

LESSON I

1. The Alphabet

Name	Form	Final Form	Transliteration	Pronunciation	Modern Script	Block
ʾālēf	א		ʾ	Silent letter	ʾ	א
bêt	ב		b	B as in <i>Boy</i>	ב	ב
	ב		v	V as in <i>Vine</i>	ב	ב
gímēl	ג		g	G as in <i>Go</i>	ג	ג
	ג		g	G as in <i>Go</i>	ג	ג
dálēt	ד		d	D as in <i>Dare</i>	ד	ד
	ד		d	D as in <i>Dare</i>	ד	ד
hēʾ	ה		h	H as in <i>His</i>	ה	ה
vāv	ו		v	V as in <i>Vine</i>	ו	ו
zāyīn	ז		z	Z as in <i>Zeal</i>	ז	ז
hêt	ח		ḥ	CH as in <i>BaCH</i>	ח	ח
ṭêt	ט		ṭ	T as in <i>Tall</i>	ט	ט
yôd	י		y	Y as in <i>Yes</i>	י	י
kāf	כ	ך	k	K as in <i>Keep</i>	כ	כ
	כ	ך	kh	CH as in <i>BaCH</i>	כ ך	ך
lāmēd	ל	ל	l	L as in <i>Let</i>	ל	ל
mēm	מ	ם	m	M as in <i>Met</i>	מ ם	ם
nûn	נ	ן	n	N as in <i>Net</i>	נ ן	ן
sāmēkh	ס		s	S as in <i>Set</i>	ס	ס
ʾāyīn	ע		ʾ	Silent letter	ע	ע
pēʾ	פ	ף	p	P as in <i>Pet</i>	פ ף	ף
	פ	ף	f	F as in <i>Fat</i>	פ ף	ף
šādē	צ	ץ	š	TS as in <i>NeTS</i>	צ ץ	ץ
qōf	ק		q	K as in <i>Keep</i>	ק	ק
rêš	ר		r	R as in <i>Rule</i>	ר	ר
šīn	ש		ś	S as in <i>Set</i>	ש	ש
šīn	ש		š	SH as in <i>SHine</i>	ש	ש
tāv	ת		t	T as in <i>Tall</i>	ת	ת
	ת		t	T as in <i>Tall</i>	ת	ת

I.1 THE ALPHABET

Notes:

1.1 The pronunciation recommended here is based upon that used in modern Hebrew. It is known as the Sephardic pronunciation.

1.2 A point is placed under ה when it transliterates ח, under ת when it transliterates ט, and under ש when it transliterates צ. This is to distinguish these letters from others that have similar sounds.

1.3 There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. This number is arrived at by counting ו and ו as variant forms of the same letter.

1.4 The Hebrew alphabet contains no vowels, but only consonants. This is because ancient Hebrew was written without vowels. Its correct pronunciation was based upon an oral tradition handed down from generation to generation. A written vowel system was devised in the period between A.D. 500 and 1000 for the primary purpose of preserving the oral tradition. A text without vowels is called "an unpointed text." Synagogue scrolls even today are written with an unpointed text, as are most books, magazines, and newspapers printed in Modern Hebrew. The written vowels are of great benefit to the beginning student and will be studied in Lesson 2.

1.5 The first letter in the alphabet is א (ʾālēf), but it must not be confused with English "a" or Greek "alpha" (α). The latter two are vowels, while א is always a consonant.

1.6 Hebrew is written and read from right to left. Thus the letters of the alphabet should be written as follows:

א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת

But they should be read as follows: ʾālēf, bêt, gímēl, etc.

