

The Online Hebrew Tutorial

Version 2.0



Somewhere on the road south of Dahab, eastern Sinai Peninsula...

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Introduction

This tutorial teaches both Biblical and Modern Hebrew, with an emphasis on Modern Hebrew as spoken in the State of Israel today. This is because with Hebrew, the past cannot be meaningfully separated from the present.

The latest version of this document is available at <http://foundationstone.com.au/> – if you have not already done so, put yourself on the mailing list for updates by following the instructions on that page.

A file "OnlineHebrewTutorial.pdf" is available in the distribution. If you have the Adobe Acrobat viewer (available free of charge at <http://www.adobe.com/>) a high quality paper copy can be made. For those who need a larger print version, one is available for download at foundationstone.com.au/Distribution/OHT20Large.pdf

The tutorial is a complete course. However, it is also designed for use with whatever other learning materials you find useful, interesting or beneficial. Master the lessons in the order indicated, and do all the exercises for full results.

Due to the goal of advancing the student as rapidly as possible, the course is heavy going in parts, and may not be a favourite to those who prefer a gentler pace. There is extensive, but hopefully not unnecessary, grammar. It is what I would have liked people to have told me when I was learning, and fills a gap that I feel exists in the courses I have seen.

Like all skills Hebrew requires considerable effort to learn - it takes some time before it all starts to make sense. I hope you persevere until you reach that point.

Lesson 1 - The Alphabet

A good place to start is at the beginning, and Hebrew begins with an alphabet (infact *the* alphabet). Don't be too concerned that the following table looks very unfamiliar at first glance.

Here is the Hebrew Alphabet –

Printed	Name	Cursive	Trans- literation	Value
		IC	,	1

ב ; ב	בית ; בית	ב ב	v; b	2
ג ג	גימל	ג	gh; g	3
ד ד	דלת	ד	dh; d	4
ה	הא	ה	h	5
ו	וו	ו	v	6
ז	זין	ז	z	7
ח	חית	ח	ch	8
ט	טית	ט	t	9
י	יוד	י	y	10
כ ; ד ; כ	כף ; כף סופית ; כף	כ ק כ	kh; k	20
ל	למד	ל	l	30
ם ; מ	מם סופית ; מם	מ מ	m	40
ן ; נ	נון סופית ; נון	ן נ	n	50
ס	סמך	ס	s	60
ע	עין	ע	`	70
פ ; פ ; פ	פא סופית ; פא פא	פ פ פ	ph, p	80
ץ ; צ	צדי סופית ; צדי	צ צ	tz	90

ק	קוף	ק	q	100
ר	ריש	ר	r	200
ש; שׁ	שין; שׂין	e e'	s; sh	300
ת; תׁ	תו; תׂו	ת תׁ	t	400

There is also an alphabet used prior to the Babylonian exile, which appears on archaeological relics. Interested readers are referred to “Appendix A – Origin of the Alphabet”.

Basic Principles:

Hebrew uses an alphabet of 22 consonants. It is written from right to left, top to bottom. Notice that the consonants “כ”, “מ”, “נ”, “פ” and “צ” when appearing at the end of a word take what is called the **final forms** “ך”, “ם”, “ן”, “ף” and “ץ” respectively. Thus “אֶרֶץ” not “אֶרֶצ”.

The symbols written above and below the consonants are the vowels – these will be covered next lesson, so ignore them for now.

Note that the pronunciations given in the table are **Sephardi** (originating from Spain and North Africa), and is the pronunciation used in the State of Israel. Many communities use the **Ashkenazi** (German) pronunciation – the most obvious difference is that “ת” is pronounced “s” as in “Shabbas”, rather than “Shabbat” for שַׁבָּת, the day of rest.

Difficult Letters:

People who speak European languages often have problems pronouncing “ד”, “כ” and “ק”; “א” and “ע”.

“ד” has a peculiar throaty sound, whereas “כ” and “ק” are indistinguishable.

“א” is simply a pause, like in the word “o’clock”.

“ע” is the hardest to describe – it is like clearing your throat.

Shortly, we will be using a video to learn them.

Exercise 1a:

Referring to the table above, learn the printed alphabet and try to and become familiar with the cursive (modern handwritten) letters along the way. Learn to recognise the letters and their **transliterations** (you will be unable to read their names until the next exercise). Practice reading and writing them in alphabetical order. The Hebrew numerical values are rarely used in Modern Hebrew (a modern text contains the familiar Arabic numerals 1-10, so you can ignore them for now).

Exercise 1b:

Browse the link: foundationstone.com.au/ListeningSkills.html and follow the instructions to install the QuickTime media layer (if necessary). Quicktime enables your computer to play the various multimedia files used in this tutorial. Download and play the “Alphabet.mov” video. The speaker will read from the above table, follow along and practice producing the correct sounds and saying the names of the letters. In particular pay close attention to “א”, “ב” and “ג”; “ד” and “ה”.

Exercise 1c:

When you think you know the table, go into FoundationStone and learn the letter **pronunciations**, without listening to “Alphabet.mov”. Select the “Alphabet” word type filter, and practice.

Optional Exercise 2a:

Redo exercise 1a, but with the emphasis on learning the cursive (handwritten) script. You will need to consult “Appendix B – The Cursive Alphabet” before proceeding.

Optional Exercise 2b:

When you think you know the table, go into FoundationStone and select the “Alphabet” word types from the filter menu. In the Edit menu, select “General Preferences...”. Click on the “Handwritten Hebrew” button, then the “Apply” button to change the font. Practice recognising the cursive letters. When you are finished return to the printed Hebrew font.

Optional Exercise 2c:

Return to the printed font, and redo exercise 1c, this time learning the numerical values of the letters. This is chiefly for Biblical Hebrew students who are interested in the topic of Gematria (where words are given numerical values equal to the sum of the consonants that compose them).

Lesson 2 - Vocalisation

To pronounce consonants together in a word, we need to have some vowels between them, and some rules for how to do it.

Here are the Hebrew vowels –

Symbol	Name	Vocalisation
–	פֶּתַח	vowel short "a" like a in father
ֵ	סֶגוֹל	vowel short "e" like e in get
ִ	חִירִיק חָסֵר	vowel short "i" like i in lid
ֹ	קָמֶץ קָטָן	vowel short "o" like o in top
ֻ	קָבוּץ	vowel short "u" like u in but
ַ	קָמֶץ גָּדוֹל	vowel long "a" like a in bar
ֵֿ	צִירִי חָסֵר	vowel long "ae" like e in hey (or a in may)
ֶֿ	צִירִי מָלֵא	vowel long "ae" like e in hey (or a in may)
ִֿ	חִירִיק מָלֵא	vowel long "i" like the final i in Israeli
ֹֿ	חוֹלָם חָסֵר	vowel long "o" like o in over
ֶֿ	חוֹלָם מָלֵא	vowel long "o" like o in over
ֻֿ	שׁוּרֹק	vowel long "u" like u in tube
׀	שָׁנָא	silent OR vowel "very short e" like first a in banana
ֵֿֿ	חֲטָף פֶּתַח	vowel "very short a" like a in lather
ֵֿֿֿ	חֲטָף סֶגוֹל	vowel "very short e" like e in elf

ט:	חֹטֵף קָמֶץ	vowel "very short o" like o in colic
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Basic Principles:

Hebrew is a phonetic language – it is spoken how it is written. Therefore at the end of this lesson you will be able to correctly pronounce or follow a reading of any written text that is pointed, or has niqudot. נִקּוּדוֹת are the signs appearing above and below the line of the text. In a modern Israeli newspaper or book, the vowels are dropped (reappearing occasionally if the pronunciation of a word is unusual). After some familiarity with the language, you will be able to anticipate these vowels from their context and supply them mentally.

Essentially, Hebrew is a language of consonants, with vowels placed between them to aid pronunciation. Therefore, it is unnatural to say two consonants one after the other. When this is necessary, a device called the **Seva** (see below) is used.

The vowel symbols above were invented around the 8th Century CE by a group called the Massoretes, as an aid to correct pronunciation. They devised a scheme having vowel signs (previously supplied by a reader intimately familiar with the texts) explicitly written above and below the sacred (and therefore inalterable) text of consonants. Today, a Torah scroll (ie Genesis through Deuteronomy) is still written without נִקּוּדוֹת and must be read aloud by an expert (or thoroughly rehearsed) reader. Note that Hebrew was successfully written down for at least 2000 years without recording the vowels. **This was possible because some consonants, specifically “ה”, “ו” and “י” can also be used as vowels:** (eg “ה” is associated with “הָ”; “ו” is used in vowels “וּ” and “וֹ”; and “י” is used in vowels “יִ” and “יֹ”). This concept is important, so let us consider the word “יְהוָה” – here the “י” is used first as a consonant, and second as a vowel.

Accent:

The accent usually appears on the word’s last syllable; otherwise, it appears on the second last syllable. Some texts mark the accent; if so a small "<" appears above the syllable to be stressed. Be warned, getting accustomed to where the accent falls can take some time for new students who speak European languages.

Syllables:

All Hebrew syllables start with a consonant. There are two basic types: **open** (not ending with a consonant and terminated by a vowel) and **closed** (ending with a consonant having a vowel in between - think of the consonants as shutting in the vowel).

If a syllable is shut, and is not accented, it must have a short vowel. An open syllable usually has a long vowel, unless it has the accent when it may take a short vowel. Conversely, a closed syllable usually has a short vowel, although it may have a long vowel if the accent falls on it. Note that this is how to distinguish a חֹטֵף קָמֶץ from a חֹטֵף קָמֶץ.

סֵּוּף (Seva):

The last four entries in the table are each a different סֵּוּף. They have very short vowel like sounds as indicated. The simple סֵּוּף is either silent (if it ends a shut syllable), or has a slight "e" sound otherwise.

An augmented סֵּוּף is used under a **Guttural** (see below). The Guttural “א” prefers “אֵּ”, ie “אֵ”.

Two simple vocal סֵּוּף cannot appear together: if this occurs (typically at the start of a word), the first becomes a חִירֵיק (ie “ֵ” or “ִ”) and the **Dagesh** (see below), if present, is dropped (eg “לְבָרִית” not “לֵבָרִית” and “לִיחַוֵּדָה” not “לִיחַוֵּדָה”).

מַקֵּף (Makayf):

Sometimes (especially in Biblical writings) you will find a “ֿ” symbol joining words. This device simply makes the two words appear as one for the purpose of accent. It has no sound of its own. For example “אֶחָד־עָשָׂר”.

דָּגֶשׁ (Dagesh):

There are two types of Dagesh (ie a dot inside a consonant).

Dagesh Lene can occur in the letters “ת”, “פ”, “ב”, “ד”, “ג” and “ב”. When it does, it makes the letters harder in tone. For example, “בֿ” (b) and “בֿ” (v).

Dagesh Forte can occur in any letters except “א”, “ה”, “ח”, “ע” (these sounds come from the back of the throat; the so called **Gutturals**) and “ר”. When it does, the letter is effectively doubled. For example “טֿ” = “טֿטֿ”; “כֿסֿא” = “כֿכֿסֿא”. When the Dagesh Forte appears in the Dagesh Lene letters (“ת”, “פ”, “ב”, “ד”, “ג” and “ב”) the doubled letter is hard. Thus “בֿ” = “בֿבֿ”.

There can be no confusion between which Dagesh a letter is marked with, because the Dagesh Forte is always preceded by a full vowel (any vowel except “ֵ” “ִ” “ֶ” “ֹ” “ֺ”), but the Dagesh Lene never is.

Special Cases:

If a guttural is the last letter in a word and is preceded by any long vowel except גִּדּוֹל, it is difficult to pronounce. To overcome this, a פִּתְחָה is placed under, and yet pronounced before it. Thus “רוֹצֵחַ” ro-tzae-ach; and “שׁוֹמֵעַ” sho-mae-a`.

Common Problems:

Because the two קָמֶץ share the same vowel symbol “ֿ”, there is often confusion about which one to use. The accent and syllable will allow you to determine if the vowel is short or long. In practice the קָמֶץ גִּדּוֹל is more often encountered, because the accent in Hebrew is typically on the last syllable and a common ending for words is the “ֿה” (this usually indicates feminine gender); thus making the pronunciation long.

Exercise 1a:

Referring to the above table, learn the names of the vowels and their transliterations. Practice reading and writing them.

Exercise 1b:

Transliterate the following words, separating the syllables with a “-”. Hint: check your answers against the “Answers To Exercises”.

פָּנִים	(a)
מִנָּה	(b)
עֲבוּדָה	(c)
אֵלֶב	(d)
חֶזֶק	(e)
נָבִיא	(f)
צִדְקָה	(g)
דָּבָר	(h)
מִצְנָה	(i)
מִמְלָכָה	(j)
מִלְחָמָה	(k)
מִזְבֵּחַ	(l)

מֶמֶה	(m)
נֶנֶה	(n)
סֶסֶה	(o)
פֶפֶה	(p)

Exercise 2a:

Browse the link: foundationstone.com.au/ListeningSkills.html and follow the instructions to install QuickTime (if necessary). Download and play the “Vocalisation.mov” video. The speaker will read from the table, follow along and practice producing the correct sounds and saying the names of the vowels. (You may choose to ignore the names of the vowels, but you must learn the sounds).

Exercise 2b:

When you think you know the table, go into FoundationStone and learn the vowel pronunciations, without listening to “Vocalisation.mov”. Select the “Vocalisation” word type filter, and practice.

Exercise 3:

Return to “Lesson 1 – The Alphabet” Exercise 1c. This time use FoundationStone to practice pronouncing **the names** of the consonants. Use “Alphabet.mov” to assist if necessary.

