

SECTION A

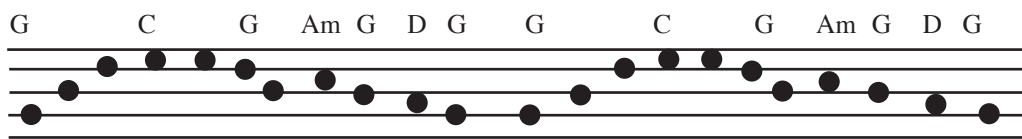


ALPHABET AND PUNCTUATION SECOND EDITION

HBRW

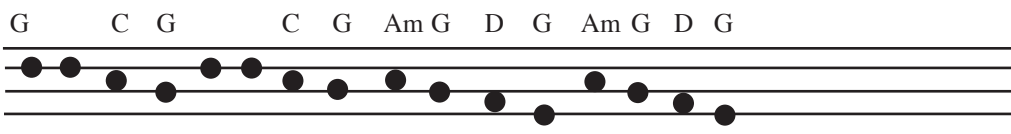
Th lphbt s hrd t mstr;
 Rdng bck t frnt's dsstr.
 Nlss h's rd the clssfds,
 whr trth, bbrvtd hds,
 th wld-b rdr f the Bbl,
 prsntd wth th txt, s lbl
 t trn nd rn wth shrks nd hwls-
 th Hbrw Scrptrs hv n vwls!

AN ALEPH-BET SONG



Aleph Bet Gimel Dalet, Hey Vav (*Hey Vav*), Zay'n Het Tet, Yod Kaf Lamed, Mem Nun (*Mem Nun*)

א ב ג ד ה ו ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ מ נ



Samech Ay'n Pe, Tsade Qof Resh, Shin Tav (*Shin Tav*) Shin Tav (*Shin Tav*).

ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת ש ת ש ת ש ת

Aleph Bet
 Gimmel Dalet,
 Hey Vav (*Hey Vav*),
 Zay'n Het Tet,
 Yod Kaf Lamed,
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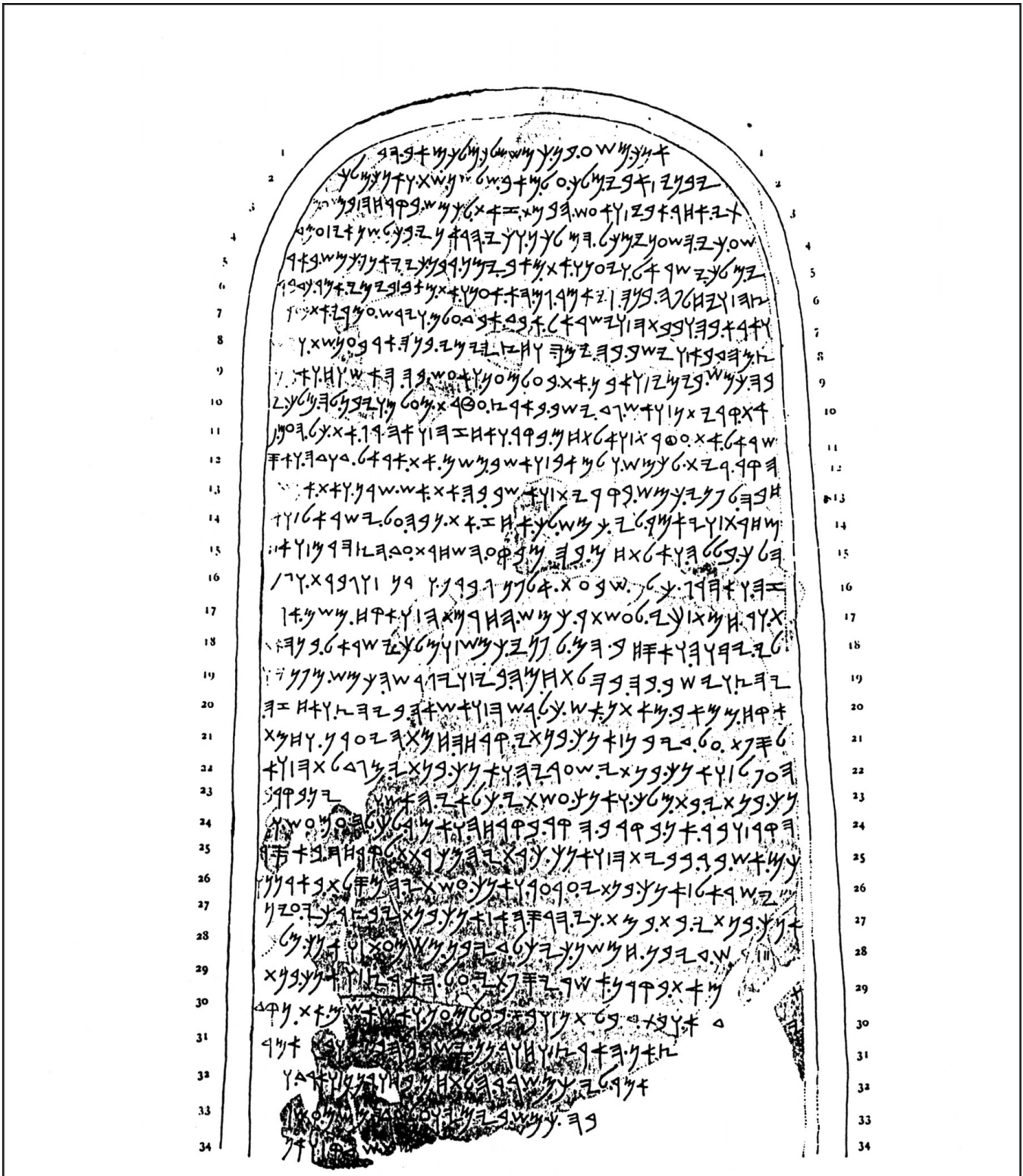
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ABBREVIATIONS

