THE
MASTER'S SEMINARY

A GRAMMAR
FOR BIBLICAL HEBREW

עִבְרִית

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Revised Edition

PREFACE

Originally, the authors had composed their own individual grammars during the course of teaching Biblical Hebrew on the seminary level for many years. It was a pleasant surprise to find that each had adhered to the same basic philosophy of teaching Hebrew grammar. There were some areas that had been developed differently, but the general design was harmonious. *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* represents a combining of those two grammars. It is our hope and prayer that the use of this grammar will prove to be a joyful exercise resulting in an understanding of the Hebrew Old Testament. For this revised edition the authors present a totally new and updated vocabulary for the lessons and for the appendixes.

Special thanks is offered to Dr. Michael Grisanti, who has read and commented on this grammar as it has been (and is being) developed, and to Scott Bashoor, Brian Rickett, and Bryan Murphy who have taught the course with this textbook for a number of years. Thanks are also due to all those students who have patiently endured (and who are enduring) the process of developing and testing this volume in the classroom. Doubtless, our students have experienced the scriptural warning, ". . . beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless" (Eccl 12:12a, NASB). Be assured that the authors have experienced the fact that "excessive devotion *to books* is wearying to the body" (12:12b). As exhausting as the process might prove to be, however, we are not to be "weary of doing good" (2 Thess 3:13).

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Table of Abbreviations & Symbols

§	section (usually a reference to a section in a reference grammar)
§§	sections
1	1st person (with reference to verbs)
2	2nd person (with reference to verbs)
3	3rd person (with reference to verbs)
abs	absolute; *cf.* inf
acc	accusative case
act	active
adj	adjective, adjectival
adv	adverb, adverbial
art	article
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, corrected ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952)
BHS	K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1967–77).
c	common
Chisholm	Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998)
coh	cohortative
con	construct (used for both the construct state of the noun and, with inf, for the infinitive construct); *cf.* gen, inf
conj	conjunction
cons	consecutive (*waw*-cons = *waw*-consecutive)
corr	correlative (*waw*-corr = *waw*-correlative)
def	definite
disj	disjunctive
ed	edition, editor
f	feminine (sometimes: fem.)
fact	factitive
fient	fientive
fn	footnote
gen	genitive case; *also*, con
GKC	E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed., trans. and ed. by A. E. Cowley (1910; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966)
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 5 vols., rev. by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, trans. and ed. by M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994–2000)
HBI	Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert* (Quakertown, PA: Stylus Publishing, 1996)
Holladay	William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971)

IBHS   Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990)

impf   imperfect (with reference to the *yiqtol* verb form)

impv   imperative

indef   indefinite

inf   infinitive: inf abs = infinitive absolute, inf con = infinitive construct

intran   intransitive

J-M   Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2 vols., trans. and rev. by T. Muraoka, Subsidia Biblica 14/I–II (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996)

juss   jussive

LXX   Septuagint

m   masculine (sometimes: masc.)

mid   middle

ms   manuscript; mss = manuscripts

MT   Masoretic Text

NIDOTTE   Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1997)

nom   nominative case

NT   New Testament

OT   Old Testament

p   plural (sometimes: pl.)

part   particle

pass   passive

perf   perfect (with reference to the *qatal* verb form)

ppron   personal pronoun

pret   preterite

pron   pronoun, pronominal

ptcp   participle, participial

Q   Qumran

recp   reciprocal

refl   reflexive

rel   relative (rel pron = relative pronoun)

s   singular (sometimes: sg.)

SP   Samaritan Pentateuch

stat   stative

Syr   Syriac Peshitta

TDOT   G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1974–2008)

Tg   Targum(s)

TLOT   Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3 vols., trans. by Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997)

trans   transitive

TWOT   R. Laird Harris, Gleason L.. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980)

v   verse; vv = verses
V   Latin Vulgate
Williams   Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of
            Toronto Press, 1976, reprinted 1992)

Introduction

In the Word – Exegetical Insights

The driving force of this *Grammar* is to introduce the student to the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Scriptures as soon as possible. Its goal is the exegesis of the Hebrew text preparatory to expounding the OT Scriptures. To that end, commencing with **Chapter 6** each chapter of this textbook starts with a section entitled **In the Word – Exegetical Insights**. The verses may be used devotionally by the instructor or by the student studying on his own. Additional material about each verse is located in an appendix in the back of the textbook. It is also suggested that the student spend time repeatedly reading aloud the Hebrew of these verses for the purpose of gaining fluency in pronunciation and classroom reading. The authors have employed some transliteration in the early chapters to help the student gain proficiency in proper pronunciation. From **Chapter 6** onward, however, the student should read only the Hebrew, not the transliteration of Hebrew.

The following symbols are employed in **In the Word – Exegetical Insights**:

> ➲ Paragraphs marked with this symbol guide the student to helpful sections within the *Grammar*.

> ✡ Grammatical and syntactical notes are indicated by this symbol.

Goals for the Study of Biblical Hebrew

- To gain a working knowledge of Biblical Hebrew grammar.
- To gain a working understanding of Biblical Hebrew grammatical thought processes. It is not possible for the modern teacher or student to completely understand how the original writers thought when they wrote, but it is desirable to get as close to that understanding as possible.
- To gain an increased interest in and appreciation for the OT and the languages in which it was written.
- To experience how Hebrew, with the preceding goals, can assist in spiritual maturation and ministry.
- To be able to read aloud the Hebrew of any passage of the Hebrew OT.
- To be able to translate simple sentences from the Hebrew OT.

Importance of the Study of Biblical Hebrew

The OT was written in two languages: Hebrew and Aramaic. Hebrew is the primary language in which the greater part of the OT was written. The portions which were written in Aramaic include a place name in Genesis 31:47, one verse in Jeremiah (10:11), and sections of Daniel (2:4–7:28) and Ezra (4:8–6:18; 7:12–26).

Hebrew is the language God employed to communicate His message to His people. For the student of Scripture, knowledge of Hebrew is an invaluable asset for properly understanding the OT.

In addition to a proper understanding of the OT, a knowledge of Hebrew aids in understanding the NT. Much of the NT is based upon the OT. OT quotations and allusions in the NT need to be understood in their original context before the interpreter can understand their use by the NT writers.

Knowledge of biblical Hebrew is a guard against theological error. The final authority for faith and practice is the written Word of God. However, the believer needs to interpret that Word in order to apply it. In that interpretative process the final court of appeal in disputes over interpretation resides in the original languages of the Scripture.

According to the Polish rabbi, Haim Nacham Bialik, "Reading the Bible in translation is like kissing your bride through a veil." The student of Scripture should attempt to draw as near to the original sources as possible, so as not to be dependent upon others for what the text says or means. In other words, "For the minister, a knowledge of Hebrew is necessary because it opens up the only truly reliable interpretive window upon the text of the Old Testament."[1]

The student should prayerfully consider the following words of the great reformer, Martin Luther:

> *Though the faith and the Gospel may be proclaimed by simple preachers without the languages, such preaching is flat and tame, men grow at last wearied and disgusted and it falls to the ground. But when the preacher is versed in the languages, his discourse has freshness and force, the whole of Scripture is treated, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and works.*
>
> *It is a sin and shame not to know our own book or to understand the speech and words of our God; it is a still greater sin and loss that we do not study languages, especially in these days when God is offering and giving us men and books and every facility and inducement to this study, and desires his Bible to be an open book.*[2]

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[1] Stephen J. Andrews, "Some Knowledge of Hebrew Possible to All: Old Testament Exposition and the *Hebraica Veritas*," *Faith & Mission* 13, no. 1 (1995): 98. The beginning student is strongly encouraged to locate the article by Andrews and to read it before completing the first month of study in Biblical Hebrew. Another article that will prove equally enlightening and rewarding is Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Future Role of the Bible in Seminary Education," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (Oct 1996): 245–58 (especially, 252–54).

[2] John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God's Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 99–100.

The Identity and History of the Hebrew Language

1A.   **A Semitic Language.** Hebrew is a member of the Semitic[3] family of approximately 70 languages.[4] The Semitic languages are found in a geographical zone including Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Arabian peninsula, and Ethiopia. Hebrew belongs to the Northwest branch of Semitic languages. Although there is some debate concerning the characteristics common to the members of the Semitic family of languages, most Semitics scholars generally identify the following with the Northwest Semitic branch:

- A 3–letter (triliteral) morphological root system dominates word formation.[5]
- An initial *waw* (= *w*) changes to *yod* (= *y*) as the first root letter, especially in the formation of verbs.
- An unvocalized *nun* (= *n*) is completely assimilated to the following consonant.
- There is evidence for three basic case endings:[6] a *u*-class vowel as the nominative ending, an *i*-class vowel as the genitive ending, and an *a*-class vowel for the accusative ending.
- The feminine ending *–at* on noun forms drops the *t* in the absolute state but maintains it in the construct state.

2A.   **The Branches of Semitic Languages.** The Northwest branch of the Semitic languages is but one of five main branches. Each of the following languages is the chief representative of its branch:

1B.   **Hebrew**
- Hebrew is closely related to Phoenician and Ugaritic.
- The people of Israel spoke Hebrew until the Babylonian Exile when it began to be replaced by Aramaic (cf. Nehemiah 8 and 13). By the end of the first century A.D., Aramaic rather than Hebrew was the commonly spoken language of Israel. Hebrew was originally written in the old Phoenician script. One result of the Babylonian Captivity and the transition to Aramaic was that

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[3] *Semitic* is derived from the name of *Shem*, the son of Noah, because of identifiable similarities between the languages spoken by certain genealogical branches of his descendants (cf. Gen 10:21–31).

[4] Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. by John Elwolde (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1996), 3.

[5] The morphological roots of Northwest Semitic are not exclusively triliteral. There are a number of 2-letter (biliteral) roots as well. Bergsträsser considered triliterality a "prevailing trait of Semitic" — Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, trans. by Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 6.

[6] Case endings indicate the grammatical function of nouns in a clause. In biblical Hebrew these three case endings are often merely the remnants of an earlier pattern that had already undergone change. Cf. Bergsträsser, *Introduction to the Semitic Languages*, 17, 60; and, Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, 23.

writers of Hebrew borrowed the Aramaic square script with which to write Hebrew. Speakers and writers of Hebrew still employ that same script today. It is common to refer to it as the Jewish script.

- In 1948 the newly established state of Israel revived Hebrew as its national language.
- The main phases of the Hebrew language are:
  a. Biblical, or classical, Hebrew (BH)
  b. Rabbinical, or Mishnaic, Hebrew (RH)
  c. Modern Hebrew (MH)

2B.   Akkadian
- Akkadian is the common name for the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian dialects. It was also the original name for this early Mesopotamian language.
- Akkadian was superseded by Aramaic ca. 10th century B.C.
- Akkad was the chief city of the early Semitic empire in Mesopotamia ca. 2300 B.C. (cf. Gen 10:10).

3B.   Aramaic
- Aramaic was the official language of the Near East from the 10th century B.C. onward.
- Aramaic totally replaced Hebrew in Palestine by A.D. 70, although the process began a millennium earlier.
- Rabbis wrote much of the Talmud (rabbinical writings) in Aramaic. Various Jewish scholars completed Aramaic translations of the Bible (called Targums) by the 6th century A.D.
- Arabic generally superseded Aramaic ca. 7th century A.D.

4B.   Ethiopic
- Ethiopic appears to have existed from ca. 4th century A.D.
- Amharic, a modified Ethiopic and the main language of Ethiopia today, became the language of the court ca. 13th century A.D., but Ethiopic was still the theological language for many centuries.

5B.   Arabic
- Arabic is the language of all of Arabia and evidence indicates its existence since ca. 8th century B.C.
- Arabic is the official language of Islam and the Qur'an.

