

READ HEBREW IN 22 DAYS OR LESS



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JEWISH STUDIES FOR CHRISTIANS

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Introduction

Is it possible to learn how to read anything you see in the Hebrew Bible in 22 days? Yes! There are only 22 letters in the Hebrew language. And of course, there are some reading rules too. But honestly, there is plenty of time to catch on to them as you read one section per day. And if you are going to learn how to read Hebrew, you should have fun doing it.

In fact, this book will get you reading short Hebrew words on the first day! It will walk you through the Hebrew letters, giving you clear instructions and plenty of examples to get you reading immediately. The lessons will include some memory techniques like rhyme and assonance to help you associate each letter with its sound. There will also be opportunities to practice some writing, too, because writing what you learn improves retention.

The Hebrew font used in this book is common “square script” in which the Hebrew Bible and other Hebrew literature is typically printed. Remember that Hebrew reads from right to left. This also means that books written in Hebrew will typically start from what English readers would consider the back cover.

Just like English, Modern Hebrew has a cursive system, and people who write in Hebrew by hand typically do so in cursive. But if you plan to learn how to read the Bible, then learning the block script is the goal. While modern Hebrew is typically written without any vowel symbols,

this book will use and teach you the traditional system of vowels utilized in children's books and in the Hebrew Bible. Vocabulary will draw mostly from Biblical Hebrew but will also offer you some modern vocabulary that you will not encounter in the Bible.

On occasion, this book will include an "Advanced Information" section after introducing something new. You will also come across some "Biblical Insights" sections. It is not necessary to learn or even read these sections in order to successfully learn to read Hebrew. These asides are provided for the curious reader who seeks deeper understanding.

Visually, Hebrew is very different from English. There will be some challenges, but just remember to pay attention to the details. Once you are reading Hebrew, you will discover the amazing beauty in reading the Bible in a new and fresh light in the original. Reading and studying biblical Hebrew paves the way for seeing what translations often obscure.

Are you ready to begin learning how to read Hebrew? Move through the incremental lessons by working through the alphabet, letter by letter. Stay focused on the details, do not skip ahead too fast, and we will have you reading this incredible language in very short order! In 22 days or less...

DAY 1 – First and Second Letters

We hope you are excited to get on with reading Hebrew! But before we jump into learning the Hebrew alphabet, there are several important points to keep in mind:

First and foremost, **Hebrew reads “backwards”** (that is, from right to left), so you will be starting on the right side of the text and reading leftwards. Arrows pointing left will appear over Hebrew words for the first few lessons to remind you of this.



Secondly, **Hebrew has no capital letters**. A handful of letters have a “final form” (which is how the letter will appear at the end of a word only), but other than this, there is only one form of each letter that you will need to learn.

Thirdly, **Hebrew does not contain vowel letters like English**. While a few Hebrew consonants often represent certain vowel sounds, vowels will primarily be represented by a system of dots and symbols positioned

below, above, or to the left of each consonant. So, the entire alphabet is made up of consonants.

Finally, in Hebrew, the **word stress is usually on the last syllable**. However, if the stress is on the second-to-last syllable, this book will include this symbol [<] over the word. So, let's get started at the beginning...

The first letter's name is:

’ **Álef**

Say “Olive” but with an F sound

An *Alef* looks like this:



In English, the first letter A is a vowel, but *Alef* is not a vowel. The “sound” of the letter *Alef* is a short pulse of silence.

English words like “Open” and “Elephant” that start with a vowel or with a silent H (like “Honor” and “Heir”) begin with the “silent pulse” sound of the *Alef*. You can especially hear it twice in “Uh Oh!”

In this book, the *Alef* will be transliterated with an apostrophe:

א = ’

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The fancy linguistic term for the sound of the *Alef* is a glottal stop. It is a deliberate yet brief stop in the throat of all breath and sound. *Alef* (also spelled *Aleph*) is itself an actual Hebrew word that is related to “Elephant” and means Ox (found in Psalm 8:7). In fact, the ancient Hebrew form of the letter *Alef* was a crude drawing of the head of an ox. However, the current forms of all the Hebrew letters come from Aramaic and have been used by Israelites since the 6th century BCE.

Since the *Alef* is silent, we will need to learn a vowel symbol to attach to it before we can read it. Hebrew vowels are marked by symbols that are usually written under the letter, and they are pronounced with consonants. Our first vowel looks like a tiny capital letter T, and it represents the “ah” sound as in Father.

The *Alef* with this vowel attached looks like this:

אָ ’āh

Ah! Did you just read your first Hebrew syllable?

Excellent!

As you read Hebrew, each letter will have a vowel sign attached to it (with the possible exception of the last

letter of the word). So, when reading any word, pronounce it syllable by syllable. Work through the words in a zig-zag pattern, pronouncing a consonant with its vowel and then the next consonant-vowel pair until you get to the end. Like this:



ADVANCED INFORMATION: The vowel marks are called *Nikkud* (dots), and this particular vowel’s name is *Kamats* (also spelled *Qamats*). In the Ashkenazi dialect of Hebrew, which is largely reserved for liturgical use only, this *Kamats* vowel sounds more like the “aw” in awesome. This is probably close to the ancient Hebrew pronunciation of *Kamats* but not the Modern Israeli pronunciation of it.

The second letter’s name is:

Bet

Sounds like the English word “Bet”

A Bet looks like this:



Take note of the little “bitty bump” that juts out of the lower right corner of the letter *Bet*. This will help you distinguish it from another Hebrew letter that we will learn later.

The letter *Bet* can have two different sounds.

1) With a bitty black ball



Bet sounds like B as in “Baby”

This is the usual and expected sound of the letter *Bet*.

2) With a vacuous void



it sounds like V as in “Vivid”

This V sound is what the *Bet* makes if there is any vowel sound right before it.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: Sometimes, *Bet* is spelled *Beth* because of a more ancient pronunciation. The meaning of *Bet* in Hebrew is House which you can see in place names like Bethlehem and Beth-shemesh. That dot

in the middle of the *Bet* is a *Dagesh* which in Hebrew means Emphasis, and it gives *Bet* (and five other letters) a plosive sound instead of a spirantized sound. *Bet* will take the B sound by default but changes to V when any vowel sound precedes it, in which case there will be no dot in the *Bet*.

Now that we have learned the letter *Bet*, we can read two more Hebrew words. As indicated by the arrow, read Hebrew from right to left:



בָּאֵלָּהּ bā'
[coming]

This word means Coming. Pronounce the “B” first with its Ah vowel, and *Alef* is effectively silent at the end of a syllable. So בָּאֵלָּהּ (bā') - is this your first Hebrew word? You are coming along so nicely! How about another?

Note that the English transliterations in this book will follow the customary English flow from left to right. But remember to read Hebrew from right to left.

Let's read this second word:



אָב 'āv

[father]

This word means Father. Notice the void in the *Bet* that makes the *V* sound? So, pronounce the *Alef* with the *Ah* vowel followed by the *V* of the *Bet* without a dot. Is this your second Hebrew word? Your Father would be so proud!

Now let us build a sentence! Let's say "Father Comes" in Hebrew:



אָב בָּא

bā' ← 'āv

You should have read this as 'āv-bā. Congratulations, Your first sentence in Hebrew! Wow, you are already reading some Hebrew, having learned only two letters!

DAY 2 – Third and Fourth Letters

The third letter's name is:

Gímel

Say “Giggle” but swap the “gg” for “m”

A *Gimel* looks like this:



The letter *Gimel* always makes the G sound as in Gap.

Sometimes a *Gimel* will have a dot like *Bet* often does (and historically there were two pronunciations), but in modern pronunciation, the sound of the *Gimel* always stays the same. So, from right to left like a Guru, Gladly Give this word a Go:

גָּב **gāv**
[back]

This word means Back. Give yourself a great pat on the back! The more letters you learn, the more words you'll be able to read. Keep it up!

ADVANCED INFORMATION: *Gimel* is the ancient variant

of the Hebrew word *Gamal* which both means and is the origin of Camel. In ancient pronunciation when *Gimel* had no dagesh dot, the sound changed into a breathy G sound, but not anymore in modern pronunciation.

The fourth letter's name is:

Dálet

Rhymes with “Ball it”

A Dalet looks like this:



The letter *Dalet* always makes the D sound as in Door.

Just like *Gimel*, *Dalet* may have a dot, but the sound of a *Dalet* always stays the same in modern pronunciation.

