

The First 95 Ketiv Readings in the Hebrew Bible

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A “ketiv reading” is an actual word (or words) in the text of the Hebrew Bible, which has a note in the margin (called a “qere reading”) providing a different spelling, or in some cases a different word entirely. In a liturgical setting Jews have traditionally approached the ketiv readings by reading aloud the word in the margin rather than the word in the text (what oftentimes is a very bizarre word or spelling). This tradition is for a liturgical setting, and the very nature of its telling assumes there is a bizarre spelling that we see when we study the text on our own in a non-liturgical setting. The truth is that words spelled in unexpected or bizarre ways appear all over the Hebrew Bible, and the Masora (the notes, to speak generally, of the Hebrew Bible) just highlights some of them. In Genesis 1:12 **לְמִינֵהוּ** is missing a yod; it should be spelled **לְמִינֵיהוּ**. In Genesis 4:18 **וּמַחֲיִיאֵל** has a bogus chireq vowel (◌ֿ) and a yod-shureq vowel in place of the normal vav-shureq (the yod-shureq is common in ketiv readings); the word should be spelled **וּמַחֲוִיאֵל**. By “should be spelled” I don’t mean that there’s an error here. I assume it’s supposed to be spelled in the strange manner as it is and that there is a didactic purpose for the strange spelling. There are multitudes of strange spellings in the Hebrew Bible, and their existence brings a kind of normalcy to the strange ketiv readings—they’re really not that strange in the overall strangeness of the literature. The Hebrew reader who doesn’t know that the text is strange isn’t paying attention to how words are spelled.

The ketiv readings, in truth, can be seen as a kind of tutor, teaching us to see the strange spellings in the text. When we pay attention to them, we develop an eye which sees them where they are not marked. By taking away the ketiv readings, digital editors (and even those of the Qoren text, the Hebrew Bible commonly used in Israel) have taken away our tutor in the strange spellings of the Hebrew Bible—and yet all those other strange spellings are still there. When we grasp these other strange spellings, we need to ask, “Why did you take the ketivs away?”—“*Why did you take away our tutor?*” The tradition is to “read aloud”—not to “rewrite”. It is a tradition for the voice—not the eye. I think you should read aloud **וּמַחֲוִיאֵל** as **וּמַחֲיִיאֵל**—that doesn’t mean you should change what the text reads.

This is a list of the first 95 ketiv readings (there are over 1,200 of them scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible). The hard copy *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) is the only place I know of where you can see the ketiv readings—everyone else has removed them. (*The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament*, edited by John R. Kohlenberger III, uses the BHS and therefore has the ketiv readings. There could be many sources like that with which I am not familiar, sources using the BHS and which therefore show the ketiv readings.) In the Westminster Leningrad Codex and (in general—there are exceptions) on Mechon-Mamre.org the ketivs are shown as letters only; this follows in the pattern of the Qoren text. In both the Logos Bible Software edition of the BHS and the Anderson-Forbes Analyzed Text in Logos, the vowels have routinely been changed.

The Westminster Leningrad Codex (WLC) here is from version 4.18 (this list is actually anchored in the WLC; this is the first 95 qere readings in the WLC). The BHS is my own transcription from the hard copy 4th edition. (I have modified from the Leningrad Codex both the WLC and BHS for Exodus 16:7; I show here what I think is a better reading.)

	WLC	BHS
Gen 8:17	הוּצָא הַיָּצֵא	הַיָּצֵא
Gen 13:3	אֵלֶּה אֲהַלֹּךְ	אֲהַלֵּךְ

Gen 14:2	צְבוּיִם	צְבוּיִם
Gen 14:8	צְבוּיִם	צְבוּיִם
Gen 24:33	וַיִּשֶׁם	וַיִּשֶׁם
Gen 25:23	גַּיִם	גַּיִם
Gen 27:3	צִידָה	צִידָה
Gen 27:29	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ
Gen 30:11	בַּגְדֵי	בַּגְדֵי
Gen 36:5	יַעֲשֵׂה	יַעֲשֵׂה
Gen 36:14	יַעֲשֵׂה	יַעֲשֵׂה
Gen 39:20	אֲסוּרֵי	אֲסוּרֵי
Gen 43:28	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ
Gen 49:10	שִׁלְחָה	שִׁלְחָה
Gen 49:11	עִירָה	עִירָה
Gen 49:11	סוּתָה	סוּתָה
Exod 4:2	מִזָּה	מִזָּה
Exod 16:2	וַיִּלְוֵנוּ	וַיִּלְוֵנוּ
Exod 16:7	תִּלְוֵנוּ	תִּלְוֵנוּ
Exod 21:8	לֹא	לֹא
Exod 22:4	בְּעִירָה	בְּעִירָה
Exod 22:26	כְּסוּתָה	כְּסוּתָה
Exod 27:11	וְעַמֻּדָיו	וְעַמֻּדָיו
Exod 28:28	מִטְּבַעְתָּיו	מִטְּבַעְתָּיו