Exercise 4:

The purpose of this exercise is to make sure you have accurately learnt the sounds of written Hebrew (identical for both modern and Biblical).

Browse the link: foundationstone.com.au/ListeningSkills.html and follow the instructions to install QuickTime (if necessary). Download and play the “Shema.mov” video. The speaker will read from Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Follow along and practice producing the correct sounds.

Optional Exercise 5:

Obtain a Hebrew text with niqdot such as a Siddur (Prayer Book), a Biblical text or the Shaar Lamathil newspaper (see the “Online Resources” section of this tutorial). Turn to any page and try to pronounce a sentence, syllable by syllable, by referring to the language rules in this lesson. Keep practising to increase your fluency.

Lesson 3 - Nouns Part 1

Hebrew nouns are either masculine or feminine. They can occur in singular, plural or dual (double) form. Generally, the gender and number of a noun can be recognised from its terminal letters.

For example –

Hebrew Noun	Translation	Suffix	Gender	Number
מֶלֶךְ	king	nil	male	singular
מְלָכִים	kings	ים	male	plural
מַלְכָּה	queen	הַ	female	singular
מַלְכוֹת	queens	ות	female	plural
שֵׁד	breast	nil	male	singular
שְׁנַיִם	two breasts	ים (modern Hebrew) or ים (Biblical)	male	dual
אָזן	ear	nil	female	singular
אָזְנַיִם	two ears	ים (modern Hebrew) or ים (Biblical)	female	dual

In a Hebrew dictionary, only singular nouns are recorded. You will need to recognise the underlying word to look up a noun in its plural form. For instance to look up “סוּסִים” (horses) you will need to look for “סוּס” (horse). **I recommend at this point you obtain a small pocket dictionary.** In a few lessons, new vocabulary will be introduced in the exercises that will require you to get familiar with looking them up. See the “Useful Resources” section for a choice of dictionaries.

In a dictionary, you will notice nouns marked with a “ן” or a “ה” indicating the gender of the word. Nouns ending with “ה” are usually feminine, although there are many exceptions with words of ancient origin. **For this reason, it is best to learn a noun with an accompanying adjective** (how to will be discussed in “Lesson 5 – The Adjective” Exercise 3). For now, pay attention to the noun’s gender when you learn it.

Note that the dual form applies for both male and female (זָכָר and נְקִיבָה) genders. Some words only appear in the dual form, for example מְסַפְּרִים (scissors).

Notice also what appears to be slight variations in spelling for the Biblical and modern versions in the table above. This due to a different convention being used to write out the same word, rather than a change in the underlying spelling. In Israel today there is a body of academics called the “Hebrew Language Academy” that issues guidelines on such matters. Here are some conventions you may see:

אָזְנַיִם	“two ears” standard Israeli text, the “י” is really an “יְ”
אֶזְנַיִם	Biblical (Massoretic) text, first vowel is a קָמֶץ קָטָן
אֶזְנַיִם	“י” is doubled using a דְּגֵשׁ
אֶזְנַיִם	Israeli “Plene” standard, having all “י” and “יְ”; with silent “ֵ” dropped from the נְקִיבָה
אֶזֶן	one ear written “defectively”
אֶזֶן	one ear written “in full”

A number of common masculine nouns do not use the normal plural ending (eg the plural of the masculine noun אָב (father) is אָבוֹת - which is still masculine). Conversely a number of common feminine nouns do not use the normal plural ending (eg the plural of the feminine noun עִיר (city) is עָרִים - which is still feminine).

Here is a list of such common masculine nouns that have the plural in the וֹת form -

Masculine Noun	Translation
אָב	father
חֲלוֹם	dream
לֵב לֵבָב	heart
מָקוֹם	place
אוֹת	sign, letter, character
עוֹר	skin

קול	voice
שולחן	table
שם	name
כסא	chair
לילה	night

Here is a list of such common feminine nouns that have the plural in the לִי form -

Feminine Noun	Translation
אבן	stone
אשה	woman, wife
עיר	city
מלה	word
שנה	year

Other common feminine endings are “ִית” and “ִת”. In practice, it is not possible to determine which feminine ending when applied to the masculine noun produces the feminine, so you must learn them separately. Fortunately, the plurals are formed in a regular pattern. For example -

Noun	Translation
מלצר	waiter
מלצרים	waiters
מלצרית	waitress
מלצריות	waitresses
תופר	tailor
תופרים	tailors
תופרת	tailoress
תופרות	tailoresses

Exercise 1:

Translate the following sentences:

- (a) Horses (masculine plural).
- (b) Mare (feminine singular).
- (c) Horses (a group of several horses and one mare).
- (d) Mares (feminine plural).
- (e) Horses (a group of several mares and one horse).

Exercise 2:

At this point, it will be useful to know some common Hebrew nouns. Load up the main wordlist in FoundationStone, and using the filters, select only nouns occurring with a frequency of 125 or more. Keep practising until you know these nouns.

Optional Exercise 3:

Repeat exercise 1, this time learning all the nouns (that is from frequency 0 to unlimited).

Lesson 4 - The Definite Article

Hebrew nouns receive the **definite article** (ie "the") by prefixing a "ה".

For example -

אִישׁ	man
הָאִישׁ	the man

Additionally, if the first letter of the noun can take a הָ (Dagesh) (ie a dot inside the letter), it will.

In the presence of a sentence containing a noun with the definite article, a particle "הָא" called the "**sign of the definite accusative**" appears as a separate word immediately before the noun. This has no English equivalent. This particle also appears in a sentence before the names of people or places (technically it occurs only when there is a verb that implies action upon a direct noun).

The following examples illustrate its use -

הָאִישׁ	I saw
הָאִישׁ אִישׁ	I saw (a) man

רָאִיתִי אֶת הָאִישׁ	I saw the man
רָאִיתִי אֶת דָּוִד	I saw David

The vowel under the “ה” varies depending upon which consonant letter starts the word to which the definite article is attached. The following table summarises all the variants -

Consonant starting the word	Form of the definite article
all others	הַ
א ע ר	הֶ
ה ח	הָ
ק ה both without the accent	הֵ
ק ה both with the accent	הֶ
ק ה	הִ

Exercise 1:

עָפָר	dust
עָם	people
יוֹם	day
חֲמֹר	donkey

Given the preceding vocabulary and that of previous lessons, translate the following sentences:

- The day.
- The stone.
- The word.
- The city.
- The king
- The dust.
- The donkey.
- The people.

Exercise 2:

Refer to the movie used in “Lesson 2 – Vocalisation” Exercise 3 and identify how the definite article and the sign of the definite accusative works. Note the different vowels that appear under the “ה”, and use of the **הַגָּזֵל** - you may find it convenient to print out the movie’s window. Before you start, you will first need to read “Appendix C – The Tetragrammaton”.

Lesson 5 - The Adjective

Adjectives follow the noun they describe, and agree in gender and number.

The following table illustrates their use -

Hebrew	Translation
סוס טוב	(a) good horse
סוסים טובים	good horses
סוסה טובה	(a) good mare
סוסות טובות	good mares
טוב הסוס	the horse is good (formal modern, and Biblical)*
הסוס טוב	the horse is good (conversational Modern Hebrew)*
הסוס הטוב	the good horse (literally: the horse, the good)*
הסוס הגדול והטוב	the great good horse (literally: the horse, the great and the good)*
ראיתי את הסוס הטוב	I saw the good horse
ראיתי את הסוסים הטובים	I saw the good horses
ראיתי את הסוסה הטובה	I saw the good mare
ראיתי את הסוסות הטובות	I saw the good mares

In the above table note well Hebrew’s idiom for “the good horse”, and “the horse is good”, where the order of the nouns and adjectives differs from English.*

Other common feminine endings are “תִּ” and “יתִ”. In practice, it is not possible to determine which feminine ending when applied to the masculine adjective produces the feminine, so you must learn them separately. For example -

Hebrew	Translation
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תה מצוין	excellent tea
תהים מצוינים	excellent teas
עגה מצוינת	excellent cake
עוגות מצוינות	excellent cakes

Advanced Concepts*:

Beginners can ignore this section. It provides a more complete treatment of the adjective-noun relationship appropriate for various language situations.

“הסוס טוב - the horse is good. The normal word order in *conversational* Hebrew is adjective *after* the noun, therefore this would be הסוס טוב ...[the former] can be poetic, emphatic or whatever, but it is not the most common word order.”¹

“There are two types of adjectives: **attributive** and **predicative**. Attributive adjectives appear in a phrase with their noun, and always follow it - הסוס הטוב גר פה (the good horse lives here). The noun and adjective agree in gender, number and definiteness. Predicative adjectives form a clause with their nouns, and may appear either before or after them. The noun and adjective agree in gender and number, but generally not in definiteness. This predicative adjective-noun structure is used in formal [Modern] Hebrew and definitely in Biblical Hebrew. Note that סוסים טובים can mean either ‘good horses’ (phrase) or ‘horses are good’ (clause).”²

Exercise 1:

עץ	tree
ילד	boy
גדול	big
קניתי	I bought

Given the preceding vocabulary, translate the following sentences:

- (a) A big tree.
- (b) The big boy.
- (c) The big girl.
- (d) I bought the big trees.
- (e) The tree is big.

Exercise 2:

Load up the main wordlist in FoundationStone, and using the filters, select only adjectives. Keep practising until you know these adjectives.

Exercise 3:

The purpose of this exercise is to fix the relationship between adjectives and the noun they describe in your memory. In addition, this process will teach you the gender of each noun. Repeat “Lesson 3 - Nouns Part 1” Exercise 1, this time learning an adjective with each noun. Use “good” as the adjective. For example: “טוֹב סוּס” (good horse), “טוֹבָה סוּסָה” (good mare), “טוֹב לַיְלָה” (good night). This will fix in your mind לַיְלָה as *masculine*, much more practically than trying to recall and apply the fact “לַיְלָה is masculine” in the middle of a conversation. **Whenever you learn a noun in future, do so with an adjective so you can learn its gender.**

Lesson 6 - The Conjunction

“וְ” is the Hebrew equivalent of the English word “and”, which is attached to the beginning of the next word. It does not displace the definite article that may also be present.

The following table demonstrates its usage –

אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה	man and woman
וּמָלָה	and (a) word
הָאִישׁ הַטוֹב וְהַגָּדוֹל	the great and good man

When it appears before the letters ב, ג, ד or כ (the so called “אֲוִתִּיּוֹת בּוּמָה”, a name made from an acronym of these letters) it is usually pronounced “וּ”.

However, if the conjunction becomes immediately before the accent (eg “bread and water”), it *may* (ie the rule is not consistently applied) become “וְלֶחֶם וְמַיִם” rather than “לֶחֶם וּמַיִם”. This situation typically occurs in a paired word construction, even outside the אֲוִתִּיּוֹת בּוּמָה. For example “טוֹב וְרָע” (good and bad) rather than “טוֹב וּרָע”.

Before another שְׁנֵי the conjugation becomes “וּ” rather than “וְ”. For example “וּדְבָרִים” rather than “וְדְבָרִים”.

If a conjugation appears before a חֲטָף (ie “ֿ”, “ֿֿ”, or “ֿֿֿ”) the שְׁנֵי is replaced with its vowel. Thus “שׁוֹר וְחֲמֹר” (ox and donkey) rather than “שׁוֹר וַחֲמֹר”.

Before a “וְ” the conjunction becomes “וַיְ”. Thus “וַיִּהְיוּ” not “וְיִהְיוּ”.

The preceding discussion applies to both Biblical and Modern Hebrew. However, not surprisingly, in modern colloquial Hebrew a widespread slang usage has crept in. It is regarded a sign of educated speech to follow the rules – you would expect to hear this on an Israeli news broadcast for example.

“I view it as a sign of educated speech. I teach it to my students, and tell them to use it or not at will. Most native speakers use a וְ at all times...”³

“In everyday conversation, even among educated Israelis, the “וַיְ” thing sounds stilted.”⁴

Therefore, although both schemes are acceptable, one is usually more appropriate.

Exercise 1:

אַתָּה	you
אֲנִי	I
רָעָם	thunder
רָקַק	lightning
פּוֹעֵל	worker (male)
בוֹהוּ	chaos, emptiness
תּוֹהוּ	desolation, emptiness

Given the preceding vocabulary, translate the following sentences fragments, using the **formal rules**:

- You and I. (hint: the Hebrew idiom is “Me and You”).
- Thunder and lightening.
- Desolation and chaos (ie “utter chaos”).
- And I.
- And the workers (masculine).

Exercise 2:

Translate the same sentences fragments as in Exercise 1, this time using the **informal rules**.

Lesson 7 - Prepositions

These are the **inseparable prepositions**, so called because they never appear on their own:

Inseparable Preposition	Translation
בְּ	in, at, with, by
כְּ	as, like, according to
לְ	to, at, for, towards

For example בְּעִיר (in a city), כְּמֹשֶׁה (like Moses), לְבִרְכָּהּ (for a blessing).

- Notice that the שְׁנֵי (under the inseparable preposition) can be modified according to the first vowel of the word the inseparable preposition attaches to. For example in לְבִרְכָּהּ – where we have two vocal שְׁנֵי modified in the usual way (see “Lesson 2 - Vocalisation”).
- Before a guttural (“א”, “ה”, “ח” or “ע”) with a חֲטִיף (“ֶ”, “ֵ” or “ִ”) the שְׁנֵי is replaced by its corresponding short vowel. Thus לְחֵלִי not לְחֵלִי and בְּאֵרִי not בְּאֵרִי.
- When an inseparable preposition occurs with the definite article (eg בְּ + הָעִיר; in + the city) the ה is discarded and the preposition takes its vowel (in this case “ֶ”), thus בְּעִיר (in the city).

