A Guide to Intermediate Classical Hebrew at the University of Chicago

Richard Goerwitz, Lecturer
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
University of Chicago

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is simply to get students comfortable with Classical Hebrew. During the first year, students memorize a lot of forms, and learn the basic mechanics of the language. The purpose of the second year is to turn this basic knowledge into something more fluid and natural, and to teach students the rudiments of philology. fluidity

Think of this course as offering you a way to refine your Classical Hebrew reading skills, and, at the same time, as providing an overall framework for understanding how we can read Classical Hebrew in the first place—in itself a minor miracle, given the small size of the corpus, its antiquity, and its culturally remote origins.

1.2 How to Reach Me

I am currently teaching just one course at the University of Chicago. The rest of my time I divide between personal research, and work on the Afroasiatic Index Project (formerly the Cushitic Etymological Index Project). The best way to get a hold of me is by electronic mail at *r-goerwitz@uchicago.edu*. Please also feel free to call me at home at (312) 643-4377. Generally I am there from 6:00 P.M. on. You can try calling as late as 11:00 P.M., but you're likely to get a busy signal after 9:00. e-mail

1.3 Requirements

For autumn quarter grades will be based on weekly tests (75%) and on a short final (25%), to be given on the last class of the quarter. There will be no paper and no midterm. If a student's participation record is outstanding, his or her final grade will be rounded upwards a step (e.g., B to B+, A- to A). Bottom grades

line: If you come to class well prepared and study consistently for the weekly tests, you will do fine.

For the winter and spring quarters, tests will be given *ad hoc,* whenever we reach a natural stopping place (e.g., the end of a book). There will also be a short, five or ten page paper (see chapter 7), and a final. The final and paper will count the same as a test.

paper

1.3.1 Class Participation, Preparation

Classes will follow a simple pattern. Students will take turns reading one- or two-verse portions of the assigned text(s) aloud and then translating for the rest of us. When a student finishes reading and translating, I may ask a few simple grammatical questions. I will also field any questions that arise. Then we will move onto another reader, who will pick up where the last one left off.

See also below (§ 5.2) on the pronunciation standard we will be using in class, which is basically modern Israeli.

To prepare for class, read the material we will be going through (at first only five- or six-verse chunks, but later more). Look up any words you don't know (on lexicons, see § 2.2), and in general get ready to read and translate. Consult a reference grammar (§ 2.3) if any phrases or words are unclear. Make a note of anything you can't figure out on your own, and ask about it in class.

There is no preset list of Hebrew reading assignments. Rather, these assignments will be drawn up *ad hoc* as the quarter goes on, based, in part, on the interests and needs of the people taking the class.

1.3.2 Weekly Tests

Weekly tests will cover readings, vocabulary, and grammatical points that we have covered in class. From time to time I will also assign outside readings, which will find their way into a few test questions. These readings will come mostly from Wurthwein 1995 and from Barr 1987.[1]

[1] Full publication information on these and other works cited here may be found below in the bibliography.

Chapter 2

Books

2.1 The Primary Text

The basic text for this class is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Kittel, Elliger, Rudolph, et al. 1990, hereafter BHS). You do not need to own it. You can get away with photocopying the relevant parts. Most serious Hebrew or Bible students, however, will want to purchase a copy eventually. If you have a copy of some other critical edition of the Hebrew Bible, though, don't throw it away. Use it. We can compare its apparatus to that of BHS. The text of BHS itself, except for obvious errors (which have been corrected), is based on an early eleventh-century medieval manuscript, Leningrad B 19a.

BHS

BHS contains a wealth of information, packed mostly into cryptic signs and notes. These signs and notes are partly explained in the preface. To get the most out of BHS, however, you will need to keep on hand a copy of Wonneberger 1990, which explains the signs and notes. There are three copies of Wonneberger in the Oriental Institute Archives, on the left-hand side of the free-standing reference shelves on the right, as you walk in. There are also a few copies on the fourth-floor reference shelves at Regenstein Library.

Wonneberger

Fuller than Wonneberger, but considerably less handy, is the standard text-critical BHS introduction, Wurthwein 1995. Wurthwein provides a good, solid overview of the methodology behind such editions. We will be reading selections from it at several points during the quarter, so buy a copy for yourself if this is possible. If Wurthwein does not answer all of your questions, take a look at Tov 1992.

Wurthwein

2.2 Lexicons

In addition to a critical Hebrew Bible edition like BHS, most will also want to purchase a lexicon of some kind—although there are enough lexicons on the reference shelves at Regenstein and the Oriental Institute Archives to make it quite possible to get away without one (see below on libraries, § 2.7.1).

The best lexicon for second-year Classical Hebrew students is Holladay 1971, both because of its conciseness and because it uses alphabetical, rather than root, order. Holladay, though, is missing a lot of vital information, e.g., textual variants, related roots in other Semitic languages, extra-biblical occurrences, relevant secondary literature. To get at this sort of information, you need to consult an unabridged dictionary such as Köhler and Baumgartner 1990.

Holladay

daggar = exhaustive citation list

braces = non-occurring dictionary form

BDB's notion of the root's basic meaning

cognate roots in other Semitic languages

binyan

morphology

definitions

next binyan (piel) with morphology and definitions

note the by-root arrangement of entries

†[בָּלָה] **vb. become old and worn out** (Ar. , Aram. בְּלֵי, , Eth. *id.*)—**Qal** *Pf.* בָּלְתָה Dt 8[4], בָּלוּ 29[4]+; *Impf.* יִבְלֶה Jb 13[28] etc.; *Inf.* c. sf. בְּלֹתִי Gn 18[12];—*wear out* (intr.), esp. of garments Dt 8[4] 29[4.4], all c. מֵעַל pregn. *wear out* (and fall) *from upon*...(hence Ne 9[21]), Jos 9[13]; fig. of the heavens (with sim. of garment) Is 50[9] ψ 102[27] כַּבֶּגֶד יִבְלוּ, the earth Is 51[6] כַּבֶּגֶד תִּבְלֶה; the bones (through suffering) ψ 32[3]; afflicted man Jb 13[28] וְהוּא כְּרָקָב יִבְלֶה (‖ כְּבֶגֶד אֲכָלוֹ עָשׁ); of an aged and decrepit woman Gn 18[12] (J) אַחֲרֵי בְלֹתִי after *I am worn out*. **Pi.** caus. of Qal. **a.** *wear out* (trans.), fig. La 3[4] בִּלָּה בְשָׂרִי וְעוֹרִי, ψ 49[15] and their form לְבַלּוֹת שְׁאוֹל is for She'ôl *to consume away* (others rd. לִבְלוֹת is for *wasting away* [Dr[§204]], connecting 'שׁ with foll.), 1 Ch 17[9] לְבַלֹּתוֹ *to wear* it (Isr.) *out* (altered fr. לְעַנּוֹתוֹ 2 S 7[10]), cf. Dn 7[25] Aram. **b.** *wear out by use, use to the full,* Is 65[22] and the work of their hands יְבַלּוּ they shall *use to the full, enjoy,* Jb 21[13] they *wear out* their days in prosperity (Qr here יְכַלּוּ *complete,* which perh. is the true reading in both passages; cf. Ex 5[13] Jb 36[11]).—On בַּלֹּתִי ψ 92[11], v. sub בָּלַל.

†[בָּלֶה] **adj. worn out**; f. בָּלָה Ez 23[43] (of a woman, cf. Gn 18[12] supr.); pl. בָּלִים Jos 9[4] (sacks), v[4] (wine-skins), בָּלוֹת v[5] (sandals), v[5] (garments).

†[בְּלוֹא] **n.**[**m.**] **worn out things, rags** (Syr. *id.*) pl. cstr. בְּלוֹיֵ Je 38[11.11], בְּלוֹאֵי v[12].

†[תַּבְלִית] **n.f. destruction**: c. sf. Is 10[25] וְאַפִּי עַל־תַּבְלִיתָם and mine anger for *their destruction.*

Figure 2.1: Sample block of entries from BDB

Although it predates the discovery of Ugaritic and the Qumran Scrolls (fig. 3.2, § 3.3.1), and is generally a bit outdated, you will find Brown, Driver, and Briggs 1979 (usually abbreviated as BDB) a worthwhile addition to your personal library—if for no other reason than that it is clear, complete, and doesn't cost much (especially if you mail order it from CBD, on which see § 2.7.4, below). Unlike most other lexicons, BDB orders entries almost entirely by root. So, for example, you will find the name מתניהו 'Mattaniah' listed under the root 'to give,' נתן. Likewise, you will find תבלית 'destruction' under בלה

BDB

(fig. 2.1). This arrangement can be confusing at first. Fortunately, BDB is thoroughly cross-referenced (see, e.g., מתן on p. 608, col. 2).

If you ever get stuck on a form, you might also want to check out an **analytical lexicon**, i.e., a lexicon that alphabetizes forms exactly as they occur in the Bible. Using an analytical lexicon, for example, you can look up the form וַיֹּאמֶר directly, i.e., as (וַ)יֹּאמֶר, and not just under its root, אמר. The classic Hebrew analytical lexicon is Davidson 1982. Davidson is where you go if you want to know how to, say, parse some bizarre verb form, but don't know where or how to look it up in the dictionary. Also useful in this situation are **parsing guides**, which offer the same kind of analysis you find in analytical lexicons, but with the forms listed in the order that they occur in the corpus, rather then alphabetically.

analytical lexicons

parsing guides

It is also worth noting that there are a number of computer-based programs that do the job of analytical lexicons and parsing guides. Over the next ten years, I expect that these programs will completely replace them—and also concordances as well (on concordances, see § 2.4).

Another helpful tool for second-year students are **reader's lexicons**, which list definitions for words in the order they occur in the biblical text (as, for example, Armstrong, Busby, and Carr 1989). Reader's lexicons save enormous amounts of time because they make it so easy to look words up. If you plan on reading much Hebrew, get one. Just be sure not to take the brief definitions it gives as the whole gospel truth.

reader's lexicons

Armstrong, Busby, Carr

2.3 Grammars

For detailed grammatical information on a passage you are reading, or on a form you don't understand, you will need to consult a standard reference grammar. I recommend Gesenius and Kautzsch 1910 (GKC) as a good, basic reference. More readable, and actually much better suited for intermediate Hebrew students, is Waltke and O'Connor 1990. Few of us actually go through grammars like these cover-to-cover. What we do is read sections that interest us, and then browse their indices to see if they mention any of the passages we happen to be reading that day.

GKC

Students should eventually learn to use Bergsträsser 1986 and Joüon 1923 (note the English edition, Joüon 1991). Those interested in historical linguistics will also need to know Bauer and Leander 1962. Despite its age, Bauer and Leander is still the only complete historical grammar of the Classical Hebrew language in existence.

Joüon

Bauer and Leander

2.4 Concordances

Lexicons and grammars, of course, only offer information in highly digested form. If, for example, you find yourself asking whether a word can have a nuance that the lexicons overlook, you really ought to examine every occurrence of the

word in the corpus, and try to make that judgment for yourself. To find every such occurrence requires a **concordance**. The two most popular concordances of the Hebrew Bible are 1) Mandelkern 1967 and 2) Even-Shoshan 1985—the latter being the easier of the two to use because of its readable format and extensive use of vowel points. The Baker edition, available by mail from CBD (see § 2.7.4), comes with a good English introduction and key. The only problem with Mandelkern and Even-Shoshan is that neither is based specifically on BHS. Mandelkern is based on the traditional Rabbinic Bible, while Even-Shoshan is based on the Koren text (which many prefer, especially for liturgical use). If you would rather stick with a Hebrew concordance based specifically on modern scholarly editions, then use Lisowsky 1981.

