

LEARN BIBLICAL HEBREW

2nd Edition

John H. Dobson



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*Dedicated to my wife Heather
with thanks for fifteen years of
unfailing encouragement and support*

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FOREWORD

I am excited by the publication of *Learn Biblical Hebrew*. I have followed its development with growing interest. It opens a doorway into the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible is one of the world's greatest pieces of literature. It appeals to a wide variety of people who want to read and understand it for very different reasons. Most people first meet it in one of its many modern translations, but a comparison of two or more of these quickly reveals the fact that no translation can ever convey the full meaning of a text in a different language. To understand it fully and to enjoy the skill of its poets, teachers, and prophets, one needs to learn the language in which it is written. John Dobson's book offers a new and effective way of learning. *Learn Biblical Hebrew* has been worked out over the last ten years in the context of a great deal of practical experiment and experience of teaching groups of beginners. It has proved to be an effective help for people across a wide range of ages and cultures.

John Dobson is singularly well equipped to carry out this task of making Hebrew understandable and enjoyable. Like many students he found the initial learning of Hebrew difficult and discouraging. This experience has given him a great desire to make learning easier for others. His background is that of a classical scholar trained at Merton College, Oxford, who later learned the Lugbara language in Uganda. He has approached Hebrew with the careful understanding of someone trained in language study. He has also had extensive experience of language teaching in Africa as well as in Europe. He has found a way of introducing Hebrew that gives people confidence to read actual passages of the Hebrew Bible from an early stage. One group of students in Moscow, for instance, learned the basics of Hebrew from lessons 1–17 and read the whole of Jonah in the course of only twelve days!

The book makes expert use of many of the techniques of modern language teaching, subtly modified to suit the task of learning an essentially written language. Its careful structuring of grammatical forms and vocabulary to build up easy familiarity through repetition goes a long way to ease the tedium that can so easily discourage a beginner.

Another unusual and excellent feature of this course is the amount of attention given throughout, but particularly in the later lessons, to the wide range of meanings of words, grammatical forms, and constructions. The importance of allowing the context of each passage to determine its meaning is brought out by a wide variety of illustrations from the biblical text, systematically grouped to give a comprehensive coverage of each point.

In the later lessons there is a stimulating introduction to Hebrew poetry, as well as an interesting section on idiomatic expressions. Much of the material goes beyond what is offered in usual grammars for beginners. It corresponds to what might be given by an enterprising college teacher in a second year class. The wealth of biblical material enhances the students' understanding and appreciation of the language, and builds up their confidence in reading it.

As one who for some years taught biblical Hebrew to theological students in a British university, using at different times three teaching grammars, I should have welcomed and eagerly used this course had it been available to me at the time. Even students trying to learn biblical Hebrew on their own, without a tutor, will have a better chance of mastering it with this course than with any other known to me.

I count it a privilege to have been invited to contribute this preface. I commend the course to teachers and students without reservation.

Anthony Gelston
Emeritus Reader in Theology
University of Durham, UK

PREFACE

Welcome to *Learn Biblical Hebrew*

The books of the Hebrew Bible are a shared inheritance for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. From them people have learned to believe in one God who is the creator of all that exists. They contain passionate pleas for justice and for the liberation of the oppressed. They introduce us to some of the world's greatest poetry and songs—and some of its deepest sorrows.

Unfortunately, the treasures of these books are partly hidden from us because they are written in Hebrew. Fortunately, Hebrew is a language one can learn to read quite quickly.

Learn Biblical Hebrew is designed to enable you to read biblical Hebrew, to understand its structure, to build a basic vocabulary by reading words in meaningful passages, hearing them on the audio CD and using them in games and activities, and to reflect on ways of translating Hebrew. An audio CD to accompany these lessons is provided with this book.

Because Hebrew is a very different language, an effort is made not to confine it too strictly within a net of English grammatical terms. It may be best to work through the whole course at least once before consulting other books. In this way confidence in reading Hebrew will be built up before more technical studies are undertaken.

Enjoy your learning and take pleasure in your progress.

How to use *Learn Biblical Hebrew*

Learn Biblical Hebrew has been structured so that you can study it on your own, in a group or with a teacher. Many of the Hebrew sentences and passages are written with an English translation beside them. This means that you can make progress without any fear of making serious mistakes.

Learn Biblical Hebrew is also a useful textbook for teaching extension courses as well as residential courses and regular classes.

You will find helpful further guidelines in the appendix on 'Teaching Biblical Hebrew' (p373).

Preparation for studying a lesson

From lesson 2 onwards use the audio CD to review the lesson you have recently done and to listen to the key parts of the next two lessons you will be studying. Look at the wordsearch at the end of the last lesson you did, and the one at the end of the lesson you are going to study.

Studying the lesson

Read each section, looking at the English and the Hebrew. Then cover the English column. Read the Hebrew. After each sentence, uncover the English to check that you have arrived at a similar meaning. If you come across a Hebrew word you cannot remember, read the whole sentence. If this does not provide a clue to its meaning, uncover the check column immediately to find out its meaning. Highlight the word. After each lesson, later in the day or on the next day, do the activations.

Move forward as fast as you can. If questions arise in your mind, you will usually find an answer later in the course. Press ahead!

