INTRODUCTION TO
HEBREW

A GUIDE FOR *LEARNING AND USING* BIBLICAL HEBREW

William Fullilove
FOREWORD BY **BRUCE K. WALTKE**

“One of my colleagues in the Old Testament department likes to quip that Greek is the language of the gods, but Hebrew is the language of God. If he’s right, that may explain why Hebrew is so challenging to learn! But fear not, for expert help is at hand. Bill Fullilove’s mission is to make learning Biblical Hebrew as painless, productive, and pastorally relevant as it can be. I’m delighted that he has now written an introductory text based on his many years of teaching experience and his sympathetic attention to students’ needs. It will be an invaluable resource not only for seminarians but for any other lover of God’s Word who desires to read Jesus’ own Bible in its original language. I highly recommend it.”
—**James N. Anderson**, Academic Dean, Reformed Theological Seminary Global Campus; Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte

“Bill Fullilove’s new grammar of Biblical Hebrew is an outstanding introduction to the language for beginning students. The author presents the basic material clearly and cogently, while deftly incorporating insights gleaned from the latest research. Beginners will enjoy starting to read actual excerpts from the Bible at an early stage; and by the end, they will be well equipped for the task of Old Testament exegesis. I warmly and enthusiastically recommend this fine new textbook.”
—**Ed Cook**, Chairman, Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures; Associate Professor, The Catholic University of America

“Learning biblical languages can be tedious, but it does not have to be; it is much more enjoyable when guided by a gifted teacher. Therefore, I am happy to commend this distinctive textbook written by a trustworthy guide. William Fullilove not only shepherds students through the rudiments of Hebrew grammar, but also introduces sound exegetical method. Each chapter contains “live” examples of Biblical Hebrew, which provides encouragement for students to persevere in their studies, and demonstrates the need for diligence to be faithful stewards of the Word of God. This is an excellent choice for an introductory Hebrew grammar.”
—**Brandon Crowe**, Associate Professor of New Testament, Westminster Theological Seminary

“From beginning to end, Fullilove keeps in mind that the ultimate goal of biblical language-learning is to grasp the message of Scripture so that the text can master us. This is an exegetically oriented beginning Hebrew grammar. It sets itself apart by teaching not only what morphology and clause syntax are but how our knowledge of Hebrew helps us understand God’s Book. Fullilove gets students into the biblical text early and then uses creative paths to nurture discovery and to point forward toward application. The chapters are well structured and clear, and the overall work is highly creative. This is a guidebook that will motivate students to learn, so I joyfully recommend this grammar.”

—**Jason S. DeRouchie**, Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology, Bethlehem College & Seminary; Coauthor, *A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*

"Bill Fullilove is a former student of mine and served as an excellent teaching assistant in my courses. Clearly, his interest in Hebrew is not merely academic. He wants his students to understand the language and to use it in teaching the Bible, more than is common among seminary graduates. I am not an expert in Hebrew grammar, but I share Bill's concern for its use in ministry. The book seems to be very complete, going beyond the text I perused in seminary. Bill presents not only the Hebrew vocabulary and forms, but much on the actual practice of textual criticism, semantic range of terms, and continuing differences among translators. He is much aware of the tendency of beginning Hebrew students to claim more knowledge than they actually have, and he issues appropriate warnings. I hope the book gets a wide usage so that it might enrich the church's teaching of the Word of God."
—**John Frame**, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando

"In my experience, students work incredibly hard to learn Hebrew. But since they don't experience firsthand the value of reading Hebrew for exegesis, a regrettable number of them don't maintain their Hebrew and therefore never get to see its payoff. Or else they are daunted by the process of using the exegetical reference tools that could help them capitalize on the skills they worked so hard to acquire.

"*Introduction to Hebrew* by Bill Fullilove, a great new resource for Hebrew teachers and students, was designed to solve that problem. Its chief brilliance lies in showing students the value of Hebrew for exegesis from the very beginning of their study. Every chapter guides the students through an exegetical exercise based on the material just learned. (Even if all they know is the alphabet!) It teaches them to use reference tools and to draw conclusions *based on their understanding of Hebrew*. This not only shows them the value of knowing Hebrew, but trains them to use those reference tools so that they come out equipped rather than intimidated by them. Hurray!

"At the same time that the book builds students' confidence in finding answers, it encourages humility in interacting with others and cautions them not to assume, as beginning students, that they *have* all the answers. That gracious word is as valuable as the skills imparted.

