

# Living Biblical Hebrew

Introduction Part One

אולפן לעברית מקראית



Randall Buth

**BIBLICAL LANGUAGE CENTER**  
Jerusalem, Israel Zeeland, Michigan



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Cover Artwork and all illustrations by Sharon Alley

Design by Gary Lee Alley, Jr.



Recorded voices are Randall Buth, Danny Kopp, and Shoshi Kvasnica.  
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To Margret

לְמַרְגְּלִית

אֶשֶׁת חַיִּל  
וְאִמָּא לְתַלְמִידֵי אוֹלְפָן רַבִּים

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## Preface

For eighteen years I worked in Africa with Bible translation projects. The dedicated workers in these projects brought a wealth of background to their task. Some translators desired to understand Hebrew but they needed to learn Hebrew quickly in order to use it in their translations. Others had studied Hebrew and Greek for many years and knew that something was missing in their biblical language training. As multilinguals they could compare their progress with languages that they had learned, like French, English, Arabic or German. They recognized the difference between their ease of use of these languages versus the biblical languages. Working with these translators made me aware of the need for better learning materials for biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek.

What works for people when learning languages? What hinders people? What helps the learner to rise to the highest levels and what restricts students to lower plateaus? What increases learning efficiency, speed and retention?

Fortunately, language teachers and theorists have been working on these questions in many languages and situations. Effective, simple techniques have been discovered. Harry Winitz created and developed *The Learnables* picture series for modern languages. James Asher made a breakthrough with his Total Physical Response method, which we use in our live summer classes. Stephen Krashen has explained factors like comprehensible input that contribute to natural language acquisition. Even the army method of the US State Department has contributed helpful techniques. Experienced language learners and Bible translators intuitively recognize when a method works. A grammar book is not an end all for language learning. People want to feel the texture of a narrative or of a poem—they want to have a sense of where they are in a text and how to work from within a language.

In response to these needs, we began developing new biblical language materials in 1996. During semester classes and six-week summer courses in Jerusalem, we have tested and refined the Hebrew materials with students from all continents. Sharon, my daughter, began to help with teaching early on and provided important feedback for development. Another joy has been watching Aaron Hornkohl grow from a student in the summer of 1999 to an effective teacher for this program in 2001. Another student from 1999, Heidi Scherer, has advanced to where we speak in Hebrew while discussing the Hebrew Bible. She currently works on a translation project in West Africa. Another *Living Biblical Hebrew* milestone came in the fall of 2002 in Jos, Nigeria, when Sharon, her husband Gary Alley, and I ran a six-week course for twenty Bible translators. We had a lot of fun acting out and playing in biblical Hebrew during the classes. More importantly, the students learned biblical Hebrew. They sensed that the language was being grafted inside them.

Several have helped in practical ways to see these volumes move toward publication. Ken and Lenore Mullican of ha-Keshet, John Ward, the Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation, and especially the staff of En-Gedi, Bruce and Mary Okkema and Lois Tverberg.

The people who have helped and contributed to the success of this program are innumerable. First of all, the colleagues in translation projects over the past two decades have all made lasting contributions to my own understanding of how human languages work. The learning continues. Two organizations in particular have contributed to this background, the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the United Bible Societies. The numbers of individuals with significant input are far too many to name in this preface, but I would like to name a few to put a human face on the institutions. John Anderson, Jon Arenson, Katy Barnwell, John Beekman, John and Pam Bendor-Samuel, Julie Bentinck, Dick Bergman, Loren Bliese, Reinier du Blois, Joan Bomberger, Rick

Brown, John Ellington, Carl Follingstad, Leoma Gilley, Ken Gregorson, Ernst-August Gutt, Ralph and Harriet Hill, Margaret Hill, John and Pam Hollman, Ted Hope, Rob Kooops, Eileen Kilpatrick, Hanni Kuhn, Krijn van der Jagt, Dorothea Jeffries, Iver Larson, Stephen Levinson, Robert Longacre, Isaac Madugu, Bill Merrifield, Christo van der Merwe, Cynthia Miller, Aloo Mojola, Phil Noss, Willis Ott, Murray Salisbury, Doug Sampson, Martin and Helga Schroeder, Don Slager, Wanda Pace-Davies, Mona Perrin, Andrew and Janet Persson, Ray Pritz, Peter Renju, Mikre Selassie, Ronnie and Margret Sims, Jan Sterk, Phil Stine, Paul Tucker, Aaron Uche, Roger Van Otterloo, Andy Warren, Dick Watson, Tim Wilt, Lynell Zogbo, and the list could go on. My sincere thanks extend to all of them and their help has certainly been more than I have been able to acknowledge.

In Jerusalem, Halvor and Miriam Ronning have supported this language program through the Home for Bible Translators. These biblical Hebrew materials have grown out of their program. David Bivin has always been an encouragement to try to get the materials as tight and efficient as possible. He has freely shared his experience of teaching English and modern Hebrew as second languages. My family has contributed greatly providing the haven that this work has needed. Many long nights at the computer have been pardoned. They have all contributed to the typing, editing, and proofing of this text. They, too, share in some of the joy when a student begins to read the Hebrew Bible. My daughters, Sharon and Rachel, have helped immensely with teaching the course and editing the materials. My son, Yony, during visits to Israel has also contributed more than these lines can offer as thanks. Sharon has also illustrated the pictures for *Living Biblical Hebrew, Introduction Part One and Two*. Gary Alley has especially helped me to get the manuscript into more readable shape, though the final deficiencies are fully my own.

My wife, Margret, has supported and upheld this project as the embodiment of the Proverbs 31 woman. This is dedicated to her, my noble woman, אשת חיל.