BH	Biblical Hebrew.
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.</i>
MNK	<i>A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar</i> by van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze.
PHK	<i>Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar</i> , by Page H. Kelley.
JAH	<i>A Basic Introduction To Biblical Hebrew</i> by Jo Ann Hackett.
JW	<i>A Practical Grammar For Classical Hebrew</i> by J. Weingreen.
PDSBH	<i>Pocket Dictionary For The Study Of Biblical Hebrew</i> by Todd J. Murphy.
VP	<i>Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide</i> by Miles V. Van Pelt.
YO	<i>The Essentials Of Biblical Hebrew</i> by Kyle M. Yates, edited by John Joseph Owens.

THE HEBREW ALPHABET, ACCENTS & OTHER MARKS



A high-contrast image of the Moabite Mesha' stela from soon after the time of King Solomon, showing an early phase in the development of the paleo-Hebrew script. The stone was a monument erected by king Mesha of Moab to commemorate his victories over Israel. The broken but mostly restored stone is now in the Louvre.

THE HEBREW ALPHABET, ACCENTS & OTHER MARKS



The paleo-Hebrew script used on the Moabite stela show on the previous page. Images taken from Ada Yardeni, *The Book Of Hebrew Script: History, Paleography, Script Styles, Calligraphy & Design*, (London, UK: The British Library, 1991).

