

Syllabification in Biblical Hebrew

Syllabification

- Now that we've learned the Hebrew Aleph-Bet and vowels, it's time to learn how to read Hebrew.
- The first step to do this is by dividing the words into syllables.
- This is called syllabification.
- At first this process may seem confusing but with plenty of repetition and practice, you'll be reading in a short time.

Syllabification

- **1st Rule of Syllabification:**

- Every syllable must begin with one consonant (C) and have only one vowel (V).

- Ex. **דְּבַר** is syllabified **דְּ | בַר**. This example has two syllables, each beginning with a consonant and each having only one vowel.

- **Note:** the number of vowels in a word determines the number of syllables in that word.

Syllabification

- **1st Rule of Syllabification:**
 - Every syllable must begin with one consonant (C) and have only one vowel (V).
- **Exceptions to the first rule:**
 - Sometimes the conjunctive ך is the vowel ך
 - The furtive patach follows another vowel (ex. רוֹחַ).

Syllabification

- **2nd Rule of Syllabification:**

- There are only two types of syllables: open and closed.
- Open syllables start with a consonant and end with a vowel (CV).
- Closed syllables start with a consonant which is followed by a vowel, and end with a consonant (CVC).
- With the word **בְּרָאָה**, the syllable **רָאָה** is open (CV) because it ends with a vowel, and the syllable **בְּרָ** is closed because it ends with a consonant (CVC).

Syllabification

- Syllable Classification

- דְּבַרִּים has 3 syllables

- דְּ | בַּ | רִים (CVC-3 CV-2 CV-1)

- In this example:

- CVC-3 = the **tonic** or stressed/accented syllable

- CV-2 = the **pre-tonic** syllable (syllable prior to accented syllable)

- CV₁ = the **pro-pretonic** syllable (syllable prior to the pre-tonic syllable)

Syllabification

- Syllable classification (cont.)
 - Normally, the stressed or tonic syllable is the last syllable of a word.
 - Sometimes, the stress falls on the next to the last syllable; these are marked with a [◀] or a _◻.
- Syllables in the **post-tonic** position occur *after* the **tonic syllable**.

• סֵפֶר → פֶּר | סֵ

Syllabification

- Remember, there are 6 letters that often have a weak dot called a "dagesh lene" inside them.
- These letters are ב, ג, ד, כ, פ, ת.
- They are often referred to as BeGaDKePHaT letters.
- The dagesh lene does not affect syllabification. It simply indicates the hard sound of the BeGaDKePHaT letters.

Syllabification

- A dagesh lene occurs in BeGaDKePHaT letters:
 - At the beginning of a syllable AND
 - They must not follow a vowel (even if the vowel is in a preceding word).

Syllabification

- Examples of dagesh lene:

- בַּיִת

- בָּרַח | מָדָה Silent sheva is syllable marker, not a vowel

- There's no dagesh lene because of preceding vowel

- רִים | בָּ | דָּ vs. בִּים | כָּ | כּוּ

- כֵּן vs. וַיְהִי כֵן

- וַיְהִי-בְקָר

Syllabification

- The dagesh forte (strong) **does** affect syllabification; it doubles the value of the consonant in the word.
- חֲקֹה is syllabified as חֲקֹה | חֲקֹה - note how we have 2 qofs.
- You have to be able to determine if a word has a dagesh forte or a dagesh lene when you are working with ב, ג, ד, כ, פ, ת.

Syllabification

- Remember, if there is a full vowel (a vowel other than a sheva) immediately preceding a consonant with a dagesh, it is a dagesh forte (not a dagesh lene); the dagesh forte represents a doubling of the consonant in which it appears.
- In מְלֶכֶּה the כּ has a dagesh lene, not a dagesh forte.
- A BeGaDKePHaT letter at the beginning of a word takes a dagesh lene unless the previous word ends in a vowel.

Syllabification

The Conjunctive Dagesh Forte is another kind of dagesh forte you should know about.

