

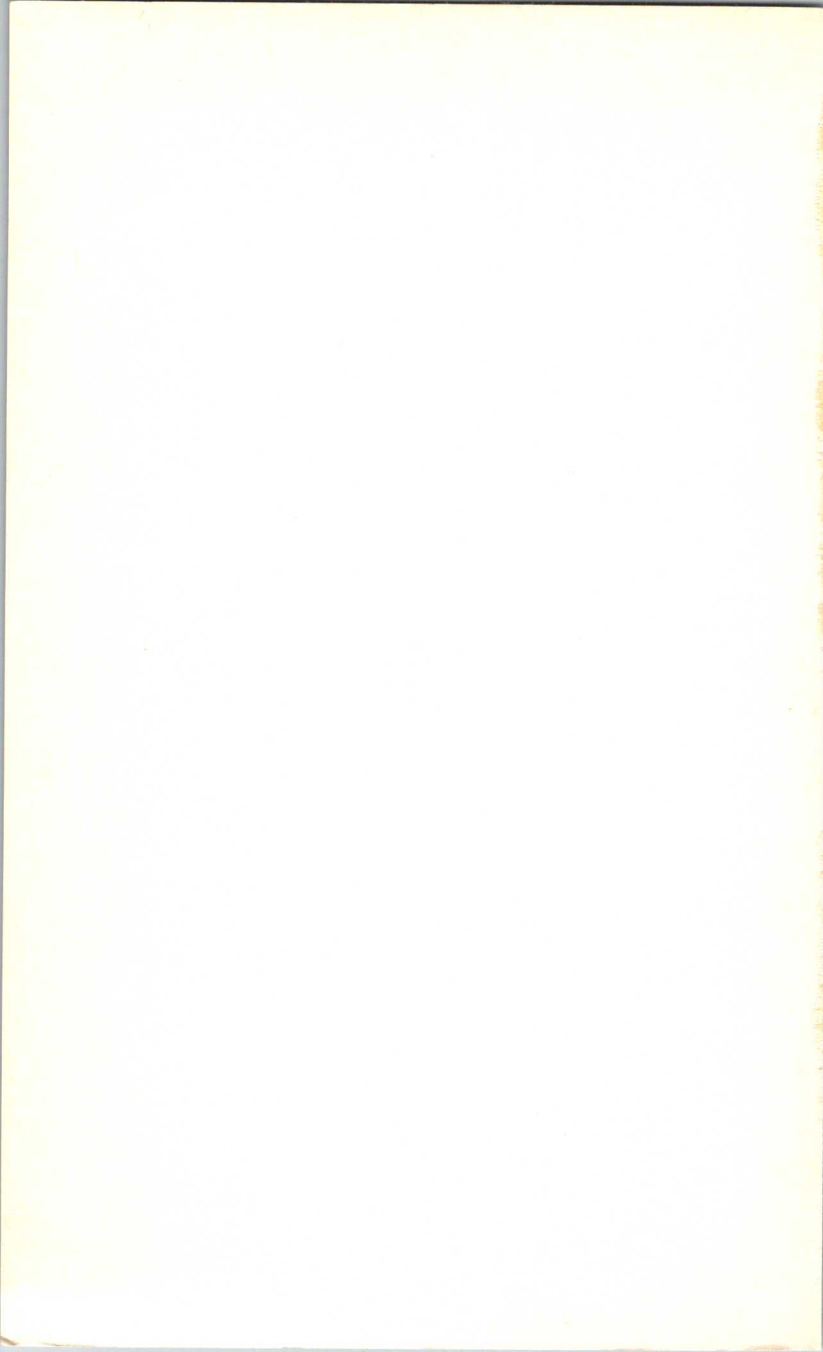
TEACH YOURSELF BOOKS



BIBLICAL HEBREW

The original language of the
Old Testament, an
expressive medium for
conveying fundamental
spiritual truths, full of
simplicity and power.