Even-Shoshan

Lisowsky

Good English concordances to use include Young 1980 and Strong 1990, which are keyed to the original languages, so that you always know what Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic words form the basis of the English entry you reading. Initially, you are probably better off using these English concordances, Young and Strong, than Hebrew ones like Mandelkern, Even-Shoshan, and Lisowsky (which can be a bit intimidating for beginning and intermediate classical Hebrew students).

2.5 Bible Commentaries

It is difficult to offer blanket statements about commentaries. They vary greatly in emphasis and overall quality. My best recommendation is simply to head off to the LSTC (§ 2.7.2) once the reading assignments have been firmed up and look at what they have in stock. Some commentaries are much better than others about linguistic and philological matters.

2.6 General Bibliography

For a general overview of what has been done lately on Hebrew language and literature, there is a survey and selected bibliography, namely Waldman 1989. What makes this book so useful is that it not only lists all the major literature, but also discusses that literature, and places it within a general scholarly context. There is also a bibliographically rich history of the Hebrew language by Angel Sáenz-Badillos (1993), written specifically as a texbook for university students. Both of these books are worth purchasing, if you plan on doing serious work in Classical Hebrew.

Waldman

Sáenz-Badillos

2.7 How to Find Books

There are three basic places to get a hold of books useful for this class: libraries, bookstores, and mail-order houses. Hyde Park is particularly rich in the first two of these three resources.

2.7.1 Libraries

Regenstein Library is the obvious starting point for any local Hebrew reference book search—specifically its fourth and fifth floor reference shelves (where you will find plenty of Hebrew lexicons). Students should also be aware of the Oriental Institute Archives, which contain a fair assortment of lexicons and biblical editions.

JKM

Probably the best source of books, though, is actually off-campus—at the Jesuit-Krauss-McCormick Library (housed in the Lutheran School of Theology, up at 1100 E. 55th St.). JKM has a very good selection of commentaries, lexicons, and editions, as well as a passable general Near Eastern collection. Unfortunately, it is a bit underutilized. Its underutilization, however, makes it an excellent place to find books and get work done. To obtain borrowing privileges there, University of Chicago students need only fill out a few forms.

2.7.2 Retail/New Booksellers

Seminary Coop

The main academic bookstore in Hyde Park is, naturally, the University of Chicago Bookstore at 970 E. 58th St. Its stock is geared more for the general, educated reader, though, and doesn't have the feel of a good, humanities-oriented academic bookstore. For that, you have to go to the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore at 5757 S. University. This is the best bookstore in Hyde Park, and, as a student, you will have little choice but to become intimately familiar with it.

LSTC

Also worth visiting is the Lutheran School of Theology's Book Center (1100 E. 55th St.). This facility is usually well stocked with the standard reference tools and Bibles. The place is not big, but it is a lot of fun to browse through.

Rosenblum's

For those interested in Mishnaic and later Hebrew dialects, or who plan on doing work with medieval commentators (highly advisable), it is a good idea to take at least one trip to Rosenblum's World of Judaica, on the north side (2906 W. Devon Ave.). They will have copies of all the major Jewish religious literature. Serious Bible students will, at the very least, want to purchase a מקראות גדולות (has the Pentateuch in Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as commentaries by major medieval scholars). Consider also taking a course from Norman Golb or Michael Fishbane, who (among many other things) teach courses in Rabbinic and medieval Hebrew literature.

2.7.3 Used Booksellers

Ex Libris

Heading the list of used bookstores where Classical Hebrew study aids can be found is Ex Libris Theological Books (1340 E. 55th St.), which is very strong on commentaries and other ancillary biblical materials. It also has language and Judaica sections, but these only sporadically carry anything of real interest to Classical Hebrew students.

O'Gara's

Also worth perusal is O'Gara's (1448 E. 57th), which has a fair sized religion section, with separate Bible shelves. It also has an ancient history section—

although that is usually not very useful for our purposes. The language reference section in the front of the store also only rarely carries anything having to do with Classical Hebrew. The Judaica section, however, often hides a gem or two.

Many of the same observations made about O'Gara's apply to Powell's down the street (1501 E. 57th St.). Powell's, though, has no Bible area, which I find to be inconvenient. Biblical materials also have a tendency to turn up in the Judaica section, particularly if they contain the word "Israel." The language and linguistic area, however, is quite good, and it has considerably more archeological materials than O'Gara's.

Powell's

In general, when perusing used bookstores, beware: You will have to wade through a lot of junk. Most of what you will find is stuff that other scholars have discarded. Think twice before buying.

2.7.4 Mail Order

Aside from an occasional trip to Rosenblum's, there is usually little reason to look outside of Hyde Park for reference books. If local bookstores don't have what you want in stock, you can almost always get it via special order from the Seminary Coop.

The only downside to doing things this way is, of course, cost. And the best way to keep your costs as low as possible is mail order. The cheapest and best of the mail-order houses I know about is Christian Book Distributors (CBD). CBD carries nearly all the works cited here.[1] In general, their discounts are extremely good for domestic religious publishers like Baker, Eerdmans, Hendrickson, Knox, etc., dipping as low as 75% off retail. Discounts are far less, though, for books they obtain from academic presses like Oxford—where you are lucky if you get even fifteen percent off. For such publishers, the Seminary Coop is probably still your best bet.

CBD

[1] To check for specific titles, or put yourself on their mailing list, call 1-508-977-5000.

Chapter 3

Basic Terms and Concepts

3.1 Linguistics

Although this is a Hebrew course, and not an introduction to formal linguistics, it will be useful to take a few moments to bring everyone up to speed on a few important terms and concepts that appear over and over again in scholarly discussions of Classical Hebrew.

3.1.1 Phonology

The term **phonology** refers to the study of the sound-units that make up natural languages. Linguists call these sound-units **phonemes**. Phonemes are basic units of linguistic organization, like the first consonant in *playing*, /p/, or the sole vowel, /ɛi/ in *bait* (I will explain the slashes and the vowel symbols shortly).

phonemes

It is essential to recognize the difference between phonemes and letters, i.e., so-called **graphemes**. The words *bait* and *played*, for example, have the same vowel phoneme, /ɛi/, despite the fact that this phoneme is spelled with different graphemes in each case, namely *ai* and *ay*. The difference, that is, is purely in the letters—not in the underlying linguistic forms.

graphemes

Note, however, that the vowel in *bait* is a little shorter than the vowel in *played*. Say them both, and you will hear a slight difference. This difference in length has no structural significance. In fact, most English speakers would never even notice it if it were not called to their attention. Such distinctions are not phonemic in nature. They pertain, rather, to **phonetics**. In other words, they reflect sound distinctions that play no integral part in the overall structure and organization of the language. Because they are not part of the language system *per se*, and because native speakers have trouble even hearing them, purely phonetic details tend not work their way into writing systems—which almost always operate on the *phonemic* principle.

phonetics

Having explained the difference between phonetic and phonemic values, it is now possible to explain what the slashes in /ɛi/ above mean. What these

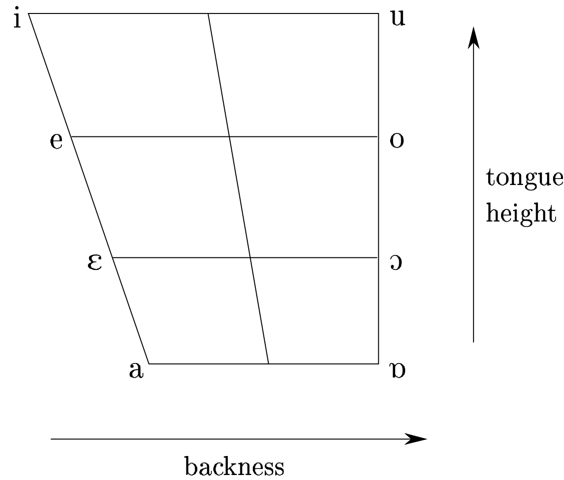

Figure 3.1: The cardinal vowels

slashes indicate is a phonemic (as opposed to a phonetic) transcription. Had the transcription been a phonetic one, the vowels would have been enclosed in square brackets and would have been marked for length, e.g., [ɛi], [ɛiː] (the ː symbol indicating a long vowel, as in *played*).

IPA

The source of the vowel symbols themselves, *ɛ* and *i*, is the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). IPA symbols have well-known phonetic values. As a result, they offer us a general way of talking about language—one that lets us forego the constant comparisons with other languages that often clutter introductory textbooks (e.g., "pronounce *ḥet* way back in the mouth, like the *ch* in German *ach*"). I cannot assume that everyone reading this knows IPA, though, so I myself will resort to some of this very nonsense later on (e.g., § 5.2.6).

cardinal vowels

Related to IPA is the notion of **cardinal vowels**. Cardinal vowels are a set of vowel articulation points and modes defined by the British phonetician Daniel Jones to provide a standard frame of reference for identifying vowels in natural languages. I have drawn up a chart of the eight cardinal vowels, arranged by tongue height and front/backness in the mouth (fig. 3.1). Note that backness, in that figure, correlates with roundedness. So, for example, the vowel [ɔ] is not just a back vowel, but a rounded one as well.

3.1.2 Morphology

Morphology is the study of word components, that is, of the least grammatically significant units that make up natural languages. These units include things like prefixes, suffixes, and indecomposable words like דָבָר. Words often consist of more than one morpheme. דְבָרוֹ, for example, is bimorphemic, consisting of דְבָר and the 3ms pronominal suffix, וֹ. Actually, according to some linguists, דְבָרוֹ is trimorphemic, consisting of 1) a consonantal root, דבר, 2) a vocalic overlay (*šva-qameṣ*), and 3) a 3ms suffix. My basic point, though, is

simply that words can be broken down, one way or another, into least grammatically significant units. These units, called **morphemes**, make up the part of a language we call its morphology.

morphemes

When I ask students to "parse" a given Hebrew form, as will happen both during class and on tests, what I am asking for is a breakdown of the form by morphological category, using terms such as stem (*qal*, etc.), person, number, and gender. Each such category manifests itself differently, usually in combination with others, but occasionally alone. The ending וֹ- , for example, is third person, masculine, and singular. The verbal form, קָם, however, is either a masculine singular *qal* active participle or a third person masculine singular *qal* perfect verb. Finally, -הֲ is just an interrogative prefix—nothing more.

parsing

3.1.3 Syntax

The term **syntax** refers to how words interrelate, especially to their order. It also refers to aspects of the morphology that depend on other words in the sentence (e.g., agreement between subjects and verbs). Syntax has, since the advent of generative-transformational grammar in the late 50s, become the main focus of modern linguistic theory—to the point that it, along with phonology, has nearly forced morphology out of the picture. In recent years, however, morphology has made something of a comeback as part of the **lexicon**, which in formal linguistic terminology means the morpheme inventory of a language.

word order

3.1.4 Historical and Comparative Linguistics

Historical and comparative linguistics have as their object to trace out genetic affiliations between languages, and to reconstruct common ancestors, i.e., **proto-languages**. Historical and comparative linguistics reached the peak of their popularity in the late nineteenth, and early twentieth, centuries. Since then, **diachronic** (literally, 'through time') ways of looking at language have tended to give way to **synchronic** ones, i.e., to methods of analysis that focus on languages as self-contained systems existing at specific points in time. In recent years, it has also become apparent that diachronic affiliations cannot always be distinguished from areal ones. For example, should we attribute the widespread use of broken plurals in Ethiopic and Arabic to derivation from a single common ancestor, or to the fact that the two respective speech communities were adjacent? Does the feature, that is, imply a common heritage, or does it reflect shared regional innovation? Most probably the answer is "both."

proto-languages

diachronic vs. synchronic methods

Despite murky areas in the historical/comparative methodology, it remains clear that languages show varying degrees of relatedness. And these disciplines help us use those relations to shed light on obscure features of one or another language. Suppose, for example, that we are scholars thousands of years from now, working on an old language called German. Suppose, furthermore, that we have encountered a word no one has ever seen before, namely *Hund*. If context does not make this word's meaning clear, we can use our knowledge of related languages, like English, to help us out. Since the surviving ancient English

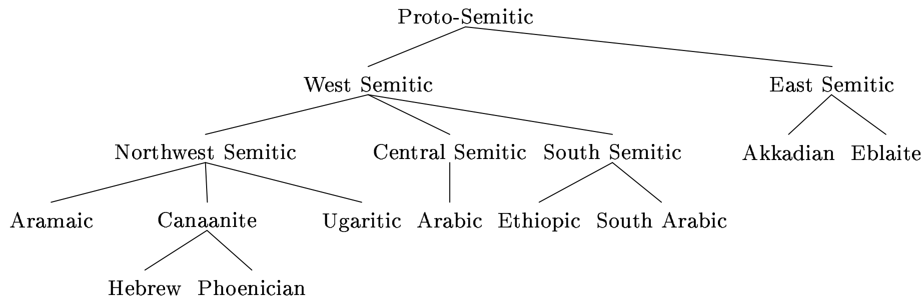

Figure 3.2: Genetic affiliations of the major Semitic languages

corpus is much larger than the German one, we have many more examples of a **cognate** (historically related) English word, namely *hound*. Although the meanings of *hound* and *Hund* are not quite the same, they shed enough light on each other to make it possible to understand the German text.

cognates

Exploiting relationships between languages in this manner forms the methodological basis for a great deal of work being done on Classical Hebrew (see below, § 3.4). It is one reason why the discovery of new ancient Semitic languages like Eblaite and Ugaritic generates interest among Hebraists. It is also the reason why full, unabridged Classical Hebrew lexicons make cognate lists an integral part of their entries for Hebrew words.

