

REALISTIC AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM FOR THE BIBLICAL HEBREW INTRODUCTORY COURSE

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ABSTRACT

An introduction to Biblical Hebrew (BH) and its accompanying practice and assessment system should enable students to independently access straightforward original biblical texts by the end of the course. Though demanding, such a course is shorter, and its objectives are different than those of Modern Hebrew courses. The practice and assessment system described here reflects a rigorous but realistic curriculum, which gives priority to proficiency over linguistic competence and teach grammar as a vehicle for comprehension rather than as an end. It draws from pedagogical principles developed for the acquisition of modern second (or additional) language *only* to the extent they are relevant for the teaching of a classical language and when adapted to it. Among the principles guiding this practice and assessment system in the BH introductory classroom are: learning language in context, learning through massive exposure to authentic text, preference for identification over production, reinforcement of familiarity with the most frequently occurring vocabulary and grammar, and attempts to reduce the affective filter. The application of such principles in graded translation exercises and detailed parsing charts, as well as in exams and quizzes, will be demonstrated. Also, a method for using biblical texts to create practice and assessment materials for different stages of the course is proposed, while considering issues such as: distribution of various grammatical elements in the text, didactic layout, and the use of ‘tools’ and lexicon.

INTRODUCTION

The question of how the basics of Biblical Hebrew should be taught involves issues such as the order in which grammatical topics are presented, the depth to which grammar is taught, the presentation style (traditional frontal or interactive), as well as what type of practice best supports students’ learning, and how their achievement should be assessed. In this article, I discuss the latter two issues, and occasionally touch on the others. The examples are drawn from the *Hinneḥ* textbook (Halabe 2011) and the additional unpublished material (i.e., exams, quizzes) supplementing it. These examples reflect the practical objectives of the curriculum: enabling students to independently read texts of different genres, which are complex in content but grammatically straightforward, by the end of the introductory

course, as well as, demonstrate their comprehension by producing sound translations of these texts.

Creating this curriculum was inspired by several relevant fields: learning theories (Feuerstein et al., 1981), functional grammar (Halliday 1993) and pedagogical grammar (Halabe 2008). Also, it was informed by the extensive research in modern additional language¹ acquisition and its resulting progressive pedagogies and innovations². However, it is important to emphasize that these literatures and methods, as beneficial as they are for teaching modern languages, are not all necessarily suitable for teaching classical languages. A major objective of teaching a modern additional language is communication, (understanding what is heard and read, as well as, responding in speech and writing), while the main objective of teaching a classical language like Biblical Hebrew, is limited to reading and comprehension. In the former, the ability to write well, speak fluently, and read high level original, un-adapted texts is a long and slow process. Advanced modern language students may meet such expectations only after many class hours³. In the latter, students are expected to access highly sophisticated ancient texts by the end of a much shorter introductory course⁴. Therefore, Biblical Hebrew (BH) introductory curricula and their complementing practice and assessment systems should be planned economically while seriously considering time constraints. When developing the *Hinneh* curriculum, I carefully looked for what could be drawn from both the rigorous, linguistically and competence oriented academic methods used in the teaching of BH (i.e., Lambdin 1973, Kittel et al. 1989, Kelley 1992) and the more practical, proficiency oriented methods used for the teaching of Modern languages. I chose what I deemed to be the golden mean in order to impart the basics of Biblical Hebrew, and achieve the above mentioned practical objectives.

In order to plan the practice and assessment tools for a BH introductory course, instructors should acknowledge what is to be realistically expected from students. In other words: what can they learn and practice as well as what level of comprehension can they demonstrate in the given limited time period? The principles that guided me were:

- giving priority to proficiency (skills) over linguistic competence (theoretical knowledge of grammar). In other words, using grammar

¹ second or foreign language.

² e.g., immersion (ulpan), Total Physical Response (TPR), culture based learning , to list a few.

³ According to syllabi of 6 ulpan levels of Rothberg International School, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem <https://overseas.huji.ac.il/hebrewlevels>, about 560 class hours are required to complete up to level 4 (low-advanced) in which students *start* reading authentic un-adapted texts.

⁴ about 150 class hours.

knowledge as a vehicle, leading to comprehension, rather than an end in itself;

- learning in context;
- providing a large amount of scaffolding through various aids (i.e., frequently occurring vocabulary lists, color coding, didactic layout, easy to access lexicon);
- grading of authentic texts used for teaching, practice and assessment;
- focus on form identification and analysis rather than on creation and production.