R.K. Harrison



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Biblical Hebrew may seem at first sight to be a difficult language. It is, in fact, comparatively uncomplicated, and the student will find that his efforts bring a quicker dividend in the form of an ability to translate the original than would be the case with Classical and other languages generally. This is a book for beginners wishing to learn Biblical Hebrew so that they may study the Old Testament in its original language. Special care has been taken at every stage to introduce the various principles as clearly and attractively as possible, and those who work carefully through the book should be equipped to tackle successfully the simpler prose passages of the Old Testament.

Students who have to work on their own will find this the most useful of any grammar in general use . . . There are two vocabularies, English-Hebrew and Hebrew-English. The exercises are well-graded and selected carefully. The paradigms are well set out and there is a key at the end of the book.

The Expository Times

BIBLICAL HEBREW

R. K. Harrison

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

BIBLICAL Hebrew may seem to present a number of initial obstacles to the aspiring student. Its appearance is strange to those unfamiliar with Semitic languages, and it lacks almost all contact with the grammar and syntax of Classical or modern European languages. The alphabet is unfamiliar at first sight, and some of the letters are apt to be confused. Writing vocalised consonants from right to left is strange to the majority of people; the ring of Hebrew words and phrases, particularly when guttural letters are enunciated, is equally unfamiliar.

Another difficulty might appear to subsist in the trilateral nature of most Hebrew roots, so that to a beginner they not only sound alike, but would also seem to require a considerable amount of mental effort to fix them accurately in the memory. Furthermore, the virtual absence of compound forms demands a separate Hebrew word for verbs which to us may express the same root idea, a factor which again appears to make for excessive memory work.

Many such ideas arise through a beginner's unfamiliarity with the language, *but the student may be assured immediately that his efforts will bring a quicker dividend in the form of an ability to translate the original than would be the case with Classical and other languages generally.* A further merit is that previous experience in language-study is not essential; in fact, it may even be disadvantageous, and the majority of students grasp the principles of Hebrew grammar readily when only the mother-tongue is known. It is true, of course, that the study of any language requires enterprise, effort and perseverance, and in this respect Hebrew is no exception.

All students welcome the comparative smallness

of the Hebrew working vocabulary. Grammatical forms are quickly recognised as schematic, and once the primary rules have been mastered, they can be applied with almost mathematical regularity and precision to produce the required parts of speech. The verb paradigm is remarkably unelaborate, with its two themes expressing completeness or incompleteness, along with their characteristic modifications, and contrasts favourably with the complex verbs of Latin and Greek. There are two genders only, and no case-endings of the sort found in other languages. Hebrew syntax has rejected the elaborate formulation of subordinate clauses for a series of simple sentences coordinated by the copulative conjunction. This has given simplicity and vividness to the language, making it a powerful vehicle for conveying fundamental spiritual truths.

These factors largely compensate for the unfamiliarity of the language, and are always encouraging to the beginner. The author has endeavoured at every stage to introduce the various principles as clearly and attractively as possible, and has stated the main rules of articulation and grammar before attempts are made to translate phrases and sentences. In the writer's teaching experience this has worked most effectively with beginners, as it appeals to the rational processes of the mind.

Of a number of current systems of transliteration, what appears to be the least complex has been adopted. The mass of detail which characterises advanced Hebrew grammars has been avoided in the interests of presenting basic grammatical principles simply. This procedure imposes obvious limitations on the work, which nevertheless, as an introductory manual, may encourage the student to master what Ewald described as "the eternal mother-tongue of all true religion."

INTRODUCTION

A CERTAIN professor at an English University is said always to commence his initial lecture on the Hebrew language with the words, "Gentlemen, this is the language which God spoke". Since substantial portions of the Divine revelation were given through the medium of this language, it is disconcerting to encounter such a marked resistance amongst Christian students to the diligent study of Biblical Hebrew.

The present writer feels that one reason for this state of affairs is the complexity and obscurity of the bulk of grammars published in the last century, and the present book is an attempt to state the basic principles of what is, after all, a comparatively uncomplicated language, as simply as possible.

Since Hebrew is now the official language of the State of Israel, it has gained in importance during recent years, and this fact makes its study a matter of more than purely antiquarian or theological interest.

