

Preface to the Instructor's Manual

This textbook is not intended for self-study but only for classroom use. The exercises are highly interactive and require the guidance of an instructor who is thoroughly grounded in the grammar and vocabulary of Biblical Hebrew. The following comments are intended to help instructors use the textbook effectively in the classroom.

Pedagogical Principles behind *Beginning Biblical Hebrew*

Less English, More Hebrew

To speed students' progress in acquiring Biblical Hebrew, the use of English has been kept to a minimum. The grammar lessons are discrete and concise, with each lesson containing no more than one new topic. Ideally, *discussion* of the grammatical concepts should not take center stage in any classroom session. Instead, after a bare minimum of explanation, the concepts should be illustrated and thus acquired by practice through the exercises and the instructor's extemporaneous variations on the exercises.

Immersion by Visual Text

Since a true language immersion context for an ancient language like Biblical Hebrew cannot be provided, this textbook offers "textual-visual" immersion. The cycle of biblical texts combined with the illustrations is the most effective way for students to acquire the creative productivity necessary to comprehend Biblical Hebrew. The textual-visual nature of this textbook does not, however, mean that its approach to language learning is "text-centered." Rather, the exercises are meant to be used (and manipulated) in classroom settings so that the eyes, ears, mouth, and whole body are engaged in the language acquisition process. In other words, the textbook merely establishes a trajectory for an effective language learning context. To flesh out the learning environment more fully, the instructor should introduce additional content through the use of objects, video clips, songs, live animals (!), and whatever else proves useful.

Vocabulary by Icon

Just as illustrations are used to teach the Hebrew of the stories, the textbook presents as many as possible of the new vocabulary words by means of icons instead of English glosses. This reflects the textbook's commitment to teaching Hebrew as

Hebrew, in contrast to the Hebrew-translated-to-English approach of other textbooks. The vocabulary lists immediately follow the stories, and the icons are meant to be read in conjunction with the story. It is often the case that the meaning of the Hebrew word is not readily apparent from the icon alone, but when the same word is found in the story, the combined information will enable students to determine an appropriate contextual meaning. The vocabulary icons and stories must therefore be used in conjunction with each other. Because some amount of intellectual discomfort and lack of certainty is critical to internalizing the language, the instructor should discourage students from resorting to the glossary too quickly.

The vocabulary tables are organized along two principles: grammatically and semantically. First, the tables progress grammatically from top to bottom in the following order: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and then other words, such as prepositions. Second, within each grammatical category, semantically related words have been grouped together as much as possible, moving from right to left. In reading 2, for example, the first (right) column of nouns includes *אִישׁ*, *אִשָּׁה*, *נָחֵשׁ*, and *מֵאֲכָל*—the first three being the animate characters in the story, and *מֵאֲכָל* appearing here simply because it did not fit well anywhere else. Admittedly this method of organization sometimes breaks down due to the lack of clear semantic groupings for the words listed.

Discovery

The illustrated stories, iconic vocabulary, and variety of exercises are intended to encourage a spirit of curiosity and discovery, in contrast to parsing drills and translation exercises, which encourage a view of “language components as puzzle.” In our textbook, the “puzzle” that excites the student should be how the text is comprehended. Thus, this textbook does not focus on the “nuts and bolts” of Biblical Hebrew but provides just enough nuts and bolts to enable students to understand the language of the texts. The desire to understand the “language of *the text*” is, after all, why students study Biblical Hebrew.

Repetition

Repetition is the key for embedding any language within the learner’s language faculty, but this repetition must also be carefully planned, such as highlighting recently learned skills by simple substitutions. Also, the repetition must occur across cycles: a recently learned skill may be briefly left behind and then picked up and reinforced with minimal new information a few lessons later. The exercises in the lessons and the readings are designed with this principle in mind. For classroom drills, the instructor can introduce minor variations in the textbook exercises to create additional repetition exercises, focusing especially on topics that prove difficult for students to master.

Practical Suggestions for Using *Beginning Biblical Hebrew*

Memorization

Rather than encouraging the memorization of every possible paradigm for nouns, verbs, and attached pronouns, this textbook is organized around the memorization

of (and extrapolation from) only a few critical paradigms. The paradigms presented earliest are for nouns (singular, dual, and plural), subject pronouns, and the possessive ל + attached pronouns. The similarities between the subject pronouns and the attached pronouns with ל should be pointed out. Moreover, the ל + attached pronoun paradigm (singular and plural) should serve as the basis for all other discussions of attached pronouns, such as pronouns attached to other prepositions, nouns, and verbs. Conceptually linking these new uses of the attached pronouns to the paradigms of the subject pronoun and ל + attached pronoun is not only reassuring for students, since they feel that they are being asked to learn “less,” but it also provides an important mnemonic.

Finally, the Qal strong verb is used as the basis for all other verb paradigms (i.e., other בנינים and all weak verbs) that the student is exposed to. All variations, whether a change in internal vowel pattern or a prefix, should be related to the paradigm that the student has already learned and internalized.