THE HEBREW ALPHABET, ACCENTS & OTHER MARKS

ALPHABET CHART

	Letter Name	Pronunciation	Print	Block	Script
1	Aleph	Silent letter	א	א	א
2	Bet	B as in Baal, V as in Vine	ב	ב	ב
3	Gimel	G as in Gehenna	ג	ג	ג
4	Dalet	D as in Delilah	ד	ד	ד
5	Hey	H as in Hallelujah	ה	ה	ה
6	Vav	V as in Vanity	ו	ו	ו
7	Zayin	Z as in Zion	ז	ז	ז
8	Het*	CH as in BaCH	ח	ח	ח
9	Tet	T as in Talent	ט	ט	ט
10	Yod	Y as in Yiddish	י	י	י
11	Kaf	K as in Kish CH as in BaCH <small>Final always fricative, and with silent sheva.</small>	כ	כ	כ
12	Lamed	L as in Lord	ל	ל	ל
13	Mem	M as in Mary	מ	מ	מ
14	Nun	N as in Nazereth	נ	נ	נ
15	Samech	S as in Sun	ס	ס	ס
16	Ayin	Silent letter	ע	ע	ע
17	Pe	P as in Passion PH as in graPH	פ	פ	פ
18	Tsade	TS as in TSar	צ	צ	צ
19	Qof	K as in Kohelet	ק	ק	ק
20	Resh	R as in Rabbi	ר	ר	ר
21	Shin	S as in Sin, SH as in SHade <small>Pronounced as S when dotted on the upper left, and SH when dotted on the upper right.</small>	ש	ש	ש
22	Tav	T as in Toil	ת	ת	ת

HEBREW FULL VOWELS

NAME	SIGN	SOUNDED AS
Qamatz (Kamatz Gadol, Qamets)		a as in yacht
Tsere (Tzere)		e as in entree
Tsere Yod		ey as in they
Hiriq Gadol (Hirik Male)		i as in brief
Shuruq (Shuruk, Shureq)		u as in blue
Holam (Holem)		o as in go
Vav Holam		o as in row
.....		
Qamatz Qatan (Kamatz Katan, Kamats Hatuf, Qamets Hatuf)		o as in dog/ o as in more
Patah (Patach)		a as in yacht
Segol (Seghol)		e as in bed
Hiriq (Hireq, Chirik Chaser)		i as in bin
Qubbuts (Qibbuts, Kubutz)		u as in blue

L
O
N
G

NOTE: Sometimes ם is not a holam but a vav-holam and should be read as vō; cf. מְצוֹרֶת in Neh 9.14 and מְצוֹרֶת in Pro 10.8. The vav-holam in the latter word is discerned by knowing the word, and by the fact that every syllable must begin with a consonant (the syllable םת cannot begin with an ō sound).

S
H
O
R
T

NOTE: The vowel signs consist of the marks in regular black tone. The grayed-out ם is only provided to show the position of the vowel marks. **Also, the h's (and ch's) in in vowel names are gutturals, except in Shuruq and Seghol.**

HEBREW REDUCED VOWELS

NAME	SIGN	PRONUNCIATION
Sheva (Shva, Shwa)	◌ְ	The sheva is sounded as a very short [e], as in <i>happening</i> , except when it is silent. Modern Israelis pronounce the three hataf vowels as <i>uh</i>, <i>eh</i>, and <i>o</i> (as in <i>pot</i>) respectively.
Hatef Patah	◌ֲ	
Hatef Segol	◌ֳ	
Hatef Qamatz	◌ִ	

NOTE: The vowel signs consist of the marks in regular black tone. The grayed-out ◌◌ is only provided to show the position of the vowel marks.

SPECIAL VOWELS

PATAH FURTIVE

Normally, a vowel sign appearing under a word is read *after* the consonant above it. This rule has an exception: if the final consonant of a word is a guttural and follows a full accented vowel, then a ◌ֲ (patah) under that final consonant is *furtive* and is read *first*. The word רֹאחַ, for example, is pronounced roo/ach, not roo/cha.

QAMATZ QATAN (QAMETS HATUF)

Written identically to the normal qamatz (*qamatz rachabh*), ◌ִ, the qamatz qatan is a short vowel and is recognized by the fact that **it appears in a closed, unaccented syllable**. By contrast, the regular qamatz appears in an open syllable, or in a closed *and* accented syllable. Qamatz Qatan occurs in כָּל (Gen 1.21), אֶכְלֶה, חֶכְמָה (Gen 2.17) and שְׁמֵרָה (Psa 121.7). In some of these instances, whether or not the qamatz appears in an open or closed syllable depends upon whether the associated sheva is vocal or silent, and vice versa!