The student will have sufficient equipment to study the simpler prose passages of the Old Testament when he has mastered the contents of the book, and in addition he will derive greater benefit from subsequent perusal of such works as Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, for the finer points of the language as met with in more advanced Hebrew prose and poetry.

This, then, is a book for beginners, and whilst the writer makes no claim whatever to originality of content or presentation, he trusts that the simplified arrangement of the material will be of assistance to students, and especially to those who are endeavouring to learn Hebrew through private study. The chapters follow the order observed by the majority of grammars, and for the first few chapters the Hebrew words are transliterated as they occur, to

enable the student to grasp their pronunciation and inflection. Proper names and technical terms are fully accented when they first occur, but subsequently they carry the minimum of accentuation, in order to simplify the format. The Divine Name is left unpointed throughout, and certain phrases are repeated in the exercises in a manner similar to the Biblical idiom.

A pocket lexicon suitable for beginners is the Hebrew-English lexicon published by S. Bagster and Sons, while for more advanced study the Oxford Hebrew Lexicon (Brown, Driver and Briggs), or the excellent two-volume work, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, by Koehler and Baumgartner, will be found to satisfy all normal requirements.

I wish to acknowledge the kindness of a Canadian scholar, Rabbi David Kirshenbaum, of London, Ontario, in reading the manuscript and making suggestions for the improvement of this work. I am indebted to the Rev. J. M. Wilkie, M.A., B.D., formerly lecturer in Hebrew in the Universities of Durham and Cambridge, for his kindness and diligence in correcting the proofs.

A number of changes in the arrangement of the material have been suggested by scholars to whom the book was submitted in proof, and the majority of these modifications have been incorporated, so as to make the book as useful as possible within its obvious limitations. In this respect I am particularly indebted to the Rev. Robert Davidson, M.A., B.D., of Aberdeen. My final acknowledgment must be to Mr. Leonard Cutts, Editor of the Series, for his care and consideration in dealing with the book at all stages of its development.

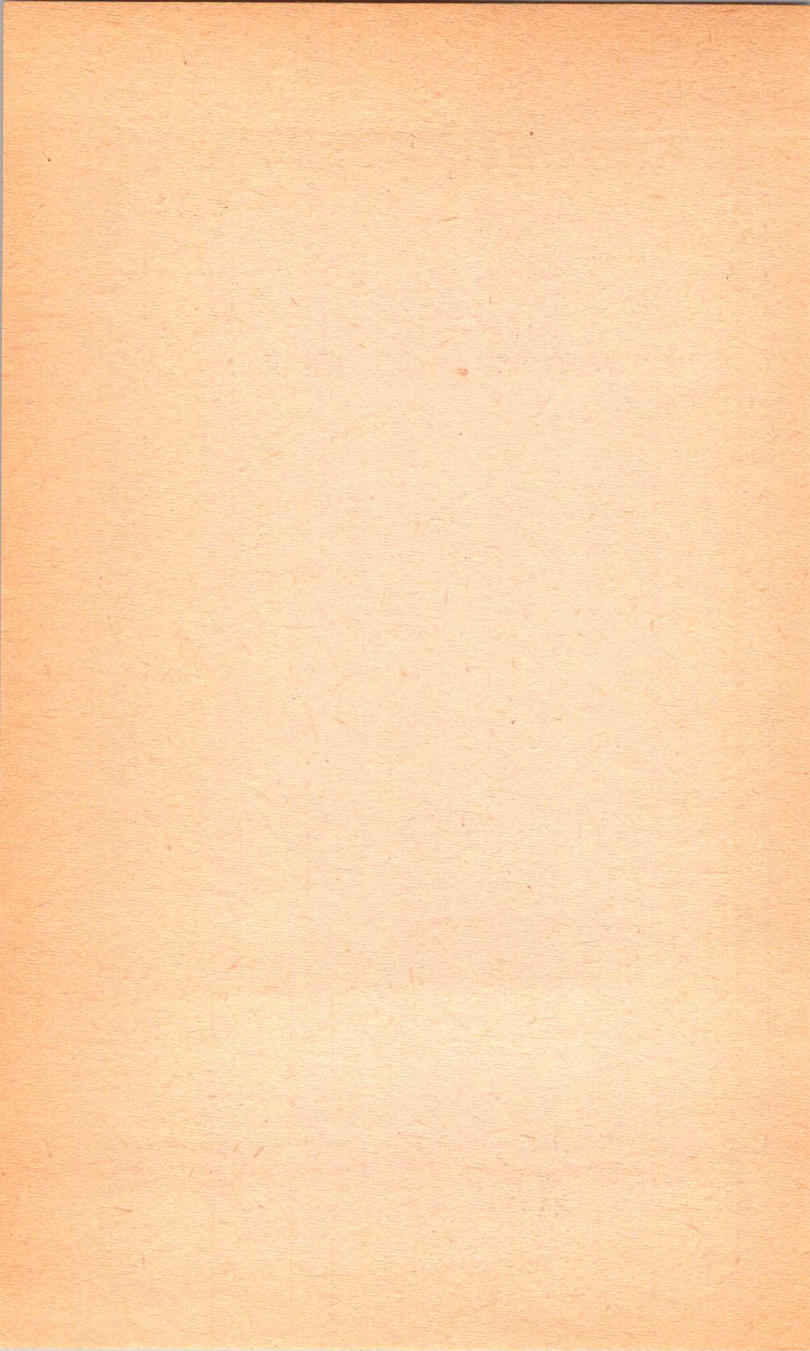
R. K. HARRISON.