Note that after many of the grammatical terms used in the text, I have added, in brackets, the most common abbreviations used. Many terms are explained in the glossary at the end of the book.

Progress

If you do three lessons a week, you will complete the course in about two months. At one lesson a week it takes only six months. It is probably best to work through the whole course once before you attempt to *write* words in Hebrew.

Using the audio CD

Listening is a very important part of language learning. When we are very young, we listen to our parents saying, ‘Mummy’ and ‘Daddy’ many times before we begin to say ‘Mummy’ and ‘Daddy’. The audio CD helps you to *listen* to most of the Hebrew in lessons 1–13, usually with an English translation read just before the Hebrew.

The audio CD is an important part of the course. As you listen, you will learn.

Use the audio CD to revise each lesson from 1 to 13. Sit and *listen* to the audio CD. Then look at the book and see if you can read the Hebrew while you listen. Use your finger or a pointer to help your eyes focus on the words. Do not be worried if at first you cannot read Hebrew words as quickly as they are spoken on the audio CD. You will gain fluency with practice.

Use the audio CD to prepare each lesson. *Listen* to the CD before you

begin to study the lesson. You do not need to try to learn anything. The act of listening attentively will help your brain to begin to gather information that will make the lesson easier when you begin to study it.

When you listen to the instructions on the audio CD, you will sometimes hear the words, ‘Listen as people speak.’ this is to alert you to the fact that *some* sentences in the exercises have a structure more typical of spoken Hebrew, whether prose or poetry, than of written sections of prose that record the development of action in a narrative.

Publisher’s note: Previous printings of *Learn Biblical Hebrew* included a CD-ROM containing audio files to enhance the learning experience. This paperback edition no longer includes an audio CD. The audio files are now available online at <http://bakeracademic.com/LearnHebrew/esources>. References to the CD remain in the book. Readers are advised to substitute “website” whenever they see “audio CD” in the book.

Some useful books

Dictionaries and Lexicons

Davidson, B. *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1984

Holladay, W. A. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972

Langenscheidt. *Pocket Hebrew Dictionary to the Old Testament*. 1988

Grammar

Waltke, B. K., and M. O’Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990

Textual Criticism

Tov, E. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992

Hebrew Poetry and Narrative

Alter, R. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1983

Alter, R. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1987

Kugel, J. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981/
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998

Watson, W. G. E. *Classical Hebrew Poetry*. Sheffield Academic Press, 1995

Wendland, E. R. *Analyzing the Psalms*. Dallas, Texas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1998

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I thank SIL (British branch) for opportunities to teach; Rina Hazony for her enthusiastic interest; Derek Kidner who guided my first steps in Hebrew; and Anthony Gelston who has so willingly contributed the Foreword. My thanks also to Pieter Kwant and his team at Piquant for preparing this second edition. I am grateful to Dr Robert Stallman for checking the new material in this edition, and to him and to Rev John Job for help with proofreading.

Thanks to those teachers who have been very keen to study my teaching methods—especially to Dr Robert Stallman of Northwest University, Kirkland, Seattle and to the Rev Justus Mbogo of St Andrews College, Kabare, Kenya who have travelled to the UK to observe my courses and who report new enthusiasm from their classes. My thanks also to the Bible Society of Kenya and the Bible Society of Pakistan who have given me the opportunity to run courses for their Bible translators, and to the Rev Jerald Mall in Karachi who has shown such a keen interest in my books and teaching methods and who hopes to translate them into Urdu, and to Dr Victor Zinkuratire of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa who greeted the appearance of *Learn Biblical Hebrew* with enormous joy.

To you all תודה

John H. Dobson

INTRODUCTION TO LESSONS 1–3

Hebrew we may already know

- (a) Hallelujah! Amen. Cherub, cherubim. Seraph, seraphim
Hallel—praise! *Amen*—truly, so be it. *Cherub*—a heavenly being. *Seraph*—a heavenly being (a burning bright one). *Cherubim* and *seraphim* mean there is more than one, so we already know one indicator that a Hebrew word is plural.
- (b) Ben and Bath
Ben Hadad means *Son* of Hadad. *Bath* Sheba is *Daughter* of Sheba.
- (c) Hebrew names give us a clue to several words:
Nathan (*nātān*): Giver (*nātān* ‘he gave’) (*ā* is a long *a*)
Michael (*mîḵāʔēl* [*Mee-kā-ʔēl*): Who is like God (*kā* ‘like’, *ʔēl* ‘God’)
Ishmael (*yîšmāʔēl*): Let God hear (*ʔēl* ‘God’, *yîšmā* [*yishmā*] ‘let him hear’)
Emmanuel (*ʿimmānû ʔēl*): God is with us (*ʔēl* ‘God’, *ʿimmānû* ‘with us’).
- (d) Matthew 27:46 *Ēli, Ēli, lāmā ...* : My God, my God, why ... ?
Ēl means ‘God’. *Ēli* means ‘my God’. You can see that an added *i* indicates ‘my’.

We already hold in our hands some important keys to unlock Hebrew.

Lessons 1–3

In Lesson 1 you will learn to read Hebrew letters and some Hebrew words. You will read Deuteronomy 6:4.

In Lesson 2 you will read Genesis 1:1 and begin to see the structure of Hebrew sentences and narrative.