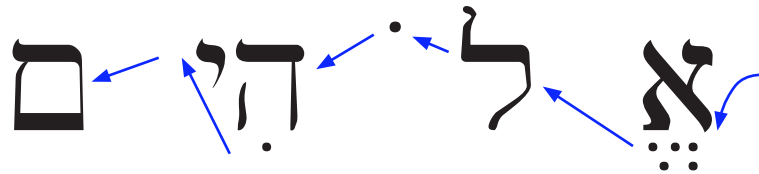
SHURUQ (SHUREQ)

The ◌ֿ sign can function either as a *shuruq* or as a doubled *vav* (with dagesh). If it follows a consonant, it is a *shuruq* (e.g. בְּרוּךְ); if it follows a short vowel, it is a doubled *vav*, and should have a vowel following (צִוֶּה). In the word קִוּוּ (Isa 51.5) the first ◌ֿ follows a *patah* and so is a doubled *vav*; the second ◌ֿ thus follows a *vav* and so is a *shuruq*.

HEBREW VOWEL POINTS

Spoken Hebrew employed vowel *sounds* from the beginning, but the ancient alphabet used no vowel *signs*. The pronunciation of Hebrew words, written only with consonants, was passed down orally. When Hebrew scholars of the Middle Ages finally decided that the vowel sounds for words in the Scriptures had to be signified to preserve the proper pronunciation for subsequent generations, they realized that they could not add any letters to the 22-sign alphabet because the words and letters of Scripture were sacred!¹ Neither the spelling of the words, nor the *number of their letters*, could be changed. Therefore, rather than add letters to the alphabet (as the Greeks had), Hebrew scholars invented a system of vowel points, tiny symbols, that could be placed below or above the Hebrew consonants to indicate vowel sounds *without changing the traditional spelling of words* in the Scriptures. Around AD 500, several vowel pointing systems were developed, frequently giving different sounds to a text! The Tiberian pointing system eventually became the most popular, and has been used in Hebrew Bibles since the thirteenth century.²

To read the words in modern editions of the Hebrew Scriptures, the reader's eye must now track up and down and across to see each vowel and consonant (not to mention accent marks!). To read the word *God*, אֱלֹהִים, for example (enlarged below), the eye must begin on the right, noting the the *aleph* and moving downward to see the vowel points, *hateph segol* (E) under it, then move upward to the left to take in the consonant *lamed* (L). From there, the eye must move slightly to the left to take in the dot above the top line (O), and then move left to see the *hey* (H). Then the eye must see the dot below the *hey* and move upward to notice that it is the first mark in the diphthong *chiriq gadol* (I). Finally, the eye must move left for the final letter *mem* (M). Thus, we read E-L-O-H-I-M (except that we've read it the other direction, M-I-H-O-L-E). I only describe this process in detail for your understanding; your eye will track this way naturally once you memorize the alphabet and vowel points.



1 Although, from around the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, scribes began to use some consonants to represent vowels, namely, *aleph*, *hey*, *vav* and *yod*. These letters, when used to help the reader recognize vowel sounds, are called *matres lectionis*, “mothers of reading.”

2 The Tiberian pointing system has been preserved in what is known today as the Masoretic text.



HORNED OR SHINING?

When Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the tablets of the law, did his face *shine* (Ex 34.29-30, NASB), or was he *horned* (*cornuta*) as in the Latin Vulgate? The answer depends upon the vowels one chooses to go with the word קרן. The word קרן means “to send out rays,” but קרן means “horn.” Jerome apparently chose the latter (and more common) meaning of the Hebrew word, and translated it “horned” in what became the Vulgate version of the Bible that Michelangelo used.



