Chapter 1 – The Hebrew Alphabet (Alef-Bet)

- Names of the Letters

- Difficulties Recognizing Letters
  - Final Forms
  - Different Fonts
  - Similar Letters

- Writing and Transliterating the Letters

- Begad Kephath Letters

- Pronouncing the Letters
The Alphabet is Just the Consonants

- In English,
  both consonants and vowels are letters of the alphabet.
  - E.g., the vowel ‘A’ and the consonant ‘B’ are both letters of the alphabet.
- In Hebrew, only consonants are considered to be letters
  - The consonant Alef א is a letter of the alphabet.
  - The vowel Seghol א is not a letter of the alphabet.
- The OT was originally written without vowels
  - Vowels and accents were added in AD 500-1000
    - מֶלֶךְ → מלך
Variations on Letter Names

- Different people spell letter names differently
  - E.g., Alef, Aleph, ’ālep, אָלֶפ

- Different people pronounce letter names differently
  - E.g., Waw vs. Vav. Yod vs. Yud.

- In Modern Hebrew, three letters are called different names depending on whether or not they have a Dagesh
  - ב Vet vs. ב Bet
  - ג Chaf vs. ג Kaf
  - ד Fay vs. ד Pay

- All reasonable variations are acceptable in my class
Alef
Bet
Gimel
Dalet
Hay
Vav
Zayin
Het
Tet
Yod
Kaf
Lamed
Mem
Nun
Samech
Ayin
Pay
Qof
Resh
Sin
Shin
Tav
Order of Sin שׂ and Shin ש

- Acrostic poems (e.g., Psalm 119) show alphabet in order.
  - Acrostics treat Sin שׂ and Shin ש as the same letter, so they don’t tell us the order.
- Modern Hebrew tends to put Shin ש before Sin ש
- Our textbook and lexicon have Sin ש then Shin ש
  - So memorize this order.
- You’ll never lose points for either order.
- Mnemonic: Keep the dots together when writing the alphabet שׂ שׁ שׂ שׁ שׂ שׂשׂ
אתה גיבור הנשים
על חמש נשים כק"ן
רシェגנה

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Memorize the Alef-Bet Before Continuing

- Before going on to the next section, learn the name of each letter and their order.
- Use the Alef-Bet song to practice the names in order.
  - YouTube has 3 versions of the music video:
    - Letters and their names
    - Letters alone
    - All the letters showing at the same time
  - The website also has the song in downloadable formats: mp3, mp4, and wmv.
- The website links to a place to practice the letters names.
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■ Pronouncing the Letters
### Final Forms

- **5 letters use different letter shape at end of word**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>ג</th>
<th>ח</th>
<th>י</th>
<th>ה</th>
<th>ב</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>פ</td>
<td>ק</td>
<td>ז</td>
<td>מ</td>
<td>ד</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Mnemonic:** “CoMMoN FaTS”
- **This shape is called the “final form” or “sofit form”**
  - Sofit (‘sew-feet’) means ‘last’
- **Final forms have the same pronunciation and transliteration as the non-final forms.**
Multiple Hebrew Scripts

- There are multiple letter styles for writing Hebrew
  - Books are printed in a fancy style with serifs
    א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר
  - But letters can be written without most of the serifs
    א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר
  - Modern Hebrew is written in a cursive script
    א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר
- Use the simplified shapes without serifs, and be legible.
- Always write Right-to-Left
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Look-Alike Letters</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ב (Bet)</td>
<td>ג (Kaf)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ג (Gimel)</td>
<td>ד (Kaf)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ה (He)</td>
<td>ה (Het)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י (Sin)</td>
<td>י (Shin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ק (final Mem)</td>
<td>ק (Samek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ל (Dalet)</td>
<td>ל (Resh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נ (Tsade)</td>
<td>נ (Ayin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ו (Waw)</td>
<td>ז (Zayin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י (Yod)</td>
<td>(Final Nun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Final Kaf)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bet
Tail in Lower-Right

