



## Read the Bible in Hebrew

This is a user-intensive way to learn Biblical Hebrew. It isn't easy. It will take many hours of difficult concentration. But it works.

If you can think of yourself as a tank, and you're ready to growl through verses as you learn, eventually you *will be* reading the Bible in Hebrew.

# HEBREW ALPHABET CHART

ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	ב	א
Zayin 7	Vav 6	Hey 5	Daled 4	Gimmel 3	Vet 2	Bet 2	Aleph 1
נ	מ	ל	כ	כ	י	ט	ח
Nun 50	Mem 40	Lamed 30	Chof 20	Kof 20	Yud 10	Tet 9	Chet 8
ש	ר	ק	צ	פ	פ	ע	ס
Shin 300	Reish 200	Kuf 100	Tzadi 90	Fey 80	Pey 80	Ayen 70	Samech 60
ץ	ף	ו	ם	ך	ת	ת	ש
Final Tzadi 90	Final Pey 80	Final Nun 50	Final Mem 40	Final Chof 20	Suf 400	Tuf 400	Sin 300

**ISRAEL 365**  
 israel365.co.il   
 Shooteq - Oo   
 Cholem - Oh   
 Shva - E   
 Kibbutz - Oo   
 Chirik - Ee   
 Tsere - Ee   
 Segol - Eh   
 Palach - A   
 Kamatz - Ah

Hebrew reads from right to left. Some people think that Hebrew is backward. But since Hebrew is about 3,000 years older than English, guess which one is backward? Greek came from Hebrew and the first Greek was also right to left. Then Greek changed into boustrophedon, which means as an ox treads while plowing a field, right to left, left to right, right to left, and so on, and finally Greek became left to right. Latin came from Greek. And English comes from Latin. (F. F. Bruce, [\*The Books and the Parchments\*](#)). All these languages are connected, and you will often recognize English words as you learn Hebrew.

## Free or Not So Free

First decide if you want to learn Hebrew for free or spend some money.

If you want free, use the chart above with an on-line resource such as [Blue Letter Bible](#). This link shows Genesis 1.1. You can open to the Hebrew for the verse by clicking the Tools tab to the left of the verse number. You get the verse in English and Hebrew, plus the key root words and their approximate translation and transliteration. Click on the Strong's number and you get an expanded definition of the root word plus all its appearances in the Bible.

For not so free, I recommend you buy Dr. Danny Ben Gigi's Hebrew – English Phonetic Bible, available at his company, [Hebrew World](#). Dr. Ben Gigi is a native Israeli Hebrew speaker and he taught biblical Hebrew at Arizona State University for 15 years before Hebrew World. The transliteration is his, verse by verse, so you can trust it. Dr. Gigi does simplify the transliteration slightly, which helps beginners. As you get better at reading Hebrew, you can adjust your browser or screen so that you can't see the English or transliteration, but it's there if you need it. I've heard some people say they don't need the transliteration, but it really does help when learning pronunciation. Here's what Dr. Ben Gigi's program looks like on my iPad:

Genesis 1

בראשית פרק א  
Genesis Chapter 1

א. בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

1. Be•re•sheet ba•ra Elohim et ha•sha•ma•yim ve•et ha•a•retz.  
1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

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ב. וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹ וּבְהוֹ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

2. Ve•ha•a•retz hai•ta to•hoo va•vo•hoo ve•cho•shech al-p'nei te•hom  
ve•roo•ach Elohim me•ra•che•fet al-p'nei ha•ma•yim.  
2. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And a wind from God moved upon the face of the waters.

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ג. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי-אוֹר וַיְהִי-אוֹר:

3. Va•yo•mer Elohim ye•hi-or vay•hi-or.  
3. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.

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ד. וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ:

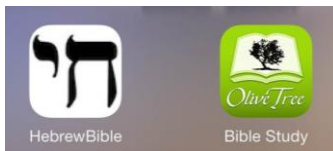
4. Va•yar Elohim et-ha•or ki-tov va•yav•del Elohim bein ha•or oo•vein

## Why are Root Words Important?

Root words are normally three letters. Prefixes and suffixes are added to the root to show gender, possession, and tense, among others. So one Hebrew word with prefixes and suffixes might translate into two or as many as six English words.

A simple example is the first word of the Bible, **בראשית** Be-re-sheet, which translates to In the beginning. Go to the Blue Letter Bible for this verse, click on the Tools tab, then click on H7225, the Strong's number. There you will see that the root **ראשית** (with a different transliteration) means first, beginning, best, chief. The prefix **ב** bet means in. The is implied. So the first Hebrew word of the Bible translates to three English words, In the beginning.