Michelangelo's *Moses*

Photos by Roderick Graciano,
June 7, 2013, Rome, Italy

HEBREW DIPHTHONGS

NAME	SIGN	NOTES
Patah Yod	יְ	ai as in <i>chai</i> — Patah Yod functions as a long vowel in that a sheva following it will be vocal
Qamatz Yod	יָ	a as in <i>father</i> but held slightly longer toward ou in ought or ai in <i>aisle</i>
Holam Yod	יֹ	oy
Qamatz Vav	וָ	av
Qamatz Yod Vav	וֹי	Silent yod , so pronounced av
Tsere Yod	יֵ	ey as in <i>they</i>
Segol Yod	יִ	ei as in <i>sleigh</i>
Hiriq Gadol (Hirik Male)	יִ	i as in think
Shuruk Yod	יֵי	oo-ie or ü-ie as in <i>bouy</i>
Qamatz Hey (Qamatz Male)	הָ	ah
Vav with furtive Patah	וַ	ü-ah

NOTE: The vowel signs consist of the marks in regular black tone. The grayed-out וְ and וַ are only provided to show the position of the vowel marks. **Also, the h's (and ch's) in vowel names are gutturals, except in Shuruk Yod and Qamatz Hey.**

THE GUTTURAL CONSONANTS

The guttural consonants are a group of letters that are articulated at the back of the throat, namely: א, ה, ח, ע and ק. These letters cannot take a *dagesh forte*. This is why the definite article (which is normally spelled with a following *dagesh forte*) is spelled differently when it precedes a guttural letter.

The gutturals always take a compound sheva (*hataf* vowel) instead of a simple vocal sheva. Usually, guttural letters take a *hataf patah* (ֿֿ). Initial aleph, however, often takes the *hataf segol* (ֿֿֿ), and in rare instances a guttural will take a *hataf qamatz* (ֿֿֿֿ).

A guttural letter will often require a *furtive patach* when immediately following an accented full vowel, as in אֶהָ.

