pa'al* means to “fall”). For example, a Pey Guttural would mean I-Guttural, an Ayin Guttural would mean a II-Guttural, and so on.

About Hebrew Conjugations

To make matters more complicated, each of these 7 stems can be *conjugated* in 8 different ways!

1. **Perfect** - The perfect conjugation is used to denote simple, completed action. Though it is an oversimplification, for now we will translate the perfect conjugation using the simple past tense.
2. **Imperfect** - The imperfect conjugation is used to denote incomplete action. Though it is an oversimplification, for now we will translate the imperfect conjugation using the future tense.
3. **Cohortative** - Command (1st person) "Let us praise the LORD!"
4. **Imperative** - Command (2nd person) "You praise the LORD!"
5. **Jussive** - Command (3rd person) "He shall praise the LORD!"
6. **Infinitive Construct** - Verbal noun. "To praise is good."
7. **Infinitive Absolute** - A grammatical intensifier.
8. **Participle** - Verbal adjective or substantive. "The praising man..."

Starting at the Simplest

We will begin our study of the Hebrew verbal system with the Qal (stem) perfect (conjugation), and progress our way through the other stems and conjugations.

9.2 The Qal Perfect Conjugation – Strong Verbs

Section Vocabulary

he guarded, kept	שָׁמַר	he killed.....	קָטַל
he wrote.....	כָּתַב	he studied	לָמַד
he finished.....	גָּמַר	he dwelt	יָשַׁב
he shut, closed	סָגַר	he sent.....	שָׁלַח
he trusted.....	בָּתַח	he remembered	זָכַר
he ruled	מָשַׁל	not (adv)	לֹא

The Qal Perfect Conjugation – Strong Verbs

The Qal Stem

The simplest form of the verbal root is known as Qal (קָל), meaning “light” or “simple.” Qal verbs represent the most basic of the verbal stems and are the easiest to learn. In most Hebrew dictionaries, verbs are listed in the 3rd person masculine singular of the Qal (when it exists).

Properties of the Qal stem include:

1. **Active Voice** - the subject is agent of verb (e.g., “I guarded”)
2. **Simple Aspect** - the action of the verb is simple (i.e., not reflexive or causal)

The “Perfect” Conjugation: Suffixes

A *conjugation* is a set of inflected forms (of a given verb stem) based on person, gender, and number. The *perfect* conjugation is used to denote completed (i.e., “perfected”) action. For now, think of the perfect conjugation as the *past tense in the active voice*.

The perfect conjugation *for Qal verbs*, then, is a set of inflected forms (of the Qal stem) that represents completed action performed by the subject of the verb.

The inflections of the Qal stem are made by adding **suffixes** to the verb. These suffixes generally follow the sounds of the personal pronouns you have already studied.

Strong Verbs

As mentioned in the Introduction to this unit, Hebrew verb roots are divided according to whether the verb is regular or irregular with respect to one (or more) of its letters. Regular verbs are called שלמים (*shleimim*) and have no weak letters (i.e., gutturals) in the shoresh. They are therefore called Strong verbs. In this section we will study the Qal Perfect Conjugation for regular verbs.

Qal Perfect Conjugation - Strong Verbs

The root ש.מ.ר is strong since none of its letters is a guttural. In a Hebrew lexicon, ש.מ.ר would be listed as *shamar*, that is, with the vowels for the 3rd person masculine singular (3ms) of the Qal Perfect added. This is known as the "lexical form" of the verb:

ש.מ.ר *Root*

X X X *3ms vowel pattern*

שָׁמַר *Lexical Form*

Note: Even though the "root" is referred to as ש.מ.ר (with dots separating the letters), I will simply refer to it as *shamar*, which is also its lexical form.

The following conjugation shows the suffixes added to *shamar* to form the Qal perfect:

<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>		
שָׁמַרְתִּי	שָׁמַרְתִּי	1 אָנִי	<i>I guarded</i>
שָׁמַרְתְּ	שָׁמַרְתָּ	2 אַתָּה / אַתְּ	<i>You guarded</i>
שָׁמַרְהָ	שָׁמַרְהוּ	3 הִיא / הוּא	<i>He/She/It guarded</i>
שָׁמַרְנוּ	שָׁמַרְנוּ	1 אֲנַחְנוּ	<i>We guarded</i>
שָׁמַרְתֶּן	שָׁמַרְתֶּם	2 אַתֶּן / אַתֶּם	<i>You guarded</i>
שָׁמַרְוּ	שָׁמַרְוּ	3 הֵן / הֵם	<i>They guarded</i>

Notes:

1. The 3ms form has no suffix at all and entirely resembles the root ש.מ.ר. This is the lexical form of the root. Note the vowel pattern: Qamets-Patach.
2. The form of the verb itself contains pronominal information, and I included the personal pronouns for reference purposes only. In other words, *shamarti* means "I guarded" *without* the use of the word *ani* (in fact, *ani shamarti* could mean "I myself guarded"). Learning the endings along with the pronouns is somewhat easier since the sounds of the pronouns resembles the suffixes.
3. You must memorize this as a paradigm for the Qal perfect. The endings (**bolded**) are the same for all perfect verbs.
4. The first person forms for both genders (1cs) and plural (1cp) are the same. That is *shamarti* can be singular for either gender, as can *shamanu*.
5. The third person plural form is also common (3cp) for both genders (*shamru*).
6. Note the exact spelling and accent marks for each form.
7. The **endings** (suffixes) for the Qal perfect are as follows:

<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	
שָׁמַרְתִּי	שָׁמַרְתָּ	1
שָׁמַרְתְּ	שָׁמַרְתָּ	2
שָׁמַרְתֶּם	-	3

שָׁמַרְתִּי	שָׁמַרְתָּ	1
שָׁמַרְתְּ	שָׁמַרְתֶּם	2
שָׁמַרְתֶּם	שָׁמַרְתֶּם	3

Creating Your Own Conjugations

To form the perfect conjugation from strong verbs, you can follow these rules:

1. Write out the three radicals (XXX) for each place in the conjugation.
2. Add the endings to each.
3. Add the vowels / accents:
 - o Consonantal endings cause a silent sheva under the preceding letter
 - o Heavy consonantal endings (3mp, 2fp) cause propretonic reduction
 - o Add the other vowels based on the 3ms theme pattern
 - o Accent the 2nd consonant for 1cs, 2ms, and 1cp.

Section Exercises

- Memorize the vocabulary at the top of the page. Note that the word לֹא precedes the verb to negate its meaning (e.g., *lo shamar* means "he did not guard").
- Memorize the Qal perfect paradigm for *shamar*.
- Conjugate and recite each of the verbs listed in the vocabulary at the top of the page (use the same format I used with *shamar* in the Qal perfect paradigm).
- Create a flash card with the Qal Perfect paradigm. Note the rules for adding the endings, vowels, and accents on the card.
- Lookup some additional strong verbs in your Hebrew dictionary and make flash cards for them. Write their standard definition and list their Qal perfect forms.
- Translate (Psalm 78:10a):

לֹא שָׁמְרוּ בְּרִית אֱלֹהִים

Additional Notes:

- Be aware that the meaning of the perfect in Hebrew is more complex than the simple past tense in English. For instance, depending on context, *shamar* might mean "he guarded," "he did guard," "he has guarded," "he had guarded," etc. Moreover, a perfect with a prefixed Vav is normally translated in the *future* tense (more about this later).
- Word order in Hebrew is normally: verb - subject - object.

