

# Chapter 1 – The Hebrew Alphabet (Aleph-Bet)

- **Names of the Letters**
- **Difficulties Recognizing Letters**
  - **Final Forms**
  - **Different Fonts**
  - **Similar Letters**
- **Writing and Transliterating the Letters**
- **Begad Kephath Letters**
- **Pronouncing the Letters**

# The Alphabet is Just the Consonants

- **In English,**  
 both consonants and vowels are letters of the alphabet.
  - E.g., the vowel ‘A’ and the consonant ‘B’ are both letters of the alphabet.
- **In Hebrew, only consonants are considered to be letters**
  - The consonant Alef א is a letter of the alphabet.
  - The vowel Seghol ך is not a letter of the alphabet.
- **The OT was originally written without vowels**
  - Vowels and accents were added in AD 500-1000
  - מלך → מֶלֶךְ

# Variations on Letter Names

- **Different people spell letter names differently**
  - E.g., Alef, Aleph, 'āleḇ, אֵלֶף
- **Different people pronounce letter names differently**
  - E.g., Waw vs. Vav.      Yod vs. Yud.
- **In Modern Hebrew, three letters are called different names depending on whether or not they have a Dagesh**
  - כּ Vet      vs.      בּ Bet
  - חּ Chaf      vs.      כּ Kaf
  - פּ Fay      vs.      פּ Pay
- **All reasonable variations are acceptable in my class**

# Alef



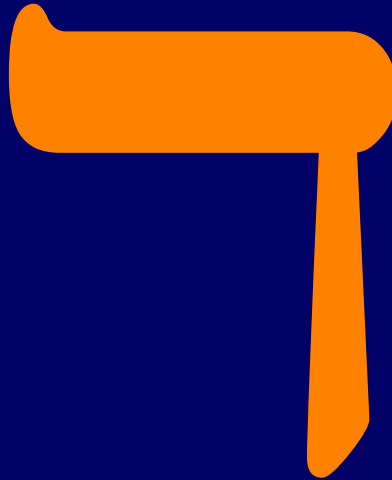
# Bet



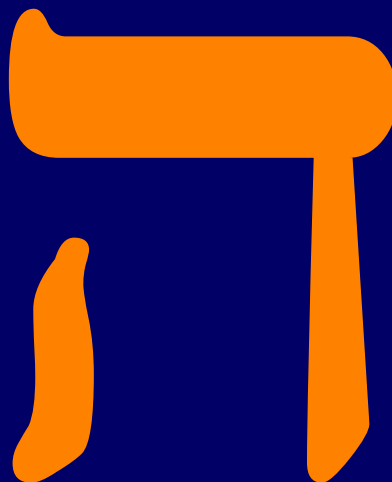
# Gimel



# Dalet



# Hay





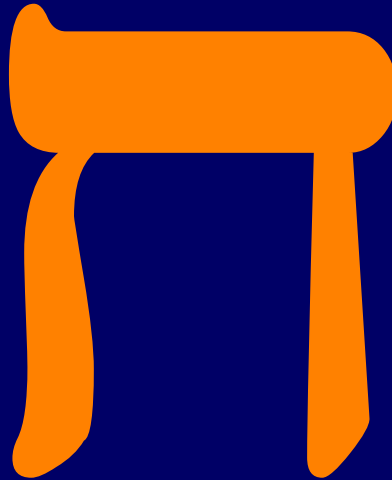
# Vav



# Zayin



# Het



# Tet



# Yod



# Kaf



# Lamed



# Mem





# Nun



# Samech



# Ayin



# Pay



# Tsadee



# Qof

A large, stylized orange Hebrew letter Qof (ק) is centered on the page. The letter is formed with a thick, rounded stroke that curves from the top left, down to the bottom left, and then back up to the top right, ending in a small hook.

# Resh



# Sin

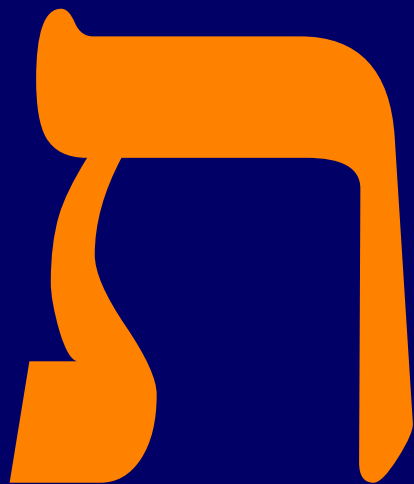




# Shin



# Tav



# Order of Sin שׁ and Shin שׂ

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

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

Song copyright © Professor John Walton of Wheaton College  
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# Memorize the Alef-Bet Before Continuing

- Before going on to the next section, learn the name of each letter and their order.
- Use the Alef-Bet song to practice the names in order.
  - YouTube has 3 versions of the music video:
    - Letters and their names
    - Letters alone
    - All the letters showing at the same time
  - The website also has the song in downloadable formats: mp3, mp4, and wmv.
- The website links to a place to practice the letters names.

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# Final Forms

- 5 letters use different letter shape at end of word

Regular	צ	פ	נ	מ	כ
Final	ץ	ף	ן	ם	ך

- **Mnemonic:** “CoMMoN FaTS”
- This shape is called the “final form” or “sofit form”
  - Sofit (‘sew-feet’) means ‘last’
- Final forms have the same pronunciation and transliteration as the non-final forms.

# Multiple Hebrew Scripts

- **There are multiple letter styles for writing Hebrew**
  - Books are printed in a fancy style with serifs  
א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ש ת
  - But letters can be written without most of the serifs  
א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ש ת
  - Modern Hebrew is written in a cursive script  
א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ש ת
- **Use the simplified shapes without serifs, and be legible.**
- **Always write Right-to-Left**



