

Biblical Hebrew Course 101

Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew

Lesson 6

שְׁעוֹר ו

Look-a-Likes & BeGeD KeFeT



Fellowshipping!

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”
Psalm 133:1 ESV

Continue learning the Hebrew aleph-bet & BeGeD KeFeT letters

- 6.01 Compare the consonants that Look-a-Like
- 6.02 Vowels: “o” & “oo” vowels
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6.01 Let's compare the consonants that are look-a-likes

Notice the differences between each of these look-a-like consonants:		
Letter	Pronounce The Name of Each Letter. Note Their Differences	Print
ב	Vet (note: the flat bottom horizontal bar)	
כ	Chaf: (note: this letter is rounded; similar to a backward “C”)	
ג	Gimmel (note: foot or heel on the lower left)	
נ	Nun (note: top & bottom horizontal bars are both short)	
ד	Dalet (note: top bar is straight & side bar extends a bit to the right)	
ר	Resh (resh is similar to ד; however, top bar doesn't extend to the right)	
ך	Chaf sofit (similar to ר, only tail hangs below the line; this letter only appears as the last letter of a word.)	
ו	Vav (note: similar to ר; only top horizontal bar is short)	
ן	Nun sofit (note: similar to נ, only tail hangs below the line; this letter only appears as the last letter of a word.)	
ז	Zayin (note: similar to נ, only top bar is slanted)	
ה	Hey (opening on the upper left... an opening for the hay to go through)	
ח	Chet (there is no opening on the top left)	
ת	Tav (looks like ח, but has foot (or a toe) on the bottom left)	
ע	Ayin (this letter is rounded on the bottom)	
צ	(this letter has a straight bottom & the cross line is also straight)	
ס	Samech (how this letter is rounded; similar to a “O”)	
ם	Mem sofit (this letter has a flat bottom & a flat right side; it only appears as the last letter of a word.)	

6.02 The “o” & “oo” vowels

The “o” & “oo” vowels are placed next to the consonant, unlike other vowels which are below the consonant.

1. There are three different ways to write the “o” type.
 - a. The 1st is the cholam vav; it is written with a dot on top of the vav: וְ. It is important to note that the vav is no longer a consonant; it is now a part of the cholam vav vowel. This vav is silent. Therefore, the sound of the cholam vav has is “o” as in “row.” For example: טוב (tov, meaning “good”)
 - b. The 2nd type of “o” vowel is called a cholam. It is similar to the cholam vav; it has only the cholam (the dot) & doesn’t have the vav. The sound of the cholam is the same the cholam vav; they both have the sound of “o” as in “row.” (For example: בֹּקֶר (bo-kehr, meaning “morning”) Note: the cholam (dot) is slightly to the left side of the “bet.”)
 - c. The 3rd type of “o” sound is not as common as the first two. It is called a chataf kamats; it is written with a sheva & a kamats. This vowel is generally under a guttural consonant & has a long “o” sound as in “row”. For example: עֲנִי (oh-nee, meaning “poor”).
2. There are two different ways to write the “oo” type of vowel.
 - a. The first is called a shurek. It is written with a vav and a dot in the middle of the vav, וֹ. As with the cholam vav, this vav is silent; because it is no longer a consonant, but part of the vowel. The sound of the shurek is “oo” as in “pool.” For example: שְׁבוּעַ (shah-vooh, meaning “week”).
 - b. And the other type of “oo” is called a kibbutz; it is 3 slanted dots under any consonant. םֹ. For example: הַעֲדוּת (hah-eh-doot, meaning “the testimony”)

6.03 Fun way to remember the sounds of the cholam vav and the shurek

- What if I tapped you on top of your head, you’d say “Oh!”; the sound of the cholam vav (וְ) & cholam (וֹ)
- What if I tapped you in the tummy, you’d say “oo” (as in pool); the sound of the shurek (וֹ) & kibbutz (םֹ).

Summary of “o” & “oo” vowels				
Book Print	Name Of Vowel	Sound Of Vowel	Block	Write Each Letter
o-type vowels				
וְ	Note: this vowel is always written with the vav & is called <i>cholam vav</i> חוֹלָם וְ	o as in row	וְ	
וֹ	Note: the <i>cholam</i> can be written with most consonants. It is called <i>cholam</i> חוֹלָם	o as in row	וֹ	
וֹ	The vowel is called either a <i>chataf kamats</i> חֲטָף קָמָץ or a <i>chataf kamats</i> & is generally under a guttural	o as in row	וֹ	
oo-type vowels				
וֹ	Note: this vowel is always written with a vav & is called <i>shurek</i> שְׁבוּעַ	oo as in pool	וֹ	
םֹ	Note: the <i>kibbutz</i> can be written with most consonants & is called <i>kibbutz</i> קִבּוּץ	oo as in pool	םֹ	

