

1 : 1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ :  
וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוֹ וָבֹהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ  
אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם : וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר  
וַיְהִי־אֹר : וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים  
בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ : וַיִּקְרָא וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר  
יוֹם אֶחָד : פ

You are now reading scripture!

## N

Your first task is to transliterate the passage above using the tables of consonants and vowel-points in the previous lesson.

## Analysis

Note: The plan of this book is introductory. We will introduce topics of grammar in an introductory manner. For example, you will be presented *some* information about prepositions, verbs, direct objects, and nouns, but each of these are far more involved topics. You will receive enough information to begin and build your confidence and understanding incrementally. But you will also see section references (§) to Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar if you want to jump ahead.

### בְּרֵאשִׁית

This is the first word of the Tanak:  $b^{\epsilon}r\bar{e}^{\zeta}šî\bar{t}$ . The **ב** is enlarged in most manuscripts and printed Bibles.<sup>1</sup>

Most Hebrew words have three letters at its core often referred to as *radicals*. The core is referred to as the *root*. The root of this word is ראש and a number of words are based on this root. Here are some (you supply the missing transliterations):

<i>head</i>	$r\bar{o}^{\zeta}$	ראש
<i>(the) first</i>		ראשון
<i>beginning (point)</i>		ראשית

Are you getting an idea what this word means from its placement and all of these clues?

בְּרֵאשִׁית contains the word ראשית with an additional element ב. בְּ is a preposition. Why is the preposition attached to this noun *the-beginning*?

Hebrew (BH) takes the root and adds affixes (prefixes, suffixes) to build meaning. You will see as we study the ways in which BH does this. But for now, let's talk briefly about prepositions.

#### Prepositions 1 (Prefixed) §102:

In English, teachers have described prepositions as words that can describe *where the cat is in relation to the box*. The cat is *under* the box; *over* the box; *in* the box; *on* the box; *at* the box, etc. Do you remember prepositions now?

In BH the simple prepositions (prefixed prepositions) attach directly to the beginning of a word.

ב (בְּמוֹ)	<i>in, at, with (poetic form)</i>
ל (לְמוֹ)	<i>to, for, belonging to (pf)</i>
כ (כְּמוֹ)	<i>like, as, according to (pf)</i>
מ (מִן-)	<i>from, out of</i>

## בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם

The typical sentence (syntax) structure in BH is *Verb-Subject-indirect object/ direct Object* (VSO) and is illustrated in the above.

בָּרָא is the verb "created" appearing in English as *past tense*. But this is not really accurate. BH does not have tenses as English does but instead we speak of completed or incomplete action (perfect and imperfect tenses). This word is perfect or completed action. [§40]

אֱלֹהִים is the BH generic word for "God." Literally, *(he-) created God . . .* VS order, but in English, SV, *(he) God created*. So far we have, "At the beginning God created . . ."

## אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם

God created what? The direct object answers. אֶת is a pointer to the direct object and we do not translate it. הַשָּׁמַיִם is a noun with a prefixed definite article הַ (*the*) [§35]. In English we also have the indefinite article *a*, as in *a dog*. BH does not have an indefinite article, so for example, כֶּלֶב can be understood as *(a) dog*. הַשָּׁמַיִם means *the heavens* or *the skies*. The dot (dāgeš) in a consonant has been mentioned previously and in an endnote. This word is transliterated *haššāmayim* with the š doubled. Look back to the endnote. What is the doubling consonant (*a geminate*) called in the note?

## וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:

Now we have another object linked by a conjunction prefixed to the noun. וְ attached to words typically means *and*, but can be read also as a marker in discourse indicating a succession in the discourse of the story (*then*), and can be conjunctive (*and*) or disjunctive (*but*). Here it is connected to the direct object marker אֶת to make וְאֵת. What do you see attached to the noun אֶת הָאָרֶץ? הָאָרֶץ is followed by a punctuation mark : called a *sōf pasûk* that acts as our period mark. And with that mark you have studied the first sentence of the Bible.

### Other marks

You will notice that there are other marks in the text than the vowel-points. These are the accent marks. For the time being overlook them. They act as punctuation and also as "musical notes" of sorts for chanting of biblical passages in the synagogue. We will look at them at a later time.

## N

Based on what you have learned so far, what can you determine about the following items?

הַיָּמִים	תְּחִלָּתָא
וְחִלָּתָא	אֶת-הָאָרֶץ

<sup>1</sup> See Yeiven, *Tiberian Masorah*, #84.