

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא (1)

אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם (2)

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New Letters: אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם

This is the letter **LAMED**: ל (לָמֶד)

It has a “Lookout” on the top that is shaped like a capital “L,” and is the only Letter that goes above the Line. It sounds like L.

LAMED represents the number 30.

It appears in the third word in Gen. 1:1 (first new word in this lesson): אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם

Notice that the dot at the top left of the letter makes the “O” sound, as if it were going to go “Over” the LAMED.

Practice reading the letter LAMED with all the vowels (notice that the largest letters are those from Genesis 1:1):

לָ לֵ לֹ לְ לוֹ לִ לִּ לִי לִי לִי לִי לִי לִי לִי לִי לִי לִי <Lamed

Practice reading these Hebrew words with LAMED:

chain

שְׁלֹשָׁה

without

בְּלִי

no

לֹא

This is the letter **HEH**: **ה** (הא)

It has a **H**ole in the top **H**alf of the left side, which leaves the side **H**anging.

It sounds like **H**. At the end of a word, the HEH is silent. HEH represents the number 5.

It appears in the third and fifth words in Day One of Genesis: **אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם**

When **ה** is found at the beginning of a noun it means “the.” This **ה** prefix is the definite article.

There is a trope mark under the HEH with the HIRIQ MALEH vowel in the first word of this lesson (the third word of Gen. 1:1), which indicates accented syllable, flow of phrase, and can be a melody note.

The letter HEH is a guttural letter, which requires auxiliary vowels when there is a mobile sh’va under it.

Practice reading the letter HEH with all the vowels (notice that the largest letters are those from Genesis 1:1):

הְ הֶ הֵ הֹ הוּ הֶ הֵ הֹ הֵ הֹ הֵ הֹ הֵ הֹ <Heh

Practice reading these Hebrew words with HEH:

many **הַרְבֵּה** Torah **תּוֹרָה** the one who comes **הַבָּא**

This is the letter **MEM SOFIT (Final MEM)**: **ם** (מָם סוֹפִית)

It looks like a **MarshMallow**.

This shape of MEM only comes at the end of words.

It sounds like **M**.

It appears in the third and fifth words in Day One of Genesis: אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם

The ם ending usually means that the word is plural.

In order to practice a letter that only comes at the end of a word, an א (silent ALEPH) will be at the beginning of each word with each of the vowels.

Practice reading the letter MEM SOFIT with all the vowels (notice that the largest letters are those from Genesis 1:1):

אָם אִים אֵם אֹם אֶם אִים אָם אֵם אֹם אֶם <Final Mem

Practice reading these Hebrew words with MEM SOFIT:

peace, hello, goodbye שָׁלוֹם the mother הָאִם name שֵׁם

This is the letter **YOD**: י (יוד)

It is the most teen**Y** tin**Y** letter. **Y**ou use it a lot like the letter **Y**.

It sounds like **Y**. It represents the number 10.

It first appears as a consonant in the fifth word in Day One of Genesis: אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם

YOD is often used as part of a vowel. In Day One of Genesis we have seen it as part of יְ (Hiriq Maleh = “ee”). It can

also be used for other vowels, such as: יֵ (sounds like a long “I” as in “aye”); יִ (sounds like “ey” as in “they”)

Practice reading the consonant YOD with all the vowels (notice that the largest letters are those from Genesis 1:1):

יְ יֵ יִ יַ יוּ יֹ יִי יֶ יַ יָ יֹ (Yod)

Practice reading these Hebrew words with YOD:

Jerusalem יְרוּשָׁלַיִם Miriam מִרְיָם days יָמִים

Our text so far:

We have not yet finished learning enough letters to read all of the first sentence. However, we can read all these words:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם

Notice that the first 3 letters of the first 2 words on line one are identical. בְּרָא . This is interesting since they are not related. Typically words in Hebrew have 3 root letters. These 3 letters are, in fact, the 3 letters for the root “create.”