3A. Chart of Semitic Languages[7]

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                                  |
            Western           - Eblaite? -[8]        Eastern
                                                    (Akkadian)
                                                         |
                                               Assyrian     Babylonian

      Northwest Group                              Southwest Group

Ugaritic   Canaanite/   Hebrew   Aramaic      Ethiopic      Arabic
           Phoenician

           Western Aramaic                    Eastern Aramaic
           (Judeo-Palestinian,                (Judeo-Babylonian,
        Biblical, Samaritan dialects)          Syriac dialects)
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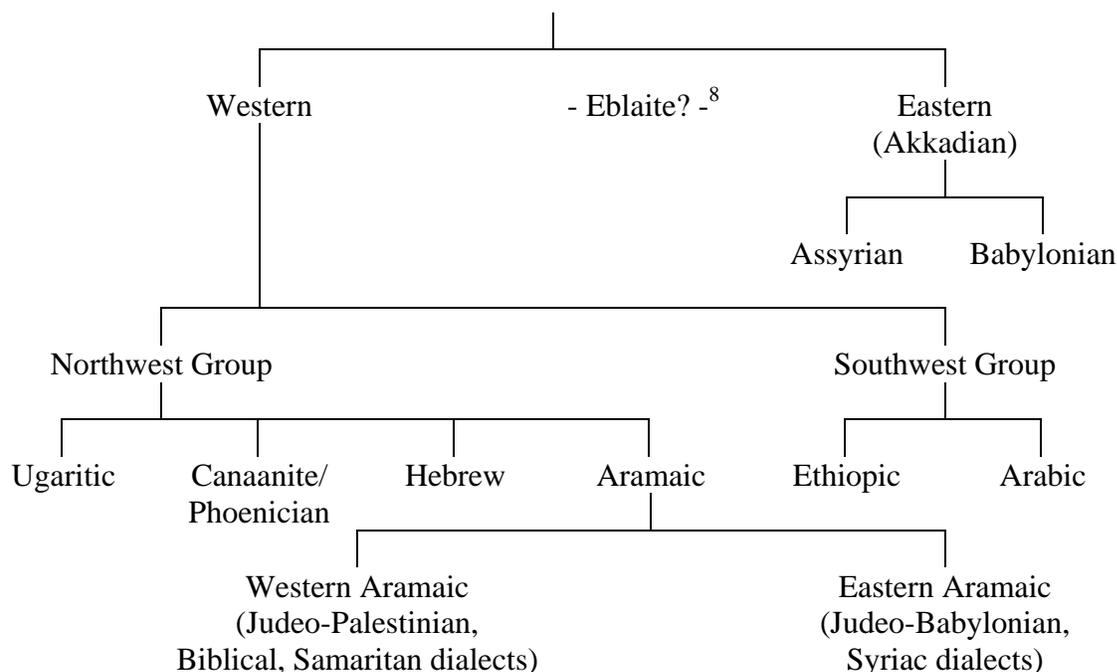
4A. Additional Notes

- Of the five ancient languages listed above, only Hebrew and Arabic are spoken today.
- Yiddish:
  a. The name of this dialect is derived from the German *Juddisch* or *Juddisch-Deutsch*.
  b. German Yiddish consists of German words written in Hebrew characters (with some admixture of Hebrew words). The following is the German Yiddish translation of Psalm 23:1—

  יְהוָֹה אִיז מֵיין פּאַסטוּךְ (הִירטֶע)
  מִיר וֶועט נָאר נִיט פֶּעהלֶען

  Jehowah ist mein Pastuch (Hirte),
  Mir weit gar nicht fällen.

  c. Ashkenazi Jews were the primary developers and speakers of Yiddish (ca. 10th century A.D.). They immigrated from Palestine and Asia Minor to northern, central, and eastern Europe.

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[7] Adapted from Mansoor, *Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1978), 7.

[8] The discovery of an ancient administrative library of clay tablets on the site of Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla) by Paolo Matthiae in 1974 brought a new Semitic language to light. It appears that the language is best classified as a border language somewhere between the Western and Eastern branches of the Semitic family of languages. Cf. I. M. Diakonoff, "The Importance of Ebla for History and Linguistics," in vol. 2 of *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language*, ed. Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 3–29; and, Cyrus H. Gordon, "Eblaite and Northwest Semitic," ibid., 127–39.

- Sephardic Jews immigrated from Palestine to Italy to Spain and Portugal and from there to much of western Europe. Later they immigrated to North Africa. Sephardic pronunciation made no distinction between the two *a*-class vowels (*qāmeṣ* and *paṯaḥ*).

<p align="center">Classification of Hebrew Pronunciation</p>

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                    Classification of Hebrew Pronunciation
                    ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
               Samaritan                              Non-Samaritan
                              ┌──────────────────┬──────────────────┐
                          Tiberian           Palestinian         Babylonian
                              └────────┬─────────┘                    │
                              Sephardic      Ashkenazi            Yemenite
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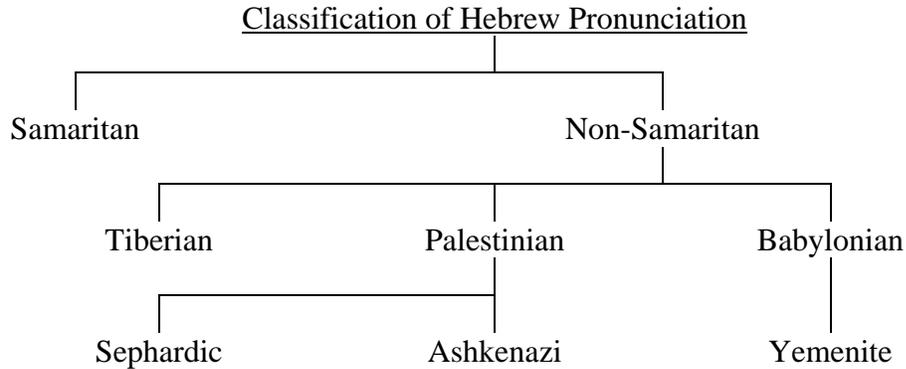
5A.   Rabbinic Literature
- Midrash
  a. Midrash means "investigation" or "inquiry" (from דָּרַשׁ, "he sought"). This is a branch of rabbinical learning comprised of oral, expositional interpretations of the OT. The oral tradition of the Midrash dates from the time of Ezra. Most of the homilies in Midrashic literature were composed between the 7th and 10th centuries A.D.
  b. There are seven categories of Midrash:
     1. on Jewish law—e.g., *Sifra* on Leviticus
     2. dealing with *Haggadah* based on the Pentateuch—e.g., *Midrash Rabba*
     3. on prophetic literature and the Holy Writings
     4. on sundry matters (small Midrashim)
     5. on Messiah and eschatology from the viewpoint of mysticism (e.g., *Zohar*)
     6. compiled from fragments of pre-existing Midrashim—the *Yalkutim* ("pockets" or "gleanings")
     7. other minor Midrashim
- Talmud[9]
  a. The meaning of Talmud is "study" (from לָמַד, "he learned"). It is the source from which the Jewish religion derives rabbinic law.
  b. Two parts comprise the Talmud: Mishna and Gemara.
     ➤ Mishna means "learning" or "repetition" (from שָׁנָה, "he repeated, did again"). It consists of oral law, a collection of religious and legal decisions developed out of the OT. Rabbis produced it around the 2nd century A.D. The Mishna

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[9] The Babylonian Talmud is four times longer than the Palestinian Talmud. Most of the latter has been lost.

is deeply spiritual, designed to stress divine immanence, simple piety, and saintly life. It is divided into 6 orders which are divided into 63 tractates:[10]

1. *Zeraim* (Seeds)
2. *Moed* (Set Feasts)
3. *Nashim* (Women)
4. *Nezikin* (Damages)
5. *Qodashin* (Holy Things)
6. *Tahoroth* (Cleannesses)

➢ Gemara means "accomplishment" (from גְּמַר, "he accomplished, completed"). It is the Aramaic commentary on the Mishna, containing the comments of the rabbis from 200–500 A.D. The Mishna was developed in two centers: Babylon and Tiberias.

1. *Halakah*, comprising about two-thirds of the Gemara, consists of legal enactments and precepts in a word for word record of the discussions of 1,800 men.
2. *Haggadah*, comprising about one-third of the Gemara, consists of non-legal, ethical interpretations illustrating the Talmud. These are talks by scholars on a variety of topics interspersed with parables and legends.

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[10] Only 36 of the 63 tractates have a Gemara in the Babylonian Talmud.

א

CHAPTER 1

The Alphabet – Consonants

1A. Introduction to the Alphabet

- There are 22 letters (consonants) in the Hebrew alphabet.
- The order of the Hebrew alphabet is clearly indicated by the acrostic psalms (cf. Psalms 9, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, and 119). See, also, Lamentations 1–4 and Proverbs 31:10–31.
- The letters, when written, always stand alone.
- There are no capital letters as in English or Greek.

2A. Hebrew Letters

	TYPED FORM	FINAL FORM[11]	NAME	PRONUNCIATION	NUMERI- CAL VALUE[12]
1.	א		ʾālep̄ - אָלֶף	ʾ / silent[13]	1
2.	בּ[14] ב		bêṯ - בֵּית	b as in *boy* b̲ or *v* as in *never*	2
3.	גּ ג		*gimel* – גִּמֶל	*g* as in *girl*	3
4.	דּ ד		*dāleṯ* - דָּלֶת	*d* as in *dawn*	4
5.	ה		*hēʾ* - *ahe*	*h as in hay15*	5

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[11] There are five letters which assume a final form when they occur at the end of a word. The names of the final forms are: *kaph sophit*, *mem sophit*, *nun sophit*, *pe sophit*, and *tsade sophit*. *Sophit* is the simplified transliteration of the Hebrew term סוֹפִית (*sôp̄îṯ* meaning *final*.

[12] Each Hebrew letter has numerical value. The earliest traces of this practice are not biblical but are found on Maccabean coins dating from the second century B.C.

[13] ʾālep̄ is transliterated with a light breathing mark (like an apostrophe) because it has no consonantal value of its own. Similar to the silent *h* in English, it conforms to the sound of the vowel which accompanies it.

[14] Six of the Hebrew letters take a dot (*dagesh lene*) in them at certain times. Its presence slightly alters the pronunciation, especially in ב, פ, and ת. See **Chapter 4** for further discussion.

[15] At the end of a word, ה is silent (cf. *oh* or *Leah*).

6.	ו		*wāw / vāv* [16] - וָו	*w* as in *wow*	**6**
7.	ז		*zayin* - זַיִן	*z* as in *zero*	**7**
8.	ח		*ḥêṯ* [17] - חֵית	*ḥ* or *ch* as in *Bach*	**8**
9.	ט		*ṭêṯ* - טֵית	*ṭ* or *t* as in *two*	**9**
10.	י		*yôḏ* - יוֹד	*y* as in *yes* [18]	**10**
11.	כ ך [19]		*kāp̄* - כַּף	*k* as in *keep* *ḵ* or *ch* as in *Bach*	**20**
12.	ל		*lāmeḏ* - לָמֶד	*l* as in *like*	**30**
13.	מ	ם	*mēm* – מֵם	*m* as in *meet*	**40**
14.	נ	ן	*nûn* – נוּן	*n* as in *note*	**50**
15.	ס		*sāmeḵ* - סָמֶך	*s* as in *sun*	**60**
16.	ע		*ʿayin* – עַיִן	ʿ / silent [20]	**70**
17.	פ פ	ף	*pē*ʾ - פֵּא (or פֵּה)	*p* as in *play* *p̄* [21] or *f* as in *foot*	**80**
18.	צ	ץ	*ṣāḏê* – צָדֵי	*ṣ* or *ts* as in *sits*	**90**
19.	ק		*qôp̄* - קוֹף	*q* as in *quiche* (*keesh*)	**100**
20.	ר		*rêš* – רֵישׁ	*r* as in *run*	**200**
21.	שׂ שׁ [22]		*śîn* - שִׂין *šîn* – שִׁין	*ś* or *s* as in *sun* *š* or *sh* as in *shine*	**300**

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[16] In classical Hebrew the pronunciation appears to have been like a *w*. In modern Hebrew, however, the Germanic-Ashkenazi pronunciation became a *v* just like the *w* in German (cf. Volkswagen = *fôks-vä-gen*).

