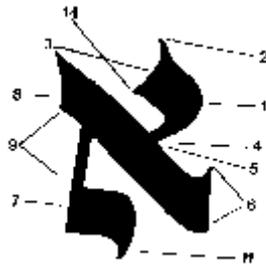


Hebrew Alphabet used in writing STA"M (Sifrei Torah, Tefillin, and Mezuzos)

Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Berger

There are over 150 laws concerning how the Hebrew Alphabet must be written by the Jewish Scribe. I have scanned in each letter separately, and try to point out some of the things to look for in good writing. **Note: This is only a reference and is by no means complete. Please check your STA"M with a competent certified Sofer. Ask your Sofer if he is certified by the Vaad Mishmeres STA"M.**

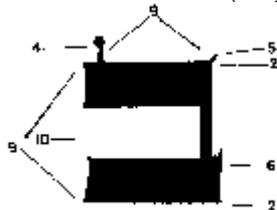
B"H - Thanks to my friend at [GF GREETINGS](#) I have put up the pictures of the letters. Click on the letter to see a larger version.



Letter Aleph

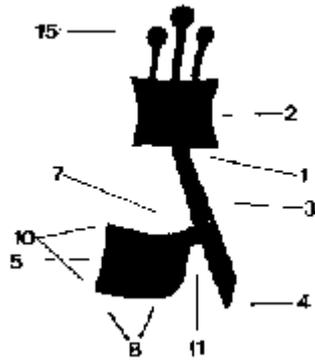
The Letter Aleph has 3 distinct parts and 10 laws concerning its form. There is an upper Yud, a lower Yud, and a body that is similar to a Vov. There should be a clear connection from the body of the Aleph to the Yuds but none of the faces of the Yuds are allowed to touch its body. The face of the upper Yud should be slightly angled upward. The very bottom end of the Vov part should be slightly turned upwards. The size of the Aleph should be 3X3 *kulmusim*.

Note: The word *Kulmus(im)* means the width of the tip of the quill.



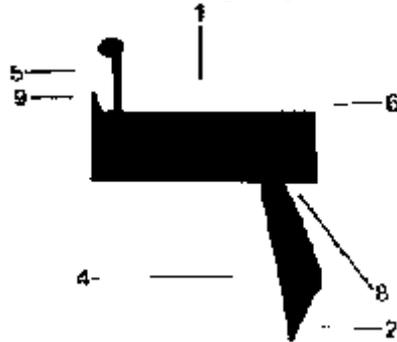
Letter Beis

The Letter Beis is made of 3 parts. The size of the letter is 3X3 *kulmusim*. The space in the middle of the Beis should be exactly equal the width of the top and bottom lines, which is 1 *kulmus*. The Beis should have a small heel coming out of its back on the bottom, so that it is clearly distinguished that it is a Beis and not a Chof Kefufa. It should also have a single Tag (pronounced tahg) on top of its head on the left side. *A Tag is a single, short line, which usually will have a "crown" at the top.* (Click on the Beis to see it better. This Tag should not be on the very end of the left side, nor be made too large, or it can cause a number of different problems.)



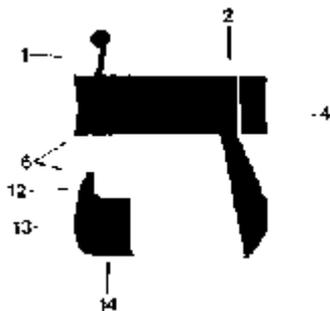
Letter Gimel

The Letter Gimel has a head of a Zayin, and has a leg sticking out of it on bottom whose face points slightly upward. There should be three Tagin on its head. All of the corners of the head should be squared. The right leg should be slightly longer than the left one. The height of the Gimel should be three *kulmusim*. Originally, Sofrim made the Gimel with a long neck, so as to be able to put the top of the next letter near the head of the Gimel. Nowadays, we arch the back of the right leg slanting downwards towards the right, to avoid any problems and to create ample space.