Here is a table of common **prepositions**, which appear as *separate words in their own right* –

Preposition	Translation
תַּחַת	under, instead of
זוּלָּת	except
מִן	from, out from
בֵּין	between
עִם	with
עַד	until, during
נֶגֶד	against, opposite, before
עַל	upon, against, over

אל	to, towards, for
מול	opposite, facing, before
של	of
את	with (don't confuse with the sign of the definite accusative)
אצל	beside, near, at, with
כמו	as, like, according to
אחר	after, behind
בלי	without
לפני	before, in front of

מן can appear in an abbreviated, inseparable like form attached to the start of a word, eg מִן־הָעִיר (from the city), and מִן־הַמֶּלֶךְ (from (a) king). Note that when the “ן” is dropped from מִן, the vowel *may* be lengthened from “ . ” to “ .. ”. Also notice that the article “ה” (the) is not displaced as is the case with inseparable prepositions.

Exercise 1:

Translate the following:

- (a) Like a boy.
- (b) Coffee with sugar. (hint: use a dictionary).
- (c) Coffee without sugar.
- (d) To the laundry.
- (e) From Israel.
- (f) Like a lion.

Exercise 2:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Prepositions” word types.

Lesson 8 - Pronouns

Here is a table showing a list of pronouns -

Hebrew	Translation	Number	Gender
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אני	I	singular	masculine or feminine
אתה	you	singular	masculine
את	you	singular	feminine
הוא	he	singular	masculine
היא	she	singular	feminine
אנחנו	we	plural	masculine or feminine
אתם	you	plural	masculine
אתן	you	plural	feminine
הם	they	plural	masculine
הן	they	plural	feminine
אותי	me	singular	masculine or feminine
אותך	you	singular	masculine
אתך	you	singular	feminine
אתכם	you	plural	masculine
אתכן	you	plural	feminine
אותם	them	plural	masculine
אותן	them	plural	feminine
איתנו	us	plural	masculine or feminine
זה	this	singular	masculine
זאת	this	singular	feminine
אלה	these	plural	masculine or feminine
הוא	that	singular	masculine
היא	that	singular	feminine
הם	those	plural	masculine
הן	those	plural	feminine

Note also that there are some other less often used substitutes for the above in Biblical Hebrew, that have been dropped in Modern Hebrew –

Hebrew	Translation	Number	Gender
אֲנִי	I	singular	masculine or feminine
אַתָּה	you	plural	feminine
הֵמָּה	they	plural	masculine
הֵנָּה	they	plural	feminine
הָאֵלֶּה	those	plural	masculine
הָאֵלֶּה	those	plural	feminine

The pronouns beginning with “אֵלֶּ” are called the **definite accusatives** and are less often used than the others. When they are, it is generally at the end of sentences (as opposed to the others – they are generally used at the start). For instance, in the sentence “I went to the shops with them”, “I” is the pronoun, “them” is the definite accusative. These particular pronouns are formed by adding the pronominal suffix (see “Lesson 14 - Nouns Part 2”) to the sign of the definite accusative “אֵלֶּ”.

Interrogative Pronouns:

The addition of the definite article in front of a pronoun introduces a questioning tone. For example –

Word	Translation
הַזֶּה	this?
הַחֲדָשׁ	is it new?

In addition, some dedicated words perform this function –

Word	Translation
מִי	who?
מָה	what?

In Modern Hebrew, questions are made explicit by the addition of the question mark.

The Relative Pronoun:

The word “אשר” is translated as “which”. It joins a subordinate clause to the rest of the sentence. For example, “הסוס אשר לפני” (the horse which is in front). It has an abbreviated form “ש”, that behaves like an inseparable preposition – “הסוס שלפני”.

Exercise 1:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Pronoun” word types.

Lesson 9 - Adverbs

Adverbs are adjectives that describe a verb – eg the English phrase “He spoke softly” contains the adverb “softly”, which has the characteristic “...ly” ending. They describe how an action is being performed.

Adverbs when they appear are not modified by the context (ie number, gender or definiteness). The most common adverb is מאד (very). For example –

Word	Translation
טוב מאד	very good
הסוסה הטובה מאד	the very good mare

Inseparable prepositions (see “Lesson 7 – Prepositions”) are often joined with מה (what?) to form adverbs –

Word	Translation
למה	why? (for what?)
כמה	how much?
במה	in what?

Direction Toward:

Sometimes a noun may indicate motion towards itself. This is achieved by a “ך” attached to the end of the noun. For example –

Word	Translation
“תבֿיָתָה”	towards the house; homeward
“דרוֹמָה”	towards (the) south; southward

Exercise 1:

Translate the following:

- (a) סוּם גָּדוֹל מְאֹד
- (b) בָּמָה לְסוּם תִּגְדֵּל מְאֹד?
- (c) זָפוֹנָה

Exercise 2:

Translate the following:

- (a) The very big tree.
- (b) A very good mare.

Lesson 10 - Verbs Part 1

In previous lessons we have laid the groundwork for this, the essential core of the Hebrew language.

Hebrew is based around the verb, a feature which makes it easy to learn once you know the rules. Once you understand how to express one verb in all its forms, all you need to do is learn a new שׁוֹרֵשׁ (root) to learn another, in all its forms. From this perspective, the language is almost mathematical in nature.

Hebrew שׁוֹרֵשִׁים typically have 3 letters, although a significant number of common ancient ones have only 2, and some modern ones have 4.

In this section we will present what is called the “פִּעֵל” form of the verb. It is the simplest form, and how it relates to the others is will become apparent in “Lesson 11 - Verbs Part 2”.

You will need to fix this table accurately in your memory -



Imperative (צווי)	Future (עתיד)	Past (עבר)	Present (הנה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֶסְגֵּר	סָגַרְתִּי	סוֹגֵר	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	סוֹגֶרֶת	"	I (feminine)
סְגֹר	תִּסְגֹּר	סָגַרְתָּ	סוֹגֵר	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
סְגְרִי	תִּסְגְּרִי	סָגַרְתְּ	סוֹגֶרֶת	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	יִסְגֹּר	סָגַר	סוֹגֵר	הוּא	he
	תִּסְגֹּר	סָגַרְהָ	סוֹגֶרֶת	הִיא	she
	נִסְגֹּר	סָגַרְנוּ	סוֹגְרִים	אֲנַחְנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	סוֹגְרוֹת	"	we (feminine)
סְגְרוּ	תִּסְגְּרוּ	סָגַרְתֶּם	סוֹגְרִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
סְגְרֶנָּה	תִּסְגְּרֶנָּה	סָגַרְתֶּן	סוֹגְרוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יִסְגְּרוּ	סָגְרוּ	סוֹגְרִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תִּסְגְּרֶנָּה	"	סוֹגְרוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	לִסְגֹּר (to close)				

To clarify the language used above; here is an example using the English verb “talk” -

Grammatical Form	English Example
imperative	talk!
future	will talk
past	talked
present	talks/talking
infinitive	to talk

Any Pa'al verb can be substituted for “סָגַר”; hence the table is really a template showing you how to **conjugate** the family of Pa'al verbs in all their tenses. The root letters have been greyed out in the table to help you recognise the prefixes and suffixes.

There are some situations causing **confusion about which pronoun** to use. For example, suppose you were referring to a group of men which contains one woman. In this case

would you refer to them as “הֵם” or “הֵנָּה” (them - masculine plural) or (them - feminine plural)? The answer is “הֵם” – which demonstrates a general principle. In a mixed gender plural, the pronoun defaults to the masculine. So even if there was a group of five women and one man, it would be proper to address them all as “אַתֶּם” (you - masculine plural).

In addition to the **פָּעַל** form of the verb, there may be up to six other forms of each **שׁוּרֵשׁ**, which are known by the “past tense third person masculine singular” form (eg he acted...) of their “demonstration verb” name. The verb **פָּעַל** (to act, do) was chosen in antiquity to exercise these forms, or **בִּנְיָנִים**. This demonstration verb is not 100% standard, hence why I used “סִגַּר” to form the **פָּעַל** table at the start of this lesson. Nevertheless, the names for the **בִּנְיָנִים** have been retained from the original demonstration verb. The forms differ in the perspective the object of the verb acts on, and by the implied intensity of the action. This is summarised in the table below –

Verb Form	Type Of Action	Translation
פָּעַל	simple active	acted; done
נִפְעַל	simple passive	(was) done, (be) done
פָּעַל	intensive active	done
פָּעַל	intensive passive	(be) done
הִתְפַּעֵל	reflexive (the person or thing is acted upon)	be affected
הִפְעִיל	causative active	activated
הִפְעִיל	causative passive	(be) activated, (be) operated

The following explanation may help you make sense of these forms, but is not essential knowledge –

“Active means the noun (person or thing) does the action; passive means the person or thing is acted upon. Intensive forms imply a more intense action than the simple forms. The causative forms imply that the verb causes some change in the noun the verb acted upon.”

Note that dictionaries tend to translate a verb into English in the present tense, where in Hebrew the word is really in the past tense (eg **פָּעַל** is translated as “act; do” whereas it is more properly “acted; done”).

You will find books of Hebrew verb tables (**לוחות פְּעָלִים**) for the conjugations of all verbs, but in practice verbs in each **בִּנְיָן** differ only slightly.

The verb tables given in this section and the next are for formal Modern Hebrew. Biblical Hebrew tends not to use the imperative. As usual, colloquial Modern Hebrew relaxes the rules a little -

“The forms אַתְּ and הֵן for feminine plural ‘you’ and ‘they’ ... are actually archaic in today's spoken Hebrew (use the masculine form instead). Same for the imperative form such as סִגְרִינָה ... most verbs use only the future tense for the imperative also, except some commonly used ones (that take the imperative), such as שֵׁב [sit!], לֵךְ [walk!/go!], קח [take!], קום [get up!], רץ [run!] etc.”⁵

Exercise 1a:

Learn the פָּעַל form of the verb by heart from the table. Speak out loud sentences “He closed the door” (ie הוּא סָגַר אֶת הַדֶּלֶת) varying the pronoun and tense of the verb (eg הֵם סָגְרוּ אֶת הַדֶּלֶת “They (masculine) closed the door”). **(Have a picture in your mind of the pronoun so when in that situation you will naturally recall the correct conjugation).**

Exercise 1b:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Binyan Pa'al” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 2:

By this stage, you know enough grammar to be reading extensively from simple texts such as easy Hebrew newspapers or even the Torah and Siddur. **(I strongly recommend at this point you obtain Shaar Lamathil, an easy Hebrew newspaper - look under “Online Resources”).** Try to practice reading regularly from here on. You will also find starting to learn the entire vocabulary from FoundationStone to be beneficial – filter the words that occur with frequencies of 100 or more, and learn them as an ongoing exercise.

Lesson 11 - Verbs Part 2

This section shows a conjugation table for each other בִּנְיָן - the one for פָּעַל is in the “Verbs Part 1” section. Be encouraged by the observation that there is a good deal of commonality between בִּנְיָנִים. This is the longest (and hardest?) section, but once you have mastered it, you really have Hebrew under control.

Note that פָּעַל and הִפְעִיל do not have infinitive or imperative forms.

נִפְעַל					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנִיחַ)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֵכְנֶס	נִכְנַסְתִּי	נִכְנֵס	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	נִכְנַסְתְּ	"	I (feminine)
הִכְנֵס	תִּכְנֵס	נִכְנַסְתָּ	נִכְנֵס	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
הִכְנִסִּי	תִּכְנִסִּי	נִכְנַסְתְּ	נִכְנַסְתְּ	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	לִכְנֹס	נִכְנַס	נִכְנֵס	הוּא	he
	תִּכְנֹס	נִכְנַסְתְּ	נִכְנַסְתְּ	הִיא	she
	נִכְנֹס	נִכְנַסְנוּ	נִכְנָסִים	אֲנַחְנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	נִכְנָסוֹת	"	we (feminine)
הִכְנִסוּ	תִּכְנִסוּ	נִכְנַסְתֶּם	נִכְנָסִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
הִכְנִסְנָה	תִּכְנִסְנָה	נִכְנַסְתֶּן	נִכְנָסוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	לִכְנֹסוּ	נִכְנָסוּ	נִכְנָסִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תִּכְנִסְנָה	"	נִכְנָסוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	לְהִכְנֹס (to enter)				

פִּעֵל					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנִיחַ)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֲדַבֵּר	דִּבַּרְתִּי	מְדַבֵּר	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	מְדַבֶּרֶת	"	I (feminine)
דַּבֵּר	תְּדַבֵּר	דִּבַּרְתָּ	מְדַבֵּר	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)

דְּבַרְי	תְּדַבְּרִי	דַּבְּרָהּ	מְדַבְּרָהּ	אַתָּה	you (feminine singular)
	יְדַבֵּר	דַּבֵּר	מְדַבֵּר	הוּא	he
	תְּדַבֵּר	דַּבְּרָהּ	מְדַבְּרָהּ	הִיא	she
	נְדַבֵּר	דַּבְּרֵנוּ	מְדַבְּרִים	אֲנֵחנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	מְדַבְּרוֹת	"	we (feminine)
דְּבָרוּ	תְּדַבְּרוּ	דַּבְּרֵתֶם	מְדַבְּרִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
דַּבְּרֵנָּה	תְּדַבְּרֵנָּה	דַּבְּרֵתֵן	מְדַבְּרוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יְדַבְּרוּ	דַּבְּרוּ	מְדַבְּרִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תְּדַבְּרֵנָּה	"	מְדַבְּרוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	לְדַבֵּר (to talk/speak)				

פִּעֵל					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֲווֹה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֶכְבֵּד	כִּבְדָּתִי	מְכַבֵּד	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	מְכַבֶּדֶת	"	I (feminine)
	תְּכַבֵּד	כִּבְדָּהּ	מְכַבֵּד	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
	תְּכַבְּדִי	כִּבְדָּתְךָ	מְכַבֶּדֶת	אַתָּה	you (feminine singular)
	יְכַבֵּד	כִּבֵּד	מְכַבֵּד	הוּא	he
	תְּכַבֵּד	כִּבְדָּהּ	מְכַבֶּדֶת	הִיא	she
	נְכַבֵּד	כִּבְדֵּנוּ	מְכַבְּדִים	אֲנֵחנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	מְכַבְּדוֹת	"	we (feminine)

	תִּכְבְּדוּ	כִּבְדְתֶם	מִכְבְּדִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
	תִּכְבְּדֶנָּה	כִּבְדְתֶן	מִכְבְּדוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יִכְבְּדוּ	כִּבְדּוּ	מִכְבְּדִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תִּכְבְּדֶנָּה	"	מִכְבְּדוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	no infinitive. (be honoured / be respected)				

Note that פָּעַל does not have infinitive or imperative forms.