"Of course, many specific aspects of the book are well thought out, too: introducing verbs early; familiarizing students with morphological tendencies, such as assimilating *nuns*, but waiting to teach weak verbs until the strong verb is well learned; and drawing the practice exercises from Scripture. But its greatest benefit lies in simultaneously training students in Hebrew and in

exegesis—and building their confidence in both."
—**Elizabeth Groves**, Lecturer in Biblical Hebrew, Westminster Theological Seminary

"This is the best teaching grammar of Biblical Hebrew available today. It has no rival. Fullilove combines his expert knowledge of the language with clear and concise explanations that are oriented toward beginning students. What sets this grammar apart is its exegetical focus, showing at every turn the relevance of the language for biblical interpretation. This is the ideal textbook for college and seminary students who are preparing for Christian ministry."
—**Scott C. Jones**, Professor of Biblical Studies, Covenant College; Author, *Rumors of Wisdom: Job 28 as Poetry*

"It is a joy to commend Bill Fullilove's *Introduction to Hebrew* to present and future pastors and to serious readers of the Scripture. He has found ways to make the language so accessible and yet filled with such accuracy that many who thought Hebrew was beyond their reach will find it readily and comfortably right at hand."
—**Walter C. Kaiser Jr.**, President Emeritus, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

"Here's the book that I wish I had been given—and from which I wish I had been instructed—when I was a student of Hebrew. Ministry students are frankly goal-oriented when it comes to language study. We want our language knowledge to directly and continually enable us to interpret God's Word. Bill Fullilove's *Introduction to Hebrew* never loses sight of this goal. I highly recommend it."
—**Tim Keller**, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City

"Dr. Bill Fullilove has successfully produced a new grammar that demonstrates the benefits of Biblical Hebrew for exegetical matters. From something as basic as the alphabet to more sophisticated linguistic concepts, he provides practical steps in gaining a knowledge of Hebrew as an essential tool to understand the message of Scripture. Diligent students will find this grammar rewarding and see immediate fruits of their labors."
—**Peter Lee**, Associate Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, DC

"Many students begin their study of Biblical Hebrew with enthusiasm, but lose their zeal because they see no practical benefit. Dr. Fullilove shows beginning students the value of learning Hebrew every step of the way. His approach will encourage students to keep moving forward until they master the basic grammar of Biblical Hebrew."
—**Richard L. Pratt Jr.**, President, Third Millennium Ministries

“In my years of teaching biblical studies, I have increasingly come to understand the need to help students discern the weightier matters of the languages without neglecting the finer points. So organization and clarity are absolutely imperative. The better a professor can help students clearly see the organizational patterns of the language, the more encouraged they are to continue—and the more likely they are to succeed. Bill Fullilove’s Hebrew grammar accomplishes just that. The organization is shrewd and helpful. The clarity is unsurpassed. I look forward to using it with my own students.”
—**Nicholas G. Piotrowski**, Director of Biblical and Theological Studies and Associate Dean of Academics, Crossroads Bible College

“Fullilove accomplishes what every student, not to mention every teacher, of Biblical Hebrew wants to accomplish as quickly as possible: introducing the learner to the ancient text of Scripture. While many grammars succeed in teaching the structure and lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, this well-designed grammar reminds us early and often of the reason why we study the language and of the rich teaching we can glean from a robust exegesis of the Holy Scriptures.”
—**John Scott Redd Jr.**, President and Associate Professor of Old Testament, Reformed Theological Seminary, Washington, DC

“The product of many years of careful study and of sustained engagement with students studying Hebrew for the first time, William Fullilove’s *Introduction to Hebrew* offers a wonderful balance between detailed language instruction and exegetical engagement with the Hebrew Bible. Students will gain a strong foundation in Hebrew from this book while immediately experiencing the benefits of that study for interpreting the Bible. This combination of features will aid instructors in teaching their students and help students to sustain their motivation to study the language, two areas in which so many other grammars fail to serve their primary audiences. *Introduction to Hebrew* can and will initiate students into a lifetime of enriching interaction with the Hebrew text of the Bible.”
—**C. A. Strine**, Vice-Chancellor’s Fellow and Lecturer in Hebrew Bible, University of Sheffield; Author, *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile*

“I wish I had been given this book forty years ago! Dr. Fullilove’s Hebrew grammar is much more than a primer; it is a veritable treasure that takes students by the hand and demonstrates how we might now use what we know without overblown and self-confident claims of ‘new insights’ or ‘errors in the translation.’ An impressive and much-needed book that will help every student of Scripture profit from the original language. Enthusiastically recommended.”
—**Derek W. H. Thomas**, Robert Strong Professor of Systematic and Pastoral Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta; Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC

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To the many men and women who have patiently taught me Hebrew.

