Chapter 3a – Syllabification

Two Basic Rules

1. *Every syllable must begin with one consonant and have only one vowel.* The following example has two syllables, each beginning with a consonant and each having only one vowel.

\[
\text{דָּבָר} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \text{דָּ-בָר} \quad dā-bār
\]

2. *There are only two types of syllables: open and closed.* Open syllables end with a vowel and closed syllables end with a consonant. In the above example, the syllable ד (dā) is open because it ends in a vowel and the syllable ב (bār) is closed because it ends in a consonant.
Chapter 3b – Syllabification

Hebrew Word Accent

Most Hebrew words are accented or stressed on the last syllable as in the following example.

Some Hebrew words are not accented on the last syllable. With these words, the accented syllable is indicated by an accent mark over the stressed syllable as in the following example.
Chapter 3c – Syllabification

Syllable Classification

Syllables may be classified with reference to their proximity to the accent.

\[ \text{tonic} \quad \text{pretonic} \quad \text{propretonic} \]

Syllables may also be classified without reference to the accent.

\[ \text{ultima} \quad \text{penultima} \quad \text{antepenultima} \]
Chapter 3d – Syllabification
Daghesh Forte and Daghesh Lene in a Begadkephat Consonant

A Daghesh Lene can occur only in a *begadkephat* consonant. A Daghesh Forte can occur in any consonant except the gutturals or ר. This means that *begadkephat* letters can take either a Daghesh Forte or a Daghesh Lene. How can you tell which Daghesh is being used in a *begadkephat* letter?

1. The Daghesh in a *begadkephat* is a **Forte** if preceded by a vowel (אַתָּה, ת preceded by the vowel Pathach).

2. The Daghesh in a *begadkephat* is a **Lene** if preceded by a consonant (מַלְכָּה, כ preceded by ל with Silent Shewa). You will learn how to distinguish between Vocal and Silent Shewa in the next handout.

3. A *begadkephat* letter at the beginning of a word normally takes a Daghesh Lene unless the previous word ends in a vowel (דָּבָר, ד with Daghesh Lene begins the word).
Chapter 3e – Syllabification
Recognizing Silent Shewa: Three Rules

A Shewa is silent when immediately preceded by a short vowel. Another way of stating this rule is that Silent Shewa will always come at the end of a closed syllable.

1. A Shewa is silent when immediately preceded by a short vowel.

פַּרְעֹה
(par-øh)

2. The first of two contiguous (side-by-side) Shewas within a word is silent (and the second is vocal).

מִשְׁפְּטֵי
(miš-pî-î)

3. A Shewa at the end of a word is silent.

כָּתַב
(kā-tab)

Basics of Biblical Hebrew
© Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt
Chapter 3f – Syllabification

Recognizing Vocal Shewa: Four Rules

1. Initial Shewa is always vocal.

ברכה
(bër-礁-kāh)

2. The second of two contiguous (side-by-side) Shewas within a word is vocal.

מִשְפְּטֵי
(miš-pî-†ê)

3. A Shewa under any consonant with Daghesh Forte is vocal.

הַמְלָכִים
(ham-mî-lâ-kîm)

4. A Shewa after a long vowel is normally vocal.

כֹּתְבִים
(kô-†î-bîm)
Chapter 3g – Syllabification
Qamets and Qamets Hatuf

Qamets and Qamets Hatuf look exactly alike. How do you tell the difference?

1. Qamets Hatuf (short o) occurs only in a closed and unaccented syllable.

חָכְמָה
(ḥok-māh)

2. Qamets (changeable long ā) prefers an open, pretonic syllable or a closed, accented syllable.

דָּבָר
(dā-ḇār)

3. A Metheg may be used to identify the Qamets. It is a small vertical line that is placed to the left of the vowel.

בִּהְמִים
(bāt-tīm)
When a word ends in ח or ע, a Pathach may appear beneath either consonant and it must be pronounced and transliterated before the guttural. This special use of the Pathach is called Furtive Pathach. Furtive Pathach is not considered to be a full vowel nor is it counted in syllabification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Syllabification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>בֹּרֵחַ</td>
<td>בֹּ-רֵאָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נֹטֵעַ</td>
<td>נֹ-טֶאָ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>רָקִיעַ</td>
<td>רָ-קְיוּא</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| רוּחַ    | רוּ-א̄ | (monosyllabic)
When א occurs without a vowel, it is *quiescent*. When the א is quiescent, it is not considered to be a consonant with reference to the rules of syllabification but it is still an essential part of the spelling.


dחַטָּאת

—

Basics of Biblical Hebrew
© Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt
Diphthong is a grammatical term used to identify sounds normally distinct but now functioning as a single unit. The most common Hebrew diphthong is יִ (ayì). Syllables that contain this diphthong are considered to be closed.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{šā́mayım} & > \text{šā́-mayım} \\
\text{ｂי́́ת} & > \text{ｂי́́t (monosyllabic)}
\end{align*}
\]
A vowel’s preference for a particular type of syllable is determined by two primary factors: (1) the type of syllable (open or closed) and (2) the proximity of the syllable to the accent.

Short Vowels prefer closed, unaccented syllables or open, accented syllables.

- דֶּב short vowel in a closed, unaccented syllable (דֶּב)
- דֶּב short vowel in an open, accented syllable (דֶּב)

Long Vowels prefer closed, accented syllables or open, pretonic syllables.

- בָר long vowel in a closed, accented syllable (בָר)
- בָר long vowel in an open, pretonic syllable (בָר)

Vocal Shewa and Reduced Vowels prefer open, propretonic syllables. The reduced vowels appear with guttural consonants.

- דָּל short vowel in an open, propretonic syllable (דָּל)
- דָּל reduced vowel in an open, propretonic syllable (דָּל)
Four Hebrew letters are called *gutturals*. They are called gutturals because they are pronounced in the back of the throat.

**Guttural Preferences**

1. Gutturals prefer a-class vowels.
2. Gutturals and ר cannot take Daghesh Forte.
3. Gutturals cannot take Vocal Shewa, but do take reduced (Hateph) vowels. The consonant ר can take Vocal Shewa. Reduced vowels are always vocal; they are never silent.