

Biblical Hebrew Course 101
– **Boot Camp** –
Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew

Lesson 7

שְׁעוֹר ז

Developing our understanding of the Hebrew Aleph Bet:
Diphthongs, Dagesh Kal, Syllables, and Sh'vas



Lighting candles & eating challah is a wonderful way to welcome in Shabbat.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” Exodus 20:8 NASB, from the Ten Commandments

- 7.01 Sound-a-Like Consonants
- 7.02 Diphthongs
- 7.03 Exercises with diphthongs (answers on 7.09)
- 7.04 Review: dagesh kal & exercises (answers on 7.09)
- 7.05 Review: Hebrew syllables
- 7.06 Exercises with Hebrew syllables (answers on 7.09)
- 7.07 Introduce the vocal & silent sh'vas
- 7.08 Exercise with vocal & silent sh'vas (answers on 7.09)
- 7.09 Answers to Exercises 7.03, 7.04, 7.06, and 7.08

7.01 Sound-a-Like consonants: consonants with the same sound

Did you know in English different consonants can have the same sound?
For example: the “ce” in “notice” has the same sound as the “s” in “plus.”

Notice these consonants sound-a-like:		
Letter	Name of letter	Sound
ו	vet	v, as in vice
ו	vav	v, as in vice
ט	tet	t, as in tell
ת	tav	t, as in tell
כ	chet	ch, as in Bach
ח	chaf	ch, as in Bach
ך	chaf sofit	same sound as כ; only it is the final letter of a word
כ	kaf	k, as in keep
ק	koof	k, as in keep
ש	sin (pronounced seen)	s, as in set
ס	samech	s, as in set

7.02 Diphthongs: a yud plus a vowel act as a single unit & form a new sound

Standard Sound Of Hebrew Vowels ↓				
א ("ee")	א ("eh")	א ("eh")	א ("ah")	א ("ah")
Sound Of Hebrew Vowels With Diphthongs ↓				
Note: the change in the sound of the vowel when a yud is added				
“ee” as in sleep	“ay” as in stay	“ay” as in stay	“I” as in isle	“I” as in isle
א	א	א	א	א
Chirek Yud חִירֶק יוּד חִירְק יוּד	Tsere Yud צִירֶי יוּד צִירֵי יוּד	Segol Yud סֶגוּל יוּד סֶגוּל יוּד	Kamats Yud קָמָץ יוּד קָמֵץ יוּד	Patach Yud פָּתַח יוּד פָּתַח יוּד
NOTE:				
1. There are only 3 diphthong sounds to remember. They are: kamats or patch + yud = “I” (sound “I” as in isle); segol or tserere + yud = “ay” (sound “ay” as in stay); and chirek + yud = still has “ee” (as in sleep).				
2. Diphthongs, sh’vas, and chatefs are all considered half vowels – not full vowels.				

7.03 Exercises with diphthongs (answers on 7.09)

Words with diphthongs (note: accented syllables are in bold & highlighted)		
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration
1) מַיִם	water	mi *-yeem (*“i” as in “isle”)
2) אֲדֹנָי	My Lord (Ps 110:1)	
3) אֲדֹנָי הַאֲדֹנָיִם	Lord of the lords, hosts (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3)	Ah-doh - nay * hah-ah-doh- neem (*“ay” as in “stay”)
4) אֲדֹנָינוּ	our Lord (1Sam 16:16) Used to refer to leaders, eg King David (1Sam 25:14, 17; 1Ki 1:43, 47; Neh 10:30; Ps 8:2,10)	
5) חַגִּי	Haggai, as in the book of <i>Haggai</i>	chahg- gi * (*“i” as in “isle”)
6) אֵיפֹה	where? (interrogative or question word)	
7) סִינַי	Sinai	

7.04 Review: dagesh kal

The dagesh kal (דָּגֵשׁ קַל) is in 6 letters: ב, ג, ד, כ, פ, ת. The acronym for these 6 letters

BeGeD KeFeT (in Hebrew: בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת) (Example of an English acronym is ASAP)

- Note: in only 3 of these 6 letters does the dagesh kal actually change the sound:
the ב changes to בּ; the כ to כּ; the פ to פּ.

- A dagesh kal is in either the 1st letter of a word or in the letter that starts a syllable.

Exercise: recognizing why these words have a dagesh kal (answers on 7.09)		
Hebrew	Translation	Explain the dagesh kal
1) בַּיִת	roof	Because gimmel ג is BeGeD KeFeT & it the first letter of the word, it has a dagesh kal
2) בֵּין	between	
3) מִדְבָּר	wilderness or desert	Because the bet ב is BeGeD KeFeT & it follows a sh'va. It, therefore, opens a new syllable
4) מַלְכָּה	queen	
5) מִשְׁפָּחָה	family	

7.05 Review: Hebrew syllables

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

אָהַב has two syllables.

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

The second syllable is הַב. It is closed because it ends with the consonant vet.
3. Easy way to identify how many syllables are in a word – count the number of vowels.
 - a. The number of vowels in the word equals the number of syllables. (Note: each syllable must begin with a consonant.)
 - b. A simple way to indicate the type of syllables:

“O” = an open syllable

“C” = a closed syllable

7.06 Exercise: Hebrew syllables (answers on 7.09)

<i>Practice identifying the number of syllables & whether they are closed or open</i>					
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration <small>Read before looking at transliteration</small>	Number of syllables	Write each word with syllables	Indicate type of syllables <small>(remember Hebrew is read right to left; use the right to left order when notating the syllables) C = closed syllable, ends with a consonant O = open syllable, ends with a vowel</small>
1) יָד	hand	yahd	1	יָד	C (1-syllable word and the syllable 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	הַב - אָ	O (1 st syllable: “אָ”) C (2 nd syllable: “הַב”)
6) אָבַד	he was lost or perished	ah- vahd	2	בַּד - אָ	O (1 st syllable: “אָ”) C (2 nd syllable: “בַּד”)
7) חָגַג	celebrated (verb, as in he made or kept a festival)	chah- gahg			
8) דָּבָר	word or thing (noun)	dah- vahr			

7.07 Introducing the vocal & the silent sh'va (שְׁוָא).

- When a sh'va ם is under the 1st letter of a word, it is generally vocal. It has the sound of “eh” as in bed. This is under the first letter of a word, as in בְּרֵאשִׁית (Genesis).
- When a sh'va follows a short vowel*, that sh'va is silent. It closes the syllable. (*To review long & short vowels, refer to last page of this lesson.)