3.1.5 Historical Grammar

Those who took Dennis Pardee's first-year Classical Hebrew course will doubtless have studied a certain amount of **historical grammar**. Here at the University of Chicago we use this term, somewhat idiosyncratically, to refer to the study of Hebrew historical morpho(phon)ology, i.e., to the study of the history and structure of Hebrew word/affix-patterns.

historical grammar

Central to the study of historical grammar as such is the concept of a **base**. A base is an abstract pattern that unites a set of related forms. Take, for example, the adjectives נָקֹד and אָדֹם. These two forms share all of their inflected patterns (e.g., feminine singular, plural), as well as their basic vowelling. We capture this commonality by assigning them a common pattern or base—in this case, *qaṭul.*

bases

By convention, bases are built around the root *qṭl* 'kill.' If a form has only two root consonants, then the *ṭ* is dropped from its base (e.g., *qal*). Affixes are tacked on unaltered (e.g., the *ma-* in *maqṭal*). See table 3.1 for more examples.

Students usually learn bases by rote initially. As time goes on, however, they become increasingly aware that bases are really just reconstructions of earlier vocalization patterns. Bases are, that is, what we come to when we strip off later sound shifts from attested Hebrew words. Suppose, for example, that we start with a form like כֹּהֵן. If we strip off the shift from */i/ to *ṣere*, we get **kōhin.* If we then also strip off the Canaanite Shift, from **ā* to *ō*, we arrive at **kāhin.* If we then, finally, replace the three root consonants *k, h,* and *n* with

sound shifts

Hebrew form	*gloss*	*base*
יָד	'hand'	*qal*
טוֹב	'good'	*qāl*
כֹּל	'all'	*qull*
שֵׁן	'tooth'	*qill*
דָּבָר	'word'	*qaṭal*
כֹּהֵן	'priest'	*qāṭil*
מִגְדָּל	'tower'	*maqṭal*

Table 3.1: Sample Hebrew forms and their bases

our conventional base consonants, *q, ṭ,* and *l*, we arrive at our base, *qāṭil.*

Having said this, let me emphasize that second-year Classical Hebrew students are not expected to generate bases themselves by reverse application of sound shifts. For one thing, there are a lot of sound shifts, and a lot of exceptions to them. Also, for many of the shifts, philologists and linguists cannot agree on the precise environments in which they occurred. To make matters worse, one often has to bring in comparative evidence well beyond the expected range of a second-year student in order to resolve problems that cannot be resolved on the basis of the Hebrew evidence alone. Still, despite the complexities, it is useful for students to know the most important sound shifts that occurred, especially in the vowel system. See figure 3.3 for a list of them.

Note that in figure 3.3 asterisks are prepended to non-occurring, reconstructed forms. This is a standard typographical convention used by linguists and philologists. Attested biblical forms, by way of contrast, take no asterisk. It should be pointed out, however, that the *qameṣ* vowel (represented as a long *ā* above) was pronounced by the people who actually pointed the biblical text as a back rounded vowel, [ɔ]. As a result, *dāḇār* above ought, strictly speaking, to take an asterisk, even though most introductory textbooks treat this as the actual attested form. I will discuss this issue in greater detail later on, in chapter 5. The exact pronunciation of biblical forms, of course, is not important for an understanding of bases and of their utility for philologists.

In general, knowing a form's base makes it easier to predict what the corresponding form(s) will look like in other Semitic languages, so we can look them up. Knowing the base also helps us guess how similar forms might have been pronounced, and how they might have functioned grammatically, in dialects written with unvowelled, or semi-vowelled, scripts (e.g., Old Aramaic, inscriptional Hebrew, Phoenician, and Ugaritic). Most importantly, though, knowing a form's base helps us predict what its morphological variants will be. For example, suppose we want to know what the plural of יָוָן is. We do not need to look anything up if we already know that its base is *qaṭal.* To determine its plural form, we merely tack on the plural ending, *-īm*, to this base, and then apply the well-known rules of pretonic lengthening and propretonic reduction (see, e.g., Lambdin 1971, § 5):

1. the Canaanite Shift, *ā → ō; e.g., *kāhinu → *kōhinu
2. loss (apocope) of final short vowels; e.g., *dabaru → *dabar, *kōhinu → *kōhin
3. attenuation, (unstressed) *C*a*CC → C*i*CC; e.g., *magdal → *migdal
4. lowering of short *i and *u to *e and *o, respectively, in open and/or stressed syllables; e.g., *kōhin → *kōhen
5. pretonic (i.e., pre-stress) lengthening; e.g., *dabár → *dābár
6. tonic lengthening in nominal forms; e.g., *dābár → dābā́r, *kōhén → kōhḗn, *migdal → migdāl
7. stress shift, (-)CV́CV → (-)CVCV́; e.g., *kātábū → *kātabū́
8. reduction of short vowels to šva in open unstressed syllables; e.g., *kātabū́ → kātəbū́
9. Philippi's Law, *C*í*CC → C*á*CC; e.g., *higgídtī → higgádtī (the old philologist's saw is that, by Philippi's Law, *Philippi* goes to *Phil*a*ppi*)
10. epenthesis; e.g., *yáld → *yálɛd
11. raising of *a to ɛ in open syllables before non-gutturals; e.g., *yálɛd → yɛ́lɛd

Figure 3.3: List of the major vocalic sound shifts in Hebrew

*qaṭalī́m → *qaṭālī́m → qəṭālī́m

We then insert the consonants *y, w,* and *n* in place of our conventional ones, *q, ṭ,* and *l*, soften any consonants that need to be softened (in this case, none), and presto: We arrive at *yəwānīm*. Note once again that this transcription should, strictly speaking, take an asterisk (i.e., *yəwānīm*), since it does not exactly match the medieval pronunciation attested in the main biblical reading tradition, and is therefore, as such, unattested.

The concept of a base, though useful for analytical purposes, is, unfortunately, not without serious internal inconsistencies. For one thing, it is not clear exactly what the target period is. Are we, for example, aiming at the mid second millennium BCE, back before the Canaanite Shift? Or are we looking at the early-to-middle first millennium BCE, i.e., after Hebrew had done away with final short vowels? Hebrew nouns originally ended in the short case vowels *u, i,* or *a*, just as perfect verbs ended in a short *a* and imperfects in short *u*. In general, we represent bases without these endings (i.e., *qāṭil* rather than *qāṭilu*). Yet the presence or absence of such endings often provides the key to a form's later evolution (e.g., final weak construct שְׂדֵה [< *śaday] vs. its absolute counterpart, שָׂדֶה [< *śadayu; see also section 6.2.1 on imperfect, jussive, and preterite verbal forms, below]).

Another inconsistency in the concept of a base is that it is at once both synchronic and diachronic. Most Hebrew philologists tend to think of bases diachronically, i.e., as historical reconstructions. Those who buy into the modern generative school of linguistic thought, however, tend to treat them more as synchronic abstractions, i.e., as patterns in our mental lexicon that are converted, on the fly, into spoken forms. Many generativists, if confronted, will downplay or deny this mental aspect of their theory, claiming that their analyses have no real cognitive implications. In practice, however, it becomes obvious that the entire motivation for these analyses is to understand human linguistic competence, i.e., to understand the nature of human linguistic ability. This cannot occur without at least an implicit theory of cognition.

Despite its inconsistencies and shortcomings, the concept of a base is a useful one, especially for students expecting to study other Semitic languages, and for people interested in understanding Hebrew in a broader historical-philological context.

A reasonably full, if somewhat outdated, catalog of base patterns may be found in Bauer and Leander 1962.

3.1.6 Hebrew Grammatical Terms

Although linguistic terms like *phoneme*, *morpheme*, and *cognate* provide basic mechanisms for describing what is going on in natural languages, each language naturally evolves its own special terminology. For Hebraists, the terminology is particularly complex, because we must contend, not only with the traditional Latin and Greek terms, but also with Aramaic terms deriving primarily from the Masorah, and with Hebrew terms that have evolved over the course of the last millennium.

Take, for example, the several terms scholars use to describe words stressed on their second-to-last syllable. Some designate such words as *penultimately* stressed forms (based on post-classical Latin *paenultimus*). Others, following the Greek tradition, designate them as *paroxytones* (from the Greek παροξύτονος). Still others, Anglicizing the traditional (originally Aramaic) grammatical term (מלעיל), refer to them as *milel* (cf. מלרע, which refers to finally stressed forms).

paroxytones

Sometimes authors will leap, gratuitously, from one terminological tradition to another in a single article or monograph.

In my opinion, such writing shows more a lack of discipline than an abundance of knowledge. In your own writing, try to be consistent. Don't gratuitously mix Greek and Latin terms, for instance. If you are writing in English, borrow Hebrew terms only when there is no good English equivalent—as, for example, with ***mišqal*** ('noun pattern'), a term that has no clear English equivalent.

mišqal

If you ever find yourself stuck on a term, check out the index to one of the major grammars, like Gesenius and Kautzsch 1910 or Joüon 1991. For quick reference, there is also a good general glossary in the back of Waltke and O'Connor 1990.

3.1.7 Further Reading

Those who want to read more about general linguistics, specifically its application to Classical Hebrew, should take a look at the recent collection, Bodine 1992. Articles in that volume deal not only with the standard linguistic fare (phonology, morphology, syntax, and historical/comparative linguistics), but also with other areas, like semantics, pragmatics, graphemics, and discourse analysis—as well as with old philological faithfuls, like lexicography. Be warned, though, that linguistics, as a field, goes through regular upheavals and changes. Bodine, though published in 1992, is already out of date in many respects.

Bodine

3.2 The Masorah

The biblical text, as we know it, consists of many historical layers. As I will discuss in more detail below (§ 5.2.1), its constituent books were composed in diverse times/places. Since their original composition these books have also passed through many redactors' and copyists' hands. Even the relatively uniform medieval text is itself tripartite, consisting of an older consonantal base, a later medieval overlay of vowels/accents, and a set of annotations set in the side margins (the **Masorah Parva**), in the upper and lower margins (**Masorah Magna**), and at the end of the Bible (**Masorah Finalis**). These annotations, known collectively as the **Masorah**, served to safeguard the text's transmission by providing a commentary on odd or otherwise noteworthy features, and by providing cross-references to parallel forms. BHS has a full Masorah Parva and Masorah Magna, the latter of these consisting of brief notes at the bottom of the main edition, referring to full listings published in a separate volume (Weil 1971). See the sample BHS page in fig. 3.4.