[17] This *h* has a dot under it (*ḥ*) to represent the sound of ח and to distinguish it from ה. It is similar in sound to the German or Scottish *ch* (cf. *Kirche* and *loch*).

[18] Sometimes י is silent (cf. *y* in *day* or *keynote*).

[19] Five of the Hebrew letters take a final form when ending a word. All but ם extend the form below the line of writing by vertically straightening the bottom of the letter. Note that ק (not a final form) also possesses a vertical extension below the line of writing.

[20] *ʿayin* (ע) is transliterated with a heavy breathing mark (like a reverse apostrophe) because it has no consonantal value of its own. The pronunciations of *ʾālep̄* (א) and *ʿayin* (ע) are virtually identical. Historically, the *ʿayin* (ע) had a guttural sound produced in the back of the throat that is difficult to pronounce in European languages. At times *ʿayin* (ע) is almost like *gimel* (ג), but more like the Arabic *ghayin*. The LXX indicates this pronunciation by its transliteration of some words like *Gomorrah* (Γομορρα = עֲמֹרָה) and *Gaza* (Γαζα = עַזָּה).

[21] *p̄* = *ph* (as in *phone*).

[22] Note that the distinction between these two consonants involves the placement of the dot over the right or the left horn of שׁ. Hebrew lexicons will list words with שׂ first. The student must keep that factor in mind when using the lexicon. According to at least one comparative Semitics grammar (Sabatino Moscati, ed., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* [Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1969],

22.	ת ת		*tāw* – תָּו	*t* as in *two* *t* or *th* as in *anthem*	**400**

- To expedite repeated references to the letters, the following simplified transliterations will be employed throughout this textbook:

Form	Technical Name	Simplified Name	Transliteration
א	*ʾālep̄*	ʾ*aleph*	ʾ
ב בּ	*bêṯ*	*beth*	*b* *b̲*
ג גּ	*gimel*	*gimel*	*g* *ḡ*
ד דּ	*dāleṯ*	*daleth*	*d* *d̲*
ה	*hēʾ*	*he*	*h*
ו	*wāw*	*waw*	*w*
ז	*zayin*	*zayin*	*z*
ח	*ḥêṯ*	*heth*	*ḥ*
ט	*ṭêṯ*	*teth*	*ṭ*
י	*yôḏ*	*yod*	*y*
כ כּ	*kap̄*	*kaph*	*k* *k̲*
ל	*lāmeḏ*	*lamed*	*l*
מ	*mēm*	*mem*	*m*
נ	*nûn*	*nun*	*n*
ס	*sāmek̲*	*samek*	*s*
ע	ʿ*ayin*	ʿ*ayin*	ʿ
פ פּ	*pēʾ*	*pe*	*p* *p̄*
צ	*ṣāḏê*	*tsade*	*ṣ*
ק	*qôp̄*	*qoph*	*q*
ר	*rêš*	*resh*	*r*
שׂ שׁ	*śîn* *šîn*	*shin* *sin*	*ś* *š*
ת תּ	*tāw*	*taw*	*t* *t̲*

33–37), Hebrew may be the only Semitic language maintaining a clear distinction between the two consonants. Ugaritic and Amorite retain only the   . There is some debate as to whether *š* or *ś* is original. There are about 675 entries beginning with שׁ in Holladay's *Lexicon* as opposed to 195 entries for שׂ — demonstrating the clear dominance of שׁ in biblical Hebrew. Since it is common to recognize 22 consonants (not 23) for biblical Hebrew, the position of prominence should be given to שׁ.

3A. Confusing Letters

Note carefully the minute distinctions — they are crucial. The small marks or strokes, designated as a *tittle* (Greek κεραία = *horn*) in Matthew 5:18 and Luke 16:17, distinguish letters which closely resemble each other. The *jot* refers to the י (*yod*), the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Distinguish carefully between consonants of similar form:

ב and כ
ג and נ
ד and ר
ד and ךְ
ה and ח
ו and ז
ו and ן
ם and ס
ם and ט
ע and צ
ע and ץ
שׂ and שׁ

3A. Written Hebrew

The Hebrew alphabet utilized in the printed Hebrew Bible is the Jewish script. It is sometimes called a *square* script because it can be written within the confines of a square. To reproduce a simple form of the script by hand, keep the square in mind. Note how the following letters utilize the square. What are the observable differences and similarities?

 י   ן   ו   ל   ד   ב   מ

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
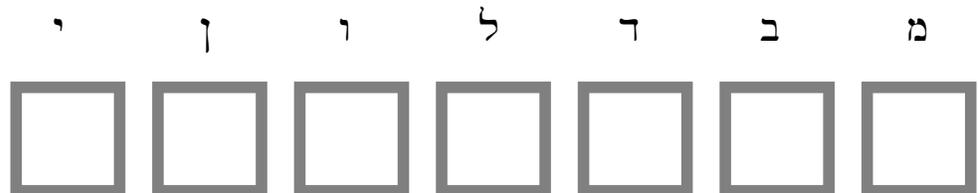
Practice writing the letters of the Hebrew alphabet within a square:

5	4	3	2	1
□	□	□	□	□

10	9	8	7	6
□	□	□	□	□

13 final	13	12	11 final	11
□	□	□	□	□

17	16	15	14 final	14
□	□	□	□	□

20	19	18 final	18	17 final
□	□	□	□	□

22	21b	21a
□	□	□

בּ

CHAPTER 2

The Alphabet – Vowels

1A. Introduction to the Vowels

The work of the scribes ended around 500 A.D. and in their place came a group of men called Masoretes,[23] who were active until approximately 1000 A.D. They were originally known as בַּעֲלֵי הַמְּסֹרֶת (*the masters of the tradition*), then later simply as מְסֹרֶת (*tradition—from* מָסַר, *he passed down*). These men attempted to

- transmit the consonantal text, just as the scribes had done, and
- insure the proper pronunciation of the text by adding vowels to the text.

The state of our knowledge regarding the history of the text has made great strides since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the mid-twentieth century. Such discoveries enable scholars to assert that "The remarkably faithful work of the Masoretes assures us that the form of their text takes us as far back as the late first century of our era."[24] The Masoretic text type had already been established nearly 800 years in advance of the Masoretes themselves.[25]

Three types of vowel pointings evolved:

The Babylonian and	בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרֹא אֱלֹהִים
Palestinian schools placed the vowel pointings above and between the consonants.	בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרֹא אֱלֹהִים
The Tiberian school placed them primarily below the consonants.	בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים

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[23] Both *Masorete* and *Massorete* are acceptable spellings depending on which Hebrew spelling is adopted מַסֹּרֶת (*massōret̲*) or מַסֹרֶת (*masōret̲*). Cf. E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed., trans. and ed. by A. E. Cowley (1910; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 18 n. 1. Hereafter, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* will be referred to as GKC (giving recognition to the author, the German editor, and the English editor: Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley).

[24] Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 147.

[25] Ibid., 177.

All three systems co-existed until approximately the tenth century A.D., when the Tiberian system became predominant.

2A. The Vowel Pointings

The Hebrew vowels are written, pronounced and classified as follows:

Class	Short Vowels			Long Vowels		
	Sign	**Name**	**Sound**	**Sign**	**Name**	**Sound**
A	ַ	*paṯaḥ*[26] פַּתַח	*a*	ָ	*qāmeṣ* קָמֵץ	*ā*
E	ֶ	*s^eḡôl* סֶגוֹל	*e*	ֵ	*ṣērê* צֵרֵי	*ē*
				ֵי	*ṣērê yôḏ* צֵרֵי יוֹד	*ê*
I	ִ	*ḥîreq* הִירֶק	*i*	ִי	*ḥîreq yôḏ* הִירֶק יוֹד	*î*
U	ֻ	*qibbûṣ* קִבּוּץ	*u*	וּ	*šûreq* שׁוּרֶק	*û*
O	ָ	*qāmeṣ ḥāṭṭûp̄*[27] קָמֵץ חָטוּף	*ŏ*	וֹ	*ḥōlem wāw* חֹלֶם וָו[28]	*ô*
				ֹ	*ḥōlem* חֹלֶם	*ō*

- To expedite repeated references to the vowels, the following simplified transliterations of vowel names will be employed throughout this textbook:

Form[29]	Technical Name	Simplified Name		Phonetic Value
אַ	*paṯaḥ*	*pathach*		*a* as in *pat*
אָ	*qāmeṣ*	*qamets*		*a* as in *father*
אֶ	*saḡōl*	*seghol*		*e* as in *met*
אֵ	*ṣērê*	*tsere*		*e* as in *eight*
אִ	*ḥîreq*	*hireq*		*i* as in *machine*[30]
אֻ	*qibbûṣ*	*qibbuts*		*u* as in *puts*

---

[26] The pronunciation of *paṯaḥ* and *s^eḡôl* follows two different traditions: the Sephardic and the Ashkenazi. The Sephardic gives *paṯaḥ* the same pronunciation as *qāmeṣ* and *s^eḡôl* the same as *ṣērê*. The Ashkenazi tradition (used in this grammar) maintains a distinction in the pronunciation of these vowels.

[27] This vowel is also known as *qāmeṣ ḥāṭṭôp̄* since it might involve either a *u*-class vowel (חָק = *ḥŏq* from חֻק = *ḥuq*) or an *o*-class vowel (חָכְמָה = *ḥŏkmâ* from חֹכְמָה = *ḥōkmâ*, or כָּל = *kŏl* from כֹּל = *kōl*). There is, however, virtually no distinction in actual pronunciation. See **Chapter 5** for a full explanation of this vowel's identification and usage.

[28] When *holem* occurs in a syllable preceding the consonant שׁ, the *holem* sometimes coincides with the dot over the right horn of the consonant: מֹשֵׁל or מֹשֵׁל.

[29] The א is utilized only for the purpose of demonstrating where the vowel pointing is placed relative to the consonants.

[30] Many Hebraists prefer to distinguish two different *i* sounds: the long *i* (as in *machine*) and the short *i* (as in *pin*). This distinction appears to have originated with Joseph Qimchi in the 12th century A.D. in a radical revision of the Tiberian vowel system. Cf. Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2 vols., trans. and rev. by T. Muraoka, Subsidia Biblica 14/I–II (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1996), 1:37; hereafter referred to as J-M.

אוּ	*šûreq*	*shureq*	*u* as in *sure*
אוֹ and אֹ	*ḥōlem*	*holem*	*o* as in *hole*
אָ	*qāmeṣ ḥāṭṭûp̄*	*qamets hatuph*	*o* as in *sod*

- While most of the vowels are placed below the consonant, there are a few exceptions:
  - ➤ The *shureq* (וּ) and the full-letter *holem* (וֹ) follow the consonant.
  - ➤ The lesser *holem* is written above the consonant (e.g., כֹּל).

- The vowel sound follows the consonant with which it is associated.
- Words and syllables normally[31] begin with a consonant rather than a vowel.
- Five vowels are known as **full-letter vowels** because they use consonants in their formation: יֵ (*ê*), יִ (*î*), וּ (*û*), וֹ (*ô*), and הָ (*â*).[32]

3A. Vowel Letters

Before the time of Christ, vowel-letters (also known as *matres lectionis*) were employed as a limited signification of vowel sounds. The vowel-letters may be observed in the scrolls from Qumran.

Vowel Class	Vowel Letter	Examples from Qumran
a	א or ה	לְךָ = לכה
i or *e*	י or א	עוּר = עואר
o or *u*	ו	לֹא = לוא

What word would be represented by אפריקה?

4A. Vowel Chart

Phonetic Triangle[33]

open vowels   rounded vowels

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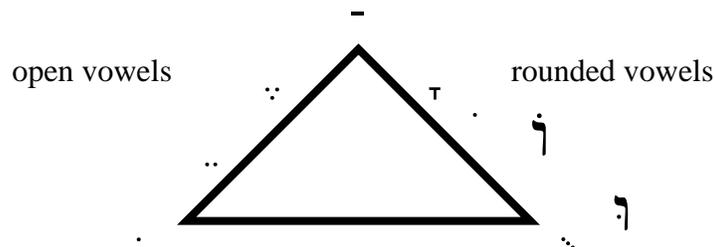
[31] See **Chapter 8** for an occasional exception.