Far more, to Jill, without doubt an אֵשֶׁת חַיִל, and the one who has patiently walked beside me each step of the way.

Contents

Foreword

Writing a grammar to teach Biblical Hebrew is difficult. This is due in part to the historical development of the Hebrew text: its consonantal text was later supplemented with *matres lectionis* (consonants to represent vowels) and then even later was also provided with the Masoretic vocalization. The task of teaching such a language is simply complex. All languages consist of a subject, predicate, modifiers, and particles, such as prepositions, connecting them. But the Semitic family of languages, of which Biblical Hebrew is a member, differs significantly from the Indo-European family of languages, of which English is a member. For example, the Semitic family, unlike the Indo-European family, contains an extensive verbal system to signify causation in connection with voice. Beyond this, in the college, seminary, or university environment, Biblical Hebrew often is not taught for the value of learning the language in its own right—though it certainly has such value! Instead, Biblical Hebrew is taught to enable strong, solid exegetical work, to enable students to read the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and grasp more fully its meaning and nuance. To expect a grammar to do all of this well is simply a lot to ask.

Nevertheless, William Fullilove's *Introduction to Hebrew* succeeds admirably. This book is the best introductory option for teaching Hebrew in a seminary, college, or university setting because it combines an expert understanding of the language with clear explanations that a beginning student can easily grasp. Dr. Fullilove's teaching grammar combines several admirable features that make it so pedagogically successful:

- All its examples are from the biblical text, thereby keeping students constantly aware of their progress in reading and their growing capability.
- It quickly introduces the basic forms of the verb (Qal perfect and imperfect) in chapters 3 and 5, thereby introducing the linguistic center of the sentence as early as possible and maximizing students' practice in parsing and translating verbs.
- The full paradigm of the strong verb is taught first, enabling students to gain a basic conception of the Hebrew verbal system before being weighed down by the myriad complexities of parsing forms built from weak verbal roots.
- Weak roots are held until the second half of the grammar and then introduced by type, enabling the student to see how the phonological impact of a weak consonant carries through the verbal system in a relatively regular way. Instead of overwhelming the

student who has just been introduced to the Qal perfect, this method vastly simplifies teaching weak roots.

- Skills such as the proper use of a lexicon, the basics of word studies, and the use of the apparatus—skills that professors must usually teach in a supplemental way—are instead integrated into the grammar.
- With all of this, the grammar is not overlong, and it can easily be completed in two semesters of introductory language study.

Beyond all these features, however, what really makes this grammar sparkle is the final section of each chapter. Based on years of classroom teaching, Dr. Fullilove has crafted each final section as a set of exegetical exercises that require students to immediately apply the skills learned in that chapter to better understanding the Hebrew text. Even in chapter 1, for example, having learned only the alphabet, students are introduced to the acrostic poem and are asked (and able!) to analyze an incomplete acrostic and consider how the text of the poem is to be understood.

No better grammar is currently available to teach the beginning Hebrew student, especially the one interested in using Hebrew for the sake of biblical exegesis. In an age of slipshod preparation for ministry and exegesis, we need better-trained students who will become superior exegetes, both in the academy and in the church. This grammar is a welcome contribution to exactly that endeavor and a superb choice for the classroom teaching of Hebrew.

Bruce K. Waltke
July 2016

Preface

Why another Hebrew grammar? Simply put, many of today's Hebrew students need to be convinced of the value of their task. The common query is this: "Can't I just look it up in Bible software? Why do I bother learning the original languages?" Having devoted decades to studying Biblical Hebrew (and other Semitic languages), I remain among those who see that these languages have value simply for their own sake—learning *is* a value. Nonetheless, I recognize that the educational climate of the day requires a continually goal-oriented approach to language study. Modern students rarely do well with an approach that says, in essence, "Just learn it now, and next year we'll show you why it's relevant." Instead, the strength to press on has to come from a continual reminder of *why* the difficult study of an ancient language is valuable.