Kaf
Rounded Lower-Right
Gimel
Bottom like heel of a boot

Nun
Flat bottom
Hay
Gap in Top Left

Ḥet
No gap in Top Left
Tav
Foot on Lower Left

枲

ハウス
No foot on Lower Left

Heṭ

(copy)
Sin
Dot on Upper Left

Shin
Dot on Upper Right
Final Mem
Square Bottom

Samech
Round Bottom
Dalet
Bump on Upper Right

Resh
Round Upper Right
Tsade
Bump on Lower Right

Ayin
Round Lower Right
Zayin
Tail on Upper Right

Vav
Round Upper Right Right
Yod
Halfway Down

Vav
Full Height

Final Nun
Below the Line
Final Kaf
Top Line is Big

Final Nun
Little or No Top Line

Usually a Silent Shewa in Final Kaf
Memorize the Letters Before Continuing

- Before going on to the next section, learn to recognize the letters in different scripts, including their final forms.

- Make flash cards with the letters on one side and the names on the other side.
  - Include final forms.
  - The website has a sheet of letters to print and cut out.
    - Some letters appear with and without a dot, for use after you have learned about begad kephat.
  - Write the name and recognition notes on the other side of each card.
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How to Write the Letters

- The following slides suggest how to write the letters.
  - You can write the letters differently, as long as it is clear which letter is intended.

- Most letters can take a dot inside them.
  - These slides show the location of the dot.
  - The dot is not part of the basic letter shape.
  - Don’t add the dot when writing the alphabet.
  - Draw the dot after drawing the letter itself.

- Practice writing the letters as you watch the video.
  - A practice sheet is available on the website.
Aleph
Bet ש

Tail on bottom right distinguishes Bet ש from Kaf כ
Dalet

Tail on top right distinguishes Dalet 럻 from Resh ר
Gap in upper left distinguishes Hay ק from Het ק
Waw / Vav י

Optional hook in top left

Unlike Yod יה and Final Nun י, Vav י comes just down to the line
Zayin 

Tail on top right distinguishes Zayin \( \digamma \) from Waw \( \daleth \)
Lack of Gap in upper left distinguishes \( \text{Het} \) from \( \text{Hay} \)
Unlike Vav ו and Final Nun נ, Yod י doesn’t reach the bottom line.
Smooth bottom right distinguishes Kaf ꞌ from Bet ꞌ.
Final Kaf ך

1

Alternately, Kaf can be all 1 curved line

2

Unlike Dalet 𬀩 and Resh 有关规定,
Final Kaf ך goes below the line.
Lamed ֶ ול
Mem

ד

1

2
Final Mem □

Square bottom distinguishes Final Mem □ from Samek  ע
Some people add a top hook
Unlike Yod ו and Vav ו, Final Nun י extends below the line
Samek ໄ

Optional hook in top left

Round bottom distinguishes Samek ໄ from Final Mem □
Ayin

2

1

ו
Pay ₪
Final Pay

ן

1

Tail extends below the line
Final Tsade

1. Tail extends below the line
2. Optional bend in line 1 at joint
Qof ־

Tail extends below the line
Smooth top right corner distinguishes Resh Ｌ from Dalet Ｌ
Placement of upper dot distinguishes Sin ꬕ from Shin ꬚
Placement of upper dot distinguishes Shin ש from Sin ס
Tail in lower left distinguishes Tav ה from Het ה.
Transliteration

- Transliterate as follows

³ b g d h w z ḥ ḥ y k l m n s ṣ p ṡ q r ś ś š t

- Different books use different transliteration symbols
  - Most of the variation is for vowels, not consonants

- Learn to recognize transliterated words
  - Transliteration is used in many reference books

- Direction of writing depends on the script:
  - Write Hebrew script Right-to-Left
  - Write transliteration Left-to-Right
Before Going on to the Next Section …

- Learn to write the letters.
  - The workbook has lines for practicing the letters.
  - Don’t try to imitate the details of the fancy printed letters in the book and workbook.

