

## The Hebrew Alphabet

Character		Name	Pronunciation	Numerical Value
	אלף	Aleph	A cutting off of the breath, like the 'h' in 'honest'	1
ב	ב	Beth	The dotted Beth is pronounced 'b,' the undotted 'v'	2
ג	ג	Gimel	The dotted Gimel is a hard 'g,' and the undotted is a soft guttural 'gh'	3
ד	ד	Daleth	The dotted Daleth is pronounced 'd,' and the undotted is a voiced 'th' as in 'the'	4
	ה	Hey	Pronounced 'h'	5
	ו	Waw	Pronounced 'w'	6
	ז	Zayin	Pronounced 'z'	7
	ח	Heth	A guttural 'h' as in the Scottish 'loch'	8
	ט	Teth	A dull 't'	9
	י	Yod	Pronounced 'y'	10
כ	כ	Kaph	The dotted Kaph is 'k,' undotted 'ch'	20
	ל		Lamed	Pronounced 'l'
	מ	Mem	Pronounced 'm'	40
	נ	Nun	Pronounced 'n'	50
	ס	Samek	A dull 's'	60
	ע	Ayin	Hard to pronounce. Like a gulping sound.	70
פ	פ	Pey	The dotted Pey is 'p,' undotted is 'f'	80
	צ		Tsade	A harsh dental 's'
	ק	Koph	A 'k' at the back of the throat	100
	ר	Resh	Pronounced 'r'	200
ש	ש	Sin, Shin	Sin (with a dot over the left) pronounced 's,' Shin (dot over the right) is 'sh'	300
ת	ת	Taw	The dotted Taw is a 't,' undotted 'th' as in 'think'	400

The Hebrew characters shown here are those of the "square" script, which the Jews borrowed from Assyria during the Babylonian exile. Prior to that, Israelites had used alphabetical characters closely resembling those of the Phoenicians, who were the first to devise a phonetic alphabet. The original characters of the Phoenician alphabet are shown above the corresponding "square" script characters in the table below.

## The language

Hebrew is a member of the Semitic family of languages. Biblical Hebrew is the name used for the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The reader should bear in mind that the pronunciation of Hebrew in the time of the writing of the Old Testament books differs from that in the time of the Masoretic punctuation. The vocalization of the Hebrew Bible represents the pronunciation as of about the 7th cent. A.D. Much of the discussion about the pronunciation of the Hebrew text is often hypothetical.

Strictly speaking the sounds of a language can only be studied in the spoken form. But in dealing with ancient languages, we have access only to written forms. When the orthography of a language is not readily recognized by an unfamiliar reader, a system of transliteration is generally employed. Such a system is neither phonemic nor phonetic, but rather deals with identification.

The Hebrew letters have been preserved for us in acrostics, so that we know that there are twenty-two characters in the order as given in these literary forms (cf. Ps. 34, 111, 112, 119, and 145; Prov. 31-11-31; Lam. 1,2,3 and 4).

Name	Hebrew	Transliteration
Aleph	א	a
Beth	ב	b
Gimel	ג	g
Daleth	ד	d
He	ה	e
Waw	ו	u
Zayin	ז	z
Heth	ח	ch
Teth	ט	t
Yod	י	i
Kaph	כ	k
Lamed	ל	l
Mem	מ	m
Nun	נ	n
Samekh	ס	s
Ayin	ע	o
Pe	פ	ph
Sadhe	צ	tz
Qoph	ק	q
Resh	ר	r
Shin	ש	sh
Taw	ת	th
Kaph (final)	ך	k
Mem (final)	ם	m
Nun (final)	ן	n
Pe (final)	ף	ph
Sadhe (final)	ץ	tz