

# Reading Classical Hebrew

## Supplementary Material

This document consists of replacement pages, additional pages, and modifications to existing pages of *The First Hebrew Primer*. I suggest that you print the new pages and insert them into your bound copy of the *Primer*. You might also want to cut out the modifications and paste them into your bound copy of the *Primer* on the pages where they go. In class I will be referring to these pages rather than to the textbook pages that they replace or modify.

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## The Definite Article

In English the word “a” or “an,” which designates *any one thing* of a kind, such as “a book” or “an idea,” is called the *indefinite article*. Hebrew has *no* indefinite article, so depending on context  $\text{בַּיִת}$  can mean either “house” or “a house.” In English the word “the,” which refers to *a particular thing*, such as “the king,” is called a *definite article*. In Hebrew, the definite article is the prefix  $\text{ה}$  attached to a noun, usually with a patach vowel and followed by a dagesh in the next letter.

$$\boxed{\text{the} = \text{הַ}}$$

In the examples below, each indefinite noun has a first letter that can take a dagesh.

definite noun	indefinite noun
$\text{הַבַּיִת}$ the house	$\text{בַּיִת}$ a house
$\text{הַמֶּלֶךְ}$ the king	$\text{מֶלֶךְ}$ a king
$\text{הַיָּעָר}$ the young man	$\text{יָעָר}$ a young man
$\text{הַבֵּן}$ the son	$\text{בֵּן}$ a son
$\text{הַדָּבָר}$ the word	$\text{דָּבָר}$ a word

**When the definite article is attached to a word whose first letter can take a dagesh or already has one, the  $\text{ה}$  becomes part of the first syllable.** Recall that when a dagesh appears in a letter that immediately follows a vowel sound (such as the patach of  $\text{ה}$ ) the consonant carrying the dagesh is implicitly doubled and its first implicit occurrence ends the syllable. Attaching the definite article to a noun that begins with a beged-cephet letter *changes* the dagesh that is already present into one that implicitly doubles the letter. These examples from the table above show how this affects the decomposition into syllables.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{hammelech} \quad \text{הַמֶּלֶךְ} &+ \text{מֶ} + \text{לֶ} + \text{כֶּ} = \text{הַמֶּלֶךְ} && \text{the king} \\ \text{habbayit} \quad \text{הַבַּיִת} &+ \text{בַּ} + \text{יַ} + \text{תַּ} = \text{הַבַּיִת} && \text{the house} \end{aligned}$$

If there is a sheva on the first letter of such a word, its replication on the second implicit occurrence of the letter begins a syllable so the sheva is sounded.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{hann'areem} \quad \text{הַנְּאָרְעִים} &+ \text{נְ} + \text{אָ} + \text{רְ} + \text{עִ} = \text{הַנְּאָרְעִים} && \text{the young men} \\ & & \uparrow \quad \uparrow & \uparrow \\ & & \text{sounded} \quad \text{silent} & \text{sounded} \end{aligned}$$

When the definite article is attached to a word whose first letter is a guttural, the ה is a syllable by itself. The letter following the ה cannot acquire a dagesh so it is not implicitly doubled, and in some cases the vowel on the ה is not a patach.

if the word begins with	the definite article is usually
א ע ה	הַ
ח ה	הָ
צ ק ר	הֶ

Here are some examples showing the definite article attached to words that begin with a guttural letter.

<u>definite noun</u>	<u>indefinite noun</u>
הַאִישׁ the man	אִישׁ a man
הָעִיר the city	עִיר a city
הָעָרִים the cities	עָרִים cities
הַרְשָׁעִים the evil ones	רְשָׁעִים evil ones

If there is a sheva on the first letter of such a word, the sheva remains sounded after attaching the definite article.<sup>1</sup> The last example in the table above has this decomposition into syllables.

har'shaeem    עִים + שָׁ + הַ + רְ = הַרְשָׁעִים    the wicked ones

When the definite article is attached to a word whose first letter is ה or ו, that letter does **not** get a dagesh and remains undoubled. The first example below illustrates this rule; the second shows that there are<sup>2</sup> exceptions.

hamvorach    הַ + בָּ + וְ = הַבְּרוּךְ    the blessed one  
 hamm'lacheem    הַ + לְ + הַ + מְ = הַמְּלָכִים    the kings

<sup>1</sup>Miles B. Cohen and Leslie Rubin, *Hebrew Grammar Guides*, 2008, p14. The only guttural letter that can take a sheva is ה.

<sup>2</sup>Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. VanPelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, Third Edition, Zondervan Academic, 2018, §5.5.

### “And” in Hebrew

In English “and” is a separate word; in Hebrew, it is the prefix ׀ attached to a word.

בַּאָבִי and a father                      וְהַמֶּלֶךְ and the king

Before most consonants, the ׀ that means “and” is pointed ׀ with a sounded sheva.

דָּוִד וְאַבְרָהָם וְרוּת      David and Abraham and Ruth  
 דָּוִד עָמַד וְהֵלֵךְ      David stood and he walked  
 הַיָּעָר וְהַיָּעָרָה      the young man and the young woman

Before ׀, ׀, ׀, or ׀ it is spelled ׀

bayn oovat      בֵּן וּבַת      a son and a daughter  
 bayit oov'haymah      הַבַּיִת וְהַחֵמָה      a house and an animal

Before ׀ the ׀ loses its sheva and the ׀ is pointed with a chiriq.

y'rooshalayim      יְרוּשָׁלַיִם      Jerusalem  
 david veerooshalayim      דָּוִד וְיְרוּשָׁלַיִם      David and Jerusalem

Before ׀ it is spelled ׀; before ׀ it is spelled ׀; before ׀ it is spelled ׀.

va'anee      וְאֲנִי      and I  
 ve'emet      אֶמֶת וְאֵל      a word and a truth

Before an accented syllable it is spelled ׀.

yom vaLAILah      יוֹם וְלַיְלָה      day and night

The pronunciation of a word containing ׀, ׀, or ׀ might change when “and” is attached, but that does not affect the meaning of the word. ׀׀׀׀׀ becomes ׀׀׀׀׀ and ׀׀׀׀ becomes ׀׀׀׀׀ (see page 98).



עִבְרִי  
a Hebrew

### Inseparable Prepositions

A *preposition* is a word that expresses a relationship between things. You have already learned the first two prepositions on the left below.

word form	meaning	inseparable form
אֶל	to	אֶל-
מִן	from	מִן-
בְּתוֹךְ	in	בְּ-
כְּמוֹ	like	כְּ-
כִּשְׁשֵׁר	when	כִּשְׁשֵׁר-

Each of these prepositions also has an *inseparable form* as shown on the right. An inseparable preposition is always attached as a prefix to another word.

## Grammatical Persons

In Genesis 1:27 the first person is Adam, but in the technical jargon of grammar the word “person” is used in naming three groups of pronoun forms and the verb inflections corresponding to them. If I am speaking to you about him, then **I** am referred to as the first person in the conversation, **you** are referred to as the second person, and **he** is referred to as the third person. Even in other contexts, the first person is still I or me, the second person is still you, and the third person is still he, she, or they.

The chart on page 51 can be rearranged like this to make it more obvious which Hebrew *subject pronouns* correspond to which grammatical persons.

person	singular		plural	
	masculine	feminine	masculine	feminine
1st	אֲנִי = אֲנִי I	אֲנִי = אֲנִי I	אֲנֵנוּ = אֲנֵנוּ we	אֲנֵנוּ = אֲנֵנוּ we
2nd	אַתָּה you ms	אַתְּ you fs	אַתֶּם you mp	אַתְּן you fp
3rd	הוא he	היא she	הֵם = הֵם they m	הֵן = הֵן they f

You will learn the Hebrew words for the *object pronouns* me, you, him, her, us, and them in Chapter 16.

## Conjugations

of some verbs having roots that end in ה  
from the verb spelling charts on page 371 and 373

	be	do	see	
I	הָיִיתִי	עָשִׂיתִי	רָאִיתִי	אָנִי
you ms	הָיִיתָ	עָשִׂיתָ	רָאִיתָ	לָאִתָּהּ
you fs	הָיִיתְּ	עָשִׂיתְּ	רָאִיתְּ	לָאִתְּ
he	הָיָה	עָשָׂה	רָאָה	הוּא
she	הָיְתָה	עָשְׂתָה	רָאָתָהּ	הִיא
we	הָיִינוּ	עָשִׂינוּ	רָאִינוּ	אֲנִיחֵנוּ
you mp	הָיִיתֶם	עָשִׂיתֶם	רָאִיתֶם	אַתֶּם
you fp	הָיִיתֶן	עָשִׂיתֶן	רָאִיתֶן	אַתֶּן
they	הָיוּ	עָשׂוּ	רָאוּ	הֵם, הֵן

The verbs that go with לָאִתָּהּ end in תָּ, so the verb rhymes with the personal pronoun. Unfortunately, the verbs that go with לָאִתְּ also end with the sound **ta**, now spelled תָּ. The endings are different, but because they sound the same it is easy to confuse the verb forms for לָאִתָּהּ with those for לָאִתְּ. You can remember which ones go with “you ms” and which go with “she” because the ones that go with “she” have *both* the תָּ and the ending הָ that is typical for feminine singular *nouns* (see page 32).

The verbs for הוּא also end in הָ but they lack the תָּ. Those verbs are all made up of just their root letters, and end in הָ only because that happens to be the final root letter.

## Learning Words

In Chapter 7 you learned how to make several verbs from a single root; knowing just a few rules and a few roots lets you manufacture many different words as you need them. But you will find it quicker to just remember the most common verbs along with the many words that are not verbs. To use Hebrew you will need to know lots of words.

The least painful way to acquire vocabulary is by seeing words in context as you read, but it is much faster to learn them by brute memorization. The best way to do that is by repeated copying, but it is almost as effective to use flashcards. Flashcards can be used whenever one gets the chance, so some students carry a set along wherever they go.

Making your own flashcards from 3x5 index stock is best, because you can customize them by, for example, grouping related words on a single card. But that takes time and calligraphic skill, so many students use flashcards that someone else has made. You can buy a set of 335 flashcards from EKS, or you can use the (somewhat more inclusive) flashcards that the instructor will provide for free. The examples on the next two pages show what those look like.

010618

אֱהָל

100603

זָהָב

34322332

שֹׁר  
סָר

(a) tent

gold

(an) officer, commander, captain, chief  
he turned aside

## תַּנְיִיךְ The Hebrew Bible

### תּוֹרָה Torah

בְּרֵאשִׁית	Genesis
שְׁמוֹת	Exodus
וַיִּקְרָא	Leviticus
בְּמִדְבָּר	Numbers
דְּבָרִים	Deuteronomy

### נְבִיאִים Prophets

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	Joshua
שׁוֹפְטִים	Judges
שְׁמוּאֵל א	1 Samuel
שְׁמוּאֵל ב	2 Samuel
מְלָכִים א	1 Kings
מְלָכִים ב	2 Kings
יִשְׁעְיָהוּ	Isaiah
יֵרֵמְיָהוּ	Jeremiah
יְחֶזְקֵאל	Ezekiel
הוֹשֵׁעַ	Hoseah
יוֹאֵל	Joel
עָמוֹס	Amos
עֹבַדְיָה	Obadiah
יוֹנָה	Jonah
מִיכָה	Micah
נַחֲוִים	Nachum
חַבְקֻק	Habakkuk
צְפַנְיָה	Zephaniah
חַגַּי	Haggai
זְכַרְיָה	Zechariah
מַלְאָכִי	Malachi

### כְּתוּבִים Writings

תְּהִלִּים	Psalms
מִשְׁלֵי	Proverbs
אִיּוֹב	Job
שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים	Song of Songs
רוּת	Ruth
אֲיִכָּה	Lamentations
קֹהֵלֶת	Ecclesiastes
אֶסְתֵּר	Esther
דָּנִיֵּאל	Daniel
עֶזְרָא	Ezra
נְחֵמְיָה	Nehemiah
דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים א	1 Chronicles
דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים ב	2 Chronicles



The Tetragrammaton is printed יהוה in the the *Etz Hayim* Chumash but יהוה in the other books discussed in this course. In any book that points the name, or in a Torah scroll where none of the words are pointed, it is easily confused with the word והיה “and it was” or the word יהיה “he will be.”