Although the term Masorah is often used in a broader sense, to denote everything added by medieval scholars to the consonantal text, in its strict sense it refers to the annotations only. The scholar-scribes whose task it was to outfit manuscripts with these annotations are known as **Masoretes**. The term *Masoretes* also has a broader sense, in which it refers collectively to the countless scholars who played an integral role in transmitting the text from one generation to the next.

Masoretes

One feature of the Masorah that students should learn to recognize are ***qere-ketiv*** variants. *Qere-ketiv* variants are cases where the ***naqdan*** or "pointer" of a manuscript has found the consonantal text to vary from its correct liturgical reading, and he has vowelled the text so as to reflect this liturgical reading. For a good example of how this works, look at Ruth 3:3–4 (BHS), where we find two odd verbal forms, וירדתי and ושכבתי. Being 2fs perfects, one might expect these forms to end in *tav*s. The unexpected *yod* may be a slip by a later scribe who spoke a non-Judaean Hebrew, or Aramaic, dialect. The *yod* may also preserve an original feature of the text—one that escaped the dialectal levelling process that has affected the whole Bible. Whatever the source of the ִי endings, though, the medieval *naqdan* who did the pointing felt that the verbs

qere-ketiv

words showing qere-ketiv variances
(note the superscripted circles, indicating
the presence of marginal Masoretic notes)

Masorah Parva

3,1—16 RUTH 1323

links to notes 3b and 4a
in the critical apparatus

marginal notes
on qeres

qere with no ketiv!

references to the
Masorah Magna

critical apparatus

Figure 3.4: Sample page from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (©1966/77 Deutsche Bibelgesellshaft, reprinted with permission)

should be read out loud is if they had been written in the standard way. As a result he pointed them with a *šva* under the *tav*, instead of a *ḥireq*, indicating that the *ḥireq* should be ignored, i.e., that it should not be taken as a *mater lectionis* for *i*:

וְיָרַדְתְּי
וְשַכָבְתְּי

Note that The Masorah proper lists וירדת and ושכבת as the *qere*s in the margin, with final *tav*s, making absolutely clear just what the vowelling, i.e., the *qere*, implies (again, see fig. 3.4).

3.2.1 The Tiberian Masorah

Contrary to popular misperceptions, the Masorah is not a unitary thing. Manuscripts are outfitted with *a* Masorah. This Masorah differs, often substantially, from one manuscript to another. Also, the form of the annotations, their placement, and the terminology used for the marginal notes, all vary from place to place and time to time. The system you will generally see in modern critical editions is called the **Tiberian**, so named after the Galilean city of Tiberias, where it was developed. Tiberias was a major center of Jewish learning in the medieval period, especially during and after the decline of the Babylonian academies in the tenth century CE.

Tiberias

The Tiberian scholars not only developed their own style of Masorah, but also their own reading conventions—and their own vowel and accentual pointing system to record those readings. I will have more to say about the Tiberian vocalic/accentual scheme below, in section 5.2.3.

3.3 Manuscripts, Versions

Critical biblical editions like BHS are of great use, not only because they give us a good look at the medieval text, but also because they tell us what is in early manuscripts and versions. Early manuscripts and versions are particularly important for understanding the Hebrew Bible because of the curious way in which its text evolved. By early medieval times, the consonantal text of the Bible had become extremely uniform. There are, of course, variations between manuscripts—a few of them significant. But, by and large, the tradition is homogeneous. That is, the manuscripts all reflect a single **recension** or text-family. As a result, without early manuscripts and versions (which predate the suppression of variant recensions), we would have only the shallowest understanding of how the biblical text came to be.

recension

As most are probably aware, the discipline of collecting and comparing early versions and manuscripts, and of using these to reconstruct the original form, and development, of the text is known as **textual criticism**. The fruits of scholarly work in this area are summarized in the critical annotations at the bottom of each page of your BHS editions. Medieval scribes, of course, were not directly concerned with such matters.

textual criticism

3.3.1 The Dead Sea Scrolls

DSS

The oldest known manuscripts of the Bible available to us are the now-famous **Dead Sea Scrolls** (DSS) discovered around Khirbet Qumran. Despite the sensation they have created, the amount of material found there is still relatively small—with the exception of a few truly astounding finds like the Great Isaiah Scroll from cave 1 (known by the siglum 1QIs^{a}). Although the first quarter of a second-year Hebrew course is not the place to take up advanced study of the Qumran Scrolls, students should be aware of their special text-critical significance.

Fitzmyer

I invite anyone who gets curious about whether a biblical passage being read in class is attested at Qumran to take a look at Fitzmyer 1990, which has an index of biblical texts in the DSS corpus.

Samaritan Pentateuch

Also worth mentioning here is the Samaritan Pentateuch, which, although it does not exist in manuscripts nearly as old as the Dead Sea Scrolls, has persisted, alongside the main Jewish recension, right up to the present day.

3.3.2 The Major Versions

LXX

Targums

The term **major versions** refers to a specific group of early Bible translations, namely the Septuagint (written in Hellenistic Greek; designated by the siglum LXX), the various Targums (Aramaic), and the Peshiṭta (written in another dialect of Aramaic, namely Syriac). Early Greek translations other than the Septuagint existed, but very little of them remain. The Peshiṭta is interesting in that, although it probably arose out of the Targumic tradition, the form in which we know it now shows heavy influence from Septuagintal traditions.

3.3.3 Minor Versions

Vulgate

Other versions have less importance for textual criticism than the three major versions mentioned above, either because they belong to a later period, or because they depend heavily on other version(s). For example, the Latin Vulgate stems from the early fifth century, and shows heavy influence from the Septuagint, although it betrays also the influence of non-Septuagintal Greek traditions, and of the Targumic milieu. The Vulgate is most important, therefore, when it differs from these other, major versions. The same is true, only more so, for the Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Arabic. Those interested in the relations between these versions, and their value for textual criticism, should look at Wurthwein 1995 and also Tov 1992.

3.4 Philology

comparative philology

Philology, classically, means the study of language and literature. In recent years, however, scholars have tended to use the word as a substitute for the more restrictive term, **comparative philology**. Comparative philology is the study

of written corpora within a broader historical and linguistic context, especially in relation to literatures written in **cognate**, i.e., genetically related, languages.

For biblical scholars, comparative philology refers specifically to the study of the Hebrew Bible, both as a piece of ancient northwest Semitic literature, and as a Semitic language in general. For dead languages like Classical Hebrew, comparative philology is extremely important. Lacking living native speakers to consult, we have no direct way of deducing fine syntactic or semantic nuances, or of pinning down the meanings of obscure words and phrases. Comparative philology offers us a chance to make up for this lack by offering us a broad linguistic, literary, and general cultural vantage point from which to view the evidence.

Sources of information at the disposal of comparative philologists, as of Classical Hebraists generally, include, for example, ancient corpora external to the traditional Hebrew canon:

1. early inscriptions, ostraca, etc. (§ 4.3)
2. the book of Ben Sira
3. Qumran Scrolls
4. early midrashic works

As noted above (§§ 3.3.2–3.3.3), we also have early translations, which provide additional data points. Finally, we have other languages and literatures of the region, with which fruitful comparison can be made. It is these last two sources, i.e., cognate language and literatures, that make up the main domain of comparative philology.

3.4.1 Philological and Historical-Linguistic Terms

You will find that general linguistic, historical linguistic, and comparative philological terminology overlap to a large extent. Below I define some terms you will need to know in order to read scholarly literature in these latter two areas, i.e., historical linguistics and comparative philology. For general linguistic terms see above, section 3.1.

analogy A catch-all historical-linguistic term referring to changes in one part of a language motivated by parallelism with some other part of the language. For example, Americans often replace *dived* with *dove*, by analogy with *drove*. In Hebrew, fpl forms like שפחותיו took on a final יו- by analogy with suffixed mpl forms like דבריו 'his words'—despite the fact that the *yod* is redundant for the fpl.

apocope Loss of a final sound, e.g., the dropping of a final short case or mood vowel (see below, § 6.2.1, page 41).

diglossia When a speech community varies its dialect according to social setting (e.g., formal vs. informal). Scribal diglossia is frequently offered as

an explanation for the sporadic introduction of late linguistic forms into older Classical Hebrew books.

D-stem The derived stem whose dominant characteristic is a doubled second radical. In Hebrew, this is the *piel*.

epigraphy Epigraphy, traditionally, is the study of inscriptions written on durable materials, especially stone. Among Semitists, however, the term has a broader meaning, covering inscribed tablets, and sometimes ink writing on potsherds, bowls, or even on less durable surfaces like papyrus and parchment.

exegesis Explicating or drawing out the meaning of a text, especially scripture. In Jewish circles you will often hear the term *midrash* used in its place, especially when referring to rabbinic literature of this type.

G-stem The basic or ground stem of a verb, known in Hebrew as the *qal* (cf., e.g., Aramaic, where the ground stem is called the *pəʿal*).

hapax legomenon A word that occurs only once in a given corpus; from the Greek ἅπαξ λεγομένον 'a thing said only once.'

onomastics The study of proper names (see below, section 6.1).

palaeography The study of writing on papyrus, parchment, wax, paper, and basically anything non-durable (durable materials being things like stone, metal—cf. *epigraphy* above). Semitists often use the term *palaeography* to refer to the general study of ancient scripts and their evolution.

syncope Loss of a non-final sound, e.g., the disappearance of the 3ms pronominal *heh* from the nominal possessive suffix, וֹ- (< **-áu* < **-áhu*).

sound change Changes in a language's sound system that occur over time, such as the shift from *ā* to *ɔ* in medieval Tiberian Hebrew.

Chapter 4

The Nature of the Corpus

4.1 Discontinuity

In chapter 2 above I discussed many books and sources of books. In chapter 3, I then went on to discuss terms and methodologies like *phonology*, *historical linguistics*, *textual criticism*, and *comparative philology*. But why are all these books, terms, and methodologies needed? Why is it necessary, in other words, to pore over all these facts just to read a well-known text like the Bible? Why not just pick up a Bible and a lexicon, and get started?

In fact, this is precisely what we will do in class. That is, we will waste little time getting right to the material. What I want students to realize, however, is that in doing things this way we are masking some serious underlying discontinuities. The text, for one thing, is composed of words. And words often cease to be used, or change their meanings, over time. High moral ideas about what is right and wrong, about God, and about the nature of the world also change and evolve—as do more mundane notions like how to cook a big pot roast or harvest a field. Changes like these create linguistic and cultural discontinuities that render ancient texts difficult; at times even opaque.

linguistic change

cultural change

Further impeding our access to ancient texts is the circumstance that they were "published" by hand copy, and therefore fell more easily subject to mistakes, pseudo-corrections, and additions, than printed books (at least in theory) do today.

scribal activity

Scribes themselves also varied widely in the respect they accorded the texts they copied. At times they even became much more than scribes, redacting and editing texts to reflect their own, or their overseers', agendas. Recall, for example, how the book of Deuteronomy revises the law codes of Exodus and Leviticus, or how the book of Chronicles edits Samuel and Kings to fit an idealistic monarchic scheme, or how Kings itself shapes an as-yet unknown chronicle into a religious narrative (1Kgs 14:19, etc.). Later Christian and Jewish notions about the the nature of scripture tend to obscure this revision process—hiding or minimizing the discontinuities that shaped the biblical text as we know it

today.

