

EXERCISES

The exercises included in each lesson are designed to help the student apply the principles studied in that lesson. Examples used in the lessons and exercises will for the most part be taken verbatim from the Hebrew Bible. This will account for the different ways in which the same word may sometimes be written. The style of the author and the demands of the context may alter the form in which a particular word appears.

1. Write a full line of each of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
2. Learn to pronounce the letters in proper order from א to ת.
3. Transliterate the following verse (Ezek. 38:12, one of twenty-six verses containing all the letters of the alphabet).

לְשַׁלַּל שְׁלָל וּלְבֹזֵז בֹּזֵז לְהַשִּׁיב יָדָךְ עַל חֲרָבוֹת נְוֹשֶׁבֶת וְאֵל עַם
מֵאֶסְפִּי מִגּוֹיִם עֲשֵׂה מִקְנֶה וּקְנִין יֹשְׁבֵי עַל טַבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ

4. Practice pronouncing the letters in the verse above in the order in which they occur, reading from right to left.
5. Locate and identify all the final forms of letters that occur in the verse above.
6. Transliterate the Hebrew names for all consonants as they appear in paragraph I.1.8, pp. 2f.

Example:

אלף = 'lf

בית = byt; etc.

7. Certain letters are similar in form and thus easily confused. Examine the following letters and learn to identify each by name.

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|-------------|--------------|
| (1) ב, פ, כ | (6) ו, ז, י |
| (2) ק, ח | (7) ס, ע |
| (3) ג, נ | (8) ט, מ |
| (4) ד, ז | (9) ה, ח, ת |
| (5) ד, ר | (10) ע, צ, פ |

8. Certain letters sound alike. Learn to identify these letters by name.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) ש, ס - S, as in Set | (4) ו, ב - V, as in Vine |
| (2) ק, כ - K, as in Keep | (5) ח, כ - CH, as in BaCH |
| (3) ת, ט - T, as in Tall | (6) א, ע - Silent letters |

9. What do the letters in each of the following groups have in common?

- (1) ב ג ד כ פ ת (3) ד ס ז ה ין
(2) ב כ פ (4) א ה ח ע ר

10. Transliterate the following proper names and try to identify them from their consonantal forms. A reference is given to indicate where each may be found in the Hebrew Bible.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) בית לחם (Mic. 5:1; Eng. 5:2) | (17) נתן (2 Sam. 7:3) |
| (2) בלק (Num. 22:2) | (18) סדם (Gen. 13:13) |
| (3) בנימין (Gen. 42:4) | (19) עשו (Gen. 25:25) |
| (4) גר (Gen. 30:11) | (20) פארן (Deut. 1:1) |
| (5) גלגל (Josh. 5:9) | (21) קדש (Gen. 14:7) |
| (6) גשן (Gen. 46:28) | (22) רבקה (Gen. 22:23) |
| (7) דוד (1 Sam. 16:23) | (23) רחל (Gen. 29:6) |
| (8) הגר (Gen. 16:1) | (24) אברהם (Gen. 17:5) |
| (9) חזקיה (2 Kgs. 18:1) | (25) שרה (Gen. 17:15) |
| (10) פנען (Gen. 12:5) | (26) שדרך (Dan. 1:7) |
| (11) ישראל (Gen. 35:10) | (27) שכם (Judg. 9:6) |
| (12) פלב (Num. 13:6) | (28) שלמה (2 Sam. 12:24) |
| (13) לאה (Gen. 29:16) | (29) שם (Gen. 9:23) |
| (14) לבן (Gen. 24:29) | (30) שפן (2 Kgs. 22:9) |
| (15) משה (Exod. 2:10) | (31) תל אביב (Ezek. 3:15) |
| (16) נבכדנאצר (2 Kgs. 24:1) | (32) תמר (Gen. 38:6) |

11. Practice spelling aloud the names listed above.

Example:

בית לחם, "bêt-yôd-tāv/lāmēd-ḥêt-(final) mēm."

Footnotes

- (a) In this first lesson, vāv is consistently transliterated as “v” and yôd as “y,” although this produces some rather strange combinations of letters. In subsequent lessons it will become apparent that certain letters, especially vāv and yôd, represent consonants only when they begin a word or a new syllable within a word. Otherwise, they stand as component parts of long vowels and are known grammatically as *matres lectionis* (cf. *G*, pp. 6, 7, 18, 437). Understanding the frequent function of these letters as vowels, or vowel indicators, will greatly facilitate their transliteration.
- (b) The English language takes certain liberties with Hebrew proper names. First, the English language capitalizes proper names, although there are no capital letters in Hebrew. Second, English translations sometime make a single name from a compound name, as in “Bethlehem.” Third, the English language frequently anglicizes the spelling of Hebrew names, as in “Rebecca.”

