

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 ם is not a letter of the alphabet.
- **The OT was originally written without vowels**
 - Vowels and accents were added in AD 500-1000
 - מלך → מֶלֶךְ

Variations on Letter Names

- **Different people spell letter names differently**
 - E.g., Alef, Aleph, 'álep̄, אָלֶפֶת
- **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**
 - בּ Vet vs. ב Bet
 - כּ Chaf vs. כ Kaf
 - פּ Fay vs. פ Pay
- **All reasonable variations are acceptable in my class**

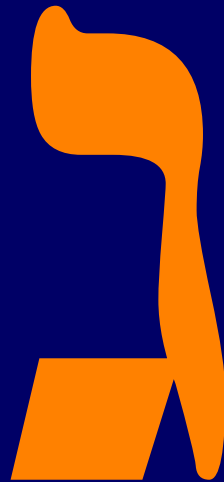
Alef



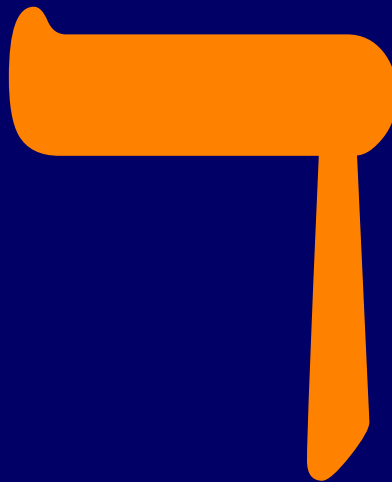
Bet



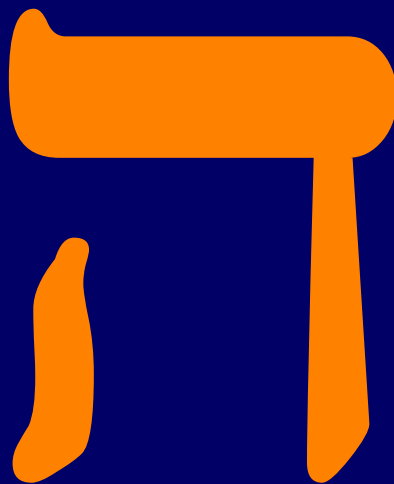
Gimel



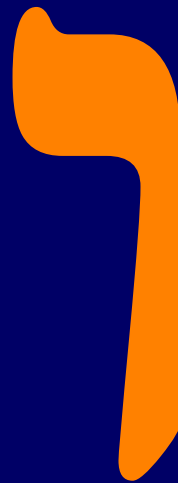
Dalet



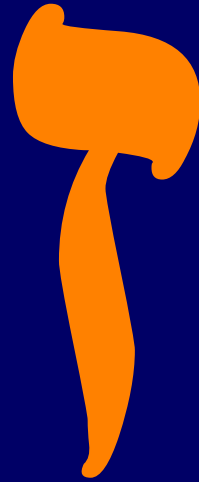
Hay



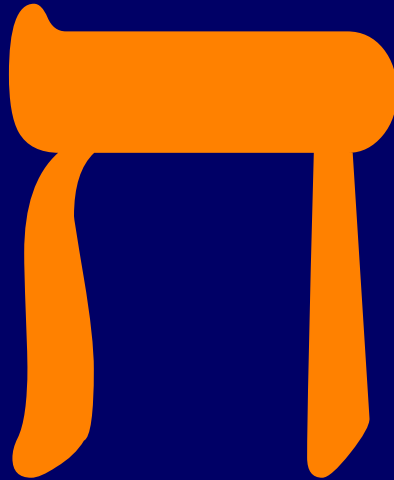
Vav



Zayin



Ḥet



Tet



Yod



Kaf



Lamed



Mem



Nun



Samech



Ayin



Pay



Tsadee



Qof

A large, stylized orange Hebrew letter Qof (ק) is centered on the page. The letter is composed of two main strokes: a vertical stem on the left and a curved stroke on the right that starts from the top of the stem, curves to the right, and then curves back down to meet the stem at the bottom.

Resh



Sin



Shin



Tav



Order of Sin שׁ and Shin שׂ

- **Acrostic poems (e.g., Psalm 119) show alphabet in order.**
 - **Acrostics treat Sin שׁ and Shin שׂ as the same letter, so they don't tell us the order.**
- **Modern Hebrew tends to put Shin שׂ before Sin שׁ**
- **Our textbook and lexicon have Sin שׁ then Shin שׂ**
 - **So memorize this order.**
- **You'll never lose points for either order.**
- **Mnemonic: Keep the dots together when writing the alphabet** אבג ... צקרששת

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

Song copyright © Professor John Walton of Wheaton College
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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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Final Forms

- 5 letters use different letter shape at end of word

Regular	צ	פ	נ	מ	כ
Final	ץ	ף	ן	ם	ך

- **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 ש ש ת

- 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 ש ש ת

- 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 ש ש ת

- **Use the simplified shapes without serifs, and be legible.**

- **Always write Right-to-Left**

Look-Alike Letters

ב (Bet)	כ (Kaf)			
ג (Gimel)	נ (Nun)			
ה (He)	ח (Het)	ת (Tav)		
ש (Sin)	שׁ (Shin)			
ם (final Mem)	ס (Samek)			
ד (Dalet)	ר (Resh)			
צ (Tsade)	ע (Ayin)			
ו (Waw)	ז (Zayin)	י (Yod)	ן (Final Nun)	ך (Final Kaf)

