

Greek for the REST of US

Using Greek Tools
without Mastering Biblical Languages

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A P P E N D I X

Hebrew for the Rest of Us



Congratulations. You've made it through Greek. You've learned enough to handle many of the issues that will arise in the study of the New Testament. But what about the first three-fourths of the Bible, the Old Testament?

A companion volume, *Hebrew for the Rest of Us™*, would have significant overlap with this book. Lessons we learned on exegesis and word studies and many other areas would be repeated. But it would also include enough new material that it deserves its own book.

But because so many classes on Greek tools want to expose their students to some Hebrew, I have included this appendix. I am indebted to my good friends Gary Pratico and Miles Van Pelt for the following. At their suggestion, most of the following material is taken directly from their first-year Hebrew grammar, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Zondervan, 2001).

Hebrew Alphabet

The Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-three consonants or letters. For the “baby Hebrew” approach, you probably need to learn only the names of the letters and their transliteration.

<i>Hebrew letter</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>
א	<i>Alef</i>	silent	ʾ
ב	<i>Bet</i>	<i>b</i> as in <i>boy</i>	<i>b</i>
ג	<i>Gimel</i>	<i>g</i> as in <i>God</i>	<i>g</i>
ד	<i>Dalet</i>	<i>d</i> as in <i>day</i>	<i>d</i>
ה	<i>He</i>	<i>h</i> as in <i>hay</i>	<i>h</i>
ו	<i>Waw</i>	<i>w</i> as in <i>way</i>	<i>w</i>
ז	<i>Zayin</i>	<i>z</i> as in <i>Zion</i>	<i>z</i>
ח	<i>Het</i>	<i>ch</i> as in <i>Bach</i>	<i>ḥ</i>
ט	<i>Tet</i>	<i>t</i> as in <i>toy</i>	<i>ṭ</i>
י	<i>Yod</i>	<i>y</i> as in <i>yes</i>	<i>y</i>
כ	<i>Kaf</i>	<i>k</i> as in <i>king</i>	<i>k</i>
ל	<i>Lamed</i>	<i>l</i> as in <i>lion</i>	<i>l</i>
מ	<i>Mem</i>	<i>m</i> as in <i>mother</i>	<i>m</i>
נ	<i>Nun</i>	<i>n</i> as in <i>now</i>	<i>n</i>
ס	<i>Samek</i>	<i>s</i> as in <i>sin</i>	<i>s</i>
ע	<i>Ayin</i>	silent	ʿ
פ	<i>Pe</i>	<i>p</i> as in <i>pastor</i>	<i>p</i>
צ	<i>Tsade</i>	<i>ts</i> as in <i>boots</i>	<i>ṣ</i>
ק	<i>Qof</i>	<i>k</i> as in <i>king</i>	<i>q</i>
ר	<i>Resh</i>	<i>r</i> as in <i>run</i>	<i>r</i>
ש	<i>Sin</i>	<i>s</i> as in <i>sin</i>	<i>ś</i>
שׁ	<i>Shin</i>	<i>sh</i> as in <i>ship</i>	<i>š</i>
ת	<i>Taw</i>	<i>t</i> as in <i>toy</i>	<i>t</i>

Final Forms. Five of the Hebrew letters have final forms. That is to say, when one of these letters occurs at the end of a word, it is written differently than when it appears at the beginning or in the middle of a word, like the Greek sigma. The changing of a letter’s form, however, does not change its pronunciation or transliteration.

Regular form	Final form	Example	Transliteration	Translation
כ	ך	דרך	<i>drk</i>	road, way
מ	ם	עם	<i>‘m</i>	nation, people
נ	ן	זקן	<i>zqn</i>	old man, elder
ש	שׁ	כסף	<i>ksp</i>	money, silver
א	אׁ	ארץ	<i>‘rṣ</i>	earth, land

Transliteration. It is important to learn the system of transliteration, not for the purpose of pronouncing or reading biblical Hebrew, but for studying other books that refer to Hebrew words without using Hebrew characters. Many commentaries, word study books, theological dictionaries, and other language tools do not use Hebrew font characters but only their transliterations. In most instances, these books will list their system of transliteration somewhere at the beginning; be sure to check them out because different books follow slightly different transliteration schemes, especially the vowels.

Right to left. Hebrew is written right to left (but when it is transliterated it is written left to right). For example, the word “king” is written in Hebrew as מֶלֶךְ (read from right to left) but it is transliterated as *mlk* (read from left to right). Here is the alphabet written out right to left.

א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת

Hebrew Vowels

You might be surprised to learn that originally the Hebrew language had no *written* system of vowels. This does not mean, however, that Hebrew vowels did not exist. While they did not exist in written form, they had always been present in the *spoken* form of the language. If we were to take the vowels out of the English writing system, these vowels would still be present in the spoken form.

Let’s use the English translation of Deut 6:5 as an example: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart.” Without the vowels, we are left with a series of consonants, much like the ancient written form of Hebrew:

Lv th Lrd yr Gd wth ll yr hrt.

In order to read this sentence out loud, you would need to rely on your

knowledge of English and supply the necessary vowels. In the same way, when Joshua read the entire law of Moses to the Israelites (Joshua 8), he had before him a consonantal text with no vowels. This required Joshua to supply from memory the necessary vowels when reading.