מכל הלב – תודה

Randall Buth  
 Mevasseret Zion  
 2 August 2006  
 Our granddaughter Shaya's first birthday  
 ח' באב תשס"ו

## About This Course

Welcome to *Living Biblical Hebrew*, a project to present optimal learning materials for those who would want to learn Hebrew up to the highest levels of language control. Extensive recordings enhance learning through listening, which language theorists see as vital for true acquisition. All of the material—recordings, drills and readings are in biblical Hebrew.

*Living Biblical Hebrew, Introduction Part One*, opens the world of biblical Hebrew. Beginners and returning readers will enjoy the 1000 illustrations that are described in Hebrew on three audio CDs. Reading, writing and common grammatical forms are introduced in Part One.

*Living Biblical Hebrew, Introduction Part Two*, continues from Part One and comes with eleven audio CDs. Part Two covers the grammatical structures of biblical Hebrew through dialogues, drills, notes and annotated readings, focusing on the book of Jonah. Part Two offers two tracks of learning. Track one is the basic course with the main lessons and their recordings. This track allows all educational levels beyond primary school to learn the language fully. The second track refers to the linguistically sophisticated footnotes that augment a first year university course of the highest standard.

*Living Biblical Hebrew, Selected Readings with 500 Friends*, comes with one audio CD. It continues a student's development in biblical Hebrew. It is especially suitable for students after they have completed Part Two. Two Israeli radio announcers read biblical selections at a relaxed speed. The contents include: Genesis 22, Genesis 1:1-2.3, Exodus 19-20, the complete book of Ruth, Psalms 8, 23, 150, Proverbs 3:1-8, and the *shma*' (Dt 6:4-9).

The Biblical Language Center offers a live biblical Hebrew immersion course every summer in Israel. Visit [www.biblicalulpan.org](http://www.biblicalulpan.org) for more details.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Is this course different? If so, what is different about this course?**

This course is unique for biblical Hebrew. The student starts learning the language like a child, in Hebrew and not via a second language. A new way of thinking and learning is opened up for a student. This is an experience that cannot be duplicated by reading an English book *about* biblical Hebrew. This learning experience is essential for any student who wants to really know biblical Hebrew. It lays a foundation for internalizing the language and provides better long-term efficiency.

### **Is this course really biblical Hebrew?**

Yes, absolutely. All words in the lessons are biblical Hebrew and are used in the syntax patterns of biblical Hebrew.

### **If my goal is to read biblical Hebrew, why should I study a course with so many voice recordings?**

Because it is more efficient. You will learn significantly more words and structures in less time and with longer retention than with grammar/translation methods. You begin to learn the language through listening comprehension and monolingual immersion. You will be able to read more material per study hour, and more easily. It is also fun, as the student will soon discover.

Listening is essential for profound language learning because that is the way human beings learn and store their first language. While it is true that massive and extensive reading is the best way to complete advanced language learning, such reading is most efficiently accomplished when it rests on a foundation that has been developed through listening comprehension. For more details see the technical notes at the end of this section.

### **Will I understand everything in these recordings with the pictures?**

Hopefully not! An important aspect of successful language learning is teaching the student how to guess and understand new situations. The student needs to learn to deal with the new language directly. This develops a feel for the language. It is important for successful language learning and long-term retention that a student learns to relate to the new language as itself and not as a paired extension of some other language. Successful modern language programs make use of these principles around the world. This is currently the only biblical Hebrew course that uses and develops such a process, which makes it such a *must* experience for students of biblical Hebrew.

### **What kind of pronunciation is used?**

An oriental Israeli pronunciation is used in this course. This provides a standard that should be understandable anywhere in the world. Israelis appreciate this as a pleasing dialect for reading biblical Hebrew. It is also the official standard for Israeli radio.

Specifics for biblical Hebrew teachers: the five vowel *sefardic* system is used; both *šayin* and *het* are pronounced as true pharyngeal fricatives; the Israeli uvular *resh* is used; the consonants

## א' About This Course

*b~v, k~x, p~f* change pronunciation; *g, d, t* remain constant; *ts* is used for *tsadi* [ʒ with retracted tongue root], while *tav/ṭet* and *kaf/qof* are the same.

### **How much Hebrew does one learn in the picture volume?**

The pictures in Part One introduce a student to about 700 different forms in varying syntactic contexts based on 250 different vocabulary items. In addition, a student learns the alphabet and how to spell the forms. This is accomplished in approximately 25–50 study hours. In context, students recognize and understand 80-95% of the material at this stage of learning.

At the end of Part Two, students are able to read the book of Jonah with understanding. Because of the built-in repetition, exceptional students have been able to read these books out loud and correctly from unvocalized texts. Part Two requires 120-240 study hours.

### **How does this course relate to modern Hebrew?**

First of all, this course is sufficient in itself and does not depend on any previous study of either modern Hebrew or biblical Hebrew.

Additionally, this course harmonizes with modern Hebrew programs. A person may profitably study modern Hebrew concurrently with, after, or even before this course.

The fluency, listening and reading skills that are developed in this course immediately reinforce the related skills in modern Hebrew because of the special way in which this biblical Hebrew course is taught. This course will make a direct and positive contribution to anyone who wishes to continue their Hebrew studies in any of the dialects.

### **When does one learn grammar and syntax?**

Immediately from picture lesson one the student begins to learn grammar patterns and syntax, but without discussion. Learning grammar takes place directly in context. After the picture lessons and learning the alphabet, students should slowly study and observe the changes in the words in the reading lessons.

Discussions about grammar and syntax have a preview section at the end of Part One and they begin systematically in Part Two. All the chapters of Part Two contain grammar notes interspersed with the drills and annotated readings. By the end of the second part, the basic Biblical grammar forms and irregularities are summarized.