I began my career in business, and I still remember a study done by one team at our firm. It was an attempt to answer a question about forecasting: which is more accurate in predicting future trends—experts or computer models? Sometimes the answer was "the experts" and other times "the computer models." Unsurprisingly, though, by far the most effective forecasting was done by neither the experts nor the computer models, but instead by experts using computer models. By analogy with Hebrew, computer software can be exceptionally valuable and helpful, and I use it regularly. True strength in study and exegesis, however, will come from experts—students who have deeply learned the language—as they use that computer software. Such learning takes time and effort, and such effort, when given, produces great fruit.

While much of this grammar follows traditional methods, those methods are put to use in the final section of each chapter, a set of *exegetical* exercises that give the student the opportunity to immediately apply the skills developed from his or her study to the biblical text, in order to gain insights that have a practical payoff of understanding the biblical text more clearly. Along with these exercises, this grammar serves as a primer on the use of Hebrew for interpretation, introducing the use of secondary resources such as a lexicon, word-study resources, and the critical apparatus. The skills typically taught in Hebrew III or IV are instead brought forward into Hebrew I and II so that the student sees the value of his or her hard work. For many students, this is the payoff that makes the hard work of learning Biblical Hebrew worth it, the reason to return another day to the paradigms and vocabulary drills and puzzling phrases that they seek to understand. People do what they want to do. We are largely guided by our loves, and if students love Hebrew (or even like it), they will continue to use it. If they

simply “grind it out,” they will soon drop it and forget it, and all the effort—by students and professors alike—will have been for naught.

In that regard, this book has been both a love and a labor, both given to the Lord. My deep thanks are due to so many who labored with me on it. As two of my teachers, Drs. Waltke and O’Connor, often observed, all language study is cumulative. I have been blessed in life with outstanding teachers of Hebrew, and my deep thanks, both for their teaching and even more for their patience, go to Dr. Edward Chandler, Dr. Bruce Waltke, Dr. Douglas Gropp, Dr. Michael Patrick O’Connor, Dr. Adele Berlin, Dr. Edward Cook, and Dr. Andrew Gross, each of whom taught me Hebrew at one stage. No human being should be so fortunate to study with all of them. Special thanks go to Katie Kelley, who edited early drafts of this book; to my 2015–16 Hebrew class at Reformed Theological Seminary Atlanta, who worked through these materials week by week as they were formed into chapters; and to the 2016-2017 Hebrew classes at Reformed Theological Seminary Atlanta, Reformed Theological Seminary New York, and Covenant College, who endured my countless typos among the page proofs of this book. Further thanks go to the many at P&R Publishing who shepherded this book through various stages—each was a delight in interaction and expertise: Natalie Nyquist, who edited these chapters; Karen Magnuson, who patiently proofread every page; Amanda Martin, a continual resource for questions; Ian Thompson, under whose encouragement this project went forward; and John J. Hughes, who believed in this grammar and without whom it would not exist. Most importantly, thanks go to Dr. Scott Jones of Covenant College, who edited each chapter—many times twice or even three times. Quite literally, each page is better because of his work, friendship, and encouragement. (Any errors and flaws, of course, remain entirely my responsibility.) Scott is a blessing beyond measure, an expert with a gentle spirit and a dear friend. Finally, thanks go to the German Bible Society for its permission to include the reproduction of a page of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (*BHS*) in this volume.

One cannot make the study of Hebrew easy, but I hope that, by grace, this book will make it “less hard.” May יהוה be blessed if that is so.

SDG

William Fullilove

July 2016

א (1)

Learning to Speak, Part 1

1.1 The Alphabet

Hebrew is written from right to left. The Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-three consonants:

Letter	Final Form	Name	Transliteration	Pronunciation
א		*aleph*	ʾ	None (silent)
בּ (ב)		*bet*	b (b̲)	b as in “but” (v as in “vat”)
גּ (ג)		*gimel*	g (ḡ)	g as in “god” (g as in “god”)
דּ (ד)		*dalet*	d (d̲)	d as in “dog” (d as in “dog”)
ה		*heh*	h	h as in “hay”
ו		*waw*	v	v as in “vet”
ז		*zayin*	z	z as in “zip”
ח		*ḥet*	ḥ	ch as in “loch”
ט		*ṭet*	ṭ	t as in “tamp”
י		*yod*	y	y as in “yet”
כּ (כ)	ך	*kaph*	k (k̲)	k as in “kit” (ch as in “loch”)
ל		*lamed*	l	l as in “lamp”
מ	ם	*mem*	m	m as in “mom”
נ	ן	*nun*	n	n as in “noun”
ס		*samek*	s	s as in “sat”
ע		*ayin*	ʿ	None (but see below)
פּ (פ)	ף	*pe(h)*	p (p̄)	p as in “pet” (ph as in “phone”)