Fortunately for us, this is not the case today. In the second half of the first millennium A.D., a group of dedicated scribes called *Masoretes* became concerned with preserving the spoken form of Hebrew. They developed an elaborate system of vowel notation called *pointing*. This pointing system was designed to preserve the spoken system of vowels in the written text. Because the masoretic scribes considered the biblical text to be sacred, their vowel symbols were designed in such a way as never to alter the original consonantal text. To do this, the Masoretes developed vowel symbols that were placed under, inside (to the left), or above the consonantal characters.

Let's look again at Deut 6:5 but this time in Hebrew. You will notice that the consonants are exactly the same in both examples. In the second example, however, the masoretic vowel pointing system has been added.

ואהבת את יהוה אלהיך בכל לבבך
 וְאֶת־הַבֵּת אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ

First-year Hebrew students often struggle to understand how the consonants and vowels go together. Perhaps the following chart will help. מֶלֶךְ (*melek*) is formed like this:

מ ← .. ← ל ← .. ← ך

Because we are pursuing the “baby Hebrew” approach, all that you need to be aware of are the names of the vowels and how they are transliterated. The names of the vowel categories below are not important for you.

	Symbol	Vowel Name	Pronunciation	Transliteration
<i>Short vowels</i>				
a-type	ַ	Pathach	<i>a</i> as in <i>bat</i>	<i>a</i>
e-type	ֶ	Seghol	<i>e</i> as in <i>better</i>	<i>e</i>
i-type	ִ	Hireq	<i>i</i> as in <i>bitter</i>	<i>i</i>
o-type	ֹ	Qamets Hatuf	<i>o</i> as in <i>bottle</i>	<i>o</i>
u-type	ֻ	Qibbutz	<i>u</i> as in <i>ruler</i>	<i>u</i>
<i>Changeable long vowels</i>				
a-type	ָ	Qamets	<i>a</i> as in <i>father</i>	<i>ā</i>
e-type	ֵ	Tsere	<i>e</i> as in <i>they</i>	<i>ē</i>
o-type	ֹ	Holem	<i>o</i> as in <i>role</i>	<i>ō</i>
<i>Unchangeable long vowels</i>				
a-type	ֶּ	Qamets He	<i>a</i> as in <i>father</i>	<i>â</i>
e-type	ֵּ	Tsere Yod	<i>e</i> as in <i>they</i>	<i>ê</i>
	ֶּ	Seghol Yod	<i>e</i> as in <i>better</i>	<i>ê</i>
i-type	ִּ	Hireq Yod	<i>i</i> as in <i>machine</i>	<i>î</i>
o-type	ֹּ	Holem Waw	<i>o</i> as in <i>role</i>	<i>ô</i>
u-type	ֻּ	Shureq	<i>u</i> as in <i>ruler</i>	<i>û</i>
<i>Reduced vowels</i>				
a-type	ְ	Hateph Pathach	<i>a</i> as in <i>amuse</i>	<i>ă</i>
e-type	ֱ	Hateph Seghol	<i>a</i> as in <i>amuse</i>	<i>ĕ</i>
o-type	ֲ	Hateph Qamets	<i>a</i> as in <i>amuse</i>	<i>ō</i>

Shewa. You will notice in the last chart that each reduced vowel is joined with a pair of vertical dots on the right side of the vowel symbol. These vertical dots also occur without an accompanying vowel (ְ). This vowel sign is called *Shewa*. The Shewa is not listed separately in the above vowel charts because it is not like any other vowel.

There are two types of Shewa in Hebrew: *Silent Shewa* and *Vocal Shewa*. The Silent Shewa is never pronounced and never transliterated. The Vocal Shewa maintains a *hurried* pronunciation and sounds like the *a* in *amuse*. It is transliterated either as an upside-down *e* (ְ, *bə*) or as a superscript *e* (ְ, *b^e*).

Advanced Information on the Consonants

Easily confused letters. For the beginning student, certain groups of consonants can sometimes look alike and become confused (just as in English with the capital *I* and lowercase *l* in the word “Idol”). You have probably also observed that different Hebrew letters can sound alike (just as in English with the *c* in “cat” and the *k* in “kite”). In order to avoid any confusion, it is sometimes helpful to compare the following characters and carefully note the distinguishing features. However, their transliterated values are quite distinct.

1. ב (Bet) and כ (Kaf)
2. ג (Gimel) and נ (Nun)
3. ה (He) and ח (Het) and ט (Taw)
4. שׁ (Sin) and שׂ (Shin)
5. ם (final Mem) and ם (Samek)
6. ד (Dalet) and ר (Resh)
7. צ (Tsade) and ע (Ayin)
8. ו (Waw) and ז (Zayin)
9. ן (final Nun) and ן (final Kaf)

Begadkephat letters. Six of the Hebrew consonants have two possible, but closely related, pronunciations. Collectively, these are known as the *begadkephat* consonants. This term is simply a mnemonic device allowing for the easy memorization of these six letters (ה כ פ ט ד ג ב). To distinguish between the two pronunciations, a dot called a Daghes Lene was inserted into the consonantal character (הּ כּ פּ טּ דּ גּ בּ). The presence of the Daghes Lene indicates a hard pronunciation and its absence denotes a soft pronunciation. A Daghes Lene will only appear in the *begadkephat* letters. Each letter without the Daghes Lene is sometimes transliterated with a small horizontal line either above or below the English character.