# Look-Alike Letters

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

# Bet

**Tail in Lower-Right**



# Kaf

**Rounded Lower-Right**



# Gimel

**Bottom like heel of a boot**



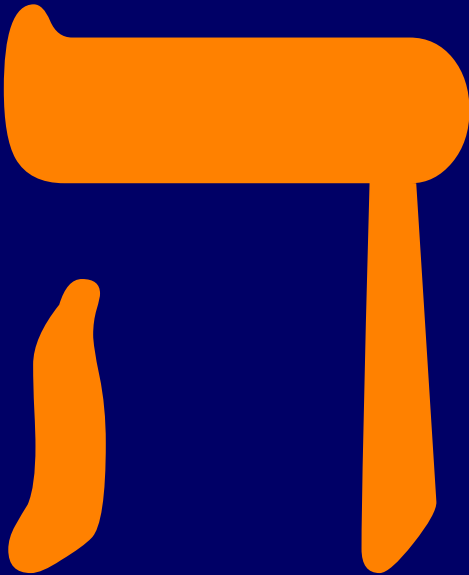
# Nun

**Flat bottom**



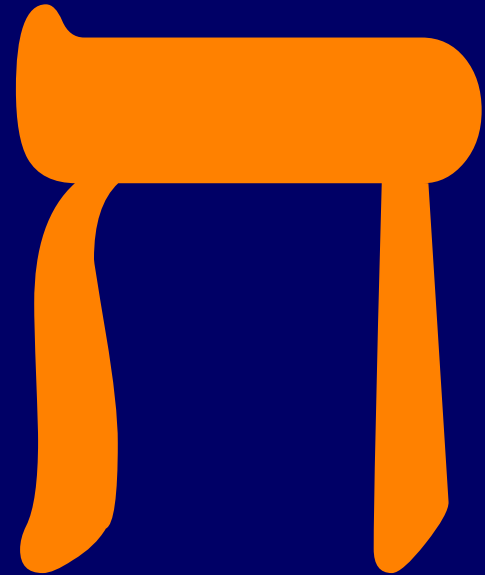
# Hay

## Gap in Top Left



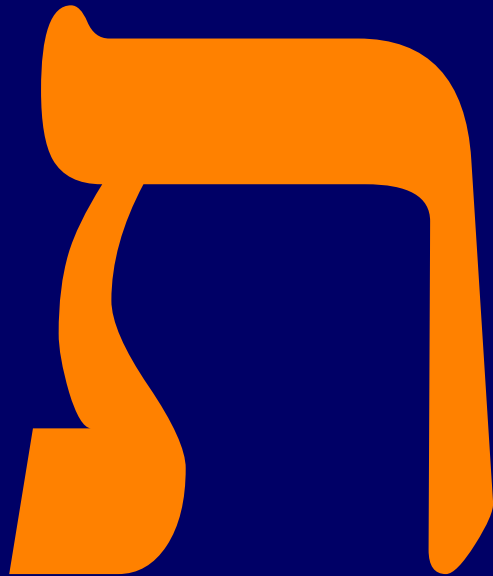
# Ḥet

## No gap in Top Left



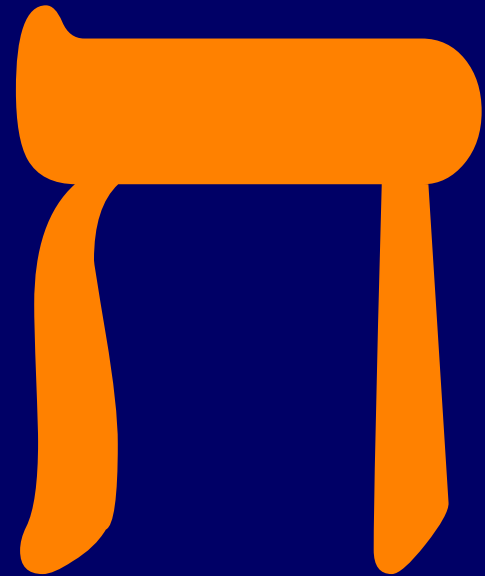
# Tav

Foot on Lower Left



# Het

No foot on Lower Left



# Sin

## Dot on Upper Left



# Shin

## Dot on Upper Right



# Final Mem

## Square Bottom



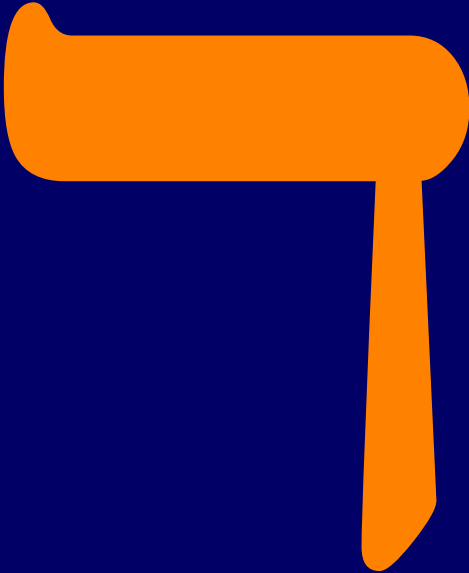
# Samech

## Round Bottom



# Dalet

**Bump on Upper Right**



# Resh

**Round Upper Right**





# Tsade

**Bump on Lower Right**



# Ayin

**Round Lower Right**



# Zayin

**Tail on Upper Right**



# Vav

**Round Upper Right**



# Yod

# Vav

# Final Nun

## Halfway Down

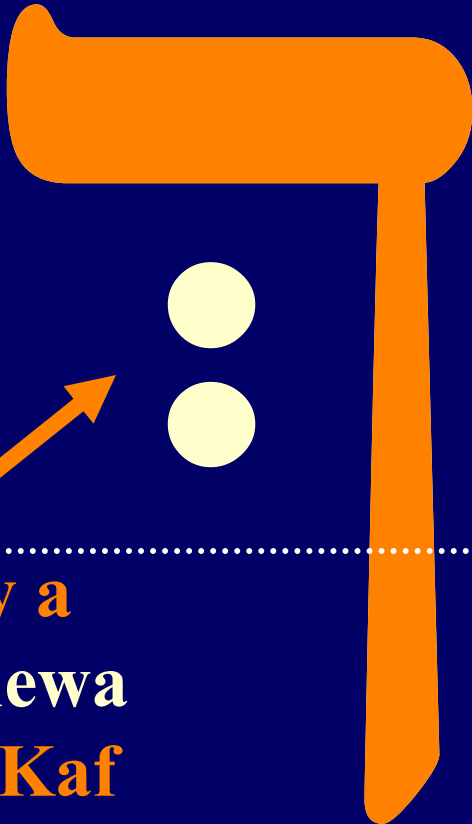
## Full Height

## Below the Line



# Final Kaf

Top Line is Big



Usually a  
Silent Shewa  
in Final Kaf

# Final Nun

Little or No Top Line



# Memorize the Letters Before Continuing

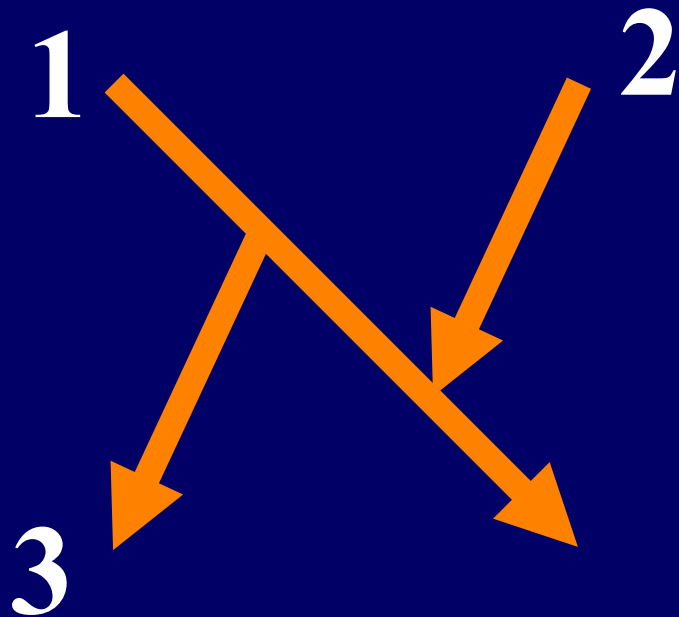
- **Before going on to the next section, learn to recognize the letters in different scripts, including their final forms.**