Letter	Final Form	Name	Transliteration	Pronunciation
צ	ץ	*ṣade*	ṣ	ts as in “bats”
ק		*qoph*	q	k as in “king”
ר		*resh*	r	r as in “rat”
שׂ		*sin*	ś	s as in “sip”
שׁ		*shin*	š	sh as in “ship”
ת (ת)		*taw*	t (t̲)	t as in “tamp” (t as in “tamp”)

Notes:

- As will be discussed in the next chapter, these **letter forms** are called the **Aramaic square script**, which was adopted for writing Hebrew after the Babylonian exile.[1] Note the danger of confusion between the following letters:
  bet (ב) and *kaph* (כ)
  gimel (ג), *waw* (ו), and *nun* (נ)
  dalet (ד), *resh* (ר), and final *kaph* (ך)
  waw (ו), *zayin* (ז), *gimel* (ג), and final *nun* (ן)
  heh (ה) and *ḥet* (ח)
  ḥet (ח) and *taw* (ת)
  samek (ס) and final *mem* (ם)
  ayin (ע) and *ṣade* (צ)
- As seen in the chart above, five letters have **final forms**: they are written slightly differently when appearing as the last letter of a word. No change in sound occurs when a letter is written in its final form. The usual form, used when the letter occurs on its own or in the midst of a word, is the **medial form**.

[1] The script commonly in use for Aramaic was “borrowed” and used to write Hebrew. Any language can be written in more than one script, as a script is merely the graphical system used to represent the sounds of the language. For example, one could write English words in the Aramaic square script: “My name is Bill.” would be מי נם אס בלל.

- Both *aleph* (א) and *ayin* (ע) represent what linguists call **glottal stops**, when the flow of air is interrupted.[2] *Aleph* is voiceless—no sound is made. *Ayin* is technically voiced ("with sound"), but its sound is difficult for English speakers to make. Therefore, most Hebrew students whose native language is English do best to treat *ayin* as silent. Remember, however, that *aleph* (א) and *ayin* (ע) are different letters.
- **Transliteration** is *writing the same sounds with different symbols*. For example, the English name *Bill* could be written in Hebrew letters using the consonants בלל plus *an i*-class vowel (see 1.3 below). It is important to be aware of transliteration values because many reference works, especially those from earlier eras, will write Hebrew words in transliteration instead of the Aramaic square script. You are not required to memorize the transliteration symbols, but you should be able to use the chart above to recognize the word being represented in transliteration.
- The **pronunciations** given here follow the modern system. The classical system, sometimes still used in academic settings, differs in the pronunciation of a few letters (see also 1.2). You should learn the modern pronunciation, but the classical pronunciation differences are noted here for completeness:

Letter	Modern Pronunciation	Classical Pronunciation
ו	v as in "vet"	w as in "wait"
ט	t as in "tamp"	t as in "top"
ק	k as in "king"	ck as in "lack"

Your instructor will detail both the best way to write the letters and his or her preference regarding modern versus classical pronunciation.

1.2 ב ג ד כ פ ת (The *Begadkephat* Letters)

As indicated above, six letters—*bet* (ב), *gimel* (ג), *dalet* (ד), *kaph* (כ), *pe(h)* (פ), and *taw* (ת)—were originally capable of two distinct pronunciations. These six letters could be pronounced either as a **stop**, when the flow of air is interrupted, or as a **spirant**, when air

[2] For example, consider the English phrase "an ice man" as opposed to "a nice man." The placement of the stoppage of air determines the correct understanding of the words in question.

flows out of the mouth during the pronunciation of the letter. Collectively, they are known by the mnemonic "the *begadkephat* letters."[3]

The *begadkephat* letters are pronounced as a stop when they follow another consonant and as a spirant when they follow a vowel. The stop, which is a "hard" sound, is indicated by a dot called the ***dagesh lene*** placed in the letter. For more on the *dagesh*, see 2.1.