6.04 Practice reading words with “o” & “oo” vowels

Read common Hebrew words & phrases below (note: accented syllables are in bold & highlighted)			
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration	Write
נָכוֹן	right or correct	nah- chon (long “O”)	
כְּבוֹד	glory, honor, or splendor	kah- vod (long “O”)	
* כל הכבוד	All the honor; congratulations.	kol hahk-kah- vod	
אָרוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ	Holy Ark (storage cabinet for the Sefer Torah, Torah Scroll; 2Chron 35:3.)	ah- ron hahk-ko- dehsh	
לֵאמֹר	to say	leh- mor (long “O”)	
סוֹף	end or close (the same root as סוֹפֵת, as in ‘mem sofit’ ם)	sof (long “O”)	
סוֹפֵת	suffix or ending, as in ‘mem sofit’ ם (same root as סוֹף)	so- feet	
הַעֲדוּת	the testimony	hah-eh- doot	
עֵד	witness (noun)	ehd	
עֶד	eternal (literally, until)	ahd	
עַד-עוֹלָם	forever (2Sam 7:16; literally until forever)	ahd-o- lahm	
וְעַד לְעוֹלָם	forever and ever (PS 145:21)	leh-o- lahm vah- ehd	
שִׁבְתֵּי שְׁלוֹם	Have a good Shabbat!	shahb- baht shah- lom	
טוֹב	Good	tohv	
בֹּקֵר טוֹב	Good morning!	bo -kehr tov	
עֶרֶב טוֹב	Good evening!	eh -rehv tov (Tip: when 2 segols appear in a 3 or 4-letter word, the 1st gets the accent)	
שָׁבוּעַ טוֹב	Have a good week	shah- voo -ah tov	
מָה זֶה	What is this	mah zeh ?	
תּוֹדָה רַבָּה	Thanks a lot! Thank you very much!	to- dah rahb- bah	
רִגַע	one moment	reh -gah	
עוֹד פְּעַם	one more time; again	od pah -ahm	
כֵּן	yes	kehn	
לֹא	no	lo	

*Words that are indented are from the same root as the word above.

6.05 BeGeD KeFeT letters: ב פ כ ד ג כּ & Dagesh Kal

There are 6 Hebrew letters which have 2 possible, but closely related, pronunciations. The acronym for these letters is BeGeD KeFeT. This word is an easy mnemonic method to remember these 6 consonants.

These 6 consonants are: bet (בּ); gimmel (גּ); dalet (דּ); kaf (כּ); pay (פּ); and tav (תּ).

In the chart below, you will notice that there can be a Dagesh Kal¹ (in Hebrew, dagesh means “dot”) in each of the 6 letters. However, there is a change in pronunciation in only 3 (פ, כ, ב) of these 6 when a dagesh appears. The change in pronunciation is highlighted below.

(Note: in the remaining 3 (ת, ד, ג), the dagesh² does not change the pronunciation.)

BeGeD KeFeT	Name of letter	Sound	Example	Explanation
בּ	with dagesh/dot: bet	as in ball	רַבָּה (rahb-bah)	NOTE: the bet and vet are pronounced differently
ב	without dagesh: vet	as in vice	שִׁבְתָּ (sheh-veht)	
גּ	with dagesh: gimmel	as in get	גַּם (gahm)	Note: the gimmel is pronounced the same both with & without the dagesh
ג	without dagesh: gimmel	as in get	חָג (chahg)	
דּ	with dagesh: dalet	as in dog	דָּג (dahg)	Note: the dalet is said the same either with or without a dagesh
ד	without dagesh: dalet	as in dog	עוֹד (od)	
כּ	with dagesh: kaf	as in keep	כֵּן (kehn)	NOTE: the kaf and chaf are pronounced differently
כ	without dagesh: chaf	as in Bach	נָכוֹן (nah-chon)	
פּ	with dagesh: pay	as in pet	פַּעַם (pah-ahm)	NOTE: the pay and fay are pronounced differently
פ	without dagesh: fay	as in far	סוּפֵת (so-feet)	
תּ	with dagesh: tav	as in tell	תּוֹדָה (to-dah)	Note: the tav is pronounced the same both with & without the dagesh
ת	without dagesh: tav	as in tell	שִׁבְתָּ (shahb-baht)	

6.06 Grammar-Made-Simple – BeGeD KeFeT: & Dagesh Kal

1. The BeGeD KeFeT letters are: bet (בּ); gimmel (גּ); dalet (דּ); kaf (כּ); pay (פּ); and tav (תּ).
2. The BeGeD KeFeT letters are written with a dagesh (dot within the letter) when they either start a word or open a syllable. Otherwise, they are written with no dagesh.
3. The name of the dagesh that is used in conjunction with BeGeD KeFeT letters is Dagesh Kal.

¹ In Lesson 9, we will discuss this dagesh/dot in more detail.

² However, there can be a change in pronunciation with when they pronounced with either a US seminary or an Ashkenazic accent.

6.05 *Let's read Psalm 133:1: some cantillation¹ markings are in the words below*

Vocabulary for Psalm 133:1 (note: accented syllables are in bold & highlighted)		
Hebrew	Translation	Transliteration
הִנֵּה	behold	heen- neh
מֵה	what or how	mah
טוֹב	good	to v (long "O")
וּמֵה	and what or how	oo- mah
נְעִים	pleasant, nice, or delightful	nah- eem
וּמֵה-נְעִים	and how pleasant, nice, or delightful (the dash or maqqef (מקף) functions similarly to a dash or hyphen in English. Note: with a maqqef, the accent shifts from the 1 st word to the 2 nd .)	oo- mah nah- eem
שָׁבַת	sit, dwell, or remain, or abide (Tip: when 2 segols appear in a 3 or 4-letter word, the 1st gets the accent)	sheh -veht
אֶחָיו	brothers	ah- cheem
גַּם	also or moreover	gahm
יַחַד	one, as in together or in unity	yah -chad
גַּם-יַחַד	also or moreover, as one	gahm yah -chad

****הִנֵּה מֵה-טוֹב וּמֵה-נְעִים שָׁבַת אֶחָיו גַּם-יַחַד:**

↑
Shurek

↑
Cholam vav

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” Psalm 133:1 ESV

Guess what?? Today, you read and understood one complete verse in Hebrew!!!

*Words that are indented are from the same root as the word above.

**Refer to Lesson 5.06 for more information on cantillation markings.