- **Make flash cards with the letters on one side and the names on the other side.**
  - **Include final forms.**
  - **The website has a sheet of letters to print and cut out.**
    - **Some letters appear with and without a dot, for use after you have learned about begad kephat.**
  - **Write the name and recognition notes on the other side of each card.**

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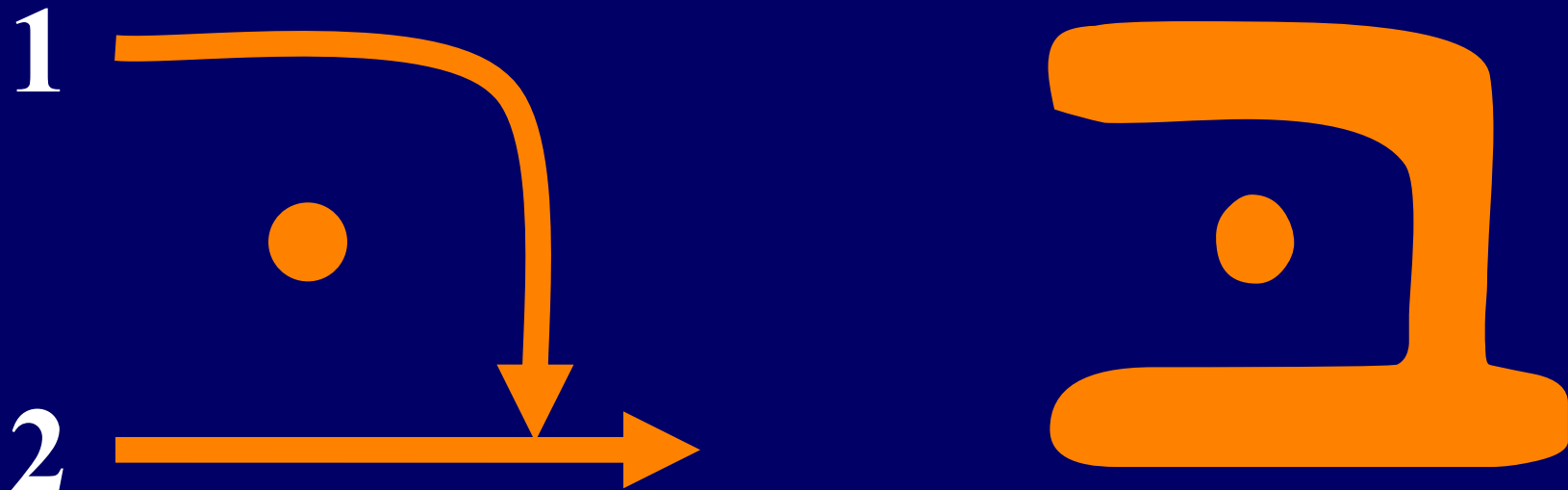
- **Names of the Letters**
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# How to Write the Letters

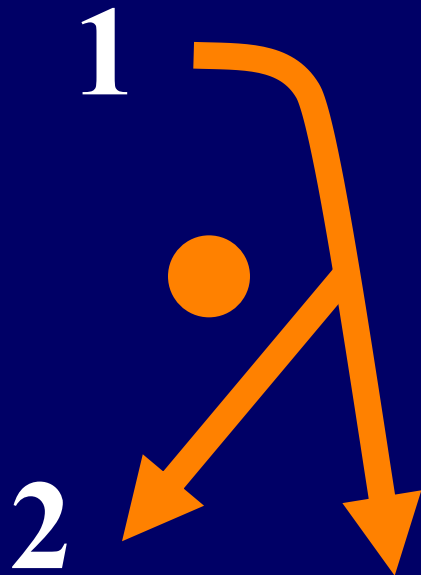
- **The following slides suggest how to write the letters.**
  - You can write the letters differently,  
as long as it is clear which letter is intended.
- **Most letters can take a dot inside them.**
  - These slides show the location of the dot.
  - The dot is not part of the basic letter shape.
  - Don't add the dot when writing the alphabet.
  - Draw the dot after drawing the letter itself.
- **Practice writing the letters as you watch the video.**
  - A practice sheet is available on the website.

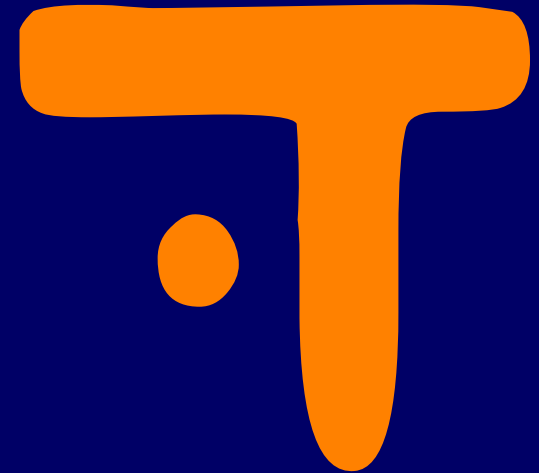
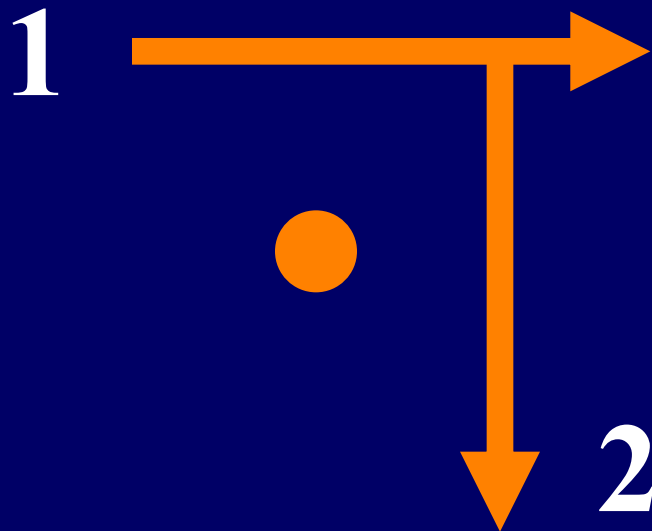