Dig into this delightful new word including the letter *Dalet*:

דָּג dāg
[fish]

Did you do it? Read it repeatedly. This word denotes Fish in Hebrew, and you are doing swimmingly!

ADVANCED INFORMATION: In ancient Hebrew pronunciation, the sound of *Dalet* would change in the absence of a *dagesh* dot into something similar to a vocal “th” as in this, but not anymore in modern pronunciation.

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: The story about perhaps the most famous fish in the world preserves a beautiful prayer which observant Jews read at least once per year. You may have guessed it. It’s the fish in the book of Jonah (יֹנָתַן). The Scriptures say that a “great fish” דָּג גָּדוֹל (*dāg gādōl*) swallowed Jonah (Jonah 1:17; 2:1 MSS). By the way, in Hebrew, adjectives like “great” דָּג גָּדוֹל (*dāg gādōl*) follow the noun they describe, so the text says literally “fish great” דָּג גָּדוֹל. Naturally, many people envision a whale of some sort, but the Bible merely says it was a fish and gives us no more details besides the fact that it was great.

The second chapter of Jonah is the famous prayer, and every year during Yom Kippur the book of Jonah is read out loud. And the reason this prayer is so meaningful is that it is a cry of human repentance from the belly of the דָּג “fish.” Jonah says, *“I have been expelled from your sight, yet nevertheless I will yet look toward Your holy temple... You have brought up my life from the pit...”* (Jonah 2:4,6) And amazingly, the prophet was inside the fish for three days and three nights (Jonah 1:17; 2:1 MSS), and in the gospels, Jesus hinted about his resurrection by bringing up Jonah’s experience inside the fish. By the way, if you reverse the letters of this short word, you will get an ancient Hebrew word for “luck” or “fortune” גָּד (gād), which also happens to be the name of one of the tribes of Israel (Gen 30:11, 49:19).

MY REQUEST

Dear reader, may I ask you for a favor? Would you take three minutes of your time and provide an encouraging feedback to other people shopping on Amazon.com about this book (assuming you like it of course!)?

Here is how: 1. Go to **Amazon.com** and search for the title of this book – “**Read Hebrew in 22 Days of Less**”. 2. Click on the title, click on the “ratings” link (right under the author’s name) and click “**Write a customer review**” button. 3. Rate the book and leave a few words.

This will really help me a lot, especially if you genuinely love this book! After writing a review, please drop me a personal note and let me know - **dr.eli.israel@gmail.com**. I would appreciate your help with this.

Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

DAY 3 – Fifth Letter

The fifth letter's name is:

Heh

Sounds like “Hey!”

A Heh looks like this:



The letter *Heh* looks like a *Dalet* with an extra vertical line segment.

Take note of the hole (or gap) in the top left corner of the *Heh* (because later, we'll learn a similar-looking letter that has no gap).

***Heh* makes the exhaling breathy H sound as in Hat and Hula-Hoop.**

Have a holy or homely look at this Hebrew word for He Loved:

אָהַב 'ā-HAV

[he loved]

Hey, is that a new vowel symbol under the *Heh*? Yes!

The short horizontal line under the *Heh* is a brief A sound as in Watt.

Since this is your first two-syllable word, it is important to mention word stress. **The stress of most Hebrew words is on the final syllable.** A minority of words have penultimate (second to the last syllable) stress. In this book, penultimate stressed words will have a less-than sign < over the stressed Hebrew Syllable. (In the transliteration, you will always see the stressed syllable spelled with small caps.)

So hey, how about a high five for learning five Hebrew words so far?

There is a second part of the story with *Heh*. You should also know that the letter *Heh* serves another key purpose besides representing the breathy H sound. Long before vowel symbols under letters were invented, *Heh* was used at the end of lots of words to represent any of three final vowel sounds: A as in Russia, E as in They, or O as in Cargo. When the vowel points were added later, the *Heh* remained, but those letters *Heh* are not pronounced as the letter H. They only represent vowel sounds.

Do you recognize these Bible place names that all have a final *Heh*?

Timnah (תִּמְנָה)

Nineveh (נִּינְוֶה)

Shiloh (שִׁלֹּה)

Let's view a new word with a final vowel represented by the letter *Heh*.

We already learned אָהַב as the verb: He Loved. But there is another similar word, the noun Love, and it has a *Heh* representing the vowel sound “ah” at the end:

אַהֲבָה 'āhă-vĀH
[love]

Notice that the new vowel (under the first *Heh*) has two dots next to it. These two dots make this A-sounding vowel to be pronounced more quickly, in a hurried way, as in Asleep. And like last time, the last syllable gets the stress.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The new vowel (that looks like a horizontal line) is called *Pataḥ*. It is a short vowel and historically was pronounced more quickly than *Qamats*. But in modern pronunciation, it is essentially the same sound as *Qamats*. The *Pataḥ* with two dots next to it is a “reduced vowel” called *Ḥataf Pataḥ*. There are three reduced vowels, and they are extremely brief, typically appearing under guttural letters (א ה ח ע ר).

A Hebrew consonant that represents a vowel sound (like

a final *Heh*) is called a *mater-lectionis*. If a final *Heh* has a vowel symbol attached to it, then the *Heh* must be a consonant. If ever a consonantal *Heh* has no vowel point attached to it, it will have a *dagesh*-like dot in it (called a *Mappiq*). Lastly, a *Heh* anywhere besides the end of the word will necessarily be a consonant and will not represent a vowel sound.

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5). “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:18).*

As it was customary to ask great teachers for wisdom, Jesus was once asked to articulate the greatest of all commandments. He answered without any hesitation. Jesus, just like Rabbi Hillel before him, affirmed that both greatest commandments were the ones that commanded to love. In the first, love was to be directed towards perfect God, and in the other, love was to be extended to his imperfect people.

Loving people is not easy. In Hebrew לאהוב (*le'ēhōv*) means “to love” and אהבה (*ahāvāh*) is a noun for “love”. What is intriguing is that in Hebrew “liking” and “loving” is the same. To love means to like, and to like, means to love. In many languages there is a clear distinction between “liking” and “loving”, but not in Hebrew, אהבה (*ahāvāh*) is an all-encompassing idea.

As we ponder God’s commandment to love, all kinds of people come across our minds, some we like a lot, and some we tolerate, while there could be others whom we can’t stand at all. Are we truly commanded to love everyone or just some people? Leviticus 19:18 commands us to treat “brothers” fairly and to love “our neighbor” as ourselves. The word רֵעַ (*rēa’*), translated as “neighbor” in Hebrew, literally means “someone who is nearby,” standing not far from us.

People generally have a notion that if we feel good about someone (we like them), we will do good to them (we will love them). However, according to ancient Eastern wisdom, it is the other way around: If we do good to someone, we also begin to feel good about that person.

DAY 4 – Writing New Letters

No new letters today. Instead, let's practice writing out the letters and words we've already learned. Write each letter several times below:

א ב ג ד ה

א ב ג ד ה

Now go ahead and use the block script you are learning to practice writing these new words a couple of times, too.

אָב

בָּא

גָּב

דָּג

אָהַב

אָהַבָּה

Do you remember what these words mean? If you don't, you can look them up in previous lessons or find their meanings and phonetic transliteration in the glossary at the end of this book.

DAY 5 – Sixth and Seventh Letters

The sixth letter's name is:

Vav

Rhymes with “Suave”

A Vav looks like this:



The letter *Vav* (like *Heh*) can represent a consonantal sound or a vowel.

As a consonant, Vav sounds like the V in Vow.

Verily, the yintage Hebrew word *Vav* means Hook or Nail:

וּוּ vāv
[hook]

You should know, however, that *Vav* appears in relatively few Hebrew words as the consonantal V sound. Instead, most of the time it represents either a long Ō or Ū vowel.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: Based on 1) Greek transliterations of Hebrew proper names, 2) Vav’s pronunciation in sister languages, 3) the behavior of *Vav* in verbal roots or before bilabial letters, and 4) its frequent interchangeability with *Yod*, it is very certain that *Vav* originally had a W sound as in Wow. Because of how similar the W consonant is to the sound of the long \bar{O} and \bar{U} vowels, *Vav* was a natural choice for a *mater-lectionis*, and very early on, it came to represent those sounds in Hebrew. Whereas a *Heh* can represent a vowel only at the end of a word, a *Vav* can do so anywhere in the word.

You may ask, if *Vav* can vary between a V sound and a vowel, how can you verify its value and obliterate unwanted obscurity? Easily:

When *Vav* represents a vowel, these are the two options.