In Lesson 3 you will learn, ‘to me, to you, to him, to her’ and ‘to us, to you, to them.’ You will notice some ways that Hebrew sentences are linked together.

So in about four hours you will have taken some important steps along the road towards learning to read Hebrew.

שמע ישראל listen, Israel

1.1 Right to left ←

Hebrew is read from right to left ←

Here is an English sentence written from right to left:

MIAM IXAT A MA I ←

When you see a Hebrew word, read it from the right end!

Note:

- (a) ‘Ben’ is Hebrew for ‘son of’. It begins with ב ‘b’. Notice the ב in בן. The short ‘e’ sound is shown by ם under the ב
- (b) ‘Bat’ or ‘Bath’ is ‘daughter of’. It ends with ת ‘t’ or ‘th’. Notice the ת in בת. The short ‘a’ sound is shown by ך under the ב
- (c) ‘Melekh’ is Hebrew for ‘king’. Notice מ ‘m’ and ך ‘l’ and ך ‘kh’ in מלך

In this lesson you will find some guidelines for pronouncing words in biblical Hebrew. They are not rules. In different places and in different ages there have been varieties of pronunciation. We have already seen that ת may be pronounced as ‘t’ or ‘th’.

If you work with a teacher, it will be best to copy the teacher’s way of pronouncing Hebrew. If you are working on your own, use the pronunciation on the audio CD. However, if you know some modern Hebrew, you may want to pronounce your biblical Hebrew in a way that is more like modern Hebrew.

1.2 Vowels and consonants

In English, the letters a, e, i, o, and u are called vowels. Other letters are called consonants: b, c, d, f, and g are consonants. ‘Y’ may be a vowel, as in ‘by’, or a consonant, as in ‘you’.

When the biblical books were first written in Hebrew, it was the custom to write only the consonants. Without vowels this sentence would be:

WHN TH BBLCL BKS WR FRST WRTTN N HBRW
T WS TH CSTM T WRT NL TH CNSNNTS

Later on, some Hebrew scribes used the letters י 'y' and ו 'w' to indicate some vowels. The next stage was to make marks under or over each consonant to show what vowel sound followed each consonant. In 1.1

we saw בֵּן [ben], in which ם under the ב is a short e

בַּת [bat], in which ם under the ב is a short a

and מֶלֶךְ [melekh], in which a short e is under מ 'm' and ל 'l'.

In Hebrew words, almost every syllable begins with a consonant. מֶלֶךְ is pronounced *me-lekh*, and not *mel-ekh*.

1.3 Reading Hebrew words

In this lesson we shall learn to read Hebrew words. To help us to learn quickly we shall, to begin with, use groups of Hebrew letters that sound something like English words. These groups of letters are not Hebrew words. But some groups will represent Hebrew words; and after the sound has been made, they will be repeated with an English meaning beside them. This will enable you to *read* some real Hebrew words. They are a reading exercise—do not spend any time trying to learn their meanings. You will learn the meanings of words when you see them in meaningful contexts as you go on through the course.

1.4 The Hebrew letters ב ג ד ה ו ז ח

and the vowel signs ם (a), ם (e), ם (i) with the letter ב b

Read these groups of Hebrew letters noting the equivalent sounds in English. A short a or e will be written a or e; a long a or e will be written as ā or ē.

ב b as in *bell*

Read Hebrew ←

ג g as in *gate*

ד d as in *door*

בג bag

גב gab

בּ ba ם = a

בבּ dab

בבּבּ bad

a as in *bat*

בבּבּ dag

בבּבּבּ gad

ה h as in *heave*

הג hag

הה had

(often silent at the end of a word)

בהּ ba

דהּ da

בּ be ם = e
e as in *pet*

בֵּג beg	דָּד dad
הֵד hed	בֵּד bed
הַד had	גַּד gad
דָּד ded	בַּד bad

וּ w as in *well*
In modern Hebrew, this letter is often pronounced 'v'

וֵד wed, ved	וַג wag, vag
וֵב web, veb	דֵּוּד dewed, deved

זּ z as in *zeal*

זֵד zed	בֵּז bez
הַג hag	הַז haz
וֵז wez, vez	זֵה ze
	זֶה 'this'

בּי bi ם = i
i as in *pit*

הֵד hid	דָּז daz
הִז hiz	דִּג dig
הַג hag	וִז wiz, viz
בֵּג big	וַג wig, vig
בֵּג beg	הַז haz

חּ h as in *loch*
(like ch in German *ach* with a guttural sound)

חַג ḥag	חַד ḥad
חִז ḥiz	חַד ḥad
חִז ḥiz	חֶד ḥed
וֵחּ wed, ved	חִג ḥig

חּ -aḥ When חּ ends a word, חּ is pronounced aḥ and not ḥa

You can now read one third of the Hebrew alphabet:

בּ b	דּ d	גּ g	הּ h	וּ w [v]	זּ z	חּ ḥ
- a	ׁ e	ׂ i				

When **ב** **ג** and **ד** do not have a dot in them, their sounds are softer. In the transliteration, a line below or above an English letter indicates the softening:

ב <i>b</i>	ב <i>b̄</i> as in <i>over</i>	הב <i>hab̄</i>
ד <i>d</i>	ד <i>d̄</i> as in <i>food</i>	דִּבְרֵךְ <i>dib̄id̄</i>
ג <i>g</i>	ג <i>ḡ</i> as in <i>gate</i>	בַּג <i>baḡ</i>

As we go on you will notice a similar softening in:

כ <i>k</i>	כ <i>k̄</i> as in <i>Bach</i>
פ <i>p</i>	פ <i>p̄</i> as in <i>awf̄ul</i>
ת <i>t</i>	ת <i>t̄</i> as in <i>foot</i>

Note that in biblical Hebrew **ד** was probably pronounced as a soft dh rather like the ‘th’ in ‘rather’; and **ת** rather like the ‘th’ in ‘think’.