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BIBLICAL HEBREW



CHAPTER I
THE ALPHABET

Form. Primary or Medial.	Final.	Name.	Trans- literation.	Nu- merical Value.
א		'Aleph	'	1
ב		Bêth	bh, b	2
ג		Gîmel	gh, g	3
ד		Dâleth	dh, d	4
ה		Hê	h	5
ו		Wāw	w	6
ז		Záyin	z	7
ח		Ḥêth	ḥ	8
ט		Ṭêth	ṭ	9
י		Yôdh	y	10
כ	ך	Kaph	kh, k	20
ל		Lāmedh	l	30
מ	ם	Mêm	m	40
נ	ן	Nûn	n	50
ס		Ṣāmekh	ṣ	60
ע		'Ayin	'	70
פ	ף	Pê	ph, p	80
צ	ץ	Çādhê	ç	90
ק		Qôph	q	100
ר		Rêš	r	200
ש		Sîn, Šîn	s, š	300
ת		Tāw	th, t	400

The Hebrew alphabet comprises twenty-two letters, all of which are consonants, and whose shapes in the first instance were similar to the objects which they are supposed to have signified.

HEBREW is one of the north-west Semitic group of languages which also includes Phoenician, Punic, Moabitic and Aramaic. It has considerable affinity with Arabic as well. From a linguistic standpoint, Hebrew was probably at its best in the period which saw the composition of the historical books such as Samuel and Kings, and the pre-Exilic prophets. Aramaic increased in influence particularly after the Exile, and towards the start of the Christian era it supplanted Hebrew as the spoken language of the Israelites.

We will now look at the Hebrew alphabet in some detail, considering each letter separately, and noting the manner in which it is to be sounded in reading.

א must never be mistaken for the letter "a", since it is always a consonant. It is represented by a "smooth breathing" ('), and is similar in nature to the silent "h" in the word "honour".

ב is "bh" and is pronounced like a "v"; בּ is a hard "b" as in "bat".

ג is transliterated "gh", and is pronounced with a slight throaty sound; גּ is a hard "g", as in "get".

ד is "dh" and is pronounced like the "th" in the word "the"; דּ is a hard "d", as in "day".

ה is the letter for "h".

ו represents the letter "w".

ז is the letter "z".

ח is signified by "h", the dot underneath helping to distinguish it from ה. It is pronounced like the

“ch” in the German “ach”, or the Scottish “loch”.

ʈ is transliterated “ṭ”, the dot underneath the letter again serving to differentiate it from a subsequent “t”. It is pronounced as a dull “t” by pressing the tongue to the palate.