Letter Daled

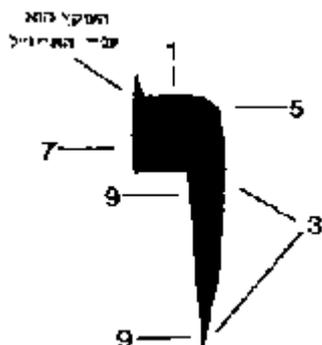
The Letter Daled has 2 main parts. There is a roof and a leg. If the heel which sticks out on the top right corner is missing, the letter is still kosher. We want there to be a heel sticking out so that the Daled is distinct from the Letter Reish. The roof should be 3 *kulmusim* long. There should be one Tag at the left end of the roof. (This Tag should not be on the very end of the left side, nor be made too large, because it can be a problem.) The leg should be slightly shorter than 3 *kulmusim*.



Letter Heh

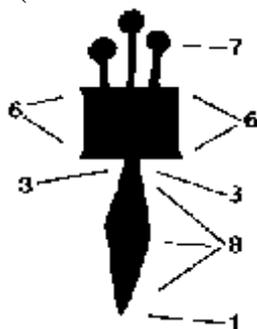
The Letter Heh is basically a Daled which has an upside down Yud at the lower left hand corner, at an equal distance away from the roof as from the leg. The heel that was found on the roof of the Daled isn't necessary on a Heh, as even if the body looked like a Reish it would be kosher, but most Sofrim put a heel on top anyway. There should be one Tag at the left end of the roof. (This Tag should not be on the very end of the left side, nor be made too large,

because it can be a problem.) Great care must be taken so that the left leg does **not** touch the roof of the Heh. If it does touch, even with an amount as thin as a hair, it would be invalid.



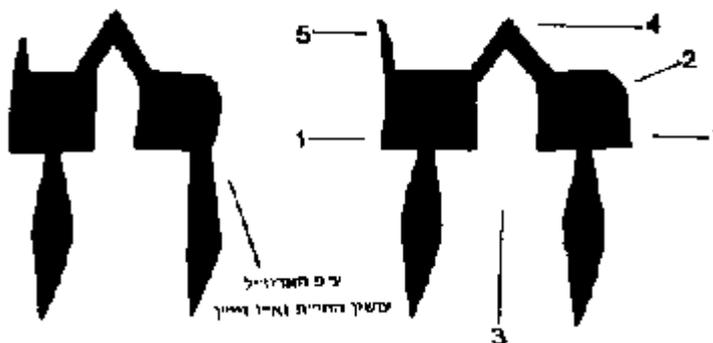
Letter Vov

The Letter Vov should be 1X3 *kulmusim*. The top right part of the Vov should be completely rounded, because if it's squared it would look like a Zayin. The face of the Vov should be straight up and down, not angled. Neither the head nor leg of the Vov should be made too long, because then it will look like another letter. (ie- a Reish or a Nun Peshuta)



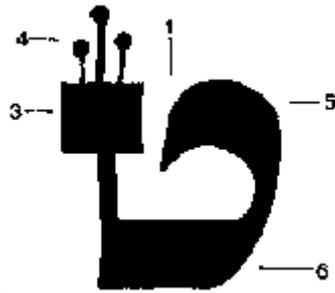
Letter Zayin

The Letter Zayin should be 1X3 *kulmusim*. It should have a completely squared head with 3 Tagin on it. The leg should be no longer than 3 *kulmusim*, as otherwise the Zayin can be mistaken for a Nun Peshuta.



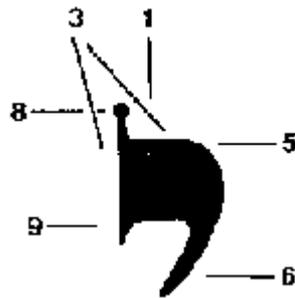
Letter Ches

The Letter Ches is made up of 2 Zayins which are written next to one another and connected together on top. The right Zayin should have no Tagin. All of it's corners should be squared, except for the top right corner, which should be rounded. The left Zayin should have all of its corners squared, and instead of having 3 Tagin like a regular Zayin, it should have 1 Tag coming out of the upper left corner. The connection between the two Zayins is imperative, as if it's broken the letter will look like two Zayins instead of a Ches.



