# The Hebrew Writing System – Lesson 8

Waw (וֹ) is used in constructing two vowels: full holem (וֹ) and shurek (וּ). At these times two things happen to the consonant waw: 1) It is no longer pronounced; only the vowel sound is pronounced. 2) It no longer counts as a consonant, but the whole thing is considered a vowel. However, if the waw of a full holem is surrounded by vowels before and after, the waw *is* pronounced. Therefore, קוֹוֶה is pronounced "qoweh", not "qoeh"; עָוֹן is pronounced "awon".

In general, yodh (י) will essentially form a diphthong when it follows a vowel *and* is itself unpointed. In English, the letter 'y' may combine with the previous vowel to form the sounds 'ay' as in 'bayou', 'ey' as in 'convey', and 'oy' as in 'toy'. When unpointed and immediately preceded by a vowel, yodh and the vowel combine to produce the same sounds. Note tsere yodh and hirek yodh, which were covered in lesson 4.

When a holem is used with shin/sin (שׁ), it can cause some potential confusion, since sin (שׂ) and shin (שׁ) are distinguished by placing a dot above one corner or the other. At times the holem can "blend in" with this dot already being used. However, a vowel missing from its usual place can alert us to this situation. If there is no pointing preceding a shin, then a holem has blended in: מֹשֶׁה is pronounced "mosheh". If there is no vowel following a sin, then a holem has blended in: שֹׂנֵא is pronounced "sone". This also means that, if a holem follows a shin "sho", it is written thus: שׁ.

הַזֶּה שֶׁבֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֱלֹהֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי שֵׂעִיר
לְבַדִּי אוּכַל אַחֲרֵיהֶם אַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק נָתַתִּי
דִּבֶּר פְּעָמִים אֶלֶף יֹסֵף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִנְּכֶם
לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם אֲלָפִים וִידֵעִים

Vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| הַר | mountain |
| צֹאן | flock |
| אֱלֹהִים | God |
| גּוֹי | nation, people |
| שָׁמַיִם | heavens |