An additional advantage of this course is that the notes and written assignments develop a sensitivity for the literary features, style, and textlinguistics.

The pictures in Part One begin to lay a foundation for later analytical grammar in the same way that primer paint prepares for finishing paint. As with a quality paint job, the student is encouraged to follow directions and the natural learning sequence of this program.

### **What about people who have already started learning biblical Hebrew or already read it, is *Living Biblical Hebrew* for them, too?**

Yes, these recordings and pictures will help anyone who has never had the experience of learning Hebrew directly through listening. It will be a new experience and a new kind of learning, whether someone has been reading biblical Hebrew for one year or seven years.

## Technical Notes for Biblical Hebrew Teachers

The general methodology for the pictures in *Living Biblical Hebrew, Introduction Part One* was developed by Harris Winitz and can be seen most fully in the course that he has published for German. Harris Winitz, *The Learnables*, 8 Books (International Linguistics Corporation, 3505 East Red Bridge Road, Kansas City, Missouri 64137 USA). He has also produced courses with the same picture books for Spanish, English, French, Modern Hebrew, Chinese, Czech, Russian and Japanese.

This approach to language learning fits within a framework called listening comprehension theory, which is within the communicative approaches to language acquisition. Theoretical discussions and testing of these approaches for reading and listening can be seen in Harris Winitz, editor, *The Comprehension Approach to Foreign Language Instruction* (Rowley, Massachusetts and London: Newbury House Publishers, 1981). These have been paralleled in studies of Stephen Krashen “Natural Approach” and James Asher “Total Physical Response,” among others.

Teachers will notice a high number of participles in the picture series of Part One. This reflects the best biblical Hebrew and was the most basic way that people talked about the actual present in biblical times. Cf. Gen 13:15, Jer. 1:11. The *prefix* tense that some books have taught as a present tense was the polite way to ask questions in the present and usually referred to habitual actions or volitional actions when classified as present. Cf. the dialogue in Genesis 37:15-16 “What would you be looking for?” [prefix tense for polite question] “I’m looking for my brothers.” [participle for actual present] For further discussion on the participle, nominal clauses and the nuances of their word orders, see Randall Buth, “Word Order in the Verbless Clause: A Generative-Functional Approach,” in Cynthia Miller, ed., *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbraun’s, 1999) 79-108.

Some teachers may also notice that words like *bayit/vayit* and *bore<sup>ah</sup>/vore<sup>ah</sup>* do not consistently reflect whether or not a vowel precedes the word. The Hebrew Bible shows the same inconsistency, since this alternation only operates within very short phrase units. A biblical writer would be expected to approve the following mix: **בַּיִת/בָּיִת** *va/baim* in *hu va, veha-naṣar veha-naṣara baim*.

Finally, even the *vav ha-hippux* structure makes its way into this introductory picture series. It is a delightful illustration of how children would have learned the structure three thousand years ago.

# Instructions

Welcome to a doorway into the world of Biblical Hebrew. This course will help you begin to think in and with Biblical Hebrew! Each picture lesson has 100 pictures. Every picture is numbered. The number will be spoken before the words that describe the picture. The numbers will proceed from 1 to 10 and then repeat from 1-10 until all 100 pictures have been presented.

Please listen to the recording (CD 1, Track 2) while the numbers listed below are read in biblical Hebrew. They will be repeated twice and then read in series twice. Please listen to the numbers without trying to pronounce them yourself. By the end of the first two picture lessons the repetition in the lessons will be sufficient for the student to recognize the numbers one through ten.

1	1		
2	2	1 2	1 2
3	3	1 2 3	1 2 3
4	4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
5	5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6	6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
7	7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8	8	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9	9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10	10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		<b>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</b>	

You may proceed to Picture Lesson One after reading the following instructions:

1. Relax 😊 Look at each picture and listen to the recording.
2. Do not repeat or mimic outloud what you hear. Just listen and enjoy the adventure of language learning. Most pictures will be immediately understandable. Some words and some details will only become clear after several lessons.
3. Listen to each lesson completely without stopping.
4. Repeat a whole lesson at least two times with the pictures and then once without the pictures. The goal is to be able to understand 90% what is being described without needing a picture. Additional review listenings will help. Most students find four to eight listenings to be helpful and stimulating.

It is preferable to delay reading until after lesson 10. It is important to open your ears and mind, understanding the language through your hearing, before beginning to read. Learning the alphabet is a different matter. The student may begin learning the alphabet at any time but should delay

beginning the readings until all of the picture lessons have been completed through multiple listenings.

After every second lesson there will be a short quiz for you to check that you understand at least 80% of the material. If you get 8 to 10 questions correct, you may proceed to the next lesson. Even so, it is sometimes more satisfying to enjoy a review session than to rush ahead.

### **Note for adult language learners**

This method will seem adventurous and fun most of the time. There will be many times when something new is introduced and you will only partially understand what is going on. This is part of laying a good foundation for deeply learning a language. Simply accept that what you hear is appropriate for describing what you see. Focus on the *jumble of new sound* and do not try to associate an English word. One picture or one scene is insufficient to grasp the new word anyway. Because of the pictures, you will be unconsciously learning a part of the meaning, even if you only learn which part at a later time. That is how you developed such a great grasp of your first language.

You will notice that words are not always used where you might predict. You will also notice little changes taking place in some of the words. That is good. The adult learner wants to immediately stop the learning and ask “why?” A child accepts the changes. As an adult you will need to trust that the questions will be answered at the appropriate time. They will be. However, successful adult language learners know that the first answer to “why?” is “because that’s the way they do it.”

Something more important will be going on with these pictures than merely learning some words and structures in the new language. A foundation will be laid that will make further learning of the language more efficient. You may think of it as laying down primer paint before coats of finishing paint. These pictures and this method help to make the language *sticky*, so that it sticks to you and stays with you.