הַתְּפִיעַל					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנָּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֶתְלַבֵּשׁ	הִתְלַבַּשְׁתִּי	מֵתְלַבֵּשׁ	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	מֵתְלַבֶּשֶׁת	"	I (feminine)
הִתְלַבֵּשׁ	תֵּתְלַבֵּשׁ	הִתְלַבַּשְׁתָּ	מֵתְלַבֵּשׁ	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
הִתְלַבְּשִׁי	תֵּתְלַבְּשִׁי	הִתְלַבַּשְׁתְּ	מֵתְלַבֶּשֶׁת	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	יִתְלַבֵּשׁ	הִתְלַבֵּשׁ	מֵתְלַבֵּשׁ	הוּא	he
	תֵּתְלַבֵּשׁ	הִתְלַבְּשָׁה	מֵתְלַבֶּשֶׁת	הִיא	she
	נִתְלַבֵּשׁ	הִתְלַבַּשְׁנוּ	מֵתְלַבְּשִׁים	אֲנֵחָנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	מֵתְלַבְּשׁוֹת	"	we (feminine)
הִתְלַבְּשׁוּ	תֵּתְלַבְּשׁוּ	הִתְלַבַּשְׁתֶּם	מֵתְלַבְּשִׁים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
הִתְלַבְּשֶׁנָּה	תֵּתְלַבְּשֶׁנָּה	הִתְלַבַּשְׁתֶּן	מֵתְלַבְּשׁוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יִתְלַבְּשׁוּ	הִתְלַבְּשׁוּ	מֵתְלַבְּשִׁים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תֵּתְלַבְּשֶׁנָּה	"	מֵתְלַבְּשׁוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)

Infinitive:	לְהַתְּלַבֵּשׁ (to dress oneself)
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הַפְעִיל					
Imperative (צִוְיָה)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הִנֵּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֶדְלִיק	הִדְלַקְתִּי	מְדַלֵּיק	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	מְדַלִּיקָה	"	I (feminine)
מְדַלֵּק	תְּדַלֵּיק	הִדְלַקְתָּ	מְדַלֵּיק	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
תְּדַלִּיקִי	תְּדַלִּיקִי	הִדְלַקְתְּ	מְדַלִּיקָה	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	יְדַלֵּיק	הִדְלִיק	מְדַלֵּיק	הוּא	he
	תְּדַלֵּיק	הִדְלִיקָה	מְדַלִּיקָה	הִיא	she
	נְדַלֵּיק	הִדְלַקְנוּ	מְדַלִּיקִים	אֲנֵחָנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	מְדַלִּיקוֹת	"	we (feminine)
תְּדַלִּיקוּ	תְּדַלִּיקוּ	הִדְלַקְתֶּם	מְדַלִּיקִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
תְּדַלִּיקְנָה	תְּדַלִּיקְנָה	הִדְלַקְתֶּן	מְדַלִּיקוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יְדַלִּיקוּ	הִדְלִיקוּ	מְדַלִּיקִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תְּדַלִּיקְנָה	"	מְדַלִּיקוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	לְהַדְלִיק (to kindle/light)				

הַפְעֵל					
Imperative (צִוְיָה)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הִנֵּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֶזְכֹּר	הִזְכַּרְתִּי	מְזַכֵּר	אֲנִי	I (masculine)

	"	"	מְזַכֶּרֶת	"	I (feminine)
	תִּזְכֹּר	הִזְכֶּרְתְּ	מִזְכֵּר	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
	תִּזְכְּרִי	הִזְכֶּרְתְּ	מְזַכֶּרֶת	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	זִכֹּר	הִזְכֵּר	מִזְכֵּר	הוּא	he
	תִּזְכֹּר	הִזְכֶּרְתְּ	מְזַכֶּרֶת	הִיא	she
	נִזְכֹּר	הִזְכֶּרְנוּ	מְזַכְּרִים	אֲנִיחֵנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	מְזַכֶּרֶת	"	we (feminine)
	תִּזְכְּרוּ	הִזְכֶּרְתֶּם	מְזַכְּרִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
	תִּזְכְּרֶנָּה	הִזְכֶּרְתֶּן	מְזַכֶּרֶת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	זִכְרוּ	הִזְכֵּרוּ	מְזַכְּרִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תִּזְכְּרֶנָּה	"	מְזַכֶּרֶת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	no infinitive. (be mentioned / be reminded)				

Note that **הַפִּעֵל** does not have infinitive or imperative forms.

Exercise 1a:

Learn the **נִפְעַל** form of the verb by heart from the table. Speak out loud sentences “He entered the room” (ie **נָכַנס לַחֲדָר הוּא**) varying the pronoun and tense of the verb. Have a picture in your mind of the pronoun.

Exercise 1b:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Binyan Niph'al” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 2a:

Learn the **פִּעֵל** form of the verb by heart from the table. Speak out loud sentences “He talked about the situation” (ie **דִּבֶּר עַל הַמִּצֵּב הוּא**) varying the pronoun and tense of the verb. Have a picture in your mind of the pronoun.

Exercise 2b:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Binyan Pi’el” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 3a:

Learn the **הָפִיעַל** form of the verb by heart from the table. Speak out loud sentences “He was honoured in the city” (ie **הָיָא כְּבֹד בְּעִיר**) varying the pronoun and tense of the verb. Have a picture in your mind of the pronoun.

Exercise 3b:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Binyan Pu’al” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 4a:

Learn the **הִתְפַּעֵל** form of the verb by heart from the table. Speak out loud sentences “He dressed himself in the morning” (ie **הָיָא הִתְלַבֵּשׁ בְּבֹקֶר**) varying the pronoun and tense of the verb. Have a picture in your mind of the pronoun.

Exercise 4b:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Binyan Hithpa’el” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 5a:

Learn the **הִפְעִיל** form of the verb by heart from the table. Speak out loud sentences “He lit the candles” (ie **הָיָא הִדְלִיק אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת**) varying the pronoun and tense of the verb. Have a picture in your mind of the pronoun.

Exercise 5b:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Binyan Hiph’il” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 6a:

Learn the **הִפְעִיל** form of the verb by heart from the table. Speak out loud sentences “He was reminded about the house” (ie **הָיָא הִזְכִּיר עַל הַבַּיִת**) varying the pronoun and tense of the verb. Have a picture in your mind of the pronoun.

Exercise 6b:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Binyan Hoph'al” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Lesson 12 - Verbs Part 3

At this point you will be able to look up any verb (infact any word) in a regular lexicon. This is achieved by identifying the past tense third person masculine singular root, and then searching for it. You should look up the Hebrew, rather than think of a translation in your language and just check the Hebrew translation of that – being able to look up a dictionary is an important skill in any language. You will find the order of the Hebrew letters similar to your native language (see “Appendix A – Origin Of The Alphabet” to understand why).

As we have seen, Hebrew is a language based around the verb. This section looks at this claim in a little more depth.

Nouns can be formed from verbs in a methodical way. These nouns are known in language study generally as **gerundives**.

Take the **פָּעַל** verb “דִּבֶּר” (talk, speak). The gerundive noun formed is “דִּבּוּר” (speech, utterance). Note that this process does not work for all verbs (or even all **פָּעַל** verbs), and some words formed in this way are not used.

Another way of forming a noun from many **פָּעַל** verbs can be demonstrated using our familiar “סָגַר” (he closed) example. It becomes “סִגְיָה” (shutting, closing).

Participle Form of the Verb:

The **participle** form may already seem familiar to the reader from “Lesson 10 - Verbs Part 1”. In that lesson, סוֹגֵר (closing) was used to show the present tense of the Pa'al verb form. **In Hebrew, the context is very important** in determining which meaning to attach to a word. Depending on the context, there may be other meanings associated with סוֹגֵר as the following table shows.

Table of the **active participle** form of the Pa'al verb (used like a gerundive – ie a verbal noun) –

Hebrew	Translation	Grammatical Form
סוֹגֵר	(a) closing	masculine singular absolute*
סוֹגֵר	(a/the) closing of	masculine singular construct§

סוגרים	(a) closing	masculine plural absolute
סוגרי	(a/the) closing of	masculine plural construct
סוגרת	(a) closing	feminine singular absolute *
סוגרת	(a/the) closing of	feminine singular construct §
סוגרות	(a) closing	feminine plural absolute
סוגרות	(a/the) closing of	feminine plural construct

The **construct verb**§, and the **absolute verb*** can be illustrated in the sentence “the time came for the closing of (the) bidding”. “(the) closing of” is the construct; “bidding” is the absolute.

Additionally, “סוגר” can (**and most commonly does**) mean “closer” - a noun (the person or thing that does the closing). Although this may seem complicated at first, the reader rapidly becomes accustomed to working out the correct meaning.

A very similar situation occurs with the active participles formed from the present tenses of the other active בנינים – (namely פועל, פועל and הפעיל). For example –

The פועל “מדבר” can mean “I (am) talking” (verb), “he (is) talking” (verb), “you (are) talking” (verb), “(a/the) talker of”, or “talker”. The התפעל “מתלבש” can mean “I (am) getting dressed” (verb), “he (is) getting dressed” (verb), “you (are) getting dressed” (verb), “(a/the) dresser of”, or “dresser”. The הפעיל “מדליק” can mean “I (am) lighting” (verb), “he (is) lighting” (verb), “you (are) lighting” (verb), “(a/the) lighter of” or “lighter”.

Which brings us to the **passive participle** form of the פועל verb (used like a verbal adjective) –

Hebrew	Translation	Grammatical Form
סגור	closed	masculine singular absolute
סגור	(a/the) closed of	masculine singular construct
סגורים	closed	masculine plural absolute
סגורי	(a/the) closed of	masculine plural construct
סגורה	closed	feminine singular absolute
סגורה	(a/the) closed of	feminine singular construct

סגורות	closed	feminine plural absolute
סגורות	(a/the) closed of	feminine plural construct

Note that if the verb's last letter is a guttural (see the "Lesson 2 - Vocalisation"), then the form is modified to "קדוּע".

Additionally, "סגור" can also be mean "(one of the) closed" - a noun.

Again, a very similar situation occurs with the passive participles formed from the present tenses of the other passive בנינים – (namely נפעל, פעל and הפעל). For example –

The נכנס "נכנס" can mean "I (am) entering" (verb), "he (is) entering" (verb), "you (are) entering" (verb), "(an/the) entered of", or "enterer". The מוכר "מוכר" can mean "I (am being) honoured" (verb), "you (are being) honoured" (verb), "he (is being) honoured" (verb), "(an/the) honoured of", or "honoured person or thing". The מוזכר "מוזכר" can mean "I (was) being reminded" (verb), "he (was) being reminded" (verb), "you (were) being reminded" (verb), "(a/the) reminded of", or "reminded person".

Negation of both active and passive participles uses "איך", not "לא". Thus סגור איך (it's not closed).

Occupations Formed From Verbs:

Consider the verb "רקד" (dance). From this we can form "רקדן" (dancer - masculine) and "רקדנית" (dancer - feminine).

Similarly for "שחק" (act, play) we can form "שחקן" (actor) and "שחקנית" (actress).

Another family of occupations can be illustrated by: from "חשמל" (electrify), we derive "חשמלאי" (electrician - masculine) and "חשמלאית" (electrician – feminine).

Abstract Nouns Formed From Verbs:

Consider the word "רגש" (be excited, be agitated). Often by adding a "ות" suffix to the root, we can produce a noun denoting an abstract notion or thing. In this case "רגשנות" (excitability, sentimentality).

Infinitive Form of the Verb:

The infinitive form can exist in an absolute and a construct form. A future version of this document may deal with this topic in more depth.

Exercise 1:

Learn the active participle form of the verb by heart from the table. Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “ActiveParticiple” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 2:

Learn the active participle form of the verb by heart from the table. Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “PassiveParticiple” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Lesson 13 - Numbers

There are several counting systems used in Hebrew.

Nowadays, the most common one is the familiar English numerals 0-9 (originally borrowed from Arabic in the Middle Ages).

Often seen in religious writings and used in the lunar calendar are the Maccabean Period numbers, which date from the 2nd century BCE. This system involves giving the Hebrew letters a value derived from their position in the alphabet. Letters that spell out part of the Divine Name (see “Appendix C – The Tetragrammaton”) are given substitutes that sum to the same total – this being the only complication to the scheme (ie 15 and 16).