The phrase יהוה יי אלהים is pronounced “Adonai Eloheem.”

Outside the context of worship, Orthodox Jews speak and write the word שם “the name” in place of the Tetragrammaton (see *The Complete Artscroll Siddur*, page XVIV). Documents containing the Tetragrammaton should be treated respectfully and disposed of in a way that does not result in the destruction of the name. Some congregations maintain a genizah for the storage of worn-out books containing the name, and periodically bury the collected castoffs in a Jewish cemetery.

*Genesis 32:31, Jacob at Jabbok*  
... I have seen God face to face...

*Exodus 7:19*  
... there will be blood in all the land of Egypt and in the [vessels of] wood...

*Ecclesiastes 1:12*  
I, Kohelet, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

*Exodus 15:18*  
The Lord will reign for ever and ever.

# Using a Hebrew Dictionary

The *First Hebrew Primer* contains a Hebrew-English Glossary (pages 405-409) and an English-Hebrew Glossary (pages 410-414). It also explains (pages 361-364) how to use *The Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Brown, Driver, and Briggs (“the BDB”) and it mentions (page 364) the Einspahr *Index* to the BDB. Hebrew words that appear in the Chumash but not in the Primer can in principle be found in the BDB by using its *Index* or by searching its on-line edition, but it is usually possible and always much easier to find them in an ordinary Hebrew dictionary. In a dictionary you can also look up words that are not translated by either the *Primer* or the BDB, including words from the siddur and words from modern Hebrew.

The words in a Hebrew-to-English dictionary are listed in the order of the Hebrew letters, so you will need to know the alephbet before you begin (that will also help you to interpret numbers written using Hebrew letters).

## Three Popular Dictionaries

Most casual students of Hebrew use one or more of the following inexpensive paperback dictionaries.

**Ben-Yehuda’s Pocket English-Hebrew Hebrew-English Dictionary** by Ehud Ben-Yehuda and David Weinstein, Pocket Books, 1964. This classic includes many words from the Bible that do not appear in the other dictionaries listed here, but its typeface is tiny and often so blurry that it is difficult to distinguish between, for example, the vowel tsere ךֿ and the vowel patach ךֿ. Be prepared to use a magnifying glass and sometimes your imagination.

**Oxford English-Hebrew Hebrew-English Dictionary** edited by Ya’acov Levy and Fern Seckbach, Oxford University Press/Kernerman Publishing Ltd and Lonnie Kahn Publishing Ltd, 1995. This new work includes many words from modern Hebrew that do not appear in the other dictionaries listed here, and for some words it helpfully provides related figures of speech. In the Hebrew-to-English portion, Hebrew verbs are as usual listed in the third person masculine singular perfect; however, in the English-to-Hebrew portion, the Hebrew translation of an English verb is annoyingly given as the infinitive instead. The stiff paper cover cracks if you try to bend it over.

**The New Bantam-Megiddo Hebrew and English Dictionary** by Reuven Sivan and Edward A. Levenston, Bantam Books, 2009. In its coverage of the language this book falls between the other two, but its orthography is superior to both. The type face is crisp, clear, and big enough to be easily readable. The pages are also larger, which makes it easier to keep the book open.

## Guessing Roots

If you have no idea what a word means it is always worth trying to look it up as it stands, but you will be lucky to find it in any of the dictionaries described above. The word **כְּמִלְכִים**, for example, is nowhere to be found in any dictionary. The first letter is an inseparable preposition meaning “like” and the last two letters are the suffix indicating the masculine plural, so the word means “like kings.” Likewise you will not find the verb **נַחֲמֵנוּ**, which means “we will cause him to rule.” The prefix **נַחֲ** indicates the imperfect tense of the **נָחַם** verb family, and the suffix **נַחֲמֵנוּ** indicates the first person plural. A paper dictionary that included every possible verb conjugation and compound noun would be too big to carry, so it is only **מֶלֶךְ** (a king) and **שָׁמַרְתָּ** (he reigned) that you will find.

When you don’t find a word in the dictionary, try to figure out its root and look for that instead. If there are prefixes and suffixes that you recognize, the root letters will be in between them. Most Hebrew roots are made up of three consonants, like **ג.נ.ח**. Sometimes not all of the letters appear so you might find only two root letters, or there might be more than three letters in the middle of the word and then you must try the possible two- or three-letter combinations in your search for the root.

## Variant Spellings

Some Hebrew words have alternate spellings that result from interchanging letters that sound alike. For example, the word **שָׁמַרְתָּ**, which means “he caught,” can also be spelled **שָׁמַרְתָּ**. However, some words that the Bible spells in different ways by interchanging letters that sound alike do *not* have alternate spellings in modern Hebrew, and then you might have to resort to the BDB (it lists **שָׁמַרְתָּ**, which appears in 1 Kings 20:18, but not **שָׁמַרְתָּ**).

Ancient Hebrew also sometimes uses plural endings different from those in modern Hebrew. For example, the word **יַעֲשׂוּ**, which means “they will do,” is spelled **יַעֲשׂוּ** in 1 Kings 20:10. In this case, unfortunately, the BDB is no help and one must rely on a Bible translation.

Rabbinic Hebrew sometimes uses **ל** instead of **ל** in plural endings. For example, the plural of **לְיָרֵךְ**, which means “a ritual enclosure,” is **לְיָרֵךְ** rather than **לְיָרֵךְ**. The singular appears in the Ben-Yehuda but only as “a mixture,” and none of these words is in either of the other dictionaries mentioned above.

The text of the Torah includes some words that are spelled one way (the **יְרֵךְ**) and pronounced another (the **יְרֵךְ**). An example from the *Primer* is Jerusalem, which is written **יְרוּשָׁלַיִם** but pronounced **יְרוּשָׁלַיִם**.

Another thing that might confuse you is the difference between the Ashkenazic and Sephardic pronunciations of the letter **ל** and the **ee** vowel **יְ** (see *Voicing Hebrew* page 16). If you hear a word and want to look it up by guessing its Hebrew spelling you must consider where you heard it.

Fortunately all of these variations are rare enough to present only minimal difficulties in using a Hebrew dictionary. A much more common spelling variation has to do with the placement of the cholam ך vowel. As explained in the *Primer* on page 151, the Hebrew word for “me” can be spelled either ׀׀׀׀ or ׀׀׀׀. The spelling with the ׀ is called *plene*, while the spelling with the ׀ is called *defective*. Dictionaries spell everything plene, so the Ben-Yehuda gives, at the entry for ׀׀׀׀, ׀׀׀׀ for “me.” The other two dictionaries do not list the word in either form going from Hebrew to English, but all three give ׀׀׀׀ as the translation from English to Hebrew. If you can’t find a word that has a cholam on some other letter, look for the spelling with an ׀ instead. If something leads you to suspect what the English translation of a Hebrew word might be, try looking up the English to see if it translates to the Hebrew in question.

Various tools are available on the internet; [doitinhebrew.com](http://doitinhebrew.com) seems to be a good one.

## Annotations

The next page shows page 237 in the Hebrew-to-English part of the Bantam-Megiddo dictionary. It translates two words that appear early in the *Primer*, ׀׀׀׀ and ׀׀׀׀, which are boxed in the left column. Several of the words are marked with abbreviations, which are shown boxed in the right column along with their meanings. The table below includes those and several other abbreviations that are often used in dictionaries.

masculine	זכר	.ז
masculine dual	זוגי זכר	ז״ז
feminine dual	זוגי נקבה	ג״ג
masculine plural	זכר נב׳ים	ז״ר
personal pronoun	מלת-אני	מ״א
conjugation	מלת-חיבור	מ״ח
preposition	מלת-יחס	מ״י
interjection	מלת-קריאה	מ״ק
interrogative	מלת-שאלה	מ״ש
feminine	נקבה	.נ
feminine plural	נקבה נב׳ים	נ״ר
verb transitive	פועל יוצא	פ״י
verb intransitive	פועל עומד	פ״ע
verb	פועל	.פ
see	ראה	ר״
acronym	ראשי-תיבות	ר״ת
numeral	שם מספר	ש״מ
adjective	תואר	.ת
adverb	תואר הפועל	ת״פ

This dictionary uses parentheses to enclose additional information about some words; on this page that is the third person masculine singular imperfect form for verbs and an alternate spelling for “heavenly.”

auditory, aural	שמיעתי ת	leftist	שמאלני[ת]	תאָר = adjective
legendary worm (that cuts stone); thorn, thistle; dill	שמיר ז	pseudonym	שם בדוי	
guarding, keeping; guard; observance	שמירה נ	religious persecution, forced conversion (of Jews)	שמד[ז]	תָּכַר = masculine
thorns and thistles (as a symbol of desolation)	שמיר וְשִׁית	devastation	שמה[נ]	תְּקַבֵּה = feminine
serviceable	שמיש ת	there; thither	שמה[תה]פ	תאָר הַפְּעַל = adverb
dress, woman's garment	שמלה נ	pronoun	שם הגוף	
nickname, adjective word	שם לוואי	infinitive	שם הפועל ת	
skirt ( <i>obs</i> )	שמלנית נ	list of names	שמוז ז	
be desolate, be deserted	שמים (ישום) פ	eight ( <i>fem</i> )	שמונה[שמ]	נְשָׁם מְסֻפָּר = numeral
desolate, deserted	שמים ת	eight ( <i>masc</i> )	שמונה ש"מ	
waste land, desert	שממה נ	eighteen ( <i>masc</i> )	שמונה-עשר ש"מ	
house lizard	שממית נ	eighteen ( <i>fem</i> )	שמונה-עשרה ש"מ	
family name	שם משפחה	eighty	שמונים ש"מ	
grow fat	שמן (ישמן) פ	rumor, hearsay	שמועה נ	
fat; stout; thick	שמן ת	preserved, guarded	שמור ת	
oil; olive oil	שמן ז	eyelash; trigger guard (on a gun)	שמורה נ	
fatty, oily	שמנוני ת	nature reserve	שמורת טבע	
fattiness, oiliness	שמנוניות נ	rejoice, be glad	שמח (ישמח) פ	פָּעַל = verb
oil-bearing, oily	שמני ת	glad, joyful	שמח ת	
nominal	שמני ת	joy, happiness; festivity, glad occasion	שמחה נ	
fat, plump	שמנמן ת	cast down; drop;	שמט (ישמוט) פ	
castor oil	שמן-קיק	slip, move out of place		
synonym	שם נרדף	nominal, by name; Semitic	שמי ת	
cream (of milk)	שמנת נ	demountable, removable	שמית ת	
hear; obey	שמע (ישמע) פ	leaving, abandoning; sabbatical year	שמטה נ	
report, rumor	שמע ז	blanket	שמיקה נ	
auditory, aural	שמעי ת	sky, heavens; Heaven; God	שמים, שמיים ז"ר	תָּכַר נַבִּים = masculine plural
noun	שם עצם	heavenly, celestial	שמימי (שמימי) ת	
proper noun	שם עצם פְּרָטִי	eighth	שמיני ת	
first name	שם פְּרָטִי	octave; octet	שמיניה נ	
jot, bit	שמץ ז	eighth	שמינית ש"מ	
obloquy, disgrace	שמצה נ	a sixty-fourth; a touch	שמינית שְׁבַשְׁמִינִית	
guard; observe, keep	שמר (ישמור) פ	audible	שמיע ת	
baby-sitter	שמרטף ז	hearing	שמיעה נ	
yeast; lees, dregs	שמרים ז"ר	audibility	שמיעות נ	
conservative	שמרן ז			
conservatism	שמרנות נ			
conservative	שמרני ת			

## Verb Forms

Dictionaries always index the third person masculine singular perfect form of a verb if it is in the  $\text{לָעָנַן}$  verb family. Hebrew has seven verb families, each of which is called a  $\text{לְיָנִיָּן}$ . The policies for including and indexing verbs that belong (or also belong) to other  $\text{לְיָנִיָּן}$  vary from one dictionary to another. If you know the root of a verb you can use the rules given in the *Primer* or other grammar books to construct forms other than those given in the dictionary, provided the verb is regular. Unfortunately, many verbs are not; fortunately, additional help is available for the 501 verbs conjugated in this book.