In Part Two of this course you will encounter other methods of language learning, including audiolingual dialogues and more traditional annotated readings and grammar explanations. But let those methods wait until you have started with this monolingual immersion through pictures. Even in Part Two it is important to spend more time with the recordings than with the explanations. This program can produce doubled efficiency, and more, in learning rates and retention.

### **Note for those who have already begun learning Biblical Hebrew through reading.**

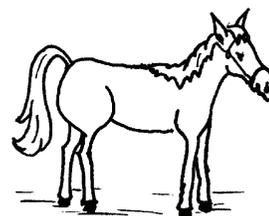
These pictures are important! Listen to them fully, at least the recommended number of times. Your whole brain will be more actively involved in the process. That is part of what will make it easier to remember words and meanings a year from now, or longer. The relationships between words and between words and various meanings will all be recorded and cross-referenced in a new way.

The most important direction is “Relax!” Do not try to think about how the word might be spelled while listening. You will have all of the opportunities necessary for correctly learning the spelling and reading at the appropriate time. Meanwhile, these pictures will develop some direct wiring in your head to facilitate the proper storage of the language. Even those with advanced reading knowledge will benefit from this re-wiring process. You will begin to feel and experience a different way of learning.

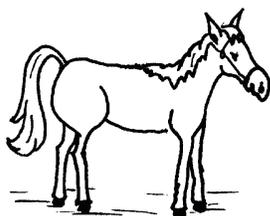
# תמונות 1 Picture Lesson 1

Recordings are on CD 1, Track 3

1



2



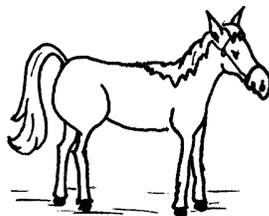
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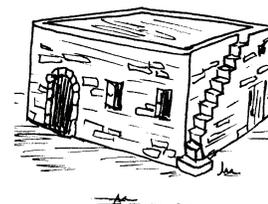
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6



7



8



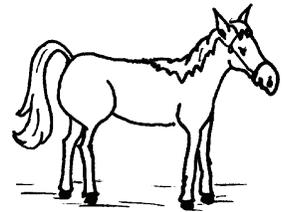
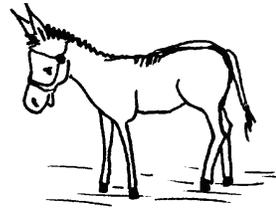
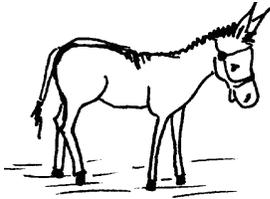
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2

1

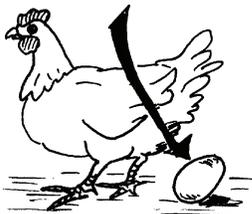
10



5

4

3



8

7

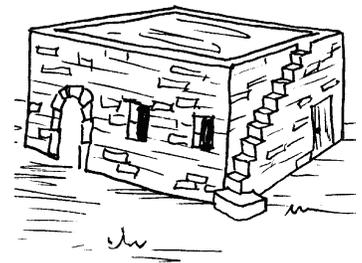
6



1

10 (20)

9

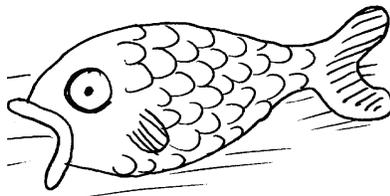
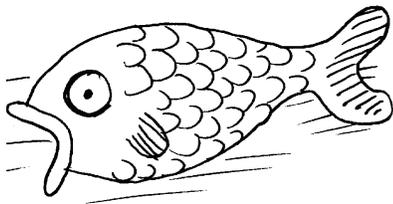


5 Pictures 1

4

3

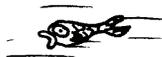
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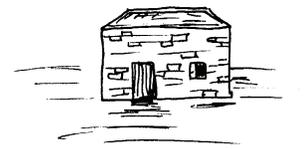
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10 (30)

9

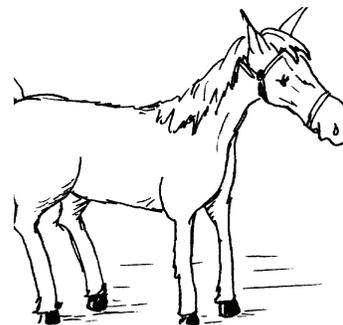
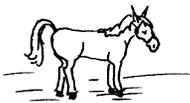
8



3

2

1



The short vowels were used when a syllable was unaccented and closed, i.e. in an unaccented syllable ending in a consonant, CVC [consonant-vowel-consonant]. An open syllable has a consonant and vowel, without a closing consonant: CV [consonant-vowel]. An open syllable in Hebrew either has a long vowel or an accented short vowel.

NOTE WELL: The symbols for the long *a* and the short *o* are the same. When the symbol [ַ] is found in a closed, unaccented syllable it is pronounced *o*. Stated another way, an *o* sound is written with ם when it is unaccented and in a closed syllable. Due to the history of the language, the long ם *a* vowel is more common than the short ם *o* vowel.

### ***Dagesh* and *begedkefet* letters**

A dot called *dagesh* is used in consonants<sup>4</sup> for two functions.

