

Complete Aleph Bet

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

Aleph-Bet Song

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# 1

## THE ALPHABET

### Keys to Success

- 1.1 **Memorize the letters** of the alphabet so well that you can write them out as fast as you can write your ABCs!
- 1.2 **Memorize the names** of the letters so well that you can say them as fast as you can say your ABCs!
- 1.3 The letters of the alphabet are the basic building blocks of the Hebrew language.
- 1.4 Mastery of the alphabet is the first step to mastery of Hebrew.
- 1.5 Do not underestimate the importance of knowing the alphabet as well as you know your own name.
- 1.6 Success begins here!

### Alphabet Chart

- 1.7 English is written from left to right. Hebrew is written from right to left.
- 1.8 The English alphabet has consonants and vowels. The Hebrew alphabet has consonants only.
- 1.9 The alphabet chart on the next two pages reads from right to left, so that from the beginning you enter the fascinating world of Hebrew.
  - Column 1 contains the **sound** you will make for the Hebrew letter.
  - Column 2 contains the **book print** you will read in this grammar.
  - Column 3 contains the **final form** (to be explained) for five special letters.
  - Column 4 contains the **hand print** you will learn to write.
  - Columns 5–7 contain the order of the **strokes** you will make to form the letters.
  - Column 8 contains the **name** you will use to identify the letter.

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Name	Stroke #3	Stroke #2	Stroke #1	Hand Print	Final Form	Book Print	Sound
Alef							Silent
Bet							<b>B</b> as in <b>Boy</b>
							<b>V</b> as in <b>Van</b>
Gimel							<b>G</b> as in <b>Gas</b>
Dalet							<b>D</b> as in <b>Dog</b>
Hey							<b>H</b> as in <b>Hat</b>
Vav							<b>V</b> as in <b>Van</b>
Zayin							<b>Z</b> as in <b>Zoo</b>
Chet							<b>CH</b> as in <b>BaCH</b>
Tet							<b>T</b> as in <b>Top</b>
Yod							<b>Y</b> as in <b>You</b>
Kaf							<b>K</b> as in <b>Key</b>
							<b>CH</b> as in <b>BaCH</b>
Lamed							<b>L</b> as in <b>Lot</b>

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Name	Stroke #3	Stroke #2	Stroke #1	Hand Print	Final Form	Book Print	Sound
Mem							<b>M</b> as in <b>Mat</b>
Nun							<b>N</b> as in <b>Nut</b>
Samech							<b>S</b> as in <b>See</b>
Ayin							Silent
Pey							<b>P</b> as in <b>Pie</b>
							<b>F</b> as in <b>Fan</b>
Tsade							<b>TS</b> as in <b>CaTS</b>
Qof							<b>K</b> as in <b>Key</b>
Resh							<b>R</b> as in <b>Rug</b>
Sin							<b>S</b> as in <b>See</b>
Shin							<b>SH</b> as in <b>SHe</b>
Tav							<b>T</b> as in <b>Top</b>

- ▶ **Memorize the letters** of the alphabet so well that you can write them out as fast as you can write your ABCs!
- ▶ **Memorize the names** of the letters so well that you can say them as fast as you can say your ABCs!

# Hebrew Aleph Bet Chart © Rabbi Jana De Benedetti

Description	Number	Sound	Name	Cursive Form	Block Form	Book Form
Open in all directions, silent	1	'	Aleph אָלֶף	א	א	א
Base at Bottom, Bar goes Beyond, Ball in Belly or BellyButton	2	B	Bet בֵּית	ב	ב	ב
Void or Vacuum in bet	(2)	V	Vet	ב	ב	ב
Gap at the bottom	3	G	Gimmel גִּמְלָל	ג	ג	ג
Dingle Dangle Doohickey	4	D	Dalet דָּלֶת	ד	ד	ד
Hole Here and Hanging	5	H	Heh הֵה	ה	ה	ה
Very narrow, Very straight	6	V	Vav וּ	ו	ו	ו
Zig-Zag	7	Z	Zayin זַיִן	ז	ז	ז
(none of the above)	8	H	Het חֵת	ח	ח	ח
Tear at the Top	9	T	Tet טֵת	ט	ט	ט
teenY tinY	10	Y	Yod יֹד	י	י	י
Curved with Cough drop	20	K	Kaph כָּפֶה	כ	כ	כ
kaph with sore throat	(20)	KH	Khaph	כ	כ	כ
kaph with sore throat at end of word	(20)	KH	Final Khaph	כ	ך	ך
taLLeSt Letter with L shaped Lookout	30	L	Lamed לָמֶד	ל	ל	ל
Mountain, Missile, bottoM Missing	40	M	Mem מֵם	מ	מ	מ

