

Learn The
ARAMAIC
Alphabet

'Hebrew' Ashuri Script

By Ewan MacLeod, B.Sc. Hons, M.Sc.

Ewan MacLeod is the creator of the following websites:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com

JesusSpokeAramaicBook.com

BibleManuscriptSociety.com

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Introduction To These Lessons

WELCOME TO these lessons on the Aramaic Alphabet, on the 'Hebrew' Ashuri script. The Alphabet, and the Ashuri script in particular, is the starting point for learning Aramaic, and the foundation upon which everything else is built.

The Ashuri script is the oldest of the Aramaic scripts. It goes back to the Aramaic that the Jews used in Babylon, and in fact this script was subsequently adopted by the Jews. It was used to preserve the Hebrew Bible, and for everything else in Judaism, including its use in Israel today.

An Aramaic Alphabet DVD of video lessons to accompany this book is available on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website, at the following link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/DVDs/DVD-Alphabet-Ashuri

Ideally you should subscribe to JesusSpokeAramaic.com to get full access to the whole series of accompanying video lessons, or buy the DVD, or both. You can subscribe using the link below:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

While this book is designed to be used for self-study or in a classroom situation, there are many concepts that can really only be taught by watching the above video lessons on the website. For example, learning how to read, write and pronounce the letters is much easier when you have access to the video lessons. On the other hand, this book allows you to read through the material at your leisure, study it, and write your own notes on the pages.

To make the best progress, just start at the beginning, and keep going! It sounds obvious, but most people don't do that... they either don't start, or start but do not keep going because the task seems so big!

Work your way steadily through the lessons, practice the material, watch the video lessons, and keep going. That way, you will make good progress, and you will be ready to make even further progress in your Aramaic studies.

How Difficult Is Aramaic To Learn?

AM SURE you have already seen the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet, perhaps in the context of Biblical Aramaic, or through the pages of the Peshitta New Testament, the Peshitta Old Testament or the Targums. Here is an example of the 'Hebrew' Ashuri Aramaic script which we will be learning in this book:

Matt. 1:1 כְּתָבָא דִּילִיהֻתָּה דִּישׁוּעַ מְשִׁיחָא בְּרַח דְּכֹרִיָּה
 בְּרַח דְּאַבְרָהָם ² אַבְרָהָם אֹלְדָה לְאַיְסַחַק אִיְסַחַק
 אֹלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב יַעֲקֹב אֹלְדָה לְיִהוּדָא וּלְאַחֻוּיָּי ³
 יִהוּדָא אֹלְדָה לְפִרְצָא וּלְזִרְחָא מִן תַּמְרָא פִּרְצָא אֹלְדָה
 לְחִצְרוֹן חִצְרוֹן אֹלְדָה לְאַרְם ⁴ אַרְם אֹלְדָה לְעַמְיַנְדָּב
 עַמְיַנְדָּב אֹלְדָה לְנַחֲשׁוֹן נַחֲשׁוֹן אֹלְדָה לְסַלְמוֹן ⁵
 סַלְמוֹן אֹלְדָה לְבַעֲזָא מִן רַחֲבָא בַּעֲזָא אֹלְדָה לְעֻבְדִּיהָ מִן
 רַעֲוֹתָא עֻבְדִּיהָ אֹלְדָה לְאַיְשִׁי ⁶ אִישִׁי אֹלְדָה לְכֹרִיָּה
 מַלְכָא כֹרִיָּה אֹלְדָה לְשַׁלְיִמוֹן מִן אַנְתַּתָּה דְאַוְרִיָּא ⁷
 שַׁלְיִמוֹן אֹלְדָה לְרַחֲבֵעָם רַחֲבֵעָם אֹלְדָה לְאַבְיָא
 אַבְיָא אֹלְדָה לְאַסָּא ⁸ אַסָּא אֹלְדָה לְיִהוּשַׁפְטָא יִהוּשַׁפְטָא
 אֹלְדָה לְיִזְרָם יִזְרָם אֹלְדָה לְעֻזִּיָּא ⁹ עֻזִּיָּא אֹלְדָה
 לְיוֹתָם יוֹתָם אֹלְדָה לְאַחֻזָּא אַחֻזָּא אֹלְדָה לְחַזְקִיָּא ¹⁰
 חַזְקִיָּא אֹלְדָה לְמַנְשָׂא מַנְשָׂא אֹלְדָה לְאַמּוֹן אַמּוֹן
 אֹלְדָה לְיוֹשִׁיָּא ¹¹ יוֹשִׁיָּא אֹלְדָה לְיוֹכְנָיָא וּלְאַחֻוּיָּי
 בְּגִלְחָתָא דְבַבְלָא ¹² מִן בְּתַר גִּלְחָתָא דִּין דְבַבְלָא יוֹכְנָיָא
 אֹלְדָה לְשַׁלְתַּאִיל שַׁלְתַּאִיל אֹלְדָה לְזוֹרְבַבְלָא ¹³
 זוֹרְבַבְלָא אֹלְדָה לְאַבְדִּיָּה אַבְדִּיָּה אֹלְדָה לְאַלְיָקִים

Perhaps you have already tried to learn the Aramaic Alphabet or even some Aramaic grammar. In these lessons on the Aramaic Alphabet, you will gradually be introduced to each of the Aramaic letters in turn, how to write them, and how to pronounce them. We often compare the Aramaic letters to their corresponding Hebrew letters, because if you know Hebrew, learning Aramaic will be much easier.

You can watch the accompanying video for this lesson from the link below:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/Aramaic-Alphabet/How-Difficult-to-Learn

If the Aramaic Alphabet is new to you, at first everything will seem strange and unfamiliar. Because the Aramaic letters look so different from English, many people assume that Aramaic *must* be a difficult language to learn.

But once you have overcome the initial shock of how different the Aramaic Alphabet looks when compared with English, how strange the letters seem and how different the vocabulary and sounds of the language are, Aramaic really isn't any harder to learn than any other language.

In fact, Aramaic is perhaps *easier* to learn than other languages, because the working vocabulary is relatively small, and certain fundamental concepts run all the way through the language from beginning to end. Once you know the Aramaic Alphabet, everything tends to fall into place, and progress in actually reading and understanding the Aramaic of the Peshitta, Biblical Aramaic or the Targums can be surprisingly fast. If you systematically work your way through all these lessons (and ideally watch the video lessons on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website), one day you will find that you can pick up the Peshitta New Testament and other writings in Aramaic, and understand the Aramaic. You will be able to appreciate the depth and

wisdom of the Biblical writings much better, and understand the true worth and wealth of the Holy Scriptures.

There is a Hebrew proverb, *Kol techilot kashot*, which means *All beginnings are difficult*. Starting to learn the Aramaic Alphabet will be difficult at first, but if you take it step by step, you will soon be amazed at how much progress you have made. The hardest step, however, is to actually begin, and to learn the Aramaic Alphabet.

The more progress you make, the easier the journey will get. It's well worth the effort. What could be more wonderful and exciting than to pick up the Aramaic New Testament, and understand the actual words spoken by Jesus, or Paul? A translation of the Aramaic, however good, is only a translation, and does not convey the beauty and majesty of the original inspired and God-breathed Scriptures. Reading a translation is like looking at a photocopy of a beautiful work of art – but nothing is more beautiful and awe-inspiring than looking at the original in all its depth and beauty.

Although all beginnings are hard, the journey is worthwhile and will be more rewarding than you can possibly imagine. Alongside Hebrew, Aramaic is one of the Holy Languages of the Bible, given by God to man to reveal His Word. However difficult the path might be, and with all humility, set your heart to understand Aramaic, starting with the Alphabet.

Aramaic is a fascinating language, full of beauty and simplicity and yet powerful enough to express the complexities of a modern civilization. Like Hebrew, it is still spoken today. Not only will the study of Aramaic allow you to read the Aramaic New Testament in its original language after the passage of thousands of years, but you will also be receiving a solid foundation in learning Hebrew. And Hebrew is the gateway to learning the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. Hebrew and Aramaic together are the languages God has used to reveal His Word, in both the Old and New Testaments.

So what are you waiting for? Start learning the Aramaic Alphabet today!

Introduction To The Aramaic Alphabet And Scripts

AS YOU MAY know from my book “*Discover Aramaic – The Bible’s SECOND Holy Language*” (available as a free download from the website) Aramaic has a long and distinguished history, going back more than 4000 years. Though world empires have come and gone, though world leaders have risen and fallen, though Aramaic itself has survived as it has watched many other of the world’s languages disappear into the mists of time, we have seen that Aramaic is still spoken today, and is still recognisably the same language as it always was, down through more than forty centuries of human history.

You can download the book *Discover Aramaic – The Bible’s SECOND Holy Language* from the link below:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/Books/Discover-Aramaic-Book

Nothing remains the same over such a long period of time, and Aramaic is no exception. As Aramaic has been spoken, written and used across many different continents and countries, writing styles have inevitably changed. If we compare Aramaic with English, we find that a similar thing has happened to English, too. If you compare a modern printed book with an early Tyndale New Testament, or an early Geneva Bible or King James Bible, the shape and form of English letters has changed so much that most people, without a lot of practice, would find it difficult to read the text of an old Bible.

Similarly, if we compare modern printed Hebrew Bibles to the script used in the Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance, we find that (although they


are still basically the same letters) the script used in the Dead Sea Scrolls is also noticeably different, and not easy to read without some practice and experience.

You can watch the accompanying video for this lesson from the link below:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/Aramaic-Alphabet/Intro-to-Scripts

In the same way, Aramaic has had a number of different scripts over the years (or over the centuries, and over the millennia!). For an understanding of Aramaic texts related to the Bible, the most important script is commonly known as the Hebrew Ashuri script. This is the script found in the Tanakh (or Hebrew Bible), in Biblical Aramaic, as well as the Aramaic Targums. It is sometimes used for printed copies of the Peshitta Old Testament and the Peshitta New Testament. Ashuri is also the script used to write Hebrew in Israel today, making it a useful and vitally important script to learn. This is why we devote so much attention to it, with separate videos for each letter in turn showing you how to write the letter. Learning the Hebrew Ashuri script will repay all your efforts.

Ironically, the "Hebrew" Ashuri script is actually (originally) Aramaic. Prior to the Babylonian exile, the Israelites used an older Hebrew script, known as Paleo-Hebrew, which was closely related to the old Phoenician characters. "Ashuri" means "Assyrian", and the Israelites adopted the Aramaic or Assyrian script following the Babylonian exile. It has remained with Israel ever since. Thus, as we study the Ashuri script, we are actually studying a script that was used for Aramaic to begin with. We have come full circle.

An example of the 'Hebrew' Ashuri script, showing the initial Hebrew of Daniel chapter 2, followed by the Aramaic portion in verse 4 – all in the same Ashuri script that you will learn in this book – is shown below:

חלם Dan. 2:1  ובשנת שתים למלכות נבכדנצר חלם
 נבכדנצר חלמות ותתפעם רוחו ושנתו נהיתה
 עליו: ² ויאמר המלך לקרא לחרטמים ולאשפים
 ולמכשפים ולכשדים להגיד למלך חלמתיו ויבאו
 ויעמדו לפני המלך: ³ ויאמר להם המלך חלום
 חלמתי ותפעם רוחי לרעת את-החלום: ⁴ וידברו
 הכשדים למלך ארמית מלכא לעלמין חיי אמר
 חלמא לעבדיך [ל][עבדיך] ופשקא נחוא: ⁵ ענה
 מלכא ואמר לכשדיא [ל][כשדיא][י] מלתא מני
 אזרא תן לא תהודעונוני חלמא ופשרה הדמין
 תתעבדון ובתיכון נולי יתשמון: ⁶ ותן חלמא
 ופשרה תהחון מתגן ונבזבה ויגר שזיא תקבלון
 מן-קדמי להן חלמא ופשרה החוני: ⁷ ענו תנינות
 ואמרין מלכא חלמא יאמר לעבדיה ופשקה
 נהחנה: ⁸ ענה מלכא ואמר מן-יצויב ירע אנה די
 עדנא אנתון זבגין כל-קבל די חזיתון די אזרא

While the Hebrew Ashuri script remained in use for many centuries, and is still used today, Aramaic slowly adopted other scripts over time. The next most important of these is Estrangela, which is closely associated with Syriac, the dialect of Aramaic most commonly used in the Peshitta Old Testament and the Peshitta New Testament.

Estrangela is reasonably similar to the Hebrew Ashuri script, and as you will find in the series of lessons on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website dedicated to it, many of the letters are nearly the same, others are somewhat similar, while others are entirely different. In Estrangela

we also see an intermediate stage in the development of writing, in that Estrangela is almost a stage between the Hebrew Ashuri script (where letters stand alone and are never joined) and Arabic (where letters have different forms depending on whether they are separate or joined with other letters, and some letters have elaborate forms).

An example of the Estrangela script, showing the first few verses of John's Gospel, is shown below:

ܠܗܘܐ ܩܪܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܕܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ **John 1:1**
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ **2** ܠܗܘܐ ܩܪܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ **3** ܠܗܘܐ ܩܪܝܢ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܐ **4** ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܩܪܝܢ **5** ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܠܗܘܐ **6** ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܠܗܘܐ **7** ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ **8** ܠܗܘܐ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ **9** ܠܗܘܐ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ **10** ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ
 ܠܗܘܐ **11** ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ **12** ܠܗܘܐ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ **13** ܠܗܘܐ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ **14** ܠܗܘܐ
 ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ ܠܗܘܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܝܢ **15** ܠܗܘܐ

Over time, Aramaic also used Serta script, which is an adaptation of Estrangela, which visually looks even closer to Arabic. In fact, at a

glance, many people unfamiliar with either language would probably say that a page of the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament in Serta script looked much like a page of Arabic. But, as we shall see, Serta is a modified form of Estrangela. Once you know the Estrangela script, therefore, Serta is easy to learn.