**501 Hebrew Verbs**, Third Edition, by Shmuel Bolozky, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2018.

If you become a serious student of Hebrew you will find this book indispensable.

### The Verb ה.ו.ה and Noun Sentences

The present tense of the Hebrew verb *to be* (see page 182a in §18) never appears in the Torah. Instead, Biblical Hebrew uses other ways to say that one thing **is** another (see below) and to say that something **is** at all (see page 117).

These sentences assert that one thing is another. They would not be sentences in English because they have no apparent verb, but they are perfectly good sentences in Hebrew.



*Genesis 21:17, Hagar and Ishmael*

... because God has heeded the voice of the boy...

*Deuteronomy 18:3*

... and this will be the judgement [portion due from the people] of the priests...

*1 Kings 8:60*

... all the peoples of the earth will know that the Lord, he is God, there is no other.

*Psalms 118:24*

This is the day that the Lord has made...

*Exodus 20:11*

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them...

*Exodus 11:3*

... moreover, the man Moses was very great  
in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants  
of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the people.

*Genesis 28:16*

... יהוה is in this place and I did not know.

*1 Samuel 26:16*

Not good is this thing that you have done. . .

Possession is shown in Hebrew by attaching endings to the word-pair form of a noun. This example shows the singular possessive endings being attached to the word-pair form of קוֹל, “voice of.”

## How to Make a Noun Possessive

**Attach the appropriate possessive ending to the word-pair form of the noun.** Normally the second noun in a word pair tells what the first noun is “of.” For example, we translate  $\text{דְּבַר מֶלֶךְ}$  as “a word of a king.” When the word-pair form of a noun is used to form a possessive, the possessive ending can be thought of as the second word of the word pair. For example,  $\text{דְּבַר הוּא}$  means “the word of him” or “his word.”

Recall that the word pair form of a noun is sometimes the same as the regular form (as in the case of  $\text{קוֹל}$  in the example above) but often it is different. Occasionally, a modification of the word pair form is used to form the possessive.

When a ׀ prefixes a word that is *not* a verb, it means “and” (see page 35). When a vav prefixes a *verb* it can change the tense of the verb. This often happens when a sentence in the Bible starts with a verb, as in the phrase ׀ִמְשַׁבֵּן–לֵאלֹהֵי יְהוָה ׀ִמְשַׁבֵּן׀ which begins Exodus 4:19 and many other verses.

- A reversing vav that is attached to a perfect-tense verb is pointed as if it meant “and.”
- A reversing vav that is attached to an imperfect-tense verb whose first letter *can* take a dagesh is pointed ׀ and the next letter acquires a dagesh. Sometimes this dagesh indicates that the letter should be doubled in pronouncing the word.
- A reversing vav that is attached to an imperfect-tense verb whose first letter *cannot* take a dagesh (one of ך ם ן ף ם) is pointed ׀
- When a reversing vav prefixes a perfect-tense verb it shifts the accent toward the end of the word; when it prefixes an imperfect-tense verb it shifts the accent toward the beginning of the word.
- If the verb to be prefixed by a reversing vav has a clipped form (see page 169) that form is used rather than the full root ending in ן.

אֲנִי	I
הָאַתָּה	you ms
אַתָּה	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתְּמוֹ	you mp
אַתְּמוֹן	you fp
הֵמוֹ	they mp
הֵמוֹן	they fp

*Genesis 1:3*

And God said “Let there be light,” and there was light.

*Genesis 1:4*

And God saw the light, that it was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.

*Genesis 1:5*

And God called the light day and the darkness He called night, and there was evening and there was morning, one day.

*1 Kings 1:11*

Then Nathan spoke to Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, saying “Have you not heard that Adonijah son of Haggith rules and our lord David does not know?” (Here אֵינִי is the plene spelling of אִי, “not.”)

*1 Kings 1:13*

Go immediately to King David and say to him, “Have not you, my lord the king, sworn to your maidservant saying that ‘Solomon your son will rule after me and he will sit on my throne?’ And why does Adonijah rule?”





Imperfect				Perfect			
אֲנִי	we	אֲנִי	I	אֲנֵנוּ	we	אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you mp	אַתָּה	you ms	אַתָּם	you mp	אַתָּה	you ms
הֵמָּה	you fp	הֵמָּה	you fs	הֵמָּה	you fp	הֵמָּה	you fs
הֵמָּה	they m	הֵמָּה	he	הֵמָּה	they m	הֵמָּה	he
הֵמָּה	they f	הֵמָּה	she			הֵמָּה	she

*Ezekiel 18:5*

And a man, if he will be righteous and does what is just. . .

*Genesis 1:26*

And God said “Let us make a man. . .”

*Exodus 6:1*

And יהוה said to Moshe, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. . .”

*1 Kings 1:20*

And you, oh lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon you to tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after you.

*Leviticus 18:3*

Like the doings of the land of Egypt where you dwelt you shall not do. . .

*Genesis 12:1-12:2*

Said the Lord to Avram, “Betake yourself from your land and from your birthplace and from the house of your father, to the land that I will show you.”

*Genesis 22:2*

And He said, “Take, please, your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and betake yourself to the land of Moriah.”

*Genesis 7:2*

From all the ritually pure animals you will take to yourself seven and seven, male and female, and from the animals that are not ritually pure (it) two, male and female. (Here בְּרֵייתָא, it, refers to the category of animals from which two are to be taken.)

*Genesis 37:14*

And he said to him, “Go, please, look into the well-being of your brothers and the well-being of the flock.”

*1 Samuel 30:12*

... for he had not eaten food and not drunk water three days and three nights.

*Genesis 7:6*

And Noah was a son of six-hundred years and the flood was water upon the earth.

*Deuteronomy 6:4*

Hear, Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your muchness.

*Genesis 41:41*

And said Pharaoh to Joseph, “See, I give you over all the land of Egypt.”

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתְּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵן	they fp

אני	I
אתם	you ms
את	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אנחנו	we
אתם	you mp
אתן	you fp
הם	they mp
הן	they fp

אֲנִי
I
הַיָּמָן
you ms
הַיָּמִין
you fs
הוא
he
היא
she
אֲנֵנוּ
we
אַתֶּם
you mp
אַתֶּן
you fp
הֵם
they mp
הֵנָּה
they fp

אֲנִי
I
הַיָּמָן
you ms
הַיָּמִין
you fs
הוּא
he
היא
she
אֲנֵנוּ
we
אַתֶּם
you mp
אַתֶּן
you fp
הֵם
they mp
הֵנָּה
they fp

אֲנִי
I
הַיָּמָן
you ms
הַיָּמָן
you fs
הוא
he
היא
she
אֲנֵנוּ
we
אַתֶּם
you mp
אַתֶּן
you fp
הֵם
they mp
הֵנָּה
they fp



*Isaiah 49:18*

... As I live, declares the Lord...

*Jeremiah 9:2*

... For from evil to evil they advance, and Me they do not heed, declares the Lord...

*Psalms 24:10*

Who is He, this the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory!

*Haggai 2:8*

Mine is silver and mine is gold, declares the Lord of Hosts.

*Haggai 2:9*

Great will be the honor of this house... said the Lord of Hosts, and in this place I will grant peace, declares the Lord of Hosts.

*1 Samuel 17:26*

And spoke David to the men standing with him, saying...

*1 Kings 18:15*

And said Elijah, "As the Lord of Hosts lives, Him whom I stand before..."

*Genesis 27:32*

And Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said "I am your son..."

*Zacharia 4:6*

And he answered, and he spoke to me saying, "This is the word of the Lord to Zarubbabel saying: 'Not by might, nor by strength, but by my spirit,' said the Lord of Hosts."

ש.מ.ר	<b>guard</b>	
שָׁמַרְתִּי	אֲנִי	I
שָׁמַרְתָּ	אַתָּה	you ms
שָׁמַרְתְּ	אַתְּ	you fs
שָׁמַר	הוּא	he
שָׁמְרָה	הִיא	she
שָׁמַרְנוּ	אֲנֵנוּ	we
שָׁמַרְתֶּם	אַתֶּם	you mp
שָׁמַרְתֶּן	אַתֶּן	you fp
שָׁמְרוּ	הֵן, הֵם	they mp

ש.מ.ר.	guard	
אֲנִי	אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	אַתָּה	you ms
אַתָּה	אַתָּה	you fs
הוא	הוא	he
היא	היא	she
אֲנִי וְאַתָּה	אֲנִי וְאַתָּה	we
אַתָּם	אַתָּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	הֵם	they mp
הֵן	הֵן	they fp

אֲנִי	I
הָאַתָּה	you ms
אַתָּה	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵנָּה	they fp

*Genesis 2:16-2:17*

And the Lord God commanded the man saying “From every tree of the garden you may surely eat, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, from it you shall not eat, because on the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

*Genesis 4:9-4:10*

The Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know; am I the guardian of my brother?” And He said, “What have you done? The voice of the blood of your brother cries out to Me from the earth.”

*Joshua 1:1-1:2*

And it was after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, and the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun. . . saying, “Moses my servant is dead, and now [you] arise and cross this Jordan, you and all of this people, to the land that I give to you, to the sons of Israel.”

*Deuteronomy 34:10*

And there did not arise another prophet in Israel like Moses, who knew the Lord face to face.

*Genesis 1:3–1:5*

And God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. And God saw the light that (it was) good and God separated the light from the darkness. And God called the light day and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

*Genesis 15:5*

And He said, “Look, please, to the heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them. And He said to him, “So will be your offspring.”

*Exodus 12:30–12:31*

And Pharaoh arose (in the) night, he and all his servants and all Egypt. And there was a great outcry in Egypt, because there was no house in which there was not there a dead person. And he cried out to Moses and to Aaron, “Arise! Go out from among my people, also you, also the house of Israel, and you go worship the Lord.”

*Exodus 9:12, 9:13, 9:15*

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I give between me and between you and between all the living souls that are with you, for generations forever. My rainbow I have given in a cloud, and it is for a sign of the covenant between me and between the earth. . . and I will remember my covenant that is between me and between you and between every living soul of all flesh that there will not be again the waters of a flood to destroy all flesh.”