The distinction in pronunciation between a stop and a spirant is preserved in modern pronunciation only for *bet* (בּ), *kaph* (כּ), and *pe(h)* (פּ) (see 1.1). The classical differences between the other three letters, again noted here only for completeness, are:

Letter	Modern Pronunciation	Classical Pronunciation
ג	g as in "god"	g as in "log"
ד	d as in "dog"	th as in "that"
ת	t as in "tamp"	th as in "thunder"

1.3 Vowels

As seen in 1.1, the Hebrew alphabet has no vowel letters. The original Hebrew text of the Old Testament was a **consonantal text** (written only in consonants). While this may seem strange to an English speaker, many languages of antiquity (and today) are written without vowel letters. In practice, a fluent speaker can usually determine and supply the necessary vowels:

> Y knw ths bcs y snd txt mssgs n yr phn.

However, due to both potential ambiguities and the eventual loss of Hebrew as an everyday language, it was eventually deemed necessary to indicate the vowels traditionally used with the consonantal text. At the time—the late first millennium A.D.—there was a strong reluctance among scribes to change in any way the consonantal text that they had received. Accordingly, the graphical representation of vowels was accomplished not by letters but by a system of **diacritics**—marks added above and below the consonants. The system of diacritics in the Hebrew Bible used by students today is from the Masoretes (for more information on the Masoretes and the Masoretic system, see 8.12.A).

[3] This mnemonic is formed by the addition of vowels to these six Hebrew consonants. The vowels themselves have no value other than making it possible to pronounce (and therefore remember) these six consonants together.

The vowel system includes the following vowels in three classes, or vowel types:

Class	Sign	Name	Length	Transliteration	Pronunciation
a	בַ	*pataḥ*	short	a	a as in “what”
	בָ	*qameṣ*	long	ā	a as in “father”
i	בֶ	*segol*	short	e	e as in “bet”
	בֵ	*ṣere*	long	ē	e as in “they”
	בִ	*ḥireq*	short or long	i or ī	i as in “hit” (short) i as in “unique” (long)
u	בָ	*qameṣ ḥatup̄*	short	o	o as in “pot”
	בֻ	*qibbuṣ*	short or long	u or ū	u as in “put” (short) u as in “rule” (long)
	בֹ	*ḥolem*	long	ō	o as in “pole”

Notes:

- The vowel signs are represented with the letter בּ, which is conventional when teaching Hebrew. Only the vowel’s sound is represented in the pronunciation column.
- The *i*-class vowels subsume the English *e*-class vowels, and the *u*-class vowels subsume the English *o*-class vowels.
- Vowels are pronounced after the letter on which their sign is written (e.g.: בַ is pronounced “ba”).[4]
- Though the *pataḥ* and *qameṣ* are, respectively, short and long vowels, their pronunciation in practice is often indistinguishable.
- For space considerations, a vowel following a final *kaph* (ךָ) or *nun* (ן) is written just to its left (e.g.: ךַ).

[4] For the one exception, see 5.5.

- When written over a *sin* (שׂ) or a *shin* (שׁ), the *ḥolem* may merge with the supralinear dot on the consonant.
- The *qameṣ* and the *qameṣ ḥatup̄* are graphically indistinguishable. The rules for distinguishing the two are covered in 2.5.

1.4 *Shewa*

The symbol ְ placed under a consonant (e.g.: בְּ) is called ***shewa***. There are two types of *shewa* in Hebrew: the **silent *shewa*** and the **vocal *shewa***. The silent *shewa* has no phonetic value (no pronunciation) and therefore is not transliterated. The vocal *shewa* is pronounced with a "scooped" vowel, sounding much like the first sound in the English word *abuse*.[5] It is transliterated with an inverted *e* (e.g.: *bə*), a superscript *e* (e.g.: b^e), or the symbol ĕ. The rules for distinguishing the silent *shewa* from the vocal *shewa* will be covered in 2.3.

1.5 Syllables

Hebrew words may be divided into syllables by the application of two rules:

1. Each syllable begins with one consonant. The only exception is the conjunction וּ (û), which will be introduced later.
2. Each syllable contains one, and only one, vowel. (A vocal *shewa* is considered a vowel for syllabification.)

