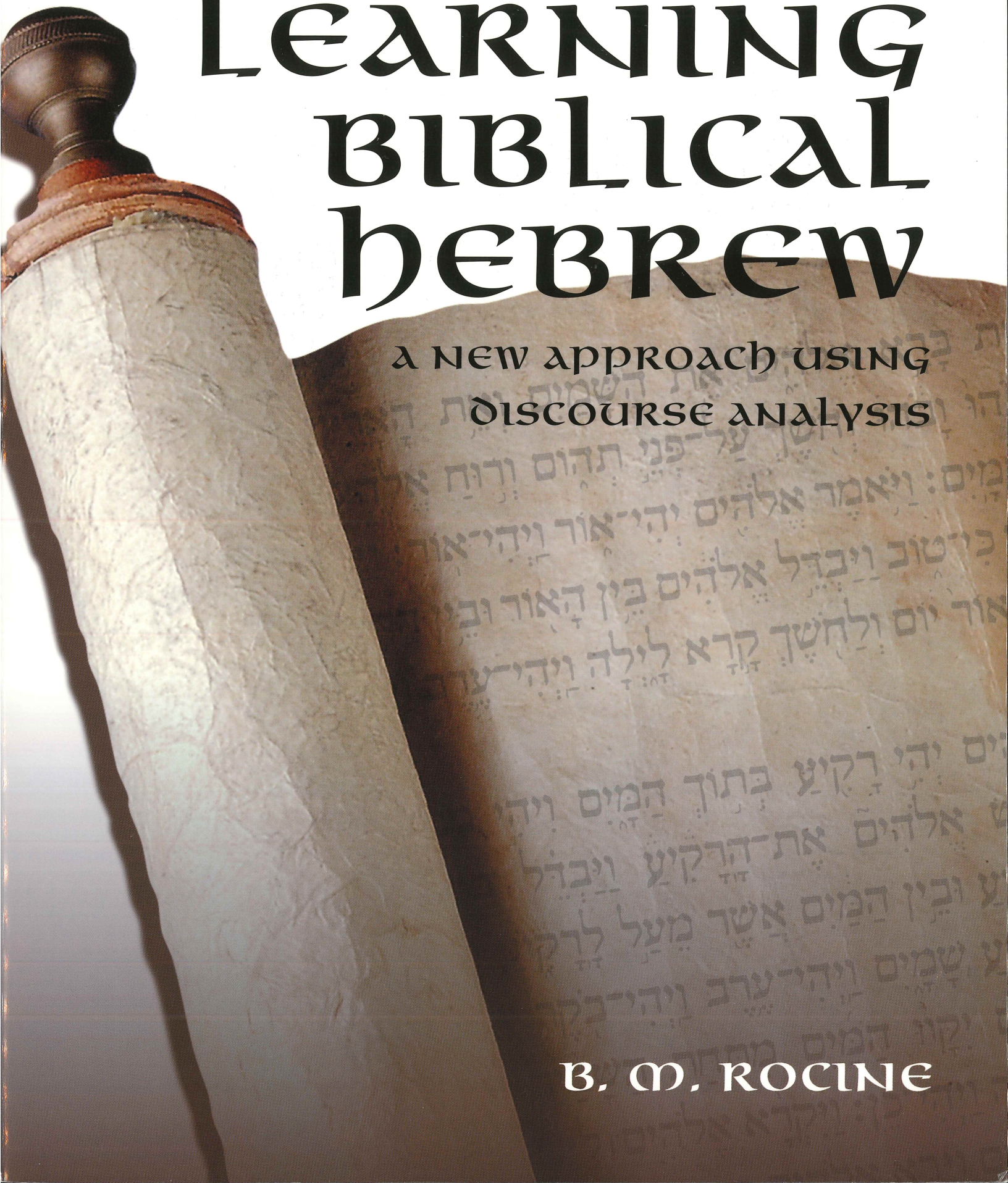
Learning Biblical Hebrew

A New Approach Using Discourse Analysis



B. M. Rocine

Learning Biblical Hebrew

A New Approach Using Discourse Analysis

B. M. Rocine

SMYTH & HELWYS
PUBLISHING, INCORPORATED MACON, GEORGIA

For My dear Catherine.

Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc.
6316 Peake Road
Macon, Georgia 31210-3960
1-800-747-3016

Printed in the United States of America.