*1 Kings 17:24*

And the woman said to Elijah, “Now this I know, that a man of God you are, and the word of God is truly in your mouth.”

*Genesis 31:43*

And Lavan answered and he said to Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters and the sons are my sons, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see, it is mine. And about my daughters what can I do in this day, or about their children that they have borne?”

# Using a Siddur

Jewish prayer was originally spontaneous, as most famously demonstrated by Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:10-2:10, and unscripted devotion still plays an important role in individual worship. But when communal prayer was introduced as a substitute for animal sacrifice after the destruction of the first Temple, a liturgy gradually developed and became fixed as it was transmitted orally from each generation to the next. When Jews emigrated from Babylon to Barcelona in the ninth century CE, they asked Rabbi Amram Gaon to write down the entire year's liturgy so that they could pray as a community without a trained cantor. He wrote what became the first סידור, so called because it specifies the סדר, the order or arrangement, of our worship services. In addition to the text of the prayers, modern siddurim contain prompts telling the worshipper when to sit, stand, and perform other physical actions. There are also branching instructions to vary the service depending on whether it is a weekday, Shabbat, or festival, which Shabbat or festival it is, whether a minyan is present, whether it is the beginning of a new month, and differences in tradition. The Hebrew of the siddur is much more difficult than that of the Torah in both grammar and vocabulary.

Over the centuries a few prayers were added and a few were deleted, but the resulting text used by Orthodox Jews today is substantially unchanged from when it was first written down. In recent times the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist movements have published prayerbooks that depart significantly from the traditional text. Here I will discuss two representative siddurim from the center of the denominational spectrum.

**Siddur Lev Shalem** edited by Edward Feld, Jan Uhrbach, David M. Ackerman, Joanna Dulkan, Amy Wallk Katz, Lilly Kaufman, Alan Lettovsky, and Robert Scheinberg, published by The Rabbinical Assembly, Inc., 2016, 466×2+xxi=953 pages.

Prayer is often referred to as “the service of the heart,” and **שׁוּב הֵלֵךְ** means “a whole heart.” This book was prepared by a committee under the auspices of the Conservative movement, and it is used in those congregations.

Usually a right-hand page has the Hebrew of the liturgy and the facing left-hand page has a translation that is meant to be “as literal as possible while recognizing that the English should be prayerful...” The translations are nonetheless imprecise in some places because they have been carefully rendered gender-neutral and inoffensive to readers of every sexual orientation. On the rare occasions (e.g., for **אֵלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ**) when the translators cannot find English they consider suitable, they simply embed the Hebrew in the English untranslated. Much of the Hebrew is transliterated for worshippers who cannot parse the language.

The margins of the right-hand pages contain commentary in English explicating the Hebrew and the choreography (often with references to biblical verses and rabbinic literature) while the margins of the left-hand pages contain inspirational and interpretive readings in English from both Jewish and secular sources.

Many of the traditional prayers have been altered to remove or rephrase passages the editors deemed offensive. Some passages have been bifurcated into one version including the patriarchs alone and another including both the patriarchs and the matriarchs. Other passages are marked for optional omission, and alternate versions are provided to replace many of the prayers altogether. New prayers have also been added, such as one that mourners can say in place of the Kaddish when no minyan is present.

The organization of the book is not strictly hierarchical, but these are the main topics identified in its page headings.

- front matter
  - contents
  - introduction
- body
  - preparing for Shabbat
  - candlelighting for Shabbat
  - kabbalat Shabbat
  - Shabbat study texts
  - Shabbat evening service
  - the counting of the omer
  - Shabbat at home
  - festivals at home
  - Shabbat daytime services
    - Shacharit
    - Torah service
    - Musaf for Shabbat
    - Musaf for Shabbat Rosh Hodesh
    - afternoon service for Shabbat and festivals
    - Pirkei Avot
  - weekday services
- festival services
  - Amidah
  - taking up the lulav
  - Hallel
  - Torah service
  - Yizkor
  - Musaf for festivals
  - Tal and Geshem
  - Hashanot
  - Hakafot
- end matter
  - additional prayers and songs
  - glossary of Hebrew and liturgical terms
  - glossary of rabbinic texts
  - glossary of historical figures
  - psalms in the Siddur
  - sources and credits
  - transliterations

The next two pages are from the Siddur Lev Shalem, right-hand followed by left-hand. In this book facing pages bear the same number to show that they go together. The first paragraph of the Shema comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, as indicated, and many other prayers contain fragments of scripture (especially Psalms) but most prayers also contain text that does *not* appear elsewhere. Because this text comes from scripture and is often chanted, it is printed with trope. On paper the instructions and transliteration are in red.



text of prayer

instructions

source

## קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע

Some people may wish to pause here for a moment. Some may close their eyes; others may place a hand over their eyes. The intention is to concentrate on God's oneness.

In the absence of a minyan, we add the following: אֵל מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמָן.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד.

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. Recited quietly.

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ  
וּבְכָל־מְאֹדְךָ: וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ  
הַיּוֹם עַל־לִבְבְּךָ: וּשְׁנַנְתָּם לְבְנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשַׁבְּתֶךָ  
בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתֶּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ:  
וּקְשַׁרְתָּם לְאָזְנוֹת עַל־יָדֶיךָ וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:  
וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל־מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

דברים ו:ד-ט

**THE RECITATION OF THE SH'MA.** Rabbinic literature refers to the Sh'ma as a *k'riah*, a reading aloud of a passage of the Torah. Later it became a meditation as well, a way to focus on God's "oneness"—so much so that for some it became a moment to experience a mystical union with God. The Babylonian Talmud reports: Rabbi Judah the Prince was teaching and needed to stop, since the hour for reciting the Sh'ma was passing, so he covered his eyes for a moment and then continued teaching (Berakhot 13b). In this story, reciting the Sh'ma was but a momentary interruption. Later, Rabbi Judah's act of

covering his eyes came to be seen as a sign of deep contemplation, and so it became the custom of many to cover the eyes while reciting the Sh'ma, as a moment to meditate on God's unity.

**GOD IS A FAITHFUL SOVEREIGN** אֵל מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמָן. These words form an acronym of *amen*. When we recite the Sh'ma with a *minyan*, the leader concludes with the words *Adonai eloheikhem emet*, "Your God truly"; when, in the absence of a *minyan*, that affirmation is not recited, we add this private affirmation at the beginning of the Sh'ma. The Kabbalists noted that the Sh'ma contained 245 words and so, by adding three additional words, we reach 248—the number of limbs in the body, according to the belief of the ancient rabbis. Thus we affirm, whether by adding words at the beginning or the end of the Sh'ma, that our entire being is dedicated to God.

**SH'MA YISRAEL** יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע. To whom are these words addressed? Certainly, we are speaking to ourselves, enjoining ourselves to truly hear what our lips are saying. We may also be speaking to each other—the collective people Israel—reminding each other that we are a people united by values, nurturing our own sense of peoplehood. A moving midrash imagines these words recited by Jacob's sons, addressed to their father Jacob/Israel, reassuring him on his deathbed that they remain true to his teachings, and that the God of Jacob is and will remain "their God" (Genesis Rabbah 98:3). And so, we too may be speaking to our forebears, reassuring our ancestors (all the way back to Jacob!) that their legacy continues in us.

**ONE** אֶחָד. The Hebrew word *ehad*, "one," has been variously interpreted. It can mean that God is totally unified and not made up of parts, as is the case with everything else we encounter in the universe. It can mean unique, that God is different from all else we encounter. It can mean "only," that there is no other being who is divine. Mystics interpret it as meaning that God is one with the universe—or in another formulation, present throughout the universe.

**PRAISED BE THE NAME** שֵׁם כְּבוֹד. This phrase is not part of the biblical text but was the customary response of those assembled to hearing the name of God as part of priestly prayers in the Temple. To differentiate it from the actual biblical text, it is recited silently. In the legend mentioned above, this sentence constituted Jacob's response to his children's affirmation, and so it is voiced differently.

**INSCRIBE THEM UPON THE DOORPOSTS** וּכְתַבְתָּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת. The observant Jew lives a life surrounded by the Sh'ma: reciting it in the morning upon arising and at night before going to sleep, walking past its inscription on the *mezuzah* when entering one's home, and even adorning oneself with the words on weekday mornings upon one's head and near one's heart when putting on *t'fillin*, phylacteries.

commentary

## Hear, O Israel

The core of our worship is not a prayer at all, but a cry to our fellow Jews and fellow humans. In it we declare that God is one—which is also to say that humanity is one, that life is one, that joys and sufferings are all one—for God is the force that binds them all together. There is nothing obvious about this truth, for life as we experience it seems infinitely fragmented. Human beings seem isolated from one another, divided by all the fears and hatreds that make up human history. Even within a single life, one moment feels cut off from the next, memories of joy and fullness offering us little consolation when we are depressed or lonely. To assert that all is one in God is our supreme act of faith. No wonder that the Sh'ma, the first "prayer" we learn in childhood, is also the last thing we are to say before we die.

—ARTHUR GREEN

## The Challenge of Faith

The Israeli poet Yoram Nissonovitch remarks that religious questions may not constitute the subversion of our faith; rather, they may help us get past tired notions that narrow our vision, and it may open our souls to new and deeper understandings. And his colleague Elhanan Nir adds: Doubts lead to a strong, surprising, and deep faith that cannot be compared with classical faith. This is a faith for which nothing is taken for granted.

## Recitation of the Sh'ma

Some people may wish to pause here for a moment. Some may close their eyes; others may place a hand over their eyes. The intention is to concentrate on God's oneness.

The following words are added in the absence of a minyan:

God is a faithful sovereign.

**Hear, O Israel, ADONAI is our God, ADONAI is one.**

Sh'ma yisrael, Adonai eloheinu Adonai ehad.

Recited quietly: Praised be the name of the one whose glorious sovereignty is forever and ever.

You shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all that is yours. These words that I command you this day shall be taken to heart. Teach them again and again to your children; speak of them when you sit in your home, when you walk on your way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand and as a symbol above your eyes; inscribe them upon the doorposts of your home and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

V'ahavta et Adonai elohekha b'khol l'vav'kha u-v'khol nafsh'kha u-v'khol me'odekha. V'hayu ha-d'varim ha-eileh asher anokhi m'tzav'kha ha-yom al l'vavekha. V'shinantam l'vanekha v'dibarta bam, b'shivt'kha b'veitekha u-v'lekht'kha va-derekh u-v'shokhb'kha u-v'kumekha. U-k'shartam l'ot al yadekha v'hayu l'totafot bein einekha. U-kh'tavtam al m'zuzot beitekha u-visharekha.

instructions

translation

source

transliteration

readings

**The Koren Shalem Siddur** with introduction, translation, and commentary by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, published by Koren Publishers Jerusalem Ltd., 2017, 1334+lvii pages (not counting a few that have a and b sides).

Jonathan Sacks was Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth; a professor at Yeshiva University, NYU, and Kings College London; the recipient of 18 honorary doctorates; and the author of 35 books. This one is used in Orthodox congregations. The table of contents runs to nine pages, so I have condensed it here.

