

KRIAT SHEMA 2:9

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

9. [following from Halakhah 8, where Rambam ruled that the reading must be done carefully...] How should he be careful?

He should take care not to "weaken" a strong letter, nor "strengthen" a weak letter; not to "move" a "stationary" Sh'va nor to make stationary a moving Sh'va.

Therefore, he must leave space between the "connected" letters - between any two letters which are similar, where one comes at the end of a word and the other begins the next word. For instance: *b'khoL L'vav'kha*, he should first read *b'khoL*, wait a bit and then read *L'vav'kha*. Similarly with *va'avad'teM M'hera*, *hakanaPH P'til*.

He must enunciate the *zayin* of *l'ma'an tiZ'k'ru*.

He must extend the *dalet* of *echaD* (in the first verse), in order to crown God in the heavens, on earth and in the four directions. However, he must not slur the *het* (in *eCHad*), so that it doesn't sound like *ei chad*.

[RABD1: "How should he be careful..." I don't know what's lost if he "moves" a stationary schwa, if he says *b'khol l'vavkha*, leaving the second *bet* stationary, so that it won't sound like a *vav*; similarly, if he enunciates the *Yod* in *Yisra'el* so that it doesn't sound like an *Alef* or anything of that sort, let him "move" the stationary vowels and this is praiseworthy. Similarly *Nish'ba* must be separated (from God's Name which follows - end of the second Parasha) so that the *Alef* is not "swallowed" by the *Ayin*]

[RABD2: "He must extend the *dalet*..." some say, he also shouldn't extend the *Alef* too much, so that it doesn't sound like *ei chad*.]

HEBREW VOCALIZATION

[this shiur is more of an introduction to some of the nuances of Hebrew pronunciation; some of our more experienced and learned Haverim may find that this is "old ground" - but review is also a part of learning!]

Yitzchak Etshalom

In Memory of Judy Licht (Yehudit bat R'euven) May her soul be bound up with the bonds of eternal life.

I.

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew language, unlike English, is generally written with consonants only. Therefore, proper vocalization (putting vowel connectors between the consonants) depends on the *niqud* - markings above or below the consonant. Errors of this type, while easily made by the novice, can render a wholly different meaning to the word. As Meir points out (below), there are two issues at play here: proper pronunciation and comprehensible pronunciation. In other words, it is possible to be understood correctly while mispronouncing a word (for instance, saying "Yisra'el" instead of "Yisra'eil"); yet some errors in pronunciation lead to miscommunications (e.g. *Qal* - light, instead of *Qol* - voice).

Almost all of the vowel markings bear consistent sounds - they are vocalized the same way in every circumstance. Except for the *Qamatz Qattan*, which will be addressed later, the only vowel marking which is vocalized differently, depending on the context, is the *Sh'va*. In order to understand how the Sh'va (marked with two vertical dots - "·" underneath the consonant) operates, we must first introduce the two types of Hebrew syllables.

II.

T'NUA' Q'TANAH AND T'NUA' G'DOLAH

A syllable is known as a "T'nua"; Hebrew includes "big" syllables ("T'nua' G'dolah") and "small" syllables ("T'nua' Q'tanah"). The rule is simple: if the vowel in question is a long vowel, the syllable driven by that vowel is a T'nua' G'dolah. If the syllable is driven by a short vowel, it is a "T'nua' Q'tanah".

Each basic sound has a short vowel and a long vowel:

"Ah" has the short Patach (single horizontal line under the letter) and the long Qamatz (marked like a small "T" under the letter).

"Ee" has the short Hiriq (marked by a single dot under the letter) and the long Hiriq (same dot under the letter, if that letter is followed by the letter Yod).

"Eh" has the short Segol (marked by three dots arranged in a bottom-pointed triangle) and the long Tzeirei (two dots, horizontally arranged next to each other).

"Oo" has the short Qubutz (three dots in diagonal descending order) and the long Shuruq (the letter is followed by a Vav with a dot in the middle).

"Oh" has the short Holam (single dot above the left side of the letter) and the long Holam (the letter is followed by a Vav with a dot over it).

For example, take a look at the word "Shabbat", which is written with a Shin (Patach under the Shin), a Bet (Qamatz underneath) and a Tav. Since the first syllable is driven by a Patach, it is a T'nua' Q'tanah. Since the second syllable is driven by a Qamatz, it is a T'nua' G'dolah.

The general rule of vocalization of T'nu'ot is that a T'nua' G'dolah ends with the vowel; a T'nua' Q'tanah ends with a consonant. You might almost think of them as "open" and "closed" syllables; a T'nua' G'dolah ends "open" - without attaching itself to the next consonant - and a T'nua' Q'tanah ends "closed" - attaching itself to the next consonant.

Before moving onto the Sh'va, one note about the Qamatz Qatan. There are some words where a Qamatz, normally a long vowel, is placed as a short vowel. The classic and most well-known case is the two-letter word Kol. Since the Qamatz here cannot be pronounced as a long vowel (since there is only one other letter, which is unvocalized) - it becomes a short vowel and is pronounced like a short "o".