An example of the Serta script, showing the opening verses from Mark's Gospel, is shown below:

1 אָמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 2 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 3 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 4 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 5 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 6 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 7 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 8 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
 9 אֲמַן אִתְּךָ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף בְּרַחְמֵי מַרְכְּלָא חַסְיָא חֲסִידָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא חַסְיָא
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Over time, another Aramaic script came to be used, which is called Swadaya, or Eastern script.

An example of the Swadaya script, showing the opening verses of Genesis in the Old Testament, is shown below:

your interest lies entirely in Biblical Aramaic and/or the Aramaic Targums, then you will have no need to ever learn the Estrangela, Serta and Swadaya scripts. If, on the other hand, your interest lies with the Peshitta Old and/or New Testaments, then you should definitely start learning the Hebrew Ashuri script. It is the foundation for all further learning. However, if you want to progress further with the Peshitta Old and/or New Testaments, you will find that many resources (such as grammars and lexicons) are only available in the other scripts. If you don't learn those scripts, you won't be able to use those resources. As your interest in Aramaic grows and you want to learn more, you will find that learning each of the other scripts is a progressively easy step from the one before, and will greatly expand the list of resources that you are now able to access.

The recommended path in learning the Aramaic Alphabet is the following:

1. Learn the Hebrew Ashuri script – it is the most important and the foundation for all further learning.
2. Then learn the Estrangela script (but only if you want to).
3. Then learn the Serta script (only if you want to).
4. Then learn the Swadaya script (only if you want to).

This is the approach we recommend at Jesus Spoke Aramaic, and this is the fastest, easiest and most beneficial path to take, as you continue your journey into the world of Aramaic.

There is a proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." At first, the idea of learning the Aramaic alphabet, and the several scripts associated with it, will seem a daunting task. Many people will not even begin a task if it looks daunting! But a journey of a thousand miles is also a daunting task, but it all begins with taking the first step, then just keeping going.

So, too, with Aramaic, it is important to get started. Don't be put off

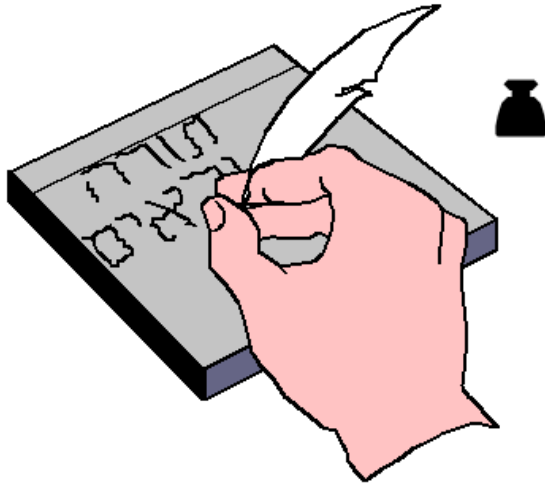
by how much there is to learn. We have designed these lessons so that you can begin at the beginning, start with a single video lesson, then just keep going. Everything is delivered in bite-sized chunks that you can master one step at a time, with each step just one step more from the one before. Just as a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, you will soon look back and see how far you have come.

But it all begins with a single step. Without that, there is no journey. And if there is no journey, there is no fun.

Aramaic WILL be a fun journey. But first, you need to take the first step...

How To Write The Aramaic Letters

IN THE FOLLOWING series of lessons, we are going to look at each of the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet in turn, and see how to write them. Before we do that, however, it will help if we remind ourselves how to write English, and then compare that to how things are done in Aramaic. Comparing Aramaic with what you already know – English – will help you to “spot the differences”, and this, in turn, will make it easier for you to learn the Aramaic alphabet.

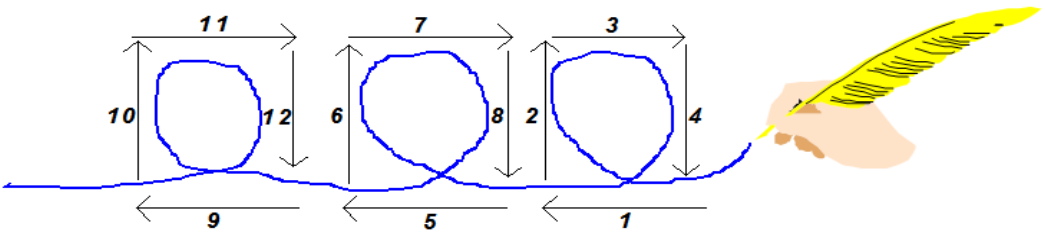


So let's compare how we write English letters, and compare that to how we write Aramaic.

English is written from left to right. You start at the left, and work your way towards the right as you write each letter.

Aramaic, however, is the opposite. You start at the **right**, and work your way towards the **left**.

Thus, when writing Aramaic, you start at the top of the letter, on the right-hand side, and generally try to write in a continuous motion, going clockwise (heading towards the left) and trying to write the letter so that you finish at the bottom of the letter, heading slightly further towards the left of the page, ready for the next letter. This, of course, is the opposite to English!



When you look at the way the Aramaic letters are written in the following lessons, try to remember this right-to-left, circulating motion. The picture shown above illustrates the motion that you are trying to achieve.

A Video Lesson showing showing you how to actually write Aramaic, plus the earlier lessons, is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

You might think it is easier to write the Aramaic letters in another way. This is because you have been writing English all your life, and have gotten used to the way you write things in English. It takes time to adapt to the new way that Aramaic does things!

Just as English letters sometimes have small but important differences between them, so Aramaic letters often have small but important differences between them. We will point out these differences during the lessons. But the important point is – pay attention to the detail we

provide for each letter. The differences between letters are important! This introductory lesson will help you as you go through the following lessons for each of the Aramaic letters in turn.

Letter Alap

IN THIS SERIES of lessons, we are going to take you through each of the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet in turn. We will explain everything you need to know about the Aramaic letter, and we will show you how to write it.

So let's get started!

The first letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Alap, pronounced *a-lap*, similar to "a lap [round the racetrack]". It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Alef. The letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in Hebrew, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Alap looks like:



You can watch a sample Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Alap from the link below:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/Aramaic-Alphabet/Letter-Alap

Let's learn some more about Alap.

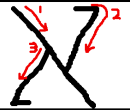
Alap does not have a sound of its own, but instead carries the sound of the vowel below or after it. We will discuss vowels in a later lesson,

where this will become clearer.

If Alap comes part way through a word, it is pronounced by stopping temporarily and starting again, in a similar way to the English words re-educate or re-do, where there is a slight pause after the initial 'e' sounds. For this reason, Alap is referred to as a guttural letter, meaning that it is pronounced from the throat. Alap, along with the other gutturals, has a number of special properties. You will discover these properties when you go through the lessons on Aramaic grammar.

Aramaic has a method of representing letters as numbers. This is called Gematria. With Gematria, each Aramaic letter has a numerical equivalent, so that numbers can be written using letters. Alap has the numerical value of 1, since it is the first letter of the Aramaic Alphabet.

The picture below shows you how to write Alap with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Alap.

Alap Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Alap.
Practice makes perfect!



Letter Beet

IN THESE LESSONS, we are going to take you through each of the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet in turn. We will explain everything you need to know about the Aramaic letter, and we will show you how to write it. So let's keep going!

The second letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Beet, pronounced *beat*, to rhyme with words such as *meet*, *seat* or *feet*. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Bet, or Beth, in the Hebrew Alphabet. The letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in Hebrew, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Beet looks like:



You can watch a sample Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Beet from the link below:


JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/Aramaic-Alphabet/Letter-Beet


Let's learn some more about Beet.

Beet is one of several Aramaic letters that take a dot in the middle. This dot is very important and is called a Dagesh. When it appears, the dot or Dagesh changes the pronunciation of the letter. With the dot, Beet is pronounced 'b' as in words such as *big*, *bat*, *ball* or *Ben*. Without the

dot, it is pronounced 'v' as in the words *very*, *valley* or *vineyard*.

Here are the two versions of Beet:

 with the dot, pronounced 'b'

 without the dot, pronounced 'v'

Since Beet is the second letter of the Aramaic Alphabet, it has the Gematria (numerical value) of 2.

Incidentally, the English word Alphabet comes from the names of the two Aramaic letters that we have just met – Alap and Beet. From Aramaic, the letters became Alpha and Beta in Greek, where much of English came from. Can you hear how similar they sound – Alpha Beta, Alphabet?

This is just one example to show that, thousands of years later, Hebrew and Aramaic have influenced the world's languages so much that English has adopted the original names of the Hebrew and Aramaic letters! In fact, the names of the first few letters of the Greek alphabet (Alpha, Beeta, Gamma, Delta) come from the names of the first few letters in the Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets, Alap, Beet, Gamal, Dalat!

As you are introduced to the other Aramaic letters, you will see that there is a great deal of similarity between the order of the letters in the Aramaic Alphabet, and the order of the letters in the English alphabet. This is no coincidence!

The picture below shows you how to write Beet with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Beet.

Beet Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Beet.
Practice makes perfect!

ב

ב

ב

ב

ב

Letter Gamal

THE THIRD letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Gamal, pronounced GA-mal, a little bit like Ca-mel. Gamal corresponds to the Hebrew letter Gímel in the Hebrew Alphabet. There is a one-to-one correspondence between the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet and those of the Hebrew Alphabet, but sometimes they have slightly different names or slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Gamal looks like:





A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Gamal is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Gamal.

Gamal originally had different pronunciations for the versions with and without the dot. But today, Gamal is always pronounced with a 'g' sound, like the words *Gilgal*, *girl* or *garden*. The word Gamal comes from the Aramaic word *gamal*, meaning *camel*, and this word has come down to the English with only a slight change in the pronunciation.

Here is what Gamal looks like with and without the dot:

 with the dot, pronounced 'g'

 without the dot, pronounced 'g'

Gamal is the third letter of the Aramaic Alphabet, and therefore has the Gematria (numerical value) of 3.



Gamal is one of the four Hebrew/Aramaic letters on the Dreidel, which is a spinning top used for playing games during the festival of Hanukkah.

The picture below shows you how to write Gamal with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Gamal.

Gamal Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Gamal. Practice makes perfect!

The image shows the Arabic letter Gamal (ج) in a bold, black font. It is positioned at the end of a horizontal line, with the rest of the line being blank for practice.The image shows the Arabic letter Gamal (ج) in a bold, black font. It is positioned at the end of a horizontal line, with the rest of the line being blank for practice.The image shows the Arabic letter Gamal (ج) in a bold, black font. It is positioned at the end of a horizontal line, with the rest of the line being blank for practice.The image shows the Arabic letter Gamal (ج) in a bold, black font. It is positioned at the end of a horizontal line, with the rest of the line being blank for practice.The image shows the Arabic letter Gamal (ج) in a bold, black font. It is positioned at the end of a horizontal line, with the rest of the line being blank for practice.

Letter Dalat

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Dalat, pronounced DA-lat. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Dalet in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Dalat looks like:




A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Dalat is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Dalat.

Like a number of other Aramaic letters, Dalat used to have two pronunciations, depending on whether or not it had a dot inside it. But today, it is always pronounced with a 'd' sound, like the words *David*, *day* or *dog*.

Here is what Dalat looks like with and without the dot:

 with the dot, pronounced 'd'

 without the dot, pronounced 'd'

Dalat is the fourth letter of the Aramaic Alphabet, and therefore has the Gematria (numerical value) of 4.

The picture below shows you how to write Dalat with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Dalat.

Dalat Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Dalat.
Practice makes perfect!

A black silhouette of the Aramaic letter Dalat with a dot, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.A black silhouette of the Aramaic letter Dalat, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.A black silhouette of the Aramaic letter Dalat with a dot, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.A black silhouette of the Aramaic letter Dalat, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.A black silhouette of the Aramaic letter Dalat, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.

Letter Heh

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Heh, pronounced to rhyme with words such as *hen* or *pen*, but without the final 'n'. It corresponds to the letter Heh in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Heh looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Heh is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Heh.

Heh is normally pronounced with a 'h' sound, like the words *Hebron*, *Haman* or *hostile*. But if Heh comes at the end of an Aramaic word, it cannot be pronounced as 'h' because 'h' does not have enough power to act as a proper sound. When it occurs at the end of an Aramaic word, therefore, Heh is simply pronounced with the vowel of the previous letter, which is usually 'a' or 'e'. This situation is identical to what happens with words such as *Hannah* or *Sarah* in English – the final 'h' is not vocalised and the last sound is the vowel 'a'.

Heh is the fifth letter of the Aramaic Alphabet, and therefore has the

Gematria (numerical value) of 5.

Heh is one of the four Hebrew/Aramaic letters on the Dreidel, which is a spinning top used for playing games during the festival of Hanukkah.

The picture below shows you how to write Heh with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Heh.

Heh Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Heh.
Practice makes perfect!

ה

ה

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Letter Waw

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Waw, pronounced very similar to the English expression *wow!* but with 'a' in the middle of the word instead of 'o'. It corresponds to the letter Vav in the Hebrew Alphabet. The letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in Hebrew, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Waw looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Waw is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Waw.

In Biblical times, Waw was pronounced with a 'w' sound, like the words *water* or *west*. In Hebrew, however, the 'w' changed to 'v' because 'w' is a weak sound and loses its impact in many words. Thus, Waw would at one stage have been pronounced as *waw* in Hebrew too. But in Israel today, this letter is always pronounced as 'v'.

As we will see later when we come to look at the Aramaic vowels, Waw sometimes acts as a vowel instead of a consonant, in which case it is

not pronounced as 'w' but instead takes the sound of its vowel. If there is a dot inside the Waw, it is pronounced 'oo' like the words *pool* or *fool*. If the dot is at the top left of the letter, it is pronounced 'o' like the words *pot* or *dot*. This is explained further in our lessons on the Aramaic vowels.