- front matter
  - prefaces
  - foreward
  - understanding Jewish prayer
  - guide to the reader
- Weekday services
- Shabbat services
- Rosh Chodesh services
  - Hallel
  - Torah reading
  - Musaf
- Pesach rituals and services
- Chol haMoed services
- Shabbat Chol haMoed services
- Shavout rituals and services
- Sukkot rituals and services
- Hoshanah Rabba rituals and services
- Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah rituals and services
- High Holiday rituals
  - annulment of vows
  - Kiddush
  - Tashlikh
  - Kaparot
  - Viduy
- Hanukkah rituals
- Purim rituals and service
- Yom haZikaron
- Yom haAtzma'ut
- Yom Yerushalayim
- Selichot
  - entries for the fasts of 10 Tevet, Esther, and 17 Tamuz
- Giving Thanks
  - Birkat haMazon
  - Blessings on Mitzvot
  - Blessings on Pleasures, Sights, and Sounds
  - Consecration of a House
  - The Traveler's Prayer
- The Cycle of Life
  - rituals and prayers for life-cycle events
- Torah Readings
  - for Mondays, Thursdays, Shabbat Mincha, Rosh Chodesh, fast days, Hanukkah, Purim
  - table of Torah readings for festivals
- Megillot
  - Song of Songs
  - Ruth
  - Lamentations
  - Ecclesiastes
  - Esther
- laws governing prayer

In this book it is usually the left-hand page that has the Hebrew of the liturgy and the facing right-hand page that has its English translation; notes on the text appear below on both sides. Various innovative conventions of layout, pointing, and indentation are used in printing both the Hebrew and the English, along with “punctilious attention to the grammar and syntax,” to facilitate the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew and in many cases to match up the English with the Hebrew line-for-line. This book is about an inch smaller than the Lev Shalem in both height and width, so it is easier to hold but it has smaller print.

The next two pages are from the Koren siddur, left-hand followed by right-hand. It is instructive to compare this translation to the one in the Siddur Lev Shalem.

The laws referred to in the introduction to the prayer are given in the final section of the book with citations to the places in scripture or rabbinic literature where they originate. I have paraphrased them below.

**349.** The Shema must be said with concentration and awe. Each word and syllable should be pronounced correctly and carefully, without slurring consonants.

**350.** Some authorities ruled that one should say the Shema with cantillation. Today, however, most people do not do so.

**351.** The custom is to cover the eyes with the right hand while saying the first verse, so as not to look at anything that might disturb one’s concentration.

**352.** It is customary to draw out one’s pronunciation of the letters ך and ך in the word ךׁׁׁ to emphasize God’s sovereignty over creation.

**353.** The second sentence is said quietly, because it does not appear in the biblical text of the Shema.

The “sign on your hand” and “emblem between your eyes” mentioned in the prayer are the tefillin or phylacteries that adult male Jews wear during the morning worship service on weekdays, and the writing “on the doorposts of your house” refers to the mezuzah. Mezuzot contain this first paragraph of the Shema, so they are self-referential. Tefillin contain this paragraph and also a few other biblical verses.



The שמע must be said with intense concentration. In the first paragraph one should accept, with love, the sovereignty of God; in the second, the מצוות as the will of God. The end of the third paragraph constitutes fulfillment of the מצווה to remember, morning and evening, the exodus from Egypt. See laws 349–353.

When not praying with a מנין, say:

אל מלך נאמן

The following verse should be said aloud, while covering the eyes with the right hand:

דברים 1: שמע ישראל, יהוה אלהינו, יהוה אחד:

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. Quietly

דברים 1: ואהבת את יהוה אלהיך, בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאורך: והיו הדברים האלה, אשר אנכי מצוה היום, על לבבך: ושננתם לבניך ודברת בם, בשבתך בביתך ובלכתך בדרך, ובשכבך ובקומך: וקשרתם לאות על ירך והיו לטטפת בין עיניך: וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך ובשעריך:

THE SHEMA

שמע Listen, Israel: The word *Shema* is untranslatable in English. It means (1) listen, (2) hear, (3) reflect on, (4) understand, (5) internalize, (6) respond in action, and hence (7) obey. In rabbinic Hebrew it developed yet other senses, such as “transmit, know about, infer, learn.” I have translated it here as “Listen” rather than the traditional “Hear” because listening is active, hearing passive. The Shema is a call to an act of mind and soul, to meditate on, internalize and affirm the oneness of God.

Most civilizations have been cultures of the eye. Judaism, with its belief in the invisible God who transcends the universe, and its prohibition against visual representations of God, is supremely a civilization of the ear. The patriarchs and prophets did not see God; they heard Him. Hence, the key verb in Judaism is *Shema*, “listen.” To give dramatic force to the idea that God is heard, not seen, we cover our eyes with our hand as we say these words.

יהוה אלהינו The LORD is our God: The sages called this declaration “acceptance of the yoke of the kingship of Heaven,” meaning that we take God as our Sovereign, and our covenant with Him as the essence of our existence

*The Shema must be said with intense concentration. In the first paragraph one should accept, with love, the sovereignty of God; in the second, the mitzvot as the will of God.*

*The end of the third paragraph constitutes fulfillment of the mitzva to remember, morning and evening, the exodus from Egypt. See [laws 349–353]*

*When not praying with a minyan, say:*

God, faithful King!

given in final section

*The following verse should be said aloud, while covering the eyes with the right hand:*

**Listen, Israel: the LORD is our God,  
the LORD is One.**

Deut. 6

*Quietly:* Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and all time.

first word in the Hebrew paragraph  
of which this is the translation

**וְאֵהָבָהּ** Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words which I command you today shall be on your heart. Teach them repeatedly to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be an emblem between your eyes. Write them on the doorposts of your house and gates.

Deut. 6

as a people. *The LORD is One:* among the many meanings of this phrase are: (1) there is only one God; (2) God is a unity, indivisible; (3) God is the only ultimate reality; (4) God is One despite the many appearances He has had throughout history; and (5) God alone is our King. This great sentence is the supreme declaration of Jewish faith: among the first Hebrew words learned by a child, often the last words of martyrs.

**בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם** *Blessed be the name:* This was the congregational response to the utterance in the Temple of the Tetragrammaton, God's holiest name. It is said here as a memory of the Temple service, but silently (except on Yom Kippur) because it is not part of the biblical text.

**וְשִׁנְנָתָם** *Teach them repeatedly:* Education is the responsibility, not only of schools, but also of parents. In Judaism, parents are educators, the home a matrix of learning, and education a conversation across the generations. Alshich connects this verse with the earlier one ("Love the LORD"): How do we teach our children? By showing them what we love.

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתְּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אנחנו	we
אתם	you mp
אתן	you fp
הם	they mp
הן	they fp

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתָּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵן	they fp

command!
צַוְּ tzav
צַוְּהוּ tzav'oo



*Genesis 7:1–7:10, 7:12-7:16, JPS translation*

<sup>1</sup>Then the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark, with all your household, for you alone have I found righteous before Me in this generation. <sup>2</sup>Of every clean animal you shall take seven pairs, males and their mates, and of every animal that is not clean, two, a male and its mate; <sup>3</sup>of the birds of the sky also, seven pairs, male and female, to keep seed alive upon all the earth. <sup>4</sup>For in seven days’ time I will make it rain upon the earth, forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out from the earth all existence that I created. <sup>5</sup>And Noah did just as the Lord commanded him.

<sup>6</sup>Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood came, waters upon the earth. <sup>7</sup>Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the Flood. <sup>8</sup>Of the clean animals, of the animals that are not clean, of the birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, <sup>9</sup>two of each, male and female, came to Noah into the ark, as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup>And on the seventh day the waters of the Flood came upon the earth.

<sup>12</sup>The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup>That same day Noah and Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, went into the ark, with Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons, <sup>14</sup>they and all beasts of every kind, all cattle of every kind, all creatures of every kind that creep on the earth, and all birds of every kind, every bird, every winged thing. <sup>15</sup>They came to Noah into the ark, two each of all flesh in which there was breath of life. <sup>16</sup>Thus they that entered comprised male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him. And the Lord shut him in.

הִתְחַזַּק	ב	he grasped, הִצְחַק he strengthened
לְבַשׁ		he put on
הִלְבִּישׁ		he clothed
מָלַךְ		he reigned
הִמְלִיךְ		he crowned
עָבַר		he crossed over
הִעֲבִיר		he transferred
עָמַד		he stood
הִעֲמִיד		he erected
הִשְׁלִיךְ		he threw
שָׁמַע		he heard
הִשְׁמִיעַ		he announced

אֲנִי  
I

אַתָּה  
you ms

אַתָּם  
you fs

הוא  
he

היא  
she

אֲנֵנוּ  
we

אַתֶּם  
you mp

אַתֶּן  
you fp

הֵם  
they mp

הֵנָּה  
they fp

אֲנִי

I

אַתָּם

you ms

אַתְּ

you fs

הוא

he

היא

she

אֲנֵנוּ

we

אַתֶּם

you mp

אַתֶּן

you fp

הֵם

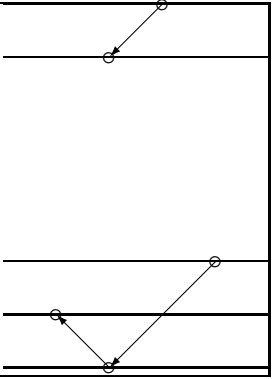
they mp

הֵנָּה

they fp

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתָּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵנָּה	they fp

And she said to her, “All that you tell me I will do.”



# Using a Chumash

On Shabbat the centerpiece (and ritual obligation) of  $\text{תּוֹרַת הַיּוֹם}$ , the morning worship service, is the reading of the Torah portion for that week. This is followed by the reading of the  $\text{הַפְּתוּחִים}$ , a related selection from  $\text{סְפָרֵי הַנְּבִיאִים}$ , the books of the Prophets. To make it easy for congregants to follow along, the Torah portions and Haftarat are printed in a book called the Chumash (its name comes from  $\text{חֲמִשָּׁה}$ , the Hebrew word for five, because the Torah consists of the five books of Moses). Every Chumash also includes commentaries on the Torah, and many also contain supplementary material of various kinds. Here I will discuss two representative Chumashim from the center of the denominational spectrum.

**Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary** edited by David L. Lieber, Chaim Potok, Harold Kushner, Jules Harlow, Elliot Dorff, Susan Grossman, and Michael Fishbane, prepared under the auspices of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and published by The Jewish Publication Society, 2001.

## front matter

- acknowledgements of people who financed the project
- table showing the division of the Five Books into weekly portions
- table of Haftarah readings for holidays and special occasions
- list of essays
- table of Torah readings for Holidays and special occasions
- foreward
- introduction

## body

- first weekly Torah portion (Genesis 1:1-6:8) with commentaries
- Haftarah (Isaiah 42:;5-43:10)
- :
- 54th weekly Torah portion (Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12) with commentaries
- there is no Haftarah because after reading this portion we begin again with the first

## end matter

- the Haftarat for holidays and special occasions
- essays
  - Biblical Life and Perspectives
  - Biblical Religion and Law
  - Worship, Ritual, and Halachah
  - Text and Context
- blessings for the Torah and Haftarah
- names of the trope and their notations
- Decalogue with upper accents
- abbreviations
- maps
- glossary
- transliteration of Hebrew
- diagrams of the tabernacle and its furnishings
- timeline for the Hebrew Bible
- committee members and contributors
- index

The next two pages show annotated images of pages from the Etz Hayim Chumash.

B'REISHIT

English translation

בראשית

When God began to create heaven and

בראשית\* ברא אלהים את השמים

Hebrew text of the Torah

v. 1. ב' רבתי לפי גוסחים מקובלים

CREATION (1:1-2:3)

The Creation narrative in the Bible is a document of faith. In its quest for meaning it gives expression to the fundamental premise of the religion of the people Israel: The universe is entirely the purposeful product of the one God, a transcendent being, beyond nature, and sovereign over space and time.

