

עברית

**Hebrew
Lesson 1: The Alef-Bet**

As you may well know by now, Hebrew is the language of Creation, the divine language. The Kabbalists teach that each letter has a particular energy and when these letters are put into combinations, worlds are created. Scanning Hebrew, such as in Torah and in the siddurim (prayer books) we use for our connections, is very powerful. Our eyes work much like a scanner in a supermarket that scans barcodes and brings up all sorts of information about a particular product. When we scan the Hebrew with our eyes, our soul connects to the energy of the Hebrew letters, and the various sequences assist us in our journey of spiritual transformation. This is a good thing for us. When we speak the Hebrew, however, we are sharing that energy with the world by broadcasting the energy with our voice. For this reason, Kabbalah4All has developed its style of transliteration and format for connections so as to make it easy to pronounce the Hebrew used on Shabbat and the various holidays. For some it is not enough to read the transliteration (the phonetic Hebrew), they want to be able to read the actual Hebrew text. If you are reading this, then you are probably one of those people. So let's begin.

Please note that the transliteration in our lessons follow the K4A Transliteration style.

Part 1 - The Letters

The Hebrew alefabet consists of 22 letters, also known as consonants. It is written from right to left and thus starts on the right-side of the page. Before we can read Hebrew, we need to learn the alefabet. Below you will find a chart with all of the Hebrew letters. Five of the Hebrew letters have final forms, meaning they are used only when that letter comes at the end of a word. It is important to become familiar with all the letters in the following charts. The biggest hurdle to learning Hebrew is to know the alefabet.

Hebrew Letter	Final Form	Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
א		Alef	silent	Depends on the vowel that comes under it.
ב		Bet	b like book	b

Hebrew Letter	Final Form	Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
ג		Gimel	g like good	g
ד		Dalet	d like door	d
ה		Hei	h like hay	h
ו		Vav	v like very	v
ז		Zayin	z like zebra	z
ח		Chet	ch like Bach	ch
ט		Tet	t like today	t
י		Yud	y like you	y
כ	ך	Chaf	k like king	k
ל		Lamed	l like lion	l

Hebrew Letter	Final Form	Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
מ	ם	Mem	m like mint	m
נ	ן	Nun	n like nice	n
ס		Sameich	s like sort	s
ע		Ayin	silent	Depends on the vowel that comes under it.
פ	ף	Pei	p like parrot	p
צ	ץ	Tzadi	tz like waltz	tz
ק		Kuf	k like king	k
ר		Reish	r like rain	r
ש		Shin	sh like ship	sh
ת		Tav	t like today	t



Here are the letters written from right to left to help you see them all together.

אבגדהוזטיכלמנסעפצקרשת

Part 2 - Hard/Soft Letters














There are some letters in Hebrew whose pronunciations are either hard or soft. For example, in English the G can be pronounced as girl or George. If a dot, called a dagesh lene, appears in one of the letters below, it has a hard pronunciation. The exception is with the Shin, the pronunciation depends on which side of the top of the Shin the dot appears. In future lessons you will learn other uses of the dagesh.

Hebrew Letter	Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
ב	Bet	b like boy	b
בֿ	Vet	v like voyage	v
כ	Caf	k like king	k
כֿ	Chaf	ch like Bach	ch
פ	Pei	p like parrot	p
פֿ	Fei	f like fine	f

Hebrew Letter	Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
	Shin	sh like ship	sh
	Sin	s like soft	s

Part 3 - Confusing Letters

For someone who is just learning Hebrew, some letters may look similar. Below you will see the letters that are often confusing.

Letter	Name	Letter	Name	Letter	Name
	Bet		Kaf		
	Gimel		Nun		
	Hei		Chet		Tav
	Final Mem		Sameich		
	Dalet		Reish		
	Tzadi		Ayin		

Letter	Name	Letter	Name	Letter	Name
ו	Vav	ז	Zayin	ן	Final Nun
ך	Final Chaf	נ	Final Nun		

Part 4 - Hebrew Letters That Sound Alike

As you may have noticed by now, some Hebrew letters sound alike. The following chart shows the like-sounding letters.

Letter	Name	Letter	Name	Pronunciation
ט	Tet	ת	Tav	t like today
כ	Caf	ק	Kuf	k like king
ס	Sameich	ש	Sin	s like soft

Part 5 - Hebrew Vowels (Nikudot)

Hebrew in its original form has no written vowels. If you were to go to a synagogue and look at the Torah that is contained in the ark, you will see that there are no vowel marks (nikudot). Even though written Hebrew did not originally have nikudot, the vowels were always present in spoken Hebrew. For example, someone who knows English well could say the following sentence without the vowels: Th dg rn acrss th rd (The dog ran across the road). Between the 7th and 11th centuries a group of scribes, called the Masoretes, developed a system of vowel notation called pointing (nikkud in Hebrew). This system was developed to preserve the spoken system of vowels in the written text. Because the scribes regarded Torah as sacred, they designed this system of pointing in such a way as to not alter the original consonantal text.

Here are two examples of the same text from the Bar'chu, the first example is without the nikudot and the second is with them.

ברכו את יהוה המברך

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְהוָה הַמְּבָרֵךְ.

Bar'chu et Adonai ham'vorach.

Praised be Hashem to Whom praise is due, now and forever!

Below you will see a chart of the Hebrew vowel point system. It is important to memorize the vowel points and their sounds. We will use the Bet as an example to show how the vowel points look with a letter. The column that says EXAMPLE shows how the nikud sounds with the letter Bet in transliteration.

Nikud	Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration	Example
כִּי	Chirik	i like pizza	i	vi
כֵּי	Tzeirei	ei like eight	ei	vei
כֶּי	Segol	e like red	e	ve
כִּי	Patach	a like father	a	va
כִּי	Kamatz	a like father	a	va

Nikud	Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration	Example
	Kamatz Katan	o like go	o	vo
	Cholam	o like go	o	vo
	Shuruk	u like tune	u	vu
	Kubutz	u like tune	u	vu
	Sh'va	e like red	'	v'
	Segol Hataf	e like red	e	ve
	Patach Hataf	a like saw	a	va
	Kamatz Hataf	a like saw	a	va

*The Kamatz Katan is not used often. In our siddurim (connections) we use the masores above the letter when it is a Kamatz Katan. However, you will not always see it in Torah or other printed material. As you learn Hebrew vocabulary, you will be able to recognize it.

**The Sh'va makes the vowel very short. There are two types, a spoken Sh'va and a silent Sh'va. Eventually you will be able to recognize when a Sh'va is spoken or silent. A Sh'va at the beginning of a sentence (within the first two letters) is always spoken.