[32] הָ is a full-letter vowel only at the ends of words. The ה (just like the י in יֵ and יִ) is silent.

[33] Adapted from William Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* (1957; repr., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1986), 108.

Note: In pronouncing the vowels of the Phonetic Triangle (beginning at the lower left corner) the student will observe a widening of the mouth in pronouncing the ascending vowels of the left side and an increased rounding of the mouth in pronouncing the descending vowels of the right side.

5A. Vocabulary

Read the transliteration of each of the following words. Identify each of the letters and vowels. Feminine nouns are indicated by (f.) in this text's vocabulary lists.[34]

Nouns:

אָב	*ʾāḇ*	father
אָדָם	*ʾāḏām*	man, Adam
אָח	*ʾāḥ*	brother
אִישׁ	*ʾîš*	man, husband (pl. = אֲנָשִׁים)
אֶרֶץ	*ʾereṣ*	(f.) earth, land
אִשָּׁה	*ʾiššâ*	(f.) woman, wife (pl. = נָשִׁים)
דָּבָר	*dāḇār*	(m. or f.) word, matter, thing
יָם	*yām*	sea
מֶלֶךְ	*meleḵ*	king

Verbs:

אָכַל	*ʾāḵal*	he ate
אָמַר	*ʾāmar*	he said
הָיָה	*hāyâ*	he was, became
הָלַךְ	*hālaḵ*	he went, walked
שָׁמַע	*šāmaᶜ*	he heard, listened
שָׁמַר	*šāmar*	he kept, watched

Adjectives:

אֶחָד	*ʾeḥāḏ*	one (m.)
אַחַת	*ʾaḥat*	one (f.)
קָדוֹשׁ	*qāḏôš*	holy

Prepositions:

אַחַר	*ʾaḥar*	after, behind
בֵּין	*bên*	between

---

[34] For the gender of Biblical Hebrew nouns this grammar replicates the classifications given by Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, *The Vocabulary of the Old Testament* (1989; repr., Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1992).

גּ

CHAPTER 3

The Alphabet – Special Letters, *Dagesh*, and *Raphe*

1A. Guttural Letters

There are four letters in the Hebrew alphabet that are known as gutturals or laryngeals. They are א, ה, ח, and ע. In addition to these four, ר acts like a guttural but is not one technically. The word guttural means "of the throat" and is used to designate these letters because they are pronounced in the throat.

The gutturals are divided into two classes, weak and strong. The **weak gutturals** are ע and א. Although ע is usually weak, it is variable and can be considered strong occasionally (especially when it is initial in words that have come to be transliterated with an initial *g*; e.g., עֲמֹרָה Gomorrah). ר, though technically not a guttural, is also classified with the weak gutturals. The **strong gutturals** are ח and ה.

The gutturals have three characteristics:

  (1)   They refuse doubling (indicated by the use of *dagesh forte*,[35] a dot in the
          bosom of a Hebrew character that doubles the sound of that character; e.g.,
          הַטּוֹב (*haṭṭôḇ = the good*).
  (2)   They prefer *a*-class vowels.
  (3)   They prefer compound *shewa*.

Note:

     Although ר normally refuses doubling, there are occasions when it is found with the doubling *dagesh* in the Masoretic Text (e.g., לֹא־יִנָּקֶה רָע in Prov 11:21). This occurs when the preceding word is accented on the penultimate syllable and ends in *seghol* or *qamets* (יִנָּקֶה) and when the next word (רָע) is accented on the opening syllable. In such a case, the two words are tied together by the doubling of the second word's initial consonant (cf., also, אֵלֶּה לָּךְ in Gen 33:5). This *dagesh* is sometimes called a *conjunctive dagesh*.

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[35] For a detailed discussion of the *dagesh*, see **5A**, below.

2A. Silent Letters

There are four letters which sometimes lose their consonantal character and become silent. They are **א**, **ה**, **ו**, and **י**. The special conditions that cause them to quiesce will be discussed later. For the present, it is important to remember them.

3A. Vowel Letters

Prior to the insertion of vowel pointings by the Masoretes (between the sixth and tenth centuries A.D.), the basic, long vowel sounds were represented by three Hebrew letters of the alphabet. They were:

Vowel Sound	Vowel Letter	Hebrew Vowel
A	ה	ָ
e and *i*	י	ֵ and ִ
o and *u*	ו	וֹ and וּ

These vowel letters had a dual function – they represented both vowel sounds and letters of the alphabet (i.e., consonants).

4A. Labials

There are three letters of the alphabet that are formed essentially with the lips. They are **ב**, **מ**, and **פ**. "Labial" means "of the lips."

5A. *Dagesh*[36]

Definition: A *dagesh* (דָּגֵשׁ = "to pierce") is a dot that is placed in the bosom of a letter. There are two kinds of *dagesh*:

1B. The **Weak *Dagesh*** (***Lene*** or קָטָן or קַל)

1C. The weak *dagesh* may occur in six letters of the Hebrew alphabet: **ב**, **ג**, **ד**, **כ**, **פ**, and **ת** (easily remembered as *b^{e}ḡaḏ-k^{e}p̄aṯ*, בְּגַדְכְּפַת).

2C. When pronounced without the weak *dagesh*, these letters are spirants because they are pronounced with a slight breath. When the weak *dagesh* is inserted, these six letters are hardened (cf. **Alphabet Chart** in **Chapter 1**). Therefore, the weak *dagesh* is commonly referred to as the "hardening dot" or "hardening *dagesh*."

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[36] The technical transliteration of the name of this pointing would be *dāḡeš*, but, in order to simplify repeated reference to it, *dagesh* will be employed throughout this textbook.

Spirant	Hardened
בֿ	בּ
גֿ	גּ
דֿ	דּ
כֿ and ךֿ[37]	כּ and ךּ
פֿ and ףֿ	פּ
תֿ	תּ

3C. The weak *dagesh* is inserted when one of the six letters (ב ג ד כ פ ת) begins a syllable (either at the beginning or the middle of a word), provided it is not *immediately* preceded by a vowel.

The weak *dagesh* is not inserted when one of the six letters (ב ג ד כ פ ת) does not begin a syllable or when (at the beginning of a syllable) a vowel immediately precedes it.

Note:
Even when the $b^e\bar{g}a\underline{d}$-$k^e\bar{p}a\underline{t}$ letter is preceded by a vowel, a *dagesh* is employed in the following situations:[38]
- following a disjunctive accent
  cf. קִנְאָתִי תֵּאָכֵל (Zeph 3:8)[39]
- with the prefixed prepositions בְּ and כְּ
  cf. כִּי בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי (Zeph 3:8)
- in situations that appear to have no other reason than to avoid too many spirants in close proximity
  cf. יָבֹאוּ בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (Gen 6:4)

2B. The **Strong** *Dagesh* (*Forte* or גָּדוֹל or חָזָק)

1C. The strong *dagesh* may occur in all the letters of the alphabet except the guttural letters and normally ר, which acts like a guttural letter.

2C. When the strong *dagesh* is inserted in a letter, it doubles the letter. Thus the strong *dagesh* is commonly referred to as the "doubling dot" or "doubling *dagesh*."

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[37] The spirant form of final *kaph* contains its vowel in its bosom: ךְ, ךֵ, ךָ, and ךֹ. The hardened form of final *kaph* contains the *dagesh lene* in its bosom and the vowel below: ךְ, ךֵ, ךָ, and ךֻ.

[38] See GKC, §21.

[39] See **8A** below.

3C. The strong *dagesh* is inserted for a number of reasons. The most common reasons are:

1D. Compensation for a letter that has elided (dropped out). For example, when the preposition מִן ("from") is prefixed to a noun such as מֶלֶךְ ("king"), the נ stands vowelless between two vowelled consonants (מִנְמֶלֶךְ). In such cases the vowelless נ is scarcely audible and therefore drops out. In compensation for the loss, the following letter is doubled: מִמֶּלֶךְ (*mimmelek*).[40]

2D. The strong *dagesh* is characteristic of certain intensive verb forms. In these verbs the second root letter is characteristically doubled: דִּבֶּר (*dibber*, "he spoke, he commanded").

6A. *Raphe*[41] (רָפֶה, "soft")

1B. Sometimes a word omits the normally present strong *dagesh* for the purpose of achieving a smoother pronunciation. In such cases, a short horizontal line (רָפֶה) is placed above the letter.

For example, the verb בִּקְּשׁוּ (*biqqᵉšû*) frequently occurs without the strong *dagesh* characteristic in the second root letter; instead a *raphe* is placed over the letter (בִּקְשׁוּ, *biqᵉšû*) to indicate that the strong *dagesh* characteristic has been omitted for euphonic reasons.[42]

2B. Some words, especially those which occur frequently, omit the use of the *raphe*, even though the strong *dagesh* has dropped away, too.

For example, וַיְּהִי (*wayyᵉhî*) is usually found simply as וַיְהִי (*wayᵉhî*).

7A. Challenge

(1) Circle all guttural letters in the following Hebrew sentence:

חַי־יְהֹוָה כִּי בֶן־מָוֶת הָאִישׁ הָעֹשֶׂה זֹאת׃

(2) What kind of *dagesh* is used in כִּי?

(3) Put a box around each of the *bᵉḡaḏ-kᵉp̄aṯ* letters in the sentence above.

---

[40] A similar procedure is followed in some English words such as *illegal* and *irreverent*.

[41] The technical transliteration of the name of this pointing is *rāp̄ēh*, but *raphe* will be used throughout this textbook to simplify references to it.

[42] In the case of בִּקְשׁוּ the *raphe* provides a way of avoiding a double ק which is already a strong radical.

8A. Zephaniah 3:8

All 22 consonants of the Hebrew alphabet, together with their 5 final forms, are found in Zephaniah 3:8 –

לָכֵן חַכּוּ־לִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה לְיוֹם קוּמִי לְעַד כִּי מִשְׁפָּטִי לֶאֱסֹף
גּוֹיִם לְקָבְצִי מַמְלָכוֹת לִשְׁפֹּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמִי כֹּל חֲרוֹן אַפִּי
כִּי בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי תֵּאָכֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:

Copy the entire verse on a blank piece of paper making certain to keep the same four lines of structure. Leave enough space between the lines of text to write a number above the first occurrence of each of the 22 letters in alphabetical order. Use an *f* after those numbers representing Hebrew characters that are a final form. The following is a sample:

<div align="center">

4   5   1   14f

לָכֵן חַכּוּ־לִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה לְיוֹם קוּמִי לְעַד

</div>

9A. Vocabulary

Nouns:

בַּיִת	*bayiṯ*	house[43]
בֵּן	*bēn*	son, grandson
בַּת	*baṯ*	(f.) daughter
גּוֹי	*gôy*	nation
דֶּרֶךְ	*dereḵ*	(m. or f.) way, path
הַר	*har*	mountain
חַי	*ḥay*	(m. or f.) life; living, alive
יָד	*yāḏ*	(f.) hand, power
יוֹם	*yôm*	(m. or f.) day
מָוֶת	*māweṯ*	death

Verbs:

גָּדַל	*gāḏal*	he was great, big[44]
יָדַע	*yāḏaʿ*	he knew[45]

---

[43] בֵּית (*house of*) is the more frequent form of this word (77% of approximately 2100 occurrences).

[44] This verb is a stative verb expressing the state or condition of its subject. Stative verbs utilize a helping or auxiliary verb form (from "be") together with the adjective describing the state.

[45] Most Hebrew verbs listed in the vocabulary will be in the Qal (= simple active) *qatal* (or, perfect) third person masculine singular (3ms) form. This is the form listed in Hebrew lexicons (i.e., the lexical form). Such verbs may occur in contexts that require a future, a past, or a present tense translation. Context alone determines the tense of the Hebrew verbs. Until there are adequate contexts to determine the particular tense, the past tense will be used for convenience in translating the *qatal* form of the verb.