READING THE SHEVA

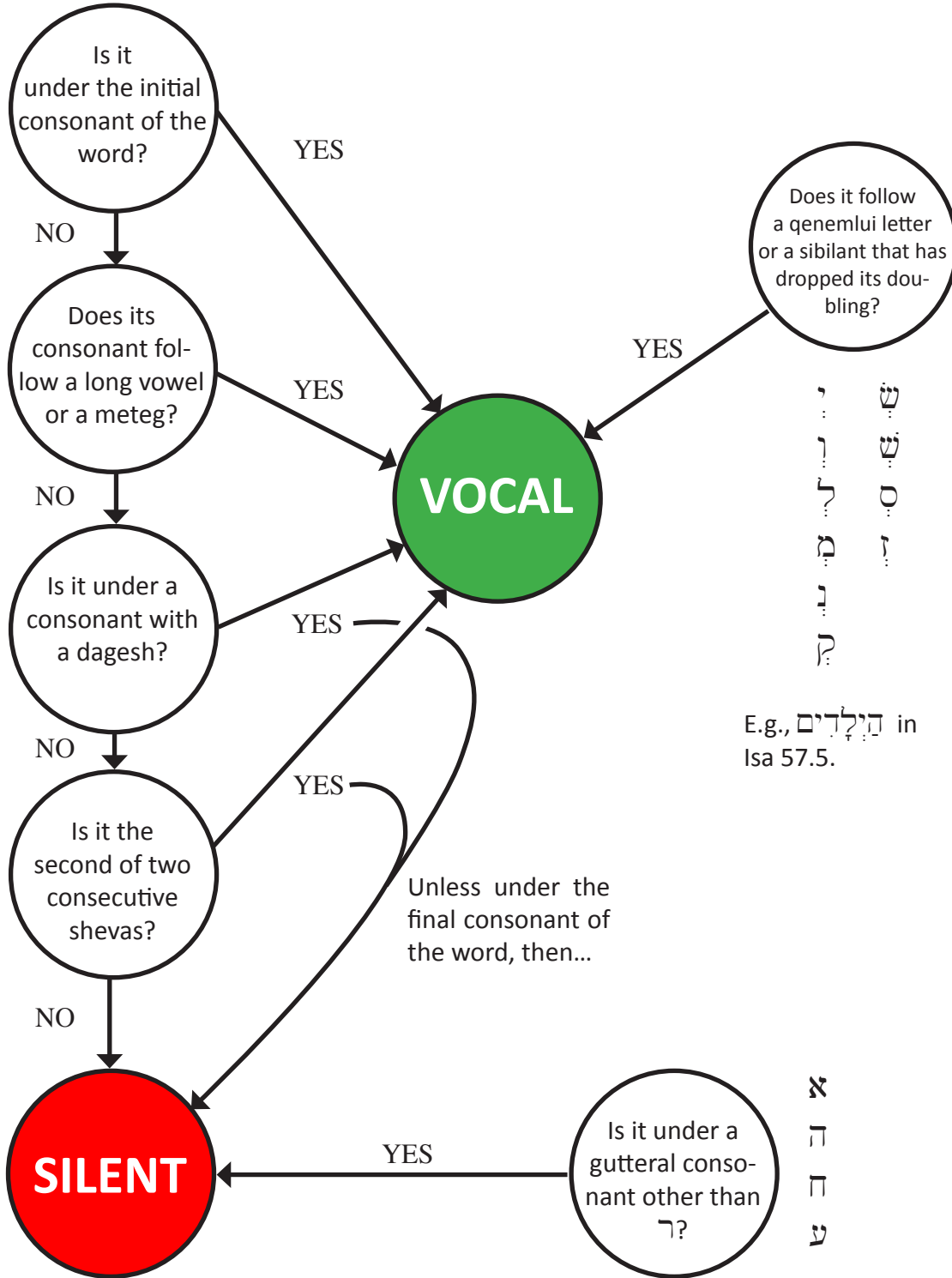
The Sheva is vocal when:

- It is the beginning vowel in a syllable, whether at the beginning or in the middle of a word.
- In the middle of a word (but not at the end), it is the second of two shevas together, or under a letter which is doubled (which is the equivalent) with a *dagesh forte* (the *dagesh forte* is distinguished by the fact that it is preceded immediately by a vowel, regardless of whether it appears in a “b^eged k^efet” letter).
- In the middle of a word, it follows a syllable with a long vowel or a syllable with an accent.

The Sheva is silent when:

- It appears at the end of a word or of a closed syllable.
- In the middle of a word, it follows an unaccented short vowel (unless it appears under a doubled consonant, and thus becomes a double sheva).
- In the middle of a word, it is the first of two shevas together.
- There is a *dagesh lene* in the consonant immediately following the sheva (as in אֶבֶר).

VOCALIZING THE SHEVA



WHAT A DAGESH DOES

DAGESH LENE (DAGESH KAL)

The dagesh lene is a dot placed in the bosom of the six letters, ב, ג, ד, כ, פ, ת, which signifies a retention of the hard pronunciation of the consonants. It changes “fricatives” into “stops.” These letters are often called “b^eged k^efet” letters (בְּגֵד כְּפֵת בְּגֵד), or less reverently, BiG DuCk FaT letters. **Dagesh lene is never preceded immediately by a vowel sound** (it may be preceded by a *silent* sheva as in מְדַבֵּר).

DAGESH FORTE (DAGESH CHAZAK)

The dagesh forte is a dot which may be placed in the bosom of any letter, except five guttural consonants, א, ח, ה, ע, א. It serves to double the letter. **The dagesh forte may be distinguished from a dagesh lene in that the dagesh forte is always preceded immediately by a vowel, whereas dagesh lene is never preceded immediately by a vowel sound.**

BIG DUCK FAT LETTERS

STOPS

FRICATIVES

בּ

B as in Boy

גּ

G as in Girl

דּ

D as in Door

כּ

K as in Kitty

פּ

P as in Pop

תּ

T as in Tall

ב

V as in Vine

ג

Gh as in Ugh

ד

Th as in There

כ/ך

Ch as in Bach

פ/ף

Ph as in Phone

ת

Th as in Think

NOTE: Final Kaf can take a dagesh, as in the final words of Gen 12.1; 21.16; Psa 73.27.