1. In general, the *dagesh* marked a lengthened consonant; it was pronounced momentarily longer. A lengthened consonant would function as a double consonant, one consonant closing a syllable and one consonant beginning the next syllable. Thus, תְּבִית *hab-báyit*, and הִלְלֵל *hil-lél*. In modern Hebrew, these lengthened consonants are not pronounced differently and they are not distinguished on the recordings in this course.<sup>5</sup> Grammar books call this *dagësh hazáq* “strong *dagesh*” or *dagësh kaflán* “doubling *dagesh*”.
2. The *dagesh* is also used with a select group of consonants to distinguish a *stop*, a hard pronunciation, from a *fricative*, a soft pronunciation. The group of consonants is ת, פ, כ, ד, ג, ב. These consonants are often called by an acronym *begedkefet* or *begadkefat*. A Basic Rule: *begedkefet* letters are soft when following a vowel and they are written without *dagesh*. When following a consonant they are hard, and written with *dagesh*.<sup>6</sup> This is an automatic process that is not related to meaning. The *dagesh* makes a difference in pronunciation on three of these consonants today. Thus, כּ, בּ and פּ with *dagesh* are pronounced as the stops *b*, *k*, *p*. On the other hand, כ, ב, and פ without *dagesh* are pronounced as soft fricatives *v*, *x*, *f*. (The symbol *x* is like German *ch*.) These three letters, כ, ב, and פ are the only *begadkefat* letters that have two pronunciations in Israeli Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> The remaining three consonants, ג, ד, ת (*g*, *d*, *t*), are always

<sup>4</sup> The dot in ם *o* and ם *u* are considered vowels and are not the *dagesh* in a consonant. There is also a dot in a final ם called *mappiq*, which marks a pronounced *h* and will be learned later.

<sup>5</sup> One verb pattern is built around a lengthened (doubled) consonant in the middle of the word, e.g., *hillel* ‘he praised’, *dilleg* ‘he jumped’, *dibber* ‘he spoke’. These are now pronounced *hi-lél*, *di-leg*, *di-ber*.

<sup>6</sup> For grammatical analysis of words it is important to learn that *begedkefet* letters receive a *dagesh* whenever beginning a word of a new phrase or when following a closed syllable, i.e., when following a consonant, not a vowel. Such a *dagesh* in a *begadkefat* letter does not represent a grammatical lengthening of the consonant, it only affects allophonic spelling rules, half of which are pronounced today. Stated from the other direction, when a *begadkefat* consonant follows a vowel within a phrase it does not receive a hardening *dagesh* (even across word boundaries within a phrase), though it *may* receive a lengthening *dagesh*. For example, in יְדַבֵּר ‘he will speak’, the ד is following a half-vowel, i.e., not a vowel-less consonant (see below under *shva*), and does not receive a *dagesh*. The בּ is also following a vowel [ַ] and might have been expected to be without *dagesh* since it is a *begadkefat* letter. However, this word has a lengthened consonant at this point so the בּ has a lengthening *dagesh* and gets pronounced as a hard *b* in spite of following a vowel. Grammatically, *ye-dab-* is analyzed as a complex, closed syllable and *-ber* is a closed syllable. Practically, for those learning to speak, יְדַבֵּר is like three syllables: *ye-da-ber*.

<sup>7</sup> In the times of the judges the *begedkefet* letters ת פ כ ג ד ב were probably all pronounced as stops, like English *b,g,d,k,p,t*. By the Second Temple period each of these stops had a corresponding fricative pronunciation when immediately following a vowel within a word or small phrase and when not lengthened by the lengthening *dagesh*. The phonetic symbols for such fricatives are *v*, *ɣ*, *ð*, *x*, *f*, *θ*. In modern Hebrew, only three of these pairs are pronounced, /b~v/, /k~x/, and /p~f/. The remaining three consonants, ת ד ג (*g*, *d*, *t*), are always pronounced hard as stops, regardless of whether the hardening *dagesh* is present or written.

pronounced hard as stops, regardless of whether the hardening *dagesh* is present or not. The *dagesh* that is related to *begeckefet* letters is called *dagesh qal* “light *dagesh*” in grammar books.

NOTE WELL: If a *begeckefet* letter follows a vowel within a word, and still has a *dagesh*, then that *dagesh* is the lengthening [doubling] *dagesh*, mentioned in point one. This will be drilled after the alphabet has been learned. For more information on *dagesh*, see pages 137-138.

## **Shva**

The symbol *shva* [ ְ ] also has two functions<sup>8</sup>.

1. The *shva* symbol [ ְ ] is placed under a consonant that closes a syllable to mark the absence of a vowel. In מַלְכוֹ *malkó*, the ל ends the first syllable and receives a *shva*.<sup>9</sup> Notice, also, that the כ which follows, has received a *dagesh*, since it is a *begadkefat* letter which follows a consonant without a vowel. A *shva* that closes a syllable is normally written when it is within a word but by convention it is not written at the end of a word. Two special cases, though, receive a written, word-final *shva*: a final *kaf* כ that has no vowel, e.g., מֶלֶךְ ‘king’, and the feminine 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular verb ending ת as in דִּבַּרְתְּ *dibbárt* ‘you *fs* spoke’.
2. *Shva* is also used at the beginning of complex syllables to mark a half-vowel. The vowel is pronounced like *e*, that is, ֶ or ֵ, but it may be slurred to the point of not being pronounced at all in rapid speech. These vocal *shva* half-vowels represent a placeholder from a vowel that has dropped out of the word for various grammatical reasons or as a historical process from an earlier stage of the language. For example, דָּבָר *davár* means ‘word, thing’ and is used independently, while דְּבָר־ *devar-* means ‘word of-’ ‘thing of-’, and is connected to a following word. In this context the word reduces to one complex, grammatical syllable and the missing vowel of the original first syllable is represented by the *shva* half-vowel. Another example, מְעַט *me’at* ‘a little bit’ is a dictionary entry with a half-vowel for a word whose first vowel dropped out before becoming standardized in biblical Hebrew. These vocal half-vowels are called *shva na’f* in Hebrew נָעֻא *na’uá* ‘moving *shva*’. The *shva* in the name itself, נְעֻא, is a ‘moving *shva*’ since it begins a syllable.

