

ROMANIZATION SYSTEM FOR HEBREW

BGN/PCGN 2018 AGREEMENT

This system, adopted jointly by the BGN and the PCGN in 2018, is based on the 2006 and 2011 Academy of the Hebrew Language's transliteration systems. It differs in only a few details from the Academy's 1957 system as used by the Survey of Israel over a period of many years and as published in *Transliteration of Geographical Names in the Topographic Maps of Israel* (Cartographic Papers No. 4), Survey of Israel, Tel Aviv, 1969. The 1957 Academy system was adopted as a BGN/PCGN agreement in 1962; the significant differences in the system presented here are the representation of row 7 as 'v' instead of 'w' and row 21 as 'ts' instead of z. These and other more minor modifications are intended to better reflect the modern Hebrew language.

Hebrew script is written from right to left, has no letter case, and, in modern orthography, seldom uses diacritics. Five Hebrew letters have different forms when the last letter of a word.

The first two tables and notes 1 through 6 provide for the romanization of Hebrew names. Notes 7 and 8 provide for the romanization of non-Hebrew names of two types: commemorative names – most commonly of European origin – and Arabic names written in Hebrew script.

CONSONANT CHARACTERS

	Hebrew	Written Hebrew	Unicode Value	Romanization	Roman Unicode Value (Lower Case)	Remarks
1	א	א	05D0	ʾ	2019	See note 1
2	ב	ב	FB31	b	0062	See note 2
3	ב	ב	05D1	v	0076	
4	ג ג	ג	05D2/ FB32	g	0067	See note 2
5	ד ד	ד	05D3/ FB33	d	0064	See note 2
6	ה	ה	05D4	h	0068	<i>Not romanized in word-final position unless written with a dot (mappiq), i.e.,</i> ה
7	ו	ו	05D5	v	0076	
8	ז	ז	05D6	z	007A	
9	ח	ח	05D7	ḥ	1E96	

	Hebrew	Written Hebrew	Unicode Value	Romanization	Roman Unicode Value (Lower Case)	Remarks
10	ט	ט	05D8	t	0074	
11	י	י	05D9	y	0079	
12	כ ך (final)	כ ך	FB3B FB3A	k	006B	See note 2
13	כ ך or ך (final)	כ ך	05DB 05DA	kh	006B+0068	
14	ל	ל	05DC	l	006C	
15	מ ם (final)	מ ם	05DE 05DD	m	006D	
16	נ ן (final)	נ ן	05E0 05DF	n	006E	
17	ס	ס	05E1	s	0073	
18	ע	ע	05E2	‘	2018	
19	פ	פ	05E4	p	0070	See note 2
20	פ ף (final)	פ ף	05E4 05E3	f	0066	
21	צ ץ (final)	צ ץ	05E6 05E5	ts	0074+0073	
22	ק	ק	05E7	q	0071	
23	ר	ר	05E8	r	0072	
24	ש	ש	FB2A	sh	0073+0068	

	Hebrew	Written Hebrew	Unicode Value	Romanization	Roman Unicode Value (Lower Case)	Remarks
25	שׁ	שׁ	FB2B	s	0073	
26	תּ ת	תּ	05EA/FB4A	t	0074	See note 2

	Hebrew	Written Hebrew	Unicode Value Hebrew/Roman	Romanization	Remarks
27	גּ	גּ	05D2+05F3/01E7	g̣	These three Hebrew characters and certain other modified characters not included in this system are used on Israeli maps to render Arabic and other non-Hebrew names. Names in which these characters occur should be romanized in accordance with notes 7 and 8.
28	טּ	טּ	05D6+05F3/017E	ṭ	
29	צּ	צּ	05E6+05F3/010D	ṣ	

VOWEL CHARACTERS

	Hebrew	Romanization	Remarks
1	א	a	
2	אֵ		
3	אֶ	a, o	Usually a; very rarely o.
4	אִ	e	
5	אֵ		
6	אֶ		
7	אִ		
	אֵ		