Here is the ordinary form of Waw, plus the two special forms which are actually vowels rather than the letter 'w':

𐤅 the ordinary letter, pronounced 'w' (or 'v')

𐤆 dot in the middle, pronounced 'oo'

𐤇 dot at the top left, pronounced 'o'

Waw is the sixth letter of the Aramaic Alphabet. It therefore always has the Gematria (numerical value) of 6, regardless of whether it is being used as a consonant or a vowel.

The picture below shows you how to write Waw with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Waw.

Waw Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Waw.
Practice makes perfect!

Arukh Waw (Waw with a hook) in Ashuri script, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.

Waw with a dot (Vaw) in Ashuri script, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.

Waw with a dot and a hook (Waw with a dot) in Ashuri script, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.

Arukh Waw (Waw with a hook) in Ashuri script, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.

Waw with a dot and a hook (Waw with a dot) in Ashuri script, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines.

Letter Zeyn

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Zeyn, pronounced *ze-yeen*. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Zayin in the Hebrew Alphabet. Remember that the letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in Hebrew, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Zeyn looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Zeyn is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Zeyn.

Zeyn is pronounced 'z', like the words *Zebulun*, *zebra* or *xylophone*. It has the Gematria (numerical value) of 7, since it is the seventh letter of the Aramaic Alphabet.

Incidentally, the sounds of the letters in the Aramaic Alphabet always come from their names. So Alap is pronounced 'a', Beet is pronounced 'b', Gamal is pronounced 'g', Dalat is pronounced 'd', Heh is 'h', Waw is 'w', Zeyn is 'z', and so on. Knowing this makes it much easier to remember both the names and the Aramaic letters!

The picture below shows you how to write Zeyn with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Zeyn.

Zeyn Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Zeyn.
Practice makes perfect!

A single cursive letter 'Zeyn' written in black ink, positioned at the end of a horizontal line.A single cursive letter 'Zeyn' written in black ink, positioned at the end of a horizontal line.A single cursive letter 'Zeyn' written in black ink, positioned at the end of a horizontal line.A single cursive letter 'Zeyn' written in black ink, positioned at the end of a horizontal line.A single cursive letter 'Zeyn' written in black ink, positioned at the end of a horizontal line.

Letter Chet

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Chet. Now, this is a difficult letter to pronounce for people who only speak English, because this sound does not naturally occur in English. The sound is kind of like a rough 'h' sound, which is half way between 'h' (as in house or Hannah) and 'ch' (as in the Scottish *loch* or the German *Bach*). It is similar to the name *Juan* in Spanish.

So, as we have said, this sound does not normally occur in English. It is produced by saying 'h' from the back of the throat and closing the throat, slightly choking the sound. The best way for an English speaker to pronounce the sound is to imagine that you are breathing onto your hands to warm them up on a cold winter day, but producing the sound further back in the throat. Or imagine you can hear someone breathing heavily into a phone line.

The letter Chet in Aramaic corresponds to the Hebrew letter Chet. With many Hebrew and Aramaic speakers across the Middle East today, the letter Chet has lost its original sound and tends to be pronounced as 'ch' as in the words *loch* or *Bach*, because some people are unable to articulate the correct 'h' sound. Arabic speakers and many Jews from Arab countries find it easy to make the sound correctly. In particular, Yemenite Jews are recognized as speaking 'correct' or authentic sound, with the original pronunciation of all the letters intact after all these years.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Chet looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Chet is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

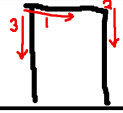
Let's learn some more about Chet.

Chet is a special letter, called a guttural. This means that it is pronounced from the throat, and because of this it has a number of special properties, just like the other gutturals in Aramaic. You will learn more about the gutturals in future lessons, but for now note the following points:

- Chet, like the other Aramaic gutturals, never takes the dot, or dagesh, inside it.
- If Chet occurs at the end of an Aramaic word, it is pronounced *after* the final vowel, not before as you would expect. For example, the Aramaic word ruach meaning wind or spirit, is pronounced *ru-ach*, not *ru-cha*, because it has a Chet at the end.

Chet has the Gematria (numerical value) of 8.

The picture below shows you how to write Chet with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Chet.

Chet Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Chet.
Practice makes perfect!

A large, bold, black cursive letter 'Chet' is positioned on the right side of the first horizontal line. The letter has a thick, rounded top bar and two vertical stems that curve slightly at the bottom.A large, bold, black cursive letter 'Chet' is positioned on the right side of the second horizontal line. The letter has a thick, rounded top bar and two vertical stems that curve slightly at the bottom.A large, bold, black cursive letter 'Chet' is positioned on the right side of the third horizontal line. The letter has a thick, rounded top bar and two vertical stems that curve slightly at the bottom.A large, bold, black cursive letter 'Chet' is positioned on the right side of the fourth horizontal line. The letter has a thick, rounded top bar and two vertical stems that curve slightly at the bottom.A large, bold, black cursive letter 'Chet' is positioned on the right side of the fifth horizontal line. The letter has a thick, rounded top bar and two vertical stems that curve slightly at the bottom.

Letter Tet

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Tet, pronounced *tet*. It corresponds exactly to the Hebrew letter Tet in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Tet looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Tet is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Tet.

Tet is pronounced with a hard 't' sound, as in the words *tabernacle*, *time* and *terrible*.

Tet has the Gematria (numerical value) of 9, since it is the ninth letter of the Aramaic Alphabet.

The picture below shows you how to write Tet with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Tet.

Tet Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Tet.
Practice makes perfect!

Letter Yud

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Yud, pronounced *yod* or *yood*. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Yod in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Yud looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Yud is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Yud.

When Yud is used as a consonant, it is pronounced with a 'y' sound, like the words *yonder*, *yoke* or *yellow*.

Yud has the Gematria (numerical value) of 10, since it is the tenth letter of the Aramaic Alphabet.

Incidentally, names of people and places in the Bible which start with the letter 'j', such as Jacob, James, Joseph, Judah, Jerusalem or Jehovah, generally start with the Aramaic or Hebrew letter Yud. The letter 'j' is used in English Bibles rather than 'y' for Yud because Latin has no letter 'y' and so it used 'i' instead. So when the Latin Vulgate

came along, followed by other Latin Bibles and Manuscripts, Latin used the letter 'i' instead of 'y'.

When English Bibles were produced later, they borrowed heavily from the Latin Vulgate, and so names which started with 'i' in Latin were changed to 'j' in English, because generally the version of the names with 'j' sounded better in English, and the names with 'i' were already in common use. Once those names appeared in printed English Bibles, they became fixed ever after. And so now, where a name starts with Yud in Hebrew and Aramaic, the English version of the name nearly always starts with 'j'.

You might also be interested in knowing that the letter Yud is mentioned in the New Testament. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus says:

Matt. 5:18; "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

The 'jot' in this verse refers to the letter Yod. It is the smallest letter in the Hebrew and Aramaic Alphabet, so Jesus is saying that not one letter, and not one tiny detail, will pass from the Law or Torah, until he fulfills everything.



The 'tittle' in this verse is referring to the *tagin*, the crowns or decoration, that traditional Jewish scribes added to certain letters when

they wrote a Synagogue Scroll. These crowns are shown in the picture shown here.

We have seen, then, that Yud is pronounced with a 'y' sound when it is used as a consonant. Sometimes in Aramaic, however, Yud is used as the vowel 'i' (pronounced 'ee' as in the words *feel* or *reef*) if there is a dot below the previous letter. A good example of this is in the different spellings of the name David that occur frequently in both Hebrew and

Aramaic...

In books such as Samuel or Kings, David is spelt like this:

דוד David, pronounced *Da-veed*

whereas in books such as Chronicles and Nehemiah, David is spelt with the addition of the letter Yud acting as a vowel to make the 'i' sound:

דוד David, pronounced *Da-veed*

In both cases, the actual pronunciation of David remains the same – but, as we will see in the lessons about the Aramaic vowels, the Yud is often used as a vowel to make the Aramaic easier to read.

The picture below shows you how to write Yud with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



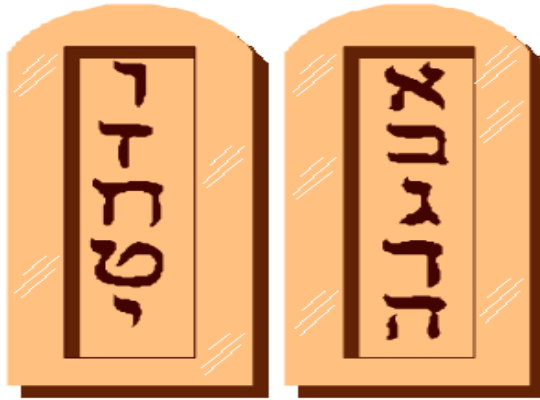
Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Yud.

Yud Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Yud.
Practice makes perfect!



Well done! You now know the first 10 letters of the Aramaic Alphabet. You should now be able to read the tablets of stone shown here. Tablets like this are a common sight in Jewish houses.



They are a reminder of the Ten Commandments given in Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter 5. They show the first ten letters of the Hebrew Alphabet to represent each of the ten commandments. Since the Aramaic alphabet is the same as the Hebrew alphabet, you can now read these letters!

You are really making progress! One more letter, and you will be half way through the Aramaic Alphabet!

Letter Kap

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Kap, pronounced similar to the word *cap*, as in baseball cap. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Kaf in the Hebrew Alphabet. As we have said before, letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in the Hebrew Alphabet, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Kap looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Kap is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:


JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Kap.

Kap is one of several Aramaic letters which has two pronunciations, depending on whether it has the dot, or Dagesh, inside it. If it has a dot, it is pronounced with a hard 'k' sound, like the words *Chronicles*, *calf* or *kill*. If there is no dot, it is pronounced 'ch' like the Scottish word *loch* or the German *Bach* (but never, ever 'ch' as in words such as *church*, *cheese*, *chat* or *charm*). **There is no 'ch' sound in Aramaic.** If you see an Aramaic word with the letters 'ch' together, it will be Kap,

and it should be pronounced as 'ch', as in *loch* or *Bach*.

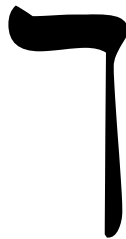
Here are the two versions of Kap:

 with the dot, pronounced 'k'

 without the dot, pronounced 'ch'

There is one other important thing about the Aramaic letter Kap. Five of the letters in the Aramaic Alphabet, including Kap, have a special form when they occur at the end of an Aramaic word. If these letters occur at the start or in the middle of an Aramaic word, then nothing special happens – but if they occur at the end, then the special form must be used instead. We will tell you which Aramaic letters have this special form when you get to them.

Here, then, is the special form of the Aramaic letter Kap when it occurs at the end of a word:



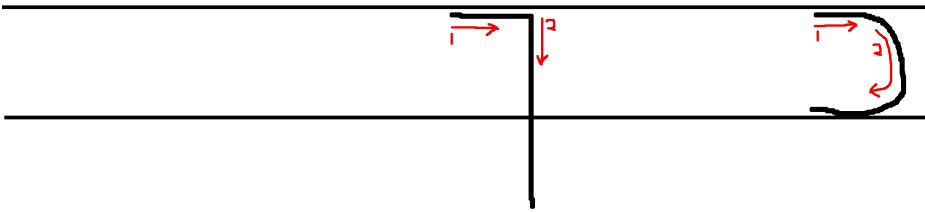
 the form of Kap at the end of a word

When Kap occurs at the end of a word in Aramaic, it is sometimes pronounced with the harder sound, 'k'. This is the opposite to Hebrew,

where the Hebrew letter Kaf always has a soft sound when it occurs at the end of a Hebrew word.

Both the normal and final forms of Kap have the Gematria (numerical value) of 20.

The picture below shows you how to write Kap with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Kap.

Kap Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Kap.
Practice makes perfect!

כ

ח

ך

כ

ך

Letter Lamad

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Lamad, pronounced LA-mad, with the emphasis on the first syllable, la. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Lamed in the Hebrew Alphabet. The letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in Hebrew, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Lamad looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Lamad is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Lamad.

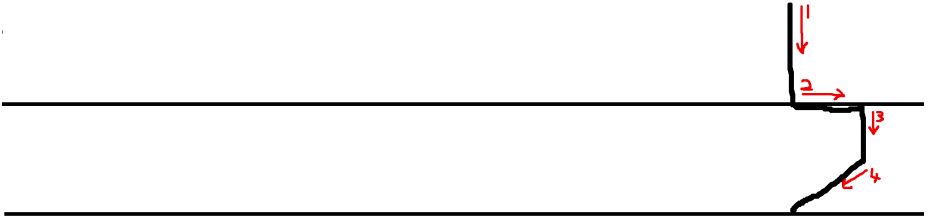
Lamad is pronounced with a 'l' sound, like the words *Laban*, *like*, *lame* or *leave*.

Lamad is the only Aramaic letter where part of the letter goes above the horizontal guidelines.

Lamad has the Gematria (numerical value) of 30. You will notice that the numerical values of the Aramaic letters now go from 10 to 90 (10,

20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90). When they reach 100, they go 100, 200, 300 then 400.

The picture below shows you how to write Lamad with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Lamad.

Lamad Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter
Lamad. Practice makes perfect!

Letter Meem

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Meem, pronounced a similar way to the English words *seem* or *beam*. Meem corresponds to the Hebrew letter Mem in the Hebrew Alphabet. As we have already seen, the letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in Hebrew, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Meem looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Meem is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Meem.

Like Kap, Meem is one of the Aramaic letters with a special form when it occurs at the end of a word.

Here is what the final form looks like:



This final form is very square looking. It is not rounded. It does not go below the line. It sits within the lines, just like the regular form of Meem.

Meem is pronounced with a 'm' sound, like the words *Moses*, *Machpelah* or *mountain*.

