

THE VOWELS OF ISRAELI HEBREW אִתְּךָ 1.5



Use with Software Chapter 1:2 “The Vowel Symbols”



Before we continue learning the letters of the Alphabet, let's take a look at the vowels.

"The Vowels are Tense". In general it can be said that Hebrew vowels are "tense" i.e., they are pronounced with the muscles of the mouth held firmly and without the tendency to "glide" from one vowel to another that is common in American English. Consider the English word *real* /ree-ahl/. Many of us pronounce two separate vowels in that word. An Israeli would say /rihl/.

Hebrew has five vowel sounds:

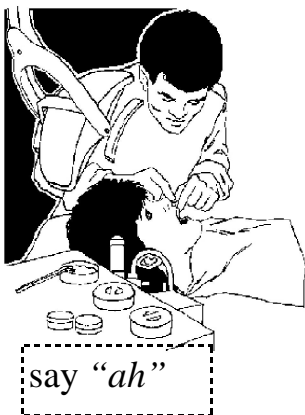
/ah/ as in "father"

/eh/ **in between** the ai of "bait" and the e of bet

/ih/ the sound which **is between** the i of bit and the ee of beet. At the end of a word, especially where there is a /yood/ at the end of the word, or in a stressed syllable, the sound will be more like /ee/ and we will write /i/ rather than /ih/ to indicate that it is closer to /ee/.

/oh/ as in "shore"

/oo/ the sound which **is between** the u of "put" and the oo of "boot".



Say "ah" אִתְּךָ 1.5.1

If a Hebrew letter doesn't have the symbol ' or | to its left... and doesn't have an "/eh/" vowel under it, read it as a consonant followed by the vowel /ah/.

/bah/ = בּ /shah/ = שׁ /rah/ = רּ

Reading hint: But in beginners' texts, Hebrew poetry or Hebrew prayer books, the vowel symbols for the /ah/ sound are included under a consonantal letter.

For example: בַּ שָׁ רַּ בֶּ שֶׁ רֶּ

Practice writing these letters: Say the sound the letters make as you write them. **פ ר א א ם ע**



1.5.2 ניקוז - /oh/

Remember: When a Hebrew syllable contains the vowel sound /oh/, then the vowel sound /oh/ is usually indicated by the letter *vahv* ן (in Modern Hebrew) written to the left of the consonant. Thus /sh/ ע + the letter /vahv/ ן = /shoh/ ןע

For example:

/roh/ = ר /shoh/ = רע /boh/ = בר

Write the syllable /roh/ _____ ← start here

Write the syllable /shoh/ _____ ← start here

Write the syllable /boh/ _____ ← start here



When nikkus is used the vowel sound /oh/ can also be indicated by a small dot at the top left side of a letter. For example: רה, בה

Practice reading single syllable words.

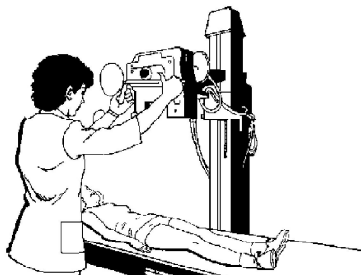
בר שר רס בור שור רה שה שפ



1.5.3 ניקוז - /oo/

The vowel sound /oo/ is indicated by the letter *vahv* ן with a dot to its left ן placed after the consonant. Thus /sh/ ע + a dotted *vahv* ן = /shoo/ ען.

/shoo/ = ען




Here's a way to remember that the /vahv/ can stand for the sound /oo/

Remember, the symbol ן is placed to the left of the letter. Note the **dot** is placed above its mid-point.

For example:

roo = רו shoo = שׁוּ boo = בוּ

Write the syllable "roo" _____  ← start here

Write the syllable "shoo" _____ ← start here

Write the syllable "boo" _____ ← start here

eh eh eh ! .. ם׃ 1.5.4

The vowel sound /eh/ is indicated by either two or three dots placed under the consonant.

Both עֶ and עֵ are pronounced /sheh/. The /eh/ sound is mid-way between the /ai/ of the English word *pain* and the /e/ of *pen*.