Letter Tes

The Letter Tes has a size of 3X3 *kulmusim*. The left head of the Tes should look like the head of a Zayin, having completely squared corners and 3 Tagin on top of it. The lower left corner of the Tes should be squared as well. However, the lower right corner should be rounded. The right head of the Tes should curve inside the Tes, not far enough to touch the base of the Tes, but rather enough so that it's clear that it is curved inwards. The two heads of the Tes should not touch each other, as this would make it invalid.



Letter Yud

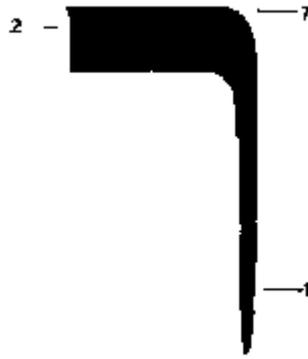
The Letter Yud is the smallest letter of the alphabet, yet it can be the trickiest to write properly. The Yud should have a size of 1X2 *kulmusim*. The Yud should have a small Tag on the top left corner. This Tag should not be made too tall, because it can cause the letter to be invalid. The top right corner should be clearly rounded. The leg should not be too long, because otherwise the Yud can turn into a Vov. There should be a small *kotz* sticking out of the bottom left corner of the head of the Yud. According to many Poskim, a Yud without this *kotz* is invalid.

Note: A kotz is a small stick or thorn, and in this case it's used to represent a small point sticking out of the letter.



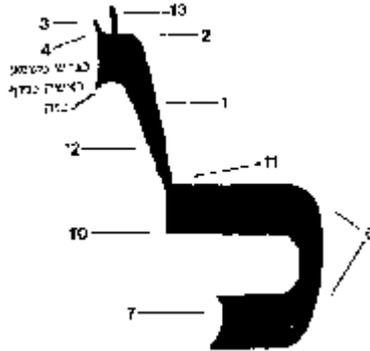
Letter Chof Kefufa

The Letter Chof Kefufa is one of the 5 letters which have a special letter which replaces it, when it is used at the end of a word. The Chof Kefufa has a size of 3X3 *kulmusim*. The upper and lower corners of its back should be clearly rounded, so that there is no confusion on whether it's a Beis or Chof Kefufa. The space in the middle of the Chof Kefufa should be exactly equal the width of the top and bottom lines, which is 1 *kulmus*.



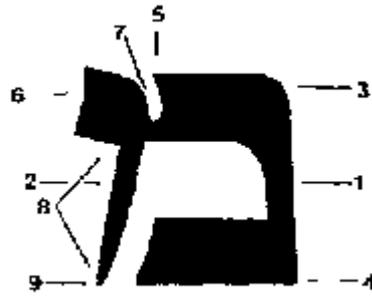
Letter Chof Peshuta

The Letter Chof Peshuta should have a roof which is no longer than 3 [kulmusim](#). We should not lengthen its roof any further, nor make it shorter, as it could very possibly look like the Letter Reish or the Letter Vov. The leg of the Chof Peshuta should be a total of 5 1/2 [kulmusim](#), when measuring from the top of the Chof to its tip. If it is any shorter, it could look like the Letter Reish. The top right corner of the Chof Peshuta should be rounded, as it is similar to its cousin, the Chof Kefufa, which has a rounded top corner.



Letter Lamed

The Letter Lamed is made up of two separate letters. There is a Chof Kefufa which is written within the lines, and then a Vov whose bottom point touches the very top left corner of the Chof Kefufa. The Letter Lamed, therefore, is one of the largest letters, and one must make sure that there is enough space above it, because if the body of the Vov must be shortened, it can become invalid. The Lamed's dimensions are 6 [kulmusim](#) in height, (that is, 3 [kulmusim](#) for the Chof Kefufa, and 3 [kulmusim](#) for the Vov) and 4 [kulmusim](#) in width. (That is- 3 [kulmusim](#) for the Chof Kefufa, and 1 [kulmus](#) for the Vov.) The top and bottom corners of the body of the Chof Kefufa should be rounded, and the space in the middle of the Chof Kefufa should be 1 [kulmus](#). (Exactly like the rules given above for a Chof Kefufa.) Our minhag is not to complete the bottom section of the Chof Kefufa part of the Lamed, rather we stop somewhere between 1/2 to 3/4 of the way from the end. As long as there is a clear bottom section to the Lamed, it will be valid. There should also be a small [kotz](#) sticking out of the middle of the head of the Vov section of the Lamed.