Bet

Tail in Lower-Right



Kaf

Rounded Lower-Right



Gimel

Bottom like heel of a boot



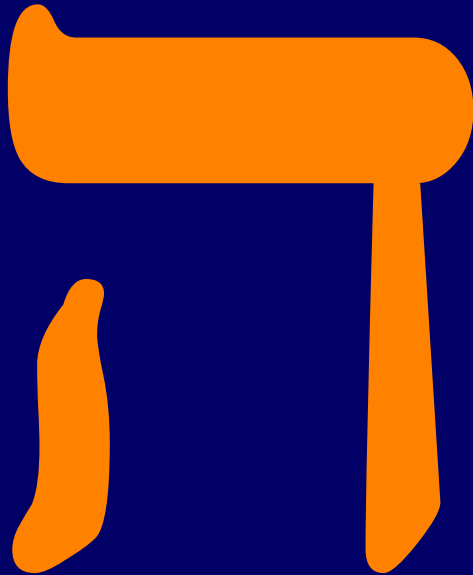
Nun

Flat bottom



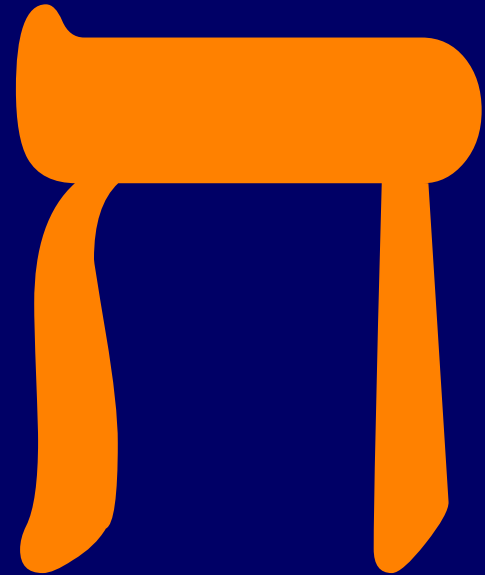
Hay

Gap in Top Left



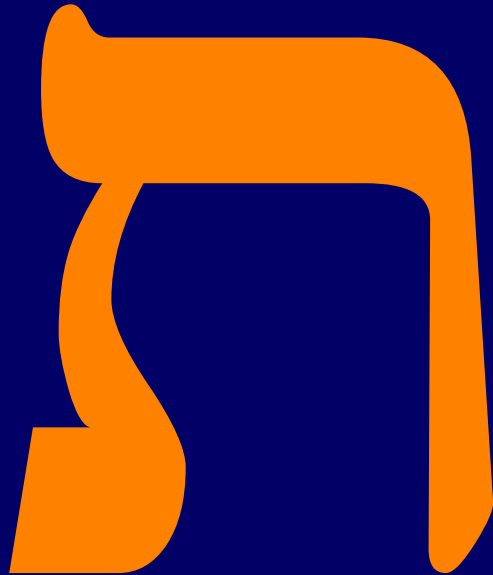
Ḥet

No gap in Top Left



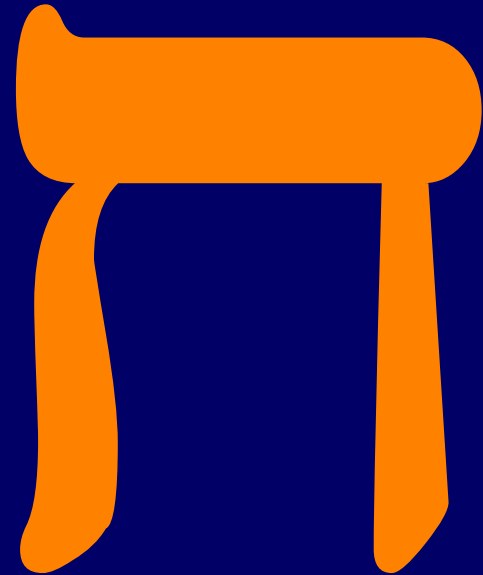
Tav

Foot on Lower Left



Het

No foot on Lower Left



Sin

Dot on Upper Left



Shin

Dot on Upper Right



Final Mem

Square Bottom



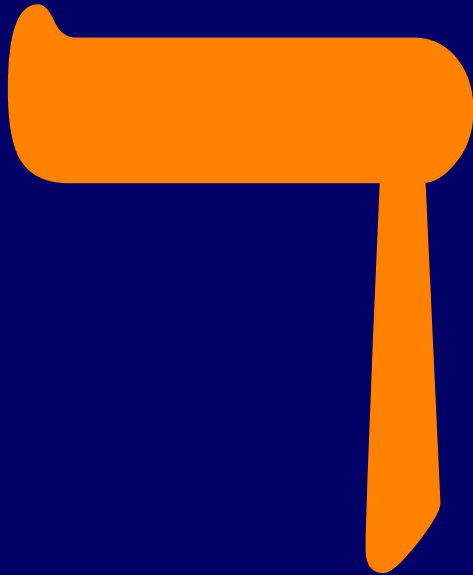
Samech

Round Bottom



Dalet

Bump on Upper Right



Resh

Round Upper Right



Tsade

Bump on Lower Right



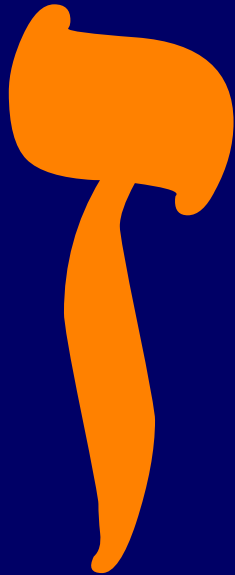