Another way in which discontinuity affected the transmission process was through scribal multilingualism and multi-dialectism. At the very least, scribes generally knew some formal or literary dialect as well as the local vernacular. Interference from this vernacular could lead to inadvertent replacement of literary with spoken forms. At times, the influence of the vernacular could lead to wholesale re-editing or **redaction** of a manuscript using more popular vocabulary and spellings—as, for example, occurred with the great Isaiah Scroll from cave 1 at Qumran (1QIs^{a}). Of course, the reverse could also happen, namely that books perceived as dialectally deviant could be revised to conform to more standard literary usage (see above, § 3.2). Either way, further discontinuities within the corpus were the result.

redaction

4.2 The Language of the Corpus

The language of the Hebrew Bible is hardly as monolithic as the bland term *Biblical Hebrew* might seem to imply, and there are many ways—both synchronic and diachronic—in which it can be broken down and classified. Understanding these classifications can be of help in isolating nuances of style, as well as in dating texts, determining their provenience, and understanding their development and role within the biblical canon.

4.2.1 Poetry and Prose

The Tiberian *naqdanim* recognized a fundamental distinction between two forms of Hebrew diction: poetry and prose. This is why, for example, they alternated between two wholly different cantillation systems—their choice of which to use for a particular book depending on the kind of diction predominating there. For Psalms, Proverbs, and Job they used a simple system better suited to short, poetic clauses. For the rest of the corpus, however, they used a more complex system that was better suited to narrative and legal prose.

two cantillation systems

This, of course, does not mean that the Masoretes found poetry only in Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. They knew full well that prophetic books like Isaiah were often heavily poetic in their diction (showing, e.g., parallel clausal structure, sparse use of subordinating conjunctions, particles, and articles, and utilizing an elevated, often archaizing, vocabulary). The Song of Songs, for example, was often copied out using a two-column stichometric format, and so also poetic sections of prose texts (e.g., Exod 15:1-18, Judg 5:2-30). See Tov 1992, 212.

Like their medieval predecessors, modern scholars also divide the biblical corpus up into poetry and prose. They further divide poetry into hymns and ritual psalms, wisdom literature, prophetic utterance, and riddles and other forms of wit (e.g. Judg 14:14, 15:16). Prose they divide into narrative and law. These divisions, though, are not hard and fast, and admit many further subdivisions. The prophets, for example, both narrate (Isa 36) and legislate

(Ezek 44:9). Psalms, by way of contrast, often strike a sapiential tone (Ps 1). Supposedly narrative prose sections also include hymns (Judg 5:5), as do the prophets (Hab 3). And legal sections of the Bible tend to slide freely in and out of narrative (Lev 24:10).

Despite gray areas in the classification, students should be aware of these general literary types because they convey important information about the function and import of the texts in which they are used. When Amos begins prophesying about Israel in 5:2, for example, he uses a dirge-like rhythm, conveying a sense of impending doom better than any words he utters. Likewise, when Jacob speaks in Genesis 49 about the future of his sons, the text does not use the staid language of standard biblical prose, but rather a highly archaizing form of prophetic utterance.

4.2.2 Archaism and Dating

The notion that biblical language shows varying degrees of archaism brings us to yet another way of classifying it: by apparent date. The Blessings of Jacob (Gen 49), the Song of Moses (Exod 15), the Oracles of Balaam (Num 23-24), the Blessing of Moses (Deut 33), the Song of Deborah (Judg 5), and Psalm 68 are all commonly regarded, because of various features of their morphology and lexicon, to be the oldest parts of the Bible. The language used there is thus aptly termed **Early Biblical Hebrew** (EBH). Most of the Bible is actually written in **Standard Biblical Hebrew** (SBH). Some books (e.g., the Song of Songs, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles) emulate SBH, but show various quirks of usage that betray their later origin. Qohelet manifests a dialect of its own. The dialects of these later books are called, aptly enough, **Late Biblical Hebrew** (LBH). Jonah, parts of Job and Psalms, and various of the latter prophets, show LBH features—though not as strongly as the above books.

EBH, SBH, LBH

The best short, general-purpose introduction to problems of intra-biblical dialectology is Sáenz-Badillos 1993, ch. 4–5.

4.2.3 Other Classifications

The terms EBH, SBH, and LBH, of course, do not exhaust the possibilities for dialectal classification of the Biblical Hebrew corpus. Other ways that have been suggested, and are being actively used, include classification by source (e.g., P vs. J), by regional dialect (e.g., north vs. south), and by social setting (e.g., literary vs. spoken).

Scholars debate just how much we can really know about the precise dialectal background of the Hebrew Bible, and how far we can analyze subtle variations between sources, regions, and social registers. My view is that the size of the classical corpus is just too slim to bear the weight of analysis that has been heaped on it by recent scholars. Much of what has been said along these lines, therefore, falls apart when subjected to careful philological examination (see, e.g., Goerwitz 1995).

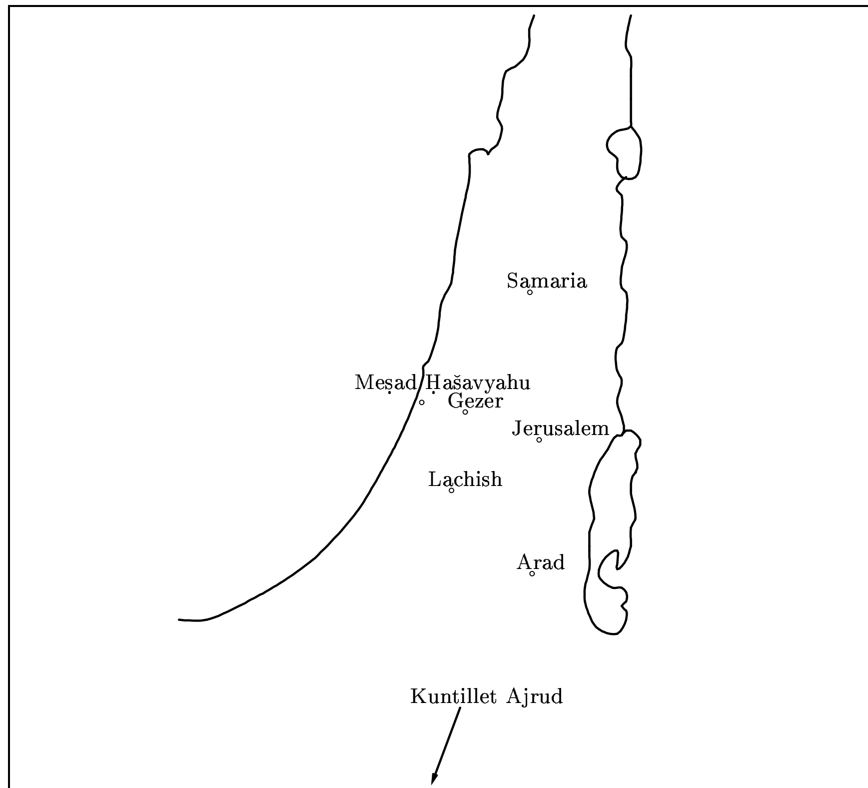

Figure 4.1: Sites of main early first-millennium BCE extra-biblical Hebrew texts

As one might expect, many supposed dialectal variations are really just by-products of discontinuities in the later transmission process (see § 4.1). It is not always a simple matter to separate original dialectal features of a particular work from ones that entered in later, as part of the general transmission or redaction process.

For further discussion of dialectal variation, see below, sections 5.2.1 and following, where I discuss the various ways in which people pronounce Classical Hebrew.

4.3 Classical Hebrew vs. Biblical Hebrew

Although the two terms are generally used to mean the same thing, **Classical Hebrew** is preferable to **Biblical Hebrew**, unless one happens to be speaking specifically about the language of the Bible. Why? Because the classical language occurs outside the traditional Hebrew canon—for example, in inscriptions, letters, and administrative dockets. It also occurs in the book of Ben Sira. Ben Sira has long been known in Greek translation as Ecclesiasticus.

Ben Sira

Just a century ago, however, it was rediscovered, in Hebrew, at the famous **Cairo Genizah**. The Cairo Genizah is a temporary storage spot, embedded in a mostly walled-off area of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo. This storage spot had not been cleaned out since medieval times, when it was found in the nineteenth century to contain a virtual treasure trove of manuscripts. Among these were four manuscripts of Ben Sira. Additional bits of Ben Sira have since been found in Cave 2 at Qumran (§ 3.3.1). Ben Sira, along with the various inscriptions, letters, and dockets etc., and various texts from Qumran, make up the known non-biblical corpus of Classical Hebrew texts.

Cairo Genizah

As illustrated earlier in figure 3.2, Classical Hebrew is a **Canaanite** language—closely related to Phoenician to the north, and to Edomite, Moabite, and Ammonite to the south and east. Classical Hebrew is also related, somewhat less closely, to Ugaritic and Aramaic. These latter two languages, along with Canaanite, form the northwest branch of the Semitic language family tree. Hebrew, then, is also a **Northwest Semitic** language.

Canaanite

Northwest Semitic

Although we will not be studying them in this class, students should be aware of the more important early texts written in Hebrew. These consist mostly, as noted above, of inscriptions, letters, and dockets. The letters and dockets (at least the ones that have survived the passage of time) were written on sherds of pottery. The term for them is **ostraca**. All of the texts, both inscriptions and ostraca, have both linguistic and historical value. Many are also just plain fun to read:

inscriptions, ostraca

Gezer Calendar Tenth-century BCE inscription containing a list of the year's agricultural periods (vintage, olive harvest, planting, etc.). Probably in an archaic form of Hebrew, though it is hard to be sure of the exact dialect.

Samaria Ostraca Eighth-century BCE royal administrative records (e.g., who deposited what goods and when).

Kuntillet Ajrud Various eighth-century BCE texts, including texts that mention Yhwh and his 'Asherah.'

Siloam Tunnel Inscription Late eighth-century BCE inscription describing and commemorating the completion of a water conduit in Jerusalem (2Kgs 20:20?).

Meṣad Ḥašavyahu Early seventh-century BCE ostracon containing a judicial plea by a very upset laborer who literally lost his shirt.

Arad Letters Late seventh or early sixth-century BCE ostraca containing administrative letters (mostly dealing with provisions and payments).

Lachish Letters Early sixth-century BCE ostraca containing letters dealing with official administrative and military matters. The often testy tone of these letters is refreshing in its own way.

The sites where these texts were found (Gezer, Samaria, Jerusalem, etc.) are depicted in fig. 4.1.

In addition to the Hebrew texts named above, there are also a number of texts in more or less related dialects. These include the Balaam inscription of Deir Allah and the famed Moabite Stone, which describes king Mesha's successful ninth-century rebellion against Israel. For a general discussion of the Moabite Stone, as well as of the Hebrew texts mentioned above, see Gibson 1971. There is also a good general discussion of known first-millennium BCE Northwest Semitic texts in Sáenz-Badillos 1993, 37–43.

Those interested in this whole area of study should consider taking Dennis Pardee's inscriptions sequence. This sequence is useful, not only for Northwest Semitic philologists, but also for those interested in general Iron-Age Syro-Palestinian history and archeology.

Chapter 5

Reading and Writing Hebrew

5.1 Why Read Aloud?

Given that Classical Hebrew is dead, and that many students will never have any need to use any living form of the language, why should we bother reading it aloud (as per § 1.3.1)?