Letter Mem Pesucha

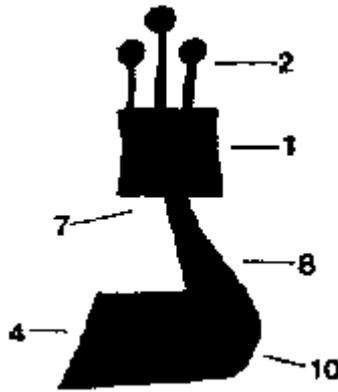
The Letter Mem Pesucha is another letter which has a special letter which replaces it when it is used at the end of a word. The Mem Pesucha is made up of two different letters- a Chof Peshuta, and a Vov. The dimensions of the Mem Pesucha are 3X3 *kulmusim*. That is, that the top and bottom of the Chof Peshuta part of the Mem Pesucha, are only 2 *kulmusim* in length. The top right corner should be rounded, (like a Letter Chof Peshuta should be,) and the right leg would then go down until it reaches a total length of 3 *kulmusim*. By the same token, the space in middle of the Mem Pesucha should equal 1 *kulmusim*. The bottom right corner of the Mem Pesucha should be squared. The Vov part of the Mem Pesucha, (which is sometimes referred to as the "nose") should be angled so that the face of the Vov is angled upward. At the point where the head of the Vov connects to its leg, is where the Vov should touch the Chof Peshuta part of the Mem Pesucha. There should be a clear notch in between the two heads of the letters. Also, the connection between them should be thick, so that it's clear they are connected. At the bottom, the Vov and Chof Peshuta must not touch at all, as that would invalidate the letter since it would become a Mem Stumah.



Letter Mem Stumah

The Letter Mem Stumah comes at the end of a word that ends with a Mem. The Mem Stumah has a size of 3X3 *kulmusim*. The top right corner should be rounded, while the remaining corners must be squared. The box of space inside the Mem Stumah should also be completely squared, as we want to make the Mem Stumah clearly different from a Samech. There should be a slight protrusion from the top left corner which should extend a little bit past the body of the Mem Stumah. There should not be any splits along any portion of the Mem Stumah, as this would render it invalid.

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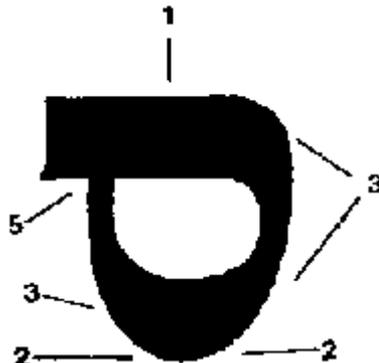
Letter Nun Kefufa

The Letter Nun Kefufa is another letter which has a special letter which replaces it when it is used at the end of a word. The Nun Kefufa should have a head like a Zayin, that is- a square head with 3 Tagin on it. Originally, Sofrim made the Nun Kefufa with a long neck, so as to be able to put the top of the next letter near the head of the Nun Kefufa. Nowadays, we arch the back of the right leg slanting downwards towards the right, to avoid any problems and to create ample space. The base of the Nun Kefufa should extend beyond the end of the head. The total size of the Nun Kefufa should therefore be 1 1/2 X3 [kulmusim](#).



Letter Nun Peshuta

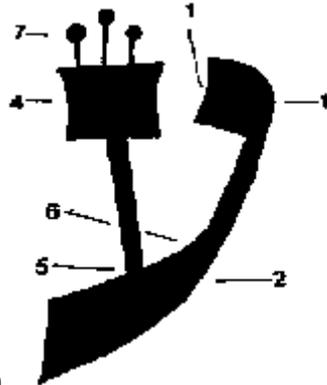
The Letter Nun Peshuta comes at the end of a word that ends with a Nun. The size of the Nun Peshuta should be 1X5 [kulmusim](#). It should have a completely squared head with 3 Tagin on it. The leg should be no shorter than 4 [kulmusim](#), as otherwise the Nun Peshuta can be mistaken for a Zayin.



