

## Introductory Biblical Hebrew I (BIBL 33900)

### Handout #2 - Syllabification

#### Syllabification

Closed Syllable: CvC

Open Syllable: Cv

- Rules about Vowels in Open and Closed Syllables:
  - a. An **ACCENTED SYLLABLE** can contain any kind of vowel *except* a reduced vowel.
  - b. An **UNACCENTED, CLOSED SYLLABLE** will almost always have a short vowel
  - c. An **UNACCENTED, OPEN SYLLABLE** will usually have a long vowel *or* a reduced vowel.
  - d. Most words are accented on the final syllable.

#### Dagesh

There are two forms of the **DAGESH**:

- **DAGESH LENE (WEAK DAGESH)**
  - appears only in six letters, the “beged-kephet” letters: **ת פ כ ד ג ב**
  - these letters will have the dagesh lene *if*:
    - (1) they are the first letter in a word, or
    - (2) if they are not preceded by a vowel sound
  - this dagesh produces the “hard” sound of each of these consonants (Ex. b vs. v in **ב**)
- **DAGESH FORTE (STRONG DAGESH)**
  - can appear in any letter *except*: **ר ע ה ה א**
  - this dagesh doubles the consonant
- in the “beged-kephet” letters, a dagesh can be *either* lene or forte. Vowel length and shewa will help determine which kind of dagesh it is in these cases.

#### Shewa

A **SHEWA** can be either silent or vocal.

- **SILENT SHEWA**
  - always closes a syllable and is not pronounced
- **VOCAL SHEWA**
  - pronounced as a very short “e” sound
  - A vocal shewa can only occur in an open syllable.

The **SHEWA** is always vocal in the following cases:

- Rule 1:
  - a) If the shewa is beneath the first letter of a word OR
  - b) if the previous vowel in the word is long, the shewa is always vocal.
    - Examples: a) **מוֹ/שְׁ = מוֹשְׁ**    b) **קָ/טָ/לָהּ = קָטָלָהּ**
- Rule 2:
  - If there is a doubled consonant with a shewa underneath, it is always vocal.
    - Example: **אָ/מָ/מָ = אָמָּא**
  - note: remember, in BH there are two consonant which have no sound, aleph and ayin. These are still considered consonants and need to be treated as such when identifying syllables.

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- Rule 3:
  - If there are two identical consonants in a row and the shewa is underneath the first, it is always vocal.
    - Example: לֵלֵ/לֵ = לֵלֵ
- Rule 4:
  - a) If there are two shewas in a row in the middle of a word, the second shewa is always vocal.
    - Example: וְצוֹ/רְ/שֵׁ = וְצוֹרְשֵׁ

The **SHEWA** is always silent in the following cases:

- Rule 4:
  - b) If there are two shewas in a row in the middle of a word, the first shewa is always silent.
    - Example: וְצוֹ/רְ/שֵׁ = וְצוֹרְשֵׁ
- Rule 5:
  - If it is preceded by a short vowel, the shewa is always silent.
  - Note: Rule 2 trumps this rule
    - Example: מְלֵ/בֵי = מְלֵבֵי