	Hebrew	Romanization	Remarks
8	◌ֶ	<i>e, or not romanized</i>	See note 3
9	◌ִ	i	
10	◌ִי		
11	◌ֹ	o	
12	◌ֹּ		
13	◌ֹי		
14	◌ֻ	u	
15	◌ֻי		

NOTES

- Every medial א bearing a vowel character or *shva* ◌ֶ should be romanized; e.g., גַּלְאוֹן → Gal'on, בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע → Be'er Sheva', נְאֻדָּר → Ne'dar. א should not be romanized when initial or when used as a consonant to indicate a vowel (mater lectionis); e.g., אֵילָה → Ela, סָאסָא → Sasa.
- The dot placed within the body of the consonant characters ב, ג, ד, כ, פ and ת, when they occur at the beginning of a name or after an unvoiced consonant character in the middle of a name, is known as the "weak" *dagesh*. The addition of the dot forms the consonant characters בּ, גּ, דּ, כּ, פּ and תּ. The phonetic distinction between ג and גּ, ד and דּ, and ת and תּ has now been lost and these pairs of characters should be romanized identically.

The same dot may also be placed within the body of any consonant character (including the six mentioned above but excluding ע, ה, ה, א and ר) to indicate the "strong" *dagesh*. This is rendered in romanization by doubling the letter; the digraphs **sh** and **ts** are not doubled. The "strong" *dagesh* can be distinguished from the "weak" *dagesh*, since the former is always preceded by a vowel character; e.g., אַכּוֹ → **Akko** but אַכּוֹם → **Karkom**. See note 4.

3. The vowel sign *shva* ◌ has two forms: *shva na'* ("moving" *shva*) and *shva nah* ("resting" *shva*). *Shva* on the first consonant of a word is always *shva na'*, which is a short neutral vowel that should be romanized by **e** where it is sounded; e.g., גְּאֻלִּים → **Ge'ullim**, but בְּרִיכָה → Brekha (pool), כְּפָר → Kfar (village), שְׁמוּרָת → Shmurat (reserve). When in doubt, romanize *shva na'* as **e**. *Shva* on the last consonant of a word is always *shva nah*, which marks the end of a closed syllable, and is not romanized.

Determining *shva* form in the middle of a word requires changing the word to its elementary form; for nouns the singular form with no prefixes or suffixes, and for verbs the singular form in the tense of the original verb. If the elementary form retains a *shva* it is *shva nah*; e.g. מְבַהֲנִים → מְבַהֵן. Otherwise it is *shva na'*; e.g. כְּבֻדוֹ → כְּבֻד.

4. Hebrew prefixes should be capitalized in romanization and written together with their following word; e.g., האגודה לקידום החינוך ביפו → **HaAgudda LeQiddum HaHinnuk BeYafu**, בית ויצ"ו לטיפול באם ובילד → **Bet WITSO LeTippul BeEm UVeYeled**, etc.

If the initial Hebrew letter of the word following the prefix bears the *dagesh*, the corresponding Roman character should also be capitalized but not doubled; e.g. היוגב → **HaYogev**. If the initial letter is ע the Roman-script equivalent of its Hebrew vowel letter should be capitalized; e.g., העגן → **Ha'Ogen**.

5. "Furtive" *patah*, which is written under final *he mappiq* הּ, ה, and ע, but pronounced before and not after those three consonant characters, should be romanized before the character under which it is written in Hebrew script: רוֹקֵחַ → **Roqeah**.

6. Hebrew abbreviations are most often marked with the *geresh* ' and *gershayim* " and adhere to these romanization guidelines:

- a. Hebrew letters written as numerals are written in full, e.g. דגניה ב' → **Deganya Bet**, שכון ל' → **Shikhun Lamed**, רחוב נ"ח → **Rehov Nun Het**.