יָטַב	*yāṭaḇ*	he was good
יָלַד	*yālaḏ*	he bore, brought forth
יָצָא	*yāṣāʾ*	he went out, departed
יָשַׁב	*yāšaḇ*	he sat, dwelt, stayed
לָקַח	*lāqaḥ*	he took, received
מוּת	*mûṯ*	to die[46] (he died)

Adjectives:

| גָּדוֹל | *gāḏôl* | great, big |
| טוֹב | *ṭôḇ* | good, well |

---

[46] Verbs with a full-letter middle vowel are listed in the Qal (= simple active) infinitive construct form of the verb in accordance with the usual practice in Hebrew lexicons. Therefore, these verb forms may be translated as infinitives. E.g.: שִׂים *to place*, *put*, *set*; בּוֹא *to go in*, *enter*; רוּם *to be high*, *exalted*.

ר

CHAPTER 4

The Alphabet – Half Vowels
Syllables

1A. *Shewa*[47]

1B. Introduction

When a letter stands vowelless at the beginning or in the middle of a word, the Hebrew language inserts a sign composed of two vertical dots (֔) below the letter. This sign is called *shewa* and is referred to as a half-vowel. *Shewa* is normally omitted when a letter stands at the end of a word, but it is retained in final ךְ (cf. הָלַ֫ךְ) and sometimes under final ת (cf. שָׁמַ֫רְתְּ).

2B. Vocal *Shewa*

A *shewa* placed under a letter that begins a syllable (either at the beginning or in the middle of a word) is a **vocal *shewa***. The vocal *shewa* is pronounced as a very short, quick *seghol*, sounding like the *a* in *lament* or the first *e* in *increment*. Its transliteration is a superlinear ^{e}.[48]

	Example	Pronunciation/ Transliteration	Explanation
1.	שְׁמֹר שְׁמוּאֵל	$š^e m\bar{o}r$ $š^e m\hat{u}$-$^{\circ}\bar{e}l$	*Shewa* placed under a letter beginning a syllable is always **vocal**.

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[47] The technical transliteration of שְׁוָא is $š^e w\bar{a}^{\circ}$, but *shewa* will be used throughout this textbook to simplify the many references made to the vowel.

[48] Some Hebrew grammars utilize the inverted *e* (ə) in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to represent *shewa* (cf. John F. A. Sawyer, *A Modern Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* [Stocksfield, Northumberland, UK: Oriel Press, 1976], 13). Even though the inverted *e* in the IPA is called *schwa*, it represents a sound value slightly different from the Hebrew *shewa*. ə represents the sound of *a* in *about*, *above*, and *sofa* (Edward Finegan and Niko Besnier, *Language: Its Structure and Use* [San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1989], 48).

2.	שׁוֹמְרִים	*šô-m^e-rîm*	*Shewa* following unaccented full-letter vowels are always **vocal**.
3.	יִשְׁמְרוּ	*yiš-m^e-rû*[49]	*Shewa*s occurring back-to-back **in the middle of a word** follow a specific pattern: **the first is always silent** and **the second is always vocal**.
4.	קִטְּלוּ	*qiṭ-ṭ^{e}lû*	*Shewa* placed under the *dagesh forte* (the doubling *dagesh*) is both **silent and vocal**. The form actually represents קִטְטְלוּ, making the situation identical to #3, above.
5.	דִּבְּרוּ	*dib-b^{e}rû*	*Shewa* in this situation is identical to #4, above, but the *dagesh* is both *forte* (doubling) and *lene* (hardening). The form actually represents דִּבְבְרוּ.
6.	הַלְלוּ	*ha-l^{e}lû*	When *shewa* occurs under the first of two identical consonants, it is **vocal**.

3B. Silent *Shewa*

When a *shewa* is placed under a letter that closes or ends a syllable (either in the middle or at the end of a word), it is a **silent *shewa*** (unpronounced).

	Example	Pronunciation/ Transliteration	Explanation
1.	יִשְׁמֹר מֶרְכָּבָה	*yiš-mōr*[50] *mer-kā-ḇâ*[51]	*Shewa* placed under a letter closing a syllable is always **silent**. In such cases the vowel preceding *shewa* is usually short and unaccented.[52]

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[49] This may also be transliterated as *yiš^e-m^e-rû* if the transliterater wishes to represent every vowel, even if silent.

[50] May be transliterated *yiš^e-mōr*.

[51] May be transliterated *mer^e-kā-ḇâ*.

[52] For exceptions to this rule, see #6 under **Vocal *Shewa*** and #2 under **Silent *Shewa***. Note that one way to determine if the *shewa* closes a syllable is if a *b^{e}ḡaḏ-k^{e}p̄aṯ* letter has a dagesh (as with מֶרְכָּבָה, above). In such cases the *b^{e}ḡaḏ-k^{e}p̄aṯ* letter has the hardening dagesh because it follows a closed syllable. See page 31 (**3C**).

2.	לֶכְנָה[53] נֶגְבָּה[54]	*lēk-nâ*[53] *neḡ-bâ*[54]	*Shewa* immediately following an accented (stressed) syllable is **silent**.
3.	מֶלֶךְ	*me-lek*[55]	When final ך is vowelless, it always takes a **silent** *shewa*.
4.	שָׁמַרְתְּ	*šā-mart*[56]	*Shewa*s back-to-back **at the end of a word** are both **silent**.
5.	יִשְׁמְרוּ	*yiš-m*[e]*-rû*[57]	*Shewa*s occurring back-to-back **in the middle of a word** follow a specific pattern: **the first is always silent** and **the second is always vocal**.

4B. Compound or Composite *Shewa*

When a *shewa* occurs under a guttural letter (ע ח ה א),[58] it requires a short helping vowel to accompany it. Three different short vowels join with *shewa* to form the compound *shewa*: *pathach* (ֲ = *ḥāṭēp̄-paṯaḥ*), *seghol* (ֱ = *ḥāṭēp̄-s*[e]*ḡôl*), and *qamets hatuph* (ֳ = *ḥāṭēp̄-qāmeṣ*). In such cases the sound of the *shewa* is not pronounced—only the sound of the short vowel accompanying it.

Example	Pronunciation/ Transliteration
אֲדָמָה	[a]*dāmâ*
אֱלֹהִים	[e]*lōhîm*
אֳנִיָּה	[o]*niyyâ*

2A. *Pathach* Furtive

When the gutturals ע and ח (and sometimes, ה) occur at the end of a word, their peculiar pronunciation demands a *pathach* under the guttural:

$$רוּחַ = rûaḥ$$
$$שָׁמֹעַ = š^emōa^ʕ$$

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[53] May be transliterated *lēk*[e]*-nâ*.

[54] May be transliterated *neḡ*[e]*-bâ*.

[55] May be transliterated *me-lek*[e].

[56] May be transliterated *šā-mar*[e]*t*[e].

[57] See footnote 49.

[58] See **Chapter 3** section **1A** regarding gutturals. ר, though it sometimes behaves as a guttural, prefers the simple *shewa* rather than a compound *shewa*.

$$^{59}\text{גָּבֹהַּ} = g\bar{a}\underline{b}\bar{o}ah$$

The *pathach* in this situation is called a *pathach* furtive. It occurs when the terminal guttural is preceded by a tone (= accented) long vowel. Vowels are characteristically pronounced following the consonant with which they are associated. However, *pathach* furtive is always pronounced **before** the terminal guttural.

A *pathach* furtive cannot form a syllable by itself since it is treated as a half-vowel in phonetic value. Therefore, רוּחַ is but one Hebrew syllable.

3A. Phonetic Chart[60]

In the following chart the heavy, bold lines represent uncrossable phonetic boundaries. Changes in vowels must proceed parallel to those bold lines except at its one breach at which a *pathach* may change to a *hireq* or a *hireq* may change to a *pathach*. Movement horizontally to the left represents the shortening of the vowel while movement horizontally to the right represents the lengthening of the vowel. With the exception of the one breach, vowel changes must remain within the same vowel class.

	Half Vowels		**Short Vowels**		**Tone Long**		**Characteristically Long**	
Class	Compound (with Gutturals)	Simple	Deflected	Pure			Pure	Diphthong
A	*a*	*e*		*a*	*a* הֶ *ēh*		הָ *â*[61]	
I & E	*i*	*e*	*e*	*i*	*ē*		*î*	*ê*
O & U	*ŏ*	*e*	*ŏ*	*u*	*ō*		*û*	*ô*

- Characteristically long vowels are found as unchangeable vowels — normally indicated by the long vowel plus a vowel letter (e.g., *tsere* in מָלֵא = *mālē'*).
- Tone long vowels are located in the accented syllable. These are vowels that were originally short but were lengthened due to the accent or proximity to the accent

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[59] The *dagesh*-like pointing in a final ה is called *mappiq* (מַפִּיק = *mappîq*). It indicates that the ה possesses its full consonantal value rather than being a vowel letter. Its sound is like a quick closing of the throat—a mild glottal stop. Its sound is lighter than ח.

[60] Adapted from Kyle M. Yates, *The Essentials of Biblical Hebrew*, rev. by John Joseph Owens (New York: Harper & Row, n.d.), 9. The transliterations represent the proper symbols for the vowels.

[61] This naturally long vowel (*â*) is indicated by both the vowel and a vowel letter (e.g., שָׂפָה = *śāpâ*) just like the other four vowels in this category. All transliterated vowels in this chart with a circumflex (ˆ) indicate vowels with vowel letters.

(an open syllable immediately preceding the accent). Each *qamets* in *קָטָל[62] (= *qāṭāl*) is long.

4A. Syllables

1B. Definitions

In Hebrew a syllable is a group of phonemes consisting of a vowel standing alone or combined with a consonant or consonants representing a complete articulation.[63] The syllable is **open** if it ends in a vowel. It is **closed** if it ends in a consonant. Normally a Hebrew syllable begins with a consonant (therefore, a word also normally begins with a consonant). An exception at the beginning of a word arises with one form of the conjunction as in וּבֵין (*û-ḇên*, two syllables with the first beginning with and consisting of a vowel, וּ).

2B. Explanation

1C. In a word such as שָׁמַר, the first syllable שָׁ (*šā*) is open because it ends in a vowel. The last syllable מַר (*mar*) is closed because it ends in a consonant. A word has as many syllables as regular vowels.

2C. In a word such as כּוֹכָב, the first syllable כּוֹ (*kô*) is open because it ends in a vowel (the וֹ is not a consonant but a full-letter vowel, *holem*). The last syllable כָב (*ḵāḇ*) is closed because it ends in a consonant.

3B. Rules to Identify Open and Closed Syllables

1C. ***Normally, long vowels occur in open syllables; short vowels normally occur in closed syllables***. Exceptions to this general rule occur in connection with accentuation: <u>If the long vowel is accented, it may occur in a closed syllable; if the short vowel is accented, it may occur in an open syllable.</u>

For example, in the word כּוֹכָב (*kô/ḵāḇ*), the final syllable is closed but it contains a long vowel because it is accented. The same rule applies to לֶכְנָה (*lēḵ/nâ*).

On the other hand, the first syllable of the word חֶסֶד (*ḥe/seḏ*) is an open syllable even though it contains a short vowel because it is accented.

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[62] The asterisk with the Hebrew word indicates that the form is hypothetical. That particular form does not occur in the Hebrew Bible.

[63] Cf. Mario Pei, *Glossary of Linguistic Terminology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 268.

2C. *Normally a short vowel is found in syllables which are closed and have no accent.* מִקֶּ֫דֶם (*miq-qe-ḏem*) has three syllables—all containing short vowels. The first is unaccented and closed (note the doubling *dagesh* in ק). Its *hireq* is a short vowel (יִ would be the long *i*-class vowel). The second syllable is accented and open. The third syllable is unaccented and closed. Therefore, the first and third syllables illustrate this rule.