**Tail on bottom right  
distinguishes  
Bet ב from Kaf כ**



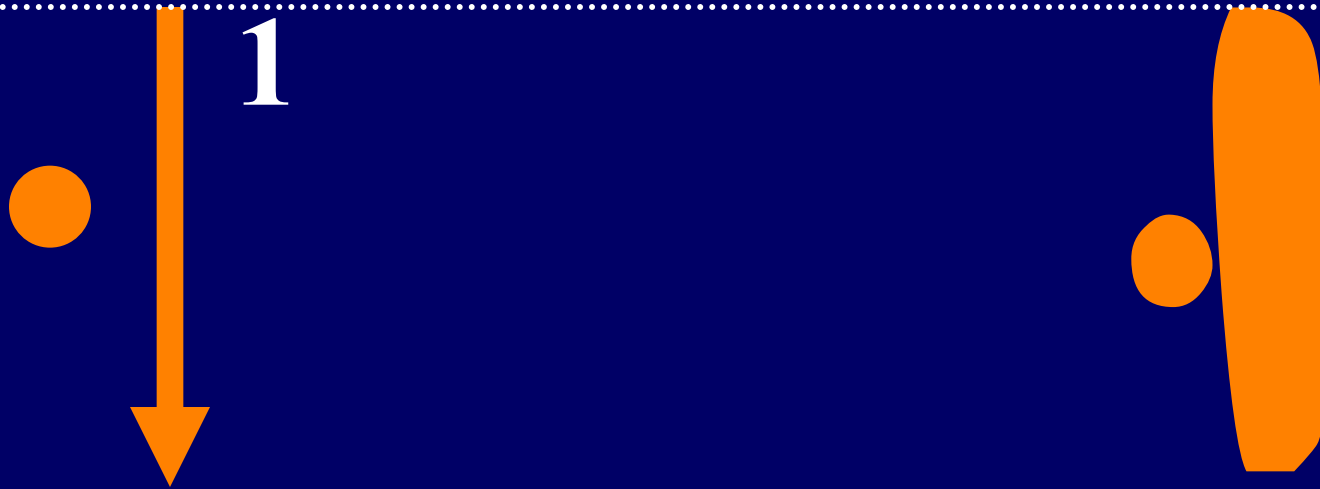


Tail on top right  
distinguishes  
Dalet ד from Resh ר

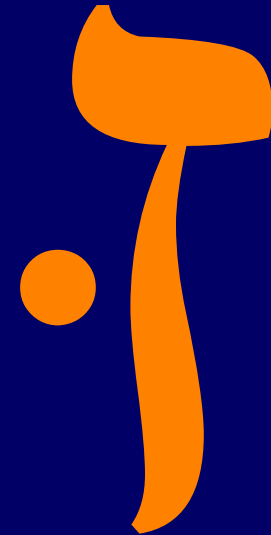
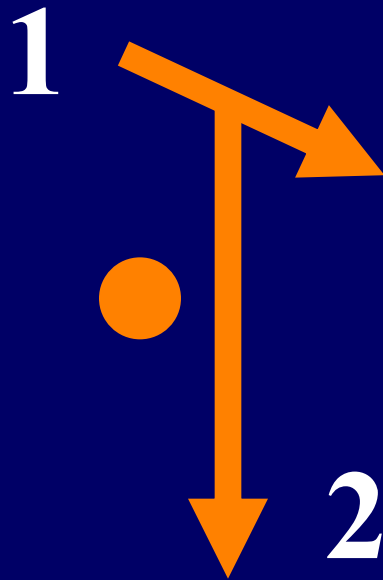