Bryan M. Rocine

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum
requirements of American National Standard for Information
Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials.
ANSI Z39.48–1984 (alk. paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rocine, B. M.
Learning Biblical Hebrew: a new approach using discourse analysis / by B. M. Rocine
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 1-57312-324-2
1. Hebrew language–Grammar. 2. Hebrew language–Discourse analysis.
3. Direct discourse in the Bible, I. Title.
PJ4567 .R56 2000
492.4'82421–dc21 00-063748

CHARTS

The book's charts are listed below in the order in which they appear. Not all the charts are listed because the paradigms are built gradually during the course, and there is no need to list charts until they are complete.

INTRODUCTION

Our many quality English translations of the Hebrew Bible are worthy accomplishments. However, there is no substitute for reading the Hebrew Bible *in Hebrew*. In his book *Hebrew: The Eternal Language*, Wm. Chomsky quotes historian and orientalist Ernest Renan:

> A quiver full of steel arrows, a cable with strong coils, a trumpet of brass crashing through the air with two or three sharp notes--such is the Hebrew language...the letters of its books are not many, but they are to be letters of fire. A language of this sort is not destined to say much, but what it does say is beaten out upon an anvil. It is employed to pour floods of anger and cries of rage against the abuses of the world, calling the four winds of heaven to the assault of the citadels of evil. Like the jubilee horn of the sanctuary it will be put to no profane use; but it will sound the notes of the holy war against injustice and the call of the great assemblies; it will have accents of rejoicing, and accents of terror; it will become the trumpet of judgment.

This volume is a one year course in Biblical Hebrew requiring roughly 300 hours of study time to complete. The student will learn the Hebrew alphabet, the basics of pronouncing Hebrew, and about 400 of the most common words in the Hebrew Bible. By the end of the course the student will have read approximately 1000 verses of Biblical text.

The rationale for this book

There are many carefully prepared teaching grammars for Biblical Hebrew already, some quite new and user-friendly, but there are several reasons why another approach is needed First, existing texts focus on teaching only the parts and pieces of the language from the sentence level and smaller. How the parts and pieces function within a system in a larger context, such as a Biblical story, is left a mystery. On the other hand, modern linguistics, computer-aided Bible research, and the experience gained from translating the Bible into hundreds of languages world-wide have worked together to give us new, powerful and perceptive models for describing Biblical Hebrew. We have learned that a writer's choices at the word, phrase, clause, and sentence levels are influenced by larger context in systematic ways. In other words, a writer guides his reader through his text with grammatical signals. In this course we will study these signals, referring to our study as discourse analysis.

No teaching grammar prior to this one has incorporated the work of the many discourse analysts of the Hebrew Bible since the landmark work of F. I. Anderson in 1970, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*(New York: Abington). It is my sincerest goal to help people understand the Word of God more richly and intimately. I have found the discourse analytical approach to the Hebrew Bible to be the most powerful grammatical tool for gaining this intimacy. This book is therefore written to teach the exegetical power of discourse analysis right from the start.[1]

---

[1] Several Hebraists of the 1990's have called for an incorporation of discourse analysis into beginning Biblical Hebrew studies, among them Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 218, "However, it is clear that the most immediate—if not the greatest—benefit from text-linguistic research will be for students and teachers of the language. In the same way that checking the cards in a deck to determine which (if any) are missing is far easier if the cards are arranged in numerical order by suits, so also learning (and therefore teaching) *any* language is greatly simplified if its forms are systematized—all the more so if it is a dead language. If the system of text-types were presented to students (I do not mean the theoretical parameters, but rather the simple existence of these text-types), and their associated mainline forms, then this much, in one stroke, would give the learner a handle to begin sorting through the various distributions and functions of the Hebrew verb." Also Longacre: "...discourse analysis emerges not as an option or as a luxury for the serious student of a language but as a necessity" (quoted in Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 53. And *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 42: "The whole legislates the parts, while, in turn, a study of the parts is necessary to the comprehension of the whole." Also van der Merwe, "From Paradigms to Texts. New Horizons and New Tools for Interpreting the Old Testament" *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 22/2, 179: "It appears that in the very good old days Jewish scholars knew relatively much about the grammar of BH as well as how it was used to communicate in the OT. Divorcing the study and teaching of BH grammar from rhetoric, concentrating on the forms of the language