Ayin

Round Lower Right



Zayin

Tail on Upper Right



Vav

Round Upper Right



Yod

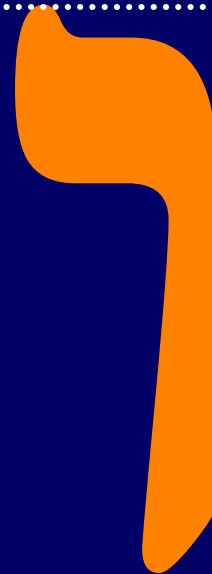
Vav

Final Nun

Halfway Down

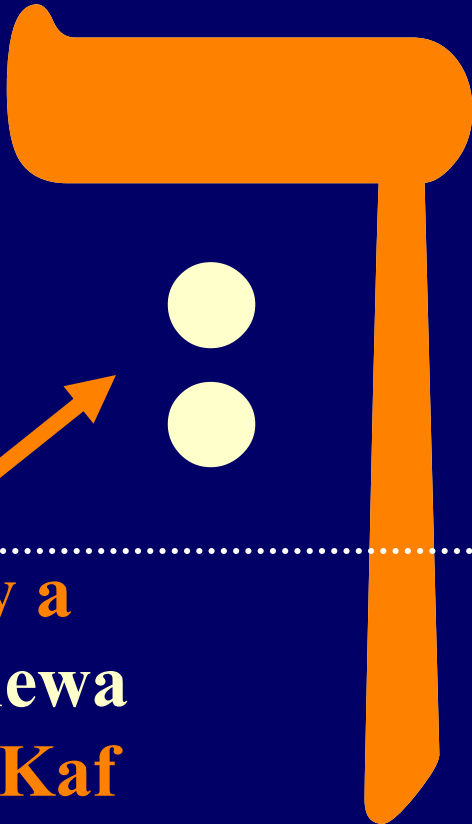
Full Height

Below the Line



Final Kaf

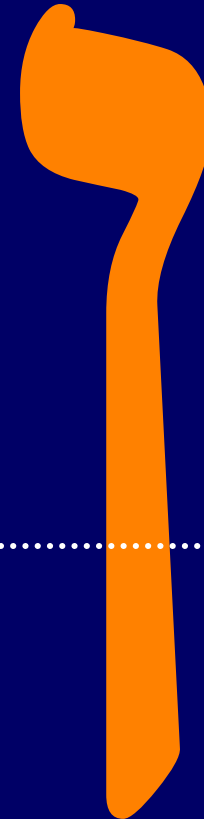
Top Line is Big



Usually a
Silent Shewa
in Final Kaf

Final Nun

Little or No Top Line



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.**

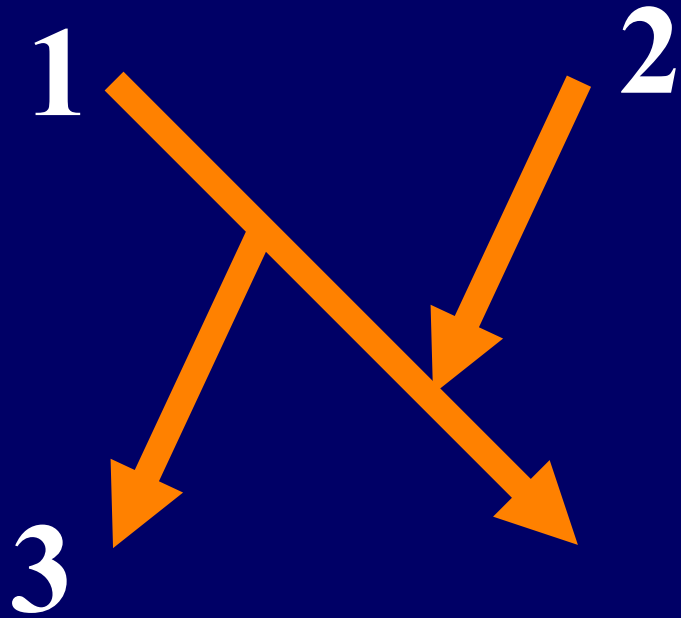
Chapter 1 – The Hebrew Alphabet (Alef-Bet)

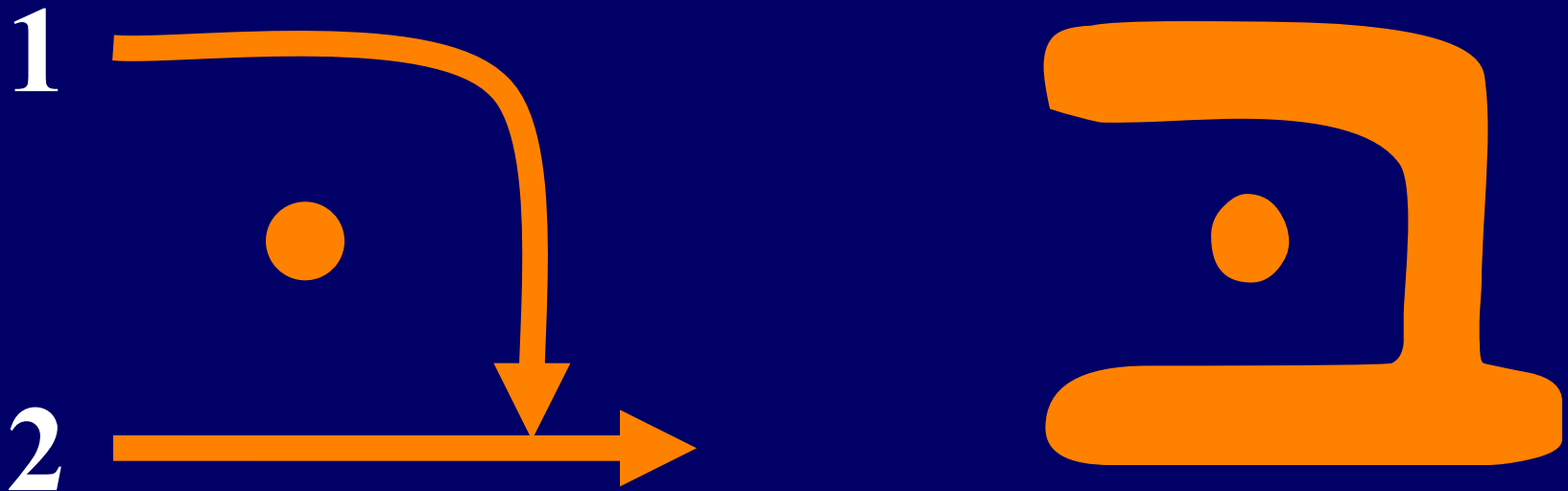
- **Names of the Letters**
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How to Write the Letters

