BIBLICAL HEBREW · GRADES K–8 · HEBREW I · QUICK REFERENCE

BIBLICAL HEBREW (Alef-Bet · Nouns · Verbs)

Grades K–12 · 4 pages

The alef-bet with sounds, finals and numbers, the vowel points and reading marks, gender and number, the article, prepositions and the construct chain, pronouns and suffixes, the Qal perfect and imperfect, commands, the wayyiqtol, participles, infinitives and the seven stems, and the verses the course reads from Genesis, the Shema and Psalm 23.

1 Alef-bet · 2 Vowels & marks · 3 Nouns & little words · 4 Pronouns & suffixes · 5 Qal verb · 6 Stems & forms · 7 Reading the Bible

1 THE ALEF-BET: 22 LETTERS, RIGHT TO LEFT

grades K–4, Hebrew I · every letter is a consonant

alef to kaf

Letter	Name	Sound	Number
א	alef	silent (carries a vowel)	1
ב	bet	b; without the dot v (בָ)	2
ג	gimel	g	3
ד	dalet	d	4
ה	he	h	5
ו	vav	v; as a vowel o (וֹ) or u (וּ)	6
ז	zayin	z	7
ח	chet	kh in loch (guttural)	8
ט	tet	t	9
י	yod	y; as a vowel i / e	10
כ ך	kaf	k; without the dot kh; final ך	20

lamed to tav

Letter	Name	Sound	Number
ל	lamed	l	30
מ ם	mem	m; final ם	40
נ ן	nun	n; final ן	50
ס	samekh	s	60
ע	ayin	silent (guttural)	70
פ ף	pe	p; without the dot f; final ף	80
צ ץ	tsade	ts; final ץ	90
ק	qof	k	100
ר	resh	r	200
שׁ שׂ	shin / sin	sh (dot right), s (dot left)	300
ת	tav	t	400

Five final forms

Five letters change shape at the end of a word: כ → ך, מ → ם, נ → ן, פ → ף, צ → ץ. שָׁלוֹם ends in final mem.

Begadkefat and gutturals

ב ג ד כ פ ת take a dot (dagesh lene) at the start of a word or syllable: b / v, k / kh, p / f (g, d, t sound the same today). The **gutturals** א ה ח ע (and ר) cannot be doubled and like a-vowels; they take hurried (hatef) vowels instead of a plain shewa.

Letters that count

No separate numerals: א = 1 … י = 10, יא = 11, כ = 20, ק = 100. Psalm 119 and Lamentations are alphabet poems: a stanza for each letter in order.

2 VOWEL POINTS & READING MARKS

grades 3–4, Hebrew I · the Masoretes added the dots

The vowels (shown under or beside ב)

Sign	Name	Says	Class
בַ	patach	a as in father (short)	a
בָ	qamets	a (long); sometimes o	a
בֶ	segol	e as in bed	e
בֵ	tsere	e as in they	e
בִ	hiriq	i as in machine	i
בֹ	holem	o as in hole	o
בוֹ	holem-vav	o (long, with vav)	o
בֻ	qibbuts	u as in put	u
בּוּ	shureq	u as in rule (with vav)	u
בְ	shewa	silent, or a hurried ə at the start of a syllable	–
בֲ בֱ בָ	hatef patach / segol / qamets	hurried a / e / o, under gutturals	–

Syllables

- Every syllable begins with a **consonant**. An **open** syllable ends in a vowel (בָ bā); a **closed** syllable ends in a consonant (בַר bar).
- **Shewa** is vocal (a quick ə) at the start of a word or syllable and after a long vowel; it is silent when it closes a syllable.
- **Vowel letters** (matres lectionis): ו י ה can stand for a vowel: שָׁלוֹם, תּוֹרָה.
- **Stress** usually falls on the last syllable: דָּבָר da-VAR.

Two kinds of dagesh

Dagesh lene hardens begadkefat (b, k, p). **Dagesh forte** doubles any letter but a guttural: הַשָּׁמַיִם hash-sha-MA-yim. A dot in a letter after a short vowel is forte.

Marks in a verse

- **Maqqef** ־ joins words like a hyphen: נָר־לְרַגְלִי (one accent for both).
- **Sof pasuq** ׃ ends the verse.
- **Accents** (te'amim) mark the stressed syllable and the chant; **meteg** marks a secondary stress.
- **Furtive patach:** a final ח ע ה after a long vowel sneaks an a in front: רוּחַ RU-ach, not ru-CHA.
- The divine name יְהוָה is read *Adonai* ("the LORD" in the KJV); אֱלֹהִים is God.