The second reason this course is needed is because the study of Biblical Hebrew needs to be made more relevant for today's student of the Bible. As already mentioned, we have numerous excellent translations, exhaustive concordances with number-coded lexicons, and powerful Bible-study software. Can only one year's study of Biblical Hebrew be worth the effort? With such helpful Bible-study resources available, there is definitely no need for most of us merely to translate the Bible all over again. Yet this is exactly what most first year courses in Biblical Hebrew are teaching. The student learns that if he can translate the Hebrew Bible into something like the Revised Standard Version, he is succeeding. Today's student knows it is a lot more efficient to simply purchase a Revised Standard Bible and a good computer program for Bible study. Also, first year courses are traditionally designed as though they are nothing more than a prerequisite to Biblical Hebrew II and III. However, students who take only one or two years of Biblical Hebrew often quickly forget almost all of what they had worked so hard to learn. It is therefore the goal of this volume to teach, from lesson one through fifty, useful nuances of meaning, especially those related to the discourse analysis of Biblical Hebrew, that are not accessible through English translations. This course seeks to stress the worth of reading the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew. Although this course in no way discourages additional years of studying Hebrew, it does seek to teach some of the subtleties of the Biblical prose that students can remember and use during a lifetime of Bible study even if the they do not continue with formal study past one year.

The third reason this book is needed is to provide a course that can truly be used with *or without* an instructor's help. Of course, it is definitely best to study using this or any other book as a class with an instructor, but often this is impossible. There are relatively few colleges and universities in North America that teach Biblical Hebrew. It is assumed that many of those who may be interested in learning Biblical Hebrew cannot, with reasonable convenience, access these institutions. Synogogue or church classes in Biblical Hebrew are also non-existent in many communities. This book is therefore written suitably for independent study. It takes an interactive approach in which the student and the text are in a kind of running dialogue in a workbook fashion. The book constantly reviews and tries to anticipate the students' questions by constantly cross-referencing the students to earlier lessons.

The organization of this book

The following three teaching guidelines control the organization of this book:

1. Teach what is most needed first.
2. Use a Hebrew Bible text as the basis for every lesson.
3. Teach discourse analysis from the start.

On teaching what is most needed first: By giving higher priority to the vocabulary and grammatical constructions that actually occur more often in the Biblical text, the student will progress as efficiently as possible, surprisingly quickly. To reiterate an earlier point, many students of Biblical Hebrew will only be able to spend one year studying the language. This book is therefore designed to teach, in one year, the most useful information about Biblical Hebrew that is possible in that given time. There is no attempt to learn everything there is to know about Hebrew. However, there is no need to wait until the second or third year of study to begin learning some basics of exegesis of the Hebrew Bible.

On the commitment to using only Biblical texts: This commitment keeps the lessons relevant, and the student confident that he is progressing. A particular Biblical verse generates the concepts covered in each lesson. Memorization of charts and paradigms does not occur until the second module of the course. This writer does not believe that it is necessary for the student to know all the grammatical paradigms before he can enjoy actual texts. In fact, the goal in this course is to keep the student as involved with actual text as possible. Learning Biblical Hebrew is not treated as an end in itself. Rather, learning the language is always treated as a means to greater understanding of the Bible.

---

unfortunately resulted in a very reduced picture of what constitutes a knowledge of BH. A recent shift in the study of language from the message of communication to the recipient of communication draws attention to the entire range of variables involved in a communication process. Apart from revealing how little we know of BH, it emphasizes the inadequacies of the grammar-and-translation method of language teaching. Though we know relatively little about BH pragmatics, I am convinced that introducing it in introductory courses can no longer be delayed."

Lastly and most importantly, on the choice of a discourse analytical theoretical base: A discourse is a text, a group of expressions linked together from a beginning to an ending so that they develop an idea in some orderly fashion. A story, a song, a thesis, an inaugural address, a friendly letter are all texts or discourses. As alluded to above, linguists have recently been able to study hundreds of living languages around the world, not only at the level of word, phrase, and sentence but at the level of discourse. Linguists have come to realize that language users signal their audiences what they are doing in their discourses by the grammatical constructions they choose. For instance, when writers are telling a story, they indicate story structure, what is more and less important to them, how events are related, what is foreground what is background, when tension is greatest, and so on, all by linguistic signals. Largely as a result of organizations such as Summer Institute of Linguistics, and their effort to translate the Bible into the languages of hundreds of indigenous peoples around the world, the pragmatic approach of discourse analysis has proven to be an extremely fast and efficient theoretical base from which to learn a language. Since there is no reason to believe that Biblical Hebrew would behave differently than any living language, we seek to utilize the advantage of discourse analysis as we learn Biblical Hebrew.