NOTE: The **blue** letters above are the ones which still have a fricative variation in the pronunciation of modern Hebrew. The others have all become stops whether they have a dagesh or not.

METEG, MAQQEPH & MAPIK

- A *meteg* (or *metheg* or *methegh* = “bridle”), also referred to as *ma’arik* (“lengthener”) and *ga’ya* (“raising”), is a **secondary accent** indicating a (very brief) pause, *and that* the word will also have an additional accent. A *metheg* appears as a small perpendicular stroke under the syllable, to the left of the vowel to be accented, as in אֶזְרָחַ (in BHS it sometimes appears to the right of the vowel). The *meteg* should not be confused with the *sillûq*, which looks the same, but only appears under the last word of the verse.

The *meteg* is used with the *qamets* in any position to ensure that it will **not** be interpreted as a *qamets hatuph*. In these cases the *metheg* closes the syllable (keeping the syllable open and the vowel long), and indicates that the following *sheva* is vocal (as in קָטַלְתָּ).

The *meteg* appears with:

- all vowels that precede a consonant with a *hateph* vowel,
 - short vowels appearing anomalously in open syllables before the primary accent,
 - all long vowels that precede a pretonic vocal *sheva*,
 - *qamets* and *sere* in open pretonic or propretonic syllables where a *hateph* vowel normally appears,
 - long vowels in a closed syllable that precedes a *maqquph*,
 - a short vowel in what appears to be a closed syllable to indicate that the normal doubling of the following consonant has been dropped: אֶזְרָחַ instead of אֶזְרָחַחַ.
- A *maqquph* is a small horizontal bar used to join words which are connected in thought or utterance. E.g., כִּי-טוֹב.
 - A *mappik* is a dot sometimes placed in the letter הֵּ (hey) when it is final, to indicate that the *hey* is to be treated as a consonant (guttural) and not as a silent vowel letter. E.g., יְגַבֵּהּ.

FUN WITH HEBREW ACCENTS

The accent marks in our Hebrew scriptures aid not only in reading but also in interpretation. As F. C. Putnam explains,

Every word without maqgef in the Hebrew Bible is marked with at least one sign in addition to its vowel points. These accents, inserted by the Masoretes (c. 500–1000 AD) have three functions: (1) to indicate whether a word should be joined to or separated from the following word; (2) to mark the accented or “tone” syllable; and (3) to indicate a word’s melody for singing (cantillating) the text.

The first function means that the accents can help us read and interpret the text, since they outline the verse’s structure. The interpretation that they represent—given the Masoretes’ attention to the text, and the antiquity of their views—should not be overlooked or casually dismissed.¹

Disjunctive Accents

The major disjunctive accents are like punctuation marks that signal a pause. They often mark the last word in a phrase, clause or other unit of thought. They include:

Atnach (אַתְּנַחֵ) : Divides a verse into its two major logical sections, regardless of their word length, and marks its word as “in pause.”²

Zaqef Qaton (זָקֵף קָטָן) and **Zaqef Gadol** (זָקֵף גָּדוֹל) : Mark the major division of each of the verse halves separated by the **Atnach**.

Silluq with **Soph Pasuq** (סוֹפֵּן פָּסוּק) : These marks always go together, under and after (respectively) the final word in a verse (but not necessarily the end of the sentence) and put the word “in pause.” Don’t confuse the **Silluq** with the **Metheg** which is identical in appearance (see p. A-16).