1.5 The Hebrew letters **ט** **כ** **ל** and the vowel signs **ָ** and **ִ**.

ט <i>t̄</i> as in <i>tip</i>	חֵט <i>hīṭ</i>	בַּט <i>baṭ, vaṭ</i>	חֵט <i>hīṭ</i>
	חַט <i>haṭ</i>	בַּט <i>baṭ</i>	טַג <i>ṭaḡ</i>
	טִז <i>ṭiz</i>	בֶּט <i>beṭ, veṭ</i>	דִּב <i>dib, div</i>
	וִט <i>wīṭ, vīṭ</i>	טִיט <i>ṭīṭ</i>	דַּד <i>daḏ</i>

בָּ <i>bā</i> ָ = <i>ā</i> <i>ā</i> as in <i>father</i> (The modern pronunciation is shorter.)	בָּד <i>bād</i>	גָּב <i>gāb</i>	הָזָד <i>hazād</i>
	בַּד <i>baḏ</i>	בַּט <i>bāṭ</i>	וִזָּד <i>wizād,</i> <i>vizād</i>
	חָט <i>hāt</i>	וֶט <i>wet, vet</i>	טָגֶט <i>tāḡeṭ</i>
	חַט <i>haṭ</i>	זָב <i>zāb, zāv</i>	חַט <i>hāt</i>
	וָ <i>wāw, vāv</i>	חַג <i>haḡ</i>	בַּטַּח <i>bāṭaḥ</i>
	וּ the letter ו	חַג ‘festival, feast’	בַּטַּח ‘he trusted...’

י y as in <i>yellow</i>	יֵט <i>yet</i>	יָד <i>yād</i>	וְטֵד <i>wetēd, vetēd</i>
	חַי <i>hai</i>	יָד <i>yād</i>	חַיָּה <i>hāyā</i>
	חַי 'alive'	יָד 'hand'	חַיָּה 'he was, it was...'
בִּי <i>bî</i> י = î î as in <i>machine</i>	בִּי <i>bî</i>	גִּיד <i>gîd</i>	טִיט <i>tît</i>
	בִּי 'in me'	גִּיד 'sinew'	טִיט 'mud'
כ k as in <i>king</i>	כַּט <i>kat</i>	כָּכִי <i>kākî</i>	יָךְ <i>yak</i>
כַּ k as in <i>Bach</i>	כָּט <i>kāt</i>	כַּדִּי <i>kaddî</i>	טִיךְ <i>tik</i>
ךְ -k (last letter of a word)	כִּיךְ <i>kik</i>	בָּכָה <i>bākā</i>	חִיךְ <i>hik</i>
	כַּד <i>kad</i>	בָּךְ <i>bāk</i>	כִּי <i>kî</i>
	כַּד 'bucket, jar'	בָּךְ 'in you' בָּכָה 'he wept...'	כִּי 'because...'
ל l as in <i>liner</i>	כִּל <i>kil</i>	לָךְ <i>lak</i>	הֵל <i>hel</i>
	לַדִּי <i>ladî</i>	לָךְ <i>lāk</i>	לִי <i>lî</i>
	טַל <i>tal</i>	לַיִל <i>layil</i>	בָּבֶל <i>bābel</i>
	טַל 'mist'	לַיִל 'night' לָךְ 'to you'	בָּבֶל 'Babel, Babylon' לִי 'to me'
מ m as in <i>mail</i>	מֵם <i>mem</i>	מַד <i>mad</i>	זִם <i>zim</i>
ם -m (last letter of a word)	מִי <i>mî</i>	מָה <i>mā</i>	גַּמָּל <i>gāmāl</i>
	מֶלֶךְ <i>melek</i>	דָּם <i>dām</i>	לֶחֶם <i>lehem</i>
	מִי 'who?'	מָה 'what?'	גַּמָּל 'camel'
	מֶלֶךְ 'king'	דָּם 'blood'	לֶחֶם 'bread'

You can now read half the Hebrew alphabet! You have read:

בָּבֶלֶל	'Babylon'	גָּמֵל	'camel'
בָּטַח	'he trusts'	דָּם	'blood'
בִּי	'in me'	הָיָה	'he was'
בְּךָ	'in you'	זֶה	'this'
בָּכָה	'he wept'	חַג	'festival'
בָּיִד	'sinew'	חֵט	'mud'

חַי	'alive'	לִי	'to me'
חַל	'mist'	לַיָּל	'night'
יָד	'hand'	לְךָ	'to you'
כָּד	'bucket'	מָה	'what?'
כִּי	'because'	מִי	'who?'
לֶחֶם	'bread'	מֶלֶךְ	'king'

