

Biblical Hebrew Course 101

– Boot Camp –

Lesson 5

שְׁעוֹר הַ

Developing our understanding of the Hebrew Aleph Bet: Gutturals, Chatef Vowels, Syllables, & 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
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- 5.06 **Let's read** Joshua 1:9b in Hebrew
- 5.07 **Introduce:** Hebrew syllables
- 5.08 **Exercise:** identify the Hebrew syllables (answer on 5.09)
- 5.09 **Answer:** Exercise 5.08
- 5.10 **Brief introduction to accent or cantillation marks**

5.01 Introduce: the guttural consonants (letters)

- 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 an O as in “row”**.

Chatef vowels				
Chatef Vowel	Name of vowel	Sound of vowel	Block vowel with aleph	Write each chatef
	חֵטף פָּתַח chatef patach	ah as in “spa”. (The chatef patach has the same sound as the patach.) It generally appears under gutturals.	אֶ	
	חֵטף סֵגוֹל chatef segol	eh as in “bed.” (The chatef segol has the same sound as the segol.) It generally appears under gutturals.	אֵ	
	חֵטף קָמָץ chatef kamats	o as in “row”. Its sound is <u>always</u> an O as in “row”.	אֹ	

5.03 Practice reading and writing the chataf vowels below

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

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

ה	hay	h (as in hi)	ה	
הֶ	hay with chatef segol	heh as in hello	הֶ	
הַ	hay with chatef patach	hah as in ha	הַ	
הָ	hay with chatef kamats	hoh (long O, as in hold)	הָ	
ח	chet	ch as in Bach	ח	
חֶ	chet with chatef segol	cheh as in chet	חֶ	
חַ	chet with chatef patach	chah as is chatef	חַ	
חָ	chet with chatef kamats	choh (long O, as in row)	חָ	
ע	ayin	silent	ע	
עֶ	ayin with chatef segol	eh as in bed	עֶ	
עַ	ayin with chatef patach	ah as in spa	עַ	
עָ	ayin with chatef kamats	o (long O, as in over)	עָ	

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”).

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

5.05 More practice reading

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

Read & Print words below			
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration (please, try to read before looking at transliteration)	Practice printing each word (use block letters)
1) אַהֲבָה	love (noun)	ah-hah- vah	
2) אֲדָמָה	earth, ground	ah-dah- mah	
3) הָאֲדָמָה	the earth (Gen 12:3)	hah-ah-dah- mah	
4) חַטָּא	sinner	chah- tah	
5) אֲשֶׁר	who, which, where, that	ah- shehr	
6) חֲטֵף	chatef is a half or reduced vowel.	chah- tehf	
7) יַעֲשֶׂה	he will do, make (Num 9:14)	yah-ah- seh	
8) אֱמֶת * Tip below	truth	eh- meht	
9) חֲזַק	strong (imperative or command)	chah- zahk	
10) וַאֲמִץ * Tip below	& courage (& courageous)	veh-eh- mahtz	
11) חֲזַק וַאֲמִץ	“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: אֱמֶת & וַאֲמִץ: neither of these two words has two segols; each word has a chatef segol (a half or reduced vowel) & only one full segol, so the accent remains on the final syllable.

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Barron's Educational Series, Inc. *ISBN: 0-8120-0331-4.

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

Idea: spiral bind this book for ease of use & insure the book's longevity, as it's 50 yrs old.
Staples: 10302 E. 71st St/Tulsa, OK – 918-294-8823. Mary in the Copy Center.

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

Words for Joshua 1:9b		
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration
חִזְק	be strong	chah- zahnk
וְאַמֵּץ	& courage (courageous)	veh-eh- mahtz

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

חִזְק וְאַמֵּץ

5.07 Introduce: Hebrew syllables

- Every Hebrew syllable begins with a consonant and has one vowel. (Note: in Hebrew, syllables cannot begin with a vowel/nikkud.)
- Hebrew has two types of syllables: open and closed.
 - Open syllables begin with a consonant and end with a vowel.
 - Closed syllables begin & end with a consonant & have a vowel between the consonants.
 - Example:

בְּהָבָה has two syllables.

The first syllable is **בְּ**. It is open because it ends with the vowel kamats.

The second syllable is **הָבָה**. It is closed because it ends with a consonant.

- Easy way to identify how many syllables are in a word – count the number of vowels.
 - The number of vowels in the word equals the number of syllables.
 - A simple way to indicate the type of syllables:
 “O” = an open syllable
 “C” = a closed syllable

5.08 Exercise: identify the Hebrew syllables (answers on 5.09)

Below identify the syllables & whether they are closed or open					
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration <small>Read before looking at transliteration</small>	Number of syllables	Write each word with syllables	Indicate type of syllables <small>C = closed syllable, ends with a consonant O = open syllable, ends with a vowel</small>
1) יָד	hand	yahd	1	יָד	C (syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
2) אָח	brother	ach	1	אָח	C
3) גַּג	roof	gahg			
4) אָב	father	ahv			

5) אָהַב	he loved	ah- hahv	2	אָ - הַב	O (1 st syllable: “אָ”) C (2 nd syllable: “הַב” The 2 nd syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
6) אָבַד	he was lost or perished	ah- vahd	2	אָ - בַד	O (1 st syllable: “אָ”) C (2 nd syllable: “בַד” The 2 nd syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant))
7) חָגַג	celebrated (verb, as in ‘he made or kept a festival’)	chah- gahg			
8) דָּבָר	word or thing (noun)	dah- vahr			

5.09 Answers to Exercise 5.08:

Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration <small>Read before looking at transliteration</small>	Number of syllables	Write each word with syllables	Indicate type of syllables <small>C = closed syllable, ends with a consonant O = open syllable, ends with a vowel</small>
1) יָד	hand	yahd	1	יָד	C (syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
2) אָח	brother	ach	1	אָח	C (syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
3) גַּג	roof	gahg	1	גַּג	C (syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
4) אָב	father	ahv	1	אָב	C (syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
5) אָהַב	he loved	ah- hahv	2	אָ - הַב	O (1 st syllable: “אָ”. This syllable is open because it ends with a vowel) C (2 nd syllable: “הַב” . The 2 nd syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
6) אָבַד	he was lost or perished	ah- vahd	2	אָ - בַד	O (1 st syllable: “אָ” This syllable is open because it ends with a vowel) C (2 nd syllable: “בַד” The 2 nd syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
7) חָגַג	celebrated (verb, as in he made or kept a festival)	chah- gahg	2	חָ - גַג	O (1 st syllable: “חָ” This syllable is open because it ends with a vowel) C (2 nd syllable: “גַג” The 2 nd syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)
8) דָּבָר	word or thing (noun)	dah- vahr	2	דָּ - בָר	O (1 st syllable: “דָּ” This syllable is open because it ends with a vowel) C (2 nd syllable: “בָר” The 2 nd syllable is closed, because it ends with a consonant)

5.10 *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.

וַיִּזְכֹּר יְהוָה אֶת אַבְרָם



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