

Biblical Hebrew Course 101

– Boot Camp –

Lesson 5

שְׁעָרָה

Developing our understanding of the Hebrew Aleph Bet: Gutturals, Chatef Vowels, & Accent Marks



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

- 5.01 Introduce the guttural consonants (letters)
- 5.02 Introduce the chatef vowels
- 5.03 Practice reading and writing the chatef vowels
- 5.04 Grammar-Made-Simple: chatef vowels
- 5.05 More practice reading
- 5.06 Let's read Joshua 1:9b in Hebrew
- 5.07 Brief introduction to accent or cantillation marks

Don't forget to bring your completed homework to class 😊

5.01 Introduce the Hebrew guttural letters (consonants)

- 1 The guttural letters are: aleph (א), hay (ה), chet (ח), ayin (ע), and sometimes resh (ר).
2. Hebrew guttural letters are pronounced in the back of the throat. Today, however, many Westerners have difficulty correctly pronouncing the ayin & the resh.
3. Gutturals cannot take a dagesh within the letter; meaning, they cannot be doubled.

5.02 Introduce the chatef vowels

1. Chatef vowels are a combination of a sh'va (ׁ) plus a patach (ׂ), or a segol (׃), or a kamats (ׄ).
2. The chatef vowels are half or reduced vowels. The only difference is that the chatefs have a shorter or quicker sound.
3. The chatef patach maintains the sound of the patach (ah as in “spa”); and the chatef segol still has the sound of the segol (eh as in “bed”).
4. The chatef patach & chatef segol vowels generally appear under guttural letters.
5. **The chatef kamats is different** – it does not have the sound of “ah”, as in “spa”; instead, its sound is **always a long O (as in “row”)**. Unlike the chatef patach and chatef segol, the chatef kamats can appear under ANY letter, not just under gutturals.

Chatef vowels				
Chatef Vowel	Name of vowel	Sound of vowel	Block vowel with aleph	Write each chatef
ׁ	חֲטָף פָתָח chatef patach	ah as in “spa”. (The chatef patach has the same sound as the patach.) It generally appears under gutturals.	אַ	
ׂ	חֲטָף סָגָול chatef segol	eh as in “bed.” (The chatef segol has the same sound as the segol.) It generally appears under gutturals.	אֵ	
ׄ	חֲטָף קָמָט chatef kamats	o as in “row”. Its sound is <u>always</u> a long O as in “row”. Chatef kamats can appear under <u>any letter</u> – unlike the other chatefs which can be used <u>generally</u> with gutturals.	אָ	

5.03 Practice reading and writing the chataf vowels below

אַ	aleph	silent	אַ	
אֵ	aleph with chatef segol	eh as in bed	אֵ	
אָ	aleph with chatef patach	ah as in spa	אָ	
אָ	aleph with chatef kamats	oh (long O, as in row)	אָ	

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

ה	hay	h (as in hi)	ה	
הָ	hay with chatef segol	heh as in hello	הָ	
הָָ	hay with chatef patach	hah as in ha	הָָ	
הָֹ	hay with chatef kamats	hoh (long O, as in hold)	הָֹ	
ח	chet	ch as in Bach	ח	
חָ	chet with chatef segol	cheh as in chet	חָ	
חָָ	chet with chatef patach	chah as in chatef	חָָ	
חָֹ	chet with chatef kamats	choh (long O, as in row)	חָֹ	
ע	ayin	silent	ע	
עָ	ayin with chatef segol	eh as in bed	עָ	
עָָ	ayin with chatef patach	ah as in spa	עָָ	
עָֹ	ayin with chatef kamats	o (long O, as in over)	עָֹ	

5.04 Grammar-Made-Simple: Chatef Vowels

- Chatef patach (ָ) & chatef segol (ָָ) vowels:
 1. Generally appear under guttural consonants **א** (aleph), **ה** (hay), **ח** (chet), **ע** (ayin), & sometimes **ר** (resh).
 2. Are pronounced quicker & shorter than the regular patach (as in “spa”) & segol (as in “bed”).
- Chatef kamats (ֹ)

1. Can be used under any consonant.
2. Sound is a long O (as in “row”).

5.05 More practice reading

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

Read & Write words below			
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration (please, try to read before looking at transliteration)	Practice writing each word (use block print)
1) אַהֲבָה	love (noun)	ah-hah- vah	
2) אָדָם	earth, ground	ah-dah- mah	
3) הָאָדָם	the earth (Gen 12:3)	hah-ah-dah- mah	
4) חָטָא	sinner	chah- tah	
5) אֲשֶׁר	who, which, where, that	ah- shehr	
6) חָטָף	chatef is a half or reduced vowel.	chah- tahf	
7) יְعַשֵּׂה	he will do, make (Num 9:14)	yah-ah- seh	
8) אֲמֹת	* Tip below	eh- meht	
9) חֹזֶק	strong (imperative or command)	chah- zahk	
10) וְאַמְתַּז	* Tip below	veh-eh- mahtz	
11) חֹזֶק וְאַמְתַּז	“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 chatef segol and a segol, the accent remains on the final syllable; it does not move to the first.

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

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

Words for Joshua 1:9b		
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration
חֲזָק	be strong	chah- zahk
וְאַמְתָּז	& courage (courageous)	veh-eh- mahtz

Can you recognize the chatef patach & the chatef segol in the verse below?

צְרָזָבְּ וְאַמְתָּז

“be strong & of good courage,” Joshua 1:9b

5.07 Brief introduction to accent marks¹ (aka cantillation marks)

The Masoretic text is regarded as the authoritative text of the Hebrew canon of the TaNaKh (Old Testament). In the 600s AD and later, the Masoretic scribes added vowels and other marks to the Hebrew letters to ensure accurate pronunciation.

The Masoretes added dots and dashes above or below a consonant to indicate it was to be stressed or accented. These marks serve many functions and go by various names; however, for this course's purpose of learning to read the Torah, we shall refer to them as accent marks.

In this brief introduction to accent marks, our goal is for you to be able to differentiate between vowels & accent marks¹.

The verse below includes these accent marks:

- In the first word, the accent mark looks like a backwards “L” and is *below* the zayin.
- And in the 2nd word, the accent mark is *above* the mem and resembles a colon.
- **Anytime you see a mark above or below a letter that you do not recognize, it is an accent mark!** It is not a vowel.

צְרָזָבְּ וְאַמְתָּז



¹ In future lessons, we will continue to expand our understanding of these accent marks and their usages.