There are five letters which have a different form when they come at the end of a word. You have seen יָ -*k* and מַ -*m*. Note the others as you come to them in 1.7–8:

Beginning or middle of a word	End of a word
כַּ <i>k</i>	כֶּ - <i>k</i>
מַ <i>m</i>	מֶ - <i>m</i>
נַ <i>n</i>	נֶ - <i>n</i>
פַּ [f]	פֶּ - <i>p</i>
צַ [ts]	צֶ - <i>s</i>

1.6 אֵ Aleph

The letter Aleph is not sounded in the same sort of way that other consonants are. It indicates a momentary stopping of the flow of breath—it is a glottal stop. It is like the tiny pause in the middle of the word 'sea-eagle'. When Hebrew words are written in English letters, אֵ may be represented by ^ʔ

א ׁ glottal stop as in <i>uh'oh</i> (silent when word final)	אב [ׁ] <i>āb</i>	אכל [ׁ] <i>ākāl</i>	אָהַד [ׁ] <i>ʔehād</i>
	הָאָב [ׁ] <i>hāʔāḇ</i>	הָטָא [ׁ] <i>hātā</i>	הָאָה [ׁ] <i>hāʔāh</i>
	אָב 'father'	אָכַל 'he ate'	אָהַד 'one'
	הָאָב 'the father'	הָטָא 'he sinned'	הָאָה 'the brother'

1.7 The Hebrew letters א ב ג ד and the vowel marks .. ׁ

ב [ׁ] <i>bē</i> .. = [ׁ] <i>ē</i> <i>ē</i> as in <i>they</i>	מֶכַּךְ [ׁ] <i>mēk</i>	מֶלֶךְ [ׁ] <i>mēlēʔ</i>	מֵאָה [ׁ] <i>mēʔā</i>
	לֶכַּךְ [ׁ] <i>lēk</i>	מֶלֶךְ [ׁ] <i>melek</i>	אֵיפֶה [ׁ] <i>ʔayyē</i>
	לֵךְ 'Go!'	מֶלֶךְ 'king'	אֵיפֶה 'where?'
			מֵאָה 'hundred'

נ <i>n</i> as in <i>noose</i> ן <i>-n</i> (last letter of a word)	אֶבֶן [ׁ] <i>ʔēben</i>	נֵם <i>nēm</i>	נַן <i>nan</i>
	אֶבֶן [ׁ] <i>ʔēben</i>	בָּנָה <i>bānā</i>	גַּן <i>gan</i>
	אֶזֶן [ׁ] <i>ʔōzen</i>	חָנַן <i>hānan</i>	נָבִיא <i>nāḇî</i>
	אֶבֶן 'stone'	בָּנָה 'he built'	גַּן 'garden'
אֶזֶן 'ear'	חָנַן 'he pitied'	נָבִיא 'prophet'	

ס <i>s</i> as in <i>sell</i>	סַף <i>saḥ</i>	כַּס <i>kas</i>	מֶן <i>men</i>
	סֵף <i>seḥ</i>	כִּס <i>kis</i>	סֵם <i>sēm</i>
	סִף <i>siḥ</i>	כֶּם <i>kēm</i>	סֵי <i>sē</i>
	סָלַח <i>sālah</i>	סִינַי <i>sînai</i>	מָסָה <i>massā</i>
	חֶסֶד <i>hesed</i>	סָבַב <i>sābab</i>	כִּסֵּה <i>kissē</i>
	סָלַח 'he forgave'	סִינַי 'Sinai'	מָסָה 'testing'
	חֶסֶד 'loyal love, mercy'	סָבַב 'he went round'	כִּסֵּה 'throne'

בו or בּ bō וּ or ם = ō ō as in <i>bowl</i>	מֹנִין <i>mōn</i>	נֹס <i>nōs</i>	זֹנֵל <i>zōnal</i>
	סֹדֵד <i>sōḏ</i>	יֹם <i>yōm</i>	טֹב <i>tōḇ</i>
	כֹּל <i>kōl</i>	לוֹ <i>lō</i>	טֹבִים <i>tōḇîm</i>
	בֹּא <i>bōʾ</i>	לֹא <i>lōʾ</i>	אֹהֵל <i>ʾōhel</i>
	סֹדֵד 'secret'	יֹם 'day'	טֹב 'good'
	כֹּל 'all, every'	לוֹ 'to him'	טֹבִים 'good'
	בֹּא 'to come'	לֹא 'not'	אֹהֵל 'tent'

ע c (a slightly raspy sound in the back of the throat, like the start of a gargle)	עַל <i>ʿol</i>	עֵי <i>ʿē</i>	נֵם <i>nēm</i>
	סֹךְ <i>sōk</i>	וַגַּ <i>waḡ, vaḡ</i>	עַט <i>ʿaṭ</i>
	עַל <i>ʿal</i>	חַי <i>ḥai</i>	בַּעַל <i>baʿal</i>
	עָבַד <i>ʿābad</i>	הֵיא <i>hî</i>	עֶבֶד <i>ʿebed</i>
	עַל 'on'	חַי 'alive'	בַּעַל 'master'
	עָבַד 'he served'	הֵיא 'she'	עֶבֶד 'servant'

In post-biblical times ע was often not pronounced, so in English translations you may not find any sign of it. For example, in Jeremiah 38 we find the name עֶבֶד־מֶלֶךְ 'servant of the king'. In English it is Ebed-melech.