MEMORY TRICK **Dot on the right is sh**

שׁ **sh**in has its dot on the **right** (as in *sh*alom); שׂ **s**in on the left. Read right to left, but the dot still tells you which.

3 NOUNS, THE ARTICLE & LITTLE WORDS

grades 5–6, Hebrew I

Gender and number

	masculine	feminine
singular	סוּס horse, דָּבָר word	סוּסָה mare, תּוֹרָה, בַּת (ה, -תַ)
plural -ִים / -וֹת	סוּסִים, דְּבָרִים	סוּסוֹת, תּוֹרוֹת
dual -ַיִם	things in pairs: יָדַיִם hands, עֵינַיִם eyes, שָׁמַיִם heavens	

Some masculine nouns take -וֹת (אָבוֹת fathers) and some feminine take -ִים (נָשִׁים women): the gender stays.

The article and "and"

The = הַ + doubling of the next letter: הַמֶּלֶךְ the king. Before a guttural the vowel lengthens instead: הָאָרֶץ the earth, הָעִיר. **And** = וְ (וּ before ב מ פ or a shewa): וּמֶלֶךְ, וְאֵת.

Prepositions

Word	Meaning	Example
בְּ	in, with, by	בְּרֵאשִׁית in the beginning
לְ	to, for	לְדָוִד of (for) David
כְּ	like, as	כַּמֶּלֶךְ like the king
מִן / מִ־	from, out of	מִבַּיִת, מִן־הָאָרֶץ
אֶל	to, unto	אֶל־הָעִיר
עַל	on, upon, over	עַל־פָּנַי
עִם	with	עִם־הָעָם
אֵת	marks a definite object (not translated)	אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם

The inseparable בְּ לְ כְּ swallow the article: בַּ = הַ + בְּ: בַּבַּיִת in the house (the hidden article).

Adjectives and "this"

An adjective **follows** its noun and agrees: מֶלֶךְ טוֹב a good king, הַמֶּלֶךְ הַטּוֹב the good king (attributive, both with the article); טוֹב הַמֶּלֶךְ the king is good (predicate, no article). טוֹב, טוֹבָה, טוֹבִים, טוֹבוֹת. זֶה this (m), זֹאת this (f), אֵלֶּה these; הוּא / הִיא that.

The construct chain

"X of Y" binds two nouns; the first (construct) shortens and the last carries the article for both: דְּבַר־יְהוָה the word of the LORD, בֶּן־דָּוִד son of David, מַלְכֵי הָאָרֶץ the kings of the earth. Plural -ִים becomes -ֵי in construct.

MEMORY TRICK

Hebrew hangs its words backward

Noun first, then adjective; owner last in a chain; the article doubles the letter after it. Read right to left and the rules fall into place.

4 PRONOUNS, SUFFIXES & VERBLESS SENTENCES

grade 6, Hebrew I

Independent pronouns

Person	Singular	Plural
1	I אָנִי / אָנֹכִי	we אֲנַחְנוּ
2 m	you אַתָּה	you אַתֶּם
2 f	you אַתְּ	you אַתֶּן
3 m	he הוּא	they הֵמָּה / הֵם
3 f	she הִיא	they הֵנָּה / הֵן

Sentences without a verb

Hebrew leaves out "is / are": טוֹב יְהוָה the LORD is good; יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים the LORD, He is God (1 Kings 18:39); אֲנִי הוּא I am He. יֵשׁ there is, אֵין there is not: יֵשׁ יְהוָה בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה.

Pronoun suffixes on a noun (סוּס horse)

Suffix	Meaning	Form
-ִי	my	סוּסִי
-ְךָ	your (m)	סוּסְךָ
-ֵךְ	your (f)	סוּסֵךְ
-ו	his	סוּסוֹ
-ָהּ	her	סוּסָהּ
-ֵנוּ	our	סוּסֵנוּ
-כֶם	your (mp)	סוּסְכֶם
-ָם	their (m)	סוּסָם

On plural nouns: סוּסַי my horses, סוּסֶיךָ your horses, סוּסָיו his horses. Psalm 23: רֹעִי my shepherd, נַפְשִׁי my soul.