Syllables can end in either a vowel or a consonant. A syllable ending in a vowel is called an **open syllable**, and a syllable ending in a consonant is called a **closed syllable**. Open syllables are sometimes noted in grammars as being the CV (Consonant + Vowel) pattern, and closed syllables are noted as being the CVC (Consonant + Vowel + Consonant) pattern.

Thus the Hebrew word מֶלֶךְ (*meleḵ* = "king") has two syllables: לֶךְ | מֶ (*me*| *leḵ*).

[5] The vocal *shewa* is sometimes termed a "half vowel" because it has a shorter pronunciation than the vowels introduced in 1.3.

1.6 Stress

Most Hebrew words have their accent (stress) on the final syllable. Developing this stress pattern in speech is often difficult for English speakers, since English more often stresses the first syllable of a word. If a word is stressed on the final syllable, no accent mark will be given in the vocabulary section. If a word is normally stressed on a syllable other than the final syllable, the stress will be marked. For example, מֶלֶךְ, given above, is stressed on the first syllable and will appear in the vocabulary as מֶ֫לֶךְ (*mé*| *le*ḵ).

1.7 Vocabulary

As will be discussed in later chapters, the English provided after each Hebrew word is technically not a definition of that word; it is a **gloss**, an English summary that corresponds (though imperfectly) to a meaning of the Hebrew word. These glosses must be memorized. The *shewa* in the word מְאֹד below is vocal, while the *shewa* in מַלְאָךְ is silent.[6]

אָדָם	man, mankind; Adam
אֶל	(prep.) to, toward
אֵל	god; God
אִם	(conj.) if
אֶרֶץ	earth, ground; land; country
אֵשׁ	fire
גַּם	also, even; as well as
דָּבָר	word; thing, affair, matter
דָּם	blood
הַר	hill, hill country, mountain
חַי	living, alive
יָם	sea, lake
לֹא	no, not
לָכֵן	(adv.) therefore
מְאֹד	(adv.) very, exceedingly
מַלְאָךְ	angel, messenger
מִן	(prep.) from
רֹאשׁ	head, top, chief
שָׁם	(adv.) there; then

[6] The glosses in this grammar were derived by consulting and comparing three major English language lexica: Brown Driver Briggs (BDB), Dictionary of Classical Hebrew (DCH), and the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT).

1.8 Language Exercises

A. Write the Hebrew alphabet in order, from right to left. Practice until you can do so easily.

B. Divide each word into syllables. Then, using your knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet, look up the following words in the lexicon assigned by your instructor. Write down the first gloss provided for each word.

1. דֶּרֶךְ
2. כֹּהֵן
3. כֶּסֶף
4. זָהָב
5. מֶלֶךְ
6. מְנָחָה
7. לָכֵן
8. חָזָק
9. זָקֵן
10. פָּרָכֶת

C. Practice reading the following sentences aloud. (Verse numbers are provided if you wish to know what you are reading.)

Any instance of *shewa* in this section is vocal. Marks other than the vowel diacritics you have learned are part of the Masoretic accentual system and will be explained later. In the last example, יְהוָה is the Tetragrammaton, the divine name, which is always pronounced "*adonai.*"[7]

Gen. 1:1	בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃
Gen. 2:10a	וְנָהָר יֹצֵא מֵעֵדֶן
Gen. 2:17a (alt.)	וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טֹב וָרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ
Gen. 3:1 (alt.)	וְהַנָּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מִכֹּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אַף כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכֹּל עֵץ הַגָּן׃

[7] *Adonai* is the addition of the possessive suffix *-ay* ("my") to אָדוֹן from the vocabulary above. When reading the text *adonai* is substituted for יהוה out of deference to the traditional reticence to speak the personal name of God.

1.9 Exegetical Exercises—The Acrostic

A. Acrostic Poems. An **acrostic** is a Hebrew poem in which each successive verse or stanza begins with the next successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is a famous example; each stanza of the poem is composed of verses that begin with the letter of the Hebrew alphabet corresponding to that stanza.

1. Look up Psalm 119 in your Hebrew Bible. Which verses start with *gimel* (ג)? How many are there? Which verses start with *ayin* (ע)? How many are there?