Conjunctive Accents

Generally, the conjunctive accents unite only words closely connected in sense, like a noun and an adjective (the closest possible connection between two words is indicated by the **Maqqeph**, see p. A-6). The conjunctive accents include:

Munach (מְנַחֵ)

Mehuppak (מְהוּפָק)

Merka, aka **Merekha** (מֶרְכָּא)

Petucha And Setuma

The **Petucha** (marked with a פְּטוּחָא) indicates the end of an open paragraph, i.e., a paragraph after which the following text begins on a new line. The **Setuma** (marked by a סְתוּמָא) marks the end of a closed paragraph, i.e., a paragraph after which the following text continues on the same line.

¹ Frederic Clarke Putnam, *Hebrew Bible Insert: A Student’s Guide to the Syntax of Biblical Hebrew* (Quakertown, PA: Stylus Publishing, 2002), p. 51.

² A word “in pause” must have a long vowel in its accented or tone syllable, and therefore, if required, the vowels of a word in pause will be lengthened.

THE HEBREW ALPHABET, ACCENTS & OTHER MARKS

Remember that the accent marks in our Hebrew scriptures are intended to aid not only in reading but also in interpretation. However, for us beginners, there are certain accent marks that are confusing because (a) they consist of multiple marks, and/or (b) they look like a vowel point at first glance. These include:

Other Disjunctive Accents

The counterpart to **Zaqef Qaton** (ֿ), namely, **Zaqef Gadol** (ֿֿ): These accents mark the major division of each of the verse halves separated by the **Atnach** (ֿֿֿ). The Zaqef Gadol consist of two dots stacked vertically, adjacent to a vertical stroke. Don't mistake the two dots for a **sheva**; the reduced vowel *sheva* always appears *under* a consonant, not above it.

Tevir (ֿֿֿ): This accent, composed of a slanted stroke, followed by a dot, has often made us think we were seeing a *hiriq* vowel (as with the word, אֲדָרָם, in Gen 1.26). The name of this accent (meaning “broken”), along with the name of the accent **Darga**, appears in a Hebrew saying, equivalent to our proverb, “Pride goes before a fall”: אַחֲרַי דָּרְגָא תְּבִיר = After Darga (to rise up) comes Tebîr (breaking = destruction).

Legarmeh (ֿֿֿֿ): This is the weakest disjunctive accent, comprised of a **Munach** (ֿֿֿ) and a following **Paseq** (|).

Segolta (ֿֿֿֿֿ): This accent always follows its word (and so is called a *postpositive*), whether or not the final syllable is stressed. In form it mirrors the **Segol** vowel (ֿֿֿ), reversing the arrangement of dots, and always appearing above the consonants (instead of below like the vowel). It indicates the first of two main pauses in a verse. The **Segolta** is always paired with a preceding **Zarqa** (ֿֿֿֿֿ) which is also postpositional. See the combination in Gen 8.21:

וַיִּרְחַת יְהוָה אֶת־רִיחַ תְּנִיחָהּ

Qarne Farah (ֿֿֿֿֿֿ), “horns of a cow,” a fourth-level disjunctive accent.

Another Interesting Accent

The rare **Shalsholet** (ֿֿֿֿֿֿֿ), normally followed at the end of the word by the vertical line of the **Paseq** (aka, *psik*, *pasek*). The **Shalsholet** appears four times in the Pentateuch and is believed to convey inner turmoil on the part of the subject (Gen 19.16; 24.12; 39.8; Lev 8.23).

Accent Under A Doubled Consonant

The question arises as to which syllable is emphasized when an accent is place under a consonant doubled by a dagesh, as in אֲמָנוּ or מְנוּחָהּ (Proverbs 10.1,2). The rule is that “The accent sign is normally placed above or below the first consonant of the accented syllable.”¹ Therefore, since the first consonant of a doubled pair *ends a syllable*, the stress must go on the syllable *begun* by the second consonant of the doubled consonant pair.

1 Van der Merwe, Christo, Jackie Naudé, Jan Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, electronic ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).