5A. Vocabulary

Nouns:

אֱדוֹם	*ᵉḏôm*	Edom
אֲדָמָה	*ᵃḏāmâ*	(f.) ground
אֲדֹנָי	*ᵃḏōnāy*	Lord, master
אֵילוֹת	*ʾêlôṯ*	Eilat (also, אֵילַת)
אֱנוֹשׁ	*ᵉnôš*	man
עֶצְיוֹן־גֶּבֶר	*ᶜeṣyôn-geḇer*	Ezion-geber
צְבָאוֹת	*ṣᵉḇāʾôṯ*	(m. or f.) armies, hosts
רוּחַ	*rûaḥ*	(m. or f.) spirit, Spirit, wind
שָׂפָה	*śāp̄â*	(f.) lip, border, edge, shore, bank, rim
שְׁלֹמֹה	*šᵉlōmōh*	Solomon
שְׁמוּאֵל	*šᵉmûʾēl*	Samuel

Verbs:

דִּבֶּר	*dibber*	he spoke, commanded
קָטַל	*qāṭal*	he killed

Adjective:

גָּבֹהַ	*gāḇōah*	high

Adverb:

אָז	*ʾāz*	then

Prepositions:

אֶל	*ʾel*	unto, to, toward
⁶⁴לְ	*lᵉ*	to, for
עַל	*ᶜal*	upon, above, on, against

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[64] The glosses (translations) listed for Hebrew words in **Vocabulary** are not exhaustive of the semantic ranges for those words. This can be especially true in regard to prepositions. In certain contexts לְ can have the following meanings: *towards*, *until*, *at*, *in*, *of*, *about*, *against*, *in relation to*, *namely*, and *because of*. Cf. Holladay, 68–69.

הֵ

CHAPTER 5

Accents
Review of Syllables

1A. Accents

    1B. Introduction

    The Masoretes placed accents[65] into the Hebrew text in order to preserve the proper reading and meaningful interpretation of the Scriptures, especially the mode of cantillation in their public reading. While the origin and intonation of the accents is obscure, the Masoretes probably introduced notations introduced into the text simultaneously with the vowel pointings. The vowel pointings preserve the traditional pronunciation and the accents preserve the traditional modulation based upon logical divisions of the text.

    2B. Basic Characteristics

        1C. The pronunciation of most Hebrew words (e.g., שָׁמַר) places the primary stress on the last syllable (or, *ultima* = ultimate syllable). Hebrew words stressed on the last syllable are called *Milraʿ* (Aramaic מִלְרַע = *stressed below*—meaning *stressed after*).

        2C. Occasionally, the pronunciation of Hebrew words (e.g., מֶלֶךְ) stresses the next to the last syllable (or, *penultima* = penultimate syllable). Hebrew words stressed on the next to the last syllable are called *Milʿel* (Aramaic מִלְעֵיל = *stressed above*—meaning *stressed before*).

        3C. While Hebrew words may be either *Milraʿ* or *Milʿel*, the primary stress never falls on any other syllable. An exceptionally long word may have two stressed syllables with a secondary accent placed earlier in the word and the primary stress coming on either the *ultima* or the *penultima*.

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[65] The Hebrew term for *accent* is טַעַם, meaning *sense*, *meaning*, or *discernment*.

4C. The normal accent mark employed in beginning Hebrew grammar is ˋ
(עוֹלֶה = *ʿôlēh*, meaning *over* or *ascending*). Since most words are stressed
on the last syllable, *ʿôlēh* is supplied only when the *penultima* is stressed.
Note this accent's use in the following word: מֶ֫לֶךְ. When no accent appears
in a Hebrew word, the *ultima* must be stressed in pronunciation.

3B. Basic Accents

1C. Purpose of Accents

- To indicate which syllable is to be stressed in pronunciation.
- To represent and preserve the chanting (cantillation) of Scripture in the synagogues.
- To indicate the logical divisions of the verse. This use of the accents is of great value in understanding the text and preserving the meaning that has been ascribed to it traditionally.

Compare the accents in Isaiah 40:3 with the text of Mark 1:3 –

<div dir="rtl">

קוֹל קוֹרֵא

בַּמִּדְבָּ֫ר פַּנּוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה

</div>

A voice crying: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD."

φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου
A voice crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord."

Early Greek manuscripts did not employ much in the way of punctuation.
Punctuation in Mark 1:3 represents a modern editor's opinion. The editor
could have chosen to place the comma after βοῶντος.

2C. Kinds of Accents

The accents are of two kinds: **disjunctive** (separating) and **conjunctive**
(joining). Medieval Hebraists referred to disjunctive accents as **kings** (or
even **emperors**) and conjunctive accents as **servants**.

1D. Disjunctive Accents

Disjunctive accents normally indicate the last word in a phrase or
clause. As such, they indicate a pause in much the same manner as a
comma, semi-colon, or period. For the beginning Hebrew student the
following are the more significant of the disjunctive accents:

- *Silluq* (סִלּוּק) is a short vertical mark which is placed to the left of
  the vowel under the stressed (tone) syllable of the last word of a
  verse:

  ⬇

<div dir="rtl">

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַ֫יִם וְאֵת הָאָֽרֶץ׃

</div>

It marks the principal stop in the verse. It is not always the equivalent of a period since a verse may be only part of a longer sentence. *Silluq* is followed by two small diamond marks (׃) called *soph pasuq* (סוֹף פָּסוּק = "end of verse").

- *Athnach* (אַתְנָח) denotes the principal division of the verse. It does not necessarily divide the verse in the exact geometric center; rather, it marks the logical division. The *athnach* is designated by a small arrow (֑) and always occurs under the accented syllable:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

- *Zaqeph qaton* (זָקֵף קָטוֹן) is a quarter marker dividing the two halves marked by *athnach*. Sometimes it supersedes *athnach* as the principal divider of the verse. This accent is composed of two vertical dots like a *shewa*, but is placed above the syllable (֔):

קוֹל קוֹרֵא
בַּמִּדְבָּר פַּנּוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה

2D. Conjunctive Accents

Of all of the conjunctive accents *munach* (מוּנַח) is the strongest and most frequent. A word bearing *munach* should not be separated from the word which follows it. It looks like a backwards miniature "L" (֣)and is placed beneath the word:

קוֹל קוֹרֵא ⬇
בַּמִּדְבָּר פַּנּוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה

3C. Example of Accents

Note how the logical divisions and pauses in Genesis 3:24 affect its meaning and translation:

וַיְגָרֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיַּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגַן־עֵדֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִים
וְאֵת לַהַט הַחֶרֶב הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת לִשְׁמֹר אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ הַחַיִּים׃ ס[66]

So He expelled the man |||| and east of the Garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim | and the flaming, revolving sword || to guard the way to the tree of life ||||[67]

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[66] The vertical accent under the first syllables of הָאָדָם and הַחַיִּים is a *metheg*. See the discussion below at **4A**.

[67] |||| marks the major pauses (*athnach* and *silluq*) while || marks the weaker disjunctive *zaqeph qaton*. The single bar (|) indicates the use of *rebia'* (֗) marking the main object (*cherubim*). In this particular

2A. Review of Syllables

At this point in the study of biblical Hebrew, the student must review the matter of syllabification in the preceding chapter.[68] The discussions concerning *qamets hatuph* and *metheg* require an understanding of the formation of syllables in Hebrew. Keep in mind that Hebrew syllabification cannot be compared to English syllabification. Some vowels in Hebrew are not capable of supporting a separate syllable by themselves. This is true of the *shewa*, the composite *shewa*s, and the *pathach* furtive.

3A. *Qamets Hatuph*[69]

1B. The vowel ָ can designate either the long vowel (*qamets*) or the short vowel (*qamets hatuph*). In order to distinguish between the two vowels the rules given on pages 39–40 (**3B**) regarding open and closed syllables must be kept in mind.

2B. The basic rule is as follows: If the vowel ָ occurs in a ***closed, unaccented*** syllable, it is a *qamets hatuph*. If the vowel ָ occurs in an open syllable, or in a closed syllable which is accented, it is the long vowel *qamets*.

Example	Transliteration	Explanation
תָּ֫נָס	*tā-nŏs*	The last syllable is closed and unaccented. Therefore, it must have a short vowel—*qamets hatuph*.
חָכְמָה	*ḥŏḵ-mâ*	The first syllable is closed and unaccented. Therefore, it must have a short vowel—*qamets hatuph*.[70]
חָנֵּנִי	*ḥŏn-nē-nî*	The *dagesh forte* doubles the נ, making the ָ appear in a closed, unaccented syllable. Thus it must be a *qamets hatuph*.

3B. In a few exceptional cases the short vowel *qamets hatuph* may occur in an open syllable, but ***only*** when followed by the composite *shewa* ֳ.

Example	Transliteration	Explanation
בְּחֳָלִי	*bŏ-hŏ̆-lî*	The ָ under the preposition בְּ was originally a vocal *shewa*. However, since two *shewas* cannot occur back-to-back and owing to the influence

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example, perhaps it would be better to rearrange the English word order so that "to guard" is not mistakenly limited to the sword: *He expelled the man and stationed spirit beings and the whirling flaming sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the path to the tree of life.*

[68] Cf. pages 38–39.

[69] The *qamets hatuph* may also be called *qamets hatoph*, especially in those cases where it represents an *o*-class vowel rather than a *u*-class vowel.

[70] In words where an initial *qamets* is followed by a simple *shewa*, the student may consider the absence of a *metheg* sufficient evidence for identifying the syllable as closed.

		of the composite *shewa* $\bar{}$ːₑ, the preposition takes the corresponding short vowel—*qamets hatuph*.

4B. In some cases the clearest indicator for the presence of a *qamets hatuph* is when it replaces either a *holem* or a *shureq* in the basic form of the word. For example, אָזְנַיִם clearly commences with *qamets hatuph* because it is derived from אֹזֶן. Compare, also, וַיָּקָם from יָקוּם and כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ from כֹּל־נֶפֶשׁ.

4A. *Metheg*

    1B. Definition

    Metheg (מֶ֫תֶג, meaning "bridle") is a mark used as a secondary accent. It is designated in the word by placing a small vertical stroke to the left of a vowel, causing the reader to pause briefly after it.

    2B. Usage

        1C. The presence of *metheg* will cause the syllable in which it appears to remain open. This is especially significant in determining if the vowel $\bar{}$ is a long vowel *qamets* or a short vowel *qamets hatuph*.

Example	Pronunciation/ Transliteration	Explanation
אָכְלָה	*ʾŏk̲-lâ* "food"	The first syllable is closed and unaccented, indicating that the $\bar{}$ is a *qamets hatuph* and the *shewa* silent.
אָכְלָה	*ʾā-k̲ᵉlâ* "she ate"	The first syllable is now forced open by the *metheg*, making the $\bar{}$ a *qamets* and the *shewa* vocal.

        2C. The presence of *metheg* is also an important clue for distinguishing between two words that otherwise are identical. *Metheg* indicates that they have different enunciations.

Example	Pronunciation/ Transliteration	Explanation
יִרְאוּ	*yi-rᵉʾû* "they fear"	The brief pause after *yi* helps to distinguish this word from the following.
יִרְאוּ	*yir-ʾû* "they see"	No pause after *yi*.

3C. Hebrew words are normally accented on the last syllable (*Milraʿ*), occasionally on the second to last (*Milʿel*), but never any other syllable.[71] In cases of longer words, a *metheg* is sometimes placed in the third syllable back from the accented syllable. Any long vowel two or more syllables before the main stress of the word may have *metheg*.

Example	Pronunciation/ Transliteration	Explanation
הָאָדָם	*hā-ʾā-ḏām*	The הָ is the third syllable back from the accent and thus receives the *metheg*.
מֵהָאָרֶץ	*mē-hā-ʾā-reṣ*	While the *Milʿel* syllable has the accent, the third syllable back from the accent still receives the *metheg*.
שְׁלֹמֹה־בְנִי וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ	*šᵉlō-mô-ḇenî way-yiš-šā-ḇaʿ lô*	The *metheg* is not limited to the first syllable.
שָׁבֻעֹתֵיכֶם	*šā-ḇu-ʿō-tê-ḵem*	*Metheg* can occur twice in the same word. But, on the last word of a verse it is only the first—the second is *silluq*.