With a dot over the top,



open up for a long \bar{O}
as in “Clove”, like in

דָּוּב

dōv

[bear]

Reducing the height of that dot is your cue

וּ

to produce a long Ū
as in “Duke”, like in

דָּוּג

dūg

which means Fishing (by the way)

If ever you view some other vowel attached to the *Vav*, verily it has a V sound. So, vigilantly verify any visage of a vowel riveted to the *Vav*:

הָוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ 'av-VĀH

[desire]

This *Vav* has a vowel attached underneath it, so the *Vav*

cannot itself be a vowel. This new word means craving Passion or Desire, which you clearly have for Hebrew!

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The dot over the *Vav* to represent \bar{O} is called *Hōlem*. The dot in the *Vav* to represent \bar{U} is not a *dagesh*; the *Vav*-with-a-dot combination is a vowel called *Shūreq*. But the dot of a consonantal *Vav* as in װ is indeed a *dagesh*. This “doubling” *dagesh* indicates that the letter is grammatically doubled. This is why the transliteration of the *vav* is doubled. In modern pronunciation, grammatically doubled letters are not pronounced differently.

The seventh letter’s name is:

Záyin

Rhymes with “Bryan”
A Zayin looks like this:



The letter *Zayin* always makes the Z sound as in Zion. Note the overhang that *Zayin* has on the top right. This is what differentiates it from the similar-looking *Vav*. Using the new letter *Zayin*, sound out this zinger:

זָהָב zā-HĀV
[gold]

This zappy Hebrew word is hardly zilch. It is dazzling Gold.

Read it a dozen times with the final syllable stressed.

Superb! Zoom ahead for the Gold!

DAY 6 – Eight and Ninth Letters

The eighth letter's name is:

Ḥet

Rhymes with “Pet”

A Ḥet looks like this:



The letter *Ḥet* always makes a scratchy [restricted] H sound as in the German name Bach and in the Scottish word Loch.

As for its form, the *Ḥet* looks very similar to a *Heh*, but it has no gap in the upper-left corner. Read this Hebrew word containing the letter *Ḥet*:

אָח *'āḥ*

[brother]

This Hebrew word means Brother. Most people think of the scratchy guttural sound of *Ḥet* as just a funny sound, but in Hebrew, it is as ordinary as any other letter. Try practicing its sound with your Brother or while listening to Bach.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The letter *Het* is a guttural letter and favors A-vowels. When *Het* ends a word but is not preceded by an A-vowel, then a *Pataḥ* vowel is inserted right before the *Het*, as in the Hebrew word for wind/breath/spirit: רוּחַ, *ru^aḥ*.

The ninth letter's name is:

Tet

Also rhymes with “Pet”

A *Tet* looks like this:



The letter *Tet* always makes the sound T as in Tent.

Take notice: *Tet* looks torn on top in this sinful term containing a *Tet*:

הַטָּא הֵיט' **hey!**
[sin]

This is certainly a Sin; not to mention the silent 'Alef and

the two new vowel signs within! The stacked dots under the *Tet* are silent, but the side-by-side ones are the long vowel as in Grey. Read it again, *s'il vous plaît!*

The new silent vowel, *Shva*, is silent at the end of a syllable. If it begins a syllable, it has a very short sound /^ə/ (like the e in Terrific). Try out this word with an audible *Shva*:

טֵוָה t^əvāh
[range]

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The new, long vowel is called *Tsere*. The symbol of the stacked dots is called *Sh'va*. In modern pronunciation, *Sh'va* is almost always silent, but historically it had an extremely short e/i sound when it started a syllable because it represents a full vowel that had reduced from a shift in the word's accent.

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: If you ask people to define the concept of sin, most will start going through a list of negative commandments citing evil deeds such as murder, theft, and others. But is that what “sin” really means? The Hebrew language shows us something more as we look at the meaning of “sin” אָפָּן (*hēt*). In Hebrew, a related word אָפָּן מִטָּוֶה means making a mistake as if by missing the target.

For example, Judges 20:16 ascribes this quality to warriors from the tribe of Benjamin, “Out of all these people, 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could

sling a stone at a hair and not miss.” A phrase in this verse - לֹא יַחֲטִי' (lō yahăti') means “not missing the target.” Related to “sin” חָטָא (hēt) is the longer form-חַטָּאת (hattāt). Torah uses this word for “sin offering” (Lev 4:3). In Leviticus 14:49, Israelites are instructed how to cleanse a house from strange mold, “To cleanse the house then, he shall take two birds...” The phrase “to cleanse the house” is לְחַטֵּאת־בַּבַּיִת (ləhattē' et-habbáyit) in Hebrew has this word חָטָא (hēt) which we usually translate as “sin” or “sin offering.”

In English, “sin” is in no way connected to “cleansing” of any kind, but in modern Hebrew, the word for “disinfection” is חִטְּוֵי (hittēy). It is incredible to see how the Hebrew language can work with word roots. The same word that ordinarily means “sin,” “making an error,” and “missing the mark” is connected to the word for “sin offering” in the Temple and can even communicate “purification.”

DAY 7 – Tenth Letter

The tenth letter's name is:

Yod

Rhymes with “Mode”

A Yod looks like this:



The letter Yod sounds like the initial Y of Yarn or Yellow.

While Yod is the smallest of all Hebrew letters, it is by no means the least important. In fact, it appears more than any other letter.

Try and pronounce this handy word that means Hand:

 **yād**
[hand]

Just like *Vav*, this new letter *Yod* serves as either a consonant or as a vowel. In this next word, *Yod* will act as a vowel, and we will learn another vowel symbol. The single dot under a letter is a vowel as in the word *Skī*.

Try and read it:

בִּי bī
[in me]

Read this word like “bee”. The meaning of this word is “in me”.

Here’s another:

גִּי g^odī
[kid/goat]

In these new words, both the single dot vowel and the Yod both represent the vowel sound in Ski. Historically, the Yod was inserted to represent the vowel sound, and then later, scribes added the dot underneath for the same purpose.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The new vowel’s name is *Hiriq*, and when it appears together with a *Yod*, it is called *Hiriq-Yod* or *Hiriq Maleh* (meaning “Full Hiriq”). Yod can also pair up with *Tsere*, and one more short-e vowel that we will learn later called *Segol*.

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: In the Bible, the word “hand” יָד (*yad*) often refers to God, as in the “hand of God”. “*The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch*

out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.” (Ex 7:5).

It’s fascinating that somehow; we human beings are very attuned to this idea of “God’s hand” (יָד הַאֱלֹהִים, *yad hā’ēlōhīm*). And yet we understand that God does not really have hands (יָדַי, *yādáyim*). This is just the way the Bible speaks of the Almighty manifesting his presence, showing his involvement through an action of some sort as if done by hand (יָד, *yād*). And it’s true when God wants to emphasize his personal involvement in something, when he wishes to emphasize his actions, he says, “by my hand”

See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand. (Deut. 32:39).

The hand of God is a symbol of his presence and involvement. The outcome of our interaction with God’s hand (יָד הַאֱלֹהִים) depends largely on where we stand with him. God is sovereign to punish or to bestow his grace and the same hand does both actions.

DAY 8 – More Letters

Let's practice writing out the new letters we've learned:

ו ז ח ט י

ו ז ח ט י

You may ask, “why am I writing if I am supposed to learn how to read?” The answer is - your memory which helps you to read, is also stimulated by writing the letters. For some people writing is a very effective way to remember new things.

Now, let’s use the block script you are learning and practice a few words. Maybe a couple of trimes for each?

דױב

דױג

אַװה

זװב

אַח

חױטא

טױח

יִד

בִּי

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: What is gold? It's an alloy, a fairly soft yellow or pink metal that does not rust or show corrosion. In Hebrew, gold is **זָהָב** (*zāhāv*). For ancient Israelites, gold (**זָהָב**) was an exotic metal because it was not found within or even near the borders of Israel. The Bible speaks of gold being brought from afar (Is. 60:9). Yet the Hebrews in the Bible were very familiar with how to work with gold. There are countless passages in Torah that mention it. And when it came to building an abode for God in the wilderness, Israelites utilized gold **זָהָב** (*zāhāv*) for its holy objects quite masterfully.

For many of us, living in a society where money is becoming more of an idea than an actual item we hold in our hand, gold (**זָהָב**) is becoming an idiom for wealth and value. But, ironically in Hebrew, “money” is **כֶּסֶף** (*késef*), the ancient word for “silver,” not gold (**זָהָב**).

Are there things more valuable than gold and silver? According to Matthew 23:17, the temple is more precious than its gold and many people would agree that healing from a disability is more valuable as well (Acts 3:6).