The numbers also have proper names (eg “one”), as well as symbols (“1”). There are two types, cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers. **Cardinal numbers** answer the question “how many?”, whereas **ordinal numbers** answer the question “in what order?”. For example the cardinals in English are “one, two, three...”; the ordinals are “first, second, third...”.

Here is a representative list of the Hebrew cardinal numbers –

Number	Hebrew (Maccabean)	Masculine	Feminine
0	none	אפס	same as masculine
1	א	אחד	אחת
2	ב	שנים	שתים
3	ג	שלושה	שלוש
4	ד	ארבעה	ארבע

5	ה	חֲמִשָּׁה	חֲמִשָּׁה
6	ו	שֵׁשׁ	שֵׁשׁ
7	ז	שִׁבְעָה	שִׁבְעָה
8	ח	שְׁמוֹנֶה	שְׁמוֹנֶה
9	ט	תְּשֻׁעָה	תְּשֻׁעָה
10	י	עֶשְׂרֵה	עֶשְׂרֵה
11	יא	אַחַד-עָשָׂר	אַחַד-עָשָׂר
12	יב	שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר	שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר
13	יג	שְׁלוֹשָׁה-עָשָׂר	שְׁלוֹשָׁה-עָשָׂר
14	יד	אַרְבָּעַת-עָשָׂר	אַרְבָּעַת-עָשָׂר
15	טו	חֲמִשָּׁה-עָשָׂר	חֲמִשָּׁה-עָשָׂר
16	טז	שֵׁשׁ-עָשָׂר	שֵׁשׁ-עָשָׂר
17	יז	שִׁבְעַת-עָשָׂר	שִׁבְעַת-עָשָׂר
18	יח	שְׁמוֹנֶה-עָשָׂר	שְׁמוֹנֶה-עָשָׂר
19	יט	תְּשֻׁעַת-עָשָׂר	תְּשֻׁעַת-עָשָׂר
20	כ	עָשָׂרִים	same as masculine
21	כא	עָשָׂרִים וְאַחַד	עָשָׂרִים וְאַחַת
30	ל	שְׁלֹשִׁים	same as masculine
40	מ	אַרְבָּעִים	"
50	נ	חֲמִשִּׁים	"
60	ס	שִׁשִּׁים	"
70	ע	שִׁבְעִים	"
80	פ	שְׁמוֹנִים	"
90	צ	תְּשַׁעִים	"
100	ק	מֵאָה	"

200	ר	מאתים	"
300	ש	שלש מאות	"
400	ת	ארבע מאות	"
500	תק	חמש מאות	"
1000	א'	אלף	"
2000	ב'	אלפים	"
3000	ג'	שלשת אלפים	"

Here is a representative list of the Hebrew ordinal numbers –

Rank	Masculine	Feminine
1 st	ראשון	ראשונה
2 nd	שני	שנייה
3 rd	שלישי	שלישית
4 th	רביעי	רביעית
5 th	חמישי	חמישית
6 th	ששי	ששית
7 th	שביעי	שביעית
8 th	שמיני	שמינית
9 th	תשיעי	תשיעית
10 th	עשירי	עשירית
11 th	האחד עשר	האחת עשרה
12 th	השנים עשר	השתים עשרה

Like other languages, Hebrew has a facility to express **proper fractions**. A full treatment may be covered in a future version of this tutorial. For now, here is a list of the most commonly encountered fractions –

Fraction	Masculine	Feminine
1/2	חצי	מחצית
1/4	רבע	רביעית

Decimal fractions, (eg 1.23) are read as feminine numerals, where the decimal point is read as נְקֻדָּה שְׁלוֹשׁ – אֶחָת נְקֻדָּה שְׁתֵּי שְׁלוֹשׁ –

Sums of **money**, (eg 3.95 ש"ח or New Israeli Shekels) although looking like a decimal fraction, are read as shekels and agorot, using cardinal numbers –

שְׁלוֹשָׁה שֶׁקֶלִים תְּשַׁעִּים וְחֲמֵשׁ אֲגוּרוֹת

Numbers, such as phone numbers, bus routes etc are an exception. When expressing a phone number for example, the number implicitly refers to מִסְפָּר - 'number'. Although this is a masculine word, we use feminine cardinal numbers (because they are shorter) –

הַטֵּלֶפּוֹן (מִסְפָּר) שְׁלִי הוּא אֶחָת - שְׁתֵּי - שְׁלוֹשׁ - אַרְבֶּעַ

Exercise 1(a):

Write out the cardinal numbers given in the first table, in their masculine forms.

Exercise 1(b):

Write out the cardinal numbers given in the first table, in their feminine forms.

Exercise 2(a):

Write out the ordinal numbers given in the second table, in their masculine forms.

Exercise 2(b):

Write out the ordinal numbers given in the second table, in their feminine forms.

Exercise 3:

Write out and learn the fractions.

Exercise 4:

Translate the following, **noting the order of the words**:

- (a) סוּם אֶחָד
- (b) חֲמִשָּׁה סוּסִים
- (c) שְׁלוֹשׁ סוּסוֹת

- (d) יום רביעי
- (e) אלפים חמש מאות שלשים ונשה סוסים
- (f) אלפים חמש מאות שלשים ושתים סוסות
- (g) היום הששי

Exercise 5:

Translate the following:

- (a) Seven days.
- (b) 1948 (year).
- (c) Nineteen mares.
- (d) One hundred and eleven horses.
- (e) 6:30AM.
- (f) 3:15AM.
- (g) 1.25 NIS.
- (h) Ph: 9876 4531.

Exercise 6:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Number Cardinal” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Exercise 7:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “Number Ordinal” word types (you will be learning the table given in this lesson).

Lesson 14 - Nouns Part 2

Sometimes nouns refer to other nouns. For example, in the sentence “a horse of a king”, the **construct noun** is “horse” and the **absolute noun** is “king”. When this pattern occurs in Hebrew, the construct noun is shortened as much as possible to allow the absolute noun to be emphasised in speech.

Here is a table demonstrating how such construct modifications appear –

Noun	Translation	Form	Gender	Number
סוס	horse	absolute	male	singular
סוס	horse of	construct	male	singular
סוסים	horses	absolute	male	plural

סוסי	horses of	construct	male	plural
סוסים	two horses	absolute	male	dual
סוסי	two horses of	construct	male	dual
סוּסָה	mare	absolute	female	singular
סוּסָת	mare of	construct	female	singular
סוסות	mares	absolute	female	plural
סוסות	mares of	construct	female	plural
סוסתים	two mares	absolute	female	dual
סוסתי	two mares of	construct	female	dual

Because the construct noun follows a principle of being “as short as possible”, it never takes the definite article. For example – “סוס קאזיש” can mean “(the) horse of the man” or “horse of the man”.

Also, adjectives that describe the construct noun follow the absolute, and as usual agree in number and gender. For example –

“סוסת קאזיש הטובה” “the good mare of the man”.

Similar to the construct noun, Hebrew does not use the paradigm “my horse” but “horse of myself”. The terminal part of the Pronoun is added to noun, to form the **pronominal suffixes** –

Pronominal Suffix	Translation	Noun Gender	Noun Number	Pronoun Gender	Pronoun Number
סוסי	my horse	male	singular	male or female	singular
סוסך	your (m,s) horse	male	singular	male	singular
סוסך	your (f,s) horse	male	singular	female	singular
סוסו	his horse	male	singular	male	singular
סוסה	her horse	male	singular	female	singular
סוסנו	our horse	male	singular	male or female	plural
סוסכם	your (m,p) horse	male	singular	male	plural

סוּסְכֶּךָ	your (f,p) horse	male	singular	female	plural
סוּסָם	their (m,p) horse	male	singular	male	plural
סוּסָן	their (f,p) horse	male	singular	female	plural
סוּסֵי	my horses	male	plural	male or female	singular
סוּסֵיךָ	your (m,s) horses	male	plural	male	singular
סוּסֵיךָ	your (f,s) horses	male	plural	female	singular
סוּסָיו	his horses	male	plural	male	singular
סוּסֵיהָ	her horses	male	plural	female	singular
סוּסֵינוּ	our horses	male	plural	male or female	plural
סוּסֵיכֶם	your (m,p) horses	male	plural	male	plural
סוּסֵיכֶן	your (f,p) horses	male	plural	female	plural
סוּסֵיהֶם	their (m,p) horses	male	plural	male	plural
סוּסֵיהֶן	their (f,p) horses	male	plural	female	plural
סוּסָתִי	my mare	female	singular	male or female	singular
סוּסָתְךָ	your (m,s) mare	female	singular	male	singular
סוּסָתְךָ	your (f,s) mare	female	singular	female	singular
סוּסָתּוֹ	his mare	female	singular	male	singular
סוּסָתָהּ	her mare	female	singular	female	singular
סוּסָתֵנוּ	our mare	female	singular	male or female	plural
סוּסָתְכֶם	your (m,p) mare	female	singular	male	plural
סוּסָתְכֶן	your (f,p) mare	female	singular	female	plural
סוּסָתָם	their (m,p) mare	female	singular	male	plural
סוּסָתָן	their (f,p) mare	female	singular	female	plural
סוּסוֹתִי	my mares	female	plural	male or female	singular
סוּסוֹתֶיךָ	your (m,s) mares	female	plural	male	singular

סוסותיך	your (f,s) mares	female	plural	female	singular
סוסותיו	his mares	female	plural	male	singular
סוסותיה	her mares	female	plural	female	singular
סוסותינו	our mares	female	plural	male or female	plural
סוסותיכם	your (m,p) mares	female	plural	male	plural
סוסותיכן	your (f,p) mares	female	plural	female	plural
סוסותיהם	their (m,p) mares	female	plural	male	plural
סוסותיהן	their (f,p) mares	female	plural	female	plural

Prepositions (see “Lesson 7 - Prepositions”) themselves can take these pronominal suffixes – eg “בִּינִי” (between me), “עָלַיְךָ” (upon you – masculine singular). Most prepositions that take pronominal suffixes are straightforward, but two common ones are easily confused.

The first are those formed from “אֵת”, the sign of the definite accusative. Called **definite accusatives**, they have been discussed in “Lesson 8 - Pronouns”. Eg – “אֵתִי” (me); “אֵתְךָ” (you – masculine singular); “אֵתְכֶם” (you - masculine plural); etc.

The second are formed from “אִתְּ”, which in this case means “with”. The confusion arises because the spelling is the same. Some examples are – “אִתִּי” (with me); “אִתּוֹ” (with him); “אִתָּהּ” (with her); “אִתְּךָ” (with you – masculine singular), “אִתְּכֶם” (with them – masculine plural).

Exercise 1:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “ConstructNoun” word types (you will be learning the first table given in this lesson).

Exercise 2:

Using FoundationStone, load up the main wordlist and learn the “PronominalSuffix” word types (you will be learning the second table given in this lesson).

Lesson 15 - Differences Between Modern and Biblical Hebrew

One of the frequently asked questions about Hebrew is “What is the difference between Biblical and Modern Hebrew”?

There is a misconception that the two are separate languages – which is far from the truth. You cannot know one and not understand the meaning, or be able to read aloud, the other. In Modern Hebrew literature, Biblical Hebrew is regularly employed. However in everyday conversation, many of the more ornate constructions of the Biblical language are dropped.

The situation is analogous to King James English used in the sentence “thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years”. Although it is easy to understand that the sentence means “your clothes did not wear out, nor did your feet swell, during the last forty years”, to the modern ear the former sentence sounds stilted.

Historians consider Eliezar Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922) the founder of Modern Hebrew. He was working in Israel before the foundation of the state, in the time of the **יְיִשׁוּב**. Ben-Yehuda was one of the people who simplified, modified, extended (and promoted) the Biblical language to handle what would be required to become an everyday modern language. Because of this simplification, it is arguably easier to learn Modern Hebrew first, and then proceed on to the more complicated Biblical.

Simplifications include the removal of the rare (even in Biblical writing) personal pronouns “אֲנִי” (I); “אַתָּה” (you - feminine plural); “הֵם” (they - masculine plural); and “הֵנָּה” (they - feminine plural). Also the form “הִיא” (she) which appears in the Torah is removed (it is thought to be a confused combination of the two proper “הוּא” (he) and “הִיא” (she) pronouns).

Modifications include new meanings attached to old words, so depending on the context the old or new meaning may be appropriate. This process has not stopped - any living language has a continuously developing slang (which in the case of Hebrew often went against the direction the revivers of the language intended).

Extensions are, in particular, the addition of technological words which in many cases are simple transliterations (ie pronounced similarly to the language they were borrowed from). For example “טֵלֵוִיזְיָה” (television). Ironically, these words can be the hardest to recognise, even to a native English-speaking student! (the old technique of looking for a root word does not work).

Biblical Hebrew makes more extensive use of the **מִקְרֵי** (discussed in “Lesson 2 - Vocalisation”).

The most significant simplifications are reworking forms of the verb. Modern Hebrew has past, present, future, participle, infinitive and imperative forms. Biblical Hebrew has perfect, imperfect, infinitive, participle, imperative, jussive, cohortative and vav consecutive forms. These forms overlap considerably. Perfect approximately coincides with past; jussive,

cohortative and biblical imperative approximately with the modern imperative. The participle and infinitive are the same in both.

Additionally, Modern Hebrew has dropped the verbal suffixes of the Biblical.

Let's consider now these Biblical forms.

