

Pronunciation Rules for Ancient Hebrew

Fixed vowels are Cholem-Gadol (אָ), Shureq (אֵ) and vowels followed by a Yod (אִ).

Strong vowels are Qamatz-Gadol (אֲ), Tzere (אִי) and Cholem-Qaton (אֹ).

Weak vowels are Pathach (אֶ), Seghol (אֵי), Chiriq (אִי), Qamatz-Qaton (אֱ), and Qubbutz (אֻ).

Reduced vowels are Pathach (אֶ), Qamatz (אֱ) and Seghol (אֵי) merged with a Sh'wa (אֲ).

Weak vowels are used in closed-unaccented and open-accented syllables.

Strong vowels are used in closed-accented and open unaccented syllables.

Sh'wa vowels are used in open-starters for a syllable complex (three or more) ... דְּבָרִים

Reduced vowels are used in guttural open-starters for a syllable complex ... אֱלֹהִים

- 1) Every syllable begins with a consonant and includes a vowel (אֶבֶן).
- 2) An open (weak) syllable is a simple consonant with its vowel (אֶבֶן).
- 3) A closed (strong) syllable is consonant with vowel and another consonant (אֶבֶן).
- 4) The second consonant that forms the closed syllable will not have a vowel.
- 5) All letters except the guttural (א ה ח ע) and the Resh (ר) can have a Dagesh.
- 6) A Dagesh that is preceded by an open syllable (any vowel) is strong (Forte) (אֶבֶן).
- 7) A Dagesh occurring in (ב ג ד כ פ ת) is weak (Lene) when it initiates a syllable (בִּבְרָא).
- 8) A strong (Forte) Dagesh will double the consonant and split the syllable (אֶתָּהּ = at/toh).
- 9) A weak (Lene) Dagesh will only harden the consonant and not modify the syllable (בִּבְרָא = bo not vo).
- 10) A word starting with (ב ג ד כ פ ת) is Dagesh Lene (weak) if the previous word is closed.
- 11) A word ending with the (א ה ו י) without a vowel constitutes an open syllable.
- 12) A Sh'wa is silent if it is preceded by a weak vowel.
 - a) The first of two contiguous Sh'wa is silent.
 - b) A Sh'wa at the end of a word is silent.
 - c) A Sh'wa under a guttural is silent.
- 13) The Sh'wa is vocal anywhere else.
 - a) A Sh'wa under a strong Dagesh (Forte) is vocal (אֶבֶן).
 - b) A Sh'wa under the first consonant is vocal (דְּבָרִים = di-va-rim).
 - c) A Sh'wa after a strong vowel is vocal (כֹּתְבִים = cothi-vim).
 - d) A Sh'wa under a Resh (ר) can be vocal.
- 14) A Qamatz in a closed and unaccented syllable is a Qamatz Qaton (weak).
- 15) A Qamatz with a Metheg is a Qamatz Qaton (weak) (אֲ).
 - a) A Metheg reverses an otherwise strong condition (אֲ).
 - b) A Metheg forces an accented syllable.
- 16) A Qamatz in a closed and accented syllable is a Qamatz Gadol (strong).
- 17) A Qamatz in an open or accented syllable is Qamatz Gadol (strong).
- 18) Reduced vowels are always open syllables and usually with a guttural.
- 19) A word ending with a Cheth (ח) or Ayin (ע) is furtive, meaning that the vowel it carries is pronounced first.
- 20) An Alef (א) without a vowel is quiesced (nearly absent).
- 21) Consonants that are followed with (אֶ) Pathach-Yod-Chiriq are a closed syllable unit.
- 22) Except with a Metheg, the last syllable of a word is always accented (strong).