

Irregularities and Exceptions

1) We learned about a **vowel called “sh’va”** — it’s two vertical dots below a letter. Here are the rules about the pronunciation of sh’va that will be helpful to memorize:

- When the sh’va is at the end of a word, it is silent [לְ = *lach*]
- When the sh’va is in the middle of a word, by itself, it is silent and ends a syllable. “Middle of the word” means it appears under a letter that is not the first or last syllable of the word; “by itself” means there is not another sh’va on either side of it.

[יְשׁוּמֵר = *yeesh-more not yee-sheh-more*]

- When the sh’va is at the beginning of a word or syllable, it is pronounced like the “eh” in **skeleton** [דֵּמַי = *deh-may*]
- When there are two sh’va’im (plural for sh’va) next to each other under a word, the first sh’va is silent and ends a syllable; the second sh’va is sounded and begins a new syllable

[יְשׁוּפְטוּ = *yeesh-peh-too*]

2) We also learned about **combination vowels**. These will appear under one of the following four letters: אַ, הַ, עַ, and םַ. Two vowels (the patach and the segol) do ***not*** change their sound when combined with sh’va:

ah = אַ = אֶ

eh = אֶ = אֵ

One vowel (the kametz) **does** change its sound when combined with sh’va:

אֵ = oh (not “ah”)

Some vowels do **not** change their sound when combined with or followed by the letter ך (yud):

אֵי = אַי אֶי = אַי אִי = אַי

Some vowels **do** change their sound when combined with or followed by the letter י (yud):

[dye = דַּי] eye = אֵי = אַי

[boy = בּוֹי = בַּי] oy = אֹי = אַי

[vee-doo-ee = וּדְוֵי] oo-ee = אִי = אַי

3) **Accents** — In most Hebrew words, the accent falls on the final syllable of the word. This does change for different dialects.

4) There is **one exception** to the “top to bottom...right to left” reading rule in Hebrew. In this situation, two factors must be present:

- a. The FINAL letter of the word is ח and
- b. The vowel under the chet is a patach: חַXX

In this case—and only when both of these conditions are met—two things happen. First, the final syllable is pronounced “ach” (it is read from bottom to top); and second, the accent of the word moves to the second-to-last syllable:

פּוֹתֵחַ = poh-TAY-ach

כּוֹחַ = KOH-ach

5) The **dagesh** is a dot that appears in the center of a letter. It can appear in all but 5 letters [“the gutturals” = א, ח, ה, ע, and ך].

6) The **BeGeD KeFeT letters**: this is an acronym for the six letters which **usually** take a dagesh if they are at the beginning of a word or syllable: ב, ת, פ, כ, ד, ג,