1. It occurs when 2 words are close in pronunciation.
2. The accent on the second word is on the 1st syllable and the accent on the first word is on the last or second to last syllable.
3. The ending of the first word must be either:

◌ִ , ׀ִ , ׀ִ

Syllabification

- Examples of Conjunctive Dagesh Forte:
- נתַּנְּהָ לִי She gave to me
- לְקַחְתָּהּ - זֹאת She was taken
- כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת Because she made this

Syllabification

- **The Sheva and Syllabification:**
 - A sheva marks the end of a CV and a CVC syllable.

Syllabification

- A sheva is vocal if it begins a word:
 - מֶאֵד
- A sheva is vocal if it follows a long vowel:
 - כֹּתְבָם
- This rule has exceptions. I don't know the reasons why. I have noticed that נִינְוָה (Ninevah) is pronounced with a silent sheva (נְ).

Syllabification

- The sheva under a consonant with a dagesh forte is doubled with the consonant.
- The first sheva is vocal and the second is silent.

- דְּמַלְכִים → דֶּם | לְ | מְ | כִים
• CVC CV CV CVC
• vocal silent

Syllabification

- A sheva at the end of a CVC syllable is silent.

מֵלְכָה → כָּה | מֵלְ

- A sheva is silent if it is preceded by a short vowel:

ֵ, ִ, ֶ, ֶ, ֶ.

(Note that here ֶ is a **qamets-hatuf** and not a regular qamets.)

חֶכְמָה → מָה | חֶכְ

Syllabification

- In order to discuss the next section, I need to mention inseparable prepositions.
- Inseparable prepositions are single letter prepositions (such as ך , לְ , ךְ) that are added to the front of a word; specifically, they are prefixed to the front of their objects.
- We will discuss the meaning of each of these letters later.

Syllabification

- **Rules of Sheva:**
- **1st Rule of Sheva:** Hebrew will not allow two vocal shevas to be side by side at the beginning of a word.
- This could conceivably occur with the addition of an **inseparable preposition**. In such an instance, the first vocal sheva becomes a hireq, and the second becomes a silent sheva.
- $\text{לְנִבְיָאִים} + \text{לְ} \rightarrow \text{לְנִבְיָאִים}$
- The application of the 1st **Rule of Sheva** produces a hireq in a closed syllable.

Syllabification

- **Exception to the 1st Rule of Sheva:**
- If the first syllable is **יְ** as in **יְהוּדָה** adding the preposition **לְ** would produce **לְיְהוּדָה**, but 2 vocal shevas at the beginning of a word is not allowed.
- In this case, the application of the 1st Rule of Sheva produces **לְיְהוּדָה**.

Syllabification

- **2nd Rule of Sheva:**
- A second rule of sheva applies to syllables which have a guttural consonant (א, ח, ה, ע, ר) followed by a Hateph vowel (reduced vowels: אֲ, אָ, אִ)
- A vocal sheva can't precede a guttural (א, ח, ה, ע, ר) with a Hateph vowel.
- If this were to happen by adding an inseparable preposition such as בְּ, the preposition will take the corresponding short vowel of the of the reduced vowel.
- חֵלֹם + בְּ → חֵלֹם בְּ → חֵלֹם בְּ

Syllabification

- Examples:

• אַנְיָהּ → אַנְיָהּ (gamets hatuf)
• boat, ship

• אֶדוֹם → אֶדוֹם
• Edom

• אֲדָמָה → אֲדָמָה
• ground

Syllabification

- **Exception to the 2nd Rule of Sheva:**
- When an inseparable preposition like לְ (Lamed with Sheva) is prefixed to אֱלֹהִים (God), the result is לְאֱלֹהִים.
- The לְ becomes quiescent (silent) and the hateph seghol (a reduced vowel) lengthens to the long vowel, Tsere; this is referred to as compensatory lengthening.