Description	Number	Sound	Name	Cursive Form	Block Form	Book Form
Marshmallow at end of word	(40)	m	Final Mem	ם	מ	מ
Narrow Nose, with Nostril	50	N	Noon נן	ן	נ	נ
Narrow Nose below liNe at end of word	(50)	n	Final Noon	ן	נ	נ
Circular	60	S	Samekh שם	ס	ס	ס
quiet as your eye	70	`	`ayin ען	ע	ע	ע
Profile of Person with Pill in mouth	80	P	Peh פּ	פ	פ	פ
Fangs in Front	(80)	PH	Pheh	פ	פ	פ
Fangs in Front below line at end of word	(80)	ph	Final Pheh	פ	פ	פ
twisted preTZel	90	TZ	Tzadee צז	צ	צ	צ
twisted preTZel below line at end of word	(90)	tz	Final Tzadee	צ	צ	צ
looks like Q	100	Q	Quph קן	ק	ק	ק
Rounded	200	R	Resh רש	ר	ר	ר
SHooSH air out of your teeth (sun-)SHine; SHE is always right	300	SH	SHin שן	ש	ש	ש
SSS air out of your teeth Sun(-shine); no Sin to be a lefty	(300)	S	Sin	ש	ש	ש
aTTached at Top left, and Tail aTTached at boTTOM left	400	T	Tav תן	ת	ת	ת

Hebrew Aleph Bet Chart © Dr. Jana De Benedetti

## Five Final Letters

- 1.10** There are five letters that have a different form when they are the last letter of a word.
- 1.11** Four final letters have the last stroke going straight down and extending below the line rather than going across the line to the left.

Final Form	Basic Form
ך	כ
ן	נ
ף	פ
ץ	צ

- 1.12** One final letter is more square than round.

Final Form	Basic Form
ם	מ

## Letters with Two Pronunciations

- 1.13** English has letters with two pronunciations, for example, the letter “c” in city and cat, or the “th” in this and thing. There are six letters that had two pronunciations when Biblical Hebrew was spoken. These letters are referred to by the mnemonic *begadkefat*.

ת פ כ ד ג ב ←

- 1.14** You are learning the pronunciation of Modern Hebrew. Only three letters have two pronunciations. The difference in pronunciation is marked by a dot in the letter, called *weak dagesh*. With the *dagesh*, the sound is hard; without, it is soft.

	Soft
<b>V</b> as in <b>Van</b>	ב
<b>CH</b> as in <b>BaCH</b>	כ
<b>F</b> as in <b>Fan</b>	פ

	Hard
<b>B</b> as in <b>Boy</b>	בּ
<b>K</b> as in <b>Key</b>	כּ
<b>P</b> as in <b>Pie</b>	פּ



- 1.15** The weak *dagesh* is also found in the letters ג (*gimel*), ד (*dalet*), and ת (*tav*), but the pronunciation in modern Hebrew is not affected.

### Letters That Look Alike

- 1.16** There are several letters that look alike. You may confuse them at first. Soon they will look as different as O and Q, or U and V, or G and C.

ר	ד	כ	ב
ז	ו	ת	ח
צ	ע	ט	ס

### Letters That Sound Alike

- 1.17** English has pairs of letters that sound alike, for example, kite and car, or find and phone.
- 1.18** There are five pairs of letters that sound alike in Hebrew.

<b>V</b> as in <b>V</b> an	ו	ב
<b>CH</b> as in Ba <b>CH</b>	כ	ח
<b>T</b> as in <b>T</b> op	ת	ט
<b>K</b> as in <b>K</b> ey	ק	כ
<b>S</b> as in <b>S</b> ee	ש	ס

### Guttural Letters + Resh

- 1.19** There are four sounds originally made in the throat, called *gutturals* (from the Latin *guttur* = throat): א (*alef*), ה (*hey*), ח (*chet*), and ע (*ayin*). The letter ר (*resh*) shares characteristics in common with the gutturals. Special characteristics of the gutturals and *resh* will be pointed out in following chapters.