<i>Begadkephat letter</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>
ב	<i>b</i> as in <i>boy</i>	<i>b</i>
בּ	<i>v</i> as in <i>vine</i>	<i>ḅ</i>

ג	<i>g</i> as in <i>God</i>	<i>g</i>
ג	<i>gh</i> as in <i>ag^hast</i>	<i>ḡ</i>
ד	<i>d</i> as in <i>day</i>	<i>d</i>
ד	<i>dh</i> as in <i>the</i>	<i>d̄</i>
כ	<i>k</i> as in <i>king</i>	<i>k</i>
כ	<i>ch</i> as in <i>Bach</i>	<i>k̄</i>
פ	<i>p</i> as in <i>pastor</i>	<i>p</i>
פ	<i>ph</i> as in <i>alphabet</i>	<i>p̄</i>
ת	<i>t</i> as in <i>toy</i>	<i>t</i>
ת	<i>th</i> as in <i>thin</i>	<i>t̄</i>

Hebrew Words

Roots and stems. Many nouns and verbs share the same consonants. For example,

מֶלֶךְ	king	➤	מִלְכָּה	to reign
דְּבָר	word	➤	דִּבֶּר	to speak
מִשְׁפֵּט	judgment	➤	שָׁפַט	to judge

Notice how each pair shares a common set of consonants and related definitions. The reason for this relationship is due to the fact that they share a common root. It is important to understand the distinction between a root and those words derived from that root. It is a distinction between root and stem.

Hebrew roots are typically composed of three consonants (triconsonantal), occasionally two (biconsonantal). *A root represents the origin or simplest form from which any number of Hebrew words are derived.* From a root, therefore, any number of nouns or verbs may be derived. *A stem is the most basic form of any word derived from a root.*

For example, from the triconsonantal root מֶלֶךְ comes the noun stems מֶלֶךְ (king), מַלְכָּה (queen), מַלְכוּת (kingdom), and the verb stem מִלְכָּה (to reign, be king). Once again, notice how each different word shares a common set of consonants and related definitions. This relationship is based upon the sharing of a common root.

Word studies, cognate words, and cognate languages. Word studies will often take these related forms into consideration. The meaning of most Hebrew words is quite clear. However, the meaning of some words is less clear, and writers will often turn to related Hebrew words to help determine the meaning of these words.

If related Hebrew words do not help, writers will often resort to looking at related or cognate languages (e.g., Akkadian, Arabic, Aramaic, Egyptian, Ugaritic) in order to determine what a particular Hebrew word may mean.

Lexical form for Hebrew verbs. The lexical form of any triconsonantal verb is the Qal Perfect third person masculine singular.

Person, gender, and number. In English, a verb by itself does not have person, gender, or number (e.g., “study”). (Greek verbs, likewise, do not designate gender.) It must be supplied by the addition of a personal pronoun (e.g., “she studied”). However, in Hebrew, most verbs have person, gender, and number. These verbal characteristics are indicated by certain patterns of inflection. For example, the verb **כָּתַב** means “he wrote” and the verb **כָּתְבָהּ** means “she wrote.” The different ending indicates person, gender, and number.

Even though most Hebrew verbs are capable of indicating person, gender, and number by themselves, verbs may also occur with independent personal pronouns. For example, **אֲנִי כָּתַבְתִּי** and **כָּתַבְתִּי אֲנִי** are both translated “I wrote.” Because Hebrew verbs by themselves indicate person, gender, and number, the addition of an independent personal pronoun typically expresses some type of emphasis.

With regard to person, Hebrew verbs can be first person (I, we), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they). With regard to number, Hebrew verbs will be either singular (I, you, he, she, it) or plural (we, you, they). And with regard to gender, Hebrew verbs will be either masculine (he), feminine (she), or common (I, we, they).

Software. If you are using a tool such as a software program like *Accordance* to look at a Hebrew word, you will quickly notice that when you move the cursor over what appears to be a single word, the software is telling you the one form is actually multiple words. In fact, a single cluster of Hebrew letters, something that looks like a single word to most of us, may in fact represent an entire clause consisting of multiple lexical items or words. For example, the single Hebrew construction **וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל מִיָּה**

actually consists of three different lexical items. The initial letter (ו) is the Hebrew conjunction translated “and.” The last letter (ה) is a third person, feminine singular, pronominal suffix translated “her.” The middle section of this Hebrew construction (אהב) contains a verb that we can translate as “he loved.” When we put it all together, this single Hebrew construction represents an entire English clause translated “and he loved her.” This example represents a common feature of the Hebrew language. That is, Hebrew nouns and verbs can take a number of prefixes (such as conjunctions, prepositions, or the definite article) and/or suffixes (such as pronominal suffixes with objective or possessive translation values) that have their own distinct lexical values.

Doing Hebrew Word Studies

John Kohlenberger has written an excellent interlinear, *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament* (Zondervan, 1979). This can help you find the Hebrew word behind the English, but because of the issues I have been raising, this may not be the best choice for you.

You can use an exhaustive concordance that lists the number of the Hebrew word at the end of the entry. Some of the software programs also give you access to the Hebrew behind the English.