The second word בְּרָא means, “He created.” In the first word, the first letter בְּ is a prefix meaning “in, with, on.” The next 3 letters of the word בְּרָא represent the word for “head” רֵאשִׁית. The word for “head” is often a way of expressing a beginning of something. Just as a typical birth would start “head-first” the birth of the world/universe is “head-first.” The end of the word ית represents something which I will call “an instance of.” I would suggest that valid translations for בְּרֵאשִׁית could be: “In the beginning;” “In a beginning;” “At a first instance;” “With primal stuff.” There are other translations offered as well.

The second word בְּרָא is the past tense masculine singular form meaning “He created.”

The third word אֱלֹהִים is a word meaning “God,” and is obviously the subject of the verb. In other words, “God created.” It is interesting to note that בָּרָא is definitely singular, and therefore, although אֱלֹהִים appears to have a plural form (the ם ending), it is definitely to be understood as a singular noun.

If translated directly one word at a time, the text seems to be saying, “In the beginning He created God.” That is obviously not a correct translation. In Biblical Hebrew the verb and the subject can come anywhere in the sentence. When we get to the next word it will be obvious what is being created, and therefore which part of the first phrase is really the subject and who the Creator is.

The fourth word in the text is אֵת . There is no “translation” to the word. It has an important grammatical function. It is the “definite direct object marker.” It clearly shows what is receiving the action of the verb, in this case, what is being created. We now know that God could not have been what was created in the sentence, because it would have had an אֵת before it.

There is another interesting way of looking at the אֵת in this sentence. Since we shall soon see that God created the world by using words, first the letters had to be created. Notice that the word אֵת is made up of the first and last letters of the aleph-bet. This, is a graphic way to show that God created א . to ת -- and all letters in between.


The word **הַשָּׁמַיִם** is often translated as “Heaven.” I am going to suggest that there is a connotation to that word implying the dwelling place of angels that may not be the most appropriate way to translate it. The word is made up of a few parts. There is the definite article prefix **הַ** which means, “the.” The **ים** ending denotes that the word is plural (and possibly a dual ending, implying two). One possible way of looking at the word is a combination of two words: **שָׁמַיִם** (meaning “there”) and **מַיִם** (meaning “water”). This implies that water comes from “up there.” Perhaps it could be translated as “skies.” This preserves the plural nature of the word, and gives the imagery of our atmosphere and outer space as well.

We are already seeing what could be called a repetitive parallel in these first few words, that are markers of poetry. The first two words repeat the first three letters. The end of this selection we have learned repeats the **ים** ending. We will see many other examples of this repetition of sounds. Lullabies for infants often include repetitive sounds, perhaps as a soothing method.

Trope Mark Basics

We have already noted that trope markings denote the accented syllable while reading words. Trope markings can also be effective ways to understand how to break sentences into phrases. A simple way of reading trope phrases is to watch the direction that they seem to be facing. In this reading method, the first word of the sentence would have a slight pause, since the trope mark under it points back toward the beginning of the word. However, the second word has a trope mark that “points” to the following word, so while reading this word, continue to read this word in the same phrase as the next word. The mark under the third word “points up and down” as opposed to right or left, and therefore is a stopping signal. The fourth and fifth words have symbols that face each other, and should be grouped together while reading. Therefore, the phrases would be like this:

אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים בְּרֵאשִׁית נ

The trope mark  under the third word is called “etnahta,” and often indicates the middle of a sentence (in addition to indicating the accented syllable and the possible melody for chanting). This rarely means the same number of words in the first and second halves of the sentence. Rather it is more like a conceptual division. In other words, if the reader analyzes the statement being made from the beginning of the sentence until the etnahta, it will often be a complete thought. Then if the reader analyzes the sentence after the etnahta, it too will be a complete thought. Then the reader should examine both halves together as making a whole thought. This is especially true in poetic writings of the Scriptures. I would like to suggest that the creation story is a form of poetry.