It may seem like a student just beginning the uphill climb of learning a new language has enough of a burden to simply learn about the language at the sentence level and below. The addition of the higher, discourse issues may seem as though it will overload the curriculum. On the contrary, the addition of discourse issues organizes and systematizes the presentation of the introductory material *with a system that is inherent to the language being learned*, and in fact, that is already a part of the student's own experience with how language works. Since the system used to organize the material is inherent to the language and familiar to the student, the student is then able to learn more information more easily.

A couple last points

The emphases in this book will *not* be on composing and speaking Hebrew. Those who are interested in learning modern, conversational Hebrew are strongly advised to find other better-suited materials. A secure, automatic pronunciation ability for Hebrew is very important for being able to read and enjoy the Hebrew Bible. Otherwise, the student will be so preoccupied with pronouncing the text, his comprehension will suffer. However, an undue emphasis on perfect or "native" pronunciation is not necessary either. The book does not promote a sloppy or carefree pronunciation of Hebrew, but it does not put the stress on pronunciation that would be appropriate for a course on conversational Hebrew.

A first year teaching grammar is not usually footnoted, and although this one is not annotated as extensively as a dissertation would be, there are numerous notes which point to the literature which discusses the topic at hand. These notes are not intended primarily for the first year student who can easily ignore them without compromising his course-work. Rather, they are for the benefit of instructors who may want to use this book, but find they are unfamiliar with some late studies. In addition, they should prove helpful to the student who has finished this course and wants to continue his studies. Or the notes may help someone who has already taken some Hebrew but wishes to learn more about the discourse analysis of the Hebrew Bible.

Acknowledgments

I am, as mentioned, indebted to the Hebraists of the last thirty years whose research inspired this work and whose work is, I pray, done justice in the text and its notes. I must thank especially Robert Longacre and Alviero Niccacci, for it is on their work that this project most fundamentally rests. I thank them both for the personal time and interest they both gave me and this project. This course has developed over six years of field use in a variety of settings, academic and informal, from high school level to the mission field to college and I thank all the students and instructors who had valuable insights and suggestions for improving the lessons. I must express my gratitude to those willing souls of The Church of the Living Word in Syracuse, NY, most especially Richard and Linda Ludovico, who ventured through the first drafts of many of the lessons as we discovered together the merits of this new approach. I also appreciate the assistance of Stanley Bray, Dutch Schultz, and Paul Bailey in providing me so much technical support in using the computer for this project. I am also indebted to Rodney K. Duke of Appalachian State University for his constructive criticisms. I claim full responsibility for all the errors that remain in this present work.

Materials required for this course

In addition to this text the student is required to have a Hebrew Bible with Masoretic vowel markings, preferably the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and a good English-Hebrew Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible, preferably *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrikson, 1979). Both of these books are available through Eisenbrauns, Inc. (phone: 1-219-269-2011, e-mail: orders@eisenbrauns.com) among other places.

PRONOUNCING HEBREW

A brief history

If the beginning Hebrew student looks at any page of the Hebrew Bible, he likely does not see a thing that looks familiar. As a result, simply learning the Hebrew alphabet often seems intimidating. And then there is the matter of Hebrew proceeding from right to left. Students often ask, "How come Hebrew goes the wrong way?" If we take into account that Hebrew went from right to left thousands of years before Geoffrey Chaucer wrote "Whan in Aprille with his shoures soote" in Middle English, which language, if either, goes the wrong way?

Actually, a student, knowing neither the phonetics of English nor Hebrew, and all else being equal, would most likely far prefer learning the Hebrew. Unlike that of English, all Hebrew pronunciation makes sense and operates according to a relatively small set of rules. There will be none of the kind of thing that happens constantly in English: for example, a different pronunciation of the *o* in words like *love* and *rove*. Or the classic: seven different pronunciations for one letter sequence, *-ough-* as in *rough, though, bough, ought, through, cough,* and yes, even *hiccough*!