4C. *Metheg* should not be confused with *silluq*.[72] The *silluq* has an identical form but a different function from the *metheg*. *Silluq*, however, occurs only under the tone syllable of the last word of the verse.

5A. Words in Pause

Sometimes changes in vowel pointing take place in words when they occur at a major break (pause) in a sentence or clause. These major stops are indicated primarily (but not solely) by the major disjunctive accents *silluq* and *athnach*. The basic purpose for the changes in the pointing is to slow down the reader in those places, thus performing a function similar to the English comma, semi-colon, or period.

Example	Explanation
קָטַל ➜ קָטָל לַיְלָה ➜ לָיְלָה	The short vowel *pathach* lengthens to a *qamets*.
פְּרִי ➜ פֶּרִי	The vocal *shewa* becomes a *seghol*, with the accent moving back onto it.
אֲנִי ➜ אָנִי	The short vowel of the composite *shewa* is lengthened, with the accent moving back onto it.

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[71] Cf. page 41 (**2B**).

[72] Cf. page 42–43.

קָטְלָה ➜ קָטְלָה שָׁמְרוּ ➜ שָׁמְרוּ	In verbs, the *shewa* under the second syllable reverts back to its original vowel (קָטַל) which is lengthened and again accented.

6A. Vocabulary

Nouns:

חָכְמָה	*ḥŏkmâ*	(f.) wisdom
כֹּהֵן	*kōhēn*	priest
כּוֹכָב	*kôkāb*	star
לֵב / לֵבָב	*lēb / lēbāb*	(m. or f.) heart
לַיְלָה	*lāyᵉlâ*	night (see page 69, **2B**)
מִדְבָּר	*midbār*	wilderness
נֶפֶשׁ	*nepeš*	(m. or f.) breath, life, soul, person
עֶבֶד	*ᶜebed*	servant
עַיִן	*ᶜayin*	(f.) eye, spring
עִיר	*ᶜîr*	(f.) city
עַם	*ᶜam*	people
פְּרִי	*pᵉrî*	fruit
קוֹל	*qôl*	(m. or f.) voice, sound

Verbs:

יָרֵא	*yārēʾ*	he feared
נָשָׂא	*nāśāʾ*	he lifted up, carried
נָתַן	*nātan*	he gave
עָלָה	*ᶜālâ*	he ascended, went up, arose
עָשָׂה	*ᶜāśâ*	he did, made
קָרָא	*qārāʾ*	he called, summoned, read
רָאָה	*rāʾâ*	he saw
שָׁכֵן	*šākan*	he dwelt

וֹ

CHAPTER 6

The Article and Interrogation

In the Word – Exegetical Insights

> Proverbs 30:4
>
> מִי עָלָה־שָׁמַ֫יִם . . . מִי אָסַף־ר֫וּחַ

➲ For unfamiliar words, see **Vocabulary** at the conclusion of this chapter or the **Hebrew-English Glossary** at the end of the book.

➲ The accent used on עָלָה and אָסַף is *metheg* (see pages 46–47). The short horizontal line (־) following both אָסַף and עָלָה is called a *maqqeph*. It is used to bind words together, indicating that they are to be pronounced as though they were one word.

✿ The accent on מִי is a minor conjunctive which indicates that the interrogative pronoun is not to be separated from the following verb. מִי is the personal interrogative pronoun (*who?*). See page 53 (**1B**).

✿ **Exegetical comment:** These questions are rhetorical. By context their implied answer is emphatically "God alone."

1A. The Article

    1B. Introduction

        The Hebrew language has no word to designate the indefinite article (*a, an*). If a word is indefinite, it is usually implied by the context. Certain nouns are definite by nature: e.g., מִצְרַיִם (*Egypt*), שָׂרָה (*Sarah*), יהוה (*Yahweh*).

        The definite article was originally designated by הַל. The ל was lost when הַל was attached inseparably to a word. The loss was compensated for by the insertion of a strong (doubling) *dagesh* (*dagesh forte*) into the first root letter.[73]

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[73] See page 32 (**1D**).

2B. Rules

There are five rules which govern the affixation of the article. The first three govern the majority of cases; the last two govern only a relatively small portion of cases.

1C. The article is always attached inseparably, normally with a *pathach* followed by the strong *dagesh* in the first root letter of the word.

לַיְלָה	*a night*	becomes	הַלַּיְלָה	*the night*
יוֹם	*a day*	becomes	הַיּוֹם	*the day*
קוֹל	*a voice*	becomes	הַקּוֹל	*the voice*

2C. When the article is attached to a word beginning with one of the weak gutturals (א or ע) or with ר (which acts like a weak guttural but actually is not), the article is pointed with a *qamets* without the *dagesh*. This adjustment is necessary since the guttural cannot take the *dagesh*,[74] causing the preceding vowel (*pathach*) to be lengthened to a *qamets*.

אָדָם	*a man*	becomes	הָאָדָם	*the man*
עִיר	*a city*	becomes	הָעִיר	*the city*
רֹאשׁ	*a head*	becomes	הָרֹאשׁ	*the head*

3C. When the article is attached to a word beginning with one of the strong gutturals (ה or ח), the article is usually pointed with a *pathach*. Just as in the case of the weak gutturals, the *dagesh* is rejected and does not appear in the first root letter—instead, that guttural is doubled by implication.

הֵיכָל	*a temple*	becomes	הַהֵיכָל	*the temple*
הֶבֶל	*a breath*	becomes	הַהֶבֶל	*the breath*
חֹשֶׁךְ	*darkness*[75]	becomes	הַחֹשֶׁךְ	*the darkness*

4C. When the article is attached to a word beginning with an ***unaccented*** הָ or עָ it is usually[76] pointed with a *seghol*. It is always pointed with a *seghol*.when attached to a word beginning with חָ.

הָרִים	*mountains*	becomes	הֶהָרִים[77]	*the mountains*

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[74] See page 29 (**1A**).

[75] In the case of a generic noun, a definite article is sometimes not used.

[76] An exception is the word חַג (*a festival* or *feast*) whose *pathach* changes to a *qamets* when the article is added: הֶחָג (*the festival* or *feast*).

| עָפָר | *dust* | becomes | הֶעָפָר | *the dust* |
| חָזָק | *a strong* [*man*] | becomes | הֶחָזָק | *the strong* [*man*] |

5C. When the article is attached to a word beginning with an accented הָ or עָ, the article is usually pointed with a *qamets*.

| עָב | *a cloud* | becomes | הָעָב | *the cloud* |

This rule also explains those nouns whose initial *pathach* or *seghol* are altered to a *qamets* when the article is attached:[78]

אֶרֶץ	*earth/a land*	becomes	הָאָרֶץ	*the earth/land*
הַר	*a mountain*	becomes	הָהָר	*the mountain*[79]
עַם	*people*	becomes	הָעָם	*the people*
אֲרוֹן	*an ark/box*	becomes	הָאָרוֹן	*the ark/box*

2A. The Interrogative ה

The interrogative ה introduces the question in Hebrew. It is always attached inseparably, usually to the first word of a sentence or clause. One should carefully note the differences between this particle and the definite article.

1B. Normally, the interrogative ה is pointed with *hateph-pathach*.

| שָׁמַר | *he kept* | ➔ | הֲשָׁמַר | *Has he kept?* |
| לֹא שָׁמַר | *he did not keep* | ➔ | הֲלֹא שָׁמַר | *Has he not kept?* |

2B. When the interrogative ה is attached to a word which begins with a *shewa* or a guttural, it is pointed with a *pathach* to avoid two *shewas* in a row.

| שְׁמַרְתֶּם | *you kept* | ➔ | הַשְׁמַרְתֶּם | *Have you kept?* |
| אַתָּה | *you* | ➔ | הַאַתָּה | *Are you?* |

3B. An exception to the above rule exists when the interrogative ה is attached to a guttural which is pointed with a *qamets*. In such cases the interrogative ה is pointed with a *seghol*.

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[77] There are very few words in the Hebrew OT that begin with an unaccented הָ and that occur with an article. Note הֶהָרִים (*the mountains*) in Gen 22:2, הֶהָמוֹן (*the tumult/crowd*) in 1 Sam 4:4, בֶּהָדָר (*in the glory*) in Ps 29:4, and הֶהָרוֹתֶיהָ (*her/its pregnant women*) in 2 Kgs 15:16.

[78] These four words can be remembered by utilizing the mnemonic device: *Earthy mountain people* had *the ark.* See footnote 76 for an exception.

[79] Note that the singular and plural of הַר are treated differently (cf. **4C** above).

אָבַד	*he perished*	➔	הֶאָבַד	*Has he perished?*
עָזַב	*he left*	➔	הֶעָזַב	*Has he left?*
חָטָא	*he sinned*	➔	הֶחָטָא	*Has he sinned?*

3A. Interrogative Pronouns

There are two interrogative pronouns which Hebrew uses to introduce questions.

1B. The personal interrogative pronoun is מִי, meaning *who?* (subject) or *whom?* (object). Its form never changes (i.e., is indeclinable). It is always used with reference to persons, not things.

2B. The second interrogative pronoun is מָה. It usually means *what?* but occasionally will mean *how?* This pronoun, used only of things, follows basically the same rules for pointing as the definite article.[80] However, **since ־מֶה and מֶה are so easily recognized and are nearly always translated by means of *what?* or *how?*, there is no need to memorize the following variations in its form.**

1C. Preceding non-gutturals: מַה־זֶּה

Note that the doubling *dagesh* must be used in the first letter of the next word, because the interrogative pronoun generally follows the rules for the pointing of the definite article.

2C. Preceding the gutturals א, ה[81], ע, and ר: מָה־אַתָּה

3C. Preceding harsh gutturals (ה and ח):   מַה־הִיא

4C. Especially[82] preceding gutturals with *qamets*: מֶה־עָשִׂיתָ

NOTE: The short horizontal line (־) following the interrogative pronoun is called a *maqqeph*. It is used to bind words together, indicating that they are to be pronounced as though they were one word.

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[80] See pages 49–50.

[81] Two different treatments of words beginning with ה occur (see, also, **3C**): מָה הָאָרֶץ (Num 13:19) and מֶה־הָיָה (Exod 32:1).

[82] There are many exceptions (cf. מָה רָאִיתָ, Gen 20:10). Often this form omits *maqqeph*. It also occurs before some uses of ה, ח, and ע without *qamets* (cf. מֶה עָז, Judg 14:18). Usage may be affected by distance from the principal accent.

4A. Vocabulary

Nouns:

אֹהֶל	tent
אֲרוֹן	ark, box
הֵיכָל	(m. or f.) temple, palace
חֹשֶׁךְ	darkness
מַיִם	water
עָפָר	dust
קֹדֶשׁ	holiness
רֹאשׁ	head
שֵׁם	name
שָׁנָה	(f.) year

Verbs:

אָהַב	he loved
חָטָא	he sinned
קָדַשׁ	he was holy; he sanctified (not in Qal)
שִׂים	to place[83] (he placed)
שׁוּב	to return, repent (he returned, repented)
שָׁלַח	he sent, stretched out (a hand)

Interrogative Pronouns:

מָה	what? how?
מִי	who? whom?

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[83] In Hebrew lexicons certain verbs are entered by means of their infinitive form rather than a finite verb form. Lexicographers did this in order to preserve the general triliteral nature of Hebrew root words. Verbs like שִׂים are known as *Middle Vowel* verbs. The finite form of the verb (e.g., שָׂם, *he set/placed*) has only two root radicals showing. Whenever *Middle Vowel* verbs appear in the **Vocabulary**, they will be translated as infinitives.