Exod 32:19	מידו מִיָּדָיו	מִיָּדוֹ
Exod 37:8	קצוותו קְצוּתָיו	קְצוּתָו
Exod 39:4	קצוותו קְצוּתָיו	קְצוּתָו
Exod 39:33	בריחו בְּרִיחָיו	בְּרִיחָו
Lev 9:22	ידו יָדוֹ	יָדוֹ
Lev 11:21	לא לֹא	לֹא
Lev 16:21	ידו יָדוֹ	יָדוֹ
Lev 21:5	יקרחה יִקְרַחַהּ	יִקְרַחָהּ
Lev 25:30	לא לֹא	לֹא
Num 1:16	קריאי קְרִיאֵי	קְרִיאֵי
Num 12:3	ענו עֲנִינוּ	עֲנִינוּ
Num 14:36	וילונו וַיִּלְוֵנוּ	וַיִּלְוֵנוּ
Num 16:11	תלונו תִּלְוֵנוּ	תִּלְוֵנוּ
Num 21:32	ויירש וַיִּירָשׁ	וַיִּירָשׁ
Num 23:13	לד-לְכָה-	לְכָה-
Num 26:9	קרואי קְרִיאֵי	קְרִיאֵי
Num 32:7	תנאון תְּנַאֲוֹן	תְּנַאֲוֹן
Num 34:4	והיה וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה
Deut 2:33	בנו בְּנֵינוּ	בְּנֵינוּ
Deut 5:10	מצותו מִצְוָתוֹ	מִצְוָתוֹ
Deut 7:9	מצותו מִצְוָתוֹ	מִצְוָתוֹ
Deut 8:2	מצותו מִצְוָתוֹ	מִצְוָתוֹ

Deut 13:16	ההוא הִהיא	ההוא
Deut 21:7	שפכה שִפְכוּ	שִפְכֶה
Deut 22:15	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 22:15	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 22:16	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 22:20	לנער לַנְעָרָה	לַנְעָר
Deut 22:21	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 22:23	נער נְעָרָה	נְעָר
Deut 22:24	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 22:25	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 22:26	ולנער וְלַנְעָרָה	וְלַנְעָר
Deut 22:26	לנער לַנְעָרָה	לַנְעָר
Deut 22:27	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 22:28	נער נְעָרָה	נְעָר
Deut 22:29	הנער הַנְעָרָה	הַנְעָר
Deut 28:27	ובעפלים וּבַעֲפָלִים	וּבַעֲפָלִים
Deut 28:30	ישגלנה יִשְׁכַּבְנָהּ	יִשְׁגָּלְנָהּ
Deut 29:22	וצביים וְצַבִּיִּים	וְצַבִּיִּים
Deut 32:13	במותי בַּמּוֹתַי	בַּמּוֹתַי
Deut 33:2	אשדת אִשְׁדַּת	אִשְׁדַּת
Deut 33:9	בנו בְּנוּ	בְּנוּ
Josh 2:13	אחותי אַחֹתִי	אַחֹתִי

Josh 3:4	ובִּינּוֹ	ובִּינּוֹ
Josh 3:16	בְּאָדָם	בְּאָדָם
Josh 4:18	בְּעֵלוֹת	בְּעֵלוֹת
Josh 5:1	עֲבָרְנוּ	עֲבָרְנוּ
Josh 6:5	בְּשִׁמְעֵכֶם	בְּשִׁמְעֵכֶם
Josh 6:7	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	וַיֹּאמְרוּ
Josh 6:9	תִּקְעוּ	תִּקְעוּ
Josh 6:13	הַלְלוּ	הַלְלוּ
Josh 7:21	וַאֲרָא	וַאֲרָא
Josh 8:11	בֵּינוּ	בֵּינוּ
Josh 8:16	בְּעִיר	בְּעִיר
Josh 9:7	וַיֹּאמְרוּ	וַיֹּאמְרוּ
Josh 9:7	אֶכְרֹת־	אֶכְרֹת־
Josh 15:4	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה
Josh 15:47	הַגְּבוּל	הַגְּבוּל
Josh 15:53	וַיִּנְּוּ	וַיִּנְּוּ
Josh 15:63	יֹכְלוּ	יֹכְלוּ
Josh 16:3	תִּצְאָתוֹ	תִּצְאָתוֹ
Josh 18:12	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה
Josh 18:14	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה
Josh 18:19	וְהָיָה	וְהָיָה
Josh 18:19	תִּצְאָתוֹ	תִּצְאָתוֹ

Josh 18:24	הַעֲמִנִי	הַעֲמִנִי
Josh 19:22	וְשַׁחֲצוּמָה	וְשַׁחֲצוּמָה
Josh 19:29	וַיְהִי	וַיְהִי
Josh 20:8	גִּלְזוֹן	גִּלְזוֹן
Josh 21:27	גִּלְזוֹן	גִּלְזוֹן

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