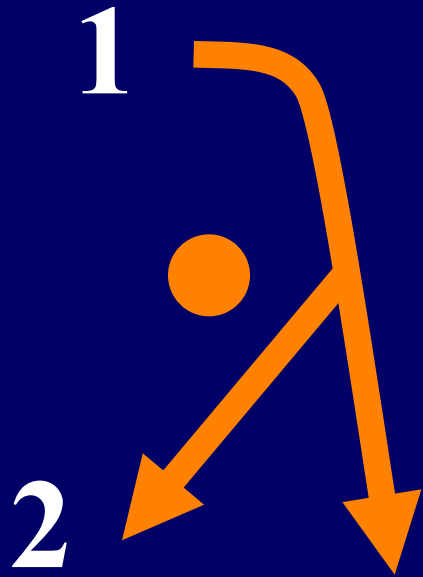
- **The following slides suggest how to write the letters.**
 - You can write the letters differently, as long as it is clear which letter is intended.
- **Most letters can take a dot inside them.**
 - These slides show the location of the dot.
 - The dot is not part of the basic letter shape.
 - Don't 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.

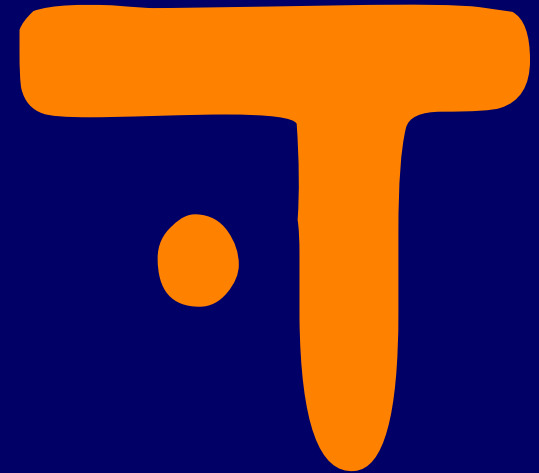
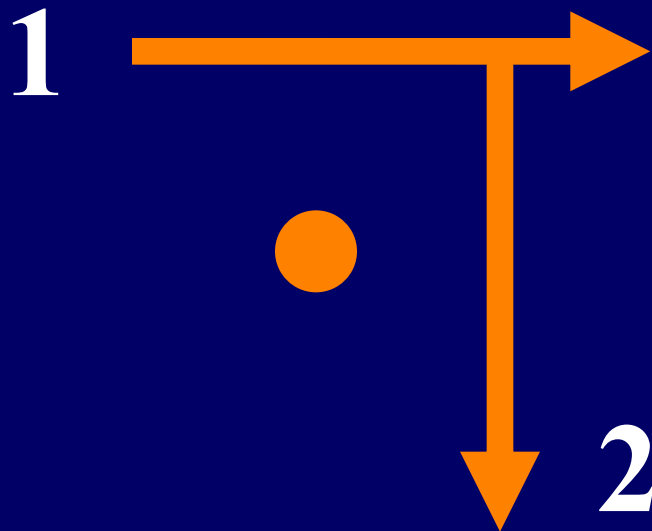
Alef א





