


בְּרַאשִׁית בְּרָא

בְּרַאשִׁית בְּרָא

This is the letter **BET**: **ב** (בֵּית)

It has a **B**ar on the **B**ottom, and a **B**ase that goes **B**eyond, and a **B**all or a “**B**elly-**B**utton” in the “**B**elly.”
It sounds like **B**. BET represents the number 2.

In the first sentence in the Torah, it appears as the first letter in the first two words: 

In almost every Hebrew printed copy of the Torah (including hand-written Torah scrolls) the very first letter BET is larger than the rest of the letters. This is especially noticeable, since there are no capital letters in Hebrew. There are a number of stories to explain this. One says that the whole rest of the Torah “emanates” from this initial BET. Look at the shape of the letter, and the direction of the opening of the letter (facing the rest of the whole Torah). There are also stories about why the letter BET was chosen as the first letter in the Torah.

In the first word **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, the BET with the SH’VA under it represents a prefix, which usually means, “in” or “with” or “on.” In the second word **בְּרָא**, the BET with a QAMATZ is part of the verb root for “He created.”
Practice reading the letter BET with all the vowels (notice that the largest letters are those from Genesis 1:1):

ב **בְּ** **בוּ** **בִּ** **בוֹ** **בֵּ** **בִּי** **בֶּ** **בִּי** **בֵּ** **בֵּ** **בֵּ** **בֵּ** <BET

This is the letter **RESH**: ר (רֵשׁ)

It is **Rounded**, and looks like the back of a “**ROSH**” (רֹאשׁ)



It sounds like **R**. In Israel, the pronunciation is more like a “French” R, sounding from the back of the throat. RESH represents the number 200.

In the first sentence in the Torah, it appears as the second letter in the first two words:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא

In the first word, the RESH is actually the beginning of the word, that had the BET as its prefix. The word is related to the word “ROSH” which means “head” and implies a beginning, like “Rosh Hashanah,” which is the new year (the HEAD of the year).

רֹאשׁ = ROSH = head

רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה = Rosh Hashanah = head of the year = New Year

In the second word, the RESH with a QAMATZ is the middle root letter of the verb root for “He created.” There is a trope mark under the RESH with the QAMATZ, which indicates accented syllable, flow of phrase, and can be a melody note.

Practice reading the letter RESH with all the vowels (notice that the largest letters are those from Genesis 1:1):

רֵ רֶ רֹ רִ רֵ רֶ רִ רֵ רֶ רִ רֵ <RESH

This is the letter **SHIN**: ש (שין)

The letter SHIN means “tooth” and it makes the sound of “**SHooSHing**” air between the front teeth. Note that the dot is on the right, which can remind you of the right part of the word sun**SH**ine. Some people remember that “**SH**e is always right.”

It sounds like **SH**. SHIN represents the number 300.

In the first sentence in the Torah, it appears in the first word (and again later in the sentence): בְּרָא שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ

There is a trope mark under the SHIN with the HIRIQ MALEH vowel, which indicates accented syllable, flow of phrase, and can be a melody note.

Practice reading the letter SHIN with all the vowels (notice that the largest letters are those from Genesis 1:1):

שֵׁ שִׁ שׁוּ שׂ שׁוּ שׂ שׁוּ שׂ שׁוּ שׂ שׁוּ שׂ <SHIN

This is the letter **TAV**: ת (תּו)

The letter TAV is a**TT**ached at the **Top** le**ft** and has a **T**ail or a **T**oe at the bo**TT**om le**ft**
It sounds like **T**. TAV represents the number 400.

In the first sentence in the Torah, it appears in the first word (and again later in the sentence): בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרֵא

Since it comes at the end of the word, it has no vowel below it or following it. That is typical for letters at the end of a word. Often you will see the letter Tav with a dagesh (dot) inside it. In some dialects this indicates a different pronunciation (a T with a dagesh and a S or TH without a dagesh). However, in modern Israeli pronunciation, there is no difference in the pronunciation of the Tav with or without the dagesh.

Practice reading the letter TAV with all the vowels (none of these are without vowels like the beginning of Genesis 1:1):

תּ תַּ תוּ תְּ תֹ תִּ תֵּ תֶּ תִּ תֵּ תֶּ <TAV

Real Hebrew words using the letters you learned in Lesson One.

song / poem	שִׁיר	head	רֹאשׁ
his song / poem	שִׁירָתוֹ	Sabbath	שַׁבָּת
ox / bullock	שׁוֹר	fire	אֵשׁ
hole / pit	בּוֹר	with fire	בְּאֵשׁ
turn / line	תּוֹר	covenant	בְּרִית
grid / net / channel	רֶשֶׁת	primal / paramount / principal	רֵאשִׁית