INTRODUCTION (1:1)

1. When God began to create The conventional English translation reads: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The translation presented here looks to verse 3 for the completion of the sentence and takes

citation to Genesis Rabbah

Time has not diminished the power or the majesty of the familiar biblical account of the creation of the world, nor has familiarity dulled its impact. It still moves us, conveying so much in so few words. What kind of world does the Torah envision God creating? The opening chapters of Genesis are not a scientific account of the origins of the universe. The Torah is a book of morality, not cosmology. Its overriding concern, from the first verse to the last, is our relationship to God, truth about life rather than scientific truths. It describes the world God fashioned as "good," a statement no scientific account can make.

basic and inevitable questions: Why is there something instead of nothing? Why is there life instead of inert matter?

God's world is an orderly world, in which land and water each has its own domain, in which each species of plant and animal reproduces itself "after its own kind." But it is also an unpredictable world, a world capable of growth and change and surprise, of love and pain, of glory and tragedy, not simply replication of what is, because it includes human beings who have the freedom to choose how they will act. And it is an unfinished world, waiting for human beings to complete God's work of creating.

The first letter of the first word in the Torah, "B'reishit," is the Hebrew letter bet. This prompted the Midrash to suggest that, just as the letter bet is enclosed on three sides but open to the front, we are not to speculate on the origins of God or what may have existed before Creation (Gen. R. 1:10). The purpose of such a comment is not to limit scientific inquiry into the origins of the universe but to discourage efforts to prove the unprovable. It urges us to ask ourselves, "How are we to live in this world?" And it urges us to live facing forward rather than looking backward. Jewish theology generally has been concerned with discerning the will of God rather than proving the existence or probing the nature of God. Ultimate origins ("Who made God?") are hidden from view, but all the rest of the world is open to inquiry. The Torah begins with bet, second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, to summon us to begin even if we cannot begin at the very beginning.

CHAPTER 1

The Torah assumes the existence and overwhelming power of God. We find here no myth of God's birth, as we find in other cultures' accounts of creation, only a description of God's actions. It seems that the Torah is saying, "This is the premise on which the rest stands. Only if you accept it is everything that follows intelligible." God created the world, blessed it with the capacity to renew and reproduce itself, and deemed it "good." This is the answer to the

The Midrash takes the word for "beginning" (reishit) as a synonym for "Torah" (as in Prov. 8:22), interpreting the first verse as declaring: "With reishit did God create the heaven and the earth." God created the world by consulting the Torah, fashioning a world based on Torah values, or for the sake of the Torah, so that there would be somewhere in the universe where the values of the Torah could be put into practice (Gen. R. 1:1,6).

1. When God began The beginning of all knowledge and morality lies in the recognition that God created the world. Akiva taught: "Just

בראשית

The opening book of known as Genesis in Hebrew word, B'reishit. was also termed among (The Book of the Upright patriarchs.

Genesis is the book of the world of humanity, and of the unique relationship with that people. In its claims to cover a time period offers a rapid sketch of human history from Abraham, with the remembrance of Joseph making work. This imbalance in theme of Creation serves as an introduction to the central message of the historical drama. The opening chapters of Genesis serve as the pillars on which the rest of the Torah stands.

The God of Genesis is a sufficient One, absolute in nature. He is the unchallenged world, who is provident in man affairs, the God of being in Genesis is the prime creature of infinite precision and unique relationship with



earth—<sup>2</sup>the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—<sup>3</sup>God said, "Let there be light"; and there was

וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ: <sup>2</sup>וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תְהוֹ וּבְהוֹ וְהַשָּׁר עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: <sup>3</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים

trope

verse 2 to be parenthetical, describing the state of things at the time when God first spoke. Support for understanding the text in this way comes from the second half of 2:4 and of 5:1, both of which refer to Creation and begin with the word "when."

**God** The Hebrew term for God used throughout this account of Creation is not the unique sacred divine name *YHVH* but *elohim*, a general Hebrew word for "deity," which can also refer to pagan gods. Although plural in form, it almost always appears with a singular verb or adjective. The name, connoting universalism and abstraction, is most appropriate for the God of Creation.

**create** The Hebrew stem of the word translated as "create" (ברא) is used in the Bible only for divine creativity. It signifies that the created object is unique, depends solely on God for its coming into existence, and is beyond the ability of humans to reproduce. The verb never means "to create out of nothing."

**heaven and earth** The observable universe is here specified by the use of the definite article in Hebrew (literally, "the heaven and the earth"). The combination of opposites ("heaven and earth") expresses the totality of cosmic phenomena, for which there is no single word in biblical Hebrew.

THE PRIMORDIAL WORLD

(v. 2)

**2. unformed and void** The Hebrew for this phrase (*tohu va-vohu*) means "desert waste." The point of the narrative is the idea of order that results from divine intent. There is no suggestion here that God made the world out of nothing, which is a much later conception.

**darkness** In the Bible, darkness is often a symbol of evil, misfortune, death, or oblivion. Here it seems to be not just the absence of light

but a distinct entity, the origin of which is left unclear.

**the deep** The Hebrew word for "the deep" (*t'hom*) refers to the subterranean waters that ancient humans believed were beneath the earth. The text says nothing about how or when this body of water came into existence. In Proverbs (8:22–24) it is one of God's creations. The word is related etymologically to Tiamat, the maritime goddess in the Babylonian creation story. In all of the ancient Near Eastern creation stories, the primal element is water. To the ancients, the formless nature of water seemed to represent the state of affairs before chaos was transformed to order.

**a wind from God** Or, as others suggest, "a mighty wind." The Hebrew word *ruah* means "wind, breath, spirit." "Wind" is the prevalent understanding of the word here in ancient and medieval Jewish sources. As a physical phenomenon, wind conforms to the picture of primal chaos evoked by this verse.

**sweeping** Movement is the basic idea underlying this Hebrew verb (רחף). Motion, the essential element in change, originates with God's dynamic presence.

**water** This is either the cosmic ocean believed by the ancients to surround the earth or the water referred to in verses 6, 7, 9, and 10, namely, that which covered the solid mass of earth. These two bodies of water were probably not clearly differentiated in the ancient Hebrew mind.

THE FIRST GROUP OF CREATED OBJECTS (vv. 3–13)

DAY ONE

**3. God said** The divine word shatters the cosmic silence and signals the beginning of a

citation to Midrash T'murah

**3.** God creates the world with words. This is the first invocation of the Torah's belief in the reality of words, their power to create and to destroy.

**Let there be light** Light, the first thing God created, can be seen as symbolizing Judaism's commitment to clarity rather than mystery, to openness rather than concealment, to study

יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי אוֹר: הָאָרֶץ כִּי־טוֹב וַיִּבְרָא וַיִּבֶן הַחֹשֶׁךְ: וַיִּקְרָא וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה: יוֹם אֶחָד: פ

ect of creation. Light, like here as a separate entity.

ot to possess a name is tantance in the worldview of East, including Egypt and giving was thus associated domination, for the one who ver over the object named. d names day and night, the he sea. This is another way absolute sovereignty over

orning The Hebrew words ly mean "sunset" and "break appropriate before the crea- the fourth day. Here the two ctively, the end of the period he creativity was suspended) ight (when the creative pro-

er: "the first day." The He- functions as both a cardinal

pure persons, no mixing of ss-breeding animal species. ggests that separation, spe- most always achieved with even as there is a sense of vdalah service that marks habbat and weekday, even an infant is born out of its as there is a sense of painful child outgrows its depen- The Midrash (Gen. R. 5:3) r waters weeping at being e upper waters, suggesting aing poignant in the creative gs once united are separated. terally, "one day," taken by an "the day of the One," the

hour cycle begins at sunset. s before sunset, and continue sunset if no stars are visible.

תְּהוֹם

תְּהוֹם

The Etz Hayim is used in Conservative congregations. It has the 1999 Jewish Publication Society translation, which is conspicuously informed by secular academic scholarship on the Bible. When it transliterates the Hebrew it assumes the Sefardic or Israeli pronunciation. Its commentaries are divided; the **טפּזפּ** explains words and phrases in the text, **שנן** gives interpretations of its deeper meaning. Some of the pages (not including those pictured) have a **למַעַן יִשְׁמַע הַלְלוֹתָהּ** section, printed in a gray box at the bottom of the page.

The first image is of the first page of the first Chapter, so it has a general Chapter introduction separate from the commentaries relating to the particulars of the Torah text; subsequent pages of a chapter look like the second page image. The commentaries often include citations to rabbinic literature, using abbreviations that are expanded in a table at the back of the book.

The small unpointed words under the Hebrew column in the first page image say with reference to verse 1 that printing the **א** larger than the other letters is in accordance with accepted practice. Other explanatory notes appear in a similar way, most commonly indicating when a word should be pronounced (**קָרָא**) differently from the way it is spelled (**פְּתַיִב**).

**The Chumash: The Stone Edition** by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, ArtScroll Mesorah Publications, Enhanced Edition, 2019.

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The next two pages show annotated images of pages from the Stone Chumash.

אונקלוס	פרשת בראשית	verse numbers
<p>אֲבָרְכְּמִין בְּרָא יְיָ יְת שְׁמִיא וְיֵת אֲרַעָא: בְּאֲרַעָא הֵינָת צְדָנָא וְרִיקְנָנָא וְחֲשׂוּבָא עַל-אַפֵּי תְהוּמָא וְרוּחָא מִן קִדְם יְיָ מְנַשְׁבָּא עַל-אַפֵּי מְיָא: גְּנֹאֲמֵר יְיָ יְהִי נְהוּרָא וְהוּהָ נְהוּרָא: ד-וְנֹזָא יְיָ יֵת נְהוּרָא אֲרִי טֵב וְאַפְרֵשׁ יְיָ בֵּין נְהוּרָא וּבֵין חֲשׂוּבָא: ה-וְקִרְא יְיָ לְנְהוּרָא יִמְמָא וְלְחֲשׂוּבָא קִרְא לִילְיָא וְהוּהָ רִמְשׁ וְהוּהָ צִפְרָ יִמְמָא חֲדָ:</p>	<p>וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹ וְנָהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי-אֹרֶךְ אֹרֶךְ: וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָרֶץ כִּי-רָעָה וַיִּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאָרֶץ וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹרֶךְ יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ קֶרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:</p>	<p>א א-א ב ג ד ה</p>

Rashi's commentary

וכמו מגיד מראשית אחרית (ישעיה מו:ו) ולא פירש מגיד מראשית דבר אחרית דבר, אס כן תמה על עלמך, שהרי המים קדמו, שהרי כתיב ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים, ועדיין לא גילה המקרא בריאת המים מתי היתה, הא למדת שקדמו המים לארץ, ועוד, שהמים מאש ומים נבראו (חגיגה יב.), על כרחך לא לימד המקרא בסדר המוקדמים והמאוחרים כלום: ברא אלהים. ולא נאמר ברא ה', שבתחלה עלה במחשבה לבראיתו צדמת הדין ורעה שאין העולם מתקיים, הקדים מדת רחמים וספפה למדת הדין. והיינו דכתיב ביום עשות ה' אלהים ארץ ושמים (להלן ב:ד; ב"ר יב:טו, יד:א; ש"ר ל:ג; פס"ר מ (קס"ו): (ב) תהו ובהו. תהו לשון תמה ושמונו, שחדש תהיה ומשחמם על צהו שבה: תהו. אשטורדישו'ן בלע"ז: בהו. לשון ריקות ולוו (אונקלוס): על פני תהוום. על פני המים שעל הארץ: ורוח אלהים מרחפת. כסא הכבוד עומד באויר ומרחף על פני המים ברוח פיו של הקב"ה ובמאמרו כיונה המרחפת על הקן (חגיגה טו; מדרש תהלים ג:ה) אקובטו'ר בלע"ז: (ד) וירא אלהים את האור כי טוב ויבדל. אף צהו אתו לריבין לכדרי אגדה, ראהו שאינו כדאי להשתמש בו רשעים והבדילו ללדיקים לעמיד לבא (חגיגה יב; ב"ר ג:ו): ולפי פשוטו כך פרשהו, ראהו כי טוב ואין נאה לו ולתשך שיהיו משתמשין בערבוביא, וקבע לזה תחומו ביום ולזה תחומו בלילה (ב"ר ט; פסחים ב:). (ה) יום אחד. לפי סדר לשון הפרשה היה לו לכתוב יום ראשון כמו שכתוב בשאר הימים, שני, שלישי, רביעי, למה כתב אחד, לפי שהיה הקב"ה יחיד בעולמו, שלא נבראו המלאכים עד יום שני. כך מפורש ב"ר (נח:).