If you want to do serious word study, we are pleased to have the five-volume *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. VanGemeren (Zondervan, 1997). It is also available in software. VanGemeren organized the Hebrew words based on their GK number, so once you have the number it is easy to find the word. This is as advanced as you will need, and it is a trustworthy resource. You can also use Kohlenberger’s *The English-Hebrew Concordance to the Old Testament* that, like its Greek counterpart, will list in English every verse that uses a specific Hebrew word, in order to discover the word’s semantic range. *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Moody, 1980), is not as detailed but may be helpful. *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, a multi-volume word study edited by Botterweck and Ringgren (Eerdmans), is considerably advanced for the “baby Hebrew” student.

Commentaries on the Old Testament are usually less than helpful. The more technical commentaries are often more concerned with “scholarly” issues (and less with the meaning of the biblical text) such as ancient Near

Eastern parallels and source criticism. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* is worth purchasing, and it plus two good study Bibles are probably your best bet. You may also want to look at *The New American Commentary* (Broadman Press) and the *NIV Application Commentary* (Zondervan). If you want to work with biblical and theological teaching, you may want to pick up the commentaries by Calvin and Luther. For a helpful listing of Old Testament Commentaries see Douglas Stuart, *A Guide to Selecting and Using Bible Commentaries* (Word, 1990).

Advanced Word Studies: Choosing and Using a Hebrew Lexicon

It may be that you do not need a Hebrew lexicon. The information in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* will be easier for you to understand and probably more than you need. But if you want a Hebrew lexicon, there are two types of lexicons: *standard* and *analytical*. The most important is the standard lexicon.

The Standard Lexicon

For the beginning student, the choice of a standard lexicon is somewhat limited. For reasons of cost and quality, there are basically two possibilities. The standard lexicon is by F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson, 1979), referred to as *BDB*. An easier lexicon to use is by W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

BDB, unfortunately, has two significant liabilities: (1) It is seriously outdated and (2) despite a cross-referencing system, it is difficult for a beginning student to use because its entries are not arranged alphabetically but according to verbal root. For example, the noun מִצְוָה (command) is not entered alphabetically under מ but rather under צ because מִצְוָה is derived from the verbal root צָוָה (to command). For many words you may have little difficulty identifying the verbal root from which a word is derived, but the verbal root for many entries is difficult to identify. For example, the noun מוֹשֵׁב is listed under שָׁב, and תוֹרָה is listed under רָה. As you can see, the ordering of *BDB* by verbal root requires a fairly advanced understanding of the so-called weak verbal roots. All of this is certainly not to suggest that *BDB* is unusable by the beginning student. Just be aware that it can be difficult to find certain words in *BDB*.

There are two resources available that can help with navigating *BDB*. The first is an index arranged by chapter and verse: Bruce Einspahr, *Index to Brown, Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976). The second resource is the electronic version of *BDB* available with Accordance and other software programs. With the electronic version, you can search *BDB* in a number of different ways (by entry, English gloss, English content, Hebrew content, Greek content). Additionally, the Hebrew text of *Accordance* is linked to the *BDB* lexicon. This means that you can search *BDB* automatically by “triple-clicking” on a word in the Hebrew text.

For the beginning student, the Holladay lexicon is to be preferred over *BDB*. Though it is an abridged version of an earlier lexicon,* its great advantage over *BDB* is that it offers an alphabetical ordering of all entries rather than an arrangement by verbal root.

It takes time to learn how to use any lexicon effectively. While it is not our intention to provide exhaustive instructions on the use of the Holladay lexicon, a few suggestions and observations should be helpful.

1. Given that words are entered alphabetically in the Holladay lexicon, make sure that you have memorized the alphabet in its proper sequence. If you have not memorized the Hebrew alphabet in order, it will be difficult to look up words.

2. Remember that many consonants sound and look alike. Be certain that your search in the lexicon is conducted with the correct consonants and vowels. For example, the consonant שׁ precedes שׂ in the lexicon and your best efforts will not locate שׂר (official, leader) under שׁ . Similarly, confusion between ס and שׁ will produce difficulty as with אם (if) and אשׁ (with). Imagine the awkwardness of a translation that confuses אמר (terror, fear) with אשר (maidservant).

3. Holladay is both a Hebrew and an Aramaic lexicon. While there is much in common between the two languages, you must restrict your search to the Hebrew portion of the lexicon. The Aramaic entries are listed in the last few pages of the lexicon (396-425).

4. In the Holladay lexicon, words are located according to the sequence of consonants and not according to vowels. The one important

* L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958).

exception is that the unchangeable long vowels (vowel letters) are considered to be consonantal. For example, *הַלְלוּהָ* (praise, glory) precedes *הַלְלוּהָ* (song of thanksgiving) because the Holem Waw of *הַלְלוּהָ* is treated as a consonant in terms of location in the lexicon.