Gap in upper left  
distinguishes  
Hay ה from Het ה

Optional hook  
in top left



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



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

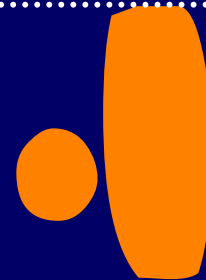


Lack of Gap in upper left  
distinguishes  
Ḥet ח from Hay ה

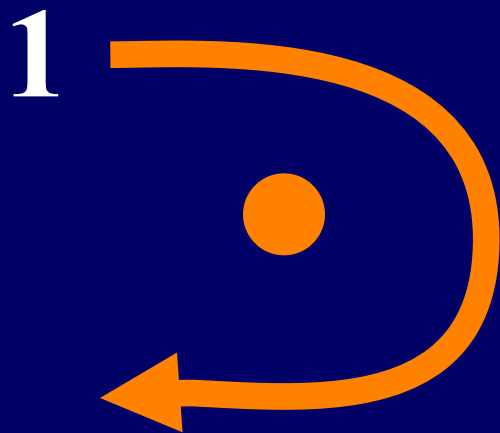




Some people  
curve Yod



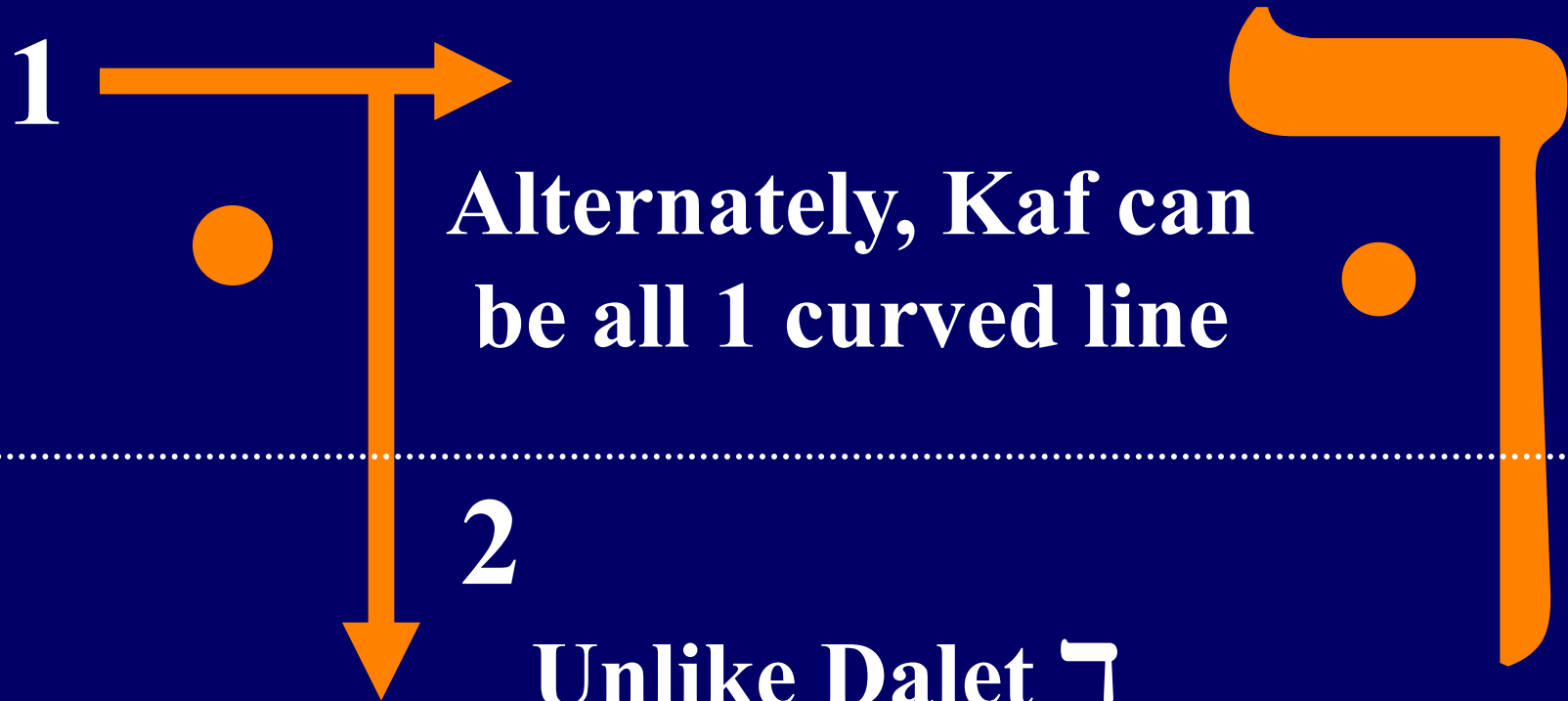
Unlike Vav ו and Final Nun ן,  
Yod י doesn't reach the bottom line.



Smooth bottom right  
distinguishes  
Kaf כ from Bet ב

# Final Kaf כ

1-59



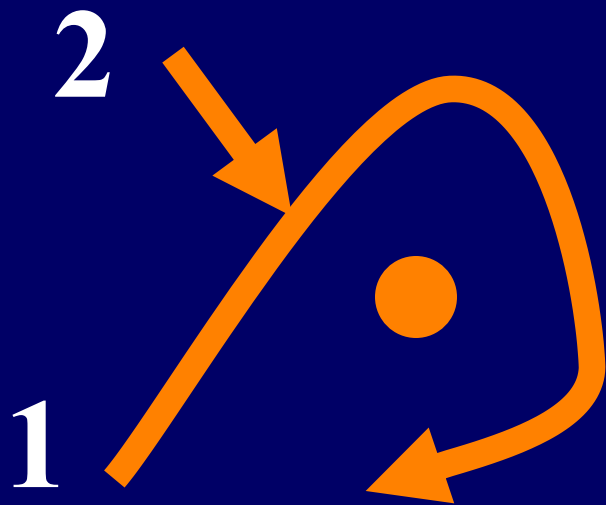
Unlike Dalet כ and Resh ר,  
Final Kaf כ goes below the line

