The Hebrew Alphabet

Aleph-Bet

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- There are about 23 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.
- Some letters have more than one sound and some have special forms used at the end of words.
- Each letter has a numeric value used in gematria that I will include for your reference.

- Let’s get started!
## Aleph-Bet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Final Form</th>
<th>Name/#</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>א</td>
<td>Aleph; 1</td>
<td>(silent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ב, ב</td>
<td>Bet, Ve; 2</td>
<td>ב = b as in boy; ב = v as in vote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ג</td>
<td>Gimmel; 3</td>
<td>G as in gimmick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ד</td>
<td>Dalet; 4</td>
<td>D as in doll</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ה</td>
<td>He; 5</td>
<td>H as in hey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ו</td>
<td>Vav; 6</td>
<td>V as in vote (Note Vav can also be spelled Waw)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ז</td>
<td>Zayin; 7</td>
<td>Z as in zoo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next letter that we will learn on our list is call Het.

The problem Americans face when pronouncing this letter is that we don’t pronounce “Bach” as the Germans do. We’re going to try and fix that right now.

To get the positioning of your tongue correct to make this sound, pretend you are going to pronounce an English “g” as in the word “get” ...

But don’t actually make the “g” sound.

Instead, note where your tongue is in the back of your throat.
Now, lower the back of your tongue off your soft palate just a tiny bit; bring it back slightly and force a little air to pass through between your tongue and soft palate.

Now add a vowel sound as you pronounce the letter.

Practice several times to get it right.

Remember, it is *not* a *ck/ch* sound; it’s more of a breathy *h* sound.

You don’t have to over-do it and say it too harshly.
# Aleph-Bet

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ח</td>
<td>Het; 8</td>
<td>Ch as in Bach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ט</td>
<td>Tet; 9</td>
<td>T as in toy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>י</td>
<td>Yod; 10</td>
<td>Y as in yellow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כ, כּ,ךּ</td>
<td>Kaf, Kha; 20</td>
<td>כ K as in keep; כּ/ךּ Ch as in Bach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ל</td>
<td>Lamed; 30</td>
<td>L as in look</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מ</td>
<td>Mem; 40</td>
<td>M as in me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נ</td>
<td>Nun; 50</td>
<td>N as in name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ס</td>
<td>Samech; 60</td>
<td>S as in sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ע</td>
<td>Ayin; 70</td>
<td>(silent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>פ, פּ</td>
<td>Peh, Feh; 80</td>
<td>P as in pay; F as in fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>צ, צַדֵּק</td>
<td>Tsade; 90</td>
<td>Ts as in cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ק</td>
<td>Qof; 100</td>
<td>K as in key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ר</td>
<td>Resh; 200</td>
<td>R as in rate</td>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ש</td>
<td>Shin; 300</td>
<td>Sh as in shoe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ש</td>
<td>Sin; 300</td>
<td>S as in sin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ת</td>
<td>Tav; 400</td>
<td>T as in toy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let’s sing the Aleph-Bet song!

Note: Song does not play in pdf version.
Please play from lesson page.
There are 6 letters that often have a dot called a "dagesh lene” inside them. These letters are ב, ג, ד, ה, ו, ט. They are often referred to as BeGaDKePHaT letters.
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- Sometimes the dagesh in BeGeDKePHaT letters is not a dagesh lene, but is a dagesh forte.
- If there is a full vowel (a vowel other than sheva) immediately preceding a consonant with a dagesh, it is a dagesh forte (strong dagesh), representing a doubling of the consonant in which it appears.
- All other letters (besides gutterals and BeGeDKeFaT letters) can take a dagesh forte.
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- ש, ח, כ, צ, and ר are known as gutturals.
- Their sound can’t be doubled; they don’t take a dot in the center of them called a “dagesh forte.”
- As a result of the inability to double their sound, vowel changes (resulting in compensatory lengthening) under gutturals often occur.
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- We will discuss dagesh forte further when we discuss syllabification.
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- There are 4 letters that change their form when they appear at the end of a word; these are final sofit letters:

  - כ becomes כ
  - מ becomes מ
  - פ becomes פ
  - צ becomes צ
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- It is not unusual to confuse certain letters when first learning Hebrew. Please pay close attention to:

  - ד (dalet) and ר (resh)
  - ה (he) and ח (het)
  - ו (vav) and ר (resh)
  - ו (vav) and נ (nun sofit)
  - ו (vav) and י (yod)
  - ע (ayin) and צ/ן (tsade/tsade sofit)
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Notice that some letters have the same sounds but may be transliterated differently to distinguish them.