III. THE SH'VA

Although a Sh'va is a "stop" (telling the vocalizer to hold that consonant, much as is done with the last letter in a word - like the Tav in Shabbat), not all stops are alike. If a consonant is at the beginning of a T'nua', it is impossible to pronounce it as a totally "stopped" consonant. For example, the word "T'nua'" - since we are asked to pronounce the Tav at the beginning - but not to "move" it anywhere, it must have a minimal movement of sorts. That is why it is properly written - in transliteration - with an apostrophe. There is the slightest movement with the consonant.

On the other hand, if a letter at the end of a T'nua' has a Sh'va, it can easily and properly be pronounced with no movement at all. For example, the name "Avraham" - underneath the "Vet" (aVraham) is a Sh'va; since this letter is at the end of the first T'nua' of the word, it can be pronounced with no movement whatsoever. We do not call him Av'raham, rather Avraham.

Now, since a T'nua' G'dolah ends in a vowel and does not attach to the next consonant, if a Sh'va is preceded by a T'nua' G'dolah, it is vocalized like a Sh'va at the beginning of a word - it is slightly moved. This is called a "Moving Sh'va" - or "Sh'va Na". If, however, the Sh'va is at the end of a T'nua Q'tanah (i.e. the letter before it bore a short vowel), that letter is the end of the T'nua and is totally stopped. The letter is vocalized as a "Stationary Sh'va" - or "Sh'va Nach". (You should be able to figure out, from this information, whether the Alef - the first letter of Avraham - has a Patach or a Qamatz under it.)

Rambam is concerned that when reading Sh'ma, we are careful about the difference between Sh'va Na' and Sh'va Nach - let's see some examples from the Sh'ma itself.

The word Yisra'eil is a good example for us. The first syllable is clearly a T'nua' Q'tanah, since the

Yod has a short Hiriq under it (i.e. it isn't followed by another Yod) - hence, the "Sin" of yiSra'eil is the end of that T'nua' - and is a Sh'va Nach. In the second (Rabbinically added) line, the third word is "K'vod"; again, since the Sh'va is under the first letter, it must be a Sh'va Na'. Look at the first word of the next verse - "V'ahavta" - the vowel under the "Heh" is a Patach, so it is a T'nua' Q'tanah- which means that the T'nua' ends with the Vet - v'aHAVta - so the Sh'va under the Vet is a Sh'va Nach.

MIDWAY GLOSSARY:

T'nua' - syllable

Sh'va Na' - moving Sh'va

Sh'va Nach - stationary Sh'va

IV.

THE DAGESH

Now, what happens if a letter is the end of a T'nua' Q'tana - but also has its own vowel? For instance, the Bet of shaBBat is both the end of the first T'nua' - but is also the beginning of the next T'nua'. How can we demonstrate, both in written and oral form, that this letter is part of two T'nu'ot?

Enter the Dagesh. Dagesh is simply a dot in the middle of the letter - and almost all letters can take a Dagesh. What the Dagesh means when that letter is at the end of a T'nua' Q'tanah is that the letter should be understood to be doubled. (Arabic has the similar Shadda over the letter to be doubled). Therefore, we properly read Shabbat as "Shab-bat" - the Bet is doubled, as it "closes off" the first T'nua' and also begins the second.

(This should not be confused with a Dagesh Rafeh - the letters Bet, Gimel, Daled, Kaf, Peh and Tav always take a Dagesh at the beginning of a word or if following a T'nua' Q'tanah; however, this does not represent a "doubling" of the letter).

In other words, there is an assumed Sh'va Nach at the end of every T'nua' Q'tanah - and, if that letter has another vowel, we read it as if both are happening; first a Sh'va Nach, then the letter again with its own vowel.

Rambam is expressing concern that D'geshim be dealt with properly, such that a letter which should be read "doubled" is done so.

Our Haver, Meir Levin, has provided an insightful explanation of the dispute between Rambam and RABD; further comment would add nothing.

ML: (Meir Levin):

Point 1. The disagreement between Rambam & Raavad is only about the Shva Na and Shva Nach. Raavad agrees regarding other steps to be m'dakdek b'otiotah (careful about the enunciation).

This is because refinements in Shva does not change meaning of the words whereas others do.

The disagreement appears to be whether *dikduk* (careful enunciation) is a part of Kriah when Kitvei Hakodesh are involved. Rambam states in Ch. 12 of Hilkhos Tefilla that if someone reads from a Sefer Torah without dikduk - we make him go back and reread properly. This is quoted in Shulkhan Aruch but the Rama disagrees. Raavad holds that dikduk is a part of obtaining correct meaning. Rambam maintains that it is a part of correct reading. Therefore, Rambam holds that dikduk is also required in other languages and Raavad says that it is only a peirush (translation) (meaning-based) and does not require dikduk.

See Rambam to Pirkei Avot 1, 17. s.v. Rabbi Shimon omer. He states that there are 2 types of recommended speech 1. _Reading_ Torah, talmud etc. 2. _Speaking_ of middot etc - called Derech Eretz

A side-question: Why is the requirement regarding Kriat Hatorah even B'di'avad and for Shma only L'khat'hila?

Perhaps, Kriat Hatorah is an obligation of the Tzibbur [public] (quoted in the name of R.Moshe Soloveitchik). Dikduk has two components. 1. How one pronounces 2. How one understands. Regarding Shma there is a component of understanding. Even if it was not pronounced correctly, the text was still understood correctly. This is not the case with the Tzibbur.

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