Additional Helps

The Origin and Early History of Biblical Hebrew

Hebrew belongs to the Semitic family of languages, a classification based on the cultural-linguistic elements of Genesis 10:21-31. Semitic languages are usually divided according to their geographical distribution into Northeast Semitic, Northwest Semitic, and Southwest Semitic. Northeast Semitic consists mainly of Akkadian, which in turn is divided into two dialects, Babylonian and Assyrian. Northwest Semitic is comprised of Amorite (known mainly from proper names), Ugaritic (known from the Ras Shamra tablets, discovered in 1929), Canaanite (known from inscriptions), Moabite (known almost exclusively from the Mesha stele), Hebrew, and Aramaic. Southwest Semitic includes Classical Arabic (the language of the Quran), Southern Arabic (known from inscriptions), and Ethiopic.

Before they arrived in Canaan, the Hebrews probably spoke a form of proto-Aramaic. Having settled in Canaan, they borrowed and adapted its language, although it is not known how much time was required for this process to be completed. Indications of the Canaanite origin of Hebrew are obvious. The Bible itself describes the language as “the language of Canaan” (Isa. 19:18). Elsewhere it is described as “Judahite,” i.e., as the language spoken by the inhabitants of Judah (2 Kgs. 18:26, 28; Neh. 13:24). The earliest known use of the term “Hebrew” to designate the language is in the Prologue to Sirach (c. 180 B.C.E.). In Rabbinical writings it is often referred to simply as “the sacred language.”

During the Babylonian exile and the following centuries, Hebrew was gradually

replaced by Aramaic as the everyday language of the people. Still, Hebrew remained the literary language of the Jews. Among the late books of the Hebrew Bible, Esther and Ecclesiastes show rather strong Aramaic influence. Portions of Ezra and Daniel are actually written in Aramaic, at least in the form in which they have survived. A late variety of Hebrew mixed with Aramaic and variously known as Mishnaic, Rabbinic, or Tannaitic Hebrew is preserved in the Mishna, the oldest part of the Talmud, and in other Rabbinic writings.

In recent times Hebrew has been resurrected as the language of the new State of Israel. However, Israeli Hebrew is significantly different from Biblical Hebrew, especially in its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.

Biblical Hebrew reflects the history of the Hebrew people and their interactions with their neighbors. It does this by the use of loan words and phrases characteristic of neighboring languages as well as by the physical appropriation of neighboring scripts. Though the books of the Hebrew Bible were largely edited under the influence of southern (i.e., Judean) editors (either in pre-exilic Judah or during the Exile) other influences also survive. For example, the difficult text of Hosea has long been regarded as "corrupt" because of its divergence from standard Hebrew word forms, syntax, etc. However, more recently some scholars have suggested that these difficulties are due rather to dialect and that Hosea reflects the northern (i.e., Israelite) dialect of the time (cf. Judg. 12:6).

The Hebrew Bible is largely grammatically uniform considering the vast centuries involved in its composition, but significant differences appear between the various documents. The time factor in the development of the language appears most dramatically when comparing earlier books (Samuel and Kings) with the latter books (Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles).

Suggestions for Further Testing

1. Five letters take different forms when they are final in a word. Write each of these, first in its regular and then in its final form.

(a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____
 (d) _____ (e) _____

2. Write the six BeGaD KeFaT letters, first with and then without a dagesh lene.

(a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____
 (d) _____ (e) _____ (f) _____

3. Write the five letters that are classified as gutturals.

(a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____ (d) _____ (e) _____ (sometimes)

4. Use the space above each letter in the following verse (Ezek. 38:12) to number the letter according to its alphabetical order. Repeated letters should be numbered alike. The same is true of regular and final forms of certain letters. Remember that ש and ש are also numbered alike (cf. *G*, 1.3, p. 2).

לְשַׁלַּל שְׁלַל וּלְבֹו בֹו לְהַשִּׁיב יָדְךָ עַל חֲרָבוֹת נוֹשֶׁבֶת וְאֵל

עִם מֵאֶסְףּ מִגֻּוֹיִם עֲשֵׂה מִקְנָה וּקְנִין יֹשְׁבֵי עַל טְבוֹר הָאָרֶץ

5. From your study of the Glossary (cf. *G*, pp. 424ff.), define the following terms.

- 1) Alphabet
- (2) Aramaic
- (3) BeGaD KeFaT Consonants
- (4) Dagesh Lene
- (5) Hebrew Language
- (6) Semitic Languages
- (7) TANAKH