(א) בראשית. אמר רבי יצחק, לא היה נריך להתחיל את התורה אלא מהחדש הזה לכם שהיא מלוא ראשונה שנלטו בה ישראל, ומה טעם פתח בבראשית, משום כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים (תהלים קיא); תנחומא ין (יא) שאם יאמרו אומות העולם לישראל ליסטים אתם שכבשתם ארצות שבעה גוים, הם אומרים להם כל הארץ של הקב"ה היא, הוא בראה ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו, ברטונו נתנה להם, וברטונו נטלה מהם ונתנה לנו (ב"ר א:ב); בראשית ברא. אין המקרא הזה אומר אלא דורשני, כמ"ש רז"ל בשביל התורה שנקראת ראשית דרכו (משלי ח:כב; תנחומא ין ה) ובשביל ישראל שנקראו ראשית תבואתה (ירמיה ב:ג; תנחומא ין ג; ויק"ר לו:ד). ואם זאת לפרשו כפשוטו כך פרשהו, בראשית בריאת שמים וארץ והארץ היתה תהו ובהו והשך ויאמר אלהים יהי אור. ולא בא המקרא להורות סדר הבריאה לומר שאלו קדמו, שאם בא להורות כך, היה לו לכתוב בראשונה ברא את השמים וגו', שאין לך ראשית במקרא שאינו דבוק לתיבה שלאחריו, כמו בראשית ממלכת יהויקים (ירמיה כז:א) ראשית ממלכתו (להלן י"ז) ראשית דגך (דברים יח:ד). אף כאן אמה אומר בראשית ברא אלהים וגו' כמו בראשית בראו, ודומה לו תחלת דבר ה' בהושע (הושע א:ב) כלומר תחלת דבורו של הקב"ה בהושע ויאמר ה' אל הושע וגו'. וה"ל להורות בא שאלו תחלה נבראו, ופירושו בראשית הכל ברא אלו, ויש לך מקראות שמקלרים לשונם וממעטים תיבה אחת, כמו כי לא סגר דלתי בטני (איוב ג:י) ולא פירש מי הסוגר, וכמו ישא את חיל דמשק (ישעיה ח:ד) ולא פירש מי ישאלו, וכמו אם יחרוש בבקרים (עמוס ו:יב) ולא פירש אם יחרוש אדם בבקרים,

other commentaries

PARASHAS BEREISHIS

1. We begin the study of the Torah with the realization that the Torah is not a history book, but the charter of Man's mission in the universe. Thus, in his very first comment, Rashi cites Rav Yitzchak who says that since the Torah is primarily a book of laws, it should have begun with the commandment of the new moon (Exodus 12:2), the first law that was addressed to all of Jewry as a nation. He explains that the reason for the Torah's narrative of Creation is to establish that God is the Sovereign of the universe: He declared to His people the power of His works in order to give them the heritage of the nations (Psalms 111:6). If the nations accuse Israel of banditry for seizing the lands of the seven nations of Canaan, Israel can respond, "The entire universe belongs to God. He created it and He granted it to whomever He deemed fit. It was His desire to give it to them and then it was His desire to take it from them and give it to us."

As Ramban notes, even after reading how the world and its central character, Man, came into being, we still do not understand the secret or even the process of Creation. Rather, the work of Creation is a deep mystery that can be comprehended only through the tradition transmitted by God to

Moses, and those who are privileged to be entrusted with this hidden knowledge are not permitted to reveal it. What we do know is that Adam and Eve, the forerunners of humanity, had the mission of bringing about the fulfillment of Creation by carrying out God's commandment. They failed, and were driven into exile.

Man's mission did not change, however, only the conditions in which it would be carried out. God punished the transgressors, but did not discard them. They could repent; indeed, the concept of repentance was a prerequisite to Man's existence, because he could not have survived without it. Adam and Eve repented. So did the subsequent sinners Cain and Lemech. This, too, is one of the major lessons of the story of Genesis: Man may sin, but he can come back, and God allows him the opportunity to do so.

All this is a prelude to the story of Israel. God was patient for ten generations between Noah and Abraham, but each of these generations failed to carry out the mission for which it had been created. After that failure, God chose Abraham and his offspring to be the bearers of the mission that had originally been universal (see Avos 5:2). Ramban maintains that this is why Genesis is called the Book of Creation: The



English translation

PARASHAS BEREISHIS

**1** <sup>1</sup>In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth — <sup>2</sup>when the earth was astonishingly empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep, and the Divine Presence hovered upon the surface of the waters — <sup>3</sup>God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.  
*The Beginning:* <sup>4</sup>God saw that the light was good, and God separated between the light and the darkness.  
*First Day* <sup>5</sup>God called to the light: "Day," and to the darkness He called: "Night." And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

essence of creation is not primarily the story of mountains and valleys, of oceans and deserts, or even of human and animal life. Creation is the story of the birth of Israel, the nation that inherited the task of Adam and Eve. In this first Book of the Torah we trace Israel's story from the life of Abraham and Sarah until their offspring develop into a family and then a nation.

Ramban comments that the Torah relates the story of the six days of Creation *ex nihilo* to establish that God is the sole Creator and to refute the theories of those who claim that the universe is timeless or that it came into being through some massive coincidence or accident. This is implicit in the narrative of the first six days, for Scripture gives no specific details regarding the process of Creation, just as it makes no mention of the angels or other incorporeal beings. The story of Creation tells of when the major categories of the universe came into existence only in very general terms, because its primary purpose is to state that nothing came into being except at God's command.

**1.** בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים — *In the beginning of God's creating.* This phrase is commonly rendered *In the beginning God created*, which would indicate that the Torah is giving the sequence of Creation — that God created the heaven, then the earth, darkness, water, light, and so on. *Rashi* and *Ibn Ezra* disagree, however, and our translation follows their view.

According to *Ramban* and most other commentators, however, the verse is indeed chronological. It begins with a general statement: *At the very first moment* — from absolute nothingness — *God created the heaven and the earth*, i.e., the basic substance from which He then fashioned the universe as we know it, as expounded in the following verses. The chapter continues the day-to-day process until it reaches its climax in the Creation of Man — the prime goal of Creation.

Homiletically, the word בְּרֵאשִׁית can be rendered בְּשִׁבְלִי רֵאשִׁית, [the world was created] for the sake of [the things that are called] "beginning," meaning that God brought the world into being for the sake of things that are of such basic importance that the Torah calls them רֵאשִׁית, *first* or *beginning*. These things are the Torah and Israel; thus the reason for Creation is that Israel would accept and fulfill the Torah (*Rashi*). The Midrash adds other things called רֵאשִׁית, such as the commandments regarding the firstborn, first fruits, and gifts to the Kohanim, which must be taken from crops and dough before they may be consumed. The implication is that the purpose of Creation is to enable Jews to dedicate their first efforts and successes to the service of God.

אֱלֹהִים — *God.* This Name denotes God in His Attribute of

Justice [מִדַּת הַדִּין], as Ruler, Lawgiver, and Judge of the world. By using this Name exclusively in the narrative of Creation, the Torah indicates that Justice is the ideal state of the world, meaning that Man should be treated exactly as he deserves, according to his deeds. However, because Man is not virtuous enough to survive such harsh scrutiny, God added His Attribute of Mercy to the story of Creation, so that judgment would be tempered with mercy (see 2:4).

**2.** חֹשֶׁךְ — *Darkness.* This is not merely the absence of light, but a specific creation, as is clearly stated in *Isaiah 45:7*: יוֹצֵר חֹשֶׁךְ אֹרֶךְ וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ, *He Who forms the light and creates darkness.* This is also indicated by the Sages' characterization that until light and darkness were separated from one another, they functioned "in a mixture," implying that patches of light and darkness were intermixed with one another.

**3.** This verse begins a detailed chronology of Creation, but, as noted above, the narrative of Creation is beyond our comprehension. The commentary will be limited to a brief selection from pertinent commentaries.

**4-5.** כִּי טוֹב . . . וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים — *God saw that . . . was good.* In the plain sense, God saw that the light was good, so He decreed that it should not be mingled with the darkness, but should function independently during the day (*Rashi*). *Ramban* maintains that the term *saw that it was good* means that God expressed His approval and decreed permanence to the phenomenon under discussion, in this case that the light required no further perfection. Then (v. 5), "God summoned the light and appointed it for duty by day, and He summoned the darkness and appointed it for duty by night" (*Pesachim 2a*).

According to the Midrash, the original light was of an intense spiritual quality and *God saw* that the wicked were unworthy of enjoying it. Therefore, He separated it from the rest of the universe and set it aside for the use of the righteous in the World to Come (*Rashi*).

Throughout the narrative, the term *that it was good* means that the creation of the item under discussion was completed. Thus, for example, the light is described as good, because its existence and function were now final. The waters, however, did not receive their final form until the third day, when they were gathered into seas and oceans. Consequently, they were not called *good* until the third day (*Rashi* to v. 7).

**5.** וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בקָר — *And there was evening and there was morning.* The first day is now complete. Scripture uses the cardinal number אֶחָד, *one day*, instead of the ordinal number ראשון, *first day*, to indicate that on this day God was One

See chart, p. 1317.

מְקִיָּא וְיָת  
מִן וְרִיקְנֵיָא  
וְרִיקְנֵיָא מִן  
אֵא: גִּוְאָמֹר  
ד־וְרִיקְנֵיָא יֵי  
שׁ יֵי בִין  
וְקִרְא יֵי  
אֵא קִרְא  
יִמְא קִד:

אחרית דבר,  
מ מרחפת על  
סקדמו המים  
לימד המקרא  
ה' שבתחלה  
הקדים מדה  
ושמים (להלן)  
זו: מהו לשון  
"ש"ן בלע"ז:  
הארץ: רוחו  
ברוח פיו של  
האלים לנהו:  
אף בזה הט  
יילו ללדיקים  
יוצ ואין נלה  
תחומו בלילה  
ו לכחוז יום  
ד לפי שהיה  
בב"ר (ג:חז):

We be  
the Tor  
mission  
*Rashi* cit  
primarily  
mandme  
was adr  
reason fo  
that God  
people th  
of the na  
banditry  
Israel ca  
created  
was His  
take it fr  
As Ra  
central c  
derstan  
the work  
hended

The Stone Chumash is used in Modern Orthodox congregations. Its translation was made especially for it, and attempts “to follow the Hebrew as closely as possible and to avoid paraphrase,” so it preserves much of the poetic cadence and literal meaning of the Hebrew text. When it gives a transliteration it uses the Ashkenazi pronunciation of the Hebrew. Each right-hand page has the Hebrew text of the Torah, its Targum Onkelos (the authoritative translation of the Hebrew into Aramaic) and Rashi’s commentary on the Torah (in Hebrew, printed in the Rashi typeface). Each left-hand page provides the new English translation of the Hebrew at the top. Below the Rashi on the right and below the translation on the left appears in English a compendium of other traditional commentaries; some (not shown here) helpfully include diagrams to illustrate the text.