NOTE WELL: The above explanations provide a beginning analysis of the writing system. The student should be aware that being able to describe and explain the writing system is a different matter from learning to read and use the writing system. Full explanations may best be left for advanced studies. Meanwhile, the student should continue to learn to read Hebrew by proceeding to the next alphabet list!

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Thus, in Second Temple times and in the Massoretic Hebrew text, the word דֶּלֶת ‘door’ was pronounced *déleθ*. Today, it is pronounced *délet*, and will be heard like that on the recordings. As a result, the modern pronunciation can be thought of as halfway between King David’s pronunciation and the Massoretic pronunciation, 3 out of 6.

<sup>8</sup> A third usage in conjunction with the low, short vowels ַ ִ ֵ will not be discussed since the symbols ְ ִ ֵ have not been presented yet. They are a variant of the second *shva*, the half-vowel, and they also lead to an irrelevant complication at this stage between the two kinds of *shva*.

<sup>9</sup> This kind of silent *shva* is called *shva nah* in Hebrew, נָחֻא *na’uá* ‘resting *shva*’.

אלף-בית 10  
Recordings are on CD 3, Track 13

אלף-בית 9  
Recordings are on CD 3, Track 12

פָּפָּה = פָּפָּה	.1	בַּד	דָּב	.1
בַּבָּה	.2	פָּ		.2
בַּבָּה	.3	כָּגֶשׁ	פָּגֶשׁ	.3
וַיֵּשֶׁב	.4	פָּשָׂה	שָׂפַד	.4
וַיֵּשֶׁב	.5	בָּךְ		.5
כִּי	.6	כָּךְ	כָּךְ	.6
בָּתוֹ	.7	כָּכָה	כָּךְ	.7
בְּכִיתָ	.8		שָׂפַךְ	.8
וּוּוּ	.9	שָׂפַכְתִּי	שָׂפַכְתָּ	.9
הָבָה	.10	יִשְׂפַךְ	יִשְׂפַד	.10
לָבַךְ	.11	יִכְבֹּשׁ	יִכְבֹּשׁ =	.11
לְכַתֵּךְ	.12	יִפְגֹּשׁ	יִגְפֹּשׁ	.12
לְכַתּוֹ	.13	כָּפָה	הִפְךָ	.13
לְגִלְג	.14	וּשְׂפוּךְ	יִשְׂפְּכוּ	.14
לְדִלְג	.15	יִכְבֹּשׁוּ	יִשְׂפְּכוּ	.15
גּוּ	.16	הִדָּךְ		.16
גְּדָל	.17	הִלּוּךְ	הִדּוּךְ	.17
יְהִי	.18	בְּהִדָּפוֹ	בְּהִפְכוֹ	.18
יֵשֶׁב	.19	הִפְכָּתְךָ	הִפְכָּתִי	.19
יֵשְׁבָה	.20	יִלְד	יִלְךָ	.20
שְׂבִידְבִידוֹ	.21	לְכַדָּתְךָ	לְלַדָּתְךָ	.21

## Hebrew Pronunciation

So far in the course, the student has not been required to pronounce Hebrew. That will begin to change with *Living Biblical Hebrew, Introduction Part Two*. Below are some guidelines for pronunciation. These notes will help the student when trying to understand and appreciate many of the seemingly irregular sound changes that occur in Hebrew words.

Hebrew, as a Semitic language, used the tongue-root to produce many of its sounds. Please study the the mouth-throat diagram at the end of this pronunciation guide in order to know where the tongue-root is located.

The most conspicuous sounds are *šayin* and *het*. They are formed by retracting the tongue-root towards the back of the pharyngeal cavity [throat, below uvula]. These two consonants are still pronounced today in the Oriental Israeli pronunciation. *šayin* is voiced, *het* is voiceless.

However, several consonants were also pronounced with a constricted tongue root, even though such pronunciations are no longer used today. **ט, צ, ק** were actually just **ת, ס, פ** pronounced with the tongue-root retracted into a constricted pharynx at the same time. Today, **ק** and **פ** are pronounced the same, *k*. Also, **ט** and **ת** are pronounced the same, *t*. **צ** is distinguished from **ס** by using an affricate, *ts*. Today, the tongue-root is only retracted for the consonants *šayin* and *het*.

As can be imagined, pronouncing sounds with the tongue in the mouth while simultaneously retracting the tongue-root into the pharynx can cause surrounding vowels to have a slightly different sound. Many of the rules about how Hebrew words change their shapes are the result of this tongue-root phenomenon. For example, the guttural consonants **ע, ח, ה, א** have a preference for *a* vowels **א, א, א**. This preference for *a* is especially strong in *šayin* and *het*. These two consonants require so much energy to produce, relatively speaking, that they also developed the helping vowels at the end of words like **ישוע**. Such vowels are not counted in the grammar as additional syllables but are considered part of the final consonant. This may be more easily understood from the history of the language. A Second Temple name like **ישוע** did not have a final *a* vowel, only the consonant *šayin*. However, when pronouncing the *šayin*, something close to an *a* was heard, so it was added to the writing system when the vowels were recorded at the end of the first millenium CE.

## Pronunciation Tips<sup>26</sup>

1. Use *ε/e* as a rest sound and as the sound when pausing to think.

This is the sound that Israelis use and will naturally provide the correct starting point for the tongue when executing speech. Note: ‘uh’ or ‘um’ is distinctly English and non-Hebrew.