5. Nouns are listed in a standard lexicon in their singular (lexical) form, such as *דָּבָר* (masculine singular) or *הַלְלוּהָ* (feminine singular). The entry is sometimes followed by gender identification and the frequency of occurrence in parentheses. Variant spellings of a noun (such as defective spelling) are sometimes provided immediately after the lexical form or after the frequency statistic. Before the range of a word's meaning is given, a number of additional forms are listed that generally include: the construct singular form, the singular noun with selected pronominal suffixes, the absolute plural form, the construct plural form, and the plural form with a selection of pronominal suffixes. This selection of forms is then followed by the range of meaning, often with specific biblical references. Remember, however, that the Holladay lexicon is an abridged lexicon and so the presentation of word meaning and biblical attestation is not comprehensive. In order to get a sense of the arrangement of noun entries, look over the entries for *דָּבָר* (word), *הַלְלוּהָ* (law), *מַלְאָךְ* (messenger), and *אֶבֶן* (stone). Remember too that in Hebrew, the definite article (*הַ*) is attached to a noun (e.g., *הַדָּבָר*), and you need to drop the letter to look up the Hebrew word.

6. Verbs are listed in a standard lexicon in their Qal Perfect third person masculine singular form, such as *כָּתַב* (to write) or *בָּנָה* (to build). The only exception to this practice is the listing of biconsonantal verbs in their Qal Infinitive Construct form. As with nouns, frequency statistics are sometimes provided for verbs. Entries are arranged according to a verb's attestation in the Qal and derived stems. For example, the verb *אָכַל* (to eat) is presented in the categories of Qal, Niphal, Pual and Hiphil because these are the stems in which this verb is attested. When looking up a verb in the lexicon, it is important that you correctly identify the verbal stem and consult the appropriate category for verbal meaning. In other words, when you are looking for the definition of a particular verb and that verb appears in the biblical text as a Niphal, you must be sure to check its meaning in the Niphal category.

After you have located the correct verb and identified the correct stem, you will encounter two basic types of information. First, you will see a

selection of inflected forms (Perfect, Imperfect, Imperative, etc.). Next, the range of verbal meaning is given (with a small selection of biblical references). The Perfect and Imperfect selection will frequently include forms with pronominal suffixes. Sometimes suffixes are shown on the Imperative, Infinitive, and Participle. Note, however, that the person, gender, and number of the suffixes are not identified nor are the Infinitives labeled as Construct or Absolute.

7. The arrangement of entries for other parts of speech is similar to that of nouns and verbs. Familiarity with how all of the entries are arranged will come from your frequent use of the lexicon.

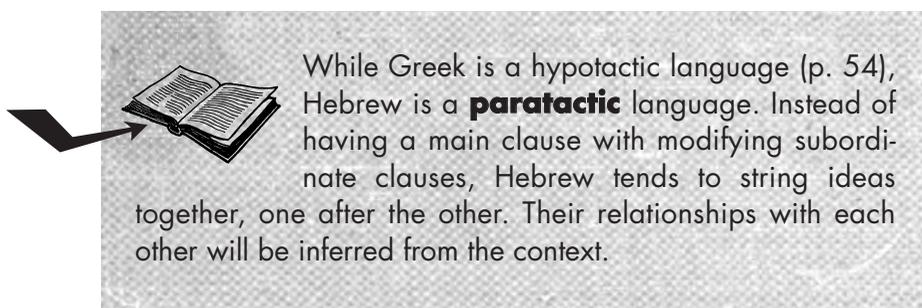
8. Unfortunately, the Holladay lexicon does not translate or give the meaning for most proper names. Masculine names of persons, places, and gentilics (Egyptian, Israelite, Moabite, etc.) are simply identified as “n.pers.” and feminine forms are labeled “n.pers.f.”

9. It is best to begin your exposure to the Holladay lexicon by reading the introduction and then familiarizing yourself with the list of abbreviations located in the beginning of the lexicon.

10. The effective use of any lexicon takes time, concentration, and a concern for painstaking detail. Be patient! With persistence, you will gradually acquire the ability to use a standard lexicon effectively.

The Analytical Lexicon

The comments above have focused on choosing and using a standard lexicon. As noted at the beginning of this discussion, there is another type of lexicon that is known as an “analytical lexicon.” An analytical lexicon is basically a parsing guide. Unlike a standard lexicon, an analytical lexicon lists *inflected* forms with full parsing information. For example, if you were unable to identify a form like **קָתַבְתָּ** (an inflected verbal form), an analyti-



cal lexicon will provide its full parsing information (Qal Perfect second person masculine singular from **קָטַב**) with translation. Similarly, a noun or preposition with a pronominal suffix will be identified by its lexical form and the person, gender, and number of the suffix.

The same information is available more quickly from several of the software packages. As you move the cursor over the Hebrew word, its lexical form, parsing, and other information is shown.

The analytical lexicon that is the easiest to use is the work by J. J. Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989). These volumes are arranged according to the canonical ordering of the Old Testament in the Protestant tradition (Genesis-Malachi), progressing chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Every word or phrase in each verse is identified together with its page location in *BDB*. The translation of each word or phrase generally follows the RSV. Other analytical lexicons include those by B. Davidson, *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956) and T. S. Beall and W. A. Banks, *Old Testament Parsing Guide* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).

Verbal Stems

In the Hebrew verbal system, there are seven major stems: the Qal, Niphal, Piel, Pual, Hiphil, Hophal, and Hithpael. The Qal stem is the basic or simple verbal stem. From the Qal stem all other verbal stems are formed. For this reason, the Niphal through Hithpael stems are called “derived stems” because their forms are derived or based on the Qal stem. Verbal stems tell us two things about the action or meaning of a verb: the type of verbal action and the voice of verbal action.