Both forms of Meem have the Gematria (numerical value) of 40. That's easy to remember – *Meem* is for *Moses*, and Moses was on mount Sinai for 40 days.

The picture below shows you how to write Meem with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Meem.

Meem Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Meem.
Practice makes perfect!



Letter Noon

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Noon, pronounced *noon*, to rhyme with words such as *soon* or *moon*. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Nun in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Noon looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Noon is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Noon.

Noon is pronounced with a 'n' sound, like the words *Naaman*, *Nahum* or *Noah*.

Like Kap and Meem, Noon is one of the Aramaic letters with a special form when it occurs at the end of a word.

Here is what the final form looks like:

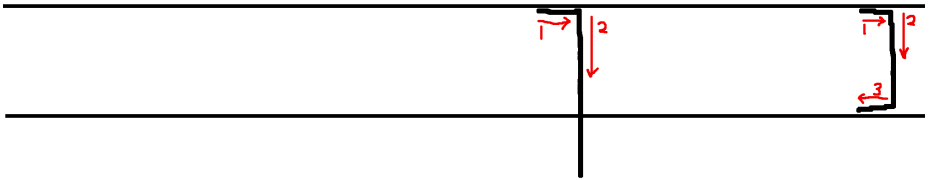


The final form has a tail, or descender, which goes below the line.

Noon is one of the four Aramaic letters on the Dreidel, which is a spinning top used for playing games during the festival of Hanukkah.

Both forms of Noon have the Gematria (numerical value) of 50.

The picture below shows you how to write Noon with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Noon.

Noon Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Noon.
Practice makes perfect!



Letter Semkat

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Semkat, pronounced a little bit like "same cat", but with *sem* instead of *same*. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Samech in the Hebrew Alphabet. The letters in the Aramaic Alphabet are almost identical to those in Hebrew, but have slightly different names and sometimes slightly different sounds. In this case, you can tell that the letters have similar names (Samech and Semkat) but are not quite the same.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Semkat looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Semkat is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Semkat.

Semkat is pronounced with a 's' sound, like the words *Selah*, *serpent* or *slave*.

Incidentally, if you are thinking that Semkat looks exactly like the Greek letter Sigma, only pointing to the left instead of the right, then you are exactly correct. This is not a coincidence. The Greek language

stole the Hebrew and Aramaic letters and wrote many of them the wrong way round, because the Greeks couldn't decide whether to write from left to right, or from right to left. For example, the Aramaic letter Resh looks like the English 'r', but it is facing the other way. English copied the Greek letters, just as Greek copied the Aramaic letters! The world began with Hebrew and Aramaic letters!

Semkat has the Gematria (numerical value) of 60.

The picture below shows you how to write Semkat with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Semkat.

Semkat Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Semkat. Practice makes perfect!

o

o

o

o

o

Letter Ey

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Ey, pronounced a little bit like English word *eye* but with more of an 'e' at the start, rather than 'a'. It corresponds to the letter Ayin in the Hebrew Alphabet.

This is another sound which is difficult to pronounce for English speakers, for the simple reason that this sound does not occur in English. It is a guttural sound. The best way for English speakers to pronounce this sound is to pretend that you are at the doctor, and the doctor asks you to say aaaa. But you are at the doctor because something is wrong with your throat, and every time you try to say 'a', the long sound is stopped short, and the back of your throat is restricted, with a sort of choking sound. So the sound comes out as Ey rather than 'a'.

Alternatively, you can stand in front of a mirror, and say 'a' but with your throat constricted, as if you were about to gag slightly. If you are doing the sound correctly, you should see your Adam's apple bob up and down.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Ey looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Ey is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Ey.

Like Alap and Chet, Ey is a special letter called a guttural. Its sound is often described as a vocal glottal stop, meaning that it is produced by making a sound similar to the letter 'a' or 'e' but far back in the throat, and closing the throat during the sound, slightly choking it. As we have seen, this sound does not exist in English. But with a little bit of practice and perseverance, there is no reason why you can't learn to pronounce the sound just fine. It is a learnable skill, just like everything else in life.

The sound of Ey or Ayin is still present in Arabic, a language closely related to Aramaic. Arabic speakers will therefore have no problem pronouncing this letter correctly. Yemenite Jews, or Jews from other Arab countries, can also pronounce the letter Ey correctly.

Like the guttural Chet, Ey or Ayin is often not articulated correctly by Jews who speak Aramaic today, or by Jews who speak Hebrew in the Land of Israel. But that doesn't mean that YOU shouldn't try to pronounce the letter correctly!

When you are learning Aramaic, you should at least try to pronounce letters like Chet and Ey correctly. Failing to do so will make it much harder to spell Aramaic words, because you will not be able to use the sound of the word as a guide to tell you how to spell it.

Like Alap, Ey often carries a vowel with it. Those unable to articulate Ey correctly often treat it as though it were Alap.

Ey has the Gematria (numerical value) of 70.

The picture below shows you how to write Ey with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Eya.

Also practise saying the letter Eya to see how well you can pronounce it. Have some fun while you do this!

Ey Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Ey.
Practice makes perfect!



Letter Pe

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Pe, pronounced similar to the words *pen* or *hen* but without the final 'n'. It corresponds to the letter Pe in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Pe looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Pe is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe


Let's learn some more about Pe.

Pe has two pronunciations, depending on whether it has the dot, or Dagesh, inside it. If it has a dot, it is pronounced with a hard 'p' sound, like the words *Palestine*, *Peter*, *Paul* or *person*. Without the dot, it is pronounced 'f' like the words *fish*, *Philistine*, *famine* or *fool*.

Here are the two versions of Pe:




with the dot, pronounced 'p'

 without the dot, pronounced 'f'

Pe is also one of the five letters in the Aramaic Alphabet with a special form when they occur at the end of an Aramaic word. The final form of Pe looks like this:



 the form of Pe at the end of a word

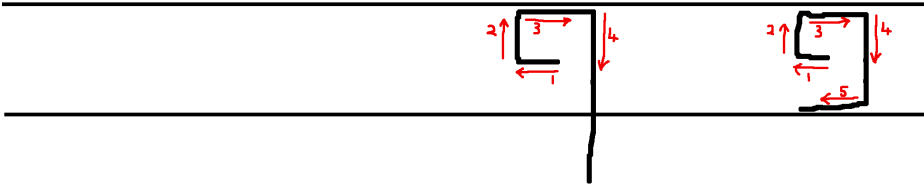
As you can see, the final form has a tail, or descender, which goes below the line.

At the end of an Aramaic word, Pe is sometimes pronounced with the harder sound 'p', rather than the softer sound 'f'. This is the opposite of Hebrew, since Hebrew words ending in Pe always have the softer sound 'f', rather than the harder sound 'p'.

All forms of Pe have the Gematria (numerical value) of 80.

In Israel, Pe is one of the four Aramaic letters on the Dreidel, which is a spinning top used for playing games during the festival of Hanukkah. In Israel, Pe often replaces the letter Sheen.

The picture below shows you how to write Pe with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Pe.

Pe Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Pe.
Practice makes perfect!

P

p

P

p

P

Letter Tsadeh

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Tsadeh, pronounced TSA-deh. Tsadeh corresponds to the letter Tsadeh in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Tsadeh looks like:

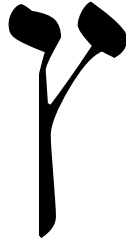


A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Tsadeh is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Tsadeh.

Tsadeh is pronounced with a 'ts' sound – that is, 't' and 's' together. This sound **does** occur in English, but only at the **end** of English words such as *hits*, *bits*, *puts*, *sits*, *goats*, and so on. In Aramaic, however, this sound can occur anywhere in a word – at the start of a word, in the middle of a word, or at the end of a word. Since in English we only find the 'ts' sound at the end of a word, at first it can be difficult to pronounce Tsadeh. However, practice makes perfect!

Tsadeh is the last of the five letters in the Aramaic Alphabet with a special form when they occur at the end of an Aramaic word. The final form of Tsadeh looks like this:

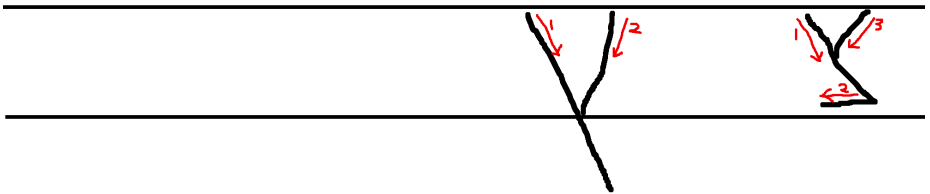


the form of Tsadeh at the end of a word

As you can see, the final form has a tail, or descender, which goes below the line.

Both forms of Tsadeh have the Gematria (numerical value) of 90.

The picture below shows you how to write Tsadeh with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Tsadeh.

Tsadeh Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Tsadeh. Practice makes perfect!

Letter Kop

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Kop, pronounced *kop* (like *cop*), but with a more audible 'k' at the start, pronounced from the back of the throat, and often transliterated as 'q'. It corresponds to the Hebrew letter Kuf in the Hebrew Alphabet. This exact sound does not occur in English, but the letter 'k' comes very close, and so most people just pronounce it as 'k'. Here is what the Aramaic letter Kop looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Kop is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

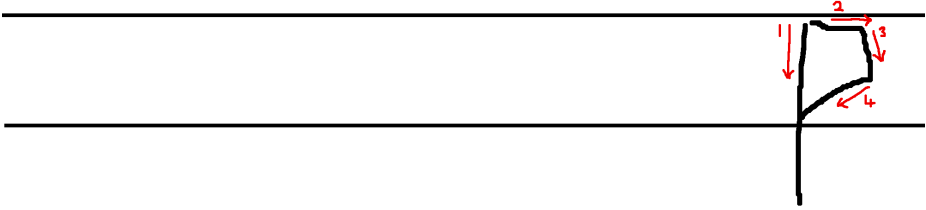
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Kop.

As we have seen, Kop was originally pronounced with a 'k' sound produced from the throat, almost like a 'q'. (This sound is still present in Arabic.) In fact, the letter Kop is often transliterated as 'q' in English, such as in the word *Qumran*. Today, however, Kop is often pronounced as 'k', as in the words *Korah*, *Cain*, *cat* or *kill*. With many Aramaic and Hebrew speakers today, there is little difference between the pronunciation of Kop and Kap with a dagesh.

Kop has the Gematria (numerical value) of 100.

The picture below shows you how to write Kop with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Kop.

Kop Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Kop.
Practice makes perfect!



Kop



Kop



Kop



Kop



Kop

Letter Resh

THE NEXT letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Resh, pronounced just like it sounds. Resh corresponds to the letter Resh in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Resh looks like:



A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Resh is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Resh.

Resh is pronounced with a 'r' sound, like the words *Rachel*, *Ruth* or *Rahab*. But the sound is not exactly like the English letter 'r'. It is pronounced differently. In Aramaic, and also Hebrew, the sound is more of a trill, either like the sound *rrrrr* in Scottish, or the word *rue* in French. Using either of these pronunciations is much better than saying the normal 'r' sound that we have in English.

Resh looks very much like the English letter 'r', but pointing to the left instead of the right. This is no coincidence, since the English letters were influenced by the Greek alphabet, and the Greek alphabet in turn was copied from the Hebrew and Aramaic Alphabets. Similarly, the

Greek letter Sigma was copied from the Aramaic letter Semkat, but the Greek letter is written the other way round.

Resh has the Gematria (numerical value) of 200.

The picture below shows you how to write Resh with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Resh.

Resh Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Resh.
Practice makes perfect!

Letter Sheen

THE NEXT letter, the second last one in the Aramaic Alphabet, is called Sheen. It is pronounced the way it sounds. It corresponds to the letter Sheen in the Hebrew Alphabet.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Sheen look like:




A Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Sheen is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Let's learn some more about Sheen.

In Hebrew, the letter Sheen comes in two forms, pronounced *seen* and *sheen*, respectively. Seen has the dot on the left hand side, and Sheen has the dot on the right-hand side.

Here are the two versions of Sheen:

 with the dot on the right, pronounced 'sh'

 without the dot on the left, pronounced 's'

In Hebrew, these are variations of the same letter. In Aramaic, however, generally only the Sheen form exists, with the dot at the right-hand side, pronounced 'sh'. This is because the spelling of Aramaic words which have a 's' sound, such as places or common names, usually prefer to use the letter Semkat, in place of the letter Sin.

A further note: if you ever see the letter Sheen without the dot, as shown here, then you should assume it is Sheen rather than Seen, and you should pronounce it as 'sh'.

Sheen is called a sibilant. Sibilants are sounds made with the teeth and lips together, such as 's', 'sh', 'ts' and 'z'. In many languages, especially Semitic languages such as Aramaic, Hebrew and Arabic, these sounds became interchanged over time as they were passed between the languages and spoken by many different peoples of different ethnic backgrounds, with different accents. This is another reason why Aramaic does not really need two forms of Seen and Sheen, and why it generally uses another letter (Semkat) to make the 's' sound.

This process (of interchanging sibilants) is illustrated very clearly by comparing words which have passed from one language to another. In English, for example, we are all familiar with Biblical names starting with 's', such as Solomon, Saul, and Samuel. But in Hebrew and Aramaic, these names all start with 'sh', not 's'. These names in Hebrew are Shlomo, Shaul, and Shmuel. In other words, the sounds of 's' and 'sh' are so similar that they have become blurred when passed down through different languages, over many centuries.

Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic have many similar examples. For instance, honey in Hebrew is davash, but in Arabic it is debes, where the final 's' and 'sh' have been interchanged. This example also illustrates that 'b' and 'v' have become interchanged in this particular word, and as you already know from the letter Beet, Beet has two forms (pronounced 'b' or 'v'), depending on whether there is a dot inside the letter.

These examples clearly illustrate how the sounds of individual letters become confused when a word gets transferred from one language to another. This is just one small example of how God confused (mixed up) the languages of men at the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11!