Suffixes on prepositions

	to / for לְ	with עִם	object אֵת
me	לִי	עִמִּי	אֹתִי
you (m)	לְךָ	עִמְּךָ	אֹתְךָ
him	לוֹ	עִמּוֹ	אֹתוֹ
her	לָהּ	עִמָּהּ	אֹתָהּ
us	לָנוּ	עִמָּנוּ	אֹתָנוּ
you (mp)	לָכֶם	עִמָּכֶם	אֶתְכֶם
them (m)	לָהֶם	עִמָּם	אֹתָם

אַתָּה עִמָּדִי thou art with me (Psalm 23:4); לְבַדּוֹ by himself; עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ a help meet for him.

Questions

Word	Meaning
מִי	who?
מָה / מַה	what?
אַיֵּה / אֵיפֹה	where?
לָמָּה	why?
מָתַי	when?
אֵיךְ	how?
הֲ־	yes-or-no question prefix: הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אָנֹכִי am I my brother's keeper?

5 THE VERB: ROOT, QAL PERFECT & IMPERFECT

grades 7–8, Hebrew I units 5–7

The three-letter root

Every verb grows from three consonants: מ־ל־ךְ (reign: מֶלֶךְ king, מַלְכָּה queen, מַלְכוּת kingdom); ק־ד־שׁ (holy: קָדוֹשׁ, קִדֵּשׁ); שׁ־מ־ר keep; כ־ת־ב write; א־מ־ר say. Dictionaries list the 3ms perfect: קָטַל he killed, שָׁמַר he kept.

Qal perfect (קָטַל): completed action

Person	Form	Meaning
3 ms	קָטַל	he killed
3 fs	קָטְלָה	she killed
2 ms	קָטַלְתָּ	you killed
2 fs	קָטַלְתְּ	you killed
1 cs	קָטַלְתִּי	I killed
3 cp	קָטְלוּ	they killed
2 mp	קְטַלְתֶּם	you killed
2 fp	קְטַלְתֶּן	you killed
1 cp	קָטַלְנוּ	we killed

Endings go on the **end**. The perfect (qatal) tells of a finished whole: בָּרָא he created. Stative verbs describe a state: כָּבֵד he is heavy. Negate with לֹא.

Qal imperfect (יִקְטֹל): incomplete, future, habitual

Person	Form	Meaning
3 ms	יִקְטֹל	he will kill
3 fs	תִּקְטֹל	she will kill
2 ms	תִּקְטֹל	you will kill
2 fs	תִּקְטְלִי	you will kill
1 cs	אֶקְטֹל	I will kill
3 mp	יִקְטְלוּ	they will kill
3 fp	תִּקְטֹלְנָה	they will kill
2 mp	תִּקְטְלוּ	you will kill
2 fp	תִּקְטֹלְנָה	you will kill
1 cp	נִקְטֹל	we will kill

Preformatives go on the front: י ת א נ (remember *yod-tav-alef-nun*). לֹא תִגְנֹב thou shalt not steal.

MEMORY TRICK

Perfect behind, imperfect in front

Perfect = suffixes at the **end** (past, done). Imperfect = prefixes at the **front** (not yet done).

Commands and wishes

- **Imperative** (the imperfect with its prefix cut off): קְטֹל kill! (ms), קִטְלִי (fs), קִטְלוּ (mp); שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל Hear, O Israel. נָא = please.
- **Prohibitions:** לֹא + imperfect for a lasting law (לֹא תִרְצָח); אַל + jussive for a moment (אַל־תִּירָא fear not).
- **Jussive** (let him): יְהִי אוֹר let there be light. **Cohortative** (let us / me): נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם let us make man.

The story verb: wayyiqtol

וַ + doubling + imperfect = "and he …" in narrative: וַיֹּאמֶר and he said, וַיְהִי and it was, וַיַּרְא and he saw, וַיִּקְרָא and he called. The **weqatal** (וְ + perfect) carries commands and procedures forward: "and thou shalt…". The day formula: וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר and the evening and the morning were…

6 PARTICIPLES, INFINITIVES & THE SEVEN STEMS

Hebrew I units 8–10

Non-finite forms

Form	Pattern	Example
active participle	קֹטֵל	שֹׁמֵר keeper, he that keepeth; רֹעֶה shepherd
passive participle	קָטוּל	בָּרוּךְ blessed, כָּתוּב written
infinitive construct	קְטֹל / לִקְטֹל	לְהַבְדִּיל to divide; with בְּ = when, כְּ = as
infinitive absolute	קָטוֹל	מוֹת תָּמוּת thou shalt surely die (emphasis)

הִנֵּה behold

Points at what follows, often with a participle: הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עֹשֶׂה behold, I am doing.