In Hebrew, there are three basic categories of verbal action: *simple* action (e.g., to break), *intensive* action (e.g., to smash into pieces) and *causative* action (e.g., to cause to break). There are also three basic categories of verbal voice: *active*, *passive*, and *reflexive*. The first two are the same distinction as found in Greek. With the reflexive voice (which is somewhat like the Greek middle voice), the subject of the verb is both doing and receiving the action of the verb. In the example “David dressed himself,” David is both performing and receiving the verbal action.

Understanding the basic significance of a verbal stem is necessary if you are going to follow the discussion in a commentary.

1. **Qal**. The Qal is the simple or basic verbal stem. Qal verbs are active

in voice, though a few passive forms do exist. The Qal stem also exhibits the simple or unnuanced type of action. For example, “he heard.”

2. Niphal. The Niphal stem is used to express simple action with either a passive or reflexive voice. In other words, whatever a verb means in the Qal stem, it becomes passive or reflexive in the Niphal stem. An example of a translated Niphal verb is “he was heard” (passive) or “he heard himself” (reflexive).

3. Piel. The Piel stem is sometimes used to express an intensive type of action with an active voice. In other words, the simple action of the Qal stem will take on some type of intensive nuance in the Piel stem. For example, a verb meaning “he broke” in the Qal stem can mean “he smashed into pieces” in the Piel stem.

4. Pual. The Pual is the passive form of the Piel. The Pual stem, therefore, is used to express an intensive type of action with a passive voice. For example, the Piel verb meaning “he smashed into pieces” would be translated in the Pual stem as “he (it) was smashed into pieces.”

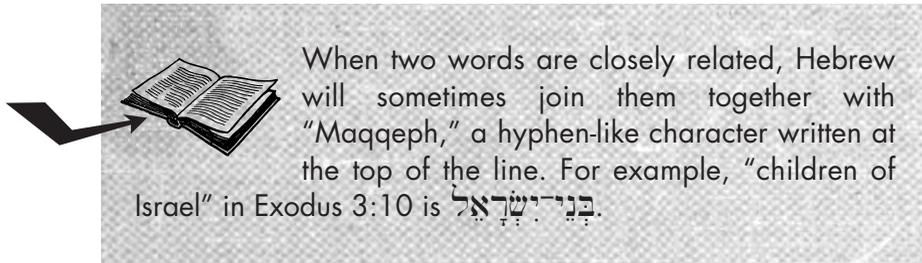
5. Hiphil. The Hiphil stem is used to express causative action with an active voice. For example, a Qal verb meaning “he was king” or “he reigned” would be translated “he caused to reign” or “he made (someone) king” in the Hiphil stem.

6. Hophal. The Hophal is the passive form of the Hiphil. The Hophal stem, therefore, is used to express causative action with a passive voice. For example, the Hiphil verb translated “he made (someone) king” would be translated “he was made king” in the Hophal stem.

7. Hithpael. The Hithpael stem is used to express an intensive type of action with a reflexive (or sometimes passive) voice. For example, a Qal verb meaning “he hid” would be translated “he hid himself” in the Hithpael stem.

	<i>simple</i>	<i>intensive</i>	<i>causative</i>
<i>active</i>	Qal	Piel	Hiphil
<i>passive</i>	Niphal	Pual	Hophal
<i>reflexive</i>	Niphal	Hithpael	

Verbal stems and verbal meaning. Many verbs in Hebrew are “regular.” That is to say, their meanings follow the pattern summarized above when they appear in the different stems. For example, a Hebrew verb in



the Qal meaning “to break” will mean “to smash into pieces” in the Piel stem. In this and many other instances, the relationship between the meanings of a verb in different stems is apparent in light of the discussion above.

However, the meaning of a verb in the Qal may be significantly different when that same verb appears in another stem. For example, the verb כָּרַךְ means “to kneel” in the Qal, but in the Piel stem it means “to bless.” Always consult a lexicon to be certain of a verb’s meaning in a given stem.

Verbal Conjugations

In English and Greek, verbs are conjugated in order to express different verbal functions such as tense. English verbs may also be conjugated as participles (studying), infinitives (to study), or imperatives (study!). Each English verb takes on a different form (study, studies, studied, studying, to study) in order to express a different verbal function.

In Hebrew, there are eight basic verbal conjugations: Perfect, Imperfect, Imperative, Cohortative, Jussive, Infinitive Construct, Infinitive Absolute, and Participle. This means that a verb in the Qal may be conjugated any one of eight different ways, depending on what verbal function the author intends. In most cases, the change in verbal function will be identifiable by a change in verbal form. Each of the derived stems (Niphal, Piel, Pual, etc.) may also be conjugated in any one of these eight different conjugations. In Hebrew, therefore, there are seven verbal stems (Qal and the derived stems) and eight verbal conjugations (Perfect, Imperfect, etc.).

1. Perfect. The Perfect conjugation is used to express a completed action or a state of being. When used to describe a completed action (either in reality or in the mind of the speaker), the Hebrew Perfect may be translated by the English past tense (he studied), present perfect (he has studied), past perfect (he had studied), or future perfect (he will have

studied). When used to describe a state of being (stative verbs), it will be translated with the English present tense (he is wise). The Hebrew Perfect may also be translated by the English present tense with verbs of perception or attitude (he knows, he loves). It must be emphasized that the Hebrew Perfect does not have tense (time of action) apart from context and issues of syntax. Rather, it signifies aspect (type of action). The Perfect aspect designates a verbal action with its conclusion envisioned in the mind of the speaker or writer. To state it differently, the Perfect aspect denotes completed action, whether in the past, present, or future.