Tail on bottom right
distinguishes
Bet ב from Kaf כ





Tail on top right
distinguishes
Dalet ד from Resh ר

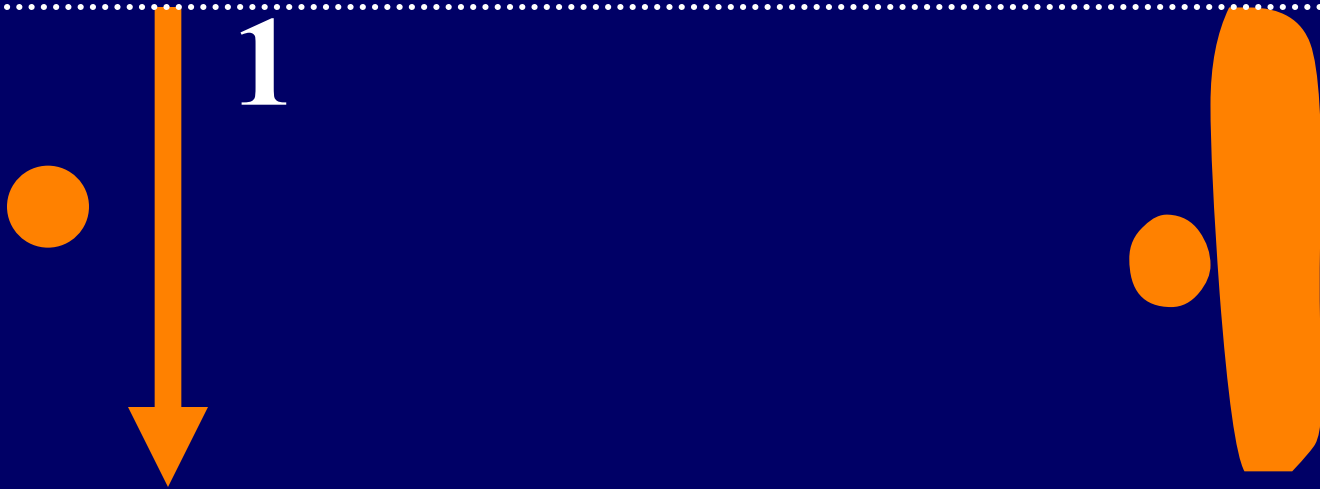
Hay ה



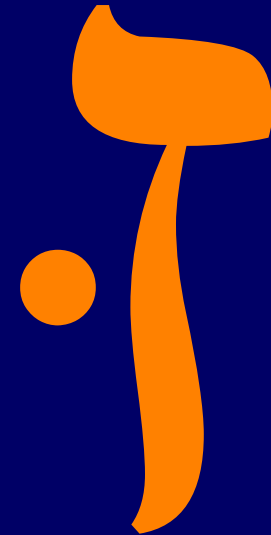
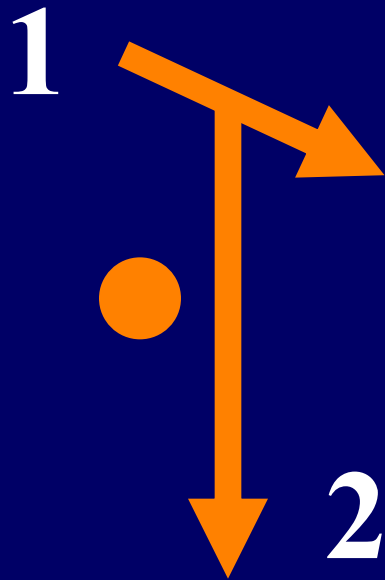
Gap in upper left
distinguishes
Hay ה from Het ח

Waw / Vav ו

Optional hook
in top left



Unlike Yod ך and Final Nun ן,
Vav ו comes just down to the line



**Tail on top right
distinguishes Zayin ז
from Waw ו**



**Lack of Gap in upper left
distinguishes
Ḥet ח from Hay ה**

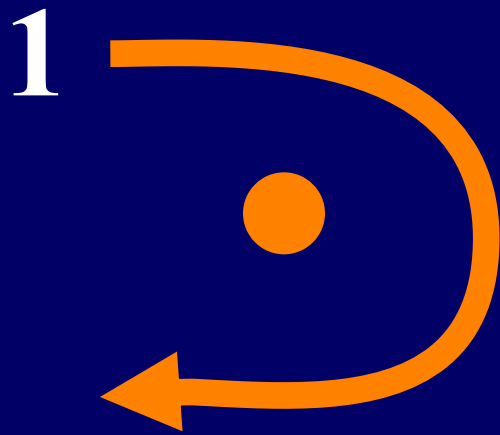
Tet ט



Some people
curve Yod



Unlike Vav ך and Final Nun ך,
Yod ך doesn't reach the bottom line.



**Smooth bottom right
distinguishes
Kaf כ from Bet ב**

Final Kaf כ

1



Alternately, Kaf can
be all 1 curved line

2



Unlike Dalet כ
and Resh כ,

Final Kaf כ goes below the line



Lamed

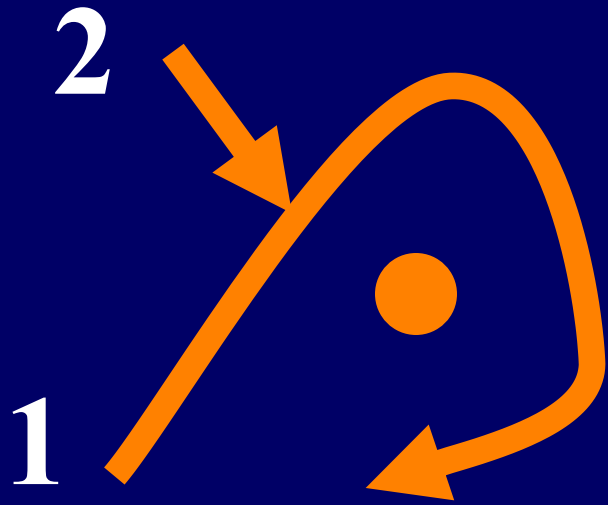
ל

1-60

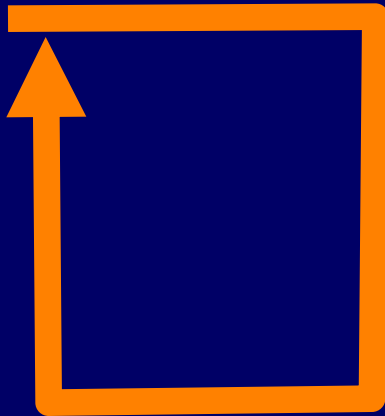
1



Mem מ



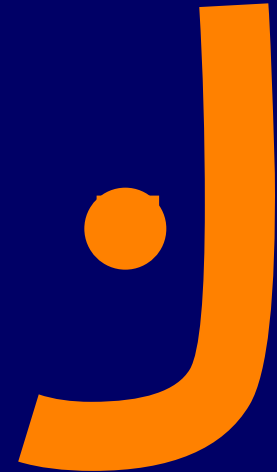
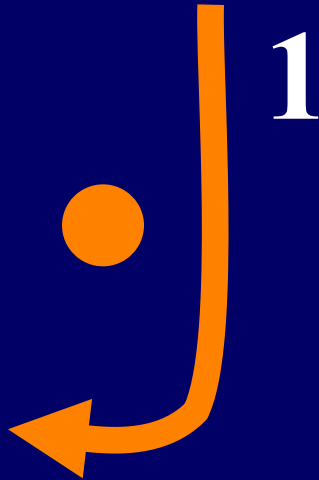
1