פּ p as in <i>pet</i> פּ p̄ [f] as in <i>awful</i> פּ -p̄ (last letter of a word)	פִּין <i>pin</i>	פָּן <i>pān</i>	גַּפּ <i>gaḡ</i>
	זִפּוּל <i>zipil</i>	פִּיט <i>piṭ</i>	הַפּ <i>haḡ</i>
	פֶּן <i>pen</i>	פּוֹ <i>pō</i>	עוֹפּ <i>ʿōp</i>
	פֶּה <i>pe</i>	לֵב <i>lēḇ</i>	אֵם <i>ʾēm</i>
	כַּף <i>kaḡ</i>	פְּנִים <i>pānîm</i>	יָסַף <i>yāsaḡ</i>
	פֶּן 'that not, lest'	פּוֹ 'here'	עוֹפּ 'birds'
	פֶּה 'mouth'	לֵב 'heart'	אֵם 'mother'
	כַּף 'palm of hand'	פְּנִים 'face'	יָסַף 'he added'

בוּ bū וּ = ū ū as in <i>flute</i>	פּוּ <i>pū</i>	מוּן <i>mūn</i>	עוּל <i>ʿol</i>
	עוּפּ <i>ʿūp</i>	לוּם <i>lūm</i>	עוּל <i>ʿul</i>
	עוּפּ <i>ʿōp</i>	סוּךְ <i>sūk</i>	הוּ <i>hū</i>
	נוּחַ <i>nūaḥ</i>	נוּס <i>nūs</i>	הִיא <i>hî</i>
	עוּפּ 'birds'	סוּךְ 'to pour out'	הוּ 'he'
	נוּחַ 'to rest'	נוּס 'to flee'	הִיא 'she'

LESSON 1

1.8 Dots within a letter

You have now read three quarters of the Hebrew alphabet, and you have seen that אה is 'he' and שה is 'she'!

You have also seen that when ב ג ד כ פ and ת have an added dot, it marks the letter as being hard: ב *b*, ג *g*, ד *d*, כ *k*, פ *p*, and ת *t*. Some English writers indicate the softer sound by an added h, others by a line: *ph* or *p̄*.

After a vowel sound, a hard letter usually becomes soft, unless there is a pause or punctuation. Note בַּטַּח *bāṭaḥ* and בָּקָה *bākā*. Both begin with a hard b. [for forms like בָּקָה see 1.10(b)]

So בָּקָה בַּטַּח 'he trusted in you', but, if we put בָּקָה first, the ב of בַּטַּח becomes ב: בַּטַּח בָּקָה

The dot in the ב of בַּטַּח is called a *dagesh lene*. It never alters the meaning of a word: בַּטַּח and בָּטַח both mean 'he trusted'.

There is another use of a dot in letters, to mark them as strong or doubled, for example:

ז	י	מ	נ	ס
זז	יי	ממ	ננ	סס

so: מֶלֶךְ *melek* 'king' הַמֶּלֶךְ *hammeklek* 'the king'.

The dot that marks a letter as strong or doubled is called a *dagesh forte*.

א ה ו ע and ך are never found with a *dagesh*.

When ה comes at the end of a word, it is not usually pronounced. It is silent:

הָיָה *hāyā* 'he was' מֵאָה *mē'ā* '100' מַלְכָּה *malkā* 'queen'

But in some words the final ה needs to be lightly pronounced. In such words the final ה has an added dot, called *mappiq* (but some scholars argue that ה with a *mappiq* was not pronounced):

לָהּ *lāh* 'to her' בָּהּ *bāh* 'in her' מַלְכָּהּ *malkāh* 'her king'

1.9 The Hebrew letters צ ק and the vowel

צ <i>ṣ</i> [ts] as in <i>cats</i>	צִין <i>ṣin</i>	פֶּץ <i>peṣ</i>	זוּם <i>zūm</i>
ץ -ṣ (last letter of a word)	מָצָא <i>māṣā</i>	יָצָא <i>yāṣā</i>	חָפֵץ <i>ḥāpēṣ</i>
	מִצְוָה <i>miṣwā</i>	עֵץ <i>‘eṣ</i>	צֹאן <i>ṣōn</i>
	מָצָא ‘he found’	יָצָא ‘he went out’	חָפֵץ ‘he takes pleasure in’
	מִצְוָה ‘a command’	עֵץ ‘tree’	צֹאן ‘flock, sheep’

בּ <i>bu</i> = <i>u</i> <i>u</i> as in <i>book</i>	כּלָנוּ <i>kullānū</i>	אָגֻדָּה <i>‘āguddā</i>	אָחֻצָּה <i>‘āḥuzzā</i>
	כּלָנוּ ‘all of us’	אָגֻדָּה ‘troop, bundle’	אָחֻצָּה ‘landed property’