2. Imperfect. The Imperfect conjugation is used to express incomplete action and is usually translated by the English present tense (I study) or future tense (I will study). The action of the verb occurs either at the time of speaking or after the time of speaking. The Hebrew Imperfect is also used to denote habitual or customary action, whether in the past, present, or future (he prays regularly, he used to pray). The Imperfect may also be rendered by one of several modal values (would, could, should, may, might, can, etc.). These modal translation values are suggested by various contextual considerations. It must also be emphasized that, like the Perfect, the Hebrew Imperfect does not have tense (time of action) apart from context and issues of syntax. It too signifies aspect (type of action). The Imperfect aspect designates a verbal action for which, in the mind of the speaker or writer, the conclusion is not in view. To state it differently, the Imperfect aspect denotes incomplete action, whether in the past, present, or future.

3. Imperative. The next three conjugations (Imperative, Cohortative, and Jussive) are volitional conjugations, meaning they are used to express some type of command, wish, or desire. The Imperative conjugation is used primarily to express direct commands, demanding immediate action from the one being addressed. It can also be used to request permission or communicate a request. The Hebrew Imperative occurs only in the second person. For example, "(You) defend the cause of the weak!"

4. Cohortative. This second volitional conjugation is used much like the Imperative, to express a wish, request, or command. It may also be used, however, to express purpose (in order to) or result (resulting in). The Cohortative conjugation occurs in the first person, for example, "Let me (first person singular) honor the Lord!" or "Let us (first person plural) honor the Lord!"

5. Jussive. The Jussive conjugation is also used to express either some type of mild command or strong wish. Strictly speaking, it occurs only in the third person, singular and plural. For example, “May the Lord (third person) give to me another son.”

To sum up the volitional conjugations, all three are used to express some type of command, request, or desire. Context will help determine which volitional nuance is intended by the author. The Cohortative occurs in the first person (I, we), the Imperative in the second person (you), and the Jussive in the third person (he, she, it, they).

6. Infinitive Construct. An Infinitive is a verbal noun. In Hebrew, there are two Infinitive forms: the Infinitive Construct and the Infinitive Absolute. The Infinitive Construct may function much like an English Infinitive, usually translated with the preposition “to” plus a verb as in “to study” or “to learn.” Like a noun, it can be used as the subject (To study is hard work.) or object of a verb (I want to study.). It may also be used in a number of other ways.

7. Infinitive Absolute. The Hebrew Infinitive Absolute has no real English counterpart. It may be used in conjunction with other verbs to emphasize or intensify the verbal action. It may also be used in the place of an Imperative to express a command. In special instances, it can be used with other verbs to express two verbal actions occurring at the same time, that is, contemporaneous action.

8. Participle. A Participle is a verbal adjective. As such, it has both verbal and adjectival characteristics. Verbally, it expresses some type of verbal action such as “studying” or “learning.” Adjectivally, it is used much like a Hebrew adjective: attributively, predicatively, or substantively.

Word Order in the Hebrew Verbal Sentence

In English, the ordering of words in a sentence helps to identify the function of those words. For example, in the sentence “Jacob loved Rachel,” Jacob is the subject of the verb because his name precedes the verb. Additionally, Rachel is the object of the verb because her name follows the verb. If the sentence was “Rachel loved Jacob,” then Rachel would be the subject and Jacob the object because of their positions in the sentence. In English, normal word order is subject-verb-object. In Biblical Hebrew, however, normal word order for a verbal sentence is verb-subject-object. It must be acknowledged, however, that there are frequent

variations and exceptions to this “normal” ordering of words. For example, it is common for the direct object to stand at the beginning of a Hebrew sentence for the purpose of emphasis.

Textual Criticism

Textual criticism in the Hebrew Bible shares many characteristics in common with that of the Greek Testament. Some books and sections of the Old Testament are relatively free of textual problems (the Pentateuch, Judges, Jonah). Other sections present the reader with an array of textual difficulties (Samuel-Kings, Psalms, Job, Ezekiel, Zechariah).

One of the uniquely Hebrew intentional errors is the altering of a text because the scribe deemed the wording to be disrespectful to God. We also see the substitution of a euphemism for a word or expression that the scribe deemed to be indelicate or offensive, and the introduction of glosses into the text for the purpose of clarification or explanation.

When doing Hebrew textual criticism, the textual critic uses different Hebrew manuscripts such as those from Qumran, the Targumim, and other translations such as the Septuagint, Coptic, Syriac, and Vulgate (the latter three being translations made from the Septuagint).

You will sometimes see modern writers “emending” the text. Because the vowels were added later, and because different vowels can produce a considerably different meaning for the three consonants, some writers emend or alter the vowels to produce a different meaning. Some also emend the consonants.

Hebrew Bible

The standard Hebrew Bible is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). A better and more affordable Hebrew Bible for beginning students is *Biblia Hebraica Lenningradensia*, edited by Aron Dotan (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001). For a listing of additional tools and resources, see *BBH* 36.8. While it is fun to look at these two books, at the “baby Hebrew” stage they would be overwhelming to try and use.

