

Biblical Hebrew Course 101
– **Boot Camp** –
Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew
Lesson 7
שְׁעוֹר ז

Developing our understanding of the Hebrew Aleph Bet:
Diphthongs, long & short vowels, and sh'vas



It's exciting learning to read an actual Torah scroll!

- 7.01 Sound-a-Like Consonants
- 7.02 **Introduce: diphthongs**
- 7.03 Exercise: words with diphthongs (answers on 7.11)
- 7.04 Exercise: review concepts (answers on 7.11)
- 7.05 **Introduce: long and short vowels**
- 7.06 **Introduce: levels 1& 2 of the sh'vas**
- 7.07 Exercise: identify levels 1 & 2 of the sh'vas (answers on 7.11)
- 7.08 **Introduce: level 3 of the sh'vas**
- 7.09 **Introduce: level 4 of the sh'vas**
- 7.10 Exercise: identify levels 3 & 4 of the sh'vas (answers on 7.11)
- 7.11 Answers to Exercises

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
ק	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 Introduce: diphthongs

Standard Sound Of Hebrew Vowels ↓				
ֵ ("ee")	ֶ ("eh")	ֶ ("eh")	ֹ ("ah")	ֹ ("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
ֵי	ֶי	ֶי	ֹי	ֹי
Chirek Yud	Tsere Yud	Segol Yud	Kamats Yud	Patach Yud
חֵירָק יוּד	צֵירֵי יוּד	סֶגוֹל יוּד	קָמָץ יוּד	פָּתַח יוּד
NOTE:				
1. There are only 3 diphthong sounds to remember. They are: kamats or patch + yod = “I” (sound “I” as in isle); segol or tsere + yud = “ay” (sound “ay” as in stay); and chirek + yud = still has “ee” (as in sleep).				
2. Diphthongs are long vowels.				

7.03 *Exercise: words with diphthongs* (answers on 7.11)

Words with diphthongs: we encourage you to read these words <i>at least once a day</i> .		
Hebrew	Translation	Identify diphthongs
1) אֲדֹנָי הַאֲדֹנָיִם	Lord of the lords, hosts (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3)	Tsere yud: said “ay”: as in “stay” Chirik yud: said “ee” as in “sleep”
2) אֲדֹנָי	My Lord (Ps 110:1)	
3) חַגִּי	Haggai, as in the book of <i>Haggai</i>	Patach yud: said “I” as in “isle”
4) אֵיפֹה	Where? (interrogative or question word)	
5) סִינַי	Sinai	

7.04 *Exercise: review concepts* (answers on 7.11)

Identify the concept in the words below			
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration	What is the concept?
1) אַהֲבָה	love (noun)	ah-hah- vah	<u>Under the first hay</u> : chatef patach
2) חַטָּא	sinner	chah- tah	<u>Under the chet</u> : chatef patach
3) אֶמֶת *	truth *The chatef segol is not a full segol, so it does not count as one of 2 segols in a row	eh- meht	
4) וְאַמִּץ *	& courage (& courageous) *refer to explanation above	veh-eh- mahtz	
5) אֲדֹנָי	My Lord (Ps 110:1)	Ah-doh- nee	
6) 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”)	
7) סִינַי	Sinai	See- ni (*“i” as in “isle”)	
8) מַלְכָּה	queen	mahl- kah מל כָּה	The patach (in front of the sh’va) closes the 1 st syllable. The kaf is BedGeD KeFeT & it starts a new syllable.
9) הַגִּדָּה	Haggadah (booklet that tells the story of the exodus from Egypt)	hahg-gah- dah הג ג דָּה	The gimmel has a dagesh chazak, because it follows a vowel. The 1st gimmel closes the 1st syllable & the 2nd opens the next syllable.
10) בְּמִדְבָּר	in the wilderness or desert (Deut 1:1)	bahm-meed- bahr במ מד בָּר	Dagesh Kal (bet is part of בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת & it does not follow a vowel) Dagesh Chazak (mem is doubled because dagesh follows a vowel.) Dagesh Kal (bet is part of בְּגֵד כֶּפֶת & bet does not follow a vowel)

7.05 Introduce: 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

- For now, all other vowels are considered short.