The seven stems (binyanim)

Stem	Meaning	Mark	Example
Qal	simple active	none	קָטַל he killed; בָּרָא
Niphal	passive / reflexive	נִ prefix (perfect)	נִבְרְאוּ they were created
Piel	intensive, causative	doubled middle letter	בֵּרַךְ he blessed
Pual	passive of Piel	doubling + u-vowel	בֹּרַךְ he was blessed
Hithpael	reflexive	הִתְ prefix	הִתְהַלַּךְ he walked about
Hiphil	causative	הִ prefix, ִי vowel	הֵאִיר he gave light
Hophal	passive of Hiphil	הָ / הֳ prefix	הָמְלַךְ he was made king

MEMORY TRICK

Qal is plain, Piel is doubled, Hiphil makes it happen

Parse a verb by asking: which stem, perfect or imperfect, which person. Then look up the root.

Weak verbs

- **III-he** (ל״ה): עָשָׂה make, רָאָה see, הָיָה be; the he drops in wayyiqtol: וַיְהִי, וַיַּרְא.
- **I-nun**: נָתַן give, נָפַל fall; the nun assimilates: יִתֵּן.
- **I-yod**: יָשַׁב sit, יָדַע know, יָצַר form.
- **Hollow** (middle vav/yod): קוּם rise, שׂוּם put, בּוֹא come: וַיָּשֶׂם and he put.

Clauses

כִּי that, because, when; אֲשֶׁר who, which (with a resumptive pronoun: the man *whom* he made *him*). A clause that starts with a noun instead of a verb steps off the main line to describe (וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ).

7 READING THE BIBLE IN HEBREW

grades 4–8 · verses the course reads and recites

Genesis 1:1 WORKED

בְּרֵאשִׁית	*in-beginning (רֵאשִׁית + בְּ)*
בָּרָא	*he created (Qal perfect 3ms)*
אֱלֹהִים	*God*
אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם	*(object) the heavens*
וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ	*and (object) the earth*

Genesis 1:3 WORKED

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	*and God said (wayyiqtol)*
יְהִי אוֹר	*let there be light (jussive)*
וַיְהִי־אוֹר	*and there was light*

Verses by heart

Hebrew	English	Where
שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד	Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD	Deuteronomy 6:4
יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר	The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want	Psalm 23:1
נֵר־לְרַגְלִי דְּבָרֶךָ	Thy word is a lamp unto my feet	Psalm 119:105
יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ	The LORD bless thee, and keep thee	Numbers 6:24
הַלְלוּ אֶת־יְהוָה כָּל־גּוֹיִם	O praise the LORD, all ye nations	Psalm 117:1
כִּי־טוֹב	that it was good	Genesis 1
טוֹב יְהוָה לַכֹּל	The LORD is good to all	Psalm 145:9

Bible words you already know

Hebrew	Meaning
אָמֵן amen	truly, so be it
הַלְלוּיָהּ hallelujah	praise ye the LORD
הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא hosanna	save now
עִמָּנוּאֵל Immanuel	God with us
שָׁלוֹם shalom	peace, wholeness; hello
שַׁבָּת Sabbath	rest
מָשִׁיחַ Messiah	anointed one (Greek: Christ)
תּוֹרָה Torah	teaching, law

Hebrew poetry

Lines come in pairs that **parallel** each other (say it again, say it more, say the opposite): "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: / he leadeth me beside the still waters." חֶסֶד hesed = mercy, lovingkindness; נֶפֶשׁ soul, life; צֶדֶק righteousness; צַלְמָוֶת the shadow of death.

How the Hebrew Bible came to us

- The **Masoretes** (about A.D. 600–1000) added vowel points and accents; the **Leningrad Codex** (1008) is the oldest complete copy.
- The **Great Isaiah Scroll** from the Dead Sea (about 125 B.C.) matches the text a thousand years older.
- Daniel 5 is in **Aramaic**, Hebrew's cousin: מְנֵא מְנֵא תְּקֵל וּפַרְסִין.
- Christians who learned Hebrew: Jerome, Reuchlin, Luther, Tyndale; the KJV translators (1611).

MEMORY TRICK **Read it aloud**

Hebrew was made to be heard. Chant the alef-bet, sing the Shema, say Psalm 23 with the accents: יְהוָה רֹעִי.