Vav Consecutive:

This is the most extensively used form in Biblical Hebrew, and can be illustrated by the following verse, taken from שמות (Exodus) 4:4 –

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה שְׁלַח יָדְךָ וְאַחֲזוּ בְזָנְבוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיַּחֲזֶק בּוֹ וַיְהִי
לְמִטָּה בְּכַפּוֹ

This is typically translated as –

“And G-d said to Moses: Put out your hand, and hold it by the tail – and he put out his hand, and took hold of it, and it became a staff in his hand”.

Now if we look at this sentence and try a translation according to the rules of Modern Hebrew, it now becomes –

“And G-d will say to Moses: You have put out your hand and to hold it by its tail – and he (Moses) will put out his hand and he will take hold of it, and it will become a staff in his hand”.

There is usually somewhere in the sentence (typically the first word) a verb like XXXִי which is the third person masculine future tense plus a preceding conjunction – which you would expect to be “and he will XXX” (future tense). This is actually rendered “and he XXXed” (past tense).

The Vav Consecutive provides a way of linking verbs that depend on each other. There are **two basic forms**, one starting with a perfect verb (ie the action is complete), and the other starting with an imperfect verb (ie the action is not complete).

Consider the following sentence –

וַיֵּצֵא וַיִּדְרֹךְ וַיִּלְכֹּד וְלֹא שָׁבַת בְּעִיר”

“He went out and pursued and captured, and did not rest in the city”

Notice how it starts with the perfect tense, having each following dependant verb in the imperfect. If a word appears between the ו and the next verb (ie לא disrupts the sequence), it causes the tense of that and all subsequent verbs to revert to that of the very first verb.

Similarly, the following sentence using Vav Consecutive starts with the imperfect –

”וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת-הַנְּבִיאִים וַיֵּצֵא וַיִּשְׁמַע אֹתָם בְּעִיר”

“And he remembered the prophets and went out and heard them in the city”

Again, if a word appears between the ׀ and the next verb (there is none in this example), it causes the tense of that and all subsequent verbs to revert to that of the very first verb.

Jussive:

A future version of this document may deal with this topic in more detail.

Cohortative:

A future version of this document may deal with this topic in more detail.

Verbal Suffixes:

Verbal suffixes have been dropped in Modern Hebrew. They are similar to those employed in pronominal suffixes (see “Lesson 14 - Nouns Part 2”); and if encountered in a text the reader can, without further study, correctly guess the meaning.

A future version of this document may deal with this topic in more detail.

Lesson 16 - Weak Verbs

You will recall in “Lesson 10 – Verbs Part 1” how “פעל” is used to refer to the consonants in a verb. The so-called weak verbs involve one or more of these root consonants being gutturals (“א”, “ה”, “ח”, “ע”), or “ו”, “י” or “נ”. Weak verbs are classified according to where the weak consonants appear. Thus if the first letter is א, such as in the verb אכל, it is classified as a א״פ weak verb because the א appears in the פ position of the demonstration verb פעל. Thus נתן is both a נ״פ and a נ״ל weak verb.

Conjugating these verbs involves modifications to the standard tables given in the previous lessons. Some words have their very own conjugation table, not exactly like any other verb. Many of the words are of ancient origin.

There are a number of patterns to these modifications that do not require learning a complete conjugation table for each. However, the approach taken here is to learn these verbs as exceptions, when the student encounters them in their reading. The alternative is to become involved in some complicated, burdensome rules for their conjugation that won't be recalled in the midst of a conversation. Fine for a scholar, but not appropriate for someone seeking a practical knowledge of the language.

Typically the weak letters are displaced by the standard prefixes and suffixes added when conjugating a verb, and often the infinitive form is very different to the regular case. For a more complete treatment, consult a book of verb tables such as Tarmon and Uval's.

Here are some commonly encountered weak verbs, given in a condensed conjugation table –

נָתַן					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנָּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
נֵן	תִּנֶּן	נָתַתָּ	נוֹתֵן	אֹתָהּ	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לָתֵת (to give)		Comment:	ן at both ends is dropped.	

לָקַח					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנָּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
קַח	תִּקַּח	לָקַחְתָּ	לוֹקֵחַ	אֹתָהּ	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לִקְחוֹת (to take)		Comment:	An ancient word that has to be learnt as a special case.	

יָדַע					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנָּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
דַּע	תִּדַּע	יָדַעְתָּ	יּוֹדֵעַ	אֹתָהּ	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לְדַעַת (to know)		Comment:	Note the infinitive form.	

יָצָא					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנָּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
צֵא	תֵּצֵא	יָצָאתָ	יוֹצֵא	אֹתָהּ	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לְיַצֵּאת (to go out)		Comment:	Note the infinitive form. ך is displaced by the prefix.	

לָשַׁן					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הִנֵּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
לָשַׁן	תִּישָׁן	לָשַׁנְתָּ	לָשַׁן	אַתָּה	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לִישֹׁן (to sleep)		Comment:	ל in this case is not displaced by the prefix.	

לָשַׁב					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הִנֵּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
לָשַׁב	תִּשָּׁב	לָשַׁבְתָּ	לֹשֵׁב	אַתָּה	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לִשְׁבֹּת (to go out/exit)		Comment:	Note the infinitive form.	

לָרְאֶה					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עָתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הִנֵּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
לָרְאֵב	תִּרְאֶה	לָרְאִיתָ	רֹאֶה	אַתָּה	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לִרְאוֹת (to see/perceive)		Comment:	Note the infinitive form: ל"ה verbs typically have the וֹת ending.	

Exercise 1:

Write short sentences exercising the past, present, future and infinitive forms of the above verbs in masculine singular form. Use any of the vocabulary so far encountered to assist in constructing the sentences.

Exercise 2:

Read out loud the sentences you have made to become fluent at using the language in this section.

Exercise 3:

Say out loud the imperative for each of the above verbs. You may like to try varying the number and gender, by extrapolating from the regular conjugation tables.

Lesson 17 – Verbs Part 4

Two Letter Verbs

Two letter verbs often have ancient origins, and like weak verbs are best learnt as exceptions. Here are some commonly encountered two letter verbs –

קם					
Imperative (צווי)	Future (עתיד)	Past (עבר)	Present (הנה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
קום	תקום	קמתי	קם	אתה	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לָקום (to arise)		Comment:	Most common form.	

שם					
Imperative (צווי)	Future (עתיד)	Past (עבר)	Present (הנה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
שים	תשים	שמתי	שם	אתה	you (masc singular)
Infinitive:	לָשים (to put)		Comment:		

Four Letter Verbs

Four letter verbs have modern origins, and are associated with the **התפעל**, **פעל**, and **פעל** forms, to which they bear a close resemblance. Their conjugations are more regular, according to the following tables –

בלבל					
Imperative (צווי)	Future (עתיד)	Past (עבר)	Present (הנה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender

	אֲבִלְבֵל	בִּלְבֵּלְתִי	מְבִלְבֵּל	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	מְבִלְבֵּלַת	"	I (feminine)
בִּלְבֵּל	תְּבִלְבֵּל	בִּלְבֵּלְתָּ	מְבִלְבֵּל	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
בִּלְבֵּלִי	תְּבִלְבֵּלִי	בִּלְבֵּלְתִּי	מְבִלְבֵּלַת	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	יְבִלְבֵּל	בִּלְבֵּל	מְבִלְבֵּל	הוּא	he
	תְּבִלְבֵּל	בִּלְבֵּלָהּ	מְבִלְבֵּלַת	הִיא	she
	נְבִלְבֵּל	בִּלְבֵּלָנוּ	מְבִלְבֵּלִים	אֲנֵחָנוּ	we (masculine)
	"	"	מְבִלְבֵּלוֹת	"	we (feminine)
בִּלְבֵּלוּ	תְּבִלְבֵּלוּ	בִּלְבֵּלְתֶּם	מְבִלְבֵּלִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
בִּלְבֵּלְנָה	תְּבִלְבֵּלְנָה	בִּלְבֵּלְתֶּינָה	מְבִלְבֵּלוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יְבִלְבֵּלוּ	בִּלְבֵּלוּ	מְבִלְבֵּלִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תְּבִלְבֵּלְנָה	"	מְבִלְבֵּלוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	לְבִלְבֵּל (to confuse)				

בִּלְבֵּל					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עֲתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הִזָּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֲבִלְבֵל	בִּלְבֵּלְתִי	מְבִלְבֵּל	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	מְבִלְבֵּלַת	"	I (feminine)
	תְּבִלְבֵּל	בִּלְבֵּלְתָּ	מְבִלְבֵּל	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
	תְּבִלְבֵּלִי	בִּלְבֵּלְתִּי	מְבִלְבֵּלַת	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	יְבִלְבֵּל	בִּלְבֵּל	מְבִלְבֵּל	הוּא	he
	תְּבִלְבֵּל	בִּלְבֵּלָהּ	מְבִלְבֵּלַת	הִיא	she

	נבֿלֿבֿל	בֿלֿבֿלֿנו	מבֿלֿבֿלֿים	אִנְחֵנו	we (masculine)
	"	"	מבֿלֿבֿלוֹת	"	we (feminine)
	תבֿלֿבֿלוּ	בֿלֿבֿלֿתֶּם	מבֿלֿבֿלֿים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
	תבֿלֿבֿלֶנָּה	בֿלֿבֿלֿתֶּן	מבֿלֿבֿלוֹת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יבֿלֿבֿלוּ	בֿלֿבֿלוּ	מבֿלֿבֿלֿים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תבֿלֿבֿלֶנָּה	"	מבֿלֿבֿלוֹת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	no infinitive. (be/become confused).				

הַתְּבַלֵּבֵל					
Imperative (צִוִּי)	Future (עֲתִיד)	Past (עָבָר)	Present (הֵנָּה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֶתְבַּלֵּבֵל	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵלְתִּי	מִתְבַּלֵּבֵל	אֲנִי	I (masculine)
	"	"	מִתְבַּלֵּבֶלֶת	"	I (feminine)
הַתְּבַלֵּבֵל	תִּתְבַּלֵּבֵל	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלְתָּ	מִתְבַּלֵּבֵל	אַתָּה	you (masculine singular)
הַתְּבַלֵּבֵלִי	תִּתְבַּלֵּבֵלִי	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלְתְּ	מִתְבַּלֵּבֶלֶת	אַתְּ	you (feminine singular)
	יִתְבַּלֵּבֵל	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵל	מִתְבַּלֵּבֵל	הוּא	he
	תִּתְבַּלֵּבֵל	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלָהּ	מִתְבַּלֵּבֶלֶת	הִיא	she
	נִתְבַּלֵּבֵל	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלְנוּ	מִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלִים	אִנְחֵנו	we (masculine)
	"	"	מִתְבַּלֵּבֹּת	"	we (feminine)
הַתְּבַלֵּבֵּלוּ	תִּתְבַּלֵּבֵּלוּ	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלְתֶּם	מִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלִים	אַתֶּם	you (masculine plural)
הַתְּבַלֵּבֶלֶנָּה	תִּתְבַּלֵּבֶלֶנָּה	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלְתֶּן	מִתְבַּלֵּבֹּת	אַתֶּן	you (feminine plural)
	יִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלוּ	הִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלוּ	מִתְבַּלֵּבֵּלִים	הֵם	they (masculine)
	תִּתְבַּלֵּבֶלֶנָּה	"	מִתְבַּלֵּבֹּת	הֵן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	לְהִתְבַּלֵּבֵל (to become confused/ confuse oneself)				

Special Forms of התפעל

There are some special modifications that occur with these words where the first letter of the root (either 3 or 4 letter) is ט, ז, ט, ס, צ, ש, ש, or ת. The reason this occurred was to allow for easier pronunciation.

ס"ש, ש"ש and ש"ש roots

If the first letter of the root word is ס, ש or ש, the ת swaps position with it. For example, the התפעל form of the root שמש "להשתמש".

לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ					
Imperative (צווי)	Future (עתיד)	Past (עבר)	Present (הנה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אֶשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	הִשְׁתַּמַּשְׁתִּי	מִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	אני	I (masculine)
	"	"	מִשְׁתַּמֶּשֶׁת	"	I (feminine)
הִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	תִּשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	הִשְׁתַּמַּשְׁתָּ	מִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	אתה	you (masculine singular)
הִשְׁתַּמְּשִׁי	תִּשְׁתַּמְּשִׁי	הִשְׁתַּמַּשְׁתְּ	מִשְׁתַּמֶּשֶׁת	את	you (feminine singular)
	לִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	הִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	מִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	הוא	he
	תִּשְׁתַּמֶּשׁ	הִשְׁתַּמֶּשְׁתְּ	מִשְׁתַּמֶּשֶׁת	היא	she
	נִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ	הִשְׁתַּמַּשְׁנוּ	מִשְׁתַּמְּשִׁים	אנחנו	we (masculine)
	"	"	מִשְׁתַּמְּשׁוֹת	"	we (feminine)
הִשְׁתַּמְּשׁוּ	תִּשְׁתַּמְּשׁוּ	הִשְׁתַּמַּשְׁתֶּם	מִשְׁתַּמְּשִׁים	אתם	you (masculine plural)
הִשְׁתַּמְּשֹׁנָה	תִּשְׁתַּמְּשֹׁנָה	הִשְׁתַּמַּשְׁתֶּן	מִשְׁתַּמְּשׁוֹת	אתן	you (feminine plural)
	לִשְׁתַּמְּשׁוּ	הִשְׁתַּמְּשׁוּ	מִשְׁתַּמְּשִׁים	הם	they (masculine)
	תִּשְׁתַּמְּשֹׁנָה	"	מִשְׁתַּמְּשׁוֹת	הן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ (to use/utilise)				

ל" roots

If the first letter of the root word is ל, the ת not only swaps position, but changes to a ד. For example, the התפעל form of the root זקף "להזדקף".