In the first page image of this book, as in the first page image of the *Etz Hayim*, there is a note \* about the permissibility of printing the first letter of the text bigger than the others. The second page image shows that the English translation is accompanied by marginal notes helpfully summarizing the content.

In a Chumash, unlike in a scroll, the Hebrew text of the Torah is vocalized with vowel points and punctuation. Some letters are also decorated with cantillation marks describing the trope, how the words are to be sung by the Torah reader. Each mark or pair of marks specifies a phrase of several notes. The Hebrew text is also marked with the letters ׀ and ׆, which show whether the text is continuous in the Torah scroll (a closed section) or separated by a horizontal space (an open section).

Each weekly Torah portion is further divided into parts called aliyot, so that several congregants can have the honor of reciting the Torah blessings before and after the reading of each part. To mark when each aliyah begins, a Chumash includes in the margin of the Hebrew its (unpointed) ordinal number. Because the first aliyah needs no marking the page images shown above do not illustrate this feature.

aliyah	cardinal	ordinal	in Chumash	usually called
first	א	אָהַשְׁוֹן	unmarked	Kohen
second	ב	שְׁנֵי	שני	Levi
third	ג	שְׁלֹשִׁי	שלישי	Yisrael
fourth	ד	רְבִיעִי	רביעי	Yisrael
fifth	ה	חֲמִישִׁי	חמישי	Yisrael
sixth	ו	שֵׁשִׁי	ששי	Yisrael
seventh	ז	שִׁבְעִי	שביעי	Yisrael
maftir		מַפְטִיר	מפטיר	Haftarah reader

The Torah is read on Shabbat morning (seven aliyot plus maftir, completing the cycle in a year) and on Shabbat afternoon, Monday morning, and Thursday morning (each time three aliyot, from the portion to be read on the *next* Shabbat). Each year’s cycle of Torah readings ends and begins again on the holiday of Simchat Torah.

יָדַע	he knew
הוֹדִיעַ	he informed
יָלְדָה	she gave birth
הוֹלִיד	he begot
יָצָא	he went out
הוֹצִיא	he brought out
יָרַד	he descended
הוֹרִיד	he lowered
הִגִּיד	he told
נָפַל	he fell
הִפִּיל	he toppled
הִצִּיל	he rescued

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתְּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵנָּה	they fp

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתְּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵנָּה	they fp



*Exodus 6:2*

God spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am יהוה. . .”

*Exodus 6:5*

“And also I have heard the groan of the children of Israel, that Egypt enslaves them, and I have remembered My covenant.”

*Exodus 6:6*

“Therefore, say to the children of Israel, ‘I am יהוה, and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt, and I shall rescue you from their service. . .’ ”

*Exodus 6:7*

. . . I shall take you to me for a people and I shall be to you a God, and you shall know that I am יהוה your God, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt.”

*Exodus 6:10*

יהוה spoke to Moses, saying

*Exodus 6:11*

“Come, speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he will send the children of Israel from his land.”

*Exodus 6:12*

Moses spoke before יהוה saying, “Behold, the children of Israel have not listened to me. . .”

*Exodus 6:13*

And spoke יהוה to Moses and to Aaron and commanded them [with regard] to the children of Israel and [with regard] to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt.

*Exodus 7:26*

And said יהוה to Moses, “Come to Pharaoh and say to him ‘Thus said יהוה: send My people. . .’ ”

*Proverbs 3:18*

She is a tree of life to those who grasp her. . .

הִכִּין	he prepared
הִכָּה	he struck
הִיא	he came
הִבִּיא	he brought
הִמִּית	he died
הִמִּית	he killed
הִקָּם	he arose
הִקִּים	he established
הִשָּׁב	he returned
הִשְׁיב	he restored

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתְּ	you fs
הוּא	he
הִיא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתֶּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵן	they fp

הַ → הֵ

Perfect	he will
= הֵבִיא	bring
= הוֹלִיד	beget
= הוֹצִיא	bring out
= הִלְבִּישׁ	garb
= הִגִּיד	tell
= הִפָּה	hit
= הִעָבִיר	transfer
= הִעָמִיד	erect
= הִקִּים	establish
= הִנְשִׁיב	restore
= הִנְשִׁילֵךְ	throw

אֲנִי

I

אַתָּה

you ms

אַתְּ

you fs

הוא

he

היא

she

אֲנֵנוּ

we

אַתֶּם

you mp

אַתְּן

you fp

הֵם

they mp

הֵנָּה

they fp

brought  
הִבִּיאֲתִי  
הִבִּיאָה  
הִבִּיאת  
הִבִּיא  
הִבִּיאָהּ  
הִבִּיאֵנוּ  
הִבִּיאְתֶם  
הִבִּיאֲתֶן  
הִבִּיאֵי

אֲנִי I  
אַתָּה you ms  
אַתָּה you fs  
הוא he  
היא she  
אֲנֵנוּ we  
אַתֶּם you mp  
אַתֶּן you fp  
הֵם they mp

אֲנִי I  
אַתָּה you ms  
אַתָּה you fs  
הוא he  
היא she  
אֲנֵנוּ we  
אַתֶּם you mp  
אַתֶּן you fp  
הֵם they mp  
הֵן they fp

1. Wood and stones will break my bones but names will not hit me.
2. If there is no bread there is no Torah.
3. Am I my brother's keeper?
4. A woman of valor, who can find...
5. Time is money.
6. If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?
7. Go down Moses to the land of Egypt! Tell the old Pharaoh to let my people go!
8. Lizzie Borden took a sword. She gave to her mother forty hits. When she saw what she had done, she gave to her father forty-one.
9. May you proclaim liberty in the land to all who dwell in it...
10. To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens. A time to give birth and a time to die... a time to guard and a time to send away... a time for war and a time for peace.

אָסאַם	he gathered, collected
חָיָה	he lived
הוֹסִיף	he continued, added
יָרָא	he was in awe of, feared
כָּרַת	he cut off
הִכְרִית	he destroyed, eliminated
נָשָׂא	he lifted, carried
עָלָה	he went up, ascended
הִעֲלָה	he elevated, raised



אֲנִי	I
הָיָא	you ms
הָיָא	you fs
הָיָא	he
הָיָא	she
הָיָא	we
הָיָא	you mp
הָיָא	they mp

me  
you ms  
you fs  
him  
her  
us  
you mfp  
them

*Deuteronomy 6:1–6:2*

And this is the commandment, the decrees and the judgements, that יהוה your God commanded [me] to teach you, to perform in the land to which you are crossing, there to inherit it, in order that you will fear יהוה your God, to guard all His decrees and commandments that I command you and your child and your grandchild all the days of your life, and so that your days will be lengthened.

*Deuteronomy 6:4–6:9*

Hear, O Israel: יהוה is our God, יהוה is one. You shall love יהוה your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your מְאֵדָה. And these matters that I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children and you shall speak of them while you sit in your house and while you walk on the way and when you lie down and when you arise. Bind them as a sign upon your arm and they will be as תְּפִלָּה between your eyes, and write them on the doorposts of your house and in your gates

לָחַם he fought (לָחַץ)  
נִלָּחַם he fought (נִפְעַל)

אֲנִי  
I

אַתָּה  
you ms

אַתְּ  
you fs

הוא  
he

היא  
she

אֲנֵנוּ  
we

אַתֶּם  
you mp

אַתְּ  
you fp

הֵם  
they mp

הֵנָּה  
they fp

נִאָמַד  
 נִאָסַף  
 נִבְנָה  
 נִזְבַּר  
 נִוָּדַע  
 הָיָא נִלְוָה  
 נִכְנַת  
 נִמְצָא  
 נִשָּׂא  
 נִתַּן  
 נִעֲשָׂה  
 נִקְרָא  
 נִרְאָה  
 נִשָּׁבַר  
 נִשְׁמַע  
 נִשְׁמַד

אָמַד  
 אָסַף  
 בָּנָה  
 זָבַר  
 וּדָע  
 הָיָא יִלְוָה  
 כָּנַת  
 מְצָא  
 שָׂא  
 תַּן  
 עֲשָׂה  
 קָרָא  
 רְאָה  
 שָׁבַר  
 שָׁמַע  
 שָׁמַד

אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתְּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
הֵם	they mp

הִלַּךְ	he walked, went
הִתְהַלֵּךְ	he walked himself about
הִלְלֵל	he praised
הִתְהַלֵּל	he boasted
חִזַּק	he was strong, firm
חִזְּקוּ	he strengthened
הִתְחַזְּקוּ	he grasped, held, strengthened
הִתְחַזְּקוּ	he strengthened himself
קָדַח	he kindled, burned, was angry
עָבַד	he worked, served, tilled
הִתְפַּלֵּל	he prayed
קִדְּשׁ	he sanctified
הִקְדִּישׁ	he dedicated
הִתְקַדְּשׁ	he made himself holy
אַף	a nose; anger



אֲנִי	I
אַתָּה	you ms
אַתְּ	you fs
הוא	he
היא	she
אֲנֵנוּ	we
אַתֶּם	you mp
אַתְּן	you fp
הֵם	they mp
הֵנָּה	they fp

*Genesis 37:13–37:16*

<sup>13</sup>And said Israel to Joseph, “Is it not so that your brothers are shepherding at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” He said to him: “Here I am!” <sup>14</sup>And he said to him, “Go please, look into the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring to me a word.” And he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. <sup>15</sup>And a man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field. And the man questioned him, saying, “What do you seek?” <sup>16</sup>And he said, “My brothers do I seek; tell me, please, where they are shepherding.”

letter	value
א	1
ב	2
ג	3
ד	4
ה	5
ו	6
ז	7
ח	8
ט	9
י	10
כ	20
ל	30
מ	40
נ	50
ס	60
ע	70
פ	80
צ	90
ק	100
ר	200
ש	300
ת	400

sheva	sound	as in	name
:	<b>uh</b> <b>ih</b> <b>ah</b> <b>eh</b>	<b>bug</b> <b>city</b> <b>ma</b> roon stupe <b>fy</b>	sounded sheva
:	none	end syllable	silent sheva
◌ְ	<b>ah</b>	<b>ma</b> hjong	half-patach
◌ֶ	<b>aw</b>	<b>awe</b>	half-qamats
◌ֶּ	<b>eh</b>	<b>bed</b>	half-segol

mark	meaning	name
<	accent this syllable	wedge
◌ֻ	accent this syllable	meteg
◌ֿ	double consonant	dagesh
◌ֹ	pronounce <b>akh</b>	furtive patach
◌ֹּ	pronounce <b>v</b>	silent yod
◌ֹ׀	change verb tense	reversing vav
◌ֹׁ	denote abbreviation	geresh
◌ֹׂ	denote number	gershayim
...◌ֹ׃	prefix question	question mark