When you go to our lessons comparing Hebrew and Aramaic, you will see that there are dozens of examples of sounds being interchanged between these two languages. Once you get a handle on this fact, you can use a knowledge of Hebrew to leverage Aramaic, or vice versa!

If we go back to Biblical times, we find something even more interesting – around the time of the Judges of Israel, some groups of people (such as the Ephraimites) had great difficulty even pronouncing 's' and 'sh' correctly! This may indicate that the Ephraimites were more used to speaking in Aramaic than Hebrew, since they were coming from a predominantly Aramaic-speaking area. Just as English speakers today often have problems pronouncing some of the Hebrew and Aramaic letters, it seems that people in past centuries also had this problem!

The following verse from the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible illustrates this:

Judges 12:5-6; “...and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.” (KJV)

Here was a simple test – the Ephraimites had to pronounce *Shibboleth*, meaning ears of corn, correctly. They pronounced it as *Sibboleth* instead. In this case, failure led to the death of the unfortunate Ephraimite!

In the New Testament, also, Galileans spoke Aramaic differently to the way that the inhabitants of Jerusalem spoke Aramaic. At the time, you

could tell what area of the country people came from, just by the way they spoke Aramaic.

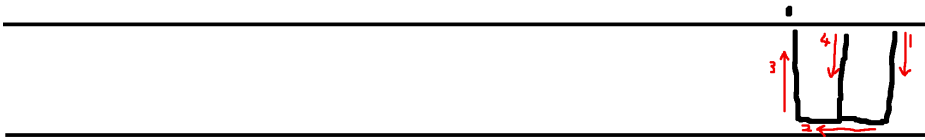
For example, the people speaking to Peter instantly knew from the way he spoke Aramaic that he was not from Jerusalem. They could tell that he was from Galilee:

Matt. 26:73; “And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.”

Sheen has the Gematria (numerical value) of 300.

Sheen is one of the four Aramaic letters on the Dreidel, which is a spinning top used for playing games during the festival of Hanukkah.

The picture below shows you how to write Sheen with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Sheen.

Sheen Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Sheen. Practice makes perfect!



Letter Taw

THE LAST letter of the Aramaic Alphabet is called Taw. It is pronounced TA-oo. The Aramaic letter Taw is similar to the letter Tav in the Hebrew Alphabet, except that the Waw at the end is pronounced like 'w' in Aramaic and 'v' in Hebrew. But apart from that, they are one and the same letter.

Here is what the Aramaic letter Taw looks like:



You can watch a sample Video Lesson showing you how to read, write and pronounce the letter Taw from the link below:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Lessons/Aramaic-Alphabet/Letter-Taw

Let's learn some more about Taw.

Taw in Aramaic has two pronunciations. With a dot, it is pronounced with a *hard* 'th' sound, as in the words *this*, *that* or *there*. Without the dot, it is pronounced with a *soft* 'th' sound, as in the words *think*, *thin*, *throne*, *thunder* or *thanks*.

Here are the two versions of Taw:

 with the dot, pronounced 'th' as in *this*, *that*

ת without the dot, pronounced 'th' as in *thick*, *thin*

In Israel today, however, the corresponding Hebrew letter (Tav) is always pronounced as 't' (just like the letter Tet), as in the words *Tarshish*, *time* or *tell*. It is worthwhile to know the Aramaic pronunciation, however, because it will help you to spell both Hebrew and Aramaic words correctly. For example, any time you see the letters 'th' in an English word that has come from Hebrew or Aramaic, you know that the original Hebrew or Aramaic word must be spelled with the letter Taw, not Tet. In the words *Bethesda* or *Bethlehem*, for instance, the Hebrew and Aramaic words uses the letter Taw.

Taw has the Gematria (numerical value) of 400.

The picture below shows you how to write Taw with an ordinary pen, and where the letter sits within the imaginary top and bottom gridlines:



Make sure you use the following Practice Page to help you write the letter Taw.

Taw Practice Page

Copy this page as many times as you like, and use it to practice writing the letter Taw.
Practice makes perfect!

The image shows the Aramaic letter Taw (ܐ) with a dot, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines. The letter is black and has a distinctive shape with a small dot in the center.The image shows the Aramaic letter Taw (ܐ) without a dot, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines. The letter is black and has a distinctive shape.The image shows the Aramaic letter Taw (ܐ) with a dot, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines. The letter is black and has a distinctive shape with a small dot in the center.The image shows the Aramaic letter Taw (ܐ) without a dot, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines. The letter is black and has a distinctive shape.The image shows the Aramaic letter Taw (ܐ) with a dot, positioned on a set of three horizontal lines. The letter is black and has a distinctive shape with a small dot in the center.

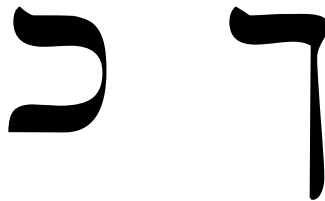
Summary Of Letters With Final Forms

AS WE HAVE seen in the previous lessons on the Aramaic Alphabet, five of the Aramaic letters have a **final form** when they occur at the **end** of a word. This special form is used only at the **end** of words.

This review lesson provides a helpful summary to remind you of these final forms, and which letters they relate to. In each case, the normal form of the letter is shown *first* (on the *left*) and the final form is shown on the *right*.

Kap

The two forms of Kap are as follows:



Meem

The two forms of Meem are as follows:



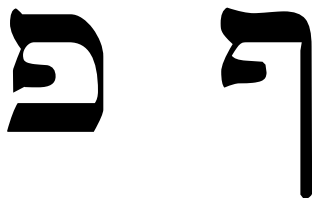
Noon

The two forms of Noon are as follows:



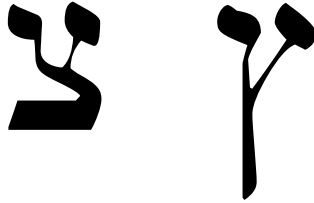
Pe

The two forms of Pe are as follows:



Tsadeh

The two forms of Tsadeh are as follows:



Generally, the final forms are similar to the normal forms, but they are *longer* – that is, they extend *below* the imaginary grid line.

Summary of Letters That Look Alike

BY NOW YOU should have gone through all the lessons of the Aramaic Alphabet. When you first start to learn a new alphabet, everything is new. You will probably find that the shapes of some letters remind you of other letters, and you may start to get some letters confused. This is perfectly normal, and is not unique to Aramaic. When children learn to write English, for example, they often get different letters confused. It just takes practice and time before things fall into place.

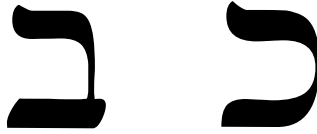
Our introductory lesson on how to write the Aramaic letters hopefully helped to point out the important differences between some of the letters. And during the video lessons for each letter that are available on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website, we carefully pointed out some of the ways in which you could get the letters confused with other letters, and how to make sure you draw the letters correctly to avoid confusion with other letters.

Finally, in this lesson, as a helpful review, we will go through some of the letters that beginners typically get confused. Once you “spot the difference” between the letters, and pay attention to their shape, you will hopefully never get them confused again. But it helps to at least be aware of letters that are commonly confused. This stage, of getting some letters confused, is only temporary. You will soon get over it!

So let's take a closer look now...

Beet and Kap

Beet and Kap are shown below:



If you look closely, you will see that the differences are as follows:

- ✓ Kap is more rounded.
- ✓ Beet has square edges.
- ✓ Beet has a foot on the bottom right that sticks out.

Dalet, Resh, Final Kap and Tav

These letters are shown below:



If you look closely, you will see that the differences are as follows:

- ✓ Dalat and Final Kap have an edge that sticks out at the top right.
- ✓ Dalat and Final Kap have square edges.
- ✓ Final Kap is long, and goes below the line.

- ✓ Resh is rounded.
- ✓ Taw is rounded, and has a leg (with a foot) on the left.

Heh, Chet and Taw

These letters are shown below:



If you look closely, you will see that the differences are as follows:

- ✓ Heh has a large gap on its vertical left leg.
- ✓ Chet and Taw have no gap on their vertical left leg.
- ✓ Heh and Chet have square edges.
- ✓ Taw is more rounded, and has a foot on the left that sticks out.

Yud, Waw, Zeyn and Final Nun

These letters are shown below:



If you look closely, you will see that the differences are as follows:

- ✓ All are thin – they are half the width of most other letters.
- ✓ Yud is small – it is both half height and half width.
- ✓ Waw is the same height as the other letters.
- ✓ Final Nun is long and goes below the line.
- ✓ Zeyn's vertical line is slightly bent or curved.
- ✓ Zeyn's vertical line comes down from the middle, not from the far right-hand edge.

Semkat and Final Meem

These letters are shown below:



If you look closely, you will see that the differences are as follows:

- ✓ Final Meem can only ever occur at the end (far left) of a word because it is a final form!
- ✓ Semkat can occur *anywhere* in a word.
- ✓ Final Meem is very square looking.
- ✓ Semkat is more rounded.

Congratulations!

YOU HAVE NOW come to the end of learning the Aramaic Alphabet, and you now know all the **letters**. This is a really major step, so congratulations!

The next step is to learn the **vowels** that go with the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet. This is what we are going to cover in the next few lessons in this book. Once you know both the letters and the vowels, you will need to learn how to put letters together to form words – first short words, then longer words. Once you can do this, you can actually read Aramaic!

The grammar lessons at JesusSpokeAramaic.com will then teach you to *understand* Aramaic!

Introduction To Vowels In Aramaic

IF YOU HAVE reached this lesson, you will hopefully have gone through all the previous lessons discussing each of the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet, and you will feel confident that you know each letter. Rather than just *reading* the lessons, however, it is important that you also print out the Practice Page for each letter, and write out the letters dozens of times each. Nothing will help you get the shapes of the letters fixed in your mind, more than writing them out by hand.

You may also want to use the Aramaic Flashcards which we provide at JesusSpokeAramaic.com to repeatedly test yourself with the Aramaic letters in random order, shuffling the order of the flashcards to practise testing yourself with the letters in a different order each time. Practising the letters in random order will identify whether you *really do* know the letters and the sounds and shapes of them, and whether there are still ones which you find difficult.

Practising groups of letters, a few every day, will also help you. Little and often is a much more effective learning method than long sessions days apart.

But let's say that you have now thoroughly learned all the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet, and you believe that you are ready to progress to the next step... What's next?

Let's first compare the Aramaic Alphabet to the English Alphabet. English has 26 letters, from A to Z. It has a combination of *consonants*

(meaning fixed-length sounds like b, g, k, l, s and so on) and *vowels* (which are open-ended sounds like a, e, ee, o, oo, oh, and so on). The English alphabet is a mixture of these consonants and vowels.

By contrast, the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet are all **consonants**. You might not have noticed this before when you were working your way through the alphabet lessons.

Now, certain letters in the Aramaic alphabet **can** be used to help with the pronunciation of Aramaic words, in a similar way to vowels. We will cover this in a separate lesson called, *The Mothers of Reading*.

Apart from those special letters, however, the Aramaic alphabet does not contain *any* vowels. This is interesting, and in fact quite different from English. In fact, it is such a fundamental part of the Aramaic language that it is very important to understand **why** Aramaic does not include vowels as part of the letters of the alphabet.

It turns out that Aramaic does not **need** vowels in the same way that English does, because Aramaic works completely differently, in a way that might surprise you at first. To help explain all of this, the next lesson is called *Why English Needs Vowels*. After that, we have a lesson called *Why Aramaic is Different*. Once you have done those two lessons, you will understand something very interesting, important and unique about Aramaic, something that is a golden thread running through the language from start to finish...

We will briefly discuss a little of the *History* of the Aramaic Vowels, before individually looking at each of the vowels in turn. We will first explain the vowels of the Hebrew Ashuri script, which matches the Aramaic letters that you have already met.

On other lessons of the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website, we will look at the vowels of other Aramaic scripts including Estrangela, Serta and Swadaya. These are exactly the same vowels, and they sound exactly the same, but they are written differently in different scripts.

So before we introduce the vowels one at a one, make sure you work your way through the following lessons which introduce you to different aspects of vowels in Aramaic. Once you have gone through these lessons, you will understand one of the golden threads running through the Aramaic language, and you will be ready to understand the lessons on the Aramaic vowels.

Once you have done that, you will have made enormous progress in understanding Aramaic. You will have mastered the Aramaic alphabet and vowels, and you will be ready to start reading whole words, then phrases, as you go through our series of lessons on learning Aramaic.

Learning Aramaic involves just two steps:

1. Start learning
2. Keep going

You have already successfully completed the first step, so all you need to do now is keep going! Oh, and have fun!

Why English NEEDS Vowels

IN THE PREVIOUS lessons in this book, we looked at the Aramaic Alphabet. As we have seen, the Aramaic letters are essentially **consonants**, although a few (*The Mothers of Reading*) including Alap, Yud, Waw and Heh are sometimes used as vowels to make the pronunciation of some Aramaic words easier and less ambiguous.

When we say Aramaic Vowels, we mean the small marks, the dots and dashes, that appear inside, below or above the Aramaic letters. These vowels are optional in Aramaic. You don't need them, but some texts have them because it makes reading easier. This is completely different from English, where words are made up of letters which are consonants or vowels, and you need both to form a word. In English, in contrast to Aramaic, the vowels (a, e, i, o, u, oo, ee and so on) are an inherent part of the word, and are scattered as letters throughout the word. The vowels are an integral part of an English word and the word can't be spelled without its vowels. The vowels look like any other letter in English.

Well, in Aramaic, things are different. Very different. Why? The answer is simple. Because of the way English works, English **must** have vowels. Aramaic, however, doesn't really **need** vowels. Having vowels often makes it easier to know how to pronounce an Aramaic word (especially for beginners) and vowels can also resolve some ambiguities, but Aramaic words don't **need** vowels. Vowels weren't included when the Biblical texts were first written down, for instance.