2. Look at Psalm 145 in your *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) or *Biblica Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ). This chapter is also an acrostic.

    a. How many verses are in the psalm? How does this compare to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet? What letters are missing?

    b. One letter is missing because verse 20 covers both *sin* and *shin*, which is unsurprising since the dot that distinguishes these letters is probably a later diacritical mark, not an original consonantal distinction. (The symbol שׂ most likely stood for both *s* and *sh*.) The other missing letter has a more complex explanation. Which other letter is missing?

c. Look at Psalm 145 in the NIV and ESV. Notice that all the verses, except one, are similar in length and fall easily into halves. Which verse in the English translation does not fit this pattern? Why?

d. If you compare the English verse 13 to the Hebrew, you will find that the English translation includes two lines of poetry not present in BHS: "The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works" (ESV). How would you justify this seeming addition to the Hebrew text? The copy of Psalm 145 found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran (11QPs[a]) has an additional line of poetry:

נאמן אלוהים בדבריו וחסיד בכול־מעשיו

Likewise, the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, made in the last centuries B.C., contains an extra line labeled as verse 13a: πιστὸς κύριος ἐν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ὅσιος ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ. If one were to back-translate this into Hebrew, it would likely have been written as:

נֶאֱמָן יהוה בְּכָל־דְּבָרָיו וְחָסִיד בְּכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו

Both the Greek and the Hebrew would be translated as the ESV has done. What letter begins this proposed line of poetry in Hebrew?

e. Given the witness of the Septuagint translation, the presence of the *nun* line in manuscripts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and its presence in the Syriac translation of the Hebrew, most interpreters surmise that a copyist accidentally skipped the *nun* line of the poem, leaving the manuscript that is reproduced in BHS with a copyist error. Accordingly, most major English translations restore this line and consider it part of Psalm 145. The NIV, ESV, and other translations have not misled you when they add a line to verse 13; they are restoring what they believe to be the original composition.

B. Hebrew Bible Book Names and Order. The Hebrew Scriptures are grouped into three sections: the תּוֹרָה (“Torah”), the נְבִיאִים (“Prophets”), and the כְּתוּבִים (“Writings”), hence the common designation of the Hebrew Scriptures as the תנ״ך (often written in English as “Tanakh”). The order here is that used by BHS.

כְּתוּבִים (Writings)	נְבִיאִים (Prophets)		תּוֹרָה (Torah)
	אַחֲרוֹנִים (Latter)	רִאשׁוֹנִים (Former)	
תְּהִלִּים (Psalms)	יְשַׁעְיָהוּ (Isaiah)	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Joshua)	בְּרֵאשִׁית (Genesis)
אִיּוֹב (Job)	יִרְמְיָהוּ (Jeremiah)	שֹׁפְטִים (Judges)	שְׁמוֹת (Exodus)
מִשְׁלֵי (Proverbs)	יְחֶזְקֵאל (Ezekiel)	שְׁמוּאֵל א (1 Samuel)	וַיִּקְרָא (Leviticus)
רוּת (Ruth)	הוֹשֵׁעַ (Hosea)	שְׁמוּאֵל ב (2 Samuel)	בַּמִּדְבָּר (Numbers)
שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (Song of Songs)	יוֹאֵל (Joel)	מְלָכִים א (1 Kings)	דְּבָרִים (Deuteronomy)
קֹהֶלֶת (Ecclesiastes)	עָמוֹס (Amos)	מְלָכִים ב (2 Kings)	
אֵיכָה (Lamentations)	עֹבַדְיָה (Obadiah)		
אֶסְתֵּר (Esther)	יוֹנָה (Jonah)		
דָּנִיֵּאל (Daniel)	מִיכָה (Micah)		
עֶזְרָא (Ezra)	נַחוּם (Nahum)		
נְחֶמְיָה (Nehemiah)	חֲבַקּוּק (Habakkuk)		
דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים א (1 Chronicles)	צְפַנְיָה (Zephaniah)		
דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים ב (2 Chronicles)	חַגַּי (Haggai)		
	זְכַרְיָה (Zechariah)		
	מַלְאָכִי (Malachi)		

Note that BHS, which follows the Leningrad Codex for its text, has a different order of books within the כְּתוּבִים than many other editions of the תנ״ך. BHS also gives book titles in Latin on the facing pages. Using the chart above, find each of the following books in BHS and write its corresponding Latin title and English name.

Hebrew Book Name	Latin Book Name	English Book Name
וַיִּקְרָא		
מִשְׁלֵי		
דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים א		
מְלָכִים א		
מַלְאָכִי		
שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים		
קֹהֶלֶת		

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