With time and exposure to a greater number of texts, the links between the core paradigms and the variational paradigms will become less active on the surface of the student's language process. That is, the student will not need to expend the energy to make the link in order to comprehend an encountered variational form. However, the fundamental relationship between the core and the variational forms will remain active and useful at a deep level.

Previewing Concepts

Encountering an occasional not-yet-introduced concept in the exercises of earlier lessons can be a productive learning tool. Therefore, the student may come across some form or concept in the readings or exercises that has not yet been explained. This occurs primarily in the vocabulary, such as when a Hifil verb appears before the Hifil בנין has been introduced. When used sparingly, this can encourage a sense of discovery in learning the language. This technique is most effective if the instructor creates an environment in which the student trusts the instructor and the textbook. Otherwise, students may assume that such occurrences are not intentional but the result of poor planning. For this reason, we strongly recommend alerting students to this intentional component of the textbook's design.

Textbook Organization, Lesson Exercises, and Readings

Cross-References

The pedagogical approach outlined above makes the use of cross-referencing an important characteristic of this textbook. Cross-references to other sections of the textbook (e.g., “see L9” or “see R3”) appear often in the lesson discussion. Cross-references also point to a relevant point in the appendixes where an expanded version of a paradigm is presented.

Special Typeface for Proper Names

Proper names are marked in grey type in the lesson exercises and in dark red type in the readings to distinguish them from other vocabulary words. This prevents such

words from being confused with inflected forms and reduces the number of words appearing in the vocabulary lists.

Marking Penultimate Stress

Penultimate, or nonfinal, stress is marked everywhere except in the illustrated readings. In the lessons and in the reading exercises, such marks are helpful to the beginning student. The reason for omitting these marks from the illustrated readings is pedagogical: it forces students to learn which words have nonfinal stress rather than become dependent on the mark.

Pausal Forms

By the end of the second cycle of readings (reading 7, Genesis 37), pausal forms rarely appear. Starting with reading 11 (Genesis 1), pausal forms appear whenever they occur in the biblical text. This teaches students to allow for minor spelling variations and to recognize well-known words even when pointed slightly differently.

Reading Design

Readings 1–7 have a fairly easy exercise at the start of each exercise section, followed by exercises that are either intermediate or difficult. Readings 8–10 do not have this easy exercise, since the readings more closely reproduce the actual biblical texts and the exercises correspondingly increase in difficulty.

Grammatical Terminology

Traditional Latinate terminology, such as *status constructus* or *patach furtivum*, has been avoided in favor of equivalent English or Hebrew terms. A modern linguistic, English term is employed when the referent is a universal grammatical category (e.g., verb, noun, person, aspect). A Hebrew term is employed when the referent is specific to Hebrew (e.g., סְמִיכוֹת, פְּתַח גְּנוּבָה). To facilitate the transition from traditional nomenclature to the modern terminology employed in this textbook, a table of equivalents is provided in appendix E.

Weak Verbs

This textbook treats weak verbs simply as variations on the strong verb. Thus, weak verbs are not “taught” but are learned in context (i.e., inductively). Paradigms of the main types of weak verbs are presented in the appendixes and are meant to be used as quick-reference guides. Some instructors may be concerned about this approach: the lack of an explicit introduction to the weak verbs as well as the use of weak verbs and derived בְּנִינִים so early in the textbook. The reason for this organization is twofold: (1) weak verbs and derived בְּנִינִים are extremely common and cannot be avoided in biblical texts, and (2) highlighting the points of morphology that weak verbs and derived בְּנִינִים share with strong verbs and the Qal בְּנִינִי will teach students the salient patterns to use in reading.

This departure from the pedagogical method of previous textbooks has several advantages. First, this textbook can be used in one-semester courses, in contrast to textbooks that focus on the basic grammar apart from the weak verbs in the first half of the book (= first semester) and then focus almost entirely on the morphology of weak verbs in the second half (= second semester). Second, this textbook avoids placing undue emphasis on intricate morphological and morphosyntactic changes and thus enables students to progress faster in their grasp of the syntax of the language. Third, this textbook offers a sort of *via media* between the two dominant approaches of other textbooks. Some textbooks have students focus on learning the entire strong verb first, followed by attention to the various weak verb forms;¹ others focus on successive **בְּנֵינִים**, treating both strong and weak forms together.² By contrast, this textbook deductively introduces the **בְּנֵינִים** spread over the breadth of the lessons, while interspersing inductive encounters with various **בְּנֵינִים** of both strong and weak verbs in the readings and exercises.

Because this textbook's approach to weak verbs represents an important departure from other textbooks, we offer suggestions on how to implement this strategy in the classroom. Simply put, the best approach is to combine diligence and a sense of calm. When the first few examples of each type of weak verb appear, the instructor should nonchalantly note it in class and point out that

“Yes, such things occur (we can all curse the language gods), but they really aren't hard to identify. Look here, here, and here—see how you identify the person, gender, number, and **בְּנֵינִי** and then a set of options for the root?”