To bring this major difference between English and Aramaic home to you, let's consider what would happen if English didn't have vowels. Let's read a sample paragraph of English text without vowels and see

what happens.

Take a look at the following block of English text for a minute, and see if you can work out what it means – that is, what it says. As a clue, it is a famous quote from a famous book by a famous author:

"T ws th bst f tms, t ws th wrst f tms, t ws th g f wsdm, t ws th g f flshnss, t ws th pch f blf, t ws th pch f ncrdlty, t ws th ssn f Lght, t ws th ssn f Drknss, t ws th sprng f hpe, t ws th wntr f dspr, w hd vrythng bfr s, w hd nthng bfr s, w wr ll gng drct t Hvn, w wr ll gng drct th thr wy – n shrt, th prd ws s fr lk th prsnt prd, tht sm f ts nsst thrts nsstd n ts bng rcvd, fr gd r fr vl, n th sprltv dgr f cmprsn nly."

Now, the chances are that you won't be able to read this text. Most people who look at it will say that it looks complete gibberish. If you look at the text for a good long while, you will probably be able to make out some of the words, but others will remain a complete mystery.

And yet, English is probably your mother tongue, and this is a well-known quote by a famous author. Actually, it is the opening paragraph from the book *A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens. If we add the vowels back in to the words, the text will suddenly make more sense:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only."

(If the text still doesn't make sense, the book is setting the scene for

the chaotic, uncertain and unpredictable times preceding the French Revolution).

But the point is this – without the vowels, the average native English speaker will just not understand what the text says. In other words, in English, you need vowels. Without vowels, you will not be able to understand what you are reading.

Let's try to illustrate this point with another, different, example. Take the two consonants (the letters) b+t, for example. Without vowels, these letters could give any of the following words:

abet, bat, bait, abate, batty, bet, beat, bit, bite, bot, boot, boat, booty, but, butt

Or, as another example, the two consonants (the letters) b+r could give any of the following words:

bar, bare, Barry, bear, beer, bier, boar, bore, burr, buyer

So, if you remove the vowels, the words in English become ambiguous. In fact, they become so ambiguous that you can't really tell what they are any more. They could be one of any number of words. You can only tell which word is meant by guesswork, a knowledge of what the text is supposed to be, and a bit of luck. And that is just a simple word with two consonants.

In fact, if we examine the list of words generated from the two simple examples above, we find that the above lists of words have two things in common:

1. They all have the same consonants, the same 'root' letters.
2. They have nothing in common! That is, the words that can be formed from the same consonants are completely different. They have different meanings and different derivations, with no connection whatsoever between the words.

In English, therefore, you **must** have vowels in the word. Without them,

you simply won't understand what the word is meant to be because there are so many possibilities and potential ambiguities.

This is a consequence of the way English works, and the fact that English is a mixture of several language roots such as Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic, French, German, Greek and Latin.

But the point of this lesson is to show that English *needs* vowels. They are an essential part of the word. They are needed to resolve ambiguities.

But, you might be surprised to know that Aramaic is different. It doesn't **need** vowels in the same way that English does. To find out why this is the case, and why Aramaic is different, be sure to read the next lesson!

Why Aramaic Is Different

IN THE LESSON *Why English NEEDS Vowels*, we saw that vowels in English are an essential part of the word. You *must* have vowels in English (which is why they are an inherent part of the English alphabet) otherwise a block of text is nearly impossible to read, or at least you won't be able to read it without extreme difficulty. This is probably so obvious to most English speakers that you may think all languages are like that. Surely all languages need vowels in the same way that English does?

Well, no. In Aramaic, things work differently. The hundreds of ambiguities that would arise if English didn't have vowels, simply don't arise at all in Aramaic – or at least, they don't arise often enough to become a problem.

How can this be? Well, English is a language that has evolved slowly over time, and accumulated words derived from many different sources – including words from Latin, Greek, Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic, French, German and several other sources. Aramaic, however, is a relatively pure language – it has not evolved, absorbed foreign words, or changed anything like as much as English has.

What this means is something quite amazing – something that may, in fact, shock you if you haven't heard it before. In Aramaic, words which have the same set of consonants are almost always related. The set of consonants which make up the word, together form the core meaning, or root, of the word. In Aramaic, in other words, if you take a given set of consonants, you will only be able to form words which are related in meaning. Unlike English, where we were able to form potentially dozens of different (unrelated) words from a given set of consonants, if we

tried that experiment in Aramaic, we would generally only be able to form words which all had the same basic (related) meaning.

Even more amazing is that the root (or core) meaning of a given set of consonants is not only preserved across all words that are derived from that root, but words (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on) are formed from the root in predictable ways. So if you look at a word you have never seen before, as long as you can figure out what the root letters are, you can actually figure out what the meaning of the word *must* be. The root gives rise to many related words, but equally you can take an unknown word, work out the root, then work out the meaning of the unknown word.

It's amazing, and it is nothing like English. It is one of the golden threads running all throughout the Aramaic language, from beginning to end.

As an example, let's take the set of Aramaic consonants yld. This set of letters has the same meaning in Hebrew. These letters form the "root". The root yld means "to bear, to give birth". Therefore, all words which stem from this root will, in some way, be related to this core meaning. Even more remarkably, no words using the root yld will mean anything other than the root concept "to give birth".

To demonstrate this remarkable phenomenon of the Aramaic (and Hebrew) language, here are some words and phrases that derive from the root yld:

- *she gave birth*, expressing the root meaning.
- *he was born*, from the same root. Notice how different the English words are – born and birth.
- *begat, engendered, fathered*. Again, in English, completely different words are used.
- *a boy*, something that is given birth to.

- *a girl*, the feminine form of the above word, again something that is given birth to.
- *children*, the plural form of boys and girls. Whereas in English, boy, girl and children are completely different words with completely different derivations, in Aramaic they are all connected. They are, respectively, the masculine, feminine and plural noun forms of the root yld.
- *youth/youthhood*. Again, the same root meaning; youth is what is given birth to, and what children experience as they grow older.
- *midwife*, that is, one who assists in giving birth.
- *birthday*, the day that someone was born.
- *generations, genealogies* – successions of people who are given birth to.
- *land of nativity* – the place where someone is born.

This simple example could be multiplied by hundreds, even thousands, of other roots in Aramaic. Each root in Aramaic gives rise to many related words, all of which have the same root meaning.

But notice how different the English words are: birth, born, begat, fathered, boy, girl, children, youthhood, midwife, birthday, generations, land of nativity. Since all these words derive from the same basic concept, in Aramaic they are all related and all have the same root (yld). Exactly how to form words from the root, and how to recognise which root individual words have come from, is something that a knowledge of Aramaic brings. We discuss all of this in later lessons on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website, as you learn Aramaic for yourself.

In Aramaic, words such as those above are formed from the root in very systematic, predictable ways. Once you start to recognise these

patterns, you can look at a 'new' word and know what it means just by looking at the structure of the word, even if you have never seen it before. Nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs are all formed from the root in consistent and predictable ways.

Going back to our core questions – why English NEEDS vowels, and why Aramaic is different – hopefully you can now start to see the reason why. Whereas the presence of vowels in Aramaic certainly helps you to know how to pronounce the Aramaic word, if you don't have vowels, (with practice) you can look at the word, know what the root is, know what the root means, and therefore know what the word is and what it means. You are not faced with dozens of unrelated possibilities, as you would be with English.

Therefore, when Aramaic was first written down, it was written entirely without vowels because everyone understood what words were intended, even if the vowels were not present. This illustrates that vowels are not really necessary in Aramaic, even though in English a lack of vowels would cause major problems.

As you progress further in your studies in Aramaic, all of this will become clearer. You will understand how words are derived from their roots. You will see how logical and simple Aramaic is. It is not the random, anarchic mixture of languages that English has become over time. As befitting a language used to preserve the Holy Scriptures for thousands of years, there is order and predictability in Aramaic that is missing in English.

Aramaic is a beautiful, elegant and vibrant language. It will enrich your life and give you a closer connection with the mind of the Father, who inspired the Holy Scriptures. Draw nearer to Aramaic, and you will draw closer to the Father.

The Mothers Of Reading

Using Aramaic Letters As Vowels

IN THE LESSONS *Why English NEEDS Vowels* and *Why Aramaic Is Different*, we have seen that English actually NEEDS vowels. It is very difficult to understand an English text without vowels. Aramaic, on the other hand, does not really *need* vowels in the same way that English does. Due to the way that Aramaic works, all words with the same root will generally be related, making it possible to understand an Aramaic text without the vowels being present.

Given that this is the case, how and why did vowels come to be used in Aramaic in the first place? As we have seen, when the books of the Holy Scriptures were first written down, they were written entirely without the vowels (dots and dashes) which are present in Biblical Aramaic and the Aramaic Targums today. The text contained only the letters of the Aramaic alphabet which we have already learned.

However, despite what has been said previously about vowels being unnecessary in Aramaic, there are occasions when not having **any** vowels makes the text harder to read. There are also occasions when there are certain ambiguities in Aramaic words, and not having any vowels makes these ambiguities possible.

And so, as time went on, certain Aramaic letters started to be used as auxiliary vowels. They still had more or less the same sound as before, but were inserted to make it less ambiguous as to which word was intended when the text was read without vowels.

These Aramaic letters are Alap, Heh, Waw and Yud.

Let's look at a few examples.

In the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament, the word "Israel" – obviously a very common word – is spelled in several ways:

איִסְרָאֵיל

איִסְרָיִל

יִסְרָיִל

Obviously the word Israel is pronounced the same way every time, but the letter Alap is used in different positions to supplement the spelling, to make it more obvious.

Another example, however, is the opposite, showing the letter Alap being omitted – again, to make it easier to pronounce.

The phrase "son of man" in the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament is written as:

בְּרֵ אֲנָשָׂא

However, a common abbreviation of this runs the two words together, to give:

בְּרֵנְשָׂא

or even:

בְּרֵנְשׂ

Here, either one, or both, of the letter Alaps are omitted, because in pronunciation, they are just not necessary.

Another example from the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament is of interest.

כָּל

This word means *all*, or *every*.

However, this could equally be spelled with the letter Waw in the middle of the word, as follows:

כּוּל

Both variations will be found.

In the Aramaic Targums, *in him* is typically written as:

כּוּיָה

Whereas in the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament, it is typically written (without the Yud) as follows:

כּוּה

Thus, the Aramaic letters Alap, Heh, Waw and Yud are often used to help with the pronunciation of words in the text, either to resolve ambiguities or to make the pronunciation clearer. These letters are known as *emahot hakria* – the mothers of reading.

There are many similar examples where these extra letters are added or omitted in Aramaic words.

Thus, some words can be spelled in two ways in Aramaic – with and without the extra letters acting as vowels. These alternatives are known as *ketiv maleh* (full spelling) or *ketiv chaser* (omitted spelling).

As we study the lessons on Aramaic grammar and learn Aramaic further, we will come across many examples of these two types of spelling.

The History Of The Aramaic Vowels

IN PREVIOUS lessons in this book, we looked at the individual letters of the Aramaic Alphabet. You have been introduced to the idea that English really NEEDS vowels in order for a block of text to make sense, whereas (by contrast) in Aramaic the vowels are not really necessary, but they are useful in helping to pronounce Aramaic words correctly.

When the various Aramaic Biblical texts were first written down, they did not contain any vowel points at all. The text was written entirely using the letters (or consonants) of the Aramaic Alphabet, and there were none of the vowels and punctuation marks that we will look in the next few lessons. As we saw in our lesson *The Mothers of Reading*, a number of Aramaic letters can be used to help pronunciation and to avoid potential ambiguity in the way that some words can be pronounced. However, these too are optional and words can usually be spelled with or without these auxiliary letters.

The vowels, which we will cover in the next few lessons, were added later, after the Biblical texts were first written down. As we have seen, Aramaic has used a number of different scripts over the years. Just as each script looks different, so too the vowels look different, depending on the script being used. The history, also, of when the vowels were added is also different for each script.

In the case of the Hebrew Ashuri characters, which is the form of the Aramaic alphabet that we are looking at in this book, the Aramaic letters and vowels form an inherent part of the Biblical text, preserved

by faithful Jewish scribes for centuries. The vowels in the Biblical text were added from about the 6th to the 10th centuries A.D. As the centuries progressed, it became more and more difficult to faithfully preserve the traditional understanding and pronunciation of the Biblical text purely on an oral basis, where each generation of scribes and scholars taught the next generation the correct pronunciation of the Biblical text by heart. Over time, the need arose to devise ways to teach the correct pronunciation of the text, in a way which could be written down and preserved for future generations.

Several groups of Jewish scholars in Palestine tried to develop a systematic way of adding vowels to the Hebrew and Aramaic Biblical texts, so that anybody could learn how to pronounce it correctly. Since they believed the Biblical text itself was sacred and could not be altered or added to, they could not add extra letters. The only solution was to make little marks around or inside each letter, without touching the letters themselves.

A number of competing systems were developed in Palestine around this time. The system which eventually became dominant, however, was that developed in Tiberias by the Massoretes. Theirs was the most systematic and complete system, and gained a certain authority by its dominance. In time, it became the official system and manuscripts of this type were the most sought after. The Aleppo Codex is the best example of a Massoretic manuscript of the Hebrew Bible. The oldest complete Massoretic manuscript of the entire Hebrew Bible is the Leningrad Codex.

