

## THE VOWELS OF ISRAELI HEBREW :ניקוד: 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:

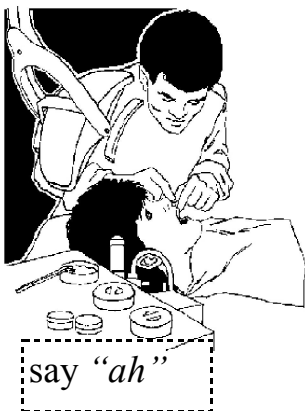
/ah/ as in "father"

/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" :ניקוד: 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/ = ב    /shah/ = ש    /rah/ = ר

**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:

לְ שׁ בַּ רַ

Practice writing these letters: Say the sound the letters make as you write them. ש ל ב ב ר ם



1.5.2 ניקוד: ן - /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/ ש + the letter /vahv/ ן = /shoh/ שו

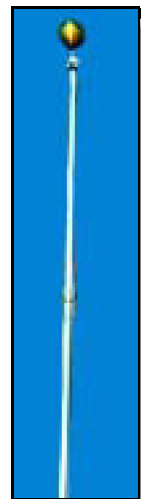
For example:

/roh/ = רו /shoh/ = שו /boh/ = בו

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: בר, רב

Practice reading single syllable words.

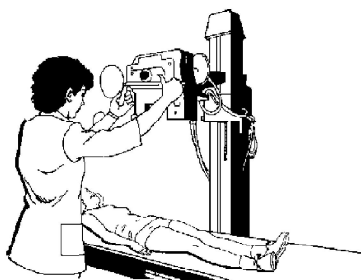
בר שר רם בור שור רב שב לש



1.5.3 ניקוד: ן - /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/ ש + a dotted *vahv* ן = /shoo/ שן .

/shoo/ = שן



Here's a way to remember that the *vahv* ן 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 = רוּ      shoo = שׁוּ      boo = בוּ

Write the syllable "roo" \_\_\_\_\_  ← start here

Write the syllable "shoo" \_\_\_\_\_ ← start here

Write the syllable "boo" \_\_\_\_\_ ← start here

### 1.5.4 ניקוד: eh eh eh ! ..

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

Both שׁ and שׂ 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


שׂ שׁ שׂ – eh eh eh !

These dots are omitted when nikkud is not used.

Write the word "Name" \_\_\_\_\_  /shehm/ שֵׁם 

Write the word \_\_\_\_\_ /shehl/ שֵׁל

Write the word \_\_\_\_\_ /lehv/ לֵב

Write the word \_\_\_\_\_ /shehv/ שֵׁב 

### 1.5.5 The letter mehm = /m/ מ

We are adding another letter before we learn more vowels.

Practice writing mehm \_\_\_\_\_  מ

See Software Chapter 1:3 for a writing demonstration

Write the word \_\_\_\_\_ /sheh-mehsh/ שְׁמֵשׁ

Write the word \_\_\_\_\_ /mool/ מוּל

### 1.5.6 ניקוד: שׁ The Shva

**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/ בְּרוּ

\_\_\_\_\_ /shvoo/ שְׁבוּ

\_\_\_\_\_ /sham-roo/ שְׁמְרוּ

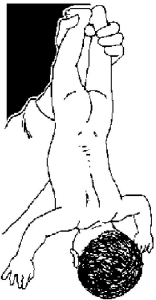


When you see **two dots** (like a colon) below a letter at the end of a syllable, just pronounce the sound of the letter itself: **For example:** /shav-roo/ שְׁבָרוּ

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

\_\_\_\_\_ /shav-roo/ שְׁבָרוּ

\_\_\_\_\_ /sham-roo/ שְׁמָרוּ



### 1.5.7 קריאה: ih The sound of

1.5.7.1 - "ih" י

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



/shihr/ שִׁיר . This short little letter has two jobs. The י is the Hebrew

symbol for the consonantal sound of /y/ (to be taught later). However, the symbol י placed to the left of a consonant is also used to indicate the vowel sound /ih/ or /i/.

**Write**

MY NAME IS .... \_\_\_\_\_ /shmee/ שְׁמִי

Write the name "Mira" \_\_\_\_\_ מִירָה

"My name is Mira." \_\_\_\_\_



שלום, שְׁמִי מִירָה!



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

Now write the Hebrew word for *song*. \_\_\_\_\_ שיר

**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.



הוא שר שיר

- |          |          |          |          |        |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| a. rohsh | b. sheer | c. shoor | d. shohr | 1. שור |
| a. boor  | b. bohr  | c. voo   | d. vohr  | 2. בור |
| a. bee   | b. boh   | c. voh   | d. boo   | 3. בי  |
| a. reesh | b. dohsh | c. roosh | d. rohsh | 4. רוש |
| a. boosh | b. voosh | c. bohsh | d. vohsh | 5. בוש |



**1.5.9 עבודה בקבוצות: "PUZZLER" GROUP WORK**

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

- |         |        |         |        |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| /rihr/  | 4. בור | /bihr/. | 1. שיר |
| /shar/  | 5. שר  | /shihr/ | 2. ביר |
| /shoov/ | 6. שוב | /boor/  | 3. ריר |



**1.5.9.1 ל /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. לשמור

Now write the Hebrew word /lihsh-mohr/. \_\_\_\_\_ לשמור



\* This dot is omitted when nikkud is not used.