

Biblical Hebrew 101

Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew

Lesson 5

שְׁעוֹר הַ

Chataf Vowels



All ages (from youngsters through seniors) have fun learning God's holy Word

Continue learning Hebrew vowels

- 5.01 Introduce the chataf vowels
- 5.02 Fact: the Torah is the foundation of the Bible
- 5.03 Practice reading and writing the chataf vowels
- 5.04 More practice reading
- 5.05 Let's read Joshua 1:9 in Hebrew
- 5.06 Brief explanation of cantillation marks

In this lesson, we will learn the *chataf** vowels:

אָ - chataf patach; אֶ - chataf segol; and אֲ - chataf kamats.

*Also pronounced chatef vowels

5.01 Introduce the chataf vowels

1. Chataf vowels are a combination of a sheva (◌ְ) plus a patach (◌ַ), segol (◌ֶ), or a kamats (◌ֹ).
2. They have a much quicker sound than their corresponding single vowel. They are also called half or reduced vowels.
3. Chataf vowels only appear under guttural letters.
The guttural letters are: aleph (א), hay (ה), chet (ח), ayin (ע), and sometimes resh (ר).

Chataf Vowel	Name of vowel	Sound of vowel	Block vowel with aleph	Write each chataf
◌ְַ	חֵטף פָּתַח chataf patach	ah as in spa; same sound as patach	אָ	
◌ְֶ	חֵטף סֵגוֹל chataf segol	eh as in bed; same sound as segol	אֶ	
◌ְֹ	חֵטף קָמָץ chataf kamats	o as in row	אֲ	

5.02 **FACT:** the Torah is the foundation of the Bible

Even though the Old Testament is at the front of today's Bibles and is the larger portion of the whole Bible, it is basically disregarded today with the exception of Psalms and Proverbs. Many traditional, mainstream Christians only study the Old Testament for its historical information and as an aid to understanding the Jews. To these Christians, the New Testament is the Scripture with greatest relevance.

Interesting fact: did you know that every book of the Bible has its foundation in the Torah?

Let us consider: what Scripture did Yeshua Himself study? The Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible). What Scripture did Paul and the early believers study? The Torah. How do we know? Because the Apostolic Scriptures had not yet been written.

If our goal is to live and to walk as our Messiah did, don't we think we should do the things He did, including studying the Scriptures He studied?

We are living in a very special time – God chose for US to live at this time and is allowing us the opportunity to help restore that which was lost in our understanding and study of Scripture.

5.03 Practice reading and writing the Chataf vowels below

Chataf Vowels				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chataf vowels appear only under these guttural consonants א (aleph), ה (hay), ע (ayin), ח (chet) & sometimes ר (resh). The chatafs are pronounced quicker and shorter than the regular segol and tseré. 				
Letter	Name	Sound	Block	Write letter & vowel
א	aleph	silent	א	
אֶ	aleph with chataf segol	eh as in bed	אֶ	
אִ	aleph with chataf patach	ah as in spa	אִ	
אֹ	aleph with chataf kamats	o (long O, as in row)	אֹ	
ה	hay	silent (as in hi)	ה	
הֶ	hay with chataf segol	heh as in hello	הֶ	
הִ	hay with chataf patach	hah as in ha	הִ	
הֹ	hay with chataf kamats	ho (long O, as in hold)	הֹ	
ע	ayin	silent	ע	
עֶ	ayin with chataf segol	eh as in bed	עֶ	
עִ	ayin with chataf patach	ah as in spa	עִ	
עֹ	ayin with chataf kamats	o (long O, as in over)	עֹ	
ח	chet	ch as in Bach	ח	
חֶ	chet with chataf segol	cheh as in chet	חֶ	
חִ	chet with chataf patach	cha as is chataf	חִ	
חֹ	chet with chataf kamats	cho (long O, as in row)	חֹ	

5.04 Now, we are going to practice putting these sounds together!

Our objective is to become familiar with the letters and their sounds not to memorize words.

Always remember read: right to left and top to bottom.

Read & Write words below			
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration (please, try to read before looking at transliteration)	Practice writing each word (use block print)
אַהֲבָה	love (noun)	ah-hah- vah	
אֲדָמָה	earth, ground	ah-dah- mah	
הָאֲדָמָה	the earth (Gen 12:3)	hah-ah-dah- mah	
חָטָא	sinner	chah- tah	
אֲשֶׁר	who, which, where, that	ah- shehr	
חָטַף	chataf (also, pronounced chatef) is a half or reduced vowel. (eg, the vowels we studied in this lesson)	chah- tahf	
יַעֲשֶׂה	he will do, make (Num 9:14)	yah-ah- seh	
אֱמֶת	truth	eh- meht	
חֹזֶק	strong (imperative or command)	chah- zahk	
וְאַמִּץ	& courage (& courageous)	veh-eh- mahtz	
חֹזֶק וְאַמִּץ	“Be strong and of good courage” Congratulations said to Torah service participants at the end of Torah service. (Deut 31:6, 7, 23; Josh 1:6, 7, 9, 18, 10:25; 2Sam 10:12; 1Chron 19:13, 22:13, 28:20; 2Chron 32:7)	chah- zahk veh-eh- mahtz	

* **Tip** Normally when there are 2 segols in a 3-4 letter word, the accent is on the first segol. However, when a word has a chataf segol and a segol, the accent remains on the final syllable; it does not move to the first.

Examples: אֱמֶת & וְאַמִּץ: neither of these two words has two segols; each word has a chataf segol (a half or reduced vowel) & only segol, so the accent remains on the final syllable.

At work, I'm starting to count using the Hebrew alpha-numeric numerals! BO



5.05 Let's read Joshua 1:9 ... in Hebrew!

Words for Joshua 1:9		
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration
צוֹיְתִיךָ	I have commanded you. Note: ך is <u>not</u> a shurek; <u>it is a vav</u> that is doubled. (We shall study the doubling of a consonant in a future lesson.)	tseev-vee-tee-chah
חֹזֵק	be strong	chah-zahk
וְאַמִּץ	& courage (courageous)	veh-eh-mahtz

↓ Vav

צוֹיְתִיךָ חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ

↑ Patach

“I have commanded you to be strong & of good courage,” Joshua 1:9a

5.06 Brief explanation of cantillation marks

In the 600s AD, the Masorets added vowels and other markings to the Hebrew letters in order to ensure accurate pronunciation. Today, these markings are found in Biblical writings. The verse below includes these extra marks (aka cantillation marks, accents, tropes).

The Masoretic text includes cantillation markings. These special marks are placed on accented syllables. These marks are placed either above or below the consonantal letters (the consonants).

Explanation and example of cantillation marks:

- In the first word below, there are 2. (One is above the tav and the other is above the chaf sofit)
- In the 2nd word, it looks like a backwards “L” and is below the zayin.
- And in the 3rd word, *above* the mem is a mark that resembles a colon.

צוֹיְתִיךָ חֹזֵק וְאַמִּץ



201 Hebrew Verbs fully conjugated in all the forms ... A great tool to further your studies!
Barron's Educational Series, Inc. *ISBN: 0-8120-0331-4.

(Order used; ours was published in 1970! Sometimes it takes several weeks to arrive 😊)