Small pieces, big help

Hebrew joins its small words to the word that follows: "and", "the", "in", "to" are written as one letter at the start of a word. "My", "your", "his" are written as a few letters at its end. Learn these sixteen pieces and you will recognize most of the words in this book.

At the start of a word

	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE	
וְ	*ve-*, *u-*, *va-*	and	וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָּ	and may He keep you
הַ	*ha-*	the	הַשָּׁמַיִם	the heavens
בְּ	*be-*, *ba-*	in, with, at	בְּרֵאשִׁית	in the beginning
לְ	*le-*, *la-*	to, for, of	לְדָוִד	of David
כְּ	*ke-*, *ka-*	like, as	כְּעֵץ	like a tree
מִ	*mi-*, *me-*	from	מֵאַרְצְךָ	from your land
שֶׁ	*she-*	that, who	שֶׁיֹּרֵד	that runs down

At the end of a word

	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE	
י	*-i*	my	רֹעִי	my shepherd
ךָ	*-cha*	your (to a man)	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	your God
ךְ	*-ech*	your (to a woman)	עַמֵּךְ	your people
וֹ	*-o*	his, its	שְׁמוֹ	His name
יו	*-av*	his (with plurals)	פָּנָיו	His face
הּ	*-ah*	her	צְבָאָהּ	her service
נוּ	*-nu*	our	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	our God
כֶם	*-chem*	your (to many)	אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	your God
ם	*-am*, *-em*	their	חַרְבוֹתָם	their swords

Good to know. The vowel under a starting letter changes with the word that follows (וְ, וּ, וַ are all "and"). Look at the letter, not the vowel.

The Priestly Blessing

Numbers 6:24–26

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה

The blessing that Aaron and his sons, the priests, were told to give the people of Israel. It is still said today in synagogues and in churches, and by parents over their children.

24 יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ׃ 25 יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו
אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ׃ 26 יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם
לְךָ שָׁלוֹם׃

The Priestly Blessing · key words

Read each word out loud. Where a word is taken apart, read the pieces from right to left: they are printed in the order they are joined.

וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ
veyishmerecha
and keep you

וְ	יִשְׁמְרֶ	ךָ
and	may He keep	you

יְהוָה
Adonai
the LORD (read: Adonai)

יְבָרֶכְךָ
yevarechcha
may He bless you

יְבָרֶכְ	ךָ
may He bless	you

אֵלֶיךָ
elecha
toward you

פָּנָיו
panav
His face

פָּנָ	יו
face	his

יָאֵר
ya'er
may He make shine

וְיָשֵׂם
veyasem
and may He give

וְ	יָשֵׂם
and	may He put, give

יִשָּׂא
yisa
may He lift up

וִיחֻנֶּךָּ
vichuneka
and be gracious to you

וְ	יחֻנֶּ	ךָּ
and	may He be gracious	to you

שָׁלוֹם
shalom
peace, wholeness

> **Good to know.** Every line opens with a wish, "may He…" (yevarech, ya'er, yisa), and the word "you" comes back again and again at the ends of words (ךָ, -cha). The blessing is spoken to one person, even when a whole crowd hears it.

The Priestly Blessing · line by line

Read the Hebrew first. Its sound is underneath in English letters, and its meaning under that. The small number is the verse.

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ׃ 24

Yevarechcha Adonai veyishmerecha
May the LORD bless you and keep you.

יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ׃ 25

Ya'er Adonai panav elecha vichuneka
May the LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם׃ 26

Yisa Adonai panav elecha veyasem lecha shalom
May the LORD lift up His face toward you and give you peace.

The Priestly Blessing · practice

Match each word to its meaning

1	וִיחֻנֶּךָּ	____	**a**	and be gracious to you
2	פָּנָיו	____	**b**	His face
3	יְהוָה	____	**c**	may He make shine
4	וְיָשֵׂם	____	**d**	may He lift up
5	יִשָּׂא	____	**e**	the LORD (read: Adonai)
6	יָאֵר	____	**f**	and may He give

Read without help

Cover the line-by-line page and read these lines out loud. Then check yourself.

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ׃ 24

יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וִיחֻנֶּךָּ׃ 25

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם׃ 26

I read this passage ☐ slowly ☐ at speaking speed ☐ without looking at the transliteration

How Good and How Pleasant

Psalm 133

הִנֵּה מַה־טּוֹב

A short psalm from the “Songs of Ascents” (Psalms 120–134), traditionally linked with pilgrims going up to Jerusalem. Its first verse is a well-known song in Israel today.

[1] שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת לְדָוִד הִנֵּה מַה־טּוֹב וּמַה־נָּעִים שֶׁבֶת
אַחִים גַּם־יָחַד׃ [2] כַּשֶּׁמֶן הַטּוֹב עַל־הָרֹאשׁ יֹרֵד עַל־
הַזָּקָן זְקַן־אַהֲרֹן שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל־פִּי מִדּוֹתָיו׃ [3] כְּטַל־חֶרְמוֹן
שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל־הַרְרֵי צִיּוֹן כִּי שָׁם צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה
חַיִּים עַד־הָעוֹלָם׃

Biblical Hebrew Reading Practice

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