Syllabification

- **Summary of Shevas:**
- Vocal
 - Beginning of syllable (or word)
 - After long vowel (unless stressed)
 - 2nd of 2 shevas (unless at end of word)
- Silent
 - At end of syllable (or word)
 - After short vowel
 - 1st of 2 shevas

Syllabification

- **Quiescent ׀** – When ׀ occurs in a word without a vowel under it, it is quiescent (silent), as in **חַטָּאת** (sin). When the ׀ is quiescent, it is not considered to be a consonant with reference to the rules of syllabification.
 - חַטָּ׀ת | חַטָּ׀׀

Syllabification

- **Furtive Patach** – When a word ends with ך or ם (not immediately preceded by an a-class vowel), a patach may appear beneath this final guttural consonant, as in רוֹחַ or רִקִיעַ.
- This use of the patach is called the furtive patach and it is pronounced before the final guttural consonant.
- In terms of syllabification, the furtive patach is not counted.

Syllabification

- **Metheg** - means bridle, pause
- It is a syllable breaker seen with both long and short vowels.
- It is on the secondary accent of a word (not the tonic syllable; the tonic syllable in the last word of a sentence/verse is marked by a **silluq** which looks exactly the same).

Syllabification

- Metheg

מָה | כֹּ | חָ

VS.

מַה | כֹּחַ

Real/full qamets

Open syllable

With metheg

Qamets hatuf

Closed syllable

Without metheg

Syllabification

- **Maqqef** – connects two words = binder, connection

- בני-ישׁוּרֵאֵל

- Causes stress change which can cause vowel changes:

- אֶת־קוֹלִי → אֶת קוֹלִי

- Tserere reduced to Seghol with maqqef

- כָּל־אִישׁ → כָּל אִישׁ

- Holem reduced to Qamets hatuf

Syllabification

- **Mappiq (feminine period)**
- A mappiq is a dot in final ה (הּ)
- הּ is a consonant and not a vowel
- Normally הַ , הֲ , הִ , הֵ are vowels.
- It distinguishes the feminine noun endings from words with a 3rd feminine singular pronominal suffix.
- מַלְכָּה queen מַלְכָּהּ **her** king
- סוּס horse (m) סוּסָהּ mare (f) סוּסָהּ **her** horse (m)

Syllabification

- Before we finish, let's look at one more word, the sacred name:

יְהוָה

- According to what's in this presentation, this word should have 3 syllables:

יְהוָה | הַ | הַ | הַ
cvc c? cv

- Note that the first הַ is missing a vowel!
- There is no silent sheva under the first הַ so it is not a closed syllable. It needs a vowel!

Syllabification

- One text book I have, says to use the circumlocution Adonai (אֲדֹנָי) instead of the sacred name יְהוָה.
- As a reminder, this text book spells the sacred name as יְהוָה until readers are transitioned back to saying Adonai when they see יְהוָה .
- Note that the vowels in יְהוָה (הָ וְ) are not the same as in אֲדֹנָי (וֹ וְ) as many people claim when explaining the origin of using the circumlocution of Adonai.

Syllabification

- There are a variety of circumlocutions for יהוה .
 - LORD
 - Adonai
 - HaShem (The Name)
 - Yahweh or Yahveh
 - Some people just spell it out as YHVH or YHWH
- I've used all of these at one time or another; I don't have a problem with people who use any of these.