The word Massorete is perhaps best translated into English as "traditionalist". It comes from the Hebrew word *massoret* which means *tradition*, from the verb *msr* to hand over or to hand down. An alternative derivation is from the Hebrew root *asar*, *to bind*, because the Massoretes fixed and protected the sacred text. The Massoretes added the vowel points to show how Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic text

should be pronounced, or traditionally was pronounced. The vowel system developed by the Massoretes was a vitally important stage in the development of the Biblical text. It is exactly the same system which is found in the Hebrew Bible today, more than 1000 years later, for both the Hebrew and Aramaic portions. In fact, the Hebrew Bible is also referred to as the Massoretic Text, because it contains the vowel points which the Massoretes added, as well as the Biblical text which they faithfully copied for generations.

Thus, to know how to pronounce Aramaic correctly, and hence to read the Aramaic portions of the Hebrew Bible, it is necessary to learn these vowel points. The Aramaic Targums are also printed using the same system, and the Peshitta Old and New Testaments are also frequently (but not always) printed with the same system. Therefore, learning these vowel points will greatly assist your ability to read the Aramaic for a wide variety of Holy Scriptures. We will discuss them in the next few lessons.

The Estrangela, Serta and Swadaya scripts, which we discuss in other video lessons on the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website, contain their own written forms of vowels. All this will become clear as you work your way through this series of lessons on the Aramaic Alphabet – the foundation for all further learning.

Vowel Híreq

WHEN WE introduce each of the vowels in the next few lessons, we are going to show the vowel alongside an imaginary Aramaic letter. The vowels can either be placed *under*, *above* or *after* the corresponding Aramaic letter. Since the vowels can appear with *any* letter, we will show the letter itself as a rectangle.

The first vowel which you need to learn is called Híreq. It is shown below:



Híreq is a single dot *below* the letter, in the middle of the letter. It is pronounced with a short (normal) vowel like the words *meet*, *beat*, *peat*, *seat*, or *feet*, but not as a long vowel like the words *me*, *see*, *knee*.

The Híreq vowel is usually written as 'i' rather than ee, but despite this it is not pronounced like the letter 'i' as in the words *in*, *ink* or *ill*.

Like all the Aramaic vowels, when Híreq appears, the letter is pronounced *first* and *then* the vowel.

The following examples show Híreq with a number of Aramaic letters:

ܘ vee

ܝ yee

ܕ dee

ܟ kee

ܚ hee

ܚ chee

ܡ mee

Hireq is sometimes followed by Yud, as follows:

ܝܘ

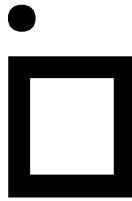
In this case, it is still pronounced the same way.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Hireq is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Vowel Holem

The next vowel which you need to learn is called Holem. It is shown below:



Holem is a single dot *above*, at the *top left* of the letter, following it. It is pronounced with a short 'o' in words such as *pot, not, dot, got, hot*. But it is not pronounced with a long 'o' in words such as *paw, saw, jaw*.

After the letter Sin or before the letter Shin, the dot of Holem can sometimes merge with the dot of the letter, depending on the font used.

Like all the vowels, Holem is pronounced *after* the corresponding letter.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Holem is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Vowel Shurek

The next vowel is called Shurek. It is shown below:



Shurek is a single dot *inside* the letter Waw. It is pronounced with a short 'oo' as in words such as *boot, loot, moot, foot, soot*, but not with a long 'oo' as in words such as *Jew, sue, do, who, true, blue*.

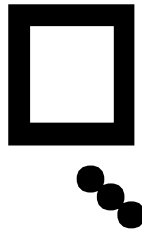
Shurek is often written 'u', but despite this it is not pronounced with an 'u' sound as in words such as *under, up*.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Shurek is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Vowel Kubbutz

The next vowel which you need to learn is called Kubbutz. It is shown below:



Kubbutz consists of three dots in a diagonal row underneath the letter. It comes from the same root as *kibbutz* (the Israeli settlement), which means *gathering*.

You can think of the three dots as an abbreviation for the three points of the Waw – top, middle and bottom.

It is pronounced the same as Shurek – that is, with a short 'oo' as in words such as *boot, loot, moot, foot, soot*. But it is not pronounced with a long 'oo' as in words such as *Jew, sue, do, who, true, blue*.

Like all the vowels, Kubbutz is pronounced *after* the corresponding letter.

Kubbutz is often written 'u', but despite this it is not pronounced with an 'u' sound as in words such as *under, up*.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Kubbutts is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:
JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Vowel Patach

The next vowel is called Patach. It is shown below:



Patach is a small horizontal stroke *below* the letter. It is pronounced 'a', as in many English words such as *apple, bat, cat, fat, mat, sat, ant, etc.*

Like all the vowels, Patach is pronounced *after* the corresponding letter.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Patach is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

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Vowel Kamets

The next vowel is called Kamets. It is shown below:



Kamets is a small horizontal stroke below the letter, but with a vertical stroke, almost like a small T shape. It is usually pronounced 'a', like *Patach*, as in many English words such as *apple*, *bat*, *cat*, *fat*, *mat*, *sat*, *ant*, etc. This is how it is pronounced in Israel.

However, some accents/dialects (such as Ashkenazi Jews or some Syriac dialects) pronounce it as 'o', like *Holem*.

Like all the vowels, Kamets is pronounced *after* the corresponding letter.

Kamets may once have been differentiated from Patach by emphasis and stress of the word, or open and closed syllables.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Kamets is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

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Vowel Sere

The next vowel is called Sere. It is shown below:



Sere consists of two small dots in a horizontal line below the letter. It is pronounced 'e', as in many English words such as *met*, *bet*, *get*, *end*, etc.

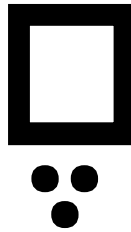
Like all the vowels, Sere is pronounced *after* the corresponding letter.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Sere is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Vowel Segol

The next vowel is called Segol. It is shown below:



Segol consists of three small dots in a small T shape below the letter. It is pronounced 'e', just like *Sere*, as in many English words such as *met*, *bet*, *get*, *end*, etc.

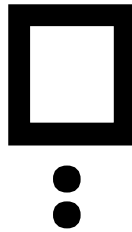
Like all the vowels, Segol is pronounced *after* the corresponding letter. Segol may once have been differentiated from Sere by emphasis and stress of the word, or open and closed syllables.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the vowel Segol is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

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Shwa

Shwa, often written *Shva*, consists of two dots directly underneath each other. It is shown below:



When Shwa appears, it means that the letter does not a full vowel. The letter can either have no vowel at all – called *shwa nach* (meaning *resting Shwa*) or it can have a very slight half-vowel, called *shwa na* (meaning *moving Shwa*).

This difference will become clearer when you learn how to read entire Aramaic words. The JesusSpokeAramaic.com website has a whole series of video lessons called *Learning Aramaic for Beginners* which will help you in this regards.

Now, there are a number of somewhat complicated rules for whether Shwa is moving (pronounced slightly) or resting (not pronounced at all). You *can* learn these rules from an Aramaic grammar, but it is better to learn the rules by practising Aramaic through doing, speaking and listening. This is far better than trying to learn grammatical rules in an abstract context. In any case, the rules are not as fixed as most grammars would like to suggest.

You should realize that, when people speak in real life, there is a lot of variation in pronunciation. People speak fast or slow, with or without accents, formally or using slang, with or without emphasis, and there are many other causes of variation. Therefore, you should think of these 'rules' more as guidelines. The best way to learn how to pronounce Aramaic 'correctly' is to speak the language, or by listening to narrations of passages from the Scriptures being read. Don't rely on grammars and textbooks to tell you what is 'correct' or 'incorrect'. Don't sit and analyse a bunch of rules every time you find a new word. Speak Aramaic, listen to Aramaic, and learn by doing. There is no substitute for this.

In Israel today, for instance, with the myriad of variation in the way that people speak, pronouncing a word with the 'wrong' Shwa would probably go unnoticed unless you keep making repeated mistakes with common words. Insisting on exact rules, and precisely when and where a Shwa is resting or moving, is something that is generally done only by academics such as University professors and people who can't actually hold a conversation in Hebrew or Aramaic!

A Video Lesson telling you more about Shwa is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Dagesh

DAGESH is not really a vowel. Instead, it is a dot which can appear *inside* most, but not all, letters. We looked at the effect of Dagesh already, when we looked at the individual letters in previous chapters.

As we saw, Dagesh changes the pronunciation of certain letters. With other letters, however, Dagesh has no change in the pronunciation of the letter.

Sometimes Dagesh is used when the letter is doubled, for emphasis.

A Video Lesson telling you more about Dagesh is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

Using Aramaic Flashcards

IN THE very first lesson in this book on the Aramaic Alphabet (*How Difficult is Aramaic to Learn?*), we said that learning the Aramaic Alphabet is a major step. At first it will seem to be a very daunting step, but it is probably the most difficult step of all.

The fact that Aramaic has a different Alphabet makes it *look* difficult to many people. This is why we have tried to make the task as easy as possible by providing these lessons.

By now, therefore, you should have studied all the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet, and ideally watched all the videos on the website showing you how to write the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet. You should also have practised writing the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet in the Alphabet Practice Pages which we have provided for each letter.

Before you learn the vowels in Aramaic, you need to make sure you really do know the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet inside out.

To help you further, we have provided Aramaic Flashcards which are available on the website. Simply print the PDF document on double-sided paper, cut out the Flashcards, and you will have ready-made cards which you can use to revise the letters until you know them inside out. These Flashcards cover both the Aramaic letters on their own, and the Aramaic letters with vowels.

Flashcards are the best way to learn the Aramaic Alphabet. Most people find that they learn some letters easily, some letters take more time, and other letters are difficult to learn. Flashcards allow you to test and re-test yourself on the letters you find more difficult. You can put the Flashcards in a pocket, and practice them repeatedly

throughout the day. You will find that many short practice sessions throughout the day are more effective than one long session once or twice a week.

Practice often, just for a few minutes, several times per day, again and again, until you know both the Aramaic letters and vowels inside out. Then you will be ready for the next step, which is to combine the letters into complete words. On the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website, we have video lessons showing you how to do exactly that, first with short words of just two letters, then longer and longer words until you can eventually read entire Aramaic words and sentences with ease.

So please download or buy the Aramaic Flashcards, print them out, and get started! Have fun with this! You can practice at any time of the day, even if you are doing something else such as watching television.

A Video Lesson telling you more about the use of Flashcards, with a downloadable set of Flashcards on the Aramaic Alphabet, is available to Subscribers on the website. For further information, follow the link:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Subscribe

And Now For Some Reading Practice

LET'S REVIEW what you have learned so far. You have now learned each of the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet in the 'Hebrew' Ashuri script. You have also learned all the vowels. In theory, you should now be able to read Aramaic words, or even Biblical texts such as Biblical Aramaic, the Targums, the Aramaic Old Testament and the Aramaic New Testament.

In practice, however, years of experience have shown that most people generally *cannot* go from simply knowing the Aramaic Alphabet to being able to read the Biblical texts. It still takes some time and experience to read words slowly, sounding them out letter by letter and vowel by vowel, until you can read them at a 'normal' reading speed.

At first, this process of sounding the words out letter by letter will be slow, and rather painful. It will feel like you are back in kindergarten again! But that's OK... It just takes some time for your brain to absorb the letters and vowels, to recognise them, and to get faster and faster at doing this.

So it is very, very important that you spend a while, maybe several weeks, quite literally just spelling words out. The very best way to do this is to download the Aramaic New Testament which is available from the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website, along with the Aramaic New Testament Transliteration that is also available. If you use these two books together, perhaps using your favourite passage, you will find your reading speed gradually getting better and faster.

A beautifully typeset edition of the Aramaic New Testament, in the Ashuri script that you have been learning, can be downloaded from the link below:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/Bibles/Aramaic-NT-Illuminated

And a corresponding Aramaic New Testament Transliteration can be downloaded from the link below:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/Books/ANT-Transliteration

You can also buy physical (printed) copies of these books if you prefer.

Now, many people will ignore this advice (of spending a few weeks just reading through a Biblical text such as the Aramaic New Testament, to gain familiarity with the letters and vowels) and jump straight into learning some grammar.

If that works for you, then great! But you run the risk of always struggling to read at a 'normal' reading speed, and giving up at some point in the future because you can't read Aramaic as fast as you can read English! Many people fall into this trap.

However, for those who don't want to go to the trouble of downloading the Aramaic New Testament and the Transliteration that are available from JesusSpokeAramaic.com, the list below contains some very common words from Biblical Aramaic and the Aramaic New Testament.

To get some practice reading entire words, first read the Aramaic word, then try to spell it out yourself, then look at the transliteration in the next column, then look at the English translation in the third column.

Keep doing this exercise over and over again, until you gain confidence in reading and recognising the Aramaic words. Better still, write out the Aramaic words until you can confidently read your own hand-writing! This exercise may sound trivial and most people will ignore it, but it will help enormously with your ability to read Aramaic words. Please don't ignore this advice!