להזדקף					
Imperative (צווי)	Future (עתיד)	Past (עבר)	Present (הנה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אזדקף	הזדקפתי	מזדקף	אני	I (masculine)
	"	"	מזדקפת	"	I (feminine)
הזדקף	תזדקף	הזדקפת	מזדקף	אתה	you (masculine singular)
הזדקפי	תזדקפי	הזדקפת	מזדקפת	את	you (feminine singular)
	יזדקף	הזדקף	מזדקף	הוא	he
	תזדקף	הזדקפה	מזדקפת	היא	she
	נזדקף	הזדקפנו	מזדקפים	אנחנו	we (masculine)
	"	"	מזדקפות	"	we (feminine)
הזדקפו	תזדקפו	הזדקפתם	מזדקפים	אתם	you (masculine plural)
הזדקפנה	תזדקפנה	הזדקפתן	מזדקפות	אתן	you (feminine plural)
	יזדקפו	הזדקפו	מזדקפים	הם	they (masculine)
	תזדקפנה	"	מזדקפות	הן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	להזדקף (to stand up)				

צ" roots

If the first letter of the root word is צ, the ת not only swaps position, but changes to a ט. For example, the התפעל form of the root צדק "להצטדק".

להצטדק					
Imperative (צווי)	Future (עתיד)	Past (עבר)	Present (הנה)	Associated Pronoun	Pronoun Number and Gender
	אצטדק	הצטדקתי	מצטדק	אני	I (masculine)
	"	"	מצטדקת	"	I (feminine)
הצטדק	תצטדק	הצטדקת	מצטדק	אתה	you (masculine singular)
הצטדקי	תצטדקי	הצטדקת	מצטדקת	את	you (feminine singular)
	לצטדק	הצטדק	מצטדק	הוא	he
	תצטדק	הצטדקה	מצטדקת	היא	she
	נצטדק	הצטדקנו	מצטדקים	אנחנו	we (masculine)
	"	"	מצטדקות	"	we (feminine)
הצטדקו	תצטדקו	הצטדקתם	מצטדקים	אתם	you (masculine plural)
הצטדקנה	תצטדקנה	הצטדקתן	מצטדקות	אתן	you (feminine plural)
	לצטדקו	הצטדקו	מצטדקים	הם	they (masculine)
	תצטדקנה	"	מצטדקות	הן	they (feminine)
Infinitive:	להצטדק (to justify oneself)				

פ"ט, פ"ט, פ"ד roots

If the first letter of the root word is ד, ט, or ת the prefix's ת disappears, and the first letter of the root takes a שג in compensation. For example, the תפעל form of the root טהר "להטהר". This makes these verbs resemble the נפעל form – but they are not! Fortunately, such verbs are rare, but are mentioned here for completeness.

Exercise 1:

Write sentences using the past, present, future and infinitive forms of the above two letter verbs in masculine singular form.

Exercise 2:

Write sentences using the past, present, future and infinitive forms of the above four letter verbs in masculine singular form.

Exercise 3:

Write sentences using the past, present, future and infinitive forms of the above special forms of **התפעל** verbs in masculine singular form.

Recommendations for Further Study

This tutorial should have provided you with a solid learning foundation. I hope it was enjoyable, and encourage you to continue your studies. Here are some suggestions for improving your skills.

Speaking and Listening

- Attend an Ulpan in Israel. For decades now the Israeli Ministry of Absorption has run six month live in language courses, chiefly for the benefit of new, or potential new immigrants. If you can attend such a course, your speaking and listening will benefit immensely. Unlike studying from a book, you will be immersed in the language. To benefit fully, choose roommates who do not speak your language. Contact your local community to find out more details. Rating: ★★★★★
- Attend an Ulpan in your City. Not quite as good as being in Israel, you will nevertheless be able to work on your speaking and listening. To benefit fully, you will need to avoid the temptation of talking in your own language. Rating: ★★★★★
- Listen to Hebrew broadcasts. This may be on your local community station, or some stations are now broadcasting over the Internet. If you are using such material, try the slowed down Hebrew audio available at foundationstone.com.au/ListeningSkills.html. Rating: ★★
- Watch Hebrew movies. TV and videos are particularly good, because the language is slower, presented as a dialogue between the actors (as opposed to a monologue on the radio). Additionally, because of the images there are more queues as to what is going on when you cannot quite understand all the Hebrew. Especially beneficial are movies with subtitles. Movies can be obtained from many libraries, or perhaps relatives can assist by taping some TV. Cable services often have a foreign movie channel, and may be another source of this material. Rating: ★★★★★
- Language tapes. Not all tapes are useful, however I recommend the Vocabulearn tapes, reviewed in “Online Resources”. Rating: ★★★

Reading and Writing

- Obtain the book “Hebrew Verb Tables” by Asher Tarmon and Ezri Uval (see “Useful Resources” for a review). It is available online at <http://www.amazon.com/> or perhaps at a large bookstore near you. This book is one of the most useful you can own – second only to a dictionary. Unfortunately it is only available in English. For Russian speakers I recommend the “Maskilon I” verb tables by Dr Abraham Solomonick. Rating: ★★★★★
- Obtain a subscription to the Jerusalem Posts “**Shaar Lamathil**”, an easy Hebrew newspaper. Look under “Online Resources” – this publication can be shipped internationally. Until you can read from a regular Israeli newspaper, this is a great resource. Being in a weekly newspaper style format, you can find a topic inside that you have an interest in, which maintains your motivation. Working in conjunction with “Hebrew Verb Tables” and a pocket dictionary, you will quickly (and painlessly) learn its limited vocabulary of around 1000 verbs. Although the language is limited, the subject matter is not. I found myself reading it cover to cover each week. Rating: ★★★★★

Further Language Courses

- I recommend Modern Hebrew students continue with “Maskilon II” by Dr Abraham Solomonick after completing this course. This book is available in English and Russian. See “Online Resources” for more information. Rating: ★★★★★
- After completing this course, I recommend Biblical Hebrew students continue with two books, which complement each other. The first is “Biblical Hebrew: A Text and Workbook” by Kittel, Hoffer and Wright (ISBN 0300043945). The second is “Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew” by Jacob Weingreen (ISBN 0198154224).⁶

Useful Resources

Ben-Yehuda’s Pocket English-Hebrew Hebrew-English Dictionary by Ehud Ben-Yehuda/David Weinstein.

This is an inexpensive Modern Hebrew dictionary. It has some good information about the development of the language in the preface, and the pre-exilic form of the Hebrew letters (if you are interested in reading archaeological artefacts this is useful). Ehud is the son of Eliezar Ben-Yehuda, considered the founder of Modern Hebrew.

Biblical Hebrew, A Complete Course by Dr R K Harrison.

This old, though still popular book is rather hard going for a beginner, although on the upside is rather short. It is very grammatical, and reminds me of the nightmare of English in the fifth grade. However, you will pick up much of how Hebrew is composed in this work.

Langenscheidt’s Pocket Hebrew Dictionary to the Old Testament Hebrew-English by Dr Karl Feyrabend.

This dictionary contains complete coverage of all Tanach ('Old' Testament) words, although you can only look them up from the Hebrew to English. Other language translations very likely exist too (this is a German work).

The New Bantam-Megiddo Hebrew and English Dictionary by Dr R Sivan and Dr E A Levenston.

This is my preferred small sized Modern Hebrew dictionary, because the English to Hebrew and then Hebrew to English translations seem to coincide more often than in others.

Hebrew Verb Tables by Asher Tarmon and Ezri Uval.

Is a modern book consisting of 235 verb tables. As a bonus 3175 high frequency verbs and their translations are included in an English to Hebrew and a Hebrew to English format. A book of verb tables helps you to recognise a particular verb in all its forms, and should be your next purchase after a dictionary. After some familiarity with Hebrew, you will find that this book is where you spend much of your learning.

+2000, A Dictionary for Learners of Hebrew by Edna Lauden and Liora Weinbach.

This dictionary gives a controlled list of words, with examples of their usage. Additionally, there are useful lists of words associated with various aspects of life (eg at the shops, in the art gallery, in the home etc). It appears to be available in languages other than English. Notice however that this dictionary does not attempt to cover the whole language.

Online Resources

See foundationstone.com.au/HtmlSupport/OnlineHebrewTutorial/OnlineResources.html for more resources available on or over the Internet.

Appendix A – Origin Of The Alphabet

This optional material is included here for interested readers, and endeavours to give an appreciation of the historical development of Hebrew and its wider contribution to language and writing in general. Also, a consequential use of a knowledge of Hebrew: you can with little extra work read archaeological relics.

You may have noticed that the English word Alphabet is formed from the first two letters of the Hebrew Alphabet (א + ב). Further, if you know the Greek Alphabet, it also begins with (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta etc). Those of you with some familiarity locating words in a Hebrew dictionary will notice the order of the sounds is familiar. This is no coincidence!

Scholars believe that it was around 3100 BCE in Sumer, a region in modern day southern Iraq, that the first writing was developed. It happened independently only decades later in Egypt and a few centuries later in China – so this may be revised as further archaeological evidence is found and interpreted. This was an important improvement over the only thing that comes close – the cave painting. Cave painting can communicate some ideas – but cannot be considered writing. "Writing only started when an organised system of signs or

symbols was created that could be used to clearly record and fix all that the writer was thinking, feeling and capable of expressing.”⁷

Historically, there have been three basic schemes of recording a language: Pictograms, Phonograms and a combination of the two.



Accadian Cuneiform.

- Using **pictograms**, each word is represented by a particular glyph. Today Chinese is written in this way, where each individual basic word has a unique Chinese character. Sometimes words can be built up by using combinations of characters. For example, the Chinese “mermaid” is composed of the characters “beautiful + human + fish”. The original Sumerian was written in this way, and gradually evolved from pictures to the more abstract wedge shaped (Cuneiform) script pictured here. Cuneiform was written on a clay tablet using a cut reed, then baked hard into a durable piece of pottery.
- Using **phonograms**, individual words are recorded using a limited set of symbols that describe the **syllables** that compose it. English uses such a system.
- Finally, a combination of the two is where some words are presented as pictograms (also called **logograms**), and some words are represented with phonograms. Egyptian hieroglyphs are recorded in such a system. Sumerian quickly evolved into a family of languages that were written in syllables and logograms (for example Akkadian) using a similar cuneiform script.

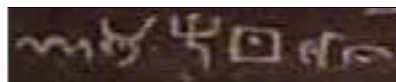
Therefore, by 1500 BCE the Middle East was politically and culturally under the influence of two great civilisations. There was Egypt and hieroglyphic writing to the southwest. A thousand kilometres to the northeast was Mesopotamia and cuneiform writing. Writing in both language systems was syllable-logogrammic. Between these two centres where a diverse group of peoples, speaking Semitic dialects: Moabites, Amalekites, Phoenicians, Canaanites and many others.



Sphinx discovered by Petrie at Serabit El Khadim.

On the west coast of the Sinai Peninsula - the great and terrible wilderness of the Exodus - at a place called Serabit El Khadim, the Egyptians mined turquoise. Turquoise is a semi precious stone found alongside copper ore. The workers in the mines were a Semitic people, perhaps contemporary with the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, although probably not including them given the nature of their religious practices. However, they spoke a language very similar to Hebrew. In 1905, Sir Flinders Petrie discovered several artefacts including the Sphinx pictured here. They were engraved with an alphabetic script and classical hieroglyphics, both stating the same message. A similar happy coincidence occurred with the famous Rosettastone (found at Rashid in Egypt by Napoleon's soldiers) which allowed scholars to work from the known Greek to the then undeciphered Hieroglyphics. It is believed the alphabet we use today had its origins in this so named proto-Sinaitic script. Scholars can trace its development through Greek, to the European Alphabets in use today. It became the basis of such widely different alphabets such as Sanskrit, Arabic, Cyrillic and Thai.

It was at Serabit El Khaddim that the idea occurred to represent **the sounds** in a language in a limited set of symbols, and to record the language exclusively in just those symbols. This was a major breakthrough, because now it was easy to teach someone how to read and write, if they spoke the language. In the cuneiform or hieroglyphic writing systems, even though a person spoke the language, they would be unable to read or write it without many years training. In the ancient world, this meant writing was restricted to a privileged class of scribes or priests, and literacy rates were low. "It can truly be said that the birth of the alphabet marks the real beginning of the democratisation of knowledge"⁸



Close-up of the Sphinx inscription.

The sphinx inscription reads in Hebrew "מֵאֵהָ (ב) בַּעַלְתִּי" "beloved of the mistress (Baalat)". The characters appear left to right on the inscription; the bracketed letters are interpolated by scholars and do not appear on the actual inscription itself; however their presence is inferred.

How can we be so sure that the proto-Sinaitic alphabet was the first? How can such messages be deciphered? Because of the brevity of the proto-Sinaitic inscriptions, another fortunate circumstance was required. “It is because the archaeologists were familiar with Hebrew that they were able to decipher the alphabet by applying the theory that the sound that each picture represented was the initial sound of the Hebrew nouns for the objects represented by the characters”⁹. Therefore, אֶלֶף (an old Hebrew word for Ox, is written using an Ox symbol borrowed from Hieroglyphics). בֵּית (בֵּית - a house), גִּמְלָה (גִּמְלָה - a camel), דֶּלֶת (דֶּלֶת - a door), and so on.

As an illustration of how the alphabet evolved, lets look at the first letter – א.