**Square bottom distinguishes
Final Mem ם from Samek ם**

Nun נ

Some people
add a top hook



Final Nun ן

Optional hook
in top left

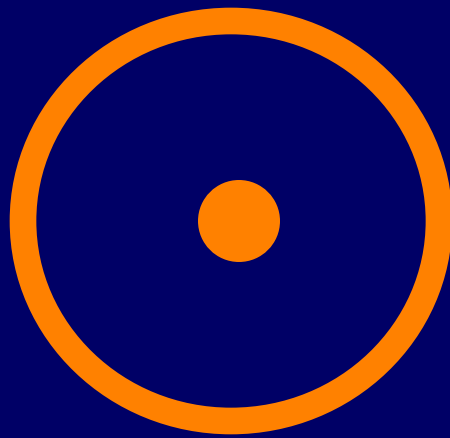


1



Unlike Yod ך and Vav ן,
Final Nun ן extends below the line

Optional hook
in top left



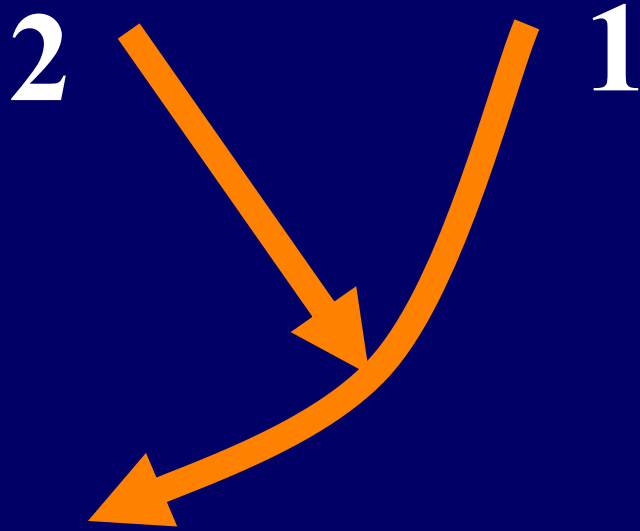
1



Round bottom distinguishes
Samek ם from Final Mem ם

Ayin ע

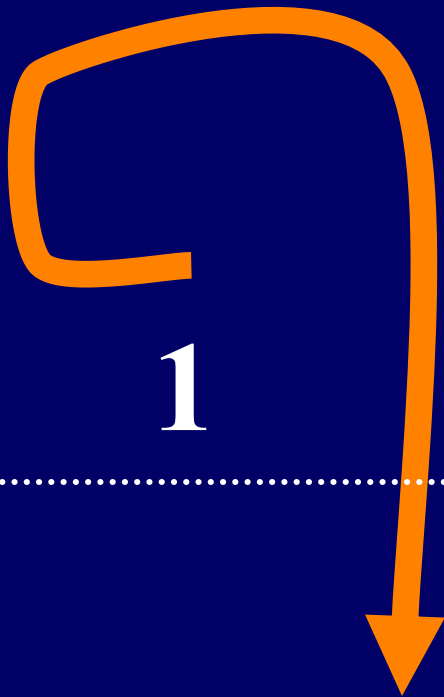
1-66



Pay פ

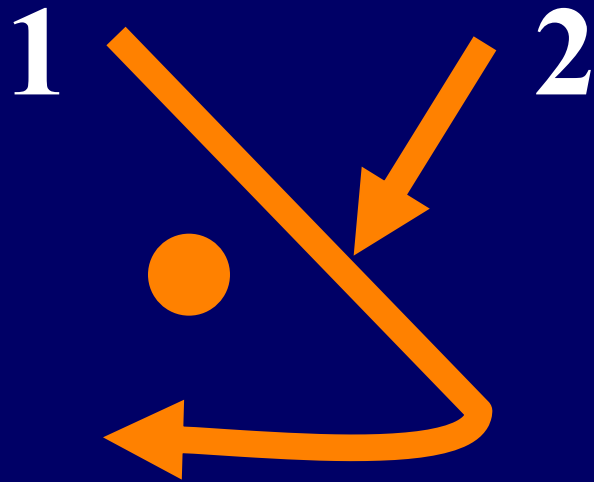


Final Pay פ

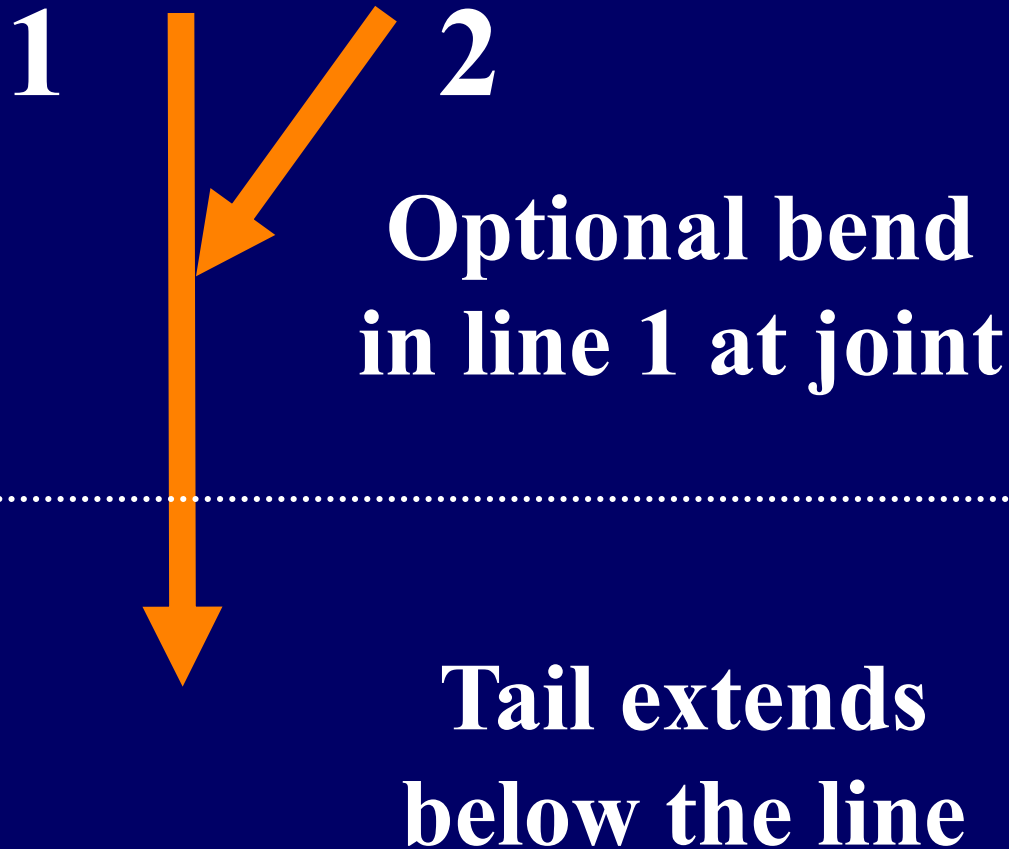


**Tail extends
below the line**

Tsade ט



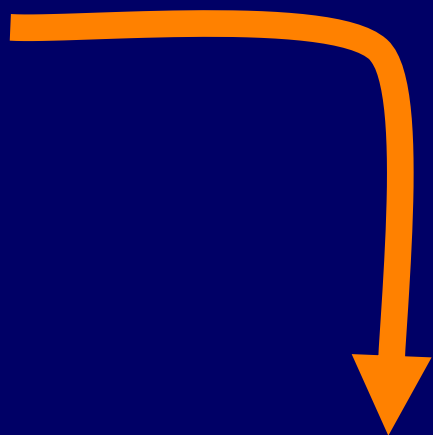
Final Tsade ך





**Tail extends
below the line**

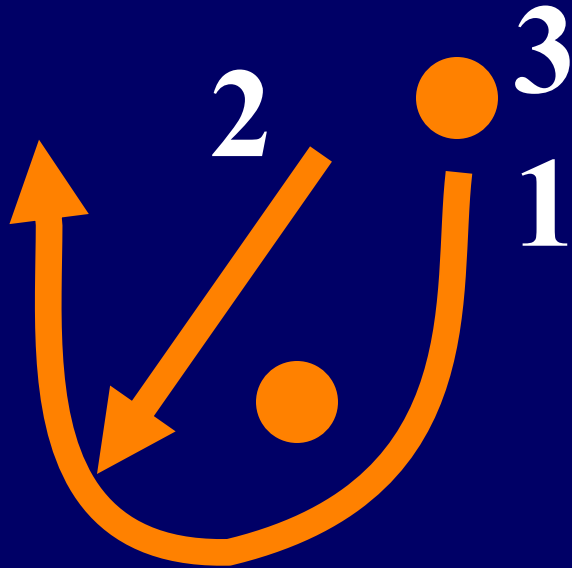
1



**Smooth top right corner
distinguishes
Resh ר from Dalet ד**



**Placement of upper dot
distinguishes
Sin שׁ from Shin שׂ**



**Placement of upper dot
distinguishes
Shin שׁ from Sin שׂ**



Tail in lower left
distinguishes
Tav ת from Het ח

Transliteration

■ Transliterate as follows

ʾ b g d h w z ḥ ṭ y k l m n s ʿ p ṣ q r 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

...אבגד

– Write transliteration Left-to-Right

ʾ b g d ...

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.

א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ כך ל מ מן נ ס ע פ פף צ צץ ק קר ש שש ת

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Begad Kephath Letters

- “**Begad Kephath**” means the letters **ת פ כ ג**
- **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)

