

Brief Review or Introduction to Hebrew Consonants and Vowels

The Hebrew letters are consonants. The vowels are symbolized by the markings under (or sometimes over or next to) the letters. The vowels in this transliteration are as spoken in modern Israeli Hebrew. A vav is used to make a vowel "o" or "u" sometimes, as shown below. The consonants below are just to give the vowels a consonant to which to relate; note they are in alef-bet order.

a = ah as in father אַ , אָ (pa-tach', ka-mats')

e = eh as in set עֶ , עֵ (se-gol', tse'-re)

i = ee as in feed יִ (chi-rik')

o = oh as in coal חוֹ , חוֹ (cho-lam' ma-le', cho-lam' cha-ser')

u = oo as in who שׁוּ , כּוּ (shu-ruk', ku-but's')

Spanish or Italian sounds of vowels work very well. (Two areas of oversimplification are that the kamats (ֶ) is sometimes pronounced like a long "o" instead of "ah", and that the tsere (ֵ) is more like a long "a" than a short "e").

׀ Shva or she-vah' (as it would be phonetically spelled in this text) is pronounced as a muted form of the vowel mark with which it appears, either an "a", or an "e", or by itself. Its most muted form is by itself, when it sounds almost like "uh", or like the sound you have to make between the sh and the v when you say its name: shva. In the transliterated text, a shva or shva-modified vowel is denoted by being in *italics* and smaller.

The consonants below correspond to the transliteration in the text:

א alef is silent, pronounce the vowel under it or following it

ב	bet = b
ב	vet = v
ג	gi'-mel = hard g
ד	da'-let = d
ה	hei = h
ו	vav (as a consonant) = v
ז	za'-yin = z
ח	chet = ch (guttural, as in <u>loch</u> , <u>Bach</u> , <u>Chag Sameach</u>)
ט	tet = t
י	yud or yod = y or i (ee sound - like young & free)
כ	kaf = k
כ	chaf = ch (guttural, as in Scottish <u>loch</u> , J.S. <u>Bach</u>)
ל	la'-med = l
מ	mem = m
נ	nun = n
ס	sa'-mech = s
ע	a'-yin = silent pronounce the vowel under it or following it
פ	pei = p
פ	fei = f
צ	tza'-di = tz or ts
ק	kuf = k
ר	resh = r (rolled or guttural, actually a vocalized "chet" ח)

שׁ shin = sh

ס sin = s

ת tav = t

You will see dots in consonants other than bet, kaf, pei, and shin/sin in the Hebrew text, but they do not change the pronunciation in modern Hebrew. A dot in a consonant is called a dagesh (da-gesh').

Consonants which have a different form as the final letter in a word, but sound the same:

chaf : ך (כ)

mem : ם (מ)

nun : ן (נ)

fei : ף (פ)

tsadi : ץ (צ)

Description of the Method

The Hebrew line has the same words as the transliteration and translation English lines. The Hebrew line reads right to left. You can count the words from right to left in Hebrew and match, for example, the third word from the right in Hebrew with the third word from the left in English to compare them.

There is an accent mark on the transliterated word which shows the stressed syllable. It is denoted in the Hebrew by a line over the consonant of the stressed syllable ם̄, if the stress is not on the last syllable. If there is no stress mark at all in the Hebrew, the stress is on the last syllable.

An underline is used to show a part of the word which has its own meaning (located under it and also underlined), but is still a part of the one Hebrew word. Hebrew likes to make small modifiers part of the main word, either at the beginning or at the end.

A hyphen (-) is used in the transliteration to separate syllables for pronunciation. A single accent mark is used in the transliteration to show the stressed syllable (').

"Adonai" is not translated in this work. It is one way to indicate the name of G-d. Klein noted that some scholars think that Adonai is derived from the root "dalet-yud-nun", which means "to judge". So Adonai could be translated as "my judge". It is often translated as HaShem (the name) and Lord. In modern Hebrew "a-do-ni" means "sir".

IMPORTANT: At the bottom of each page is the location of that text in The Rabbinical Council of America Edition of the Artscroll Siddur for the Orthodox section, the Siddur Sim Shalom (1985 and 1998 Editions) for the Conservative section, and Gates of Prayer for the Reform section.