

SEM 6461 Biblical Hebrew

Course Objective: To impart an active knowledge of Standard Biblical Hebrew, so that students will be struck by linguistic anomalies in the Bible and thereby anticipate the questions posed by philologically oriented exegetes like Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, and Radak.

Textbook: T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Almost the entire book is covered.

Reference Works:

1. A. Even-Shoshan, קונקורדנציה חדשה. The only concordance that provides vitally important information about collocation (word combination).
2. BDB = F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. A classic work, still unsurpassed for the wealth of information it provides about the usage of common words.
3. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3rd edition. Important as a guide to recent research, especially in the area of Semitic cognates.
4. P. Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. A classic French work, translated into English and updated through the addition of summaries (not always accurate) of recent publications in the field.

Topics Covered: orthography (the Tiberian system of pointing), phonology (gemination, vowel length, stress, syllable structure, reduction, alternation of reduced vowels with full vowels, compensatory lengthening), morphology (the definite article, prefixed prepositions, the conjunction, suffixed pronouns, the regular verb in all *binyanim*, irregular verb types), syntax (passive, causative, reflexive; clause types), vocabulary

Requirements: attendance, homework, quizzes (if given), cumulative final exam. There are two meetings of the course per week (each for 75-80 minutes), at each of which 2 chapters of the text are covered. The homework for each meeting is (a) to review the chapters covered in the previous meeting, memorizing the forms in them and the rules presented in class; (b) to read in advance the new chapters to be covered; (c) to translate 7-8 English sentences from the text into fully vocalized Standard Biblical Hebrew. In cases where the translation requires an idiomatic phrase, you should justify your answer by giving biblical parallels (include chapter, verse and Hebrew text), located using the concordance or BDB. The papers are returned and reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting. Homework may be delivered to my home (147-07 69th Road, Kew Gardens Hills), but under no circumstances is it accepted less than 24 hours before the class in which it is reviewed. Students with an excessive number of absences or missing homeworks may be asked to take the course at another time. Students are encouraged to study together, but homework must be done individually; those who wish to correct their homeworks with the help of another student before submitting them should submit two copies of the homework. The homeworks should be viewed as a preview of the final exam, which will contain a passage based on them. Issues discussed in the class review of the homework may well be incorporated into the exam.

Grading: The grade for the course is normally the grade on the final exam.

How to Analyze a Vocalized Hebrew Word

The procedure consists of six partially ordered steps; most changes in the order will result in circularity.

1. **מלעיל** -- Determine whether the main stress is **מלרע** (on last full vowel) or **מלעיל** (on next-to-last full vowel) by finding the word in the **תנ"ך** (or the Even-Shoshan concordance) and examining the position of its **טעם**. Be sure the **טעם** in question is not one of the prepositive ones (תלישא גדולה, יתיב) or postpositive ones (סגול, זרקא, פשטא, ורקא); see Joüon-Muraoka, pp. 64-5. Minimal pairs for stress position: **קומי**, **בָּאָה**, etc.

כל בואי ובואי לשון נקבה מאריך בבית כגון ובאי שכבי, באי אשת ירבועם וכל בואי ובואי לשון זכר מאריך באלף כגון הדין עד־פאי אליך מצרימה (כ"י לנינגרד, פירקוביץ א 54. מס"ג בר' יט. לא.) וזה חילוק בכל תיבה לשון נקבה שיסודה שתי אותיות, כמו בא, קם, שב, כשהטעם למעלה, לשון עבר הוא, כגון זה, וכגון (בר' כט, ט) ורחל באה, (בר' לז, ז) קמה אלומתי, (רות א, טו) הנה שבה יבמתך, וכשהטעם למטה הוא לשון הווה, דבר שנעשה עכשיו והולך, כמו (בר' כט, ו) באה עם הצאן, (אסתר ב, יד) בערב היא באה ובבקר היא שבה (רש"י בר' טו, יז) **קומי אורי פי בא אורך** (ישע' ס, א)

2. **דגשים** -- Determine which are **חזקים** (quantitative, indicating a long consonant) and which are **קלים** (qualitative, indicating a plosive rather than a fricative pronunciation of the **בגדכפת** letters) by means of the following rule: If the **דגש** is in the first letter of the word (except in cases of **דחיק**) or if it follows a **שוא**, it is **קל**; if not, it is **חזק**. The result can sometimes be checked using another rule: If the **דגש** is not in one of the **בגדכפת** letters, it is not **קל**. (The converse is not true: no rule is possible if the **דגש** is in one of the **בגדכפת** letters.) Minimal pairs for consonant length: **על־מחבת בשמן תעשה מרבכת תביאנה** (ויק' ו, יד) vs. **על־מחבת בשמן תעשה מרבכת תביאנה את אשי ה'** (ויק' ז, ל) and **ובגדי צרומים** vs. **מפר מחשבות צרומים** (איוב ה, יב) vs. **ובגדי צרומים**. Note redundant **רפה** sign denoting absence of **דגש קל**. **חכימין רפין ערטילאין דגשין**. cf. **תפשיט** (איוב כב, ו).

