

Biblical Hebrew 101

Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew

Lesson 8

שְׁעוֹר ח

Vocal & Silent Sheva



Children have fun learning Hebrew with the puppet ‘Shalom!’

“... and you are to teach them carefully to your children,” from the Shema Deut 6:7a CJB

Begin learning the vocal & silent sheva

- 8.01 Review dagesh kal
- 8.02 Introduce dagesh chazak
- 8.03 Practice reading words with dagesh kal & dagesh chazak
- 8.04 Introduce vocal & silent shevas
- 8.05 Level 1: vocal sheva – sheva is at beginning of word is vocal
- 8.06 Level 2: vocal sheva – 2 consecutive shevas
- 8.07 Practice levels 1 & 2 of the vocal sheva
- 8.08 Answers to 8.04

8.01 Review dagesh kal – dagesh means emphasis.

1. Dagesh kal (דָּגֶשׁ קַל) is also called dagesh lene (or a weak dagesh)

- Dagesh kal changes the sound of the consonant.
This dagesh is only found in the 6-letter acronym BeGeD KeFeT: בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת
However, for this class we're only concerned with these 3 letters and their changes from כּ to כֹּ; from כּ to כָּ; from פּ to פֹּ.
- Dagesh kal never follows a vowel.
- Dagesh kal is either 1st letter of a word or opens a syllable.

8.02 Introduce dagesh chazak

1. Dagesh chazak (דָּגֶשׁ חֲזָק) is also called dagesh forte (or dagesh strong)

IMPORTANT: A dagesh chazak is immediately preceded by a vowel.

- This dagesh doubles the consonant in which it stands.
- In appearance, this dagesh is identical to dagesh kal.
- A dagesh chazak may appear in any consonant except the 5 gutturals (aleph: א, hey: ה, chet: ח, ayin: ע, & sometimes resh: ר). Diphthongs are also long. (7.02 covers diphthongs)

Example: אַהֲתָהּ = אַהֲ+תָהּ (aht-tah).

8.03 Practice reading words with dagesh kal & dagesh chazak

Practice recognizing dagesh kal & dagesh chazak		
* Note: the rule for each dagesh is named below		
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration (please try to read before looking at transliteration) Syllable that is accented is shown below with yellow bold highlight.
דָּבַר	he spoke (Lev 25:2)	dahb- behr * Dagesh Kal (dalet is part of בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת) & Dagesh Chazak (bet is doubled because it follows a vowel.)
בְּמִדְבָּר	in the wilderness or desert (Dt 1:1)	bahm-meed- bahr * Dagesh Kal (bet is part of בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת) & Dagesh Chazak (mem is doubled because it follows a vowel.) * Dagesh Kal (bet opens a syllable & is part of בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת)
הַמַּיִם	the water (Gen 1:2)	hahm- may -yeem * Dagesh Chazak (mem is doubled because it follows a vowel.)
לְמִטָּה	of every tribe (Num 13:2)	leh-maht- teh * Dagesh Chazak (tet is doubled because it follows a vowel.)
הַגִּדָּה	Haggadah (booklet that tells the story of the exodus from Egypt)	hahg-gah- dah * Dagesh Chazak (gimmel is doubled because it follows a vowel.)
הַשָּׁמַיִם	the heavens (Gen 1:1)	hahsh-shah- may -yeem * Dagesh Chazak (sheen is doubled because it follows a vowel.)
וַיִּבְדֵּל	and he divided (Gen 1:7)	vay-yahv- dehl * Dagesh Kal (dalet is part of בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת)
יַמִּים	seas (Gen 1:10)	yahm- meem * Dagesh Chazak (mem is doubled because it follows a vowel.)
וַיִּלְבְּדֵהוּ	And to divide (Gen 1:18)	oo-lah-hahv- deel * Dagesh Kal (dalet is part of בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת)

8.04 Introduce vocal & silent shevas

The sheva can be either vocal or it can be silent. The vocal sheva is pronounced with a very quick and almost indistinguishable “eh” sound.

There are various rules which determine whether the sheva is vocal (“eh”) or silent which we will discuss in this lesson.

8.05 Level 1: vocal sheva – when sheva is at the beginning of a word

When the sheva is <u>under the first letter of a word</u> it is vocal. It is a sheva na (שְׁוָא נָע). This sheva generally has a quick and an almost indistinguishable sound: “eh”.		
Word	Meaning	Transliteration Explanation: 1. The small “eh” signifies the quick & almost indistinguishable “eh” sound. 2. The bolded, highlighted syllable is accented.
שְׁמָע	Shema	sheh- mah (commonly pronounced: sh' mah)
שְׁוָא	sheva: one of the vowels in Hebrew	sheh- vah (commonly pronounced: sh' vah)
בְּרֵאשִׁית	Genesis (literally: in the head or beginning)	beh-reh- sheet (note: the “eh” in the 1 st syllable is very quick and written with a small font. (commonly pronounced: b'reh- sheet)