# Lamed ל

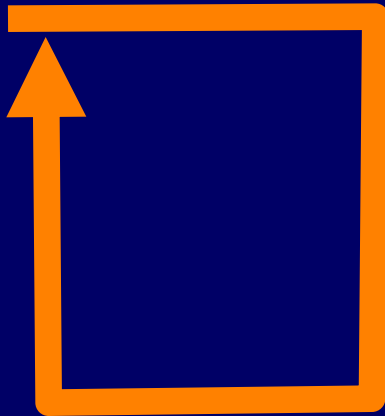
1-60

1



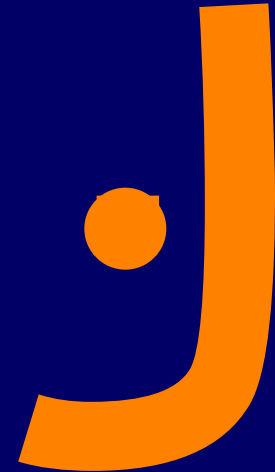


1



Square bottom distinguishes  
Final Mem ם from Samek ם

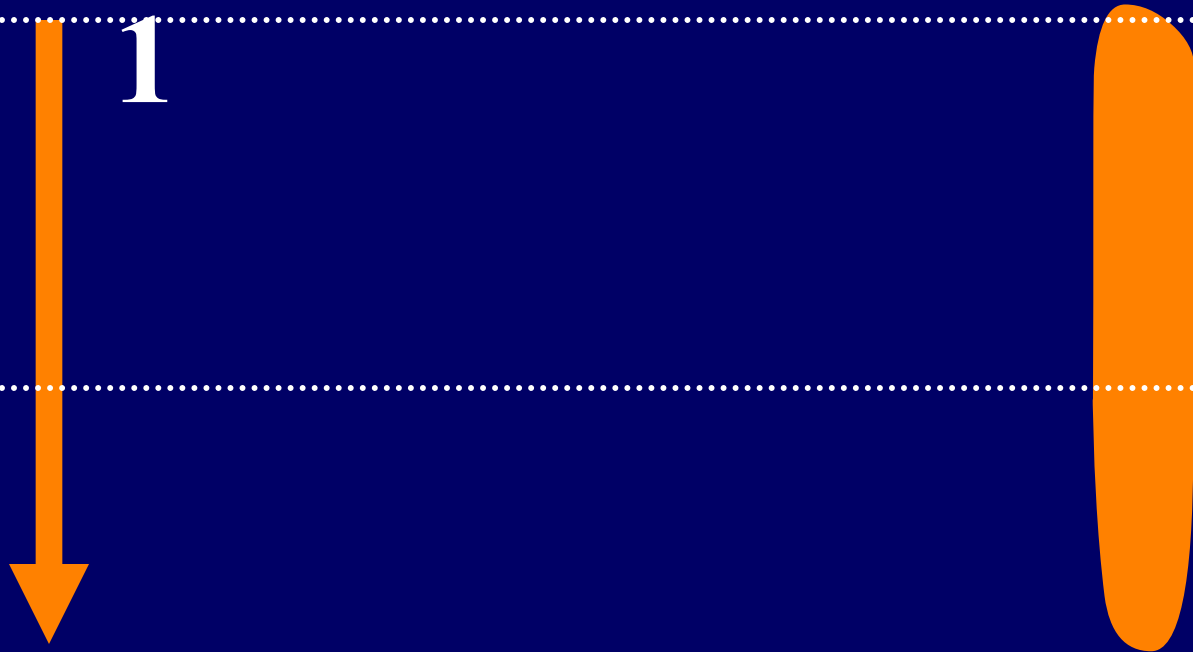
Some people  
add a top hook



# Final Nun ן

1-64

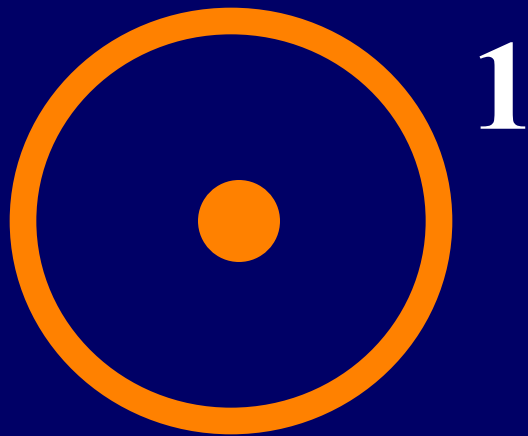
Optional hook  
in top left



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



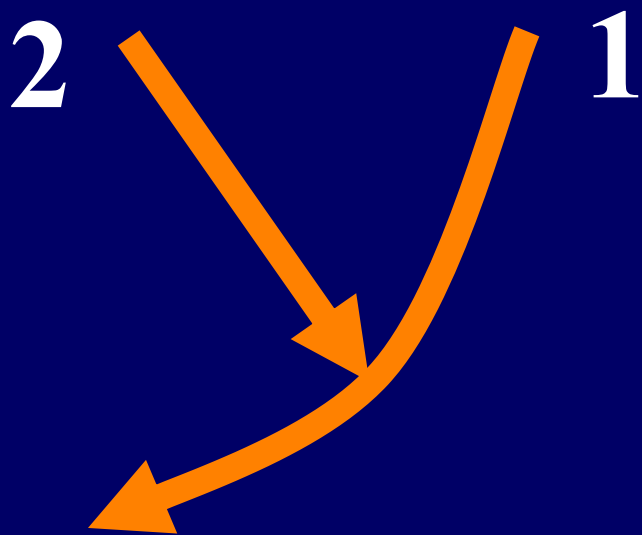
Optional hook  
in top left



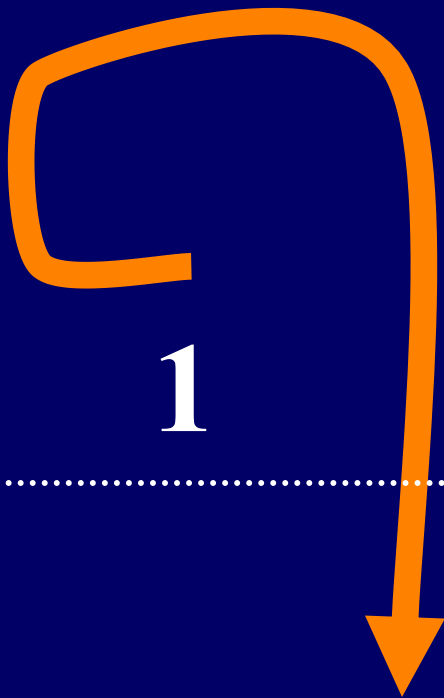
Round bottom distinguishes  
Samek ם from Final Mem ם