ק <i>q</i> pronounced as a <i>k</i> at the back of the throat	קוּץ <i>quṣ</i>	שׁוּץ <i>ṣuq</i>	קוֹם <i>qōm</i>
	קוּם <i>qūm</i>	קֵץ <i>qēṣ</i>	חֻקָּה <i>ḥuqqā</i>
	יָקוּם <i>yāqūm</i>	קוֹל <i>qōl</i>	קָטָן <i>qātān</i>
	קוּם ‘to get up’	קֵץ ‘end’	חֻקָּה ‘statute, law’
	יָקוּם ‘he will get up’	קוֹל ‘voice’	קָטָן ‘small’

1.10 Shewa

Two dots under a letter need not drive us dotty. They can help us to read Hebrew words correctly. Two vertical dots ְ may be used under a consonant in three different ways:

(a) To further shorten the vowel sounds *a*, *e*, and *o*:

רַ *ra* רְ *ră* ְ is like the *a* in *amend*

רֶ *re* רֶּ *rě* ֶ is like the *e* in *behind*

so:

עָמַד <i>‘āmād</i> ‘he stood’	עֹמֵד <i>‘āmōd</i> ‘stand!’
אֱלֹהִים <i>‘ēlohîm</i> ‘God’	אֱלֹהֵינוּ <i>‘ēlohēnū</i> ‘our God’
אֹהֶלוֹ <i>‘ohōlō</i> ‘his tent’ (see 1.11, p13)	

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(b) To make a very short vowel sound (shown as ə) under a consonant, particularly under the first of two consonants that stand together at the beginning of a word or syllable:

כָּלִי <i>kalî</i>	לָךְ <i>ləkâ</i>	דְּבָרִים <i>dəḇārîm</i>
כָּלִי ‘implement, vessel’	לָךְ ‘to you’	דְּבָרִים ‘words’

(c) To mark a consonant that closes a syllable in the middle of a word, or to mark a final כּ which is ךְ

In this third use the two dots ם do not indicate a sound. They are silent (quiescent):

מַלְכִי <i>mal-kî</i>	מִצְוָה <i>mits-wā</i>	לֵךְ <i>lēk</i>
מַלְכִי ‘my king’	מִצְוָה ‘a command’	לֵךְ ‘Go!’

As you listen to reading passages on the audio CD and follow them in the book, you will become increasingly aware of the uses of these two dots ם. They are called a *shewa*. The *shewa* in section (b) which you see in כָּלִי *kalî* is called a *vocal shewa* because it indicates a sound. The *shewa* in section (c) which you see in מַלְכִי *mal-kî* is called a *silent shewa* because it marks the close of the first syllable. In חַסְדְּךָ *hasdəkâ* ‘your loyalty’, the first *shewa* is silent—it marks the close of the syllable *has*. The second *shewa* is vocal—it indicates a short sound after the ךְ. When two *shewas* stand together like this, the second is always vocal.

1.11 The Hebrew letters ר ש ך and the vowel ם

ר <i>r</i> as in <i>rain</i>	רִם <i>rim</i>	רַק <i>ruq</i>	רוּף <i>rūp</i>
	רַט <i>raṭ</i>	רַץ <i>puṣ</i>	רוּץ <i>rūṣ</i>
	אַרִי <i>ʾārî</i>	עֶרֶב <i>ʿereḇ</i>	דְּבָר <i>dəḇār</i>
	בַּרְזֵל <i>barzel</i>	בֹּקֶר <i>bōqer</i>	דְּבָרִים <i>dəḇārîm</i>
	בָּרוּךְ <i>bārūk</i>	גָּדֹל <i>gādōl</i>	דִּבְרֵי <i>dibrē</i>
	אַרִי ‘lion’	עֶרֶב ‘evening’	דְּבָר ‘word’
	בַּרְזֵל ‘iron’	בֹּקֶר ‘morning’	דְּבָרִים ‘words’
	בָּרוּךְ ‘blessed’	גָּדֹל ‘great’	דִּבְרֵי ‘words of’

ש ś as in sell (the same sound as ס s)	שָׂר śār	סוּס sūs	שֶׁה še
	שָׂרֵי śārē	סוּסָה sūsā	שָׂנֵא śānē
	יִשְׂרָאֵל yīsrāēl	שֵׁם śīm	שְׂרָפִים śārāpīm

שָׂר 'prince'	סוּס 'horse'	שֶׁה 'lamb, kid'
שָׂרֵי 'princes of'	סוּסָה 'mare'	שָׂנֵא 'he hated'
יִשְׂרָאֵל 'Israel'	שֵׁם 'to place'	שְׂרָפִים 'seraphs'

ש š [sh] as in shell	רֹאשׁ rōš	שֵׁשׁ šēš	שָׁמַר šāmar
	שָׁמַע šama ^c	שָׁב šēb	שָׁאַל šā'al
	אֲשֶׁר ʾāšer	אֶרֶץ ʾereṣ	שָׁמַיִם šāmayim

רֹאשׁ 'head'	שֵׁשׁ 'six'	שָׁמַר 'he kept'
שָׁמַע 'listen!'	שָׁב 'sit down!'	שָׁאַל 'he asked'
אֲשֶׁר 'who, which'	אֶרֶץ 'earth'	שָׁמַיִם 'heaven, sky'

Note יָשַׁב yāšav 'he sat' and יָשֵׁב yōšēv 'sitting'. In יָשֵׁב 'sitting' the dot over ש has a double function:

- (a) To indicate that the ש is ש š
- (b) To indicate that the vowel after ך is ō

בּ bo ך = o o as in dog	אֹכֶלֶת ʾoklēt	כֹּל kōl	שָׁמְרָה šāmarā
	חֹכְמָה ḥokmā	כֹּל-כֹּל kol	אֹהֶל ʾōhel
	אִישׁ ʾiš	כֹּל-אִישׁ kol-ʾiš	אֹהֶלוֹ ʾohōlō
	אֹכֶלֶת 'food'	כֹּל 'all, every'	שָׁמְרָה 'she kept'
	חֹכְמָה 'wisdom'	כֹּל-כֹּל 'all, every'	אֹהֶל 'tent'
	אִישׁ 'man'	כֹּל-אִישׁ 'every man'	אֹהֶלוֹ 'his tent'

This short o is not very common. The symbol ך normally represents a long a, see section 1.5. In cases like כֹּל, and its shortened form כֹּל-כֹּל, the knowledge of the longer form helps us to read כֹּל-כֹּל correctly. We shall learn other words and clues to them as the course continues.

The symbol ך represents a very short sound similar to the first o in collection.

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ת <i>t</i> as in <i>tall</i>	אָתָּה ^ʔ <i>attā</i>	תָּמִים <i>tāmîm</i>	כָּלָה <i>kālā</i>
ת <i>t</i> as in <i>foot</i> (or, th as in <i>think</i>)	נָתַן <i>nāṭan</i>	תַּחַת <i>taḥat</i>	אֶחָד ^ʔ <i>eḥād</i>
	עֵת ^ʕ <i>ēt</i>	טוֹב <i>tūb</i>	תִּשְׁעָה <i>tišʕā</i>
	אָתָּה 'thou, you'	תָּמִים 'perfect'	אֶחָד 'one'
	נָתַן 'he gave'	תַּחַת 'under'	תִּשְׁעָה 'nine'
	עֵת 'time'	טוֹב 'goodness'	כָּלָה 'it was finished...'

1.12 Read

(1) Listen, Israel

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל Hear, Israel,

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה the Lord our God, (Note: יְהוָה is read as אֲדוֹנָי (see 2.8))

יְהוָה אֶחָד the Lord (is) one.

(2) Day one

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב And there was evening

וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר and there was morning

יּוֹם אֶחָד day one (the first day).

1.13 Activation

1. From 1.4 to 1.11 highlight the Hebrew words that have meanings written beside them.

2 (a) Mime these words:

מֶלֶךְ king

מַלְכָּה queen

אִישׁ man

אִשָּׁה woman

נְבִיא prophet

נְבִיאָה prophetess

שָׁמַיִם heaven

אֲרֶץ earth

שְׁמַע Listen!

לֵךְ Go!

Repeat each word and mime it several times. (See 2.12 'miming helps memory'.)

2 (b) Using the pattern

וַיְהִי מֶלֶךְ וַיְהִי מַלְכָּה 'and there was a king and there was a queen'
and words from 2 (a), say in Hebrew:

and there was a king and there was a queen
and there was a man and there was a woman
and there was a prophet and there was a prophetess
and there was heaven and there was earth

3. Wordsearch

Find these words in the grid:

כ	א		אֶל- to	אָב father
ל	א	1	לוֹ to him	אוֹ or
ו	ב	2	בוֹ in him, in it	בָּא he came
			אֵל not	בָּא coming

Do not make any marks or lines on a wordsearch grid. All words may be found by reading from right to left (across or diagonally) or up and down. No words are to be read from left to right.

4. Read in Hebrew

בָּרַךְ אֹתָהּ Blessed (art) thou,
אֱלֹהֵינוּ our God,
כִּי לְעוֹלָם for forever
חַסְדְּךָ (is) thy mercy.

Note the words:

בָּרַךְ blessed, praised	כִּי for...
אֹתָהּ thou, you	לְעוֹלָם forever (עוֹלָם distant time)
אֱלֹהֵינוּ our God	חַסֵּד loyal love, mercy

In this word list, the entry כִּי 'for' is followed by three dots. These dots indicate that here כִּי can be translated as 'for', but in other contexts כִּי has other meanings and functions. It is a linking word. It may be used after verbs of saying, seeing, and thinking ('that'). It may be used to indicate time ('when'). It may be used for emphasis and in questions.

5. Sing in Hebrew the song on the CD:

הַבִּיאֲנוּ שְׁלוֹם אֵלֵיכֶם We bring peace to you.

שְׁלוֹם peace, welfare, a greeting of peace and good wishes.

הַבִּיאֲנוּ we bring.

6. In the glossary on page 345 read the entry for *Shewa*.

7. Listen to the section on the audio CD which covers parts of lessons 1, 2 and 3. Use it as a listening and reading exercise. Follow the Hebrew words on the page. You may find it helpful to use your finger to help your eyes to follow the words.

8. In preparation for lesson 2, have a look at the wordsearch in 2.11.5. Wordsearches are designed so that they may usefully be enjoyed both before and after a lesson. No marks or lines are ever made on a wordsearch grid, so you may use a wordsearch as many times as you please.