In Biblical Hebrew 102, we will further discuss long & short vowels

7.06 Introduce: vocal & silent sh'vas

The sh'va (◌ְ) can be either vocal or it can be silent.

The vocal sh'va has the same “eh” sound as a segol or tsere. The vocal sh'va is slightly quicker than the segol or tsere.

In this lesson, we will discuss some of the main rules which determine whether the sh'va is vocal (“eh”) or silent.

Level 1: when a sh'va is at the beginning of a word

When the sh'va is <u>under the 1st letter of a word, it is vocal</u> . This sh'va generally has a quick “eh” sound.		
Word	Meaning	Transliteration Explanation: 1. The small “eh” signifies the quick & almost indistinguishable “eh” sound. 2. The bolded, highlighted syllable is accented.
1) לָךְ	for yourself (Gen 6:14)	leh- chah
2) בְּיוֹם	in the day (Lev 19:6)	beh- yom
3) בְּרֵאשִׁית	Genesis (In the beginning) (Gen 1:1)	beh-reh- sheet (commonly pronounced b'resheet)

Level 2: When 2 sh'vas are consecutive, the 1st is silent & 2nd is vocal.

When 2 sh'vas are consecutive (in other words, they are in a row), <u>the 1st is silent & 2nd is vocal</u> . 1. <u>The 1st of two consecutive sh'vas closes the syllable</u> . The 1st sh'va is silent. 2. <u>The 2nd of 2 consecutive sh'vas is vocal</u> It opens that syllable <i>and</i> has a quick “eh” sound. <u>Tip: drawing a line between the sh'vas makes it easier to visualize.</u> נַפְשֶׁךָ → נַפְ שְׁ ךָ		
Word	Meaning	Transliteration
1) נַפְשֶׁךָ נַפְ שְׁ ךָ	your soul (Deut 6:5)	nahf-sheh- chah נַפְ שְׁ ךָ
2) תִּשְׁמָעוּ	you will obey (2 nd part of the Shema; Deut 11:13)	teesh-meh- oo
3) אֶרְצְכֶם	your land (2 nd part of the Shema; Deut 11:14)	ahr-tseh- chem

7.07 **Exercise: identify levels 1 & 2 of the sh'va** (answers on 7.11)

Grammar-made-simple:

Level 1 of the vocal sh'va:

Level 1: If the sh'va is under the 1st consonant of the word, it is vocal.

Level 2 of the vocal sh'va:

Level 2: If there are 2 sh'vas in a row (consecutive), the 1st is silent (it closes the syllable) & the 2nd is vocal (it opens the syllable).

Word	Meaning	Transliteration	Type of sh'va & why
1) שְׁמוֹת	names (Ex 1:1)	Sheh'mot (commonly pronounced: sh'mot)	Level 1: vocal – because it begins a word
2) שְׁמַע	Shema	sheh-mah (commonly pronounced: sh'mah)	Level 1: the sh'va is under the first consonant & there is no vowel preceding it, it is vocal.
3) יְלָדִים	boys/children	yeh-lah-deem	
4) יִשְׁמְרוּ	they will guard or keep	yeesh-meh-roo	Level 2: there are 2 sh'vas in a row; the 1 st sh'va is silent & the 2 nd is vocal.
5) נַפְשְׁכֶם	your soul (Is 55:2)	nahf-sheh-chehm	
6) כָּתוּב	write	keh-tohv	

7.08 **Introduce: level 3: when a sh'va is under a dagesh chazak*, it is vocal.**

(*Dagesh chazak explanation below ↓.)

***Dagesh chazak: TIP: If a vowel is in front of a dagesh, it is a dagesh chazak.**

- The dagesh chazak doubles the consonant it is in.
- This example shows how a dagesh chazak doubles the consonant it is in. כָּלְךָם = כָּם + לְךָ + לְךָ
 - Note, the לְ has a dagesh chazak. Why? It follows a vowel (כָּ).
 - Because of the dagesh chazak, the לְ is doubled: כָּם + לְךָ + לְךָ
 - The 1st sh'va is silent; the 2nd is vocal: cool-leh-chehm. (Yes, this is similar to Level 2.)