Letter Samech

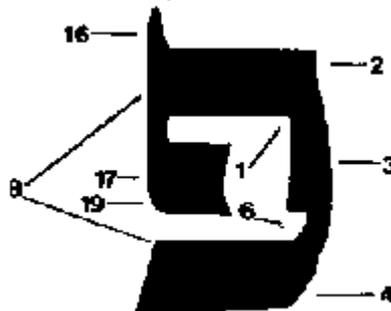
The Letter Samech has a size of 3X3 [kulmusim](#). The space in the middle of the Samech should be exactly equal the width of the top and bottom lines, which is 1 [kulmus](#). The left corner should be squared, while the other corners must be rounded, inside and outside. Great care should be taken to ensure that the corners are clearly rounded, so that the Samech doesn't look like the Mem

Stumah. There should be a slight protrusion from the top left corner which should extend a little bit past the body of the Samech. There should not be any splits along any portion of the Samech, as this would render it invalid.



Letter Ayin

The Letter Ayin has a size of slightly larger than 3X3 *kulmusim*. The Ayin is made of 5 parts, and each part should be distinct. The right leg has the head of a Vov, with a rounded top right corner. The left leg should have the head of a Zayin. (According to the Arizal, the left leg has the head of a Vov.) The head should have 3 Tagin on it, like a regular Zayin. The heads should not touch one another at all. The Ayin has a slight slant toward the right, so that letters can fit comfortably next to it. The bottom portion which the two legs fit into should be thick and have a protrusion, to show that the Ayin is not a Tes, and also to create more room for nearby letters.



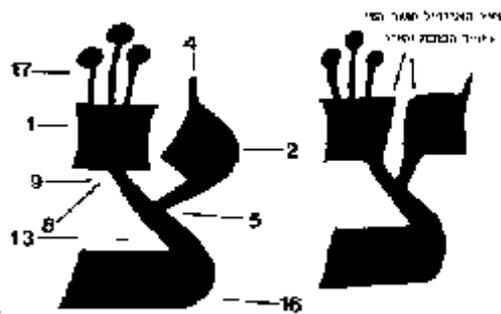
Letter Pay Kefufa

The Letter Pay Kefufa has a number of different parts. The overall size should be 4X3 *kulmusim*. The Pay should have an upside down Vov at the top left end, and the head of the Vov should enter the face of the Pay. If you look closely, you should see the outline of a Letter Bais (complete with its bottom heel) inside the empty part inside the Pay. It is because sofrim want so much to get this outline of the Bais in, that the letter is written slightly larger than the other letters. The space between the bottom of the upside down Vov and the top of the base of the bottom of the pay should be 1/2 a *kulmus*, in order to assure that the Vov doesn't touch the bottom.



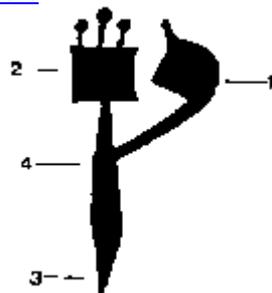
Letter Pay Peshuta

The Letter Pay Peshuta comes at the end of a word which ends with a Pay. It has a size of 3X5 *kulmusim*. The Pay Peshuta is similar to the Pay Kefufa, as they both have an upside down Vov at the top left end, whose head (of the Vov) enters the face of the Pay. Where they differ is in the right leg, whereas the Pay Kefufa has a curled body, the right leg of the Pay Peshuta goes straight down. Of course, the head of the Vov should not touch the right leg, and the right leg should be clearly longer than the upside down Vov, since it otherwise can be invalid.



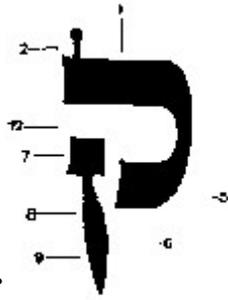
Letter Tzadi Kefufa

The Letter Tzadi Kefufa consists of pieces from 2 different letters. There is a Nun Kefufa, which is more curved than it normally is, and has a bigger bottom base than normal. There is also a Yud, which is resting on the back of the Nun part. The left head should have 3 Tagin on it, like a regular Zayin. The overall size should be 3X3 *kulmusim*. The heads should not touch one another at all.