	ת	ת	פ	פ	כ	כ	ד	ד	ג	ג	ב	ב
Sound	THin	T	PH	P	baCH	K	THe	D	GH	G	V	B

- **In Modern Hebrew, ת ד ג** pronounced like **ת ד ג**
 - I use this pronunciation.
- **Modern Hebrew uses different names for פפ ככ בב**
 - **ב** Bet vs. **ב** Vet, **כ** Kaf vs. **כ** Chaf, **פ** Pay vs. **פ** Fay

Transliterating Begad Kephath Letters

- **Underline transliterated begadkephat without a Dagesh.**
 - Overline **p̄** and **ḡ**, since an underline wouldn't fit.
 - The line indicates a sound that can go on and on.
 - E.g., כּ = k = 'v' sound which can continue.
 - E.g., כּ = b = 'b' sound which is momentary.

	ת	תּ	פ	פּ	כ	כּ	ד	דּ	ג	גּ	ב	בּ
Sound	THin	T	PH	P	baCH	K	THe	D	GH	G	V	B
Trans	<u>t</u>	t	<u>p̄</u>	p	<u>k</u>	k	<u>d</u>	d	<u>ḡ</u>	g	<u>b</u>	b

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 Kephath letters with and without a dot ('Dagesh')

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Guttural Letters

■ 4 guttural letters

- א (Alef)
- ה (Hay)
- ח (Het)
- ע (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

א (Alef)	ע (Ayin)	silent
ב (Bet)	ו (Vav) Modern	Vat
ה (Het)	כ (Chaf) No Dagesh	baCH
ט (Tet)	ת (Tav) with Dagesh	Top
כ (Kaf) with Dagesh	ק (Qof)	Kite
ס (Samek)	ש (Sin)	Sat

- 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

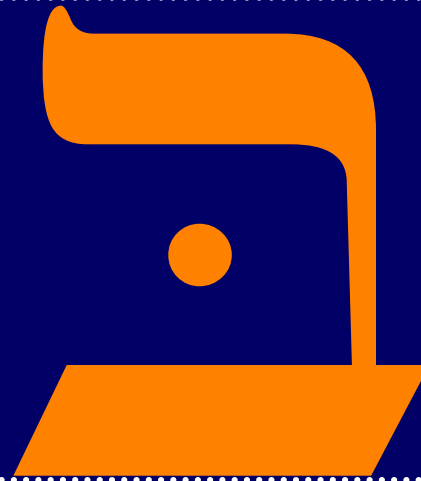
- **Some letters are pronounced differently in Modern Hebrew.**
 - **Pick a system and try to be consistent**
 - **Recognize the other system when you hear it**

