

OPEN SYLLABLES

open syllable = consonant + vowel

זָכַר חוֹלַם אֲבָרָהֶם שְׁמֹר (with pronounced $\dot{\text{v}}$)

The vowel in an open syllable is usually **unprotected**.
Therefore, when the accent (marked by $\dot{\text{v}}$) moves too far away,
the vowel may reduce to **pronounced $\dot{\text{v}}$** .

קָדוֹשׁ¹ but קְדוֹשִׁים^{1 2} (digits denote number of syllables removed from accent)

Sometimes a vowel in an open syllable is **protected**.

A protected vowel never reduces to pronounced $\dot{\text{v}}$,
even when the accent moves far away.

In biblical texts and in this book, a protected vowel is marked
with **meteg** (ֿ).

שְׁמֹרֶתֶם^{1 2} but שְׁמֹרוּ^{1 2}

CLOSED SYLLABLES

closed syllable = consonant + vowel + consonant

זָכַר חוֹלַם שְׁמֹר אֲבָרָהֶם (with silent $\dot{\text{v}}$)

The vowel in a closed syllable is always **secure**, locked in by the
closing consonant.

A secure vowel does not reduce to pronounced $\dot{\text{v}}$; no matter how
far away the accented syllable moves.

מְשֹׁמֵר¹ מְשֹׁמְרוֹת^{1 2} מְשֹׁמְרוֹתֶם^{1 2 3} מְשֹׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם^{1 2 3 4}

Closed syllables are never marked with a protective **meteg** (ֿ)
because the vowel is already secure.



Caution

when dividing words into syllables!

- א or ה without a vowel is a silent letter, not a consonant. Silent letters play no role — they do not close syllables.

שָׁרָה 1st open, 2nd open ראש closed (by the ש)

- But ה is always a consonant for the purposes of grammar, even though it is treated as a silent letter in many modern dialects.

לָה closed יָדָה 1st open, 2nd closed

- י without a vowel sign is usually a silent letter, not a consonant.

מִי open לִי open
יָדִיו = יָדוֹ 1st open, 2nd closed

► For a discussion of the exceptional cases, see p. 20.

- וּ and וֹ are vowels. The *vav* is not a consonant.

לָלוֹן 1st open, 2nd closed (by the נ) יָדוֹ 1st open, 2nd open

- ע is always a consonant for the purposes of grammar, even though it is treated as a silent letter in many modern dialects.

רַע closed יָדַע 1st open, 2nd closed

- A **consonant cluster** consists of two or more consecutive consonants (i.e., no vowel sound separates them) *in one syllable*.

Consonant clusters are common in English:

steaks prince street sprint

Consonant clusters are rarely permitted in classical Hebrew.

Each of these words contains 3 syllables:

פְּרָטִים *pe·ra·tim* **not** *pra·tim*

דְּבָרִים *de·va·rim* **not** *dva·rim*

בְּרָכָה *be·ra·kha* **not** *bra·kha*

שָׁמְרָה *sha·me·ra* **not** *sha·mra*

(also **not** *sham·ra* — the *meteg* protects an *open* syllable)

- *Dagesh hazak* doubles the letter that holds it. To avoid a consonant cluster, the first letter closes the preceding syllable, and the second begins a new syllable.

לְמַדְתִּי denotes לַמְדָּה | תִּי לְמַדְתִּי 1st closed, 2nd closed, 3rd open

יִסְפֹּר denotes יִסַּף | פֹּר יִסְפֹּר 1st open, 2nd closed, 3rd closed

1cs	שָׁמַרְתִּי		אָנִי
2fs	שָׁמַרְתְּ	אַתְּ	2ms
3fs	שָׁמְרָה	הִיא	3ms
1cp	שָׁמַרְנוּ		אֲנַחְנוּ
2fp	שָׁמַרְתֶּן	אַתֶּן	2mp
3fp	שָׁמְרוּ	הֵן	3mp

פִּעֵל

שְׁלֵמִים
regular

עָבַר
past

עָתִיד
future

הַיּוֹה
present

צִוּוּי
imperative

שְׁמוֹת
nouns

טְכוּמִים
summary

What is distinctive about פִּעֵל past tense?

The 1st syllable is always **open**.

Why is the 1st vowel sometimes .?

The two-consonant suffixes תָּם and תָּן attract the accent.

This causes the 1st vowel to reduce to **pronounced** .

Read **three** syllables: שְׁ | מַרְ | תָּם שְׁ | מַרְ | תָּן

Why is the 2nd vowel sometimes .?

The vowel-only suffixes הַ and וּ attract the accent.

This causes the 2nd vowel to reduce to **pronounced** .

Read **three** syllables: שְׁ | מַרְ | הַ שְׁ | מַרְ | וּ

The *meteg* under the שְׁ is a reminder to read שְׁ as an open syllable.

KEY TO SYMBOLS	ˊ indicates the accented syllable	ˆ indicates an open syllable
1 1st person (I, we)	c common (masculine and feminine)	s singular (one person)
2 2nd person (you)	f feminine	p plural (more than one person)
3 3rd person (he, she, they)	m masculine	

1cs	שְׁמַרְתִּי		אָנִי		
2fs	שְׁמַרְתְּ	אַתְּ	2ms	שְׁמַרְתְּ	אַתָּה
3fs	שְׁמַרְהָ	הִיא	3ms	שְׁמַרְ	הוּא
1cp	שְׁמַרְנוּ		אֲנַחְנוּ		
2fp	שְׁמַרְתֶּן	אַתֶּן	2mp	שְׁמַרְתֶּם	אַתֶּם
3fp	שְׁמַרְוּ	הֵן	3mp	שְׁמַרְוּ	הֵם

Subject-pronoun suffixes for past tense

- No suffix (3ms)
- One consonant – נוּ תָּ תִּי
- Two consonants – תָּן תֶּם
- Vowel only – הָ הַ וְ

Accented syllable

- No suffix / **one-consonant** suffix
Accent on middle root letter.
- **Two-consonant** suffix / **vowel-only** suffix
Accent on syllable of suffix.