Originally, the Hebrew Bible was written in a different alphabet than the one you will be learning. Scribes did not begin using the "square" Aramaic alphabet that is used in the Hebrew Bible today until the Babylonian Exile in the Fifth or Sixth Centuries BCE. Originally the Hebrew Bible was written with consonants only, i.e., without vowels. Many scholars believe that over time some of the consonants began to do double duty as vowels and were then added to the consonantal text as aides to pronunciation and clarity. You may wonder how any one could make sense of a language written without vowels. Can you read this sentence without any problem?

Lts g swmmng n th lk tmrrw.

Does the *n* mean *on* or *in*? You will see that the same type of interpretation must often be made in Hebrew. You may also be interested to know that most Modern Hebrew is written with a bare minimum of vowels.

However, in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries CE, Jewish scholars called the Masoretes /MAS-or-ites/ desired to add an apparatus to the text of the Hebrew Bible that would leave the consonantal text unmodified but would also specify the exact pronunciation of the Holy Text. The result was the system of dots, dashes, and other symbols that are written above, below, and in between the consonantal text.

> DEFINITION: The system of dots, dashes, and other marks added to the consonantal text by the Masoretes is called the text's **nikkud**. The nikkud consists of two parts, the vowel markings and a system of accent marks.

In this course you will spend a great deal of time learning and using the vowel marks and much less time on the accentual system.

The consonants

You will learn more about the nikkud shortly, but let us begin where the Hebrew Bible began, with the consonants. As you learn each letter of the alphabet and later, each vowel symbol, you need to associate two things to each symbol just as you did back in the first grade or two of your elementary education when you chanted "*B* says /b/ in *ball*." Of course, you must learn each symbol's name so we can later refer to the letters in the lessons of this book. Learning the names of the symbols gives us the linguistic lingo we need for instruction. Much more importantly, however, is that you learn the sound each symbol makes. Although we are not studying Modern Hebrew this course will use the pronunciation that is most widely heard in Modern Israel, also probably the simplest dialect to learn, the Sephardi. You will not likely

become automatic in your ability to pronounce the Hebrew alphabet before Lesson 1, and that is not a problem. But you must eventually gain this automaticity if you will ever unburden yourself from "thinking" about pronouncing the Hebrew Bible and enjoy comprehending it instead. If you take the time to pronounce all the Hebrew verses, drills, and examples given to you in this text, you should approach this automatic pronunciation of Hebrew by the end of this course.

THE CONSONANTS:

Letter	Name	Sound		Letter	Name	Sound
א	*aleph*	silent		ל or ל֫	*lamed*	/l/
בּ	*bet*	/b/		מ or (final) ם	*mem*	/m/
ב	*bet*	/v/		נ or (final) ן	*nun*	/n/
ג or גּ	*gimel*	/g/		ס or סּ	*samekh*	/s/
ד or דּ	*dalet*	/d/		ע	*ayin*	silent
ה	*heh*	/h/		פ	*peh*	/p/
ו or וּ	*vav*	/v/		פ or (final) ף	*peh*	/f/
ז or זּ	*zayin*	/z/		צ or (final) ץ	*tsadeh*	/ts/
ח	*khet*	/kh/		ק or קּ	*koph*	/k/
ט or טּ	*tet*	/t/		ר	*resh*	/r/
י or יּ	*yod*	/y/		שׁ or שׂ	*sin*	/s/
כּ or (final) ךּ	*khoph*	/k/		שׁ or שׂ	*shin*	/sh/
כ or (final) ך	*khoph*	/kh/		ת or תּ	*Tav*	/t/

Notes:

1. Most of the letters have sounds that correspond nicely to sounds of the English alphabet as noted in the chart.
2. The *aleph* [א] and *ayin* [ע] are thought to have originally represented a guttural stoppage of sound. We will, however, after the modern practice, treat them as essentially silent in and of themselves. We will see that both of these letters may be accompanied by a vowel in which case the consonant itself is still silent, but the vowel is pronounced.
3. Five letters have final forms, the *khoph*, *mem*, *nun*, *peh*, and *tsadeh*. The final forms are only used when these letters happen to be at the end of a word. Otherwise, the regular form is used. Keep in mind that Hebrew is read from right to left as you look at these Hebrew words as examples of regular and final letters (the vowels have been left off):