Like most English Bibles, the text of the Hebrew Bible is divided into chapters and verses. There was no such numbering system in the original Hebrew texts. This was the work of Christian scholars in the thirteenth century and later. You should also note that the chapter and verse divisions of the Hebrew Bible do not always correspond with the divisions of

our English Bibles. This phenomenon is especially common in the book of Psalms. The elements of English punctuation (such as a comma, period, semicolon, question mark, exclamation point, etc.) do not appear in the Hebrew Bible. The end of each verse is marked, however, with what looks like a large colon (:). This symbol is called Sof Pasuq and means “end of verse” in Hebrew.

The Hebrew Bible is composed of twenty-four books arranged in three major divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Hebrew Scriptures are sometimes referred to as the Tanak (also Tanach), an acronym derived from the initial letters of the Hebrew names of the three divisions. The Law is composed of the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy. The remaining two divisions of the Hebrew Bible have a different ordering and numbering of books compared to the various Christian Bibles. The Prophets comprise eight books: the former Prophets, consisting of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel (counted as one book), 1 and 2 Kings (also counted as one book); and the four Latter Prophets, containing Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve (the Minor Prophets counted as one). The Writings number eleven books that are ordered in various ways.

Advanced: The Masorah of *BHS*

One of the important and interesting contributions of the Masoretes was their system of marginal notes. These notes are called the Masorah and are traditionally categorized into two main groups: the *marginal Masorah* and the *final Masorah*. The category of marginal Masorah is further divided into the Masorah parva (small Masorah) in the outer side margins and the Masorah magna (large Masorah), traditionally located in the top and bottom margins of the text. The Masorah parva consists of word-use statistics, similar documentation for expressions or certain phraseology, observations on full or defective writing, references to the Kethiv-Qere readings, and more. Though some of this information seems trivial and inconsequential to the modern reader, these observations are the result of a passionate zeal to safeguard the accurate transmission of the sacred text. The Masorah magna, in measure, is an expanded Masorah parva. Oftentimes, the notations simply provide greater depth or specificity beyond those in the Masorah parva. Traditionally, the Masorah magna was recorded in the top and bottom margins of the text.

The final Masorah is located at the end of biblical books or after certain sections of the text, such as at the end of the Torah. The final Masorah contains information and statistics regarding the number of words in a book or section, the middle word of a book or even the middle consonant of a book. For example, after the conclusion of Deuteronomy, we learn that the book has 955 verses and that the precise midpoint falls in Deut 17:10. Additionally, we learn that the Torah has 5,845 verses, 79,856 words and 400,945 letters. The purpose for this statistical information was to ensure accuracy in the transmission of the text with the production of subsequent copies that were done by hand.

The Kethiv-Qere. The most important of the Masoretic notes are those that detail the Kethiv-Qere that are located in the Masorah parva in the outside margins of *BHS*. Given that the Masoretes would not alter the sacred consonantal text, the Kethiv-Qere notes were a way of “correcting” or commenting on the text for any number of reasons (grammatical, theological, aesthetic, etc.) deemed important by the copyist. The consonantal (uncorrected) wording of the text is the Kethiv, an Aramaic term meaning “what is written.” The Kethiv is the reading that comes literally from the consonantal text. The reading that is suggested for “correction” by the Masorete is the Qere, an Aramaic term meaning “what is to be read.” The Qere is signaled by a small circle that is written above the word in the text. This circle refers the reader to a marginal note where the consonants to be read are given. The vowel points of the Qere were placed under the consonants in the text. The consonants to be read with those vowels are printed in the margin. There are hundreds of Kethiv-Qere notations in the Hebrew Bible of varying significance.

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William D. Mounce

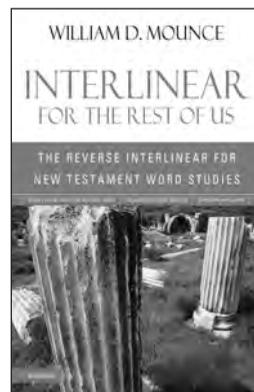
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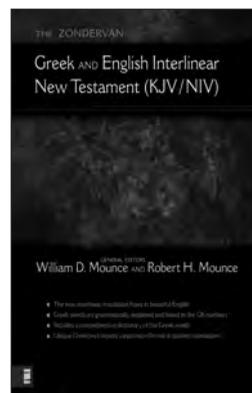
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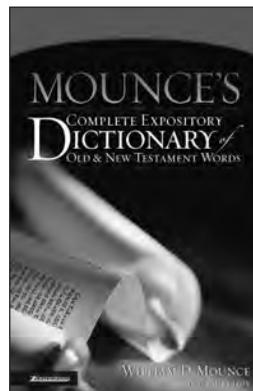
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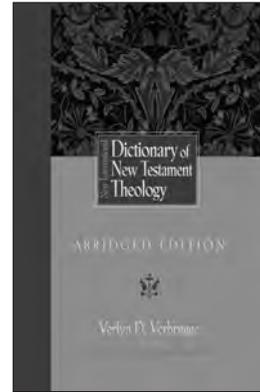


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Verlyn D. Verbrugge

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