1cs	שְׁמַרְתִּי		אָנִי		
2fs	שְׁמַרְתְּ	אַתְּ	2ms	שְׁמַרְתְּ	אַתָּה
3fs	שְׁמַרְהָ	הִיא	3ms	שְׁמַרְ	הוּא
1cp	שְׁמַרְנוּ		אֲנַחְנוּ		
2fp	שְׁמַרְתֶּן	אַתֶּן	2mp	שְׁמַרְתֶּם	אַתֶּם
3fp	שְׁמַרְוּ	הֵן	3mp	שְׁמַרְוּ	הֵם

1st syllable – always open

- No suffix / one-consonant suffix
Vowel is **ָ**.
- Vowel-only suffix
Accent moves to end of word.
Vowel is **ָ**, protected by **ַ** (*meteg*).
- Two-consonant suffix
Accent moves to end of word.
Vowel reduces to **pronounced** **ֶ**.

1cs	שְׁמַרְתִּי		אָנִי		
2fs	שְׁמַרְתְּ	אַתְּ	2ms	שְׁמַרְתְּ	אַתָּה
3fs	שְׁמַרְהָ	הִיא	3ms	שְׁמַרְ	הוּא
1cp	שְׁמַרְנוּ		אֲנַחְנוּ		
2fp	שְׁמַרְתֶּן	אַתֶּן	2mp	שְׁמַרְתֶּם	אַתֶּם
3fp	שְׁמַרְוּ	הֵן	3mp	שְׁמַרְוּ	הֵם

2nd syllable

- No suffix / one- or two-consonant suffix
2nd syllable is **closed** by **final** root letter.
Vowel is **ֶ**.
- Vowel-only suffix
Final root letter forms a syllable with suffix.
2nd syllable becomes **open**.
Unprotected vowel reduces to **pronounced** **ֶ**.

פֶּעַל שְׁלֵמִים רֵגוּלָר סְכּוּם summary

1cs	שְׁמַרְתִּי		אֲנִי
2fs	שְׁמַרְתְּ	אַתְּ	אַתָּה
3fs	שְׁמַרָה	הִיא	הִיא
1cp	שְׁמַרְנוּ		אֲנַחְנוּ
2fp	שְׁמַרְתֶּן	אַתֶּן	אַתֶּם
3fp	שְׁמַרוּ	הֵן	הֵם

עָבַר
past

פֶּעַל

שְׁלֵמִים
regular

עָבַר
past

עָתִיד
future

הוֹהָ
present

צִוִּי
imperative

שְׁמוֹת
nouns

סְכּוּם
summary

intransitive

1cs	אֶלְמַד		אֲנִי
2fs	תְּלַמְדִי	אַתְּ	אַתָּה
3fs	תְּלַמְדִי	הִיא	הִיא
1cp	נִלְמַד		אֲנַחְנוּ
2fp	תְּלַמְדֶנָּה	אַתֶּן	אַתֶּם
3fp	תְּלַמְדֶנָּה	הֵן	הֵם

1cs	אֶשְׁמַר		אֲנִי
2fs	תְּשַׁמְרִי	אַתְּ	אַתָּה
3fs	תְּשַׁמְרִי	הִיא	הִיא
1cp	נִשְׁמַר		אֲנַחְנוּ
2fp	תְּשַׁמְרֶנָּה	אַתֶּן	אַתֶּם
3fp	תְּשַׁמְרֶנָּה	הֵן	הֵם

עָתִיד
future

passive present בינוני פֶּעַל

fs	שְׁמוּרָה	אֲנִי אַתְּ הִיא	שְׁמוֹר	אֲנִי אַתָּה הִיא
fp	שְׁמוּרוֹת	אֲנַחְנוּ אַתֶּן הֵן	שְׁמוּרִים	אֲנַחְנוּ אַתֶּם הֵם

active present בינוני פֶּעַל

fs	שׁוֹמְרַת	אֲנִי אַתְּ הִיא	שׁוֹמֵר	אֲנִי אַתָּה הִיא
fp	שׁוֹמְרוֹת	אֲנַחְנוּ אַתֶּן הֵן	שׁוֹמְרִים	אֲנַחְנוּ אַתֶּם הֵם

הוֹהָ
present

intransitive

2fs	לְמַדִּי	אַתְּ	2ms	לְמַד	אַתָּה
2fp	לְמַדְנָה	אַתֶּן	2mp	לְמַדוּ	אַתֶּם

2fs	שְׁמַרִי	אַתְּ	2ms	שְׁמַר	אַתָּה
2fp	שְׁמַרְנָה	אַתֶּן	2mp	שְׁמַרוּ	אַתֶּם

צִוִּי
imperative

שֵׁם הַפְּעֵל	שְׁמַר	infinitive	לְשַׁמֵּר	infinitive with 2 prefix
שֵׁם הַפְּעוּלָה	שְׁמִירָה	gerund (name of the action)		

שְׁמוֹת
nouns