From the left:

- (a) Proto-Sinaitic, 1500 BCE, the head of an ox.
- (b) Moabite, 1000 BCE, the horns now face right.
- (c) Aramaic, 500 BCE.
- (d) Classical Hebrew 100 BCE.
- (e) Modern Hebrew Cursive, 1500 CE, developed in Germany (ie Ashkenazi).
- (f) Greek, 800 BCE.
- (g) Etruscan, 700 BCE, from Greek.
- (h) Latin, 600 BCE, from Etruscan.

Interested readers are referred to Ouaknin’s book in the Bibliography.

At this point it is appropriate to mention the attempt at an alphabet possibly 100 years earlier than the proto-Sinaitic, called the Ugaritic Alphabet and discovered in Syria. Based on Cuneiform, again it was used to record a Semitic language. However, not adopted in other languages, it died out.

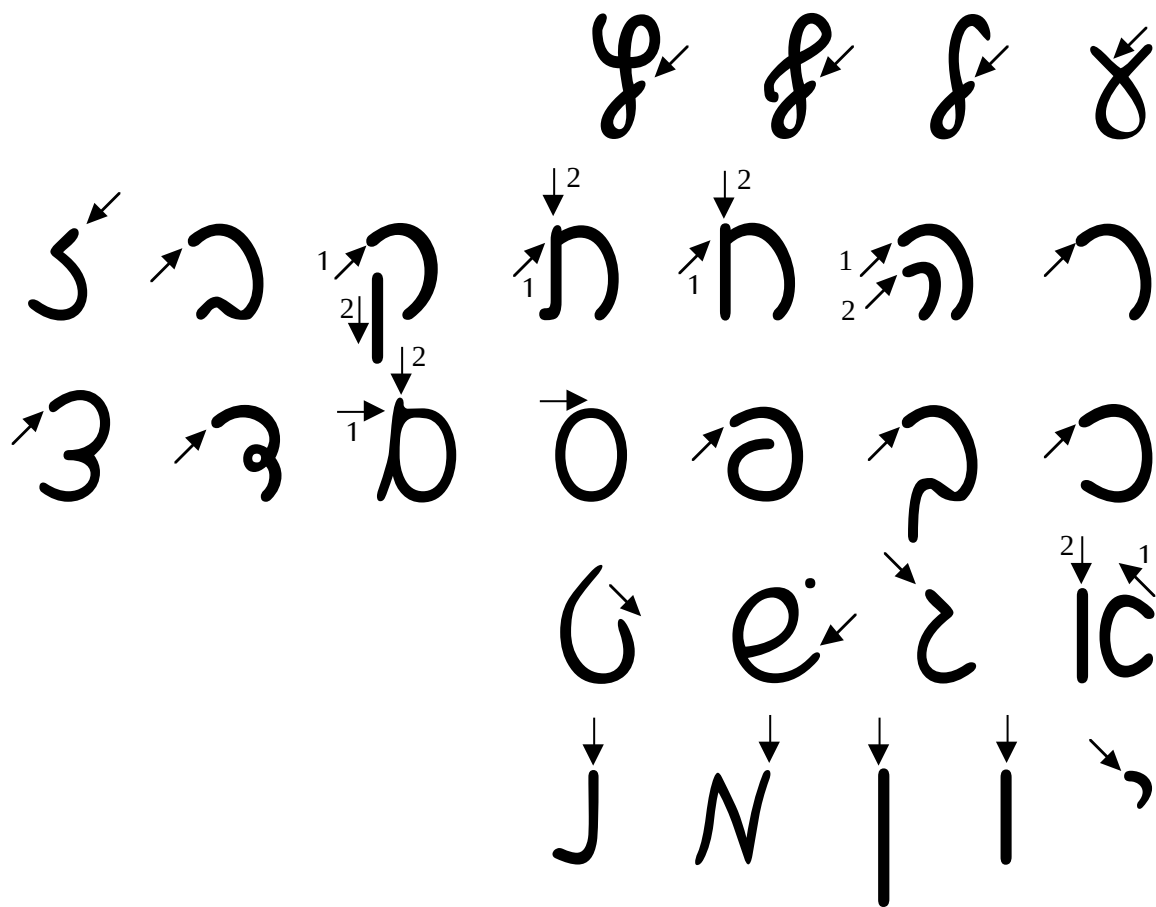
This area of study is under active research. As recently as late 1999, there has been a discovery that may put the alphabets invention in 1700 BCE in the eastern Egyptian desert, again by a Semitic migrant worker or traveller. See the related links at <http://foundationstone.com.au/> for the latest information.

Appendix B – The Cursive Alphabet

This optional material is included here for readers who need to learn cursive writing, as used on a day to day basis by Israelis. The method is adapted from that devised by Rabbi Jacques Ouaknin.

“This method has been used on both children and adults. After only an hour or an hour and a half, students with no prior notion of Hebrew can correctly copy texts...

It is vital to learn the letters from right to left, to acquire the direction of the stroke of the basic letter in the first family before going on to the other letters in the family. Only then do you go on to the second basic letter and to the second family, and so on.”¹⁰



Exercise 1:

Copy out the cursive Alphabet in the format above (proceed from right to left), until you are familiar with how to recognise, and how to construct each consonant. Take care to learn the direction of the strokes correctly, and be aware that some letters have alternate forms. When you write each letter remember to say aloud its name.

Exercise 2:

Referring to the table in “Lesson 1 – The Alphabet”, write out the cursive Alphabet 10 times in Alphabetical order, remembering to say out loud each letter’s name.

Exercise 3:

Referring to the movie used in “Lesson 2 – Vocalisation” Exercise 4, copy the text into cursive Hebrew, ignoring the נְקֻדּוֹת (vowels). You may find it convenient to print out the movie’s screen. Eg “נְקֻדּוֹת” would be written “נקודות”.

Appendix C – The Tetragrammaton

A profound influence on Jewish civilisation is the prohibition on the making of images, ie Exodus 20:4. This resulted in a purely literary tradition; almost an obsession with the written word over all other forms of artistic expression. Since Jews could not produce statues or paintings, creative energy was directed toward producing works of literature and abstract thought instead. This prohibition may also have been a motivation for abstracting the symbols used to represent the alphabet.

“The prohibition on making an image of G-d – the compulsion to worship a G-d whom one cannot see... meant that a sensory perception was given second place to what may be called an abstract idea – a triumph of intellectuality over sensuality”.¹¹

“This... eventually resulted in a transition from the stone built place of worship to worship through the book, a transition from the cult to the cultural”.¹²

The prohibition against blasphemy, ie Exodus 20:7 had similar consequences. This means that writing the name of the Deity is treated in a special way. The logic is: because of the Deity’s incorporeality, it is unfitting to use the Divine Name in swearing etc, and by extension in any way at all. If the Name or parts of it appeared in a book, the book itself then required special respect (especially in its disposal).

If you open a סִדְרָן (prayer book) used in synagogues today, you will see that the name of G-d is treated as just encountered (ie the vowels are dropped).¹³ This indicates that the word is not intended to be pronounced, and infact today no one knows for sure how to.

When the Temple stood, the High Priest alone had the duty to enter the Holy of Holies on just one day of the year (Yom Kippur) and pronounce it. The Divine Name has been the subject of rulings as recently as the early 1990’s when Chasidic Rabbis were dealing with appropriate treatment of US Treasury notes, and in the treatment of email. US Treasury notes have the English words “In G-d we trust” written on them. Newly popular email could potentially be problematic on its destruction. The rulings were: US notes require removal from view in a place such as a public toilet; and it is acceptable to delete an email containing a name of G-d.

There are a number of Names mentioned in the Torah (eg Genesis 14:18-20, 17:1, 21:33), but the most frequently encountered is the Tetragrammaton, meaning literally “the four lettered Name” – “Yud Hey Vav He”. When reading the Tetragrammaton, a substitute “שְׁמִי” (The Name) or “אֱלֹהֵי מֶלְכִי” (my Master) is used instead. If a book containing the Tetragrammaton wears out and needs to be disposed off, the Rabbis ruled it must be effectively buried with similar respect given to interring a corpse.

This has had fortunate historical consequences. Because it was forbidden to simply throw out old religious texts, and it was quite time consuming to dispose of them properly,

common practice was to place them in a ספרייה – a store room or archive. In addition, because they were full of books, often other day to day documents were stored there also.

The oldest surviving synagogue in Egypt was built in 882 CE and located in Old Cairo. It is known as the Ben Ezra synagogue. At the end of the 19th century, an historian was able to remove for study an attic full of books and community records dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries, preserved by the characteristically dry climate of the region.



Ben Ezra Synagogue, Old Cairo.



Ben Ezra Synagogue interior, with genizah visible in the background.

Jews were known to the early Muslims as “People of the Book”. Muslims found notable the affinity Jews had for their texts, and the respect they afforded written material – customs such as not turning the corner of a page to act as a bookmark; and yet the acceptability of making notes in the margins. During Medieval persecutions, Jews even ransomed books after confiscation by the Christian authorities.¹⁴

Errata

You can find a list of errors in this document discovered after it went to press at - foundationstone.com.au/HtmlSupport/OnlineHebrewTutorial/Errata.html

If you do find any errors, large or small, please report them to – author@foundationstone.com.au

Feedback

If you used this tutorial, then you will no doubt have some suggestions for its improvement. People today have limited time, so it is important to make this material as effective as possible. Towards this goal, please take a moment to complete the form –

foundationstone.com.au/HtmlSupport/OnlineHebrewTutorial/Feedback.html

Answers to Exercises

Lesson 2 – Vocalisation

Exercise 1b:

pa-nim	(a)
ma-vet	(b)
`avo-dah	(c)
'oyaev	(d)
chay-yah	(e)
na-vi'	(f)
tzeda-qah	(g)

da-var (not da-vor: because the accent falls on the last closed syllable, it is long)	(h)
mitz-vah (silent צִיָּו)	(i)
mam-la-khah	(j)
mil-cha-mah	(k)
miz-baeach (פֶּתַח is pronounced before the חֵית)	(l)
ra-`ah	(m)
to vah	(n)
shab-bat	(o)
migh-rash	(p)

Lesson 3 – Nouns Part 1

Exercise 1:

סוּסִים	(a)
סוּסָה	(b)
סוּסִים	(c)
סוּסוֹת	(d)
סוּסִים (Even one male makes the group male)	(e)

Lesson 4 – The Definite Article

Exercise 1:

הַיּוֹם	(a)
הָאִבִּן	(b)
הַמֶּלֶה	(c)
הָעִיר	(d)
הַמֶּלֶךְ	(e)

הַעֲפָר	(f)
הַחֲמֹר	(g)
הָעֵם	(h)

Exercise 2:

Note the אֵל before the Tetragrammaton; “הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה” = these things; “הַיּוֹם” = this day, today).

Lesson 5 - The Adjective

Exercise 1:

עַץ גָּדוֹל	(a)
תֵּלֶד גָּדוֹל	(b)
תֵּלֶדָה תְּגֻדוּלָה	(c)
קִנִּיתִי אֵת הָעֵצִים הַגְּדוֹלִים	(d)
גָּדוֹל הָעֵץ	(e)

Lesson 6 - The Conjunction

Exercise 1:

אֲנִי וְאַתָּה	(a)
רַעַם וְבָרָק	(b)
תּוֹהוֹ וְבוֹהוֹ	(c)
נֶאֱנִי	(d)
וְהַפּוֹעֲלִים	(e)

Exercise 2:

אֲנִי וְאַתָּה	(a)
רַעַם וְבָרָק	(b)

תוהו ובוהו	(c)
ואני	(d)
ותפועלים	(e)

Lesson 7 - Prepositions

Exercise 1:

בילד	(a)
קפה בסוּכר or קפה עם סוּכר	(b)
קפה בלי סוּכר	(c)
לִכְבֵּסָה	(d)
מִן יִשְׂרָאֵל or מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל	(e)
בְּאֶרֶץ	(f)

Lesson 9 - Adverbs

Exercise 1:

A very big horse.	(a)
How much for the very big horse?	(b)
Northward.	(c)

Exercise 2:

הָעֵץ הַגָּדוֹל מְאֹד	(a)
סוּסָה שׁוֹבֶה מְאֹד	(b)

Lesson 13 - Numbers

Exercise 4:

One horse.	(a)
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Five horses.	(b)
Three mares.	(c)
Wednesday (forth day).	(d)
2536 horses.	(e)
2532 mares.	(f)
The sixth day.	(g)

Exercise 5:

שבעה למים	(a)
אלף תשע מאות ארבעים ושמונה	(b)
תשע-עשרה סוסות	(c)
מאת ואחד-עשר סוסים	(d)
שש נחצי (slang)	(e)
שלוש ורבע (slang)	(f)
שקל אחד עשרים וחמש אגורות	(g)
תשע שמונה שבע שש ארבע חמש שלוש אחת	(h)

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Bibliography

¹ Simi K Valley, hebrew.about.com/education/hebrew/mbody.htm Personal communication.

² Esther Raizen. Personal communication.

³ Esther Raizen. Personal communication.

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- ⁴ Simi K Valley. Personal communication.
- ⁵ Simi K Valley. Personal communication.
- ⁶ Andrew Rosen. Personal communication.
- ⁷ M A Ouaknin. *Mysteries Of The Alphabet*. p18 First Edition, Abbeville Press 1999. Translated from the French.
- ⁸ Ibid. p20.
- ⁹ Ibid. p44.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. p368.
- ¹¹ Sigmund Freud. *Moses and Monotheism*.
- ¹² M A Ouaknin. *Mysteries Of The Alphabet*. p353 First Edition, Abbeville Press 1999.
- ¹³ This document respects that tradition.
- ¹⁴ Paul Johnson. *A History Of The Jews*. p214 1995 Edition, Orion Books Limited.