If an environment of strong trust among instructor, students, and textbook has been cultivated (and students know that they can always look to the appendixes for help), most students will not be unsettled. For the rare student who continues to ask about this, offer to give a fuller explanation privately during your office hours. At this point in the learning process, the memorization and recognition of *whole words and basic patterns* is much more important than memorizing and understanding advanced morpho-phonological patterns. Do not let the flow and momentum of the course be interrupted by grammatical description of weak verbs (or any other grammatical issue).

When students encounter weak verbs in the readings and exercises (they occur as early as lesson 15 and reading 3), emphasize the similarity between the weak verb forms and the strong verb forms that they are internalizing. Even with weak verbs that have a fairly different form in the stem (e.g., **קָמַתִּי**), stress that the inflectional endings remain the same (i.e., the **תִּי** ending is the same for **שָׁמַרְתִּי** and **קָמַתִּי**). We recommend that you not correct the student's production of the internal structure, as long as it is reasonably close. Our approach is similar to modern language teaching: do not hinder/discourage a student's forward progress by correcting every little mistake. Aim for overall competence. Stopping to correct a student's *chíreq* to *tsére* will often produce undesirable results: it deflates the student's confidence, disrupts

1. E.g., Page H. Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

2. E.g., C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007).

the flow of class, and wastes precious class time on nonessentials. It is simply not how adults learn a second language efficiently.

The instructor must strive to use only correct forms, so that students can learn by imitation, but most feedback to students should be of the positive type. For example, if the root **ב-נ-ה** has been presented, and a student produces a sentence with the form **בְּנִיתִי** instead of **בְּנִיתִי**, do not say “Not quite—it should be **בְּנִיתִי**.” Instead, if the error is addressed at all, simply repeat the student’s sentence using the correct form (perhaps with the whole class repeating after you). We do not recommend using this approach too often, however, since it will absorb too much class time.

Hebraists are taught to be detail-oriented, so learning to reinforce student progress positively without getting sidetracked with particulars will require conscious effort. The instructor will become more comfortable with this approach as the course progresses. When deciding how much and how often to correct, generally “less is more.” Let the textbook and the biblical text be the primary anchor to accurate forms; the instructor should focus on encouraging, motivating, and maintaining a good pace for the course.

Binyanim

Traditional approaches to the **בְּנִינִים** frequently teach, or at least imply, that the system is complete and predictable, like an inflectional system. This grammar adopts an approach much more in line with Modern Hebrew learning, which treats the **בְּנִינִים** as a derivational system. Verbs are treated as constituted by a root + a **בְּנִין**. Thus, verbs appear in the vocabulary lists and in the glossary in the 3MS Perfect of the appropriate **בְּנִין** (e.g., **הִשְׁלִיךְ**); the glossary entries also include the verbal root. The introduction to the **בְּנִינִים** (L15) endorses the views developed in Maya Arad’s 2005 study,³ namely, that the system of **בְּנִינִים** is both predictable and unpredictable in its meaning relations: predictable in the derivation of verbs from other verbs (e.g., passive **בְּנִינִים**) and unpredictable in their derivation of verbs from roots.

Answer Key

In addition to the pedagogical comments in the margins, this instructor’s manual provides the answers for the exercises appearing in both the lessons and the readings. Answers have not been supplied for the open-ended questions, which by their nature can be answered in many different ways. Although we had a clear answer in mind when we wrote such questions, students often produce answers that differ from ours but are just as accurate. To best evaluate student answers to these questions, the instructor should have the concepts that are embedded in the question (and the necessary vocabulary) firmly in mind. We find that students learn best when errors in their answers are corrected by reformulation rather than outright rejection.

The answer key for the readings includes alerts to the instructor regarding the use of weak verbs and other grammatical complexities in the stories. It is impossible and,

3. Maya Arad, *Roots and Patterns: Hebrew Morpho-Syntax*, Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 63 (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2005).

arguably, undesirable to avoid such departures from “basic grammar,” since Biblical Hebrew does represent data from a real language. The lessons avoid burdening the beginning student with such complexities. However, the exercises do require the student to grasp the connection between the basic grammar (e.g., קָל Perfect strong verb) and nonconforming forms (e.g., קָל weak verbs, strong verbs in the derived בְּנִינִים), and the instructor must encourage this. When pointing students to the verb paradigms in the appendixes, instructor’s should highlight the similarities rather than the differences by saying something like “Yes, in this kind of verb the third root letter, which is a ה, often drops out, but notice how the verbal endings are still the same ones you’ve learned!”

Vocabulary Lists

We have added three vocabulary lists at the end of this manual. In the first two lists, the Hebrew words presented in the textbook are grouped according to the lesson or reading in which each word first appears. The third list identifies Hebrew words that occur frequently in the Hebrew Bible but are not used in the textbook. These lists will help instructors keep track of which words students have already learned and which words are yet to be learned. Such information is especially useful when constructing quizzes and exams, enabling instructors to avoid unintentionally testing students on vocabulary to which they have not yet been exposed.