מה (regular *mem*)
שׁמה (regular *mem*)
שׁם (final form of *mem*)

צדק (regular *tsadeh*)
מצא (regular *tsadeh*)
ארץ (final form of *tsadeh*)

4. Many of the letters can take a dot, called a ***dagesh***, within them, but only in a few cases does the *dagesh* have any effect on the way the letter is pronounced in Modern Hebrew. The affected pronunciations are within the *bet* [בּ vs. ב], *khoph* [כּ vs. כ], and *peh* [פּ vs. פ]. The presence or absence of the dagesh in Modern Hebrew does not affect the pronunciation of the other letters that take the dagesh.

5. There are several letters, called the **guttural letters**, which cannot or very rarely take a *dagesh*. These include *aleph* [א], *heh* [ה], *khet* [ח], *ayin* [ע]. *Resh* [ר] is not technically a guttural letter, but it acts essentially like one in its usual refusal to accept a *dagesh*. You will later learn that the refusal of these letters to accept the *dagesh* has some important effects on a word.

6. One sound in Hebrew that we do not have in English is the sound of the letters *khet* [ח] and *khoph* (without the *dagesh*) [כ or the final form ך]. The sound, symbolized in this book /kh/, is made by shaping the mouth in a manner similar to the way we do when we make our *k* and then blowing so air passes by the tongue at the back of the mouth. It is similar to the German *ch* in *Bach*.

7. A couple of Hebrew letters make sounds which we have in English, but which are represented by digraphs in English. These are the *tsadeh* [צ or ץ] pronounced like the *ts* in *hits* and the *shin* [שׁ or שׂ] pronounced /sh/.

The vowels

The nikkud, as you remember, are vowel and accent markings added to the originally all-consonantal text by the Masoretes. Below is the vowel part of the nikkud. Each of the vowel markings is shown with an *aleph* [א] so you can see how the vowel marks are placed in spatial relationship to the consonants.

THE VOWELS:

Nikkud (with an *aleph*)	Name	Sound
אָ	*qamets*	/a/ as in *father*
אַ	*patakh*	/a/ as in *father*
אֵ	*tsere* (plene)	/e/ as in *prey*
אֵ	*tsere* (defectiva)	/e/ as in *prey*
אֶ	*segol*	/ɛ/ as in *met*
אֱ	*khataf segol*	/ɛ/ as in *met*
אִ	*hireq* (plene)	/i/ as in *machine*
אִ	*hireq* (defectiva)	/i/ as in *machine* or /I/ as in *pin*
אֹ	*holem* (plene)	/o/ as in *hope*
אֹ	*holem* (defectiva)	/o/ as in *hope*
אָ	*qamets khatuf*	/o/ as in *hope*
אֳ	*khataf qamets*	/o/ as in *hope*
אֻ	*shureq*	/u/ as in *rude*
אֻ	*kibbuts*	/u/ as in *rude*
אְ	*silent shewa*	silent
אְ	*vocal shewa*	shortened /uh/ as in the first syllable of *McCoy*
אֲ	*khataf patakh*	lengthened /uh/ as in *amount*

Notes:

1. Several vowel marks may make the same sound. This is often no more than alternate *plene*, meaning

full spelling versus *defectiva* meaning *shortened* spelling of the same sound. Notice that the same symbol [ָ] is sometimes pronounced /a/ and sometimes /o/. This symbol's pronunciation is determined by a reliable rule which you will learn in Lesson 3.

2. Two of the letters which you have already encountered as consonants, namely the *vav* [ו] and *yod* [י], can also be used as vowels. You will see shortly that the use of these symbols is not ambiguous. For instance, whether the symbol וּ says /v/ or /u/ in a particular Hebrew word is determined by completely reliable rules.
3. The marks *khataf segol*[ֱ], *khataf qamets* [ֳ], and *khataf patakh* [ֲ] are often referred to collectively as the *compound* or *composite shewas.* They make the same sound as their full vowel counterparts *segol* [ֶ], *qamets* [ָ], and *patakh*[ַ], only shorter.

Open syllables

The basic rule of Biblical Hebrew spelling is that every consonant except for the last one in a word or the silent letters *aleph* [א] and *ayin* [ע] must be accompanied by some vowel. To pronounce the text then, the reader proceeds from right to left, a consonant with its vowel, a consonant with its vowel.