These principles informed the practice and assessment tools created for *Hinneḥ* as well as others created to complement the program. Thus, right from the beginning, the exercises (with their various aids, which will be discussed below) facilitate the reading and comprehension of graded authentic texts. Moreover, students are expected to learn the various paradigms, but are not required to reproduce them with complete vowels; they are not asked to assign vowels to Hebrew words or texts; they are not expected to speak BH⁵ or translate English sentences into Hebrew; finally, they are certainly not expected to demonstrate competence in theoretical grammar rules.

INPUT

Input consists of authentic language samples together with practice material which is accessible to the students. According to the *Input Hypothesis* (Krashen 1982) second language acquisition requires input which is

- interesting (meaningful),
- natural (authentic)
- comprehensible⁶.

This hypothesis offered for the acquisition of modern languages may still apply to a large extent to the learning of classical languages. However, it is admittedly not always easy to find meaningful authentic biblical passages that are also comprehensible and compatible with different stages of a graded introductory program. This is why some BH textbooks resort to offering only, or mostly, artificial sentences as examples and practice material tailored to the grammatical subject presented. Unfortunately, this

⁵ Artificial Hebrew ‘conversations’ are offered in the first half of *Hinneḥ*, Volume Aleph. They are meant to demonstrate new grammatical concepts when read aloud in class. Replicating them as actual conversations is suggested only as an *option*, if time allows, and to help lighten the atmosphere and reduce possible initial apprehensions of what may be perceived as a difficult course.

⁶ In the context of learning a classical language, the notion of comprehensible input should include various study aids and practice tools.

practice often results in contrived language and uninteresting content. In contrast, students reading original passages right from the beginning greatly appreciate and feel rewarded by a more meaningful experience. A curriculum in which presentation of grammatical subjects is well sequenced - taking both frequency and 'learnability' into account - allows for level-appropriate passages to be presented more easily. Such passages can demonstrate not only the currently taught grammatical topic, but often contain previously learned topics, thus offering more opportunities for review and consolidation. As the course progresses, the growing of vocabulary and of *variational* and *developmental* grammatical subjects⁷ makes the task of finding suitable and meaningful authentic passages progressively, and sometimes surprisingly, easier. The following two translation exercises demonstrate the three features conducive to effective learning according to Krashen's input hypothesis. These exercises are offered after the basics (i.e., possessive suffixes, verbless clause, construct chain, prepositions) have been learned, and before the verb has been introduced.

<p><i>And he charged the first one, saying</i> <i>"When Esau my brother meets you and</i> <i>asks you, saying</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>you shall say,</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>(Genesis 32:18-19)</i></p>	<p><i>Ya'aqov is talking to his servants, to</i> <i>prepare for his meeting with Esav.</i></p> <p>וַיֹּצֵא אֶת הָרָאוּשׁוֹן לֵאמֹר "כִּי יִפְגְּשְׁךָ עֶשָׂו אָחִי וּשְׂאֵלְךָ לֵאמֹר 'לָמִי אַתָּה...' וְלָמִי אַלֶּה לְפָנֶיךָ' וְאָמַרְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ לְיַעֲקֹב מִנְחָה הוּא... לְאֹדְנִי לַעֲשׂו וְהָיָה גַם הוּא אַחֲרֵינוּ' (בְּרֵאשִׁית ל"ב, יח-יט)</p>	1
<p>_____</p> <p><i>(Judges 19:19)</i></p>	<p>וְגַם תָּבוֹן גַּם מִסְפּוֹא יֵשׁ לְחִמּוֹרֵינוּ וְגַם לֶחֶם וַיִּין יֵשׁ לִי וְלֹאֲמַתְךָ וְלַנֶּעֶר עִם עַבְדֶּיךָ אֵין מִחְסוֹר כָּל דָּבָר (שׁוֹפְטִים יט, יט)</p>	2

⁷ Nunan (1994) distinguishes between 'developmental' grammar items that emerge from one another and occur in a learner's productive repertoire in a set sequence, and 'variational' items that can be learned at any time. It might be more helpful, though, to determine the nature of the various grammatical systems on a continuum, from the more developmental to the least developmental, namely, the variational. Learning the Hebrew possessive suffix, for example, depends on familiarity with only a few concepts: person, gender, and number. It should be considered much more independent (variational) than the hi'fil prefix form of the hollow verbs, for example, which requires familiarity with many more grammatical concepts (the above three, together with root, stem, root groups, interpretation of the verb on the time line, etc.). There can be much more flexibility, therefore, in timing the teaching of the former than of the latter (Halabe 2008).