GEMATRIA NUMERICAL VALUES FOR HEBREW LETTERS

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20
ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	200	300	400

- b. Commemorative names containing *gershayim* treat the commemorative acronym as a word. Commemorative acronyms can include well-known acronyms רמב"ם (**Rambam**), dates פעמי תש"ז (**Pa'ame Tashaz**), and gematria numerals גבעת כ"ח (**Giv'at Koah**). The exception to this rule is commemorative gematria acronyms that use a definite article.

These numbers should then be written as the written letters; e.g. גבעת הנ"ד → **Giv'at HaNun Dalet**, נתיב הל"ה → **Netiv HaLamed He**.

c. Romanization for common Hebrew cartographic abbreviations without *gershayim*:

Hebrew Abbreviation	Full Text Hebrew	Roman Abbreviation	Romanized Full Text
.ח.	חרבת	Ḥ.	Ḥorbat
.נ.	נחל	N.	Naḥal
.ע.	עין		'En
.שמ.	שמורת	Shem.	Shmurat Teva'

7. The elements of commemorative names derived from Roman-alphabet languages should be spelled as in the original language; e.g. as with the surnames **Kfar Masaryk** (not **Masariq**), **Balfouriyya** (not **Balfuriyya**), **Kfar Szold** (not **Sold**).

The elements of commemorative names derived from non-Roman-alphabet languages other than Arabic conform to the romanization of Hebrew names guidelines; e.g. as with the Russian commemorative names אכסניית ניקולאי → **Akhsanyat Niqolay**, חצר סרגיי → **Ḥatser Sergey**.

8. In Israel (excluding the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights), Arabic names written in the Hebrew alphabet should be romanized according to the following special rules:

a. Hebrew consonant characters should be romanized according to the table above with the following amendments and additions:

1	א	<i>not romanized</i>	7	י	dh
2	ג	j	8	ח	kh
3	ד	dh	9	ט	t
4	ך	ḏ	10	ע	gh
5	הּ - הֶ - הֵּ - הִּ (final)	-a	11	צ	ṣ

6	ן	ח	12	ת	th
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b. Hebrew vowel characters should be romanized as follows:

1	◌ְ	<i>not romanized</i>	7	◌ֻ	ū See note (c.)
2	◌ַ	a (ā before word-final א)	8	◌ֵ	ei
3	◌ִ	i	9	◌ֵֿ	aiy
4	◌ֹ	u	10	◌ֵ׃	īy
5	◌ָ	ā	11	◌ֹ׃	au
6	◌ִ׃	ī			

- c. Except for some cases where ב and כ represent Arabic consonants with a shaddah, a consonant character containing a dot should be romanized by doubling the equivalent letter or digraph. The character וּ should be romanized ū, unless a vowel character is shown beneath it, in which case it should be romanized **ww**; e.g., חַוְוָרָה **Huwwāra**.
- d. An unassimilated Arabic article is written אֵל or אֵלּ and should be romanized **el**, not **al**. An assimilated Arabic article is written אֵֿ or אֵֿ׃ followed by a dotted consonant character, which should be romanized by writing the equivalent letter or digraph once as part of the article and once again as part of the following word, e.g., עֵין אֵֿֿסַהֵלָה → **‘Ein es Sahla**.
- e. The character sequences סה, כה, דה, and תה, may be romanized **d·h**, **k·h**, **s·h** and **t·h** in order to differentiate those romanizations from the digraphs **dh**, **kh**, **sh**, and **th**, which are used to render the characters שׁ, חׁ, זׁ, דׁ, and תׁ.

f. Romanization for common Arabic cartographic abbreviations written in Hebrew:

Arabic Abbreviation	Full Text Arabic	Roman Abbreviation	Romanized Full Text
ח'.	ח'רבת	Kh.	Khirbat
ו'.	וּדִי	W.	Wādī
ע'.	עֵין		'Ein
ש'.	שִׁיח'	Sh.	Sheikh