C. Getting a Grip on the Hebrew Alphabet: Vowels

Originally the vowels were not written in Hebrew. At some time before the time of Christ the Hebrews began using certain letters (mostly he, aleph, waw, and yodh) to indicate vocalic sounds. But after the time of the Lord and the loss of Palestine centrality, the community had to depend on oral transmission to keep the right sounds and this becomes a shaky device over many years. So several systems were developed to write the sounds of the letters in with the consonants. The one that eventually was uniformly accepted is known as the Tiberian system and apparent-It not ly was perfected in the 8th-9th century AD. only had devices for pronounciation but also for accenting the words and indicators showing the relationships of the words to one another. But these are the developed vowels and we usually give them in classes although I am not sure that is really very accurate...it works!

"Ah" class vowels: _ games _ pahtah

These are written sublinear and both today have a sound like the "a" in "father"...It appears s that pahtah originally had a broader sound like the "a" in "have." Some Jewish schools give qames an "oh" sound and pahtah an "a" sound. The person with whom you are speaking will be sure his view is correct. But if you broaden them both for me I will feel comfortable.

"I" class vowels: hiriq or sere or seghol or

> The vowel signs are sublinear while the yodh, when used, is infra-linear. The pronounciation is: hiriq...either (pin)or (machine)

> > sere....mostly just .. as in "hey" "eight"

seghol...usually .. as in "led"

The student must train oneself to be prepared for these vowels in any of the ways mentioned but in many cases the exact pronounciatin can only be ascertained with a dictionary.

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