- ח (transliterated ch) and כ (transliterated kh)
- ט and ת both have the t sound
- ס and ש both have the s sound
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- Hebrew vowels can be divided into two major groups: regular vowels and vowel letters.
- Please be aware that Hebrew grammars offer slightly different vowel pronunciations for e-class and i-class vowels.
- You need to listen to audio and practice to get a good handle on vowels because it’s not an exact science.
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- Long Vowels:

- A-class  Qamets  א  a as in father
- E-class  Tsere  ת  e as in they or ten*
- O-class  Holem  ה  o as in hope
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- Short Vowels

- A-class: Patach ַּ a as in father
- E-class: Seghol ֶּ e as in met
- I-class: Hireq ִּ i as in pin or machine*
- O-class: Qamets Hatuf ָּ o as in hope
- U-class: Qibbuts ֻּ u as in pull or rule*
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- B. M. Rocine teaches, “A qamets in a closed and unaccented syllable is called a qamets-hatuf and should be pronounced as a holem.”

- The qamets hatuf occurs only in closed, unaccented syllables, as in בָּלָה or בָּלָה יִבְּקָר. The qamets hatuf never appears in a closed, accented syllable.
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- Reduced (Hateph) Vowels

- A-class  Hateph Patach  א  a as in amuse
- E-class  Hateph Seghol  א  e as in metallic
- O-class  Hateph Qamets  א  o as in commit or hope
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- Vowel letters are also known as matres lectionis.
- They are vowels written with the consonants ה, ו, ו.
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- Vowel letters written with ה (He) can only appear at the end of a word:
  - A-class  Qamets He א as in father
  - E-class  Tsere He א as in they
              Seghol He א as in bet
  - O-class  Holem He א as in role
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- Vowel letters written with ו (Vav):
  - O-class Holem Vav בּ o as in role
  - U-class Shureq בּ u as in ruler
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- Sometimes א can be a consonant and sometimes a vowel.
- If it is accompanied by a vowel, it is a consonant.
- The א in צו is accompanied by a qamets, so it’s a consonant that is pronounced “v”.


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- Vowel letters written with י (Yod):
  - E-class Tsere Yod יֵּ י e as in eight
    Seghol Yod יֵּ י e as in bet
  - I-class Hireq Yod יֵּ י i as in machine

- Vowels written with Yod (י) or Vav (ו) are often referred to as historically or unchangeably long vowels.
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- An Israeli cantor taught me that:
  - Tsere is pronounced as an “e” in “met.”
  - Hireq is between an “i” in “sit” and “machine;” it’s closer to “i” as in “machine.”
  - Hebrew grammars say to pronounce a patach-yod-vav or qamets-yod-vav at the end of a word as “av.” (בָּןָו would be pronounced “ba-nav.”)
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- Defective writing refers to vowels that are written without their consonant. Three patterns of defective vowels are:

  - Holem Vav (בּה) → written as Holem (בּ)
  - Shureq (בּו) → written as Qibbuts (בּ)
  - Hireq Yod (בּי) → written as Hireq (בּ)
  - (plene) (defectiva)
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- There are two basic types of shevas:
  - Silent Shevas (א) are never pronounced or transliterated.
  - Vocal Shevas (א) have a short or hurried pronunciation and sound like the a in amuse.
  - Bear in mind that some grammars refer to “Reduced (Hateph) Vowels” as “Compound Shevas.”
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- [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_Two/unit_two.htm](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_Two/unit_two.htm)
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