DAY 9 – Eleventh and Twelfth Letters

The eleventh letter's name is:

Kaf

Rhymes with “Scoff”

A Kaf looks like this:



The letter *Kaf* can make two sounds depending on whether it has a dot (just like *Bet* does). When *Kaf* has a dot, it makes a **K sound like in the word **K**ey. But without a dot, it makes a gravelly **kh** sound, scratchier than the **ch** in **Ba**ch. To make this sound, start by making the sound of a **k**, but then loosen the pressure between your tongue and palette so air can scratch through. That's it!**

Keepr pronouncing these honorable new words:

כבוד k̄ā-vōD

[honor]

אֶכְבֹּד 'ăkhab-BĒYD

[I will honor]

Kaf looks very similar to *Bet*, but *Kaf* is completely curved, whereas *Bet* has a flat base (and a little bitty bump on the bottom right).

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The word *Kaf* means “palm of the hand.” Like *Bet*, *Kaf* will take the harder K sound by default, but changes to Kh when any vowel sound precedes it.

Not only does *Kaf* represent two sounds, but it also has two written forms. We already learned the first one; the second one is a Final Form which only appears when *Kaf* ends a word.

A Final *Kaf* looks like this:



(Later, we'll learn four other letters with Final Forms besides *Kaf*.)

A Final *Kaf* looks very similar to a *Dalet* (except that its vertical line extends down further). It is so similar, that scribes regularly added a silent *Sh'va* vowel under a final *Kaf* to reduce confusion.

Let's see some examples:

כֹּחַ zākh

[pure, clear]

כֹּחַ bākh

[in you]

A final *Kaf* can also have a full vowel (written higher than usual):

יָדְךָ yā-d^oKHĀ

[your hand]

יָדְךָ אָבִיךָ 'ā-vī-khā

[your father]

That's an accent sign over the *Bet*. The word's stress is on that penultimate syllable.

The twelfth letter's name is:

Lámed

Rhymes with “mom did”

A Lamed looks like this:



The top half of the letter *Lamed* looks like a capital L. This will help you remember that it makes the L sound as in Lulu or Lily!

Let's look at words with the letter Lamed. The first one has a dot above and to the left of a letter which represents the long-ō sound:

לֹא lō'

[no, not]

הלך hā-LAKH

[walked]

יכול yā-KHŌL

[can, able]

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The letter *Lamed* is related to a “shepherd’s staff” and means “learn”.

DAY 10 -Thirteenth and Fourteenth Letters

The thirteenth letter's name is:

Mem

Rhymes with “Them”

A Mem looks like this:



A Final Mem looks like this:



The letter *Mem* always makes the sound M as in Mimic. Like *Kaf*, it has a Final Form that shows up when *Mem* ends a word.

Might we make a mighty attempt to read words with Mem?

מָה māh

[what?]

מַיִם MA-yim

[water]

מֶלֶךְ ME-lekh

[king]

This last word has a new vowel symbol, three dots that indicate a short-E sound as in “bet” or “met”.

Also notice that the words for “water” and “king” do not have final stress, hence the stress symbol.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: A word’s stress can only be either in the last or second to last syllable. Final stress (ultimate stress) is more common. There is a principle that helps determine where stress should go in Hebrew. Short vowels appear in closed syllables and long vowels appear in open syllables. Anything other than these must carry the stress (as in מֶלֶךְ and מַיִם). When you’re not sure, assume ultimate stress.

The fourteenth letter's name is:

Nun

Sounds like "Noon"

A Nun looks like this:



A Final Nun looks like this:



The letter Nun has the sound of N as in Nancy. Like Mem and Kaf, Nun also has a final form. It looks like an elongated Vav.

Here are some nice, new words with Nun:

נֶגֶב NE-gev
[Negev]

נָהַג nā-HAG
[drove]

זְמַן z^θMAN
[time]

נָכוֹן nā-KHŌN
[correct]

If you knew that the Negev is the hot desert of southern Israel, you are correct! Have you ever spent time going for a drive in the Negev at noon?

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: Psalm 112 describes a person who has an amazing relationship with God and one of the facets of this relationship is trust. And this trust is connected to certain assurance. *“He will not fear evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.”* (Psalm 112:7).

No one enjoys receiving bad news (evil tidings), yet we all do it sooner or later. The bad news comes to us in many varieties: a debilitating illness, a severe injury, the loss of a loved one, rejection, betrayal, etc. How we react to bad news affects our lives profoundly. The man

described in this Psalm, “does not fear” לֹא יִירָא (*lō yirā*), “his heart is steadfast” נֶכֶחַן לִבּוֹ (*nākhōn libbō*) and, “he trusts in YHWH”

So what is this נֶכֶחַן (*nākhōn*)? It’s surety, steadfastness, stability, firmness, and sometimes, something permanent and well-established. In modern Hebrew, it’s a way to affirm that someone is “right” or “correct.” There are several words that derive from this root - כּוּן (*kun*), but the most famous and useful is כֵּן (*ken*), which most often means “yes” – an affirmative statement. So let your yes, be yes, and let it come from a steadfast נֶכֶחַן heart.

DAY 11 – Fifteenth Letter and Practice

The fifteenth letter's name is:

Sámekh

Rhymes with “saw Mick”
(but with a scratchy kh at the end)

A Samekh looks like this:



The letter *Samekh* makes the S sound as in Sassy Sue.
Samekh looks similar to final *Mem* but is round.

See what sassy words surface in the sea of Hebrew
Samekh!

סוס sūs

[horse]

סִימָן sī-MĀN

[symbol]

סָבַל **sā-VAL**

[suffered]

סֻלָּם **sul-LĀM**

[ladder]

This new vowel (three diagonal dots) is the short u vowel as in put.

Let's practice writing out the new letters and words we've learned:

כך ל מ ם נ ן ס

כדלמסונוס

DAY 12 – Practicing Hebrew Words

Use the block script you are learning and practice each word, at least a couple of times. If you could remember the meaning of these words that would be remarkable! You can always look them up in the glossary (at the back of the book).

כבוד

אכיל

זך

בך

ידך

אביך

לא

הלך

יכול

מָה
מַיִם
מֶלֶךְ
נָגַב
נֶהַג
זְמַן
נֶכּוֹן
סוּס
סִימָן
סֶבֶל
סֵלָם

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: *Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house. All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, saying, "Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting" (2 Chron. 7:1-3).*

The Hebrew word for “glory” is כָּבוֹד (*kavod*). Its meaning is encapsulated in its very root. This same Hebrew word is also often translated as “honor” in the Bible. When we are told to honor our parents in the Ten Commandments, Hebrew uses the same term only as a verb. The general idea of כָּבֵד (*kāvēd*) in Hebrew means “heavy” and “weighty.” Therefore, the verb לְכַבֵּד (*l^okhābēd*) “to honor” carries the notion of making something heavy (vs. making something light). In a sense, that is what honoring someone means, to consider them and their authority with some considerable weight.

God’s glory is his heaviness, his importance, his substance, his authority, and his weight. God’s glory filled the space with his weight, and the priests were not able to move—so heavy was God’s presence in their midst.

DAY 13 – Sixteenth and Seventeenth Letters

The sixteenth letter's name is:

‘Áyin

Rhymes with “Bryan”

An ‘Ayin looks like this:



The letter ‘Ayin may look a bit like a letter Y, but it sounds like an ‘Alef in modern pronunciation. So, you hear it in “Uh Oh” and English words that start with a vowel. In this book, its transliteration will be with a backwards apostrophe like this: ‘

The elegant ‘Ayin appears in all kinds of interesting words:

עֹז ‘ōz

[strength]

נַעַל NA-‘al

[shoe]

נָגַע nā-GA‘

[touched]

When ‘*Ayin* comes at the end of a word, it is not heard.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The letter ‘*Ayin* historically had a different pronunciation. It was a voiced velar fricative, which means it comes from the throat while tensing the muscles used at the beginning of a cough.

The seventeenth letter’s name is:

Peh

Sounds like “Pay”

A Peh looks like this:



A Final Peh looks like this:



The letter *Peh* (like Bet and Kaf) changes its sound if there is a dot in it. Put a dot, and *Peh* sounds like P as in Purple; forgo the dot, it forms an F sound as in Fifty. The letter *Peh* also has a final form that extends downward.

Please pay attention to the Peh in these words!