3. **תנועות** -- Determine which are **גדולות** (long) and which are **קטנות** (short) according to the theory of R. Yosef Qimhi.

Long	Short
י	.
(י)	.
י	.
(י)	.
י	.

Note that **קמץ** appears in both columns, because there are two types in the Sephardic reading tradition: **קמץ גדול** (pronounced [a] = **פתח**) and **קמץ קטן** (pronounced [o] = **חולם**); cf. Ibn Ezra: **והקמץ הוא קמוץ בפה או נקרא כן בעבור שנקמץ מן החולם ומן ההפתח ועל כן סימנו קו** (ספר מאזנים) **ונקודה** (ספר מאזנים). At this point in the procedure, they cannot be distinguished. Rules are given for distinguishing them in 6 below, but they are notoriously problematic because the Tiberian Masoretes, who invented the signs, did not make this distinction. The distinction is valid only for the Sephardic reading tradition, the tradition of the medieval grammarians.

4. **שואים** -- Determine which are **נעים** (reduced vowels) and which are **נחים** (place markers indicating the absence of a vowel) by identifying their environments.

Environments for **נע** alone:
א = בראש מלה, ב = [שוא] שני [בלתי-סופי], ג = [אחרי תנועה] גדולה [בלתי-מוטעמת], ד = [תחת] דגש [בלתי-סופי], ה = [בין] הדומות

Environments for **נח** alone: (a) at the end of the word,¹ (b) the first of two consecutive vowels, (c) after a תנועה קטנה, unless rule ד applies (חִזְקוּ but חִזְקוּ) or unless rule ה applies, (d) before דגש.

Note that rules ג and (c) cannot be used where the preceding vowel is קמץ.
Note also that the environments often overlap, as in מִלְכָּךְ.

Minimal pairs for שוא (or vowel length): יִשְׁנוּ, יִשְׁנוּ, אֶכְלָה, etc.
איוב לא ישנו חטף משלי לא ישנו געי (כתר ארם צובה, מס"ג משלי ד טז)
כל לשון יראה געי כמות וייראו האנשים וכל לשון ראייה חטף מת'ל וייראו ויקחו חוץ מפסוק אחד ...
("דקדוקי הטעמים" מהד' ב-ש §32).

5. **הברות** -- Determine which are open (CV), which are closed (CVC), and which are doubly closed (CVCC; found only at end of word) by dividing the word into units which begin with a consonant immediately followed by a vowel. Moving backwards from the end of the word, find the first consonant immediately followed by a vowel and draw a line (representing the syllable boundary) before it; find the second consonant immediately followed by a vowel and draw a line before it; etc.

Keep in mind that syllabification is based on speech sounds (consonants and vowels) rather than written signs (letters and נקודות). More specifically, (a) שוא נע counts as a vowel but שוא נח does not, (b) long consonants (indicated by דגש חזק) count as two consonants, and (c) some letters (unpointed א or any other unpointed letter in non-final position; אמות קריאה = ו and י serving as vowel letters and final ה without מפיק) do not represent any consonant.

If you have followed the procedure correctly, you will find that every letter with a דגש חזק is bisected by a syllable boundary and that, outside of doubly closed syllables, every letter with a דגש קל is preceded by a syllable boundary and every שוא (whether נח or נע) is followed by a syllable boundary. (Note: The traditional view that a שוא נע or חטף cannot be the sole vowel in a syllable and, hence, that ישכבו consists of only two syllables is based on a notion of "syllable" different from the ones current today.)

Assign each syllable to one of the following categories: (a) closed unstressed, (b) closed stressed, (c) open unstressed, (d) open stressed.

6. **קמצים** -- Determine which are גדולים and which are קטנים by Sephardim) by applying the following rule wherever possible: A קמץ in a closed unstressed syllable is קטן; a קמץ which is not in a closed unstressed syllable is גדול. Note that, when קמץ is followed by שוא, it is possible to apply this rule in some instances (e.g., in אָרְכוּ, קָרְבָּן, אָרְכוּ, קָרְבָּן) but not in others (e.g., in גִּדְלוּ, אֶכְלָה). When it is not, we can examine alternations. A קמץ which exhibits free variation with קבוץ (e.g., קָרְבָּן) and/or alternation with חולם when not followed by שוא (e.g., אָרְךָ, קָדַשׁ) is a קמץ קטן; thus, גִּדְלוּ and גִּדְלִי show that גִּדְלוּ has a קמץ קטן. A קמץ which remains unchanged when not followed by שוא is a קמץ גדול; thus, אָכַל shows that אֶכְלָה "she ate" has a קמץ גדול. When all else fails, we can check the Babylonian vocalization.

¹ The Masoretes usually omit שוא in this position, but there are exceptions; cf. Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Sahot* 6b-7a: רק המנקדים יש להם מנהג לנקד שוא תחת תיו עשית שהוא לשון נקבה שלא יתערב עם לשון זכר.... כן מנהג אנשי טיבריא, והם העיקר, כי מהם היו אנשי המסורת, ואנחנו מהם קבלנו כל הניקוד. אולי עשו כן שלא יחשב אדם כי שכת המנקד ויסתפק לו.