2. Vowels should be clear Spanish *i, e, a, o, u*.

There is no Hebrew sound like *ɪ* in English ‘bit’ and ‘hit’. Hebrew only has the sound of *í* in English ‘beet’, ‘heat’. There are no *y* or *w* vowel-glides to the vowel sounds *e, o*. Those vowels must be practiced to be clean, i.e., without the characteristic English tightening at the end of similar English vowels. Also, *u* is always like English ‘boot’ and never like English ‘put’.

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<sup>26</sup> An Israeli pronunciation will give the student the easiest access into further Hebrew studies. This includes working with other dialects like the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, mishnaic Hebrew and Israeli scholarly literature. An Israeli pronunciation also serves as a standard when meeting people from around the world who come from many different linguistic backgrounds.

3. Consonants made with the tip of the tongue, e.g., *t, d, n, l*.

*T, d, n, l* are regularly made with the tongue-tip slightly more forward than in English, against the back of the teeth. Hebrew does not use interdental sounds, as in English ‘the’, so the tongue is freer to move forward than in English, without ambiguity. Especially contrastive for *lamed* ל is the English *ull* sound. English “pull” has the back of the tongue bunched/tightened. Hebrew does not use that *l* but has a relaxed *l*, like the “ll” in English “pill”.

4. Hebrew *p, t, k* are spoken with less breath following the consonant.

*P, t, k* are only moderately aspirated in comparison to English, yet stronger than Spanish. The Hebrew *t* is half-way between the *t* in English ‘top’ and ‘stop’. Hold your hand to your lips to feel this difference.

5. ר *resh* is commonly made with a *uvular trill* at the beginning of a syllable.

At the end of a syllable the trill is stopped or swallowed and often not recognized by English-speaking students. NOTE WELL: a uvular trill is not like a Spanish tongue-tip trill and it is even farther back in the throat than the French velar-fricative *r*.

It often takes one to two months of practice for this sound to become relatively smooth for a language learner. If, after two months, the student simply cannot produce the sound, then a Spanish/Arabic tongue-tip trill can be used as a substitute. Practice gargling before giving up! Your mouth probably can do a gargle/trill, even if it feels strange or ridiculous at first.

6. Both *šayin* and *het* are made in the pharynx, not in the mouth. Both *šayin* and *het* are correctly produced by retracting the root of the tongue in an attempt to constrict the throat channel well below the uvula. See the mouth diagram on the following page. The *het* ח is produced without simultaneous vocal chord vibration, i.e., without voicing, in the same way that *p, t, k* are voiceless. *šayin* ש is produced with simultaneous voicing, like *b, d, g*. Notice that these sounds are quite distinctive from, and do not equal, the so-called German *ch* in ‘achtung’, or the glottal stop in ‘oh-oh’. That German *ch* sound is made at the same point in the mouth as a *k* and is not a pharyngeal sound at all. It is a soft *kaph*, *kaf rafa*, as in קף. The *pharyngeal fricative* sounds, *šayin* and *het*, are minority sounds in Israel and used by Oriental Jews. They are official for Voice of Israel announcers and are regularly heard on radio news announcements.

## 7. In general, the quality of speech is more open and hollow in Israeli Hebrew.

This last quality will sometimes give the impression of being slightly lower on a musical scale. The best learning technique is to listen carefully and practice mimicking. It can effectively be practiced at the same time as practicing tip 1 above, ע.

A person cannot practice all of the above at once. Take one at a time, work on it for a day or two while memorizing dialogues in *Living Biblical Hebrew, Introduction Part Two*. Then move on to another item. Review all items later. A significant improvement in accent should become noticeable after a couple of months.

## Index to Words and Forms

This is an alphabetical list of all the words from Picture Lessons One through Ten. The various forms of each word are collected together under their most basic form. Usually the most basic form is a singular noun or a past tense verb in the third person, masculine singular. The number after every word form is the chapter number for the first occurrence of that form. An approximate English gloss is also provided for basic words.

<p>10 וְאָרֶץ 6 הָאָרֶץ 6 וְהָאָרֶץ 10 בְּאָרֶץ 10 לְאָרֶץ woman אִשָּׁה 1 וְאִשָּׁה 1 הָאִשָּׁה 1 וְהָאִשָּׁה 7 אִשְׁתּוֹ 8 אִשְׁתִּי 7 לְאִשָּׁה 7 לְאִשְׁתּוֹ 9 וְנָשִׁים 3 הַנָּשִׁים Assyria 10 אֲשׁוּר 10 לְאֲשׁוּר that, which 9 אֲשֶׁר you (ms) 7 אַתָּה shovel, hoe 6 אַת 6 הָאֵת 6 בְּאֵת 9 בְּאֵתוֹ 9 בְּאֵתוֹ 6 אֵתִים (definite object marker) 1 אֵת 1 וְאֵת 7 אוֹתִי 7 אוֹתְךָ 7 אוֹתְךָ 3 אוֹתוֹ 4 אוֹתוֹ 3 אוֹתָהּ 4 אוֹתָם 5 אוֹתְךָ you (fs) 8 אַתְּ</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">eat</p> <p>1 אוֹכֵל 4 וְאוֹכֵל 8 וַיֹּאכַל 1 אוֹכֵלֶת 4 וְאוֹכֵלֶת 3 אוֹכְלוֹת 3 אוֹכְלִים farmer 6 אָכַר 6 הָאָכַר 9 וְהָאָכַר 6 לְאָכַר 6 הָאָכָרִים 6 לְאָכָרִים to 3 אֶל 6 וְאֶל these אֵלֶּה (see זה) mother אִם 7 אִם 7 הָאִם 7 וְהָאִם say אָמַר 7 אוֹמֵר 5 אוֹמְרֵת 9 אֹמְרֵתִי we אֲנַחְנוּ 9 אֲנַחְנוּ I אֲנִי 7 אֲנִי 7 וְאֲנִי four אָרְבַּעַה 6 וְאָרְבַּעַה 7 אָרְבַּעַת 7 וְאָרְבַּעַת long אָרוּךְ 8 אָרוּךְ 8 הָאָרוּךְ land, earth אָרֶץ 10 אָרֶץ</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">father</p> <p>7 הָאָב 7 אָבִי 7 אָבִי stone אָבֶן 6 הָאָבֶן 7 אָבָנִים 7 הָאָבָנִים 7 בְּאָבָנִים Edom אֲדוּם 10 אֲדוּם love אוֹהֵב 7 אוֹהֵבֶת one אֶחָד 6 אֶחָד 4 אֶחָת hold, grab אוֹחֶז 2 אוֹחֶזֶת after אֶחָרִי 3 אֶחָרִי 2 וְאֶחָרִי another הָאֶחָרֶת 4 הָאֶחָרֶת there isn't, is not אֵין 3 אֵין 8 אֵינוֹ 9 אֵינָהּ 6 אֵינָם 7 וְאֵין 9 וְאֵינוֹ ? where אֵיפֹה 9 אֵיפֹה man אִישׁ 1 אִישׁ 1 הָאִישׁ 4 לְאִישׁ 8 אִישִׁי 3 אֲנָשִׁים 3 הָאֲנָשִׁים</p>
	אכל	אב
		אבן
	אכר	
		אדום
		אהב
	אל	
		אחד
	אלה	
		אחז
	אם	
		אחר
	אמר	
		אחר
	אנחנו	
		אין
	אני	
		איפה
	ארבעה	
		איש
	ארוך	
		ארץ