פהּ **peh**
[mouth]

פְּנִים pā-NĪM

[face]

כֶּסֶף KE-sef

[silver]

The dot in *Peh* (like the one inside *Bet* and *Kaf*) will disappear if there is a vowel sound right before it. So, the final form of *Peh* will virtually always make the sound F.

DAY 14 – Eighteenth and Nineteenth Letters

The eighteenth letter's name is:

Tṣádi

Rhymes with “Saudi”

A Tṣadi looks like this:



A Final Tṣadi looks like this:



The letter Tṣadi makes the ts sound as in Hats, Cats, Pretzel, and Pizza. Tṣadi is the last letter that has a final form.

Let's practice it! Don't get antsy from the outset. No regrets, Tṣadi itself is in lots of outstanding words.

צֵבַע TSE-va‘
[color]

חֹץ ḥuts
[outside]

אֹמֵץ ’ō-mets
[courage]

הַצָּגָה ha-tsā-GĀH
[presentation]

See fancy-pants? That wasn't so bad!

The nineteenth letter's name is:

Qof

Rhymes with “Loaf”

A Qof looks like this:

The letter Qof has a hard k sound as in Kite or like the q in Iraq. (It does not have a qu sound as in Queen.)

Take a look at these key words containing Qof.

קַל qal
[easy]

לָקַח lā-QAH
[took]

צָדִיק tsā-DAQ
[was right]

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The letter *Qof* historically had a slightly different pronunciation. It (along with a few other letters) was an “emphatic,” which means that it was pronounced while tensing those muscles used at the beginning of a cough (like ‘Ayin was). But today it always sounds like K.

How about another word with Qof?

קָטַן qā-ṬĀN
[small]

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: *And He (God) took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness (Gen 15:5-6).*

For many people, “righteousness” is equated with “holiness” or even life without sin; the opposite of a “sinner” is a “righteous person”. But Hebrew reveals another understanding. What happened in Gen. 15:6 when Abraham’s belief was reckoned as righteousness?

The Hebrew root letters קִדְקָה (*tš-d-k*) can also be understood as “justice,” “fairness,” and “equity.” In Hebrew, “righteousness” is קִדְקָה (*tšəḏāqāh*), and a righteous person is called a קִדְדָּה (*tšaddīq*). Another

related word קִדְּוָה (*tšédeq*), for example, means “right,” “piety,” or “straight and proper action.”

Another interesting fact: Hebrew does not have a separate word for benevolent giving. The word “righteousness” הַקְּדָוָה (*tšədāqāh*) is used to describe such acts of kindness as well. When one practices charitable giving to those who do not have enough, one promotes an atmosphere of fairness, rightness, and equity in the world. Being “righteous” means one *is* “right” or “fair” and acts in such a manner.

DAY 15 – Twentieth and Twenty-first Letters

The twentieth letter's name is:

Resh

Rhymes with “Fresh”

A Resh looks like this:



In Israel, this “backwards r looking letter” Resh sounds like the French or German letter R (which is much like a breathy G). In other dialects, Resh sounds more like a rolled Spanish R.

Take a moment to read and rember these Resh words.

רֵגַע RE-ga‘

[moment]

קָרָא qā-RĀ'
[read]

זָכַר zā-KHAR
[remembered]

אָמַר 'ā-MAR
[said]

The twenty-first letter's name is:

Shin

Sounds like “Sheen”

A Shin looks like this:



The letter Shin makes the Sh sound as in Short or Fresh. Notice the dot on the top right.

Should you wish to push to the finish, then you shall shift downward to some short, fresh words containing Shin!

שמע shā-MA‘

[heard]

חשב ḥā-SHAV

[thought]

אושר ’Ō-sher

[bliss]

שיבר shīb-BĒR

[smashed]

Now aren't you delighted that you heard yourself do smashingly with these new words?

A variation of the twenty-first letter is named:

Sin

Sounds like “Seen”

A Sin looks like this:



The letter Sin (like Samekh) has the S sound as in Sassy Sue. It looks like Shin except its dot is on the left side.

“Sin is never right” will help you distinguish the Shin from Sin.

Take a second to sound out words with Sin:

עָשָׂה ‘ā-SĀH

[did]

שִׂיחָה sī-HĒQ

[played]

הִפֵּשׁ hīp-PĒS

[sought]

שִׂמְחָה sim-ḤĀH

[joy]

Don't forget about the long-E vowel with two side-by-side dots that makes "ey" as in they, nor about the stacked-dots *Shva* symbol that is silent at the end of a syllable.

Superb! You're almost finished. There is just one more letter left to learn.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The letter Sin sounded different than the letter Samekh, historically. Maybe it was pronounced closer to the back of the teeth to produce a sharper sound, but today it is exactly the same as a Samekh.

MY REQUEST

Dear reader, may I ask you for a favor? Would you take three minutes of your time and provide an encouraging feedback to other people shopping on Amazon.com about this book (assuming you like it of course!)?

Here is how: 1. Go to **Amazon.com** and search for the title of this book – “**Read Hebrew in 22 Days of Less**”. 2. Click on the title, click on the “ratings” link (right under the author’s name) and click “**Write a customer review**” button. 3. Rate the book and leave a few words.

This will really help me a lot, especially if you genuinely love this book! After writing a review please drop me a personal note and let me know - **dr.eli.israel@gmail.com**. I would appreciate your help with this.

Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

DAY 16 - Twenty-second Letter

The twenty-second letter's name is:

Tav

Rhymes with “Improv”

A Tav looks like this:



Dot or not, the letter *Tav* has the T sound as in Tiny Timmy. While *Tav* looks similar to *Het*, yet *Tav* has a “toe” towards the left.

Take time to tear into these words containing Tav:

תִּינוֹק **tī-NŌQ**

[infant]

בַּת **bat**

[daughter]

דֶּלֶת DE-let
[door]

אֵמֶת 'ě-MET
[truth]

In this final word for “Truth”, you should have noticed the vowel with five dots. It looks like the short-E vowel with the *shva* beside it. This means it is an extremely brief e-sound as in depict.

Terrific! You have learned all of the letters and almost all of the vowels!

ADVANCED INFORMATION: The letter *Tav* was historically pronounced differently without a dagesh. It was a th sound like thin, but some Jews today pronounce it like S.

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: What is truth? In a world where subjectivity is the norm and everything is relative, it’s a hard question to answer. Philosophers have pondered this question endlessly, and Pontius Pilate posed this very question to Jesus (John 13:38). There are always multiple options contending for the truth, it seems, and the source matters. So, it should not be a surprise that God offers his truth to those who wish to learn it.

Make me know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; For You, I wait all day. (Psalm 24:4-5)

In Hebrew, “truth” is אֱמֶת (*‘ēmet*), and naturally, it is defined as something opposite of falsehood. But it also means reliability and faithfulness, firmness, stability, uprightness, integrity, and certainty. In Hebrew, the word אֱמֶת (*‘ēmet*) has an amazing breadth of meaning that English conveys through so many other words. That is why when we encounter this word in the biblical text, the simple idea of “something opposite to falsehood” does not always fit.

For example, in Isaiah 39:8, the phrase שָׁלוֹם וְאֱמֶת (*shālōm ve ‘ēmet*) probably means “peace and stability” since the opposite of “turmoil” was sought. Similarly, in Joshua 2:12, the phrase אֵת אֱמֶת (*‘ēt ‘ēmet*) should not be translated as “a sign of truth” but rather as “a sign or pledge of stability” since, once again, not truthfulness but rather goodwill is being sought. In Exodus 18:21, Moses is told to select אֲנָשֵׁי אֱמֶת (*‘anshēy ‘ēmet*) “people of truth” literally, to be leaders in Israel, but perhaps “men of integrity” is what was meant. When it comes to words with a broad range, such as אֱמֶת (*‘ēmet*), a literal translation may be true but not always the best when it comes to understanding the biblical text.

DAY 17 – New Letters and Words

Let's practice writing out all of the new letters and words we've learned:

ע פ ף צ ץ ק ר ש ת

ע פ ף צ ץ ק ר ש ת

By now, you know what to do. Practice some words in order to remember the Hebrew characters. Writing each word two or three times would be excellent.

כָּבוֹד

עֵז

נֶעַל

נָגַע

פָּה

פָּנִים

נָסַף

אָבַע

חוץ

אֶמְצָא

הִצָּגָה

קָל
לָקַח
צָדִיק
קָטָן
רָגַע
קָרָא
זָכַר
אָמַר
שָׁמַע
חָשַׁב
אֲנֹשֶׁר
נְשִׁיבָר
שְׂמָחָה

שִׂיחָק

חִיפּוּשׁ

עֲשָׂה

תִּינוּק

אַמֶּת

בֵּת

דָּלֶת

תְּכֵנִית

קַרְבֵּן

חֲכָמָה

הַעֲלָה

Now, do you remember what these words mean? Circle 3 or 5 you do not remember and find them in the glossary. Recognizing Hebrew letters is another form of practice.