Word	Meaning	Transliteration
		Explanation: 1. The small “eh” signifies the quick & almost indistinguishable “eh” sound. 2. The bolded, highlighted syllable is accented.
1) כָּלְךָם	all of you (2 nd person: you: masculine, plural)	cool-leh-chehm כָּם לְךָ לְךָ (The lamed with the 1 st sh'va is silent; the 2 nd lamed is vocal)
2) הַשְּׁבִיעִי	the seventh	hahsh-sheh-vee-ee עִי בִּי שֵׁ הַשְּׁ - (commonly pronounced hahsh-shvee-ee) (The sheen with the 1 st sh'va is silent; the 2 nd sheen is vocal)
3) טַפְּכֶם	your (2 nd person: you: masculine, plural) children (Dt 29:11)	tahp-peh-chehm כֶּם פֶּ טַפְּ The pey is a dagesh chazak because it follows a vowel. The 1 st sh'va under the pey closes that syllable -- & the 2 nd then opens the next syllable.

7.09 **Introduce: level 4: when a sh'va follows a long vowel***, it is vocal. (*Long vowels are listed below↓.)

When a sh'va follows a long vowel*, it is vocal.

***Long vowels:** (This is an introduction to long vowels)

kamats קָמָץ (וְ) // tsere צִירֵי (וְ) // cholam חוֹלָם (וְ) // cholam vav וְ חוֹלָם וְ // shurek שׁוּרֵק (וְ)

For example: הִיְתָה (The sh'va immediately follows the kamats, a long vowel; therefore, the sh'va is vocal. הִיְתָה is pronounced: hi-yeh-**tah**)

Word	Meaning	Transliteration
1) הִיְתָה	it was (3 rd person: feminine, singular)	hi-yeh- tah (commonly pronounced hi-yee- tah)
2) לִבְבָּךְ	your heart (from the V'ahavta from the Shema, Dt 6:5)	leh-vah- veh -chah (commonly pronounced leh- vahv -chah)
3) כָּתְבִים	write (masculine, plural)	koh-teh- veem (commonly pronounced koht- veem)
4) וּבְאִתּוֹ	and his oath	oo-veh-ah-lah- toh

7.10 **Exercise: identify levels 3 & 4 of sh'vas** (answers on 7.11)

Grammar-made-simple:

Level 3: when a sh'va is under a dagesh chazak*, it is vocal:

- *Dagesh chazak is easily recognizable because the dagesh chazak follows any vowel.
- The consonant with the dagesh chazak is doubled. כָּלָל = כָּל + לָל

Level 4 is when the sh'va follows a long vowel:

If the sh'va follows a long vowel, it is vocal.

The long vowels are:

- o kamats קָמָץ (וְ) // tsere צִירֵי (וְ) //
- o 3 dots: cholam חוֹלָם (וְ) // cholam vav וְ חוֹלָם וְ // shurek שׁוּרֵק (וְ)
- o & the 5 diphthongs

Exercise: Identify Level 3 or Level 4 in each of the words below

Word	Meaning	Transliteration	Type of sh'va & why
1) כָּתְבִים	write (masculine plural)	koh- teh -veem (commonly pronounced kot' veem)	
2) וּנְשָׂאוּ	and they carried, they lifted, to marry (3cp)	veh-nah-seh- oo	
3) יַתִּיצְבוּ	and stood (Ex 2:4)	yeet-yahts-tseh-voov	The 1 st sh'va follows a short vowel & it closes the syllable Level 3: the 2 nd sh'va is under a dagesh chazak & follows a vowel – so it is vocal.
4) בְּמִלְאָכָה	in the work	bahm-meh-lah-chah בְּ מִ לָא כָה	Level 3: sh'va follows a vowel

7.11 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES 7.03, 7.04, 7.07, and 7.10