An open syllable is one which ends with a vowel sound. Pronounce the following open syllables (every *qamets* [ָ] is a regular *qamets* pronounced /a/):

בִּי גַ גָ גִּי דַ דָּ חֶ חֵי חֶ זֵי זִ זֶ הָ הֵ הֵי וַ וָ וֵי וֶ טוֹ טוּ
יִ כֹּ כּוֹ כוֹ כוּ כֹ לִי לִ לֶ לֻ מִּ מִי מִּי מֶ מֶּ נַ נַּ נִ בַּ בָּ
סֶ פִּ פֵּי פוֹ פוּ פִּ פּוֹ צָ צַ צָּ צוֹ צִ קַ קוֹ קוּ טוֹ יוֹ יוּ יִוּ
שָׁ שִׁי שֵׁי שׁוֹ שׁוֹ שׁוּ שׁוּ שִׁ תִ תִּ תוּ תֶ נָ נֶ נִּ סַ סֵּ סָ סֵי
תַ תַּ תָּ תָ תִּ תּוֹ קֹ קָּ רָ רַ רֹ רוֹ רֶ שַׁ שַׁ

Remember that the letters *aleph* [א] and *ayin* [ע] are silent in and of themselves. However, they may be accompanied by a vowel that is pronounced. In addition, some words may have an *aleph* or *ayin* that does not have a vowel, and so the two silent consonants are present with zero pronunciation value. In such a case they still provide an important clue to a word's meaning. Pronounce the following open syllables that have *aleph* and *ayin* incorporated into them:

אֵי אֶ אוֹ אוּ עָ עַ עִ עֹ עוֹ עוּ עֵי עִי בָּא בַא גַע גָּע דַע
וָא הֶע הוּא חִיא חֵיא חֵא זָא זָא זֶע לָע לוּא אָ אַ אֶ אִי
לוֹא מָע מָּא נָע נָּא נָא נֹא צֵא צָא דָע דוּא וֵא פָּא פַּע פָּא

Closed syllables

Closed syllables are those which end with a consonant sound as opposed to open syllables you learned about above which end with a vowel sound. Unlike open syllables which often contain only one consonant, closed syllables usually contain a minimum of two consonants, the one which begins the syllable and the one which ends it. Pronouncing closed syllables will give you an opportunity to practice with the final forms of the letters, so watch out for final *khoph* [ךְ], *mem* [ם], *nun* [ן], *peh* [ף], and *tsadeh* [ץ]. Pronounce the following closed syllables:

אַל אֶל עִם חָג אָב יוֹם יֹם הֹר יָד הָם רַם רָם בָּם בּוּז רַב
כֹּל קוֹל אִישׁ חוּץ פּוּץ רוּץ מוֹל מוֹת אוֹת זֹאת שָׁם אֵת אֵל
אַךְ לֵךְ לָךְ דַּן חֵן הֵן מִן צֹאן פֶּן סוֹף סוּס אוֹךְ כּוֹף טוֹב
גַּן שֵׁם שַׂר עַד כֵּן רִיב גַּם אִם עַם בֵּין בֵּן אָח הָג קַךְ רַךְ
תֹּף חַף טַף כַּף אַף

Multi-syllable words

Proceeding to multi-syllable words is a relatively simple matter for most words. Multi-syllable words usually have their emphasis on the word's last syllable. This is such a prevalent pattern that you should always pronounce the Hebrew words in this text with their emphasis on the last syllable unless you are directed to do otherwise by an accent mark [<] in this book (The accent mark do not appear in the "Assignments" sections of this book).

Another detail to learn here is what to do with a *heh* [ה] that ends a word. If a *heh* ends a word and has no vowel with it, i.e. if the *heh* closes the last syllable of a word, it is silent. For example, in the word הָיָה The first *heh* is pronounced /h/, and the second is silent. On the other hand, the word-ending *heh* that has a vowel is pronounced /h/ as in the word פִּיהָ Once again, observe the difference:

הָיָה	פִּיהָ
↑	↑
final *heh* without a vowel is *not* pronounced	final *heh* with a vowel *is* pronounced

The one exception to this rule is when a *heh* has a dot in it. The dot is not the *dagesh* you learned about earlier. It is a special dot that is only found in final *heh* called a *mappiq*. *Heh* with *mappiq* is pronounced as an aspiration or breath of air at the end of a word. We will not stress or practice with the *mappiq* until Lesson 19.4. All the syllables in the following words are open except for the last syllable which may be open or closed. Pronounce the following words.