DAY 18 - Practicing the Hebrew Consonants

Here are all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in one reference chart along with their sound. This is a slightly different font just to expose you to slight visual variations. The next chart shows how to handwrite them.

א	ב	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו
	V	B	G	D	H	V
ז	ח	ט	י	כ	כ	ל
	Z	H	T	Y	Kh	K
מ	נ	נ	ס	ע	פ	פ
	M	N	S	E	P	F
צ	ק	ר	ש	ש	ת	ת
	Q\K	R	Sh	S	T	T

It's time to review the Hebrew consonants you learned and remember how they are written. Here is a handwriting reference chart:



And it's time to test yourself! Take a blank piece of notebook paper and write out all 22 Hebrew letters by memory in sequence (with the book closed, no peeking). You can say the name of the letter and its sound as you go if it helps. Then check yourself against the chart. If you missed letters, then write out what you missed or confused. And practice writing each of those letters at least a dozen times.

If you can produce all 22 letters (consonants) in order from memory, then you are ready to continue to the lesson on vowels and some helpful reading rules.

DAY 19 – Vowels and Reading Rules

Back when we learned *Aleph*, the first vowel that we learned was the long “Ah” vowel (named *Kamats*) that looks like a subscript capital T as in:

אָב 'āv [father]

There is actually another vowel that looks the same as *Kamats* but has a short “o” sound as in toll. It is called *Kamats-Katan*, (meaning “small *Kamats*”). There are two requirements to spot these short “o” vowels. Let’s start with an example:

תְּכַנִּית tokh-NĪT [plan]

A *Kamats-Katan* vowel appears in 1) unstressed and 2) closed syllables.

1) The stressed syllable here is “NĪT”, so “tokh” is unstressed. Check.

2) The syllable “tokh” ends in a consonant, so it is “closed”. Check. Therefore, it is a *Kamats-Katan*.

Here are three other words containing a *Kamats-Katan* in their first syllables:

קָרְבָּן qor-BĀN [sacrifice]






















חֹכְמָה ḥokh-MĀH [wisdom]

הֶעֱלָה ho‘ō-LĀH [elevated]

In the first example, the *Kamats* under Bet is stressed, so it’s not a *Kamats-Katan*. In the second word, the *Kamats* under *Mem* is both stressed and in an open syllable—not a *Kamats-Katan*. In the third example, the *Lamed* has a *Kamats* (ah), the initial *Heh* has a *kamats-katan* (o), and the ‘*Ayin* has a new vowel, a super-short, reduced *kamats-katan* (ō) signified by the two stacked dots next to it. This vowel is the last of the three “reduced vowels.”

In general, where any other letter would take *Sh ’va*, guttural letters (א ה ח ע ר) will take one of the three reduced vowels (א א א) corresponding to the historical pronunciation of the word. So, since ‘*Ayin* is guttural and it is preceded by a short-o vowel, it takes the reduced-o vowel.

You now know all of the Hebrew vowels. They are organized in the following chart by length (Long, Short, Reduced) and by quality (AEIOU). English approximations and helpful notes are included. The letters Heh, Yod, and Vav are not consonants here. They represent vowels.

Reduced (very brief, never stressed, usually under guttural letters)	Short Vowels (typically in closed syllables unless accented)	Long Vowels (typically in open syllables unless accented)	
 <u>a</u> scend	 ya <u>ch</u> t	 or  fa <u>th</u> er	A
 de <u>ce</u> it	 or   be <u>t</u>	 or  the <u>y</u> 	E
 <u>i</u> mpair (but silent when closing a syllable)	 eli <u>t</u> e	 ma <u>ch</u> ine	I
 <u>o</u> bese	 to <u>ll</u> (in closed, unstressed syllables only)	 or   lo <u>w</u>	O
	 tu <u>n</u> e	 su <u>e</u>	U

Rules for Reading Hebrew

Read right to left. Read each vowel along with and after its consonant.

There are only two kinds of Syllables:

- 1) Open (like ma, due, fee, go)
- 2) Closed (like mom, dad, fog, gone)

The Rule of Unaccented syllables:

- 1) Open syllables have long vowels
- 2) Closed syllables have short vowels

Any other combination is a syllable that must carry the accent/stress of that word.

Sh'va and reduced vowels are not full vowels; they never carry the stress of a word. A letter with an audible *Sh'va* will create a consonant cluster with the next letter (like gl in “glue” or pr in “prime”). It is not a syllable of its own.

The Rule of *Sh'va*:

- 1) Beginning a syllable, *Sh'va* is a brief /ə/ sound as in system or impair.
- 2) Ending a syllable, *Sh'va* is silent. It only marks the end of the syllable.

Rule of Dagesh:

- 1) If preceded by any vowel sound, it is a doubling Dagesh.
- 2) If it is not preceded by a vowel sound, it is weak (only appearing in letters בגדכפת).

DAY 20 – Reading the Hebrew Bible

You are nearly done! You now get to read a sample from Isaiah 49:5-7. This is not the easiest biblical text, but the goal is to practice and discover any gaps in knowledge. If you can read this text without too much struggle, you have successfully achieved your goal!

Remember to read from right to left. Under the Hebrew is a transliteration to peek at if you get stuck, and under it is a gloss, a brief English translation for each word. You'll find a colon in Hebrew, which marks the end of each verse. (There are no *Kamats-Katan* vowels here.)

וַעֲתָה אָמַר יְהוָה יִצְרִי מִבֶּטֶן לְעֶבֶד

l^o-E-ved mib-BE-ten yō-tš^oRĪ YHVH 'a-MAR v^o-at-TĀH
for-a-servant from-[the]-womb my-Creator the-LORD has-said And-now

לֹא לְשׁוּבָב יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא

lō v^oyis-rā-'ĒIL 'ē-LAV ya'ā-QÖV l^oshō-VĒIV lō
to-Him and-Israel to-Him Jacob to-bring-back for-him

וְאֶסָּף וְאֶכְבֹּד בְּעֵינַי יְהוָה וְאֱלֹהֵי הָיָה

hā-YĀH vĕi'-lō-HAY YHVH b^o-ēi-NĒ v^oek-kā-VĒID yĕi-'ā-SĒIF
was/is and-my-God the-LORD in-the-eyes-of and-I-will-be-
honored will-be-
gathered

עֲזִי: וַיֹּאמֶר נָקֵל מִהַיּוֹתֶךָ לִי עֶבֶד

'E-ved lī mih-yō-t^oKHA nā-QĒIL vay-YŌ'-mer : 'uz-ZĪ
a-servant to-me for-your-being is-it-too- And-he-said my-strength.
lightweight

לְהָקִים אֶת שְׁבֵטֵי יַעֲקֹב וּנְצוּרֵי

ū-n^otšū-RĒI ya'ā-QÖV shiv-ṬĒI 'et l^ohā-QĪM
and-the-preserved-ones-of Jacob the-tribes-of to-raise-up

יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהָשִׁיב וּנְתַתִּיךָ לְאֹר גּוֹיִם

gō-YĪM l^oOR ū-n^otat-TĪ-khā l^ohā-SHĪV yis-rā-ĒIL
of-nations for-a-light and-I-will-give-you to-return Israel

לְהִיּוֹת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד קֵצָה הָאָרֶץ: כֹּה

kōh : hā-Ā-retš q^oTSEI ‘ad y^oshū-‘ā-TĪ lih-YŌT
Thus the-land/earth. the-end-of until my-salvation to-be

אָמַר יְהוָה גֹּאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדוֹשׁוֹ לְבִזָּה

liv-ZŌH q^odō-SHŌ yis-rā-ĒIL gō-ĒIL YHVH ‘ā-MAR
to-the- His-Holy-[One] Israel Redeemer-of the-LORD said
despised-of

נְפִשׁ לְמַתֵּעַב גּוֹי לְעֹבְדֵי מִשְׁלִיִּם

mō-sh^oLĪM l^oE-ved gōy lim-tā-ĒIV NE-fesh
of-rulers, to-the-servant [the]-nation to-the-hated-of being/soul

מְלָכִים יִרְאוּ וְקָמוּ שָׂרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ

v^oyish-tahā-VŪ sā-RĪM vā-QĀ-mū yir-’Ū m^olā-KHĪM
and-they-will-bow-down chiefs-will they-will-arise will-see kings

לְמַעַן יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר נֶאֱמַן קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל

yis-rā-ĒIL q^odōsh ne’ē-MĀN ‘āsher YHVH l^oMA-‘an
Israel the-Holy-One-of [is]-the-faithful-of who the-LORD on-account-of

וַיִּבְחַרְךָ:

: vay-yiv-hā-REK-kā
He-chose-you

DAY 21 – Practice Makes Perfect!