Two-letter words

יָת	yat	direct object marker
מִן	meen	from
עַל	al	on, upon, against
לֹא	la	no, not
כֹּל	kol	all, every
בֵּר	bar	son, son of
עַם	am	people
עִם	eem	with
יָד	yad	a hand
עַד	ad	up to, until
אָב	av	father
הִנֵּה	ha	behold
חַד	chad	one

רַב	rav	leader, prince
כַּד	kad	when
לֵב	lev	heart
אֵם	eem	if
אִף	af	also
כֵּן	ken	thus, so
דֵּי	dee	who, which, that
מָה	ma	what?
אָח	ach	brother
גָּו	gav	inside, within
טַב	tav	good
רַב	rav	great, large

Three-letter words

אָמַר	amar	to say, he said
קָדָם	kadam	before, in front of
עָבַד	avad	to do, to make, he did, he made
אֲרִי	a-reh	for, because
אֲרֶע	ara	land, earth
מֶלֶךְ	m'lach	a king
יוֹם	yom	a day
הָיָה	hava / hawa	to be, it/he was
גִּבּוֹר	g'var	a man, male
אֲנִי	ana	I
קוּם	koom	to stand
תּוֹב	toov	to return
הוּא	hoo	he

יתב	yatav	to sit, to dwell
סלק	salak	to go up, rise, ascend
נפק	nafak	to go out, leave, exit
מלל	malal	to speak, converse
אזל	azal	to go, to leave
יהב	yahav	to give
לוּת	l'wath	to, towards, with
עֲלָם	alam	eternity, world
חזי	chazee	to see, behold
קטל	katal	to kill, to slay, he killed
לית	layeet	there is not
תמן	taman	there, over there
שָׁנָה	sh'na	year
קבל	kaval	to receive

יָדַע	yada	to know
בָּתַר	batar	after(wards)
אָנָשׁ	enash	man, mankind
אֹרַח	orach	way, road
כֵּעַן	ch'an	now
עֶבֶד	aved	servant, slave
אֵתָהּ	eetah	wife, woman
נֶפֶשׁ	n'fash	soul, life
בֵּין	ben / beyn	between, amongst
כֹּהֵן	kahen	priest
אָכַל	achal	to eat, he ate
שָׁמַע	shama	to hear, he heard
שֵׁבֶט	shevet	tribe, rod
נָתַן	natan / nathan	to give

שִׁלַּח	shalach	to send
עֵינַן	ayeen	eye, spring
רֵישׁ	resh	head
קָרַב	karav	to approach, bring near, sacrifice
קֹדֶשׁ	kodash	holiness, a holy thing
אַתָּר	atar / athar	a place
טוֹר	toor	mountain
דֵּינַן	deen	judgment
מוֹת	maveth / maweth	to die, death
כְּמָה	k'ma	how many
נְבִי	n'vee	prophet
קָרִי	k'ree	to call
פָּקַד	pakad	to order, command
סְגִי	sa-gee	many, much

עֵדָן	ee-dan	time
חֹב	chov	sín, debt
נָטַר	natar	to keep, guard

Four-letter words

פִּתְגָּם	peet-gam	a word, a thing
קִרְיָה	keer-ya	a city, town
מֵימַר	mey-mar	a word, a command
הֲדַיִן	ha-deyn	this
תְּרַיִן	treyn	two
אֵנוּן	eenoon	they
אֵפֵין	apeen	face, surface
מִקְדָּשׁ	makdash	sanctuary
שְׁמַיִן	shma-yeen	heaven(s)
אֵלַיִן	ee-leyn	these
עוֹבַד	ovad	work, deed
הַכְּנָא	hachana	thus, like so
אֱלֹהָא	Alaha	God

Five-letter words

מְשִׁיחָא	m'sheecha	the Messiah
אַבְרָהָם	Avraham	Abraham

Aramaic Names

יִשְׂרָאֵל	ees-ra-el	Israel
דָּוִד	Da-veed / Da-weed	David
דָּוִיד	Da-veed / Da-weed	David
מֹשֶׁה	Moshe	Moses
יְהוּדָה	Y'hoodah	Judah (Yehuda)
יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	Y'roosh-lem	Jerusalem, Yerushalayim
מִצְרַיִם	Meets-ra-yeem	Egypt

Where To Go From Here

LET'S IMAGINE that you have (by now) learned all the letters and vowels in the Aramaic Ashuri Alphabet.. You are confident that you can recognise the individual letters and vowels when you see them. You know the sounds of the letters. You have even practised writing the letters. You know the shapes of the letters. You know the vowels too. That's great, and you have made wonderful progress, but you are hungry to learn more. What's the game plan? What's next? How are you going to proceed?

First, if you haven't guessed already, you should know that you can't jump from knowing the individual letters of the Aramaic Alphabet to being able to read a whole passage in Aramaic. It's just too big a jump for most people. Instead, you need to go through a sequence of stages that will lead you through from being able to recognise the individual letters, to reading whole words, then progressing from simple words to longer and more complicated words, then simple phrases, then simple sentences. Then you can build on that foundation to learn more words (vocabulary) and some grammar. A sequence of steps is necessary, one step at a time.

Let's give you an analogy with the way that children learn to read and write English. After several decades, most adults are fluent in English and forget how they learned to read as a child. It was a long time ago.

But it all begins by teaching children the letters of the alphabet, one letter at a time, just as you have been learning the letters of the Aramaic Alphabet. You teach children a, then b, then c, then d, and so on, all the way to z. You make sure they can read and write each letter.

Then, once they know the letters of the alphabet, you get them to read

words. Just very simple words, at first. Words that are short and easy to read. Words such as *cat, dog, mat, sat*. Lots of practice with simple words, to gain confidence. By the time they have done that, children know the letters of the alphabet even better than before.

The next step is to learn lots more individual words. But again, simple, very common, words. Words such as *a, the, in, on, to, for, my*, and so on. Words that occur everywhere. Then some common names, like *Andy, Jane, Peter, Mommy, Daddy*.

Gaining in confidence all the time, children are then ready to combine words. But again, only simple combinations at first. Examples might be *My Mommy, My Daddy, the cat, the dog, her fish, his puppy, we sat*.

Then it's time to make some real progress and learn simple phrases, such as: *the cat sat, the dog went, her fish swam, we sat down*.

Then comes simple sentences, such as: *the cat sat on the mat, the dog went to my Mommy, I love my dog*, and so on.

After that, it's only a matter of growing your confidence, of learning to sight-read more words, of building up more sentences, of getting more practice, and reading a little bit more difficult sentences every day, one simple step at a time.

It's hard at first, but if you take it one step at a time, and just keep going, you look back one day and realize what amazing progress you have made. Before you know it, you are reading whole words, then phrases, then sentences. Then bigger and bigger sentences with more and more words. Then you are off. You find one day that you can read a whole passage. That is a very exciting and exhilarating experience, one which you will experience one day, if you just keep going. It's going to be fun and exciting at the same time!

That, then, is the series of steps that children take when they learn to read. When you learn Aramaic, you need to proceed through exactly the same steps. Some people will learn quickly and take the steps really

fast, and other people will learn more slowly, and take the steps more steadily. It all depends on your background and experience. Everyone proceeds at their own pace. How fast you go is up to you. It's better to go slowly and steadily, and keep going. If you try to go too fast, you might feel overwhelmed one day and want to stop. Remember that in the famous story of the race between the hare and the tortoise, the tortoise won in the end. It kept going. The hare started off very fast, but thought it was all too easy, and stopped.

And so, if you want to make the best progress possible, the ideal next step is to Subscribe to the JesusSpokeAramaic.com website and follow through the series of lessons on *Learning Aramaic for Beginners*. You can also go over the series of lessons on the Aramaic Alphabet. You can go steadily from lesson to lesson, one lesson at a time. You can repeat lessons any time you like. You will find that we take you through a logical sequence of steps, each step building on the previous one, just like the way that children learn to read and write a new alphabet and a new language. This process is tried and tested. It has worked for hundreds of years, and it will work for you, too, as you learn Aramaic!

First, we show you how to use your current knowledge of the Aramaic Alphabet, where you can recognise each of the letters individually, and leverage that to read entire Aramaic words. We will give you lots of examples to get you started.

Next, we will give you lots of practice by looking at very common, small words, of just two letters. There are lots of them, and they are all very common, and you will soon be able to read them all. You will soon be able to recognise them when you look at a whole passage in Aramaic.

We will build on this by looking at longer Aramaic words – of just three letters. We will show you how to sound them out, letter by letter. Then we will look at Aramaic words with four letters. Then we will look at the very commonest names in Aramaic. By the time you have finished all

those introductory lessons, you will be able to read Aramaic words. We will give you lots of examples. Soon you will be reading Aramaic words and names that appear in pictures all over the Internet.

So enjoy the journey! The fun has already begun!

You should also know that an accompanying DVD of these Aramaic Alphabet lessons is also available from the Shop. You can find further details here:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/DVDs/DVD-Alphabet-Ashuri

About Ewan MacLeod



THE JesusSpokeAramaic.com website is run by Ewan MacLeod, B.Sc. Hons., M.Sc.

Ewan is an experienced Bible student who has studied the Holy Scriptures intensely since being baptised about 25 years ago. He took an immediate interest in the manuscripts of the Holy Bible and the Original Languages in which the inspired Scriptures were given, and is the director of the Bible Manuscript Society (BibleManuscriptSociety.com), a privately-funded organization specializing in the protection and preservation of the Holy Bible down through the centuries.

Ewan's main interests lie in Hebrew and Aramaic. He speaks modern Hebrew fluently, having studied Hebrew intensively at Ulpan Akiva in Netanya (Israel) for six months, followed by living in Israel for a further five years, and continuously studying Hebrew ever since.

In addition to a comprehensive knowledge of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and the Hebrew Massorah, Ewan's knowledge of Hebrew soon developed into a passion for Aramaic. As well as studying the Aramaic Targums and the Peshitta Tanakh (Aramaic Old Testament), he has a particular love for the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament as the inspired Word of God. JesusSpokeAramaic.com arose out of that love for the Peshitta, and the desire to share the benefits of Aramaic with the world.

In addition to creating JesusSpokeAramaic.com, Ewan has worked extensively in other areas of Hebrew and Aramaic (and, to a lesser

extent, Biblical languages such as Greek and Latin). As well as studying Biblical manuscripts, working on transcriptions, and much more, he has worked with Bible Software companies such as BibleWorks to add new texts and modules. His knowledge and skills are available to work in these areas, or related work in connection with the Biblical languages and Bible manuscripts. He is also available for public speaking appointments in the field of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic.

And be sure to check out Ewan's other books:

Jesus Spoke Aramaic: The Reasons Why & Why It Matters

Go to JesusSpokeAramaicBook.com for more information.

You can download this book from:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/Books/JSA-Reasons-Why-Book

Discover Aramaic – The Bible's SECOND Holy Languages

You can download this book from:

JesusSpokeAramaic.com/Shop/Books/Discover-Aramaic-Book

Visit JesusSpokeAramaic.com

DISCOVER the Aramaic Bible and learn why Aramaic is revolutionizing and transforming the study of the Old and New Testaments.

Have you visited JesusSpokeAramaic.com yet?

Be sure to visit the website and discover all the amazing reasons Why You Should Subscribe to Jesus Spoke Aramaic TODAY!

Aramaic was the language of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires, and is Judaism's second Holy Language, alongside Hebrew. The Aramaic language became dominant amongst Jews after the Babylonian exile, and was spoken by Jesus and the disciples. By learning the Aramaic language and studying the Aramaic Bible, you will get back to more authentic and original roots of both the Old and New Testaments.

Let **Jesus Spoke Aramaic** be your guide as you navigate the fascinating world of the Aramaic language, the Aramaic Bible, and better understand the Holy Scriptures.

“My Son, let not the Aramaic be lightly esteemed by you as the Holy One, blessed be He, has seen fit to give it voice in the Torah and the Prophets and the Writings” (Palestinian Talmud, Sotah 7:2)

As a subscriber to Jesus Spoke Aramaic, you will benefit from:

- ✔ Unrestricted access to all of our lessons and resources about the Aramaic Bible, which are growing all the time. Click here to see our current list of Aramaic lessons.
- ✔ Fascinating audio-visual lessons on the Aramaic Bible, giving

you an exciting, fun and vibrant way to learn about the Aramaic language down through the centuries.

- ✔ Amazing lessons on the History & Background of the Aramaic language, to help you understand the significance and importance of the Aramaic Bible and the Aramaic Peshitta.
- ✔ Step-by-step videos lessons that literally walk you through every letter of the Aramaic alphabet in the Ashuri and Estrangela scripts, showing you how to write each letter in turn, and how to pronounce it.
- ✔ Lessons on the Aramaic Bible suitable for all stages including beginner, intermediate and advanced Aramaic studies.
- ✔ Discover the amazing puns, plays on words and poetry of the Aramaic Peshitta, and find out why the Aramaic Peshitta resolves many problems, variant readings and inconsistencies in the Greek New Testament!
- ✔ Read our wonderful Aramaic Bible Study Guides – on The Lord's Prayer, with more coming!
- ✔ Study our video lessons on the Aramaic Peshitta New Testament, Biblical Aramaic, the Aramaic Targums and the Aramaic Peshitta Old Testament.
- ✔ Fascinating lessons comparing the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, so if you know any Hebrew, you can leverage your existing knowledge to learn Aramaic even faster!
- ✔ Interactive forums on the Aramaic Bible, where you can discuss the Lessons and Resources in a community of like-minded students who are also interested in Aramaic.
- ✔ Participate in our polls and online quizzes, to test your growing understanding of the Aramaic language and the Aramaic Bible.
- ✔ Exclusive Bonus material about Aramaic and the Bible,

including several full-color PDF Hebrew Bibles, our special Partner Offers, and our unique collection of Rare and Out-of-Print Aramaic books – providing you with all the tools, grammars, lexicons and dictionaries you will ever need to study Aramaic!

“Did you know that Aramaic is still spoken by communities throughout the Middle East and the diaspora today?”

As well as offering literally hundreds of step-by-step video lessons, be sure to visit the [Jesus Spoke Aramaic website](#) to see what else we offer. We have:

- ▶ A whole range of video lessons on DVD to accompany the online lessons.
- ▶ Aramaic Study Guides, like this one.
- ▶ Aramaic Workbooks, which accompany the DVDs and video lessons, or work stand-alone for individual study.
- ▶ Aramaic Books
- ▶ Exclusive Aramaic and Hebrew Bibles, available nowhere else.

Jesus Spoke Aramaic will further your knowledge of the Aramaic language and the Aramaic Bible through our exciting video lessons, and help you get back to true, original and authentic Aramaic Biblical roots.

Subscribe to Jesus Spoke Aramaic TODAY!

Make sure you take a look at our [Top Reasons to Subscribe](#), and find out what awaits you once you have your own access to this incredible and unique website!!

May God bless you as you study His Inspired Word.

Ewan MacLeod

JesusSpokeAramaic.com