You have to be connected to the Internet to use Blue Letter Bible. If you want to be able to study off-line, you need to spend more money. [Power Bible](#) is a CD under \$10 which gives you more information than you will probably need in this lifetime. The CD downloads to your computer so you don't have to keep the CD with you. For tablets (and for smart phones if you have really good eyes), my two favorite apps are Olive Tree in the New King James with Strong's version and Hebrew Bible, which also has Strong's. Both of these can be used off-line. These are what their icons look like in the app store and on my iPad.



If I were to start all over, I might use the Accordance Bible. It has a Bible app which breaks down the Hebrew word more than a normal Strong's, telling you, for example, "second person feminine," which is a great help when learning grammar. It is more expensive, about \$80. This is what its icon looks like.



## More Resources

[Google Translate](#) is a fun and free on-line resource that's constantly improving. You can input an English word or phrase and translate into Hebrew or do the reverse.

To input Hebrew into your computer, you need to active the Hebrew keyboard. This is done from Settings on an iPad. For a Windows computer, go to Control Panel, Region and Language, Keyboards, and add the Hebrew keyboard. With a newer Windows system, this will automatically enable right to left typing. You switch back and forth between entering English and Hebrew by pressing Alt-Shift on the left side only of the keyboard. When you do this, you will see the EN icon on the lower right of the screen change to HE and then back again.

If you want to follow the Torah portions which were put into place at the Great Assembly under Ezra 2,500 years ago, which means **ישוע** Yeshua followed them, you can find a current schedule at [Torah Portions](#).

After I read through the Torah portions in Hebrew for one year, friends gave me a [Torah scroll](#). This was like a cold shower shock. It could take ten minutes just to find where I had finished reading the last time. There are no book titles, chapter headings, or verse numbers. But my Hebrew reading ability took a big jump the second year when I read the portions the second and third times, first in Ben Gigi's program and then in the scroll. By the end of the second year, I didn't have a problem finding my way around the scroll. Now I'm reading out of the Hebrew Bible app shown above for the fourth time and that's getting easy. So this program works. It just takes effort and time on your part. If you keep the commitment, you'll be blessed!

On the next page are screen shots of Olive Tree and Hebrew Bible, each open to Genesis 1.





## Patience!

When I started reading Torah in Hebrew the first time, I felt like I was tearing my hair out. In fact, I'm mostly bald now! I wanted to put it off, but I knew that if I just stuck with it, it would be much easier after a year. And it was. And better the second and third years. I'm glad I didn't wait. You may feel like your head is overheating, but stick with it and you'll do fine.

A support group helps. The first year I was on my own, but I knew I might quit the second year without fellowship, so we started a Hebrew Torah group at our congregation.

## Let's Start

Here is Genesis 1.1 from Dr. Ben Gigi's program, showing the Hebrew, the transliteration, and the translation.

א. בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

1. Be•re•sheet ba•ra Elohim et ha•sha•ma•yim ve•et ha•a•retz.

1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The first letter, as you see on your Hebrew chart, is **ב** bet, which here is the prefix and preposition meaning in. The original Hebrew did not have vowels. When vowels were added to the text to make it easier to read, they were added usually below the letters or sometimes above and occasionally in the middle in a way that would not disturb the original text. So under the **ב** you see the vowel shva. In most cases, the right thing to do with a shva vowel is just pronounce the sound of the consonant. Here, just say "beh." That's the first syllable.

The second syllable is **רֵא** with the tsere vowel under the **ר** resh, followed by the silent **א** aleph. This is an example of Dr. Gigi's transliteration simplification. Just say "re" while rolling the r. There are resources you can look up on-line to get more into depth with these vowels, but you would be understood by a Hebrew speaker if you follow Dr. Gigi's simpler method.

The third and final syllable of the first word is **שֵׁית** with the chirik vowel under the **ש** shin (when the **ש** has the dot over the right it's pronounced shin, when the dot is over the left it's pronounced sin). Chirik is the ee sound. The **י** yod is not normally silent, but it is here after the chirik. The final letter of the syllable is **ת** tav. So this syllable is pronounced sheet.

Be-re-sheet. You just read the first word of the Bible!

The rest follows the same pattern. Remember you're a tank, growling your way through the Torah, word by word, verse by verse, portion by portion.

## More Resources

Do a search for Handy-Dandy Hebrew Grammar Chart by Shawn Madden and you'll find the clearest Hebrew grammar I've seen. You may find yourself referring to it often to see what various prefixes and suffixes mean. For practical use, the Qatal (Perfect) and Yiqtol (Imperfect) forms of the verbs will carry you through about 70% of verb usage.

I've also enjoyed various Hebrew programs, books, songs, and the daily emails from [Israel365](http://Israel365.com).

## Treasure Hunting

I hope you find treasure in your Hebrew reading of Torah. **ישוע** says that every teacher of Torah who is instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old. Today, we are more likely instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven and need to study Torah to find the treasures.

Feel free to write if you have comments about this plan or your progress.

שלום

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