Here is a sample reading from Exodus 31:6. A hyphen in the Hebrew (called *Maqaf*) is essentially the same as an English hyphen, making a compound word. This reading, however, does contain four *Kamats-Katan* vowels. Can you spot them? They are in closed, unstressed syllables. Remember how to pronounce them? There's also one reduced *Kamats* in this passage.

וְאָנִי הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי אֵת אֶהְלִיאָב
 'ohō-lī-ĀV 'ēyt 'it-TŌ nā-TAT-tī hin-NĒYH va'ā-NĪ
 Oholiav with-him I-gave behold And-I

בֶּן-אֲחִיסָמָךְ לְמִטֵּה-דָן וּבֶלֶב
 ū-v^oLĒYV dān lemat-TĒYH 'āhī-sā-MĀKH ben
 and-in-the-heart-of Dan to-the-tribe-of Ahisamach son-of

כָּל-חֲכָמֵי-לֵב נָתַתִּי חֲכָמָה
 ḥokh-MĀH nā-TAT-tī lēyv ḥākham kol
 wisdom; I-gave heart wise-[one]-of every

וַעֲשׂוּ אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִךָ:
 tsiv-vī-TĪ-khā 'āsher kol 'ēyt v^oa-SŪ
 I-commanded-you. that every[thing] they-will-make

Read the passage at least three times. After reading the passage, continue to implant the letters and sounds that they make into your mind by copying the Hebrew text onto a separate notebook page using the handwriting style you learned earlier. It should not take long.

BIBLICAL INSIGHT: *“I shall run the way of Your commandments, for You will enlarge my heart.” (Psalm 119:32)*

The psalmist says he runs in the “path of your commands,” and somehow, his “heart” לֵב (*lēv*) is enlarged. Intriguing language? The psalmist does not just walk, but he runs in the “path which God ordered.” He is clearly eager to follow God’s direction.

Biology has taught us that the heart pumps blood filled with oxygen through our body, literally supplying us with the strength to run. But that is not what the psalmist means when he says, “you will enlarge my heart.” The verb for “enlarge” is רָחַב (*rāḥav*), and it indeed means something “wide” and “broad.” In the ancient Near East, one’s “heart” לֵב (*lēv*) was not understood as a blood-pumping organ in a biological sense. That is how we modern people see it. In biblical thinking, it was understood to be something responsible for the will, decisions, motivation, emotions, thinking, and intent of any human being. By saying, “you will enlarge my heart,” the psalmist, in fact, says, “you will give me the desire, will, right thinking, in other words, an ability to keep running in your commandments, i.e., being utterly committed to God and His Word.” Commitment comes from the heart.

DAY 22 – Keep on Reading

The last reading appears as it would be in the Hebrew Bible. It is from Genesis 1:1-5. There are more symbols around the text than just the vowels that we learned. The extra symbols you won't recognize are called "cantillation marks." They comprise a system that has three jobs: 1) it breaks the text into logical segments (like punctuation does in English), 2) it tells you how to sing the text (in a liturgical setting), and 3) it tells you where the word stress is (most important for us).

There is one cantillation mark per word (usually), so it will mark the stressed syllable. Try reading the passage through by yourself! Don't get distracted by the extra marks, but definitely recognize the vowels as you read. No more transliterations.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת
הָאָרֶץ: וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹ וְבָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ
עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת
עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי
אֹר וַיְהִי-אֹר: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-
הָאֹר כִּי-טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר
וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאֹר
יּוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב

וַיְהִי-בְקָר יוֹם אֶחָד:

If you are able to read through the text without trouble, you are doing great and have acquired the skill that you wanted 22 days ago!

Way to go! Now you can read from a Hebrew Bible for yourself. If you want to practice more, find a Hebrew Bible, they are available online and in many bookstores. Understanding what you read is another goal and another journey.

ADVANCED INFORMATION: Here are some ways of writing Hebrew you may not have experienced yet. This first alphabet sample is another way to handwrite Hebrew (with a marker).

אבגדהוזחטיכל
כנסעפצקרשת
םואפר

Everyone's handwriting is a bit different. Learning how

to recognize letters, even if they are not written in exactly the way you are used to, is a helpful skill. So here is another sample of how Hebrew letters can be written.

אבגדהוזחטי
כלאנסעפצק
דשתתןםןףץ

All these styles of writing Hebrew letters require multiple strokes. Each letter is drawn out using the block system. But as you may guess, just like English, Hebrew has a cursive style too, where letters are written more quickly.

אבגדהוזחטי
כלאנסעפצק
דשתתןםןףץ

Alphabetical Glossary (Index)

adj = adjective, *adv* = adverb, *conj* = conjunction, *nf* = noun feminine,

nm = noun masculine, *part.* = participle, *PN* = proper name, *pron* = pronoun, *vb* = verb

- אָב nm 'āv Father
אָבִיךָ 'āvîykhā Your father. See אָב.
אָהַב vb 'āhav He loved
אָהָבָה nf 'āhāvāh Love
אָהֳלֵי־אָב PN 'ohōlî'āv Proper name, Oholiav, meaning
 "Tent of [the] father"
אָוָה nf 'avvāh Desire, passion
אוֹמֵץ nm 'ômetṣ Courage
אוֹר nm 'ôr Light
אוֹשֵׁר nm 'ôsher Happiness
אָחָא nm 'āḥ Brother
אָחָד nm 'eḥād One
אָחִיסָמַךְ PN 'āḥîsāmākh Proper name, Ahisamach,
 meaning "(my) brother" + "trusted"
אָכַבַּד vb 'ākhabbēd I will honor. Compare כָּבוֹד.
אֱלֹהִים nm 'ēlōhîm Mighty One, mighty ones, God
אֵלָיו prep 'ēlāv to him
אָמַר vb 'āmar He said
אֱמֶת nf 'ēmet Truth, unwaveringness
אֲשֶׁר 'āsher Relative particle translated as that,
 which, who, whom, etc.

אֶת prep 'et 1) Preposition "with"; 2) Untranslatable marker of the direct object (what receives the action of the verb).

אֵת prep 'et Same as אֶת.

אִתּוֹ prep 'ittô With him. See אֶת

בָּא vb bā' He came / he is coming

בִּי prep bî in me

בֵּינָם prep bēyn between

בָּךְ prep bākh in you (f.s.)

בֵּן nm ben Son

בְּעֵינָיו nf bə'êynêy in the eyes of

בֹּקֶר nm bōqer Morning

בָּרָא vb bārā' He created

בְּרֵאשִׁית adv bərē'shît In the beginning (of)

בַּת nf bat Daughter, derived from בֵּן plus f. Tav suffix

גֹּאֵל nm gō'el Redeemer

גָּב nm/f gāv Back (of the body or an object)

גִּדִּי nm gədî Kid goat

גּוֹי nm gōy Nation

גּוֹיִם nm gōyim Nations. See גּוֹי.

