

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

*"Chataf" is also pronounced "chatef".

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

5.01 Introduce the chataf vowels

1. Chataf vowels are a combination of a sheva (◌ְ) plus a patach (◌ַ), segol (◌ֶ), or a kamats (◌ֹ).
2. The chataf vowels are half or reduced vowels. They have a quicker sound than their corresponding single vowel.
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. Chataf Kamats can appear with <u>any letter</u> – unlike the other chatafs which can be used <u>only</u> with gutturals.	אֹ	

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

Today many evangelical Christians discount the Old Testament (the TaNaKh) with the exception of Psalms and Proverbs. The Old Testament [TaNaKh] is studied for historical information, as a metaphor or an aid to understanding Jews. To these Christians, the New Testament is the Scripture with greatest importance.

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

Let us consider:

1. What Scripture did Yeshua Himself study? The Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible).
2. What Scripture did Paul and the early believers study? The Torah.
3. How do we know? Because the Apostolic Writings (New Testament) had not yet been written.

We are living in a very special time – God chose 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.

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

5.03 Practice reading and writing the chataf vowels below

Chataf Vowels				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chataf patach (◌ַֿ) & chataf segol (◌ֿֿ) vowels: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Appear only under guttural consonants א (aleph), ה (hay), כ (chet), ע (ayin), & sometimes ר (resh). Are pronounced quicker & shorter than the regular patach (as in “spa”) & segol (as in “bed”). Chataf kamats (◌ָֿ) is also called chatef kamats <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used with any consonant. In Israel, the pronunciation is a long O (as in “over”) In the US, the pronunciation is often “ah” (as in “spa”) 				
Letter	Name	Sound	Block	Write letter & vowel
א	aleph	silent	א	
אֿ	aleph with chataf segol	eh as in bed	אֿ	
אַֿ	aleph with chataf patach	ah as in spa	אַֿ	
אָֿ	aleph with chataf kamats	o (long O, as in row)	אָֿ	
ה	hay	silent (as in hi)	ה	
הֿ	hay with chataf segol	heh as in hello	הֿ	
הַֿ	hay with chataf patach	hah as in ha	הַֿ	
הָֿ	hay with chataf kamats	ho (long O, as in hold)	הָֿ	
כ	chet	ch as in Bach	כ	
כֿ	chet with chataf segol	cheh as in chet	כֿ	
כַֿ	chet with chataf patach	cha as is chataf	כַֿ	
כָֿ	chet with chataf kamats	cho (long O, as in row)	כָֿ	
ע	ayin	silent	ע	
עֿ	ayin with chataf segol	eh as in bed	עֿ	

אָ	ayin with chataf patach	ah as in spa	אָ	
אֲ	ayin with chataf kamats	o (long O, as in over)	אֲ	

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	
אַדָּמָה	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 [YHVH] 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- zakh
וְאַמֵּץ	& courage (courageous)	veh-eh- mahtz

↓ Vav

צוֹיְתִיךָ חֹזֵק וְאַמֵּץ

↑ 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 Masoretes added vowels and other markings to the Hebrew letters in order to ensure accurate pronunciation. (Today, these markings are found in Biblical writings.)

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

The verse below includes these extra marks (aka cantillation marks, accents, tropes).

Explanation and example of these marks:

- In the first word below, there are 2. (One is *above* the tav; the other is *above* the chaf sofit)
- In the 2nd word, the mark 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 וְאַמֵּץ

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