

Lesson 2 – Hebrew Vowel Pointings

2.1

1. As has been stated that originally, the Hebrew language had no _____ system of vowels. While they did not exist in written form, they had always been present in the _____ form of the language.
2. When _____ read the entire law of Moses to the Israelites [Joshua 8], he had before him a consonantal text with no vowels. This required Joshua to supply from _____ the necessary vowels when reading.

ENGLISH EXAMPLES:

GD BLSS Y
JSS LVS M THS KNW
ARLNGTN BPTST CLLG

3. In the 900s A.D., a group of dedicated scribes called _____ became concerned with preserving the oral tradition or spoken form of Hebrew. They developed an elaborate system of vowel notation called _____.
4. This pointing system was designed to _____ the _____ system of vowels in the written text. Because the masoretic scribes considered the biblical text to be sacred, their vowel symbols were designed in such a way as to never _____ the original consonantal text.
5. To do this, the Masoretes developed vowel _____ that were placed under, inside (to the left) or above the consonants.

HEBREW EXAMPLE: Deuteronomy 6.5

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ

(in the heart of you) (all) (Elohim [the god of you]) (YHWH) (S.D.O.) (And you love)

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ

2.3 Hebrew Vowel Chart 1: Short Vowels

Short Vowels	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
<i>a-type</i>	אָ		A as in bat	<i>a</i>
<i>e-type</i>	עֵ		E as in better	<i>e</i>
<i>i-type</i>	יִ		I as in bitter	<i>i</i>
<i>o-type</i>	וֹ		O as in bottle	<i>o</i>
<i>u-type</i>	וּ		U as in ruler	<i>u</i>

2.4 Hebrew Vowel Chart 2: Changeable Long Vowels

Short Vowels	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
<i>a-type</i>	אָ		A as in father	<i>ā</i>
<i>e-type</i>	עֵ		E as in they	<i>ē</i>
<i>o-type</i>	וֹ		O as in role	<i>ō</i>

2.5 Hebrew Vowel Chart 3: Unchangeable Long Vowels

Short Vowels	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
<i>a-type</i>	אֹ		ou as in bought	<i>â</i>
<i>e-type</i>	עֵ עֹ		e as in they e as in better	<i>ê</i>
<i>i-type</i>	יִ יֹ		i as in machine	<i>î</i>
<i>o-type</i>	וֹ		o as in role	<i>ô</i>
<i>u-type</i>	וּ		u as in ruler	<i>û</i>

2.6 Hebrew Vowel Chart: Reduced Vowels

Short Vowels	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
<i>a-type</i>	אִ		A as in father	ă
<i>e-type</i>	אֵ		E as in they	ě
<i>o-type</i>	אֹ		O as in role	ō

<i>Hebrew Vowel Chart</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>u</i>
Short	אִ <i>Pathach</i>	אֵ <i>Seghol</i>	אֲ <i>Hireq</i>	אָ <i>Qamets Hatuf</i>	אֻ <i>Qibbutz</i>
Changeable Long	אָ <i>Qamets</i>	אֵי <i>Tsere</i>		אוֹ <i>Holem</i>	
Unchangeable Long	אִי <i>Qamets Yod</i>	אֵי/אֵי <i>Tsere Yod/ Seghol Yod</i>	אֲי <i>Hireq Yod</i>	אוֹי <i>Holem Waw</i>	אֻי <i>Shureq</i>
Reduced	אֲ <i>Hateph Pathach</i>	אֳ <i>Hateph Seghol</i>		אוֲ <i>Hateph Qamets</i>	

NOTE: Two of these vowels look exactly alike, the Qamets (אָ, changeable long a) and the Qamets Hatuf (אֲ, short o). How do you tell the difference in pronunciation? In general, the Qamets occurs much more frequently than the Qamets Hatuf. So, when in doubt, defer to the Qamets. In regular Hebrew, one learns the rules that govern the discernment of which sound to use.

2.13 Jots and Tittles.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matthew 5.17-18)

1. A “jot” refers to the Yod (י) in Hebrew, which is the smallest letter in the alphabet. The “tittle,” literally “horn,” probably refers to those smallest of marks that distinguish similar letters from each other, such as Dalet (ד) which has a tittle, and Resh (ר) which does not.