

Hebrew: a simple transliteration system

Version 0.3, 27 January 2011 / By Pim Rietbroek



Instructions for Authors

BRILL

1) A general-purpose Hebrew transliteration system

The simple Hebrew transliteration system we present here is meant for general use. It is based loosely on the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 'General' transliteration rules.

In the table below, the dotted circle ◌ stands for any letter: it is used as a carrier for vowel signs in the 'Hebrew' column. One transliteration character in the 'translit.' column, ħ, carries a dot diacritic below. Until recently, common computer operating systems had few fonts which supported this: Times New Roman, for instance, lacked it until it was updated with the introduction of MS Windows Vista. In this case, the [Gentium](#) and [Charis SIL](#) families have proved useful: you are free to use those if you prefer, or any other Unicode font.

The 'Unicode' column lists the hexadecimal values of those characters which cannot be keyed directly on an ordinary 'western' keyboard like a US keyboard. A method to use these values for input is described in Section 2, the Input section of this document.

Hebrew	translit.	Unicode	Hebrew	translit.	Unicode	Hebrew	translit.	Unicode
א	'	2019	ם, מ	m		◌ֵ	e	
ב	b		ן, נ	n		◌ֶ	e	
ב	v		ס	s		◌ִ	e	
ג	g		ע	'	2018	◌ֵי	e, ei	
ג	g		פ	p		◌ִי	i	
ד	d		ף, פ	f		◌ִי	i	
ד	d		ץ, צ	tz		◌ֹ	o	
ה	h		ק	q		◌ֹ	o	
ו	v		ר	r		◌ֻ	u	
ז	z		ש	s		◌ֻ	u	
ח	ħ	1E25	שׁ	sh		◌ֵ	—, e	
ט	t		ת	t		◌ֶ	a	
י	y		ת	t		◌ֵ	e	
כ	k		◌ֶ	a, o		◌ֹ	o	
ך, כ	kh		◌ֶה	a				
ל	l		◌ֵ	a				

Unicode hexadecimal value of uppercase Ĥ	
Ĥ	1E24

2) Input

You can input characters carrying diacritics in several ways:

2.1) Users of MS Office Word (**Windows**) may choose the 'Insert Symbol' command and pick the character in the Symbol palette, but this is a cumbersome method.

Mac OS X provides the similar Character Palette, which works in all text applications; this Character Palette can be switched on via System Preferences... → International (Mac OS X v. 10.6.x 'Snow Leopard': Language & Text) → Input Menu ('Snow Leopard': Input Sources). If it was not active before, a keyboard menu appears in the menu bar towards the right.

2.2) In the MS Office suite of programs (**Windows**, versions 2003, 2007, 2010), the Unicode hexadecimal value can be used for input. To get, e.g., 'ḥ', one types '1e25' (without the quotes; it does not matter whether you use a lowercase or an uppercase 'e') and then immediately Alt X: the code is replaced by the character. Typing Alt X again will toggle it back to the code.

Mac OS X allows you to input hexadecimal values directly with the Unicode Hex keyboard layout. It can be activated in the same way as the Character Palette mentioned above. To use it, first choose the Unicode Hex keyboard from the keyboard menu in the menu bar, near the right; then press down the 'Option' key (sometimes called 'Alt') and key the four-character hexadecimal code, and let go of the 'Option' key: the character appears.

2.3) The easiest way to key the transliteration characters is to use a dedicated keyboard for transliteration. One of the best, and available for both MS Windows and Mac OS X at no cost, is **Alt-Latin**. It can be downloaded from [The University of Chicago Library](#) site, where you can also find clear documentation.