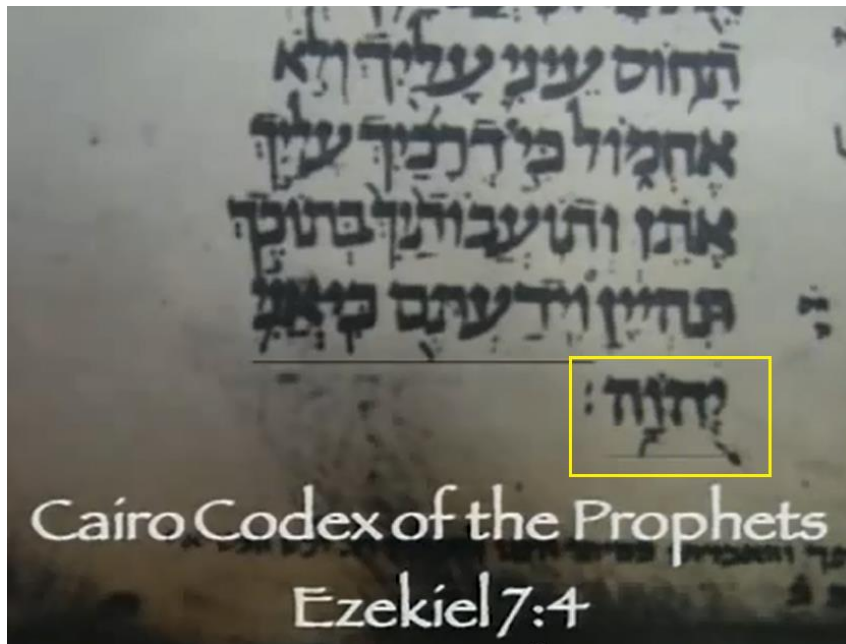
Syllabification

- I believe that the Masoretes who devised the vowel pointing system did not want the sacred name lost forever.
- Certainly, they wanted to protect the name from misuse.
- The question we must ask is, “Is there any way we can know for sure what that middle vowel really is?”
- I truly believe the answer is YES. I know it’s a hot topic, so if you disagree, that’s okay.

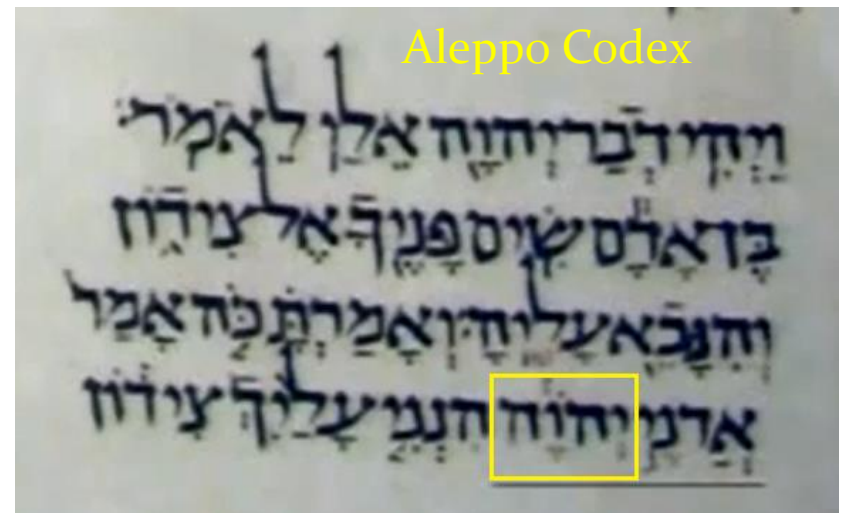
Syllabification

- The sacred name is written well over 5000 times in Scripture. Most of the time it is written as יהוה , BUT
- In a U-tube video, Nehemia Gordon, who is a Dead Sea Scrolls scholar, shared that he has occasionally seen the middle vowel in 3 witnesses:
 - The Leningrad Codex;
 - The Aleppo Codex;
 - The Cairo Codex of the Prophets.
- **Open Door Series 11 -- The Tower that Stands Still -- Nehemia Gordon**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AsckpKoC1A&feature=share&app=desktop>
See disclaimer at the end of this presentation.