אֱמֹר אֹמַר אָמַר אַחַד עֹלָה עֲשֵׂה עָשָׂה עֹשֶׂה דָּבָר פָּנִים בַּיִת אֲשֶׁר
מֹשֶׁה אִשָּׁה לָקַח אֶחָד יָשַׁב אֶרֶץ אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה הָאֲדָמָה תַּעֲשֶׂה אֹמֵר
שָׁלַח כֹּהֵן מָלַךְ מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֵי דָּוִד

Silent and vocal shewa

Discerning between silent *shewa* and vocal *shewa* may be tricky for a little while. First we will examine the problem by examining why the silent *shewa* is required. If you recall, every consonant except for an occasional *aleph*, *ayin*, or the last letter in a word must be accompanied by a vowel. However, the need quickly arises for consonants to close *interior* syllables, that is, syllables that are not the last syllables of a word. In the case of a closed interior syllable, a silent "vowel" must be used. For instance, look at the word *Israel* in Hebrew: יִשְׂרָאֵל Let us divide it into syllables:

יִשְׂ | רָ | אֵל

The first syllable is closed because it ends in a consonant, but the rules of Biblical Hebrew orthography require that the *sin* [שׂ] be accompanied by a vowel. The Jewish scholars who added the nikkud to the consonantal text would use the *shewa* [ְ] in such a case. Basically, because this *sin* closes the interior syllable, the *shewa* is silent, and the syllable is pronounced /yis/.

The next two syllables are easier: one is an open syllable pronounced /ra/ and one is closed, pronounced /el/. Assembled, the entire word is pronounced /yis-ra-EL/.

We can also solve the problem of distinguishing between a silent and vocal *shewa* from another angle by listing the occasions when a *shewa* should be vocalized.[1] Remember that its sound is a brief /uh/:

1. When a *shewa* is under the first letter of a word, it must then be a vocal *shewa* as in יְהוּדָה which is pronounced as three open syllables: יְ | הוּ | דָה

2. When there are two *shewa*s in a row, the second must be vocalized. (It then represents an open syllable made with only one consonant) as in יִשְׁמְרוּ which contains one silent *shewa* and one vocal *shewa.* Once again, the word is pronounced as three syllables:

יִשְׂ | מְ | רוּ
↑ ↑
vocal silent

When you pronounce the following words notice how the *qamets* [ָ] is slightly raised inside the final *khoph* [ך] as compared to the *qamets'* position with other letters:

פִּלְשְׁתִּי	שְׁלֹמֹה	מִשְׁפָּחָה	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	מִצְרַיִם	אַבְרָהָם
וְלֹא	וְקָטָל	וַיְדַבֵּר	לְמַעַן	יִשְׁמְעוּ	יִשְׁמְרוּ
אִשְׁתְּךָ	יִחְיֶה	תִּקְרָא	בְּרִיתִי	תִּשְׁמֹר	וְהָיָה
וְאָמַרְתְּ	שְׁכָבְתּוֹ	גֵּרָר	צָחַקְתְּ	מַמְרֵא	וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל
יְשׁוּפְךָ	גְּחֹנְךָ	קִלְלְךָ	יִפְגְּעוּ	וְיָלַדְתְּ	וְאַרְאֶךָּ

[1] Some grammarians teach a third case in which the *shewa* is vocalized, namely, when it follows a long vowel (either *qamets, shureq, hireq, sere,* or *holem*). Our technique will follow more closely the Modern Israeli practice.

Letter combinations

One last detail which we will cover in this brief introduction to pronunciation is letter combinations whose pronunciations cannot be derived from the rules above.

Combination		Sound
◌ַי	as in אָחַי	/ai/ as in eye
◌ָי	as in אֲדֹנָי	/ai/ as in eye
◌ָיו	as in אֱלָיו	/av/ as in lava
◌ֵה	as in רֹאֵה	/e/ as in prey
◌ֵי	as in תֵּעָשֶׂינָה	/e/ as in prey
וֹי	as in גּוֹי	/oi/ as in boy