8.06 Level 2: vocal sheva – when 2 shevas are consecutive (in other words, are in a row)

When 2 Shevas are consecutive, <u>the 1st is silent</u> (שְׁוָא נָח) & <u>2nd is vocal</u> (שְׁוָא נָע). 1. The first of two consecutive shevas closes the syllable. The first sheva is silent (שְׁוָא נָח) 2. The second of 2 consecutive shevas is vocal (שְׁוָא נָע) and has a quick “eh” sound.		
Word	Meaning	Transliteration
יִשְׂרְצּוּ	they (3 rd person, masculine, plural) will swarm, teem, or bring forth abundantly (Gen 1:20)	yeesh-reh- tsoo
וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ	and he (3 rd person, masculine, singular) will guard or keep you. (From the Aaronic Blessing) NOTE: The ך is a vocal sheva (שְׁוָא נָע) & does not count as one of the 2 consecutive shevas	veh-yeesh-meh- reh -chah
יִשְׁמְרוּ	they will guard or keep	yeesh-meh- roo

Grammar-made-simple: Levels 1 & 2 of the vocal sheva:

- Level 1: If the sheva is under the 1st letter of the word, it is vocal.
- Level 2: If there are 2 shevas in a row (consecutive), the 1st is silent (it closes the syllable) & the 2nd is vocal (& it opens the syllable).

8.07 Practice levels 1 & 2 of the sheva

When the sheva that is <u>under the first letter of a word sheva</u> , it is <u>vocal & is called a sheva na</u> (שְׁוָא נָע). This sheva generally has a quick and an almost indistinguishable sound: “eh”.			
When 2 Shevas are consecutive (in a row), <u>the 1st is silent</u> (שְׁוָא נָח) & <u>2nd is vocal</u> (שְׁוָא נָע).			
Word	Meaning	Transliteration	Name Level of sheva & why (Answers are on 8.09)
יִשְׂרָצוּ	they (3 rd person, masculine, plural) swarm, teem, or bring forth abundantly (Gen 1:20)	yeesh-reh- tsoo	Level 2: 2 shevas in a row
שְׁמַע	Shema	sheh- mah (commonly pronounced: sh' mah)	
בְּנֵי	sons of	beh- nay (commonly pronounced: b' nay)	
יִשְׁמְרוּ	they will guard or keep	yeesh-meh- roo	
שְׁוָא	sheva (one of the vowels in Hebrew)	sheh- vah (commonly pronounced: sh' vah)	
קְדוּשִׁים	holy (verb, masculine plural)	keh-do- sheem (commonly pronounced: k'do- sheem)	
בְּרֵאשִׁית	Genesis (literally: in the head or beginning)	beh-reh- sheet (note: the “eh” in the 1 st syllable is very quick and written here with a small font)	
וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ	and you (2 nd person, masculine, singular) will guard or keep. (From the Aaronic Blessing, Nu 6:24-26.)	veh-yeesh-meh- reh -chah	
רְאוּבֵן	Reuben (Ex 1:2)	reh-oo- vehn	
וְאַהֲרֹן	and Aaron (Ex 5:1)	veh-ah-hah- ron	
נַפְשְׁכֶם	your soul (Is 55:2)	nahf-sheh- chehm	

“By studying Hebrew, we are able to get the treasures out the Word,” DH

8.09 ANSWERS to “Practice levels 1 & 2”

When the sheva is under the first letter of a word it is vocal and is called a sheva na (שְׁוָא נָע). This sheva generally has a quick and an almost indistinguishable sound: “eh”.

When 2 Shevas are consecutive (in a row), the 1st is silent (שְׁוָא נָח) & 2nd is vocal (שְׁוָא נָע).

Word	Meaning	Transliteration	Level of sheva & why
יִשְׂרָצוּ	they (3 rd person, masculine, plural) swarm, teem, or bring forth abundantly (Gen 1:20)	yeesh-reh- tsoo	Level 2: 2 shevas in a row
שְׁמָע	Shema	sheh- mah (commonly pronounced: sh' mah)	Level 1: sheva is under 1st letter
בְּנֵי	sons of	beh- nay (commonly pronounced: b' ney)	Level 1: sheva is under 1st letter
יִשְׁמְרוּ	they will guard or keep	yeesh-meh- roo	Level 2: 2 shevas in a row
שְׁוָא	sheva (one of the vowels in Hebrew)	sheh- vah (commonly pronounced: sh' vah)	Level 1: sheva is under 1st letter
קְדוֹשִׁים	holy (verb, masculine plural)	keh-do- sheem (commonly pronounced: k'do- sheem)	Level 1: sheva is under 1st letter
בְּרֵאשִׁית	Genesis (literally: in the head or beginning)	beh-reh- sheet (note: the “eh” in the 1 st syllable is very quick and written here with a small font)	Level 1: sheva is under 1st letter
וְיִשְׁמְרְךָ	and you (2 nd person, masculine, singular) will guard or keep. (From the Aaronic Blessing, Nu 6:24-26.)	veh-yeesh-meh- reh -chah	Level 2: 2 shevas in a row NOTE: The ך is a vocal sheva (שְׁוָא נָע) & does not count as one of the 2 consecutive shevas
רְאוּבֵן	Reuben (Ex 1:2)	reh-oo- vehn	Level 1: sheva is under 1st letter
וְאַהֲרֹן	and Aaron (Ex 5:1)	veh-ah-hah- ron	Level 1: sheva is under 1st letter (the 2nd sheva does not count because it is a chatef patach) (The markings above the “resh” are a cholam & a cantillation mark)
נַפְשְׁכֶם	your soul (Is 55:2)	nahf-sheh- chehm	Level 2: 2 shevas in a row