Here are the vowel symbols (nikkud) for the sound of /eh/



JUST TWO OR THREE DOTS - IT'S ALL THE SAME TO ME

בֶּ בֵּ בִּ – beh beh beh ! 

These dots are omitted when nikkud is not used.

Write the word "Name" _____  /shehm/ פֵּי



Write the word _____ /shehl/ פֶּי


Write the word _____ /lehv/ בִּי

Write the word _____ /shehv/ בֵּי

The letter mehm = /m/ מ 1.5.5

We are adding another letter before we learn more vowels.

Practice writing mehm _____  מ

[See Demo](#) 

Write the word _____ /sheh-mesh/ מֵשׁ

Write the word _____ /mool/ מוּל

The Shva ם 1.5.6 ניקוד:

Here's a bright idea for noting when there is no vowel at all: Two dots placed vertically under a letter indicate the lack of a vowel. When you see a *shva* / ː / just pronounce the letter that is above it.



Write the following examples, with the /shva/:

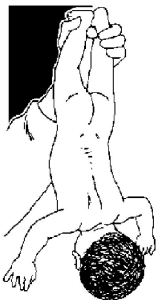
_____ /bro/ ברו
 _____ /shvoo/ שבו
 _____ /sham-roo/ שמו



When you see **two dots** (like a colon) below a letter at the end of a syllable, just pronounce the sound of the letter itself: **For example:** /shav-roo/ שברו

Write the following examples of words with the /shva/:

_____ /shav-roo/ שברו
 _____ /sham-roo/ שמו



The sound of /ih/ קריאה 1.5.7

"ih" – ' 1.5.7.1

The use of *yood* ' to indicate the vowel sound /ih/. For example: song -



/shih/ שיר. This short little letter has two jobs. The ׳ is the Hebrew symbol for the consonantal sound of /y/ (to be taught later). However, the symbol ' placed to the left of a consonant is also used to indicate the vowel sound /ih/ or /i/.



Write

MY NAME IS _____ /shmee/ שמע



Write the name "Mira" _____ מירה

"My name is Mira." _____



שְׁמִי מִירָה!

- Thus a consonant, for example /sh/ + (followed by) the letter yood = /shih/ - 'ע is placed to the left of the letter א = א' /bih/. In the word עיר the ע is followed by the letter /yood/ ' to indicate that the vowel for the ע is /ih/. So עיר is read - /shihr/.

Now write the Hebrew word for song. _____ ע'ר

1.5.8 תרגילי קריאה - These exercises may be done as group work or individually

Circle the segment that is the exact transliteration of the Hebrew. The focus is on establishing symbol-sound identification rather than on meaning.



הכאן שר ע'ר

- | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| a. rohsh | b. sheer | c. shoor | d. shohr | 1. ע'ר |
| a. boor | b. bohr | c. voor | d. vohr | 2. ב'ור |
| a. bee | b. boh | c. voh | d. boo | 3. ב'י |
| a. reesh | b. dohsh | c. roosh | d. rohsh | 4. רוש |
| a. boosh | b. voosh | c. bohsh | d. vohsh | 5. ב'וש |



1.5.9 צבוצב בקבוצות "PUZZLER" GROUP WORK

Draw a line matching these Hebrew words with their phonetic transcriptions.

- | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| /rihr/ | /bihr/. | 2. ב'ור | 1. ע'ר |
| /shar/ | /shihr/ | 4. ע'ר | 3. ב'יר |
| /shoov/ | /boor/ | 6. ע'נה | 5. ר'ר |



1.5.9.1 ע' /ih/- /lih/

- There is another symbol used for the sound /ih/, a single dot* that is placed below the consonant. For example: /bih/- בֿ, /lih/- לֿ, /mih/- מֿ. We will use this symbol most frequently to signal the /ih/ vowel of a prefix. ע'מור

Now write the Hebrew word /lihsh-mohr/. _____ ע'מור

* This dot is omitted when nikkud is not used.