Syllabification



In these source documents,
יהוה is written
with a holem:
יהוה or Yehovah



Syllabification

WTT Tools Copy

עֲשׂוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:4

הַמְטִיר יְהוָה Gen 2:5

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:7

וַיִּטֵּעַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:8

וַיִּצְמַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:9

וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:15

וַיִּצַּו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:16

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:18

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:19

וַיַּפֵּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 2:21

4887 verses, 2 forms, 5658 hits 0.67 secs | WTT Limits Strong's

WTT Tools Copy

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 3:14

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Gen 9:26

מִלְאֵךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Exo 3:2

הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Exo 13:3

הוֹצֵאךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Exo 13:9

וַיִּהְיֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Exo 13:15

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Exo 14:1

וַיַּחֲזִק יְהוָה אֱתֵנוּ Exo 14:8

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ Lev 25:17

עִם־יְהוָה וְאִפְּךָ Deu 31:27

44 verses, 1 form, 44 hits 0.05 secs | WTT Limits St

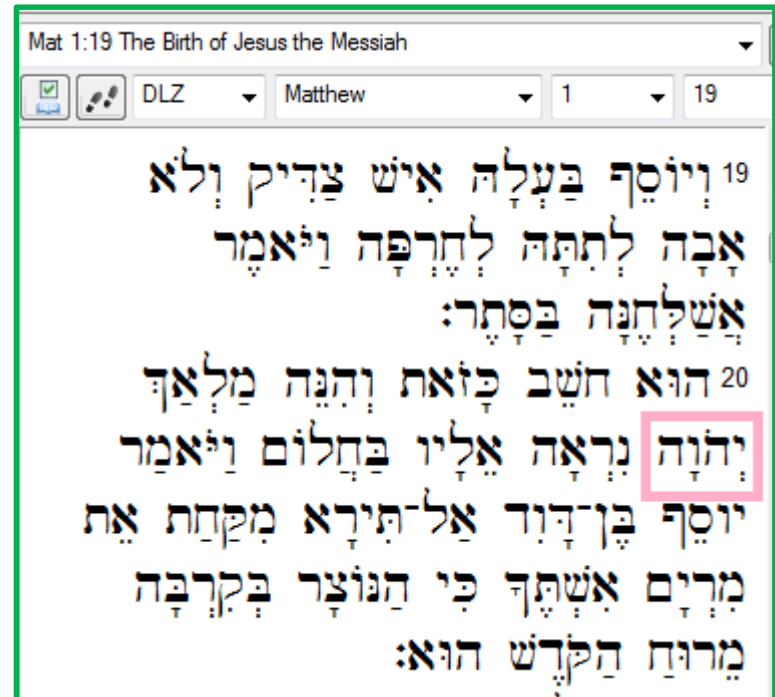
In the WTT (in BW9), יהוה got 5658 hits and יהוה got 44 hits (20 times in the book of Jeremiah). BTW, יהוה was not in Ezekiel 7:4 in the WTT.

Syllabification

- The WTT is the Leningrad Codex Hebrew Old Testament.

Syllabification

Note that the fully pointed יְהוָה is used in the Salkinson-Ginsburg and Delitzsch Hebrew New Testaments.



Syllabification

- There is another way the sacred name is spelled.

אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה
Adonai YHVH

This occurs about 270 times in the Tanach.

- The hireq under the vav (in יְהוָה) is to remind you of the word, אֱלֹהִים (Elohim).
- I understand that when readers see this spelling, they are expected to say, “Adonai Elohim” instead of Adonai Yehovah to avoid saying the sacred name.

Syllabification

- Notice the difference:

אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה
(Adonai YHVH)

Translated Lord God

But said “Adonai Elohim”

יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
(YHVH Elohim)

Translated LORD God

But said “Adonai Elohim”

Syllabification


- Now you know...
- Now you decide what you are going to say...
- In future presentations, I will use “Yehovah.”

Syllabification

- ***Biblical Hebrew A Compact Guide***, Miles Van Pelt, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 2012.
- ***Biblical Hebrew An Introductory Grammar***, Page H. Kelly, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, copyright 1992.
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Syllabification

- **Open Door Series 11 -- The Tower that Stands Still -- Nehemia Gordon**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AsckpKoC1A&feature=share&app=desktop>
- Nehemia Gordon describes himself as a prominent figure in the Karaite Jewish community; he does not acknowledge that Yeshua is the Messiah. He has worked as a translator on the Dead Sea Scrolls and as a researcher deciphering ancient Hebrew manuscripts. The use of his materials is not an indication that I agree with all of his beliefs.



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