

THE PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM DIK DUK LEARNING PROJECT

Lesson 1

© Rabbi Shalom Gold
Pirchei Shoshanim 2003

This shiur may not be reproduced in any form without permission of the copyright holder

Rehov Beit Vegan 99, Yerushalayim 02.644.6376
1091 River Ave., Lakewood NJ 08701 732.370.3344 fax 1.877.Pirchei (732.367.8168)

Lesson
1

Chapter One

The Hebrew Alphabet

Getting to know the Hebrew Letters

Before we start, familiarize yourself with the letters. These are the four basic styles that you will find. This course focuses on advancing one's reading comprehension. It is expected that you already know the basic pronunciation of the letters. Take your time.

<u>Regular</u>	<u>Block Print</u>	<u>Script</u>	<u>Rashi Script</u>
א	א	א	א
ב	ב	ב	ב
ג	ג	ג	ג
ד	ד	ד	ד
ה	ה	ה	ה
ו	ו	ו	ו
ז	ז	ז	ז
ח	ח	ח	ח
ט	ט	ט	ט
י	י	י	י
כ	כ	כ	כ
ל	ל	ל	ל
מ	מ	מ	מ
נ	נ	נ	נ
ס	ס	ס	ס
ע	ע	ע	ע
פ	פ	פ	פ
ק	ק	ק	ק
ר	ר	ר	ר
ש	ש	ש	ש
ת	ת	ת	ת

Chapter Two

Section One

Let's Begin

The Hebrew Alphabet has 23¹ consonants. Five of the consonants also have a final form, when they appear as a last letter of a word, for a total of 28 letters **any** of the 28 letters **can** function as a *Root*² letter of a word. The 28 letters can be subdivided into four categories according to their potential function(s).

Category 1—Root letters only

Category 2—Root letters or Prefixes

Category 3—Root letters, or Prefixes or Suffixes

Category 4—Root letters, or Prefixes, or Suffixes or Infixes

Section Two

All 28 Letters can function as root letters.

1. Root letters only

This category consists of 12 letters, which can **only** function as root letters in a word.

THESE LETTERS ARE:

(שׁ, שׂ, ר, ק, צ, פ, ע, ס) (ז, ח, ט) (ג, ד)

1 שׁ and שׂ are being counted as different consonants

2 **Root:** שרש (*shoresht*): The three primary letter structure of a word (usually a verb) with no vowels conveying a primal meaning.

Examples

- a. לִפְשֵׁט The root letters must be פֿשֵׁט
- b. וַיִּשְׁרְפוּ The root letters must be שֵׁרַפ
- c. וַרְחַל The root letters must be רַחַל

2. Root letters or Prefixes

This category consists of four letters, which can serve two functions. They may be root letters or they may function as a prefix (before the first root letter). If one of these four letters follows any letter in category 1, or category 3, or any other letter in category 2, then, it may no longer be a prefix letter and must be a root letter. [*Note*: A word may have more than one prefix].

THESE LETTERS ARE:



A) א as a prefix is a sign of the first person future tense masculine and feminine singular, translating to *I will*.

Examples

- a. אֶהְיֶה The א prefix added to the root הִיָּה (*be*) = *I will be*.
- b. אֵצֶל Here the א must be a root letter.
- c. וְאֶרְאֶה Here the ו is a prefix and also the first א is *I will*, while the א after ר must be a root letter. רָאָה (*look*)
- d. אֶרֶץ א is the first root letter. אֶרֶץ (*land* or *earth*)
- e. אָרוּץ The א prefix added to the root רוּץ (*run*) = *I will run*.
- f. וַיִּאָּחֶז Here the prefix pre-empted the א ability to be a future tense prefix making the root אָחַז (*acquire* or *hold* or *grab*)

[We must remember the letters relative position is only one factor to be considered when deciding the function of a particular letter. Other letters in close proximity and vowel patterns, also, play a major role in determining a letters function.]

B) **ב** as a prefix is a preposition translating to *in* or *with* and having five or six secondary possible translations.

Examples

- a. **בַּלֶּחֶם** **ב** as prefix translates to *with the bread*. **לֶחֶם** (*bread*)
- b. **בְּבֵתֶיכֶם** The double **ב** tells us to use the first **ב** as a prefix and the second **ב** as the first root letter of **בַּתִּי** (*house*) and **כֶּם** the possessive pronoun suffix (*your*).
Translation *In your houses*.
- c. **שָׂבַע** In this word the **ב** must be a root letter as it follows another letter in category 1. **שָׂבַע** (*satiated*)

C) **ל** as a prefix serves two functions:

- *Sign of infinitive*: When the **ל** is a prefix before the verb root in the form of the relative *makor*, the **ל** functions as the infinitive of the verb root and its *binian* root will be determined by vowelning (extra letter) patterns.
- *Prepositional prefix*: When the **ל** is a prefix before a noun or object preposition, the **ל** functions as a preposition, meaning *to* or *for*.