7 גָּדַר		7 בְּנוּיָהּ		in, with	-ב
5 הִגְדֵּר		7 בָּנָה		4 בּוּ	
7 בִּגְדָר		7 בָּנָה		3 בָּהּ	
10 לְגַדָּר		8 בְּנֵתָהּ		come	בא
Galilee	גליל	7 בְּנֵתָהּ		4 בָּא	
10 הַגְּלִיל		7 בְּנוּ		4 בָּא	
10 בְּגְלִיל		owner, husband	בעל	4 בָּאָה	
10 לְגְלִיל		7 בַּעַל		5 בָּאִים	
also, too	גם	8 הַבַּעַל		6 בָּאִים	
5 גָּם		harvest grapes	בצר	10 וּבָאִים	
4 גָּם		5 בּוֹצֵר		4 בָּאוֹת	
camel	גמל	5 בּוֹצֵר		9 בָּאֲתִי	
3 גָּמַל		6 בּוֹצְרֵת		9 בָּאֲתִי	
3 הַגָּמַל		look for, request	בקש	well	באר
9 וְהַגָּמַל		7 מִבְּקֵשׁ		5 בָּאָר	
5 גָּמְלִים		5 מִבְּקֵשֶׁת		5 הַבָּאָר	
5 הַגָּמְלִים		8 בְּקֵשְׁתִּי		morning	בוקר
9 וְהַגָּמַל		9 וְאֶבְקֵשׁ		10 בְּבוֹקֵר	
vine	גפן	8 וַיִּבְקֵשׁ		young man	בחור
5 גָּפָן		9 לְבִקֵּשׁ		6 בְּחֹר	
8 הַגָּפָן		iron	ברזל	6 הַבְּחֹר	
5 גָּפְנִים		10 בְּרִזַּל		between	בין
5 בְּגָפְנִים		10 וּבְרִזַּל		5 בֵּין	
6 גָּפְנִים		run away, flee	ברח	5 וּבֵין	
6 הַגָּפְנִים		9 בּוֹרַחַ		egg	ביצה
winepress	גת	8 וּבוֹרַחַ		1 גֵּיִצָּה	
5 הַגָּת		9 בּוֹרַחַת		3 גֵּיִצָּה	
fish	דג	9 בְּרַחַה		2 בְּבִיִּצָּה	
1 דָּג		meat, flesh	בשר	1 וּבִיִּצָּה	
1 הַדָּג		1 בֶּשֶׂר		1 הַבִּיִּצָּה	
2 וְדָג		1 הַבֶּשֶׂר		1 וְהַבִּיִּצָּה	
8 וְדָגִים		daughter	בת	house	בית
south	דרום	7 בַּת		1 בֵּית	
10 מִדְּרוֹם		7 הַבַּת		1 הַבֵּית	
step on, trample	דָּרַךְ	7 בְּתִי		5 לְבֵית	
6 דֹרַךְ		7 בְּתֶךָ		10 בְּתִים	
7 דּוֹרְכֵת		8 בְּתוֹ		10 בְּתִים	
6 דּוֹרְכִים		7 הַבְּנוֹת		10 הַבְּתִים	
6 דּוֹרְכִים		7 בְּנוֹת		10 לְבְּתִים	
6 וְדּוֹרְכִים		high, tall	גבוה	cry, weep	בכה
way, road	דָּרַךְ	10 גְּבוּהָ		4 בּוֹכָה	
8 דָּרַךְ		big	גדול	son	בן
8 בְּדָרַךְ		6 גְּדוּל		7 בֵּן	
is it? (question marker)	-ה	1 הַגְּדוּל		7 בָּנִים	
7 (הַשְּׁלוֹם ?)		2 גְּדוּלָּה.		7 הַבָּנִים	
the	-ה	1 הַגְּדוּלָּה		build	בנה
1 (הַסּוֹס)		6 גְּדוּלִים		7 בּוֹנָה	
1 (הָאִישׁ)		10 גְּדוּלוֹת		7 בּוֹנָה	
7 (הַחֵתָן)		fence, wall	גדר	7 בּוֹנִים	
		5 גָּדַר		7 בְּנוִי	