It has been my experience that people learn better when more senses are involved—in this case, both sight and hearing. Also, I have found that Hebraists simply don't take people seriously who stumble when pronouncing forms, or when quoting biblical passages. It would therefore be remiss for any Classical Hebrew teacher to omit oral reading from his or her second-year regimen of study.

symbol	*GSI pronunciation*[1]	*transliteration*
ִ	i	i/ī
ֵ	ɛ	ē
ֶ	ɛ	e
ַ	a	a
ָ	a	ā
ֹ	o	ō
וֹ	o	ô
ֻ	u	u
וּ	u/v	û/ww
ְ	(varies)	ə/∅
ֱ	ɛ	ĕ
ֲ	a	ă
ֳ	o	ŏ

Table 5.1: GSI pronunciations and standard transliterations for Hebrew vowels

consonant	*GSI pronunciation*	*transliteration*
א	ʔ/∅	ʾ/∅
ב	b/v	b/ḇ
ג	g	g/ḡ
ד	d	d/ḏ
ה	h/∅	h/∅
ו	v/∅	w/∅
ז	z	z
ח	x	ḥ
ט	t	ṭ
י	y/∅	y/∅
כך	k/x	k/ḵ
ל	l	l
מם	m	m
נן	n	n
ס	s	s
ע	ʔ/∅	ʿ/∅
פף	p/f	p/p̄
צץ	ts	ṣ
ק	k	q
ר	ʁ	r
שׂ	s	ś
שׁ	ʃ	š
ת	t	t/ṯ

Table 5.2: GSI pronunciations and standard transliterations for consonants

5.2 Which Pronunciation?

To make a long story short, General Standard Israeli (GSI) is the pronunciation standard we will be using in class (tables 5.1, 5.2), modified, at times, by the traditional, Qimḥian, vowel system (on which, see below, § 5.2.4), and by the language in which this course will be taught, namely English. English-speaking students, for example, are welcome to distinguish *ṣere* from *segol*, even though GSI does not, both because the Qimḥian system treats them as two different vowels, and because they match up so neatly with existing English sounds (e.g., the /εi/ in *raid*; the /ε/ in *red*).

GSI

For reasons that I will explain below (§ 5.2.5), this mixed form of GSI is much more useful to students in the long run than, for example, the "thientific" pronunciation taught in some seminaries, or various sectarian pronunciations current among Yemenite, Ashkenazic, etc. Jews.

[1] For background on the phonetic symbols used in tables 5.1 and 5.2, see § 3.1.1. For a full explanation, however, see Ladefoged 1982, or ask about them in class.

5.2.1 The Original Pronunciation

language evolution

No one really knows how Hebrew was *originally* pronounced. And, in a sense, the whole notion of an "original" pronunciation is a bit absurd. For one thing, Hebrew did not burst onto the linguistic scene all at once. Rather, it evolved gradually, like French, English, or any other natural language. So to speak of an "original" pronunciation is meaningless—unless we are using the term *original* idiosyncratically, to refer to some specific period in the language's development.

disparate origins

Even if we localize Classical Hebrew, though, in some particular time and place (e.g., in the scribes of the pre-exilic Jerusalemite court), we must remember that the biblical corpus was not composed entirely in that milieu. Rather, different sections arose in different times and places, and within different social strata. For example, the book of Amos comes from a northern agrarian sphere; First Isaiah, by way of contrast, comes from Jerusalem. Both Amos and First Isaiah were first composed during the eighth century BCE; Daniel and Esther, however, were probably written over half a millennium later, during the second century BCE.

codex vs. scroll

We should also keep in mind that the various books forming today's biblical canon were not always bound together into a single codex. The codex itself was not even invented until the Common Era. Before then, works circulated as separate scrolls, passing through various hands—often maintaining, or acquiring, their own linguistic and/or orthographic peculiarities (e.g., the Pentateuch's fs pronoun הִוא; Ezekiel's אות־ for expected אִת־).

5.2.2 The Early Common Era

Secunda

Brønno

As we move forward in history, towards the time when Hebrew ceases to be a living language, dialect diversity shows little sign of abating. The turn-of-the-millennium Qumran Scrolls, for example, give us a few glimpses of a dialect group attested, as such, nowhere else. The same may be said of the Greek transcription of the Hebrew Bible found in the second column of Origen's (c. 185–c. 254) Hexapla. This amazing transcription, known as the Secunda, exists in just a few scattered fragments today (the most substantial of these being from the Psalms). What we have preserved in those fragments attests to a dialect with its own unique structure. Those interested in the Secunda should take a look at Brønno 1943. Despite its execrable English, Janssens 1982 corrects and extends Brønno in important ways, and should be consulted as well.

For those interested in the Qumran Scrolls, there is really only one grammar *per se*, namely Qimron 1986—an abridgment of the author's unpublished (1976) Hebrew University dissertation.

Both the dialects of Qumran and the Secunda differ from what we find in the early midrashim, the Tosefta, and the Mishnah (on the latter, see Segal 1927). Sáenz-Badillos 1993 summarizes the differences between these dialects in a brief, lucid manner.

5.2.3 Early Medieval Times

As we approach the time when the biblical vocalic and accentual orthography becomes codified, about 700-1000 CE, dialectal diversity remains fairly prominent. Medieval manuscripts, for example, show three different vocalic and accentual pointing systems:

pointing systems

1. Babylonian
2. Palestinian
3. Tiberian

Within these three general types are many subtypes—even a few mixed types. And beneath these varied types, subtypes, and mixed types there lie several different underlying pronunciations.

Those interested in the ins and outs of the various pointing systems should examine, first, Yeivin 1980 and Sáenz-Badillos 1993, § 4.3–4.5. For more advanced reading, take a look at Revell 1970 or Revell 1977, which deal specifically with the Palestinian system. On the Babylonian system, see Yeivin's (1985) two-volume *magnum opus* (in Hebrew).

Yeivin

5.2.4 The Qimḥian System

From 1200 CE on, the orthographic situation simplifies a great deal, due to the Tiberian pointing system's rise to overwhelming dominance over the other systems. The dialectal situation, though, remains just as complex as before. For one thing, the pronunciation tradition that gave rise to the Tiberian vowel pointing system did not spread widely along with that system. Rather, local traditions remained in use, and new ones arose. One particularly noteworthy tradition to appear during this period was the one developed by the Qimḥi family—in particular, David (c. 1160–c. 1235). David Qimḥi's grammatical works were widely regarded as the pinnacle of medieval Jewish linguistic achievement. Remarkably, his descriptions of Hebrew vowels have remained a *de facto* standard right up to the present.

David Qimḥi

From a strictly philological point of view, the Qimḥian system's rise to prominence was unfortunate because it strayed so far from the Tiberian system that it was meant to elucidate, adding length (e.g. /ā/ vs. /a/) as a distinctive feature of Tiberian Hebrew vowels, and cutting the seven primary Tiberian vowel grades, *i, e, ɛ, a, ɔ, o, u,* down to five: *i, e, a, o, u* (on *ɔ*, see below, § 5.2.6). Qimḥi's system, of course, was not the only one existing at the time. And even today there remain a multiplicity of Hebrew reading traditions, e.g., Samaritan, Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Yemeni, etc. None of these is fully compatible with Qimḥi's system, still less with the earlier Tiberian one. Nevertheless, Qimḥi's system is widely regarded as a kind of pristine pedagogical standard, even today.

other traditions

5.2.5 General Standard Israeli

Although Qimḥi's system remains the basis for a lot of today's Classical Hebrew pedagogy, during this century scholarly pronunciation has tended increasingly towards General Standard Israeli. What GSI offers us is a way of ensuring that other Hebraists understand us, whatever their specialization happens to be—e.g., inscriptional, classical, medieval, or modern. It provides, that is, a means of conveying our knowledge of the language to a worldwide community of scholars when we meet at conferences, travel to study in each other's countries, or just get together, for whatever reasons, to discuss Hebrew.

GSI

5.2.6 Philological and Linguistic Implications

Despite the popularity and utility of both GSI and the Qimḥian systems, one must keep in mind that neither of these systems really matches the dialect recorded in our standard biblical editions. For those interested in epigraphy, linguistics, or ancient corpora like the Dead Sea Scrolls, this is a critical point. Often a seemingly strange spelling will appear in a text—one perfectly understandable from a cross-dialectal perspective. Readers must have a sufficiently broad picture of the language's phonological history to be able to place such forms in their correct linguistic context, i.e., to be able to discern whether they represent lexical shifts, scribal errors, or simple features of pronunciation common to one or another period, textual corpus, or region. Note, e.g., the tendency of certain Qumran scrolls to replace the 3ms suffix on plural nouns, יו- , with ו- , which is usually the result of a trivial phonetic shift, *ɔw* → *o*, not of any deep morphological or textual changes. A broad view of Hebrew pronunciation history can be of great service in diagnosing such shifts.

dialectal vs. textual variations

A broad view of Hebrew pronunciation can also be of help in avoiding centuries-old pitfalls, like the notion that the Tiberian Masoretes, stupidly, wrote only one sign, *qameṣ*, for two vowels: long *qameṣ* [aː] and short *qameṣ ḥaṭuf* [o]. Since the late nineteenth century evidence has steadily mounted that both of these vowels were pronounced the same way, i.e., like the *au* in *caught* in the official British Received Pronunciation. It appears, then, that the Masoretes did not conflate two vowel sounds into one graphic symbol. Rather, they simply wrote one vowel symbol for a single vowel grade, [ɔ]. If anyone can be accused of stupidity here, then, it is not the Masoretes, but rather modern scholars, who separate the one Tiberian vowel *ɔ* into *ā* and *o*!

qameṣ as *ā/o*

qameṣ as *ɔ*

Unfortunately, this false separation has been deeply etched into the scholarly mainstream. However philologically unappealing it might be, therefore, you will find it expedient to distinguish between *qameṣ ḥaṭuf*, [o], and its supposed *a*-like counterpart when reading. If you attempt to pronounce both *qameṣ*es like the British RP *au* (i.e., [ɔ]), most Americans and Israelis will not even notice the difference. Rather, they will think you are saying [aː], and will assume that you don't know what a *qameṣ ḥaṭuf* is. The few people who do hear the difference will often either be puzzled, or conclude that you are using some variant form of the Ashkenazic pronunciation.

5.3 Trope and Pause

Although intermediate Classical Hebrew students need not acquire the skill themselves, it is important to recognize that the Tiberian Text was designed to be chanted while read. This is the reason for all of the squiggles, or accents, that you don't learn in first-year Hebrew, which are there to indicate what musical patterns or tropes should be superimposed on the text when it is read formally aloud.

tropes

Although Jewish communities preserve various traditions of chant, we no longer know the exact nature of the original Tiberian tropes, i.e., the musical patterns the Tiberian *naqdanim* used when they read the text. Still, the Tiberian accents (טעמים) teach us the basic rhythms of the text by indicating, in general, what words should be joined together, and what words should be separated by means of **pauses**. Although we should never feel constrained to group words in the exactly same manner as the medieval scribes who pointed the text, it is important to note that the pauses they inserted reflect a tradition of formal reading that goes back, in one form or another, all the way to second-temple times (i.e., before 70 CE; Revell 1976 and Pfann 1991).

pauses

5.3.1 Pausal Forms

Although most Hebrew textbooks make only the barest mention of them (e.g., Lambdin 1971, § 152), the biblical text is littered with **pausal forms**. Pausal forms are Hebrew words that take on alternate vocalizations before main verse breaks, that is, before pauses. There are two kinds of pauses, major and minor. Major pauses typically follow the accents *atnaḥ*, *ole vyored* and *silluq*—the **major disjunctive** accents. Minor pauses usually occur after minor disjunctive accents, i.e., after *segolta, zaqef,* and poetic *revia*. Consult the table of accents that comes with BHS for information on the shape and placement of these accents. For more details, see also Yeivin 1980.

disjunctive accents

Hebrew words that take on alternate vocalizations with major and/or minor disjunctive accents (i.e. pausal forms), are fairly common, and can prove a serious hindrance to Hebrew students who never learn to recognize them. Although learning all the pausal forms is frequently portrayed as a difficult task, the reality is that one needs to learn just a few alternation patterns to attain practical mastery of them.