These authentic biblical texts - the first, taken from a formative patriarchal story (Yaàqov preparations to meet with his brother Esav), and the second depicting elements of a biblical scene (fodder, donkeys, bread, wine, maidservant, servant) - are interesting on different levels. In the first example, context conducive to comprehension is offered through an introductory note in English, and translation is provided for the parts that are beyond-level. In the second example, context is not needed in order to reach good understanding. Still, if students are curious, they may follow the reference offered and read the complete (morally disturbing) story of the concubine in Giv'ah from which the passage is drawn. In addition to its contribution to comprehension, authentic context adds relevance to language study which cannot be achieved through artificial material. Classes in some settings may take advantage of the opportunities provided by the material offered to discuss the literary, theological, historical, moral and other issues raised by the text.

COMMON VOCABULARY

Practice with authentic passages, while focused on the grammar learned in any particular lesson, eventually accumulates into massive exposure to the common vocabulary in the biblical text. Familiarity with frequently occurring vocabulary is important, since a relatively small number of common words accounts for a large percentage of the entire biblical text⁸. *Hinneh*, does not offer a vocabulary list for each lesson; rather, the basic vocabulary is provided in the Tool Box volume in comprehensive lists of frequently occurring words arranged by categories (nouns, prepositions, verbs etc.). Students are expected to use these lists as well as their lexicon while working through their translation exercises; in this way, they familiarize themselves with commonly occurring biblical vocabulary and learn how to look up less common words.. For example, see below parts of the frequently occurring noun list 5 out of the **110**), and the frequently occurring prepositions list (5 out of 22).

⁸ For example, the 200 most frequently occurring words account for about 60% of the entire biblical text; the 1000 most frequently occurring words account for close to 80%, etc. (הרמתי 1983).

Frequently Occurring Nouns

Plural Pronoun				Singular Pronoun				Noun in Construct State	Noun	
3fp	3mp	2fp	2mp	p1	3fs	3ms	2fs	2ms	1s	
משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	משפטים	judgment, law, justice, custom
משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	משפטיהם	
נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	נביאיו	prophet
נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	נביאיהם	
נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	נחלתו	property, inheritance
נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	נחלותיהם	
נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	נעריו	child, youth
נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	נעריהם	
עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	עבדיו	slave, servant
עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	עבדיהם	

Frequently Occurring Prepositions

Plural Pronoun				Singular Pronoun				Preposition	
3fp	3mp	2fp	2mp	1p	3fs	3ms	2fs	2ms	1s
אצלן	אצלם	אצלן	אצלם	אצלנו	אצלם	אצלם	אצלם	אצלם	אצלם
אתן	אתם	אתן	אתם	אתנו	אתם	אתם	אתם	אתם	אתם
בן	בנים	בן	בנים	בנינו	בנים	בנים	בנים	בנים	בנים
בניהם	בניהם	בניהם	בניהם	בניהם	בניהם	בניהם	בניהם	בניהם	בניהם
בין	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	בינינו	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם
בין	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם	ביניהם

Right from the beginning of the course, heavy use of both the Tool Box and the lexicon is expected in order to find and interpret common and less common vocabulary from the biblical passages studied. Thus, for the above two passages, students alphabetically find in the Tool Box:

- the common nouns, אדון, עבד, מנחה, לחם, נער, דבר
- the common prepositions לפני, אחרי, ל-, עם

Less common vocabulary in such authentic biblical passages (here: תבן, מחסור, חמורינו, מספוא) is often encountered, and students learn how to use the lexicon early in the course. The lexicon recommended for this purpose is the simpler William Holladay's *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1971).⁹

GRAMMAR – NOUNS AND PREPOSITIONS

Grammar too, should be learned and practiced in context. Thus, while working on the above two passages, students are expected to use detailed parsing charts in order to parse declined nouns and prepositions. These Noun & Preposition parsing charts are intended to lead the students to the appropriate entries in either the Tool Box or the lexicon and to ensure that they take context in consideration. Often, learners can mechanically and accurately parse lexemes, but are not able to relate their results to the role of the parsed elements in the verse. Therefore, column 4 in *both* parsing charts below inquires:

To whom/what does the possessive/pronominal suffix refer?

⁹ If instructors insist on introducing their students to the more challenging BDB lexicon [(1979). *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*. Massachusetts. Hendrickson Publishers.], I strongly recommend that they do so towards the end of the introductory course.