1.7 There are no capital letters in Hebrew.

1.8 Each letter in the alphabet represents the initial consonant of the Hebrew name for that letter. The Hebrew names (minus vowels) are as follows:

(1) אלק	(7) זין	(13) מם	(19) קוף
(2) בית	(8) חית	(14) נון	(20) ריש
(3) גימל	(9) טית	(15) סמך	(21) שין
(4) דלת	(10) יוד	(16) עין	שין
(5) הא	(11) כף	(17) פא	(22) תו
(6) וו	(12) למד	(18) צדי	

9. What do the letters in each of the following groups have in common?

- (1) ב ג ד כ פ ת (3) ך ם ן ף ין
 (2) ב כ פ (4) א ה ח ע ר

10. Transliterate the following proper names and try to identify them from their consonantal forms. A reference is given to indicate where each may be found in the Hebrew Bible.

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|
| (1) בית לחם | (Mic. 5:1; Eng. 5:2) | (17) נתן | (2 Sam. 7:3) |
| (2) בלק | (Num. 22:2) | (18) סדם | (Gen. 13:13) |
| (3) בנימין | (Gen. 42:4) | (19) עשו | (Gen. 25:25) |
| (4) גר | (Gen. 30:11) | (20) פארן | (Deut. 1:1) |
| (5) גלגל | (Josh. 5:9) | (21) קדש | (Gen. 14:7) |
| (6) גשן | (Gen. 46:28) | (22) רבקה | (Gen. 22:23) |
| (7) דוד | (1 Sam. 16:23) | (23) רחל | (Gen. 29:6) |
| (8) הגר | (Gen. 16:1) | (24) אברהם | (Gen. 17:5) |
| (9) חזקיה | (2 Kgs. 18:1) | (25) שרה | (Gen. 17:15) |
| (10) פנען | (Gen. 12:5) | (26) שדרך | (Dan. 1:7) |
| (11) ישראל | (Gen. 35:10) | (27) שכם | (Judg. 9:6) |
| (12) פלב | (Num. 13:6) | (28) שלמה | (2 Sam. 12:24) |
| (13) לאה | (Gen. 29:16) | (29) שם | (Gen. 9:23) |
| (14) לבן | (Gen. 24:29) | (30) שפן | (2 Kgs. 22:9) |
| (15) משה | (Exod. 2:10) | (31) תל אביב | (Ezek. 3:15) |
| (16) נבכרנאצר | (2 Kgs. 24:1) | (32) תמר | (Gen. 38:6) |

11. Practice spelling aloud the names listed above.

Example:

בית לחם, "bêt-yôd-tāv/lâmêd-ḥêt-(final) mēm."

EXERCISES

The exercises included in each lesson are designed to help the student apply the principles studied in that lesson. Examples used in the lessons and exercises will for the most part be taken verbatim from the Hebrew Bible. This will account for the different ways in which the same word may sometimes be written. The style of the author and the demands of the context may alter the form in which a particular word appears.

1. Write a full line of each of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
2. Learn to pronounce the letters in proper order from א to ת.
3. Transliterate the following verse (Ezek. 38:12, one of twenty-six verses containing all the letters of the alphabet).

לשלל שלל ולבו בז להשיב ירך על חרבות נושבת ואל עם
מאסף מגוים עשה מקנה וקנין ישבי על טבור הארץ

4. Practice pronouncing the letters in the verse above in the order in which they occur, reading from right to left.
5. Locate and identify all the final forms of letters that occur in the verse above.
6. Transliterate the Hebrew names for all consonants as they appear in paragraph I.1.8, pp. 2f.

Example: אֵלֶּף = 'lf
בַּיִת = byt; etc.

7. Certain letters are similar in form and thus easily confused. Examine the following letters and learn to identify each by name.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| (1) ב, פ, פ | (6) ו, ז, י |
| (2) ק, ק | (7) ס, ס |
| (3) ג, נ | (8) ט, מ |
| (4) ד, ז | (9) ה, ח, ת |
| (5) ד, ר | (10) ע, צ, ץ |

8. Certain letters sound alike. Learn to identify these letters by name.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) ש, ס - S, as in Set | (4) ו, ב - V, as in Vine |
| (2) ק, פ - K, as in Keep | (5) ח, כ - CH, as in BaCH |
| (3) ט, ת - T, as in Tall | (6) א, ע - Silent letters |

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 (2) ב כ פ (4) א ה ח ע ר

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