5A.   Decision Table for the Definite Article

Start Here

ADD: ⇦ **NO** ⟶ | Is the article Before עַ, ח, ה, א or ר ? |

• הַ

YES:
⇩ Which letter?

| א or ר | | ע | | ה or ח |

⇩ **ADD**
הָ
↘ **ADD**

| ע | | עָ unaccented | | הָ unaccented | | חָ | | ה or ח | | הָ accented |

ADD⇩   **ADD**⇩   **ADD** ⇩   **ADD** ⇩

| הֶ | | הַ | | הָ |

ז
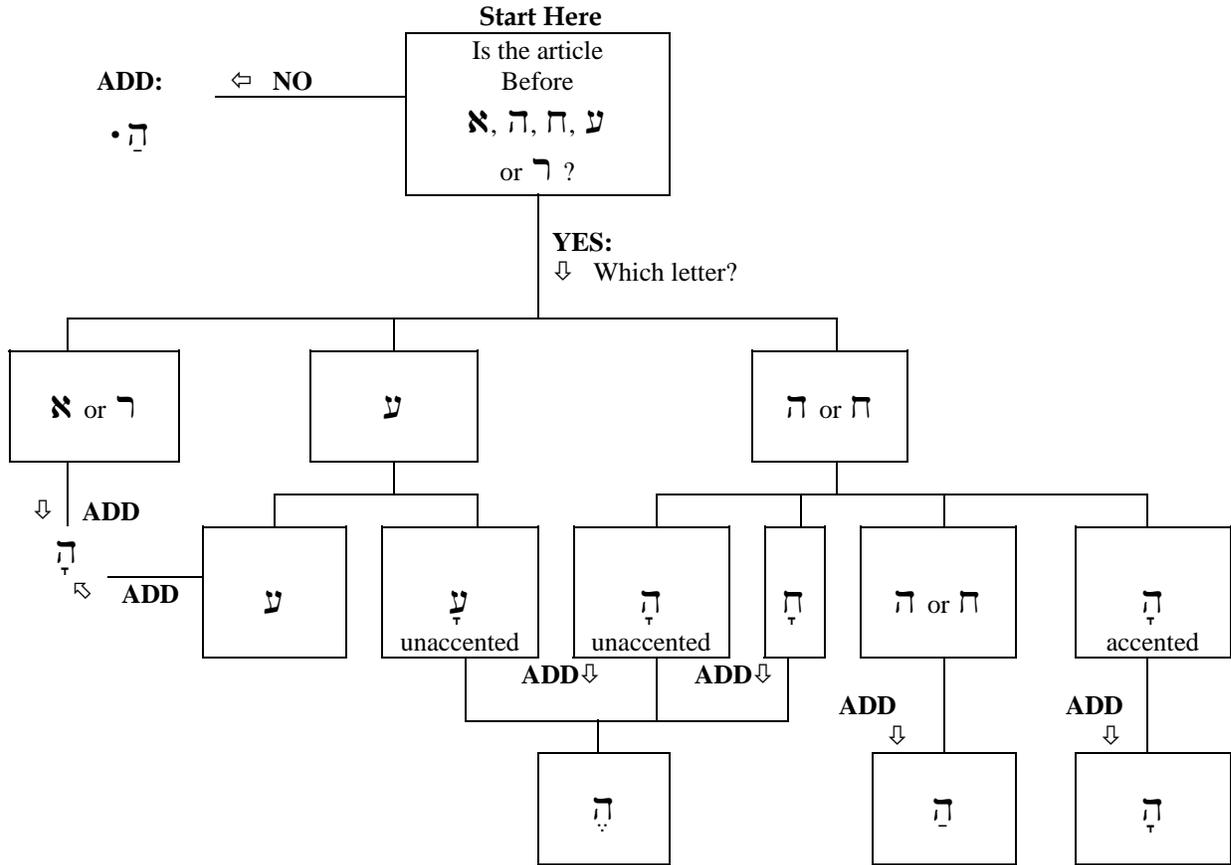
CHAPTER 7

Prepositions

In the Word – Exegetical Insights

Deuteronomy 7:6a

עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַיהוָה

➲ A chart of the personal pronouns is given in **Chapter 10.**

✿ Note that the first word (עַם) is a noun without the definite article: *a people*.

✿ קָדוֹשׁ is an adjective defining the preceding noun and completing the predicate for this clause: *a holy people*.

✿ **Exegetical comment:** This text speaks of the corporate holiness of the people of Israel.

1A. Inseparable Prepositions

Prepositions are words indicating a relationship of a noun to a verb, an adjective, or another noun. As parts of speech they introduce phrases (called prepositional phrases) that modify the other word either adverbially (with relation to verbs and adjective) or adjectivally (with relation to nouns). Prepositions consist of words like "in," "from," "on," "by," and "with."

In the sentence שָׁלַח אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ ("he sent to the king"), the prepositional phrase אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ ("to the king") modifies the verb (שָׁלַח) adverbially (answering the adverb question "Where?"). In שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַדָּבָר ("a king over Israel heard the matter"), the prepositional phrase עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל ("over Israel") modifies the noun מֶלֶךְ adjectivally.

Three prepositions in Hebrew cannot stand alone. They are prefixed inseparably to the words they govern. They are:

ל = *to, for*

בְּ = *in, with, by*

כְּ = *as, like, according to*

1B. Rules

1C. Normally, the inseparable preposition is pointed with a *shewa*.

לַבֹּקֶר *to morning*   לְאָדָם *to a man, for a man*

בְּנָהָר *in a river*   בֶּעָפָר *in dust*

כְּאִישׁ *like a man*   כְּלוֹט *like Lot*

2C. When the preposition is attached to a word beginning with a simple *shewa*, it is pointed with the *hireq*. This change is necessary because two *shewa*s cannot stand back-to-back at the beginning of a Hebrew word (i.e., a syllable cannot begin with two vowelless letters).

לִמְרַגֵּל *to a spy*   **instead of**   לְמְרַגֵּל

בִּמְרַגֵּל *with a spy*   **instead of**   בְּמְרַגֵּל

כִּמְרַגֵּל *like a spy*   **instead of**   כְּמְרַגֵּל

In cases where the inseparable preposition is prefixed to a word beginning with a *yod* and pointed with a simple *shewa* (e.g., לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ), the *shewa* which was vocal is silent and drops out. The *yod*, having thus lost its function as a consonant, merges with the *hireq* making it a long *hireq*: לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ.

3C. When the inseparable preposition is joined to a word beginning with a composite *shewa*, it is pointed with the corresponding short vowel (viz., the short vowel of the composite *shewa*), since two *shewa*s cannot occur back-to-back.

לַעֲשׂוֹת *to do, make*   **instead of**   לְעֲשׂוֹת

בֶּאֱדוֹם *in Edom*   **instead of**   בְּאֱדוֹם

כָּאֳנִיָּה[84] *like a ship*   **instead of**   כָּאֳנִיָּה

Exception: When an inseparable preposition is prefixed to אֱלֹהִים, the א no longer functions as a consonant and becomes silent. The composite *shewa* drops out (elides), causing the *seghol* to lengthen to a *tsere*:

לֵאלֹהִים **becomes** לְאֱלֹהִים

4C. When the inseparable preposition is followed by the definite article, the הַ is omitted, allowing the preposition to usurp the position and pointing of the

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[84] The *qamets* under the preposition is a *qamets hatuph*.

article. The presence of the article is identifiable by the non-prepositional pointing of the preposition.

לַמֶּ֫לֶךְ	*for the king*	**instead of**	לְהַמֶּ֫לֶךְ
בָּעֶ֫רֶב	*in the evening*	**instead of**	בְּהָעֶ֫רֶב
כָּאָדָם	*as the man*	**instead of**	כְּהָאָדָם

5C. When the inseparable preposition is attached immediately before the tone syllable (i.e., the accented syllable) of a word in pause,[85] the pointing under the preposition is *sometimes* lengthened to a *qamets*.

לְמָ֫יִם:	*to waters*	**instead of**	לְמַ֫יִם:
לָשֶׁ֫בֶת:	*for sitting*	**instead of**	לְשֶׁ֫בֶת:

2A.   The Preposition מִן

1B.   Introduction

This preposition, normally meaning *from*, is unique and therefore must be treated separately. It is a preposition that may occur either unattached or attached to the word it governs.

2B.   Pointing Rules

There are three basic guidelines that govern this preposition when attached inseparably to the word it governs.

1C.   Normally, when a נ stands vowelless between two consonants (e.g., as in מִנְמֶ֫לֶךְ), the נ is assimilated and drops out, causing the following letter to receive the *dagesh forte* in a compensatory doubling of that consonant.

מִמֶּ֫לֶךְ	*from a king*	**instead of**	מִנְמֶ֫לֶךְ
מִכֹּהֵן	*from a priest*	**instead of**	מִנְכֹהֵן
מִקּוֹל	*from a voice*	**instead of**	מִנְקוֹל

2C.   When the preposition מִן is prefixed inseparably to a word beginning with a guttural (א, ה, ח, ע, or ר[86]), the vowel under the מ lengthens from a *hireq* to a *tsere*. This change is prompted by the fact that the gutturals refuse the compensatory doubling *dagesh* required when the נ drops out.

מֵאָדָם	*from Adam*	**instead of**	מִאָדָם

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[85] See page 46 (**5A**).

[86] ר sometimes behaves as a guttural (especially when it refuses the doubling *dagesh*).

מֵהַר   *from a mountain*   **instead of**   מִהַר

מֵרוּחַ   *from a spirit*   **instead of**   מִרוּחַ

3C. When the preposition מִן is attached to a word which has the article, the preposition ***does not take the pointing and position of the article*** like the inseparable prepositions (בְּ, כְּ, and לְ).[87] The article is retained and, since the article itself is a guttural, the preposition, when attached, is pointed with a *tsere*.

מֵהַלֵּבָב   *from the heart*   **instead of**   מַלֵּבָב

מֵהָאָדָם   *from the man*   **instead of**   מָאָדָם

מֵהַחֹשֶׁךְ   *from the darkness*   **instead of**   מַחֹשֶׁךְ

In some cases, however, מִן will be attached to the definite noun by means of *maqqeph* without the loss of the נ:

וְאֵד מִן־הָאָרֶץ   = and a mist/flood from the earth   (cp. Gen 2:6)

יָצָא מִן־הַתֵּבָה   = he went out from the ark   (cp. Gen 8:19)

מִן־הַחֲצֵרֹת   = from the courtyards   (Exod 8:9, Eng. 13)

3A. Unattached Prepositions

1B.   The following prepositions[88] are normally utilized as separate words. They do not attach themselves to the words they govern, except with *maqqeph*.

אַחֲרֵי (אַחַר)[89]	after, behind	כְּמוֹ[90]	like, as
אֶל	unto, to, toward	לִפְנֵי	before, in the presence of
אֵצֶל	near, beside	מוּל	opposite, in front of
אֶת (אֶת־)[91]	with	מִן	from
בֵּין	between, among	נֶגֶד	in front of, opposite to
בְּלִי	without	סָבִיב	around, surrounding
עַל	on, upon, over	עַד	until, as far as, up to
עִם	with	לְמַעַן	in order that, for the sake of
תַּחַת	under, instead of	עֵבֶר	beyond

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[87] See page 55 (**4C**).

[88] This is not an exhaustive list of the unattached prepositions.

[89] The quasi-plural form of this preposition is the more frequent form used in the OT.

[90] This form, as compared with the inseparable preposition כְּ, is employed in the poetical sections of the OT.

[91] אֶת and עִם are synonyms. אֶת denotes a close proximity while עִם depicts a more general proximity. See **Chapter 15** for additional discussion of אֶת.

2B.   Examples

אַחַר הַיּוֹם	after today (the day)	מוּל אֱלֹהִים	in front of God
אֶל אִשָּׁה	to a woman	מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם	from the heavens
אֵצֶל הַמַּיִם	near the water	נֶגֶד הָאִישׁ	opposite the man
אֵת הָאִישׁ[92]	with the man	סָבִיב הָאָרֶץ	around the land
בֵּין הַגּוֹיִם	between the nations	עַד הַלַּיְלָה	until tonight (this night)
בְּלִי מֶלֶךְ	without a king	עַל הָעִיר	against/upon the city
כְּמוֹ אָח	like a brother	עִם הַמֶּלֶךְ	with the king
לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים	before God	תַּחַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	under the altar

4A.   Vocabulary: Learn the meanings of each preposition in this chapter.

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[92] Context, and context alone, would indicate whether אֵת is the direct object marker or the preposition.