










Long Vowels

In the following tables, the Hebrew vowels are presented in a format that is designed primarily for heuristic purposes. That is, the relationships between certain categories of vowels are preserved while some of the nomenclature is different than what one will encounter in many grammars. In particular, the distinction being made between long and short vowels is based solely upon the presence or absence of a *matres lectionis* (a vowel letter): long vowels are vowels accompanied by a *matres* and short vowels are vowels without a *matres*. Defining long and short vowels in this way is not the standard convention employed by Hebrew grammarians since technically a long vowel (as defined here) can occur without a *matres* in the case of a defective spelling. It is hoped, however, that the convention employed here will be of use to the beginning student as it has been to me.















POSITION	A-CLASS a-type	I-CLASS i- and e-type	U-CLASS u- and o-type
FINAL ONLY	qamets-he ā ^h • ā(h)  father	tsere-he ē ^h • ē(h)  pain	holem-he ō ^h • ō(h)  role
		segol-he e ^h • e(h)  pain	
FINAL OR MEDIAL		tsere-yod ē ^y • ē  pain	holem-vav ō ^w • ō  role
		hireq-yod î ^y • î  machine	sureq ū ^w • ū  rule
MEDIAL ONLY		segol-yod e ^y • ê  pain	

*In this table, "C" stands for any strong non-guttural consonant, and "G" for any guttural consonant.

Short Vowels

The following "rules" for short vowels are reflected in the following table. Note, however, that there are many words and instances in which these "rules" do not apply.

- Rule #1:** Lengthened vowels occur in accented or near open syllables (i.e., pretonic, open syllables).
- Rule #2:** Normal vowels occur in closed unaccented syllables.
- Rule #3:** Vocal shevas occur in distant open syllables.

TYPE OF VOWEL (type of syllable)	A-CLASS a-type	I-CLASS i- and e-type	U-CLASS u- and o-type
LENGTHENED** accented or near open (pretonic)	qamets ā  father	tsere ē  pain	holem ō  role
NORMAL closed unaccented (either pretonic or propretonic)	patach a  father	segol e  pen	qamets-hatuph o  role
		hireq i  pin	qibbuts u  rule
REDUCED distant open with gutturals	hateph-patach ā • ä  semi-slurred	hateph-segol ē • ë  semi-slurred	hateph-qamets ō • ö  semi-slurred
REDUCED-MURMURED distant open with non-gutturals	vocal sheva ◌ • ◌  semi-slurred	vocal sheva ◌ • ◌  semi-slurred	vocal sheva ◌ • ◌  semi-slurred

*In this table, "C" stands for any strong non-guttural consonant, and "G" for any guttural consonant.

**The vowels here termed "lengthened" are being treated as short vowels since they do not have a vowel letter. Note that some grammars treat them as long vowels though still distinguishing them from long vowels with a *matres lectionis* (a vowel letter). Here they are treated as short vowels since they can reduce in certain circumstances unlike long vowels with *matres*. Referring to them as "lengthened" is helpful since these are what normal vowels become when they go through compensatory lengthening.