# Ayin ע

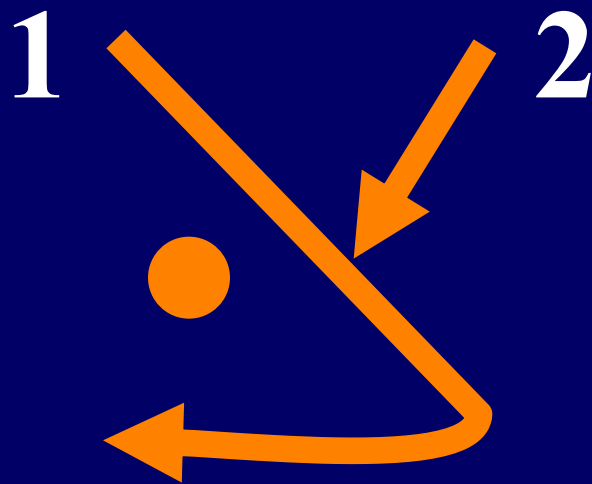
1-66

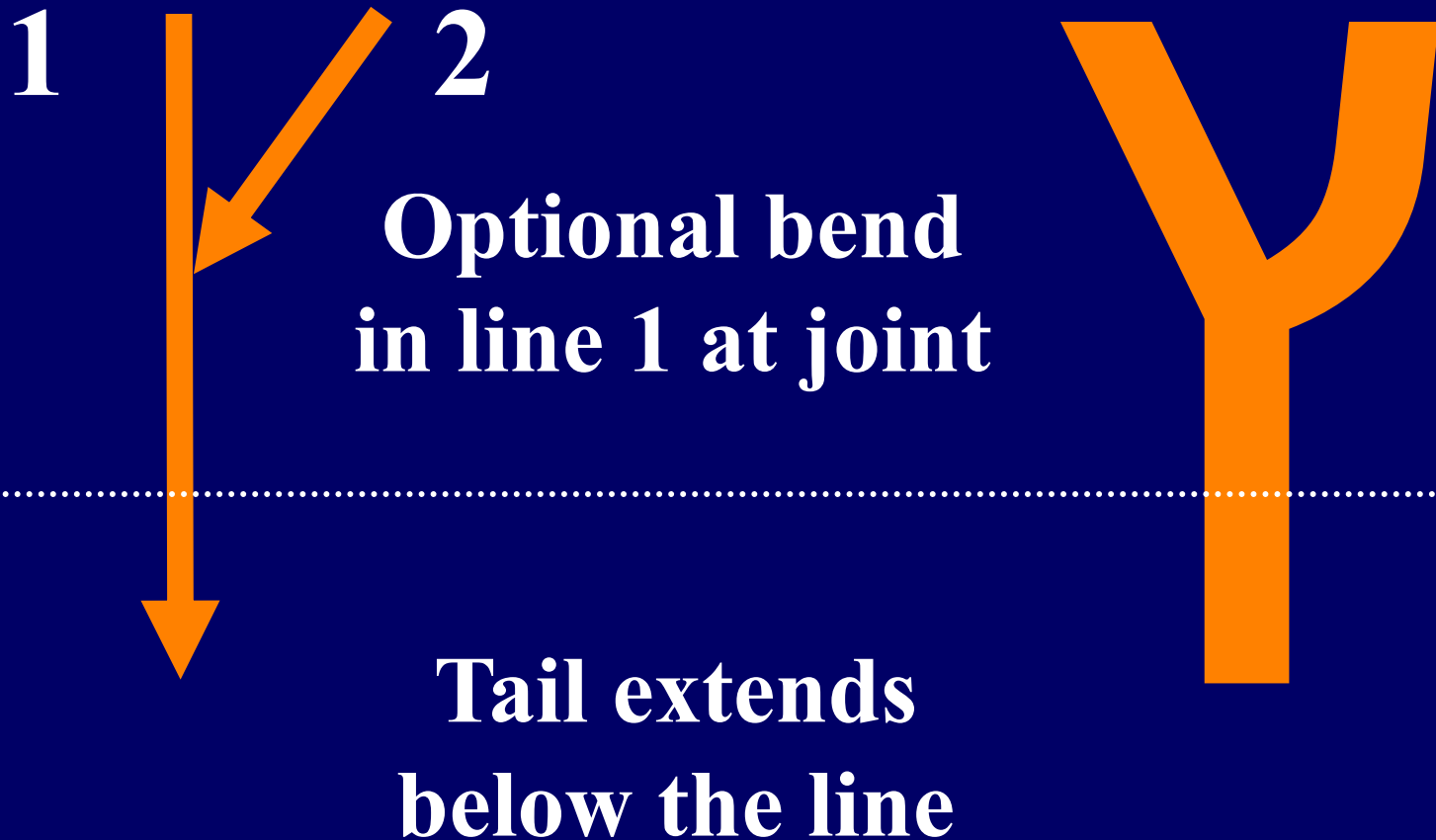






**Tail extends  
below the line**







**Tail extends  
below the line**

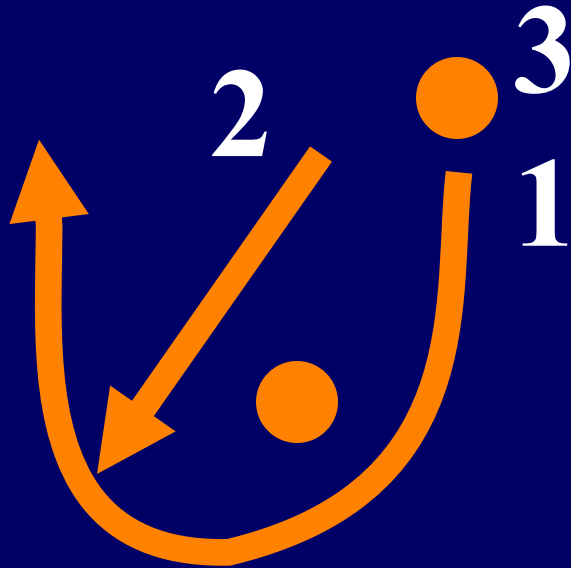


Smooth top right corner  
distinguishes  
Resh ר from Dalet ד

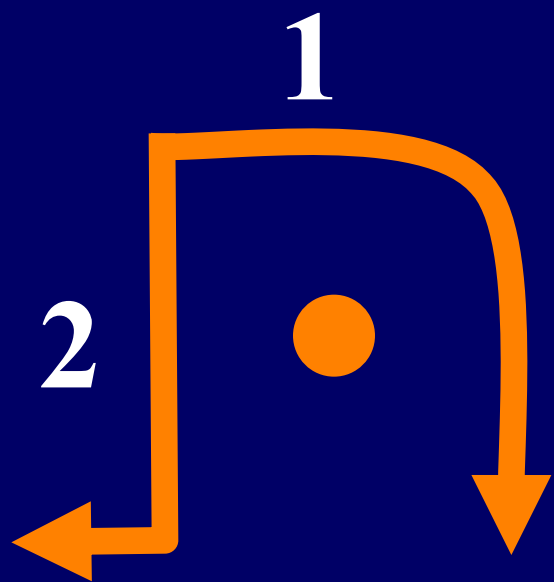




Placement of upper dot  
distinguishes  
Sin שׁ from Shin שׂ



Placement of upper dot  
distinguishes  
Shin שׁ from Sin שׁ



Tail in lower left  
distinguishes  
Tav ת from Het ח

# Transliteration

## ■ Transliterate as follows

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

## ■ Different books use different transliteration symbols

– Most of the variation is for vowels, not consonants

## ■ Learn to recognize transliterated words

– Transliteration is used in many reference books

## ■ Direction of writing depends on the script:

– Write Hebrew script Right-to-Left

...אבגד

– Write transliteration Left-to-Right

ʾ b g d ...

# Before Going on to the Next Section ...

- **Learn to write the letters.**
    - The workbook has lines for practicing the letters.
    - Don't try to imitate the details of the fancy printed letters in the book and workbook.
  
  - **Learn to write the letters in order.**
    - Write the final forms right after the regular forms.
- א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כך ל מ ם נן ס ע פ ף צ ץ ק ר ש ן ש ת

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# Begad Kephath Letters

- “**Begad Kephath**” means the letters **ת פ כ ד ג ב**
- **A dot (‘Dagesh’)** changes their sound.
  - **Dagesh** → a point-like, momentary sound (e.g., P)
  - **No Dagesh** → a sound that can last (e.g., F)

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

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

# Transliterating Begad Kephath Letters

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

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



# Before Going on to the Next Section ...

- **Learn to recognize transliterated Hebrew letters.**
  - Many Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and journal articles use transliteration rather than Hebrew letters.
  - Make flash cards with the transliteration on one side and the letter on the other side.
  - Have separate flash cards for Begad Kephath letters with and without a dot ('Dagesh')

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# Guttural Letters

## ■ 4 guttural letters

- א (Alef)
- ה (Hay)
- ח (Het)
- ע (Ayin)

## ■ Guttural letters affect the spelling of words

- The effects will be explained as they come up

## ■ Resh ר is not a guttural letter.

- It is never a guttural letter.
- But it has some of the characteristics of gutturals
- These will be explained as they come up

# Sound-Alike Letters

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

- Remember which letter is in a vocabulary word!
- To help remember, I pronounce sound-alike letters differently when pronouncing vocabulary words (but not when reading texts), and I note the letter used.