Letter	Traditional	Modern
ג	aGHast	Good
ד	THe	Dog
ת	THin	Top
ו	Wow	Vat



Alef א is silent

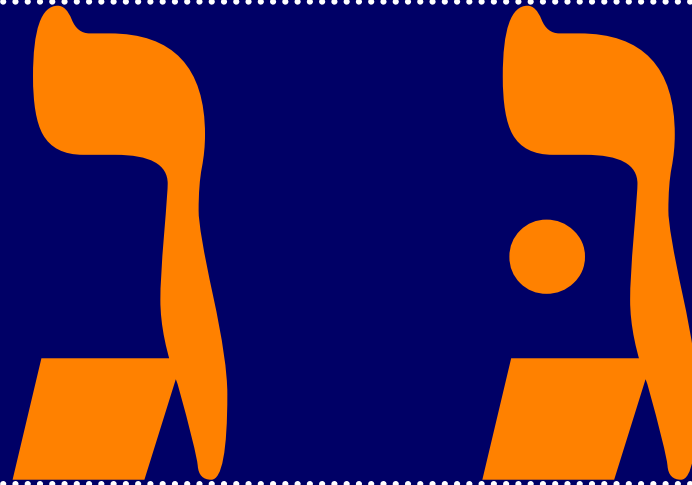
- **Silent (nowdays)**
 - Pronounce the vowel that follows it.
- **Sounds like Ayin**
 - Both are silent
 - When memorizing vocabulary, distinguish them.
 - E.g., אִם 'if' vs. אִתּוֹ 'with'
- **Guttural**
 - It was originally a glottal stop (the pause in “uh-oh”).
- **Transliterate like single closing quote** ’



Bet ב sounds like B or V

■ Begad kephat

- Dagesh ב B sound, transliterate **b**
- No dagesh ב V sound, transliterate **b**



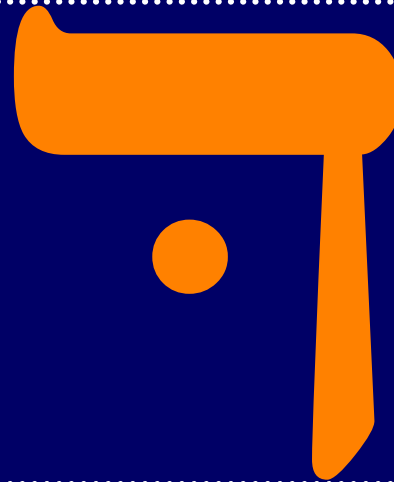
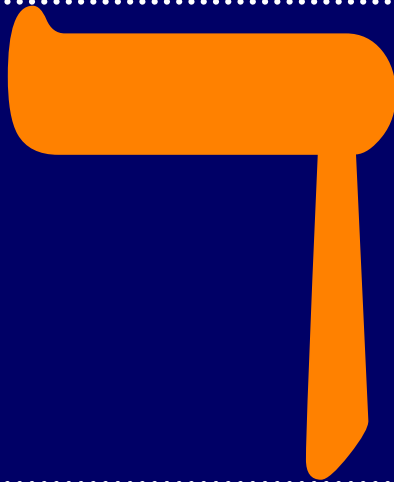
Gimel ג sounds like G / GH

■ Begad kephat

- Dagesh ג G sound, transliterate **g**
- No dagesh ג GH sound, transliterate **g̃**

■ 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 **TH**e, transliterate **d****
- **Modern Hebrew always pronounces as D**

ה

Hay ה sounds like H

- **Transliterate as h**
- **Guttural**



VaV ׀ sounds like V (or W)

- **Modern Hebrew pronounces it as V**
 - So it sounds just like ׀ without Dagesh
 - Called Vav in Modern Hebrew
- **Traditionally pronounced as W**
 - Transliterated **w**
 - **Waw**



Zayin ז sounds like Z

- Transliterate as z

ה

Het ח sounds like CH in Bach

- Sounds just like Kaf without Dagesh כּ
 - ח was deeper in the throat than כּ
- Transliterate as חּ (h with dot under it)
- Guttural



Tet ט sounds like T

- Sounds just like Tav with Dagesh טּ
 - When memorizing vocabulary, I give Tet intentional emphasis to help me remember that the word has Tet טּ not Tav ט
- Transliterate as **ṭ** (t with dot under it)



Yod ם sounds like Y

- Transliterate as y

כ פ

Kaf כ sounds like K / CH in Bach

■ Begad kephat

- Dagesh כ K sound, transliterate **k**
- No dagesh כ CH sound of Ba**CH**, transliterate **k**

■ Without a Dagesh, Kaf כ sounds like כּ

- כּ was deeper in the throat than כ



Lamed ל sounds like L

- Transliterate as l



Mem מ sounds like M

- Transliterate as m



Nun נ sounds like N

- **Transliterate as n**



ש

Samek ס sounds like S

- Sounds just like the letter Sin שׁ
- Transliterate as s



Ayin א 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 א 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 פ P sound, transliterate **p**
- No dagesh פ F sound, transliterate **p̄**



Tsade ט sounds like TS

- Transliterate as ṣ (s with a dot under it)



ק

Qof ק sounds like K

- Sounds just like the letter Kaf with a Dagesh כּ
- Transliterate as q



Resh ך 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 שׁ sounds like S

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



Shin שׁ sounds like SH

- Transliterate as š (s with a little v on top)
- Biblical acrostics treat Sin שׁ and Shin שׁ as one letter

תת

Tav ת sounds like T / TH

- **Begad kephat**
 - Dagesh ת T sound, transliterate **t**
 - No dagesh ת TH sound of **TH**in, transliterate **t**
- **ת sounds just like Tet ט**
- **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.