alternation patterns

Table 5.3 depicts the thirteen most important of these alternation patterns. Think of them as templates. Take, for example, pattern one, which consists of יִשְׁמְרוּ and (pausal) יִשְׁמֹ֫רוּ. This pattern is typical of forms ending in a consonant, then a vocal *šva* or *ḥaṭef* vowel, then an additional consonant, and finally a high or low stressed vowel (–CəC{*i*,*ɔ*,*u*}#; on the vowel heights, see fig. 3.1, above). As the ישמרו pattern exemplifies, forms of this type undergo a transformation in pause: 1) The one *ḥaṭef* vowel or *šva* turns into a full vowel and then 2) this new full vowel assumes main word stress. So, for example, the first person singular pronoun אֲנִי 'I' turns into אָ֫נִי in pause. Similarly, הָרְתָה 'she conceived' becomes הָרָ֫תָה (as in Gen 16:4,5).

	context	*minor pause*	*major pause*
1	יִשְׁמְרוּ	יִשְׁמֹ֫רוּ	יִשְׁמֹ֫רוּ
2	יִדְרְשׁוּן	יִדְרֹ֫שׁוּן	יִדְרֹ֫שׁוּן
3	יָלַד	יָלַד	יָלָד
4	אַף	אַף	אָף
5	נַ֫עַר	נַ֫עַר	נָ֫עַר
6	אָמַ֫רְתָּ	אָמַ֫רְתָּ	אָמָ֫רְתָּ
7	וְאָמַרְתָּ֫	וְאָמַ֫רְתָּ	וְאָמָ֫רְתָּ
8	שָׁמַע	שָׁמַע	שָׁמֵעַ
9	יֵלֵךְ	יֵלֵךְ	יֵלֵךְ
10	וַיֵּ֫לֶךְ	וַיֵּ֫לֶךְ	וַיֵּ{לֶ,לַ}ךְ
11	דִּבֶּר	דִּבֶּר	דִּבֵּר
12	יִתְהַ{לֶ,לַ}ךְ	יִתְהַ{לַ,לָ}ךְ	יִתְהַלָּךְ
13	לְךְ	לָךְ	לָךְ

Table 5.3: The thirteen main pausal alternation patterns

Although the fine details of pausal alternations could fill an entire book (Goerwitz 1993), a basic familiarity with the thirteen alternation patterns depicted in table 5.3 will enable you to recognize, and rightly interpret, the vast, vast majority of pausal forms you encounter in ordinary classroom reading.

5.4 Writing Hebrew

Modern Hebrew is generally hand-written in a semi-cursive script. It does not matter to me whether students use this form, or print using a more formal, classical form of the script. I almost always go with the more formal script in a biblical context—mainly out of ingrained habits acquired in the Christian school where I first studied Hebrew. The only place where your choice of writing systems really does make a difference to me is when you transliterate the forms, for historical, philological, or linguistic purposes, in a Latin-based script. This is something you will occasionally have to do, either for typographical or for pedagogical reasons (assuming you end up teaching). Some journals (e.g., *Vetus Testamentum*) will not even accept articles with Hebrew script.

Latin script

5.4.1 Transliteration

The situation with transliteration parallels the situation with GSI and Qimḥian pronunciations above. That is, when transliterating Classical Hebrew in a Latin-based script, remember that the conventions used in much of the scholarly literature (see tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.4) do not really reflect what is going on in the Tiberian dialect. Still, it may be wise to follow these conventions, unless your audience possesses some degree of linguistic or philological sophistication.

standard transliteration

vowel name	*transliteration*	*with a* mater
ḥîreq	i	î
ṣērê	ē	ê
səḡôl	e	ę̂, eh
páṯaḥ	a	
qāmeṣ	ā/o	āh
ḥōlem	ō	ô
qibbûṣ	u	
šureq		û
šəwā	ə/∅	
ḥāṭēp̄ səḡôl	ĕ	
ḥāṭēp̄ páṯaḥ	ă	
ḥāṭēp̄ qāmeṣ	ŏ	

Table 5.4: The standard American vowel transliteration system

If your audience does possess the requisite sophistication, feel free to scrap the standard system, and to substitute something that accords better with the philological evidence. It would please me no end if students were to take a look at the system Bob Johnson and I worked out in Johnson and Goerwitz 1995. For a brief overview of that system, see table 5.5. Note that this table only offers transliterations for vowels. My view of the consonants is that it is perfectly acceptable to transliterate them the way it is done in Lambdin 1971, xxii–xxv (see table 5.2)—except in cases when they are silent, as with *matres*, in which case they should be parenthesized or, as in table 5.5, superscripted.

Johnson and Goerwitz

vowel name	*transliteration*	*with a* mater
ḥîreq	i	i^{y}
ṣērê	e	e^{y}
səḡôl	ɛ	ε^{y}, ε^{h}
páṯaḥ	a	
qāmeṣ	ɔ	$\mathrm{ɔ}^{\mathrm{h}}$
ḥōlem	o	o^{w}
qibbûṣ	u	
šureq		u^{w}
ḥāṭēp̄ səḡôl	ɛ̆	
ḥāṭēp̄ páṯaḥ	ă	
ḥāṭēp̄ qāmeṣ	ɔ̆	

Table 5.5: The transliteration system of Johnson and Goerwitz 1995

Šva is lacking from table 5.5, incidentally, because the purpose of that grapheme is to signal the absence of a phonologically significant vowel (see above on difference between phonology and phonetics, § 3.1.1). Later medieval scholars became obsessed with the *šva*'s pronunciation precisely because of that

šva

sign's phonetic indeterminacy within the Tiberian scheme. My own view is that although we might want to offer *šva* in phonetic transcription, i.e., when discussing minutiae of pronunciation, there is never any reason to add it to our general transliterations. For more detailed discussion of this point, see Johnson and Goerwitz 1995, § 4, or talk to me after class.

Chapter 6

Odds and Ends

6.1 Names

personal names

The big difference between personal names most modern westerners use today and the ones used in the Bible is that the ones used in the Bible actually mean something. Old Hebrew proper names, that is, are constructed out of normal words—sometimes an adjective or a participle; more typically, though, a common noun or a two-word construct phrase or sentence (e.g., *Yehonatan* 'the LORD has given [him]'). Because their meanings are integral to the biblical narrative (Gen 3:20, 4:25, 5:29, 21:6, 25:25-26, etc.), ancient Hebrew personal names are something students should learn to analyze and interpret. They are also important for historical-linguistic reasons that I will discuss in greater detail below.

geographical names

What is true of personal names is also true of geographical names (Gen 22:14, 32:2,30, 33:17, 35:15, etc.), though to a lesser extent. Geographical names are interesting because they are so durable, often remaining in place long after the populations that originally created them have been either swallowed up or displaced. This is true, not only of peripheral names, but also of core names like *Zion* and *Jerusalem*—both of which lack good Hebrew etymologies. The situation with geographical names in old Palestine is really no different from ours today. Take, for example, our modern city of *Chicago*, or the states of *Illinois* and *Wisconsin*. All three of these places bear Algonquin names, and this even though their inhabitants now are mainly of European and African descent.

divine names

Another important category of names are **divine names**, which often originate in the common Canaanite substratum, or even go back to Proto-Semitic itself (for instance, אֵל, which occurs in most Semitic languages). Probably the best studied Hebrew divine name is the **tetragrammaton** or four-letter word, יהוה. If this word comes from the verb 'to be,' היה, as Exod 3:14 clearly presupposes, then the ו is an archaic survival, somewhat analogous to the ו in חַוָּה 'Eve'. But I confess that I am not at all sure that this derivation is actually

tetragrammaton

correct. The name's meaning and variant forms have never been explained, to my mind, in any complete or satisfying way.

Like personal and place names, divine names' purported meanings may play an important role within a narrative (as in Exod 3:14; cf. also how שדי functions in Ruth 1:21). Divine names are also often incorporated into personal names—sometimes in altered form. יהוה, for example, becomes -יָה(וּ) when it appears at the end of a name. At the beginning of a name, however, it appears, anomalously, as -יְהוֹ or just -יוֹ. Personal names that incorporate a divine element are called **theophoric**.

theophoric names

For historical linguists, Hebrew names—whether divine, personal, or geographical—are all of interest, because of their propensity for preserving archaic grammatical features (e.g., case vowels) and for maintaining lexical items no longer in common use. Those interested in archaic features of personal names should consult the recent work, Layton 1990.

On personal names in general, see Ran Zadok's dense, very thorough 1988 monograph. For a quick summary, take a look at the article on names in the old (1962) *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* The study of names, or onomastics, is just a small part of the bigger philological picture. But it is one that really should not be overlooked.

Zadok

6.2 "Converted" Tenses

The term **converted** tense—commonly bandied about in the introductory textbooks (e.g., Lambdin 1971, § 98)—is a bit misleading in its application to perfects, and downright false when used of prefix-tense ויקטל *vav*-consecutives. For reasons I will enumerate in the next section, **narrative preterite** is actually a much better term for these latter forms.

preterite

6.2.1 Imperfects and Converted Imperfects

To appreciate the relationship between imperfects and so-called converted imperfects, it is critical to know something about their history. By a strange twist of historical-linguistic fate, the *(way)yiqṭol* strong-root pattern common to the imperfect and converted imperfect arose through coalescence of three distinct Proto-Semitic verbal categories:

1. **yaqṭúlu* (subordinate [→ West Semitic imperfect])
2. **yaqṭúl* (jussive)
3. **yáqṭul* (preterite, i.e., completed/past)

In other words, the Hebrew prefix-tense יקטל consecutive pattern evolved out of (1) subordinate/imperfect, (2) volitive, and (3) completed-action/past-tense forms. To understand how these forms could have fallen together, one must understand something about the development of Hebrew stress.

Hebrew stress, originally, fell on the penultimate or second-to-last syllable.

penultimate stress

Take, for example, the common noun דָּבָר 'word.' From comparison with Arabic and Ugaritic, we deduce that this form once had a final short case vowel (i.e., **dabaru*). The best explanation of the Tiberian form is that it was stressed originally on the penultimate syllable (**-bá-*), and that the final stress we see in the biblical text, דָּבָר, resulted from apocope of its final short *-u* vowel. Similar processes explain the development of **yaqṭúlu* verbal forms—though the final short *-u* there is actually an indicative mood marker, rather than a case vowel.

final short vowels

Such processes of final vowel loss, i.e., **apocope**, effectively converted Hebrew from a penultimately stressed language into a finally stressed one. There were, naturally, a few forms that had lacked final short vowels originally, and that at least in theory should have remained penultimately stressed after the loss of final short vowels. Most such forms, however, eventually took on final stress by analogy with the stress pattern characteristic of most other Hebrew forms (hence, e.g., **yáqṭul* → **yaqṭúl*). The result was even further regularization of the word-final stress pattern.

final stress

During this same evolutionary period, the **ya- qal* jussive/preterite/imperfect prefix became *yi-* by a process scholars call, for lack of a better term, **attenuation**. Later on short, stressed *u*-vowels lowered and lengthened, becoming *ō*. The result of these changes, in addition to those mentioned above, was *yiqṭōl*, i.e., the common Tiberian pattern, יִקְטֹל (for more on such sound shifts, see above, table 3.3).

attenuation

	Variable	*Penultimate*	*Ultimate*	*(Tiberian)*
imperfect	yaqṭúlu	yaqṭúlu	yaqṭúl	yiqṭól
jussive	yaqṭúl	yáqṭul	yaqṭúl	yiqṭól
preterite	yáqṭul	yáqṭul	yaqṭúl	yiqṭól

Table 6.1: Evolution of the Hebrew imperfect, jussive, and preterite

Probably the most important side-effect of these changes was that they raised the level of morphological ambiguity past the point where effective communication could take place, by obliterating important formal distinctions of tense, aspect (imperfect/preterite), and mood (indicative/volitive). Figure 6.1 summarizes these changes. Note, in particular, the inherent ambiguity of the three once-distinct forms on the far right—which all look precisely the same in the Tiberian dialect!