# Variations in Letter Pronunciations

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

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



# Alef א is silent

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





# Bet ב sounds like B or V

## ■ Begad kephat

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

בב

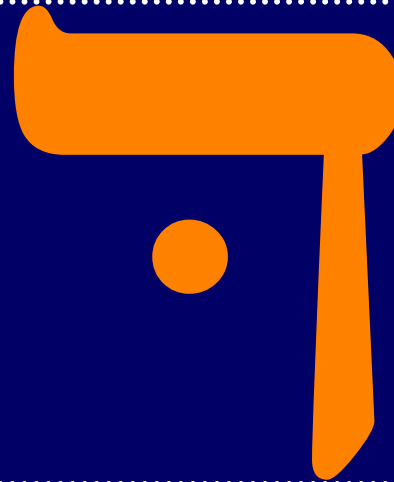
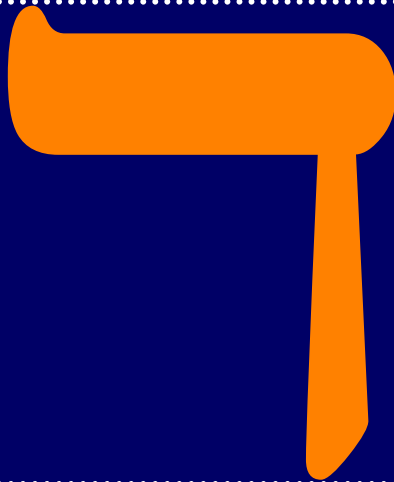
# Gimel ג sounds like G / GH

## ■ Begad kephat

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

## ■ GH is troublesome to pronounce

- voiced velar fricative GH vs. voiced velar stop G
- Modern Hebrew pronounces both as G

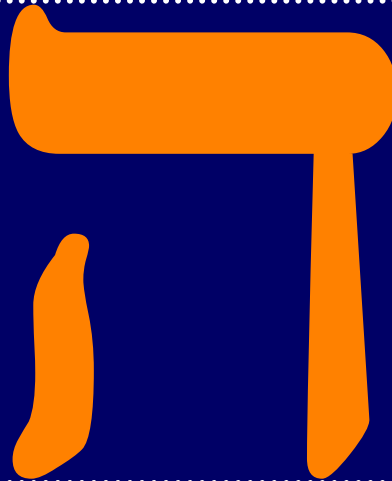


# Dalet ד sounds like D / TH in The

## ■ Begad kephat

- Dagesh ד                      D sound, transliterate d
- No dagesh ד                      TH sound of **TH**e, transliterate **d**

## ■ Modern Hebrew always pronounces as D



Hay ה sounds like H

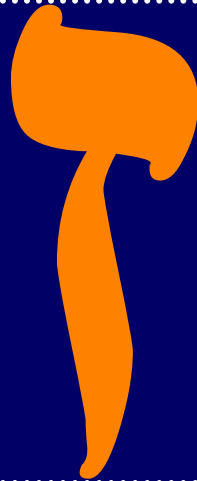
- Transliterate as h
- Guttural





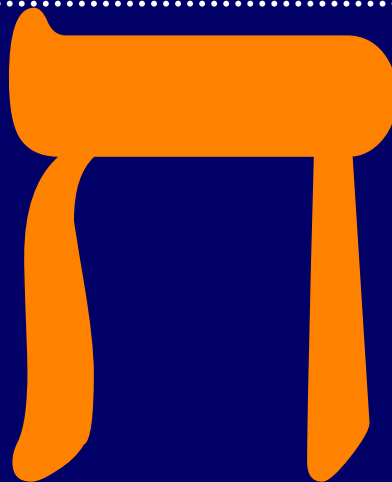
# VaV װ sounds like V (or W)

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



**Zayin ז sounds like Z**

- **Transliterate as z**



# Het ח sounds like CH in Bach

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



# Tet ט sounds like T

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





Yod ם sounds like Y

- Transliterate as y

כ פ

# Kaf כ sounds like K / CH in Bach

## ■ Begad kephat

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

## ■ Without a Dagesh, Kaf כ sounds like ׀

- ׀ was deeper in the throat than כ



Lamed ל sounds like L

- Transliterate as l



Mem מַ sounds like M

- Transliterate as m





Nun נ sounds like N

- Transliterate as n

ס

# Samek ס sounds like S

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



# Ayin א is silent

- **Silent (nowdays)**
  - Pronounce the vowel that follows it.
- **Guttural**
  - It was originally a voiced pharyngeal fricative.
- **Silent just like Alef**
  - I try to pronounce it when memorizing vocabulary, to help me remember that it is Ayin א not Alef א in the word. But when reading the Bible, I have it be silent, just like Alef.
- **Transliterate like a single opening quote ׳**

פ

פ

Pe פ sounds like P / F

## ■ Begad kephat

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





Tsade ט sounds like TS

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

ק

Qof ק sounds like K

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



# Resh ר sounds like R

- **Roll your R in the back of your throat if you can**
- **Transliterate it as r**
- **R is not a guttural letter**
  - **But it has some of the characteristics of gutturals**



# Sin שׁ sounds like S

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





Shin שׁ sounds like SH

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

הת

# Tav ט sounds like T / TH

## ■ Begad kephat

- Dagesh ט                      T sound, transliterate **t**
- No dagesh ט                TH sound of **TH**in, transliterate **t**

## ■ ט sounds just like Tet ט

## ■ Modern Hebrew always pronounces as T

# Before Going on to the Next Chapter

- **Read chapter 1 in the textbook**
  - Read the textbook supplement along with each section of the textbook as you go along.
- **Memorize the study guide.**
- **Make sure you can also do the following:**
  - Write the Hebrew Alef-Bet, including final forms.
  - Name and pronounce the Hebrew letters given their letter or transliteration.
    - This includes final forms
    - This includes begad kephat with and without a Dagesh.
- **Practice taking the quiz for chapter 1 (PDF on website)**
  - The answer key is page 2 of the PDF.