Sh'va    אָׁׂ׃

The Sh'va represents absence of vowel sound. Each consonant, except the last in a word, must have a vowel or vowel marker. When there is no vowel sound "under" a consonant in a word, the place is marked by a sh'va.

Sh'va acts in two ways. It can either begin a syllable, or end a syllable.

**XX**                      Sh'va na ("moving" or "mobile" sh'va) begins a syllable  
 v :                              Pronounced like short "grunt" (similar to first "a" in 'banana')  
    [v = any vowel: long or short]  
    Note: There can never be a dagesh after a moving sh'va

**XX**                      Sh'va nah ("resting" or "quiescent" sh'va) ends a syllable  
 : sv                              Silent  
    Note: Always preceded by a short vowel [sv]

When two sh'vas are found side by side, the first will always be a resting sh'va (ending a syllable), and the second will always be a moving sh'va (beginning the next syllable).

When a sh'va na (moving sh'va) occurs under a guttural letter (א ב ג ד) it will be accompanied by an auxiliary or "helper" short vowel, such as: אָׁׂ׃ אָׁׂ׃ אָׁׂ׃ It will be pronounced like its "full" short vowel helper. It is still considered a sh'va, and not a "full" vowel.

Syllable Trivia

A syllable can contain one, two, or three consonants, but only one "full" (not sh'va) vowel.

Examples:

<b>XXX</b>	<b>XX</b>	<b>XX</b>	<b>X</b>
: sv :	: sv	lv :	lv

## Dagesh דגש

Dagesh is a dot in a letter. There are two types of Dagesh:

דגש קל "Light" Dagesh can be found only in the six letters:

ב ג ד כ פ ת

These letters will have a dagesh at the beginning of a word or the beginning of a syllable.

Exceptions: Never a dagesh after a long vowel (LV = open syllable)

Never a dagesh after a sh'va na (moving sh'va)

Although originally all of the above six letters changed their pronunciation with the addition of a "light" dagesh, in modern Israeli pronunciation only three of the letters change pronunciation:

פ	פ	כ	כ	ב	ב
F	P	KH	K	V	B

דגש חזק "Strong" Dagesh can be found in all letters except the gutturals  
[Gutturals are: ע ה ח א and ך (also remembered as "the brother is bad" רע האח)]

"Strong" Dagesh does not significantly affect the pronunciation of its consonant.

"Strong" Dagesh can serve two purposes:

- 1) Like an apostrophe in English, dagesh can show where a letter has "fallen out."

מִן שֵׁם instead of מְשֵׁם

2) It indicates the doubling of the consonant in situations within words which have a short vowel followed by anything other than a resting sh'va. The consonant following the short vowel would be doubled to constitute a "complete" syllable.

מִלְכָּה really stands for מִלְכָּה

Compensation for "strong" dagesh which seems required in a guttural:

In a word pattern which requires that a dagesh be found in what turns out to be a guttural, often a compensation is made in order to avoid putting the dagesh in the "unwelcome" letter.  
(See, for example, prefix compensation)

## Practice

### Focusing on New Material

- A. Memorize the names and letters** of the alphabet so well that you can write them out as fast as you can say and write your ABCs!
- B.** Make the sound and say the name of the following letters, reading from right to left.

ג ח ל פ ע א ף צ מ ג ם י כ ת ג ←

ש ב ו ס ה ק ר פ ך ט ש ן ב ז ן ש ←

- C.** Read the two previous lines again and circle the letters in a special final form.
- D.** Read the two previous lines again and underline the gutturals + *resh*.
- E.** Read the two previous lines again and draw a box around the *begad-kefats*.
- F.** Match the letters that sound alike.

ו	כ
ט	ש
ח	ת
ק	כ
ס	ב

### Reading Your Hebrew Bible

- G.** The following is Gen 1:1-3. Make the sounds and say the names of each letter.

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ ←

והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על פני תהום ←

ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים ←

ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי אור ←