Speakers responded to this new ambiguity, first by restricting the preterite to narrative sequences after וְ, and secondly by expanding their use of the **qaṭala* perfect as the general past-tense form. The jussive and imperfect they allowed to coalesce—although in the latter case (i.e., the imperfect) they retained the possibility of adding an energic or paragogic *nun* to feminine singular, masculine plural, and suffixed forms.

Despite the general levelling of imperfect, jussive, and preterite patterns, there exist a few survivals from earlier times, when the jussive and preterite still remained distinct from the imperfect. These survivals may be found among verbs of the III-*heh* class, which show a CV́CVC *qal* preterite and jussive, but a CVCCV́ imperfect. Middle weaks and *hifil*s also show a slight variance in certain

jussive and preterite forms (on which, see Goerwitz 1992; see also fig. 6.2). Such variances, though, are not typical of most roots, forms, and stems, which exhibit no overt morphological distinctions between imperfects, jussives, and preterites.

	Imperfect	*Jussive*	*Consecutive*
III-ה	יִבְנֶה	יִ֫בֶן	וַיִּ֫בֶן
hollow	יָמוּת	יָמֹת	וַיָּמֹת[1]
hifil	יַגִּיד	יַגֵּד	וַיַּגֵּד

Table 6.2: The Correspondence of Consecutive to Jussive Forms

In sum, the story of the Hebrew *wayyiqṭol* consecutive is not so much the story of an imperfect converted into perfect-like form by a prefixed *vav*. Rather, it is the story of an old preterite that has, through various accidents of language evolution, largely coalesced with other prefix-tense forms—but which has, through its restricted narrative syntax and quirky prefixed *vav*, maintained a special place in the archaizing language of the Bible. Whether we are speaking in diachronic or synchronic terms, then, these are hardly "converted" imperfect forms. As noted above, they are structurally closer to jussives than to imperfects. And, historically, they reflect an entirely different (preterite) verbal category.

6.2.2 Perfects and Converted Perfects

Originally, the perfect was a kind of stative, describing the status of a thing without any inherent tense-reference. The perfect retains this function in Akkadian (where it is, in fact, called the **stative**). Apparently, the stative retained this function in early West Semitic as well, only assuming a primarily past time reference later on, as the old *yáqṭul* preterite fell out of use. The use of the perfect after *vav* as a consecutive future tense probably descends from that earlier, stative usage, just like the regular perfect tense.

stative

Even in the Tiberian dialect, the identical origin of perfect and perfect consecutive forms remains discernible. To convert the one into the other, one simply prepends the conjunction *vav* to the perfect, applying a stress shift to a few first person common and second person masculine singular forms, and, rarely, changing certain vowels in *hifil* forms (Joüon 1991, § 68). The result is a perfect consecutive. Even though there remains a close relationship between perfects and perfect consecutives in Tiberian Hebrew, the term *converted* is still not terribly helpful, since evolution from a common stative does not imply any genuine, synchronic tense conversion process.

The standard discussion of the history of the *vav*-consecutive is Mark Smith's short but sweet (1991) monograph.

[1] This is actually a pausal form. The contextual form is וַיָּ֫מָת, retracted on the analogy of III-*heh* roots.

6.3 Professional Contacts

Next to mastering the subject matter itself, the most important thing a Hebrew student can do to further his or her opportunities in the field is to make contacts. The two best sources for contacts are 1) your teachers, and 2) professional organizations. Though a great deal might be said about both of these sources, this is not the place to do it. All I want to do here is to encourage everyone who expects to be going into teaching to join the Society of Biblical Literature.

SBL

The Society of Biblical Literature is large and powerful—at least by humanities standards. It provides many opportunities for graduate students to give papers and participate in workshops. And it has an arm devoted specifically to matching up academic institutions with potential employees. It is an indispensable tool for getting one's name and work out, and forging those critical links that might mean the difference between flipping hamburgers and teaching in a university.

Chapter 7

How to Do a Word Study

7.1 What Is a Word Study?

A word study is just a brief essay that elucidates some aspect of a word's meaning. It may focus on a particular passage, trying to bring out a nuance of a word's meaning that the translators and commentators miss. Or it may do the opposite, namely, to reassert a more standard interpretation in the face of a new analysis proposed by some modern philologist. A word study may also outline the history or development of a word, i.e., how its form or meaning changed over time. Or it may deal with an idiomatic expression in which the word occurs. Whatever its particular slant, the aim of a word study is to help us understand the meaning of a word.

Words, of course, are not the only level of linguistic organization that a philologist takes any interest in. Words are, however, the principle level of interest—if for no other reason than that nearly all of our tools (concordances, lexicons, grammars) use word-level morphology as their main organizational principle. Students who are learning the principles of philological analysis, therefore, should master the art of the word study before trying more novel linguistic approaches, such as prosodic analysis or discourse grammar.

7.2 How To Organize a Word Study

Although there are innumerable ways to organize a word study, the best way is simply to follow the natural path of evidence: from individual biblical passages (which reveal the nature of the problem your paper attempts to resolve), to general biblical and later Hebrew usage, to the versions, midrashic works, and medieval commentaries, and from there to evidence from cognate languages. Modern philologists' views should be brought in wherever appropriate. Their views are especially relevant for the first few paragraphs, since word studies freqently take, as their jumping-off point, disagreement with some other recent analysis.

7.3 What Tools To Use

For the internal, biblical parts of your word study, your primary tools will be concordances, lexicons, and the various commentaries that talk about the biblical passages you are concerned with (see chapter 2 above). The first step in any word study is usually just looking through a concordance to see where your word occurs and in what contexts. You can then go to the lexicons and commentaries, which will summarize current thought—which you may agree or disagree with (or which you may change your mind about as your study progresses).

To determine what happens to your word in later, Rabbinic Hebrew, see principally Jastrow 1985 (although a broader overview can be obtained by consulting Ben Yehudah 1959). For cognate languages start with Aramaic, Arabic, and Akkadian. Don't try to sort through the lexica on your own, though, unless you know the scripts and sound correspondences. Ḥ in Hebrew, for example, corresponds to two sounds in Arabic, but to nothing in Akkadian—though in Akkadian it may leave traces in adjacent vowels. When you get to the point where you need to look at these languages, make an appointment with me and we will go through the lexica together.

To assess the versional evidence, several tools may be consulted. Those without Greek should look at Brenton's (1970) Septuagint translation. Those know enough Greek to use the original should do so. Also worth consulting is the standard concordance of the Septuagint, Hatch and Redpath 1983. Volume two of this work has a Hebrew-Greek index that tells you what Greek words translate what Hebrew words. Knowing what Greek words translate a given Hebrew word in the Septuagint can often shed new and interesting light on that word.

For the Syriac Pešiṭta, I am not aware of any full English translation of the entire text. For many of the Targums, however, translations are available. Just check the religion reference shelves at Regenstein Library. If you can read the originals, so much the better. Those who know Latin should check the Vulgate, of course. Check also for Qumran MSS that might be relevant, using the biblical passage index in the back of Fitzmyer 1990.

When you get to the point where you need to go through midrashic, medieval and patristic material, there are books that can help facilitate the process. None of them, though, is written in English. For midrashic and medieval literature, there is Hyman 1979, which will tell you who talks about what biblical passages where. Allenbach 1975 does the same for the patristic literature. If you are interested in early modern Christian commentaries, see Pearson 1660.

Modern discussions are best sorted out by reading modern commentaries, which include lots of bibliography. Köhler and Baumgartner 1990, though cryptic, is also packed with a lot of citations, and should not be overlooked in favor of an (outdated) BDB. A final, readily available modern bibliographic resource is *Old Testament Abstracts*, which comes with a yearly index of passages and words discussed in the literature.

Of course, not every paper will require that you use all of these tools. For

a five-to-ten page paper, in fact, it makes good sense to concentrate on the biblical evidence. One point of the paper, though, is to help you develop a sense of when it is appropriate to draw in evidence from other sources. So be aware that Hyman 1979, Jastrow 1985, Köhler and Baumgartner 1990, and other such tools exist. If you have any questions about what evidence to bring in, feel free to check with me. I will happily, for example, provide *ad hoc* translations of relevant sections from any of the versions or adjunct literature.

7.4 Common Errors

The single most common error that students make when they write their first philological paper is that they beat around the bush. Remember: A philological paper is not a mystery novel. No one is going to sit up until three o'clock in the morning, racing bleary eyed towards your grand dénouement. So make sure you get to the point quickly. By the end of the first or second paragraph, your reader should know where you are headed. Make sure also that your conclusion echos your first paragraphs in some way. If you fail to do this, it will seem as if you just wrote until you stumbled onto a conclusion.

don't beat around the bush.

Another common error that students make when writing philological papers is that they don't subdivide their material. Take out fifteen minutes before printing your final version, and insert section titles like

subdivide and conquer

1. The Nature of the Problem
2. Intra-Biblical Literary Evidence
3. Evidence from Later Hebrew Dialects
4. Versional Evidence
5. Evidence from the Cognate Languages
6. The Solution

If you can't subdivide your paper this way—that is, if you have wandered in and out of various forms of evidence, without giving much thought to how they ought to be classified and organized—then you probably have not formulated a coherent thesis, or even a coherent approach. I can attest from personal experience that it often takes several tries at writing a word study before your views start to fall into place, and the natural organization of your material becomes obvious. If you find yourself stalled, come back after a good night's sleep and try again.

Finally, recognize that your reader is a human being, and that some things are just intrinsically more interesting than others. If, say, you want to write a paper on what Ruth did with Boaz in Ruth 3:4, for heaven's sake have some fun with the title (e.g., *Hot Sex or Cold Feet for Boaz in Ruth 3:4?*). If, on the other hand, you are just doing a straight historical word study, then suggest that it holds some surprises (e.g., *Savor, Sapor, or Royal Decree: The Convoluted History of* טעם). In general, respect your reader enough to spend a few moments making his or her experience an interesting one.

remember the human element

Chapter 8

Concluding Remarks

As I stated at the outset (§ 1.1), the primary aim of this course is to help students get comfortable with Classical Hebrew. Its secondary aim is to provide a general context for understanding how Classical Hebrew textual criticism and comparative philology are done, and to provide a basic introduction to their theory and terminology.

Comparative philology is particularly important from the intermediate level on up because it increases the size of the information pool at our disposal. It does this by bringing in new data, especially from related languages, literatures, and texts. Comparative philology, however, does not constitute an end unto itself. Nor is it possible to pursue it in isolation.

Take Ruth 3:15, for example. Do we emend it, or do we leave it as it stands, with an "unexpected" shift in focus from Ruth to Boaz? The answer lies, not in philological niceties, but rather in the structure of the narrative itself:

> ואחזי בה וימד שש שערים וישת עליה ויבא העיר
>
> 'And she (Ruth) held out (her cloak), and he (Boaz) measured out six (measures of) barley, and placed them on it. Then he (she?) went to the city.'

Most translations turn the 'he' above (ויבא) into 'she' (ותבא) following the Peshiṭta and Vulgate. If one reads the story carefully, however, it becomes clear that Boaz is anxious and wants to leave. He wants to leave, and head back up to city gate, because he plans to catch one of his relatives first thing in the morning, on his way out to the fields. One can arrange the textual variants and cognate roots any way one likes. The narrative itself, however, tells us that they are of no account: The text reads perfectly well as it stands!

My point, then, is simply that, despite the small size of the corpus, its antiquity, and its culturally remote origins, we cannot all rush to our specialized philological tools and methods, expecting these to give us all the answers. To use these tools properly, we must first become comfortable with the language, and must develop an appreciation for its literary idiom. This is why, although

this pamphlet devotes most of its space to philological concepts and terms, during class my emphasis will—especially in the initial stages of the course—be on developing a basic facility with reading and exegesis.

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