Answers to 7.03: words with diphthongs		
Hebrew	Translation	Identify diphthongs
1) אֲדֹנָי הַאֲלֹהִים	Lord of the lords, hosts (Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3)	Nun-tsere-yud: said “nay”: as in “stay” Nun-chirik yud: said “nee” as in sleep
2) אֲדֹנָי	My Lord (Ps 110:1)	Chirik yud: said “ee” as in “sleep”
3) חַגַּי	Haggai, as in the book of <i>Haggai</i>	Patach yud: said “I” as in “isle”
4) אֵיפֹה	Where? (interrogative or question word)	Tsere yud: said “ay”: as in “stay”
5) סִינַי	Sinai	Chirik yud: said “ee” as in “sleep” Patach yud: said “I” as in “isle”

Answers to 7.04: identify the concept in the words below			
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration	What is the concept?
1) אַהֲבָה	love (noun)	ah-hah- vah	<u>Under the first hay</u> : chatef patach
2) חַטָּא	sinner	chah- tah	<u>Under the chet</u> : chatef patach
3) אֱמֶת *	truth *The chatef segol is not a full segol, so it does not count as one of 2 segols in a row	eh- meht	<u>Under the aleph</u> : chatef segol
4) וְאַמִּץ *	& courage (& courageous) *refer to explanation above	veh-eh- mahtz	<u>Under the aleph</u> : chatef segol
5) אֲדֹנָי	My Lord (Ps 110:1)	Ah-doh- nee	<u>Under the aleph</u> : chatef patach <u>After dalet</u> : cholam
6) 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”)	<u>Under the aleph</u> : chatef patach <u>After the dalet</u> : cholam <u>Below the nun</u> : tsere yud diphthong: “nay” <u>After the 2nd nun</u> : shurek
7) סִינַי	Sinai	See- ni (*“i” as in “isle”)	<u>Under the samech</u> : chirek yud diphthong: “ee” <u>Under the nun</u> : patch yud diphthong: “nI” (long “I”)
8) מַלְכָּה	queen	mahl- kah	<u>The kaf</u> : BedGeD KeFeT & it starts a new syllable
9) הַגְּדָה	Haggadah (booklet that tells the story of the exodus from Egypt)	hahg-gah- dah	Dagesh Chazak (gimmel is doubled because this dagesh follows a vowel.)
10) בְּמִדְבָּר	in the wilderness or desert (Deut 1:1)	bahm-meed- bahr	Dagesh Kal (bet is part of כָּפֶת כָּפֶת & it does not follow a vowel) Dagesh Chazak (mem is doubled because dagesh follows a vowel.) Dagesh Kal (bet is part of כָּפֶת כָּפֶת & bet does not follow a vowel)

7.11 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES, cont.

Answers to 7.07: identify levels 1 & 2 of the sh'vas			
1) שמות	Names (Ex 1:1)	Sheh'mot (commonly pronounced: sh'mot)	Level 1: vocal – because it begins a word
2) שמע	Shema	sheh-mah (commonly pronounced: sh'mah)	Level 1: the sh'va is under the first consonant & there is no vowel preceding it, it is vocal.
3) ילדים	boys/children	yeh-lah-deem	Level 1: vocal – because it begins a word
4) ישמרו	they will guard or keep	yeesh-meh-roo	Level 2: there are 2 sh'vas in a row; the 1 st sh'va is silent & the 2 nd is vocal.
5) נפשכם	your soul (Is 55:2)	nahf-sheh-chehm	Level 2: there are 2 sh'vas in a row; the 1 st sh'va is silent & the 2 nd is vocal.
6) כתוב	write	keh-tohv	Level 1: vocal – because it begins a word

Answers to 7.10: identify levels 3 & 4 of the sh'vas			
Word	Meaning	Transliteration	Type of sh'va & why
1) כתבים	write (masculine plural)	koh-teh-veem (commonly pronounced kot'veem)	Level 3: sh'va follows a long vowel
2) ונשאו	and they carried, they lifted, to marry (3cp)	veh-nah-seh-oo	Level 1: sh'va is under 1st letter Level 4: 2 nd sh'va follows a long vowel
3) יתיצבו	And stood (Ex 2:4)	yeet-yahts-tseh-voov	The 1 st sh'va follows a short vowel & it closes the syllable Level 3: the 2 nd sh'va follows a vowel & is vocal
4) במלאכה	in the work	bahm-meh-lah-chah	Level 3: sh'va follows a vowel