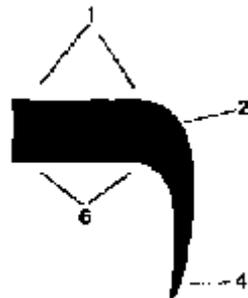
Letter Tzadi Peshuta

The Letter Tzadi Peshuta comes at the end of a word that ends with a Tzadi. It has a size of 3X5 *kulmusim*. The Tzadi Peshuta is similar to the Tzadi Kefufa, as they both have a Yud resting on the Nun part at the right side. Where they differ is in the left leg, whereas the Tzadi Kefufa has a curled body, from the Nun Kefufa part, the left leg of the Tzadi Peshuta goes straight down, like a Nun Peshuta. Of course, the head of the Yud should not touch the left head, and the right leg should be clearly longer than where the Yud meets the body, since it otherwise can be invalid.



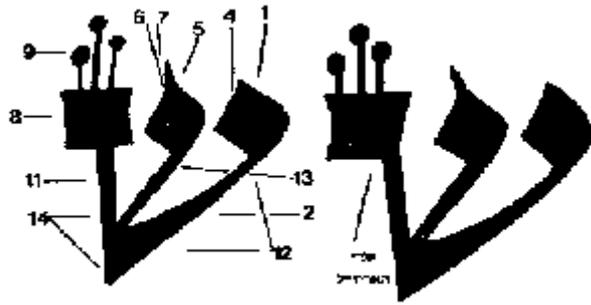
Letter Kuf

The Letter Kuf is made up of two separate letters. There is a Chof Kefufa which is written within the lines, and then a part that is longer than a Zayin, but not as long as a Nun Peshuta, which is angled next to the Chof Kefufa. The Letter Kuf, therefore, is a large letter, and one must make sure that there is enough space below it, in order to have ample room for Zayin part of the Kuf. The Kuf's dimensions are 5 *kulmusim* in height, (that is, 3 *kulmusim* for the Chof Kefufa, and 4 *kulmusim* for the Zayin) and 3 *kulmusim* in width. (That is 3 *kulmusim* for the Chof Kefufa, and the Zayin section is neatly placed and angled slightly under the roof of the Chof Kefufa section.) The top and bottom corners of the body of the Chof Kefufa should be rounded, and the space in the middle of the Chof Kefufa should be 1 *kulmus*. (Exactly like the rules given above for a Chof Kefufa.) We do not complete the bottom section of the Chof Kefufa part of the Kuf, rather we stop about 1/4 to 1/2 of the way from the beginning. As long as there is a clear bottom section to the Kuf, it will be valid. There should be one Tag at the left end of the roof. (This Tag should not be on the very end of the left side, nor be made too large, because it can be a problem of possibly looking like a Lamed.) The two parts of the Kuf should not touch each other at all. If they do touch, even with an amount as thin as a hair, it would be invalid.



Letter Reish

The Letter Reish should have a size of 3X3 *kulmusim*. However, Sofrim are usually careful to make the roof slightly longer than the leg, so that the Reish cannot have a problem of appearing like a Chof Peshuta. The top right corner should be clearly rounded, so as to avoid any problems of looking like a Daled.



Letter Shin

The Letter Shin is easily distinguished by its three heads. The spacing of the Shin is something that takes practice for a Sofer to write correctly. The leftmost leg should have the head of a Zayin. (According to the Arizal, the left leg has the head of a Vov.) The head should have 3 Tagin on it, like a regular Zayin. The heads should not touch one another at all. Also, there should be no more than 3 heads in total, or the letter would be rendered invalid. The bottom should come to a point, and not be rounded or flat.



Letter Tof

The Letter Tof consists of 3 parts. The total size of the Tof should be 3X3 *kulmusim*. The right leg is very similar to that of the Letter Daled and Heh, which also have a protrusion of the roof on the top right corner. The left leg is an upside down Vov, whose face points outward. Sofrim try to be careful not to let the head of the left leg protrude past the end of the roof, as it could cause spacing problems with nearby letters.