ʏ is the letter “y”.

ɕ is transliterated “kh”, and is very similar in sound, though somewhat lighter in tone, to the “ch” sound (ɲ) above; ɕ is a hard “k” as in “kept”.

ʌ represents “l”.

ɱ is the letter “m”.

ɳ is transliterated “n”.

ʂ is represented by “ś”, to distinguish it from a subsequent letter (ʃ), and has a dull “s” sound.

ʁ is transliterated by the “rough breathing” (ʁ), and is pronounced with a harsh guttural sound from the back of the throat.

ɸ is “ph”, pronounced like “f”; ɸ is a hard “p” as in “peg”.

ʑ is transliterated “ç”, and has a sharp hissing sound of “s”, like the “ç” in the French word “garçon”.

ʑ is represented by the letter “q”, and the sound is like a “k” or a “q” pronounced from the back of the throat.

ɹ is the letter “r”.

ʃ with the dot over the right hand corner is transliterated “ś”, and is pronounced “sh”; ʃ with the dot over the left hand corner is the letter “s”.

ɰ is the equivalent of “th” as in “these”; ɰ is a hard “t” sound as in “tin”.

It must be borne in mind that the sound for

'Aleph amounts to nothing more than the emission of the breath in preparation for pronouncing the word or syllable of which it is the commencing consonant. When it occurs within a word its effect is much the same as if we were to pronounce the word "re-educate", by pausing slightly after the enunciation of the first syllable, and then stressing the second "e" by a fresh emission of the breath. The sound for 'Ayin is as though one were clearing one's throat, without, however, uttering a clear, deep grunt. Many of these sounds are difficult to articulate, and this is rendered more complicated by the fact that we cannot be absolutely certain of the original pronunciation. Furthermore, our Western articulation is different from that in the Orient, so that each experiences trouble in attempting to pronounce certain words from the other's language. For example, the Semites had a liberal sprinkling of vowel sounds in their words, and seem to have been almost unable to pronounce two or three consonants together. Thus a word like "rhythm" would probably have been broken up into three syllables by placing a very short vowel sound between the "r" and the "h", regarding the "y" as an "i" in sound, and placing a further vowel between the last two letters of the word.

However, our primary aim is not to secure a pronunciation as near as possible to what the original is thought to have been, but to ensure the mastery of a working pronunciation adequate for the articulation of the language as printed. Careful attention to the table of pronunciation will enable the student to acquire a reasonable accuracy in representing the original sounds. The letters with a guttural quality should be enunciated most carefully, as this is not

always easy for Western people to master, to whom the majority of guttural sounds seem alike.

In writing Hebrew we shall use the printed "square" character, so that whilst we talk about "writing" Hebrew we are actually "printing" it. Care must be taken with letters which look alike but which in fact have some characteristic difference. Looking through the alphabet in order we notice that whilst the letters **ב** and **כ** exhibit some similarity, the **ב** (bh) has a small projection or "tittle" at the bottom right hand corner, whilst the **כ** is rounded off to make "kh". **ג** (gh) has a slightly angular projection to the left of its base, whilst **נ** (n) is square at the top and bottom, and thus is to be distinguished from **כ**, as well as being smaller in size.

ד (dh) and **ך** (kh, final form) are frequently confused at the start. The latter will be seen to come below the line of writing, whilst the former remains on it. Both must be distinguished from **ר** (r), which is rounded at the top, whereas both **ד** and **ך** have the "tittle".

The letter **ה** (h) is different from the guttural **ח** (ḥ) in that the top is closed in the latter, a fact which tends to be a source of confusion. The letter **ת** (th) is unlike both of these in that, whilst it is closed at the top, it has a "foot" at the bottom left hand corner.

Difficulty is sometimes experienced in distinguishing between **ו** (v) in its final form (which drops a little below the line of writing), and the letter **ו** (w), which has a slightly rounded projection at the top left, and also the letter **ז** (z) which carries a small angular bar on the top, extending to an equal distance on either side. Of the primary or medial