For example: בְּמִדְבָּר – the sh'va under this dalet is silent and closes that syllable. A new syllable is opened following that silent sh'va.

7.08 Exercise: vocal & silent sh'vas (answers on 7.09)

Practice recognizing the vocal and silent sh'vas			
Hebrew	Translation	Number of syllables	Is sh'va vocal or silent?
1) שְׁמוֹת	names/Ex 1:1	2	Vocal – it is the 1 st letter of the word
2) יְלָדִים	boys/children	3	
3) בְּרֵאשִׁית	In the beginning/Gen 1:1		
4) מִשְׁפָּט	judgment	2	Silent – because it closes the syllable
5) מִשְׁפָּחָה	family	3	
6) בְּמִדְבָּר	In wilderness (of)/Num 1:1		

7.09 Answers to Exercises:

Exercise 7.03 answers: Words with diphthongs		
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration
1) מַיִם	water	mi*-yeem (*“i” as in “isle”)
2) אֲדֹנָי	My Lord (Ps 110:1)	Ah-doh-nee
3) אֲדֹנָי הֶאֱלֹהִים	Lord of the lords, hosts (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3)	Ah-doh-nay* hah-ah-doh-neem (*“ay”: as in “stay”)
4) אֲדֹנָינוּ	our Lord (1Sam 16:16) Used to refer to leaders, eg King David (1Sam 25:14, 17; 1Ki 1:43, 47; Neh 10:30; Ps 8:2,10)	Ah-doh-nay*-noo (*“ay”: as in “stay”)
5) חַגִּי	Haggai, as in the book of <i>Haggai</i>	chahg-gi* (*“i” as in “isle”)
6) אֵיפֹה	where? (interrogative or question word)	ay*-foh
7) סִינַי	Sinai	See-ni* (*“i” as in “isle”)

Exercise 7.04 answers: Recognize why each word has a dagesh kal

Hebrew	Translation	Explain the dagesh kal
1) גַּג	roof	Because gimmel ג is BeGeD KeFeT & it the 1 st letter of the word, it has a dagesh kal
2) בֵּין	between	Because the bet ב is BeGeD KeFeT & it is the 1 st letter of the word
3) מִדְּבָר	wilderness or desert	Because the bet ב is BeGeD KeFeT & it follows a sh'va. It, therefore, opens a new syllable
4) מַלְכָּה	queen	Because the chaf כ is BeGeD KeFeT & it follows a sh'va. It, therefore, opens a new syllable
5) מִשְׁפָּחָה	family	Because the pay פ is BeGeD KeFeT & it follows a sh'va. It, therefore, opens a new syllable

Exercise 7.06 answers: Identify the number of 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>(remember Hebrew is read right to left; use the right to left order when notating the syllables) C = closed syllable, ends with a consonant O = open syllable, ends with a vowel</small>
1) יַד	hand	yahd	1	יַד	C (1-syllable word and the syllable ends with a consonant)
2) אָח	brother	ach	1	אָח	C (1-syllable word and the syllable ends with a consonant)
3) גַּג	roof	gahg	1	גַּג	C (1-syllable word and the syllable ends with a consonant)
4) אָב	father	ahv	1	אָב	C (1-syllable word and the syllable ends with a consonant)
5) אָהֵב	he loved	ah-hahv	2	אָ - הֵב	O (1 st syllable: "אָ") C (2 nd syllable: "הֵב")
6) אָבָד	he was lost or perished	ah-vahd	2	אָ - בָד	O (1 st syllable: "אָ") C (2 nd syllable: "בָד")
7) חָגַג	celebrated (verb, as in he made or kept a festival)	chah-gahg	2	חָ - גַג	O (1 st syllable: "חָ") C (2 nd syllable: "גַג")
8) דָבָר	word or thing (noun)	dah-vahr	2	דָ - בָר	O (1 st syllable: "דָ") C (2 nd syllable: "בָר")

Exercise 7.08 answers: Recognize the vocal and silent sh'vas

Hebrew	Translation	Number of syllables	Is sh'va vocal or silent?
1) שְׁמוֹת	names/Ex 1:1	2	Vocal – because it begins a word
2) יְלָדִים	boys/children	3	Vocal – because it begins a word
3) בְּרֵאשִׁית	In the beginning/Gen 1:1	3	Vocal – because it begins a word
4) מִשְׁפָּט	judgment	2	Silent – because it closes the syllable & follows a short vowel
5) מִשְׁפָּחָה	family	3	Silent – because it closes the syllable & follows a short vowel
6) בְּמִדְבָּר	In wilderness (of)/Num 1:1	3	Silent – because it closes the syllable & follows a short vowel

*REVIEW: Long & Short Vowels

The Hebrew Long Vowels are

Kamats and tsere. The three dots: the cholam, the cholam vav, and the shurek. The 5 diphthongs.

The Hebrew Short Vowels are

All other vowels. 😊 (The sh'va & the 3 chatef vowels are reduced vowels – not whole vowels.)