Noun Parsing Chart

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Translation of Word as in Text	Translation of Dictionary Entry	Singular (Dictionary Entry)	Plural (without any prefix/suffix) Only if appears as plural in the text <i>Vowels not required</i>	Absolute in Construct Chain? yes/-	To Whom/What does the Possessive Suffix Refer?	Person in Suffix	Possessive Suffix	Word as in the Text
for your servant	servant	עֶבֶד			Esav	2ms	ָ	לְעֶבֶדְךָ
for my master	master	אֲדֹנָי			Yaakov's servant	1s	ִי	לְאֲדֹנָי
for our donkeys	donkey	חֲמֹרִים	חֲמֹרִים		the Levite, his concubine and his servant	1p	ֵם	לְחֲמֹרֵינוּ
and for your maidservant	maidservant	אֲמָהָה			the old man	2ms	ָ	לְאִמָּתְךָ
your servants	servant	עֲבָדִים	עֲבָדִים		the old man	2bs	ָם	עֲבָדֶיךָ

Preposition Parsing Chart

6	5	4	3	2	1
Translation of Preposition as in the Text	Preposition without the Pronominal Suffix <i>Vowels not required</i>	To Whom/What does the Pronominal Suffix Refer?	Person in Suffix	Pronominal Suffix	Preposition as in the Text
In front of you	לפני	Yaakov's servant	2ms	ָךְ	לְפָנֶיךָ
Behind us	אחרי	Yaakov's servants	1p	ֵנוּ	אַחֲרֵינוּ
for me	לִי	The Levite	1s		לִי

To answer the questions in column 4 of both parsing charts, students have to go from verse to parsing chart, and back. They have to ensure that their results in all columns agree (i.e., gender, form, syntactic role in clause, tense) and are compatible with the context. Only then can they integrate all the information and reach sound understanding and good translation. Parsing charts should be considered as scaffolding, supporting students'

developing understanding of grammatical concepts and proficiency. They may be gradually removed when the analysis process is well internalized.

GRAMMAR – THE VERB

Similarly, when studying the Hebrew verb, students are assisted by verb tools and graded verb parsing charts offered in the Tool Box. Consider the following three examples from three different stages:

<p>(Genesis 24:20)</p>	<p>About Rivqah and Avraham's servant</p> <p>וְתָרַךְ עוֹד אֶל הַבָּאָר... וְתִשָּׂאב לְכָל גְּמָלָיו (בְּרִאשִׁית כד, כ)</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>Before I formed you in the belly</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(Jeremiah 1:5)</p>	<p>The LORD to Yermiyahu:</p> <p>בְּטֶרֶם אֶצְרֶךְ בַּבֶּטֶן יְדַעְתִּיד וּבְטֶרֶם תֵּצֵא מִרֶחֶם הַקֶּדֶשׁ שְׁתִּיד נָבִיא לַגּוֹיִם וְתִתִּיד</p> <p>(יִרְמְיָהוּ א, ה)</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>Let us _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(Exodus 1:9-10)</p>	<p>Par'oh to his people:</p> <p>הִנֵּה עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַב וְעָצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ הִכָּה נִתְחַכְמָה לוֹ כֵּן יִרְבֶּה... וְנוֹסֶף גַּם שְׁנְאִינוּ וְנִלְחַם בָּנוּ וְעֵלָה מִן הָאָרֶץ (שְׁמוֹת א, ט-י)</p>	<p>3</p>

- The first example is offered after learning all of the qal prefix and suffix forms, the major qal root groups, and the short prefix form,
- the second - after learning the hif'il stem,
- the third - after learning all of the stems - at the completion of the introductory course.

To help students identify the verbs in such passages the Tool Box offers verb paradigms of the seven stems, as well as those of the major qal root groups. For example, see the hif'il paradigm:

הפעיל hif'il			
'Strong' Verbs שְׁלִימִים			
Participle בִּינוּנִי	Prefix Form קְטַל	Suffix Form קְטַל	
מִשְׁלִיכִים מִשְׁלִיךְ	אֶשְׁלִיךְ	הִשְׁלַכְתִּי	אני
מִשְׁלִיכֹת מִשְׁלִיכָה	תִּשְׁלִיךְ	הִשְׁלַכְתָּ	אתה
Passive Participle בִּינוּנִי סָבִיל	תִּשְׁלִיכֶי	הִשְׁלַכְתָּ	את
Imperative צוּרִי	יִשְׁלִיךְ	הִשְׁלִיךְ	הוא
	תִּשְׁלִיכֶה	הִשְׁלִיכָה	היא
	בִּשְׁלִיךְ	הִשְׁלַכְנוּ	אנחנו
	תִּשְׁלִיכוּ	הִשְׁלַכְתֶּם	