דָּג nm dāg Fish; cmp. דָּג

דּוֹב nm dôv Bear

דָּוָג vb dūg Fishing; cmp. דָּג

דֶּלֶת nf délet Door

דָּן PN dān Proper name, Dan, meaning judging

הָאוֹר nm hā'ôr The light; the Heh prefix means "the"

הָאָרֶץ nf hā'āretš The land/Earth; the Heh prefix means "the"

הַחֹשֶׁךְ nm haḥōshekh The darkness; the Heh prefix means "the"

הָיָה vb hāyāh He/it was

הִיְתָה	vb	hāyətāh	She/it was
הִלַּךְ	vb	hālakh	He walked/went
הַמַּיִם	nm	hammāyim	The water; the Heh prefix means "the"
הִנֵּה		hinēh	Behold, shift of attention
הִעֲלָה	vb	ho'ōlāh	He/it was elevated
הַצָּגָה	nf	hatṣāgāh	Presentation
הַשָּׁמַיִם	nm	hashāmáyim	The sky/heaven(s)
וְאֶכְבֵּד	vb	və'ekkāvēd	and I will honor; the Vav prefix means "and"
וְאֱלֹהֵי	nm	vē'lōhay	And the God of; the Vav prefix means "and"
וְאֲנִי	pron	va'ānî	And I; the Vav prefix means "and"
וְאֵת	prep	və'ēt	Same as אֵת with Vav prefix "and"
וְבֵהוּ		vāvōhū	See וְבֵהוּ אֵת.
וּבֵין	prep	ūvên	And between. See בֵּין. The Vav prefix means "and"; The Vav turns into a U-vowel before Bet, Mem, Peh, and words with initial sh'va.
וּבְלֵב	nm	ūvələv	And in [the] heart [of]. See לֵב.
וְהָאָרֶץ	nf	vəhā'āretṣ	And the land/earth. See הָאָרֶץ.
וְחֹשֶׁךְ	nm	vəḥōshekh	And [the] darkness.
וַיֹּאמֶר	vb	vayyō'mer	[And] he said
וַיִּבְדֵּל	vb	vayyavdēl	[And] he separated
וַיִּבְחַרְךָ	vb	vayyivḥārékā	[And] he chose you. The root בחר means "choose" and the Kaf means "you".
וַיְהִי	vb	vayhî	[And] he/it was
וַיִּקְרָא	vb	vayyiqrā'	[And] he called
וַיִּרְא	vb	vayyar'	[And] he saw
וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל	nm	vəyisrā'ēl	And Israel. See יִשְׂרָאֵל.
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ	vb	vəyishtahāvū	[And] they bowed down

וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ	nm	vəlahōshekh	And to the darkness. The Lamed prefix means to/towards/for/belonging to
וּנְצוּרֵי	nm	ūnəṭṣūrêy	And the preserved ones of. From נצר, preserve.
וּנְתַתִּיכָהּ	vb	ūnətattîykhā	[And] I will put/give you. The Kaf means you (m.s.)
וַעֲשׂוּ	vb	və‘āsū	[And] they will do/make; And they did/made.
וְעַתָּה	adv	və‘atāh	And now.
וַקָּמוּ	vb	vāqāmū	[And] they will rise; And they rose.
וְרוּחַ	nm/f	vərūḥ	And [the] wind/breath/spirit
זָהָב	nm	zāhāv	Gold
זָךְ	adj	zākh	Pure
זָכַר	vb	zākhar	He remembered
זְמַן	nm	zəman	Time
חוּץ	nm	hūṭṣ	Outside [of]
חַטָּא	nm	həṭṭ’	Sin
חִיפָּס	vb	hîypēs	He searched [for]
חָכָם	nm	hăkham	[The] wise of
חֻכְמָה	nf	hokhmāh	Wisdom
חָשַׁב	vb	hāshav	He thought
טוֹב	adj	tōv	Good
טוֹחַ	nm	təvāh	Range, scope, spectrum
יֵאָסֵף	vb	yē‘āsēf	He will be gathered
יָד	nf	yād	Hand
יָדְךָ	nf	yādəkhā	Your hand. See יָד.
יְהוָה	PN		Proper name of God often rendered as Yahweh based on the scholarly consensus, yet traditionally not pronounced by Jews and replaced by Adonai or Hashem (LORD in many Bibles).

יְהִי	vb	yəhî	[Let there] be.
יוֹם	nm	yôm	Day
יָכוֹל	vb	yākhôl	He is able/capable
יַעֲקֹב	PN	Ya‘ăqōv	Proper name, Jacob, meaning "he heels/supplants"
יִצְרִי	nm	yōtṣərî	My creator. The Yod suffix means "mine".
יִרְאוּ	vb	yir’ū	They will see. Compare יִרְאֶה.
יְשׁוּעָתִי	nf	yəshū‘ātî	My salvation. Stem יְשׁוּעָה plus Yod suffix meaning "mine".
יִשְׂרָאֵל	nm	yisrā’el	Proper name, Israel, meaning "he strives with God"
כְּבוֹד	nm	kāvôd	Honor. Compare אֲכַבֵּד.
כֹּה		kōh	Thus
כִּי	conj	kî	That/because
כָּל-	nm	kol-	All/each/every. Has Kamats-Katan. Without Maqaf it is כָּל.
כֶּסֶף	nm	késef	Silver
לֹא	adv	lō’	Not/No
לְאוֹר	nm	lə’ôr	To [the] light
לֵב	nm	lêv	Heart, the seat of intellect and reason.
לְבוֹזָה		livzôh	To the despised of
לִהְיוֹת	vb	lihyôt	To be
לְהִקְיִם	vb	ləhāqîm	To establish or raise up [something].
לְהָשִׁיב	vb	ləhāshîv	To return [something].
לוֹ	prep	lô	To/for him
לִי	prep	lî	To/for me.
לַיְלָה	nm	lāylāh	Night
לְמַטֵּה	nm	ləmatēh	To/of/belonging to the Tribe of
לְמַעַן	prep	ləmá‘an	For the sake of

- לְמַתְעֵב vb part. limtā'ēv To [the] despising one. But in Isa. 49:7, the context demands "the despised one".
- לְעָבֵד nm lə'éved To/for [the] servant [of]
- לָקַח vb lāqah He took
- לְשׁוֹבֵב vb ləshôvêv To restore
- מִבֶּטֶן nf mibbêten From [the] belly/womb [of]. The Mem prefix means "from".
- מָה māh What?
- מִהְיוֹתָךְ mihyôtəkhā From your being. Comes from the word "to be". The Kaf suffix means "yours".
- מַיִם nm máyim Water(s).
- מֶלֶךְ nm mélekh King
- מְלָכִים nm mələkhîm Kings. Compare מְלִיךָ.
- מְרַחֶפֶת vb part. mərəhéfet Fluttering.
- מִשְׁלֵיִם vb part. mōshəlîm Ruling.
- נְאֻמָּן vb ne'ēmān Loyal, trustworthy.
- נֶגֶב négev Proper location, Negev, meaning "wipe".
- נָגַע vb nāga' He touched.
- נָהַג vb nāhag He drove/was accustomed to
- נָכוֹן vb nākhôn Correct, established.
- נָעַל nf ná'al Shoe
- נֶפֶשׁ nf néfesh Living being, soul.
- נִקְלָה vb nāqēl He/it was lightly esteemed. Form the root קל meaning light/easy.
- נָתַתִּי vb nātátî I gave/put. From נתן, he gave.
- סָבַל vb sāval He suffered.
- סוּס nm sūs Horse
- סִמָּן nm sîmān Sign, mark, symbol.
- סֻלָּם nm sullām Ladder
- עָבָד nm 'éved Servant, slave, worker.

עד	prep	‘ad	Until
עֹז	nm	‘ōz	Strength
עֲזִי	nm	‘uzzi	My strength. Compare עֹז.
עַל	prep	‘al	On/upon
עֶרֶב	nm	‘érev	Evening. From the root "mixing" (of light and dark).
עָשָׂה	vb	‘āsāh	He did/made
פֶּה	nm	peh	Mouth
פָּנָי	nm	pānêy	Face of
פָּנִים	nm	pānîm	Face
צָבַע	nm	tšéva‘	Color
צָדַק	vb	tšādaq	He was right/righteous/correct.
צִוִּיתִיךָ	vb	tšivvîtkhā	I commanded you.
קְדוּשׁוֹ	nm	qədôshô	His holy one. The Vav suffix means "his".
קְדוֹשׁ	nm	qədôsh	Holy one of
קָטָן	adj	qātān	Small, insignificant
קַל	adj	qal	Easy, light.
קֵצֶה	nm	qətsēh	End/extremity
קָרָא	vb	qārā’	He called/read aloud
קֶרְבָּן	nm	qorbān	Korban, a sacrifice. From the root meaning "near". It has a Kamats-Katan.
רֵגַע	nm	rēga‘	Moment
שִׁבְטֵי	nm	shivṭêy	Tribes of
שִׁבַּר	vb	shîbēr	He shattered
שִׂחַק	vb	sîḥēq	He played/jested
שִׂמְחָה	nf	simḥāh	Joy
שָׁמַע	vb	shāma‘	He heard
שָׂרִים	nm	sārîm	Princes/chiefs/leaders
תְּהוֹ וְנִבְהוֹ		tōhû vāvōhû	Formlessness and waste/void. A common expression for "chaos".

תְּהוֹם nm/f təhôm The deep/depths
תִּינוּק nm tînoq Baby/infant
תְּכַנִּית nf tokhnît Plan