Examples

- a. **לְמִצְרַיִם** Means to Egypt. With the **ל** as a prepositional prefix.
- b. **לְיַעֲקֹב** Means to or for Jacob. With the **ל** as a prepositional prefix.
- c. **לָהֶם** Means to them or for them. With the **ל** as a prepositional prefix to an object pronoun.
- d. **לְךָ** Means to you or for you, masculine singular second person as a prepositional prefix.
- e. **לְרִאוֹת** The **ל** is a sign of the infinitive meaning to see. For the root **ראה**.
- f. **לְאֹמֹר** The **ל** is a sign of the verb infinitive meaning to say. For the root **אמר**.
- g. **לְקַבֵּל** The **ל** prefix is the infinitive **ל** while the second **ל** must be root letter.
- h. **וּלְכוּ** The **ל** must be a root letter with the **ו** as a prefix the **ל** can no longer be a prefix letter.

D) ׀ as a prefix translates to *that, which* or *since*. It is a short form of the word יֵאָשֶׁר:

Examples

- a. יֵאָשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל That which he will eat.
- b. יֵאָיִן Since there is not
- c. קָשֶׁר In this word the ׀ must be a root letter.

3. Root letters, or Prefixes, or Suffixes

This category consists of five letters, which can serve three functions. They may be root letters; or they may function as a prefix (before the first root letter); or they may function as a suffix (after the last root letter). A good general rule to follow is: When one of these five letters appears before or after a definite root letter, it is probably serving its prefix or suffix function, and not as a root letter. When one of these five letters appears between any other of the letters, it will be a root letter. Also included in this category, as suffixes or root letters, are the final three letters ך, ם, ן. See prefix, suffix, and infix chart in lesson 15 to see how these five letters can function, as each serves multiple functions.

THESE LETTERS ARE:

ה, כ, מ, נ, ת

Examples

- a. וַיֹּאמֶר The ׀ must be a root letter with the ׀ and ך.
- b. כָּחָשׁוּ The כ can either be a prefix letter or root letter, in this case it's a root letter in the word כחש
- c. וַיִּנְבְּטִם The ן must be a root letter sandwiched between ך and ן, which must be root letters.
- d. מַעֲבֹדֵיךָ The ׀ is most likely a prefix letter since it precedes three root letters and the ך at the end is most assuredly a letter suffix and not part of the root.

If ה, כ, מ, נ, ת are not locked into a position of having to be a root letter, than, the overwhelming majority of the time, they function as prefix or suffix letters.

4. Root letters, or Prefixes, or Suffixes, or Infixes

This category consists of two letters (י and ו), which can serve four functions. They may be root letters; or they may function as a prefix (before the first root letter); or they may function as a suffix (after the last root letter); or they may function as an infix (a letter between two root letters that is not functioning as a root letter).

THESE LETTERS ARE:



The י (*bolom*) can be written full as in בוא or without the actual ו, with the dot above the letter preceding the ו as in בא. The ו (*shurak*) can also be written full as in ייתן or without the actual ו and the *kubutz* below the letter preceding as in יתן.

Examples

- a. וְיָמֵינוּ The ו is a prefix as is י and the ו is a suffix. The ׀ (the *mem*) with the *kubutz* represents the ו as a root letter, that has not been dropped from the root מות.
- b. וַיִּאָמֶר The ו is a reversing prefix. *Vav*. And the י is a future tense prefix.
- c. גְּדִלוֹת The ד with the *bolom* is as if the word was written as גְּדוֹ. The second *bolom* ו is part of the feminine plural ending.
- d. יָקוּם The י is a future prefix, and the ו is a root letter.

Chapter Three

Vowels

As we saw above, the 23 letters in the Hebrew alphabet are all consonants. The symbols under the letter, and the characters ׀ and ׀ following the letters, are called vowels. A consonant with its vowel, and often the consonant-vowel pair in combination with another consonant, form a syllable. Syllables follow rules, **not** sounds. A **syllable** is a letter or a group of letters that contain one long or short vowel **only**. Multiple sounds can combine to form single syllables. There are two types of vowels: short and long.

It is **imperative** to know the five long and short vowels instinctively, to be able to read, syllabialize, and pronounce words properly. The *sheva* (•) in combination with a vowel,

for example: ףְ , יְ , י׃ , יַ -׃ is not considered a short or long vowel.

<u>Long Vowels</u>				<u>Short Vowels</u>	
קִמֶץ	אֶ	The name of the vowel, if pronounced properly, contains the proper pronunciation of that vowel	אֵ	פִתַח	
שׁוּרְקֶ	אוֹ		אֵ	קִבּוּץ	
מְלֵא	חִירִיקֶ	אִי	אֵ	חִירִיקֶ חֶסֶר	
	אוֹלַם	אִי , אוֹ	אֵ	קִמֶץ קֶטָן	
	צִירָה	אִי	אֵ	סִגּוּל	

Rule 1: Long vowels always end a syllable. The letter with its vowel or *sheva* that follows a long vowel always begins a new syllable.

Rule 2: Short vowels with a letter always demand that the letter and vowel or *sheva* that follow the letter with the short vowel close the syllable.

A short quiz will follow the lesson on the *sheva*, incorporating the two sections into the check yourself quiz. Since the *sheva* is so intimately connected with the long and short vowels, examples will also be found at the end of the sections on *sheva*.

The Rules for analyzing words and breaking them down must be developed with time and practice, combining many factors in letter combinations, vowelizing, and set patterns, that will be developed as we learn more of the text. This will enable you to sharpen your intuitive/knowledgeable analysis of words.

Most sections will end with a Self-Checking Quiz, but due to the many variables involved with word identification, this section has no Self-Checking Quiz.