- Learn to write the letters in order.
  - Write the final forms right after the regular forms.
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- Pronouncing the Letters
**Begad Kephat Letters**

- “Begad Kephat” means the letters 베גדךפته
- A dot (‘Dagesh’) changes their sound.
  - Dagesh → a point-like, momentary sound (e.g., P)
  - No Dagesh → a sound that can last (e.g., F)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>THin</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>PH</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>baCH</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>THe</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>GH</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- In Modern Hebrew, 베גדךפ teh pronounced like תגד
  - I use this pronunciation.
- Modern Hebrew uses different names for 베גדךפ
  - ב Bet vs. ו Vet, כ Kaf vs. ח Chaf, פ Pay vs. פ Fay
Transliterating Begad Kephat Letters

- Underline transliterated begadkephat without a Dagesh.
  - Overline \( \bar{p} \) and \( \bar{g} \), since an underline wouldn’t fit.
  - The line indicates a sound that can go on and on.

- E.g., \( \overline{ב} = ב \) = ‘v’ sound which can continue.
- E.g., \( \overline{ב} = ב \) = ‘b’ sound which is momentary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sound</th>
<th>THin</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>PH</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>baCH</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>THe</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>GH</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
<td>( \ddot{t} )</td>
<td>( t )</td>
<td>( \bar{p} )</td>
<td>( p )</td>
<td>( k )</td>
<td>( k )</td>
<td>( d )</td>
<td>( d )</td>
<td>( \bar{g} )</td>
<td>( g )</td>
<td>( b )</td>
<td>( b )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before Going on to the Next Section …

- Learn to recognize transliterated Hebrew letters.
  - Many Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and journal articles use transliteration rather than Hebrew letters.
  - Make flash cards with the transliteration on one side and the letter on the other side.
  - Have separate flash cards for Begad Kephat letters with and without a dot (‘Dagesh’)
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Guttural Letters

- 4 guttural letters
  - א (Alef)
  - ה (Hay)
  - ח (Het)
  - י (Ayin)

- Guttural letters affect the spelling of words
  - The effects will be explained as they come up

- Resh ר is not a guttural letter.
  - It is never a guttural letter.
  - But it has some of the characteristics of gutturals
  - These will be explained as they come up
### Sound-Alike Letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>א (Alef)</th>
<th>י (Ayin)</th>
<th>silent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ב (Bet)</td>
<td>ו (Vav) Modern</td>
<td>Vat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ה (Het)</td>
<td>כ (Chaf) No Dagesh</td>
<td>baCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ט (Tet)</td>
<td>ת (Tav) with Dagesh</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ק (Kaf) with Dagesh</td>
<td>פ (Qof)</td>
<td>Kite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מ (Samek)</td>
<td>ש (Sin)</td>
<td>Sat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Remember which letter is in a vocabulary word!**
- **To help remember, I pronounce sound-alike letters differently when pronouncing vocabulary words (but not when reading texts), and I note the letter used.**
Variations in Letter Pronunciations

- Some letters are pronounced differently in Modern Hebrew.
  - Pick a system and try to be consistent
  - Recognize the other system when you hear it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ג</td>
<td>aGHast</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ד</td>
<td>THe</td>
<td>Dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ת</td>
<td>THin</td>
<td>Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Wow</td>
<td>Vat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alef א is silent

- Silent (nowdays)
  - Pronounce the vowel that follows it.

- Sounds like Ayin
  - Both are silent
  - When memorizing vocabulary, distinguish them.
  - E.g., אִּם ‘if’ vs. עִּם ‘with’

- Guttural
  - It was originally a glottal stop (the pause in “uh-oh”).

- Transliterate like single closing quote ‘
Bet ב sounds like B or V

- **Begad kephat**
  - Dagesh ב B sound, transliterate b
  - No dagesh ב V sound, transliterate b
Gimel ג sounds like G / GH

- Begad kephat
  - Dagesh ג G sound, transliterate g
  - No dagesh ג GH sound, transliterate ג

- GH is troublesome to pronounce
  - voiced velar fricative GH vs. voiced velar stop G
  - Modern Hebrew pronounces both as G
Dalet ד sounds like D / TH in The

- **Begad kephat**
  - Dagesh ד D sound, transliterate d
  - No dagesh ד TH sound of THe, transliterate d

- **Modern Hebrew always pronounces as D**
Hay ה sounds like H

- Transliterate as h
- Guttural
VaV י sounds like V (or W)

- Modern Hebrew pronounces it as V
  - So it sounds just like ב without Dagesh
  - Called Vav in Modern Hebrew

- Traditionally pronounced as W
  - Transliterated w
  - Waw
Zayin ג sounds like Z

- Transliterate as z
HebrewSyntax.org ©JCBeckman 3/29/2012  Copy freely  

He ב sounds like CH in Bach

- Sounds just like Kaf without Dagesh ב
  - ב was deeper in the throat than ב
- Transliterate as K (h with dot under it)
- Guttural
Tet נ sounds like T

- Sounds just like Tav with Dagesh ה
  - When memorizing vocabulary, I give Tet intentional emphasis to help me remember that the word has Tet נ not Tav ה

- Transliterate as ֵt (t with dot under it)
Yod sounds like Y

- Transliterate as y
Kaf כ sounds like K / CH in Bach

- Begad kephat
  - Dagesh כ K sound, transliterate k
  - No dagesh כ CH sound of BaCH, transliterate k

- Without a Dagesh, Kaf כ sounds like ח
  - ח was deeper in the throat than כ
Lamed ה sounds like L

- Transliterate as l
Mem מ sounds like M

- Transliterate as m
Nun נ sounds like  N

- Transliterate as n
Samek ס sounds like S
- Sounds just like the letter Sin ש
- Transliterate as s
Ayin ע is silent

- **Silent (nowdays)**
  - Pronounce the vowel that follows it.

- **Guttural**
  - It was originally a voiced pharyngeal fricative.

- **Silent just like Alef**
  - I try to pronounce it when memorizing vocabulary, to help me remember that it is Ayin ע not Alef א in the word. But when reading the Bible, I have it be silent, just like Alef.

- **Transliterate like a single opening quote ‹**
Pe פ sounds like P / F

- Begad kephat
  - Dagesh מ P sound, transliterate p
  - No dagesh מ F sound, transliterate ꝏ
Tsade צ צ צ צ sounds like TS

- Transliterate as ṣ (s with a dot under it)
Qof ק sounds like K

- Sounds just like the letter Kaf with a Dagesh ק
- Transliterate as q
Resh \( \daleth \) sounds like R

- Roll your R in the back of your throat if you can
- Transliterate it as r
- R is not a guttural letter
  - But it has some of the characteristics of gutturals
Sin שׂ sounds like S

- Sounds just like the letter Samek ק
- Transliterate as ś (s with a rising accent)
- Biblical acrostics treat Sin שׂ and Shin פ as one letter
Shin שׁ sounds like SH

- Transliterate as š (s with a little v on top)
- Biblical acrostics treat Sin ס and Shin שׁ as one letter
עברית
Tav ꔯ sounds like T / TH

- Begad kephat
  - Dagesh ꔯ T sound, transliterate t
  - No dagesh ꔯ TH sound of THin, transliterate ū

- ꔯ sounds just like Tet ꔯ

- Modern Hebrew always pronounces as T
Before Going on to the Next Chapter

■ Read chapter 1 in the textbook
  – Read the textbook supplement along with each section of the textbook as you go along.

■ Memorize the study guide.

■ Make sure you can also do the following:
  – Write the Hebrew Alef-Bet, including final forms.
  – Name and pronounce the Hebrew letters given their letter or transliteration.
    ■ This includes final forms
    ■ This includes begad kephat with and without a Dagesh.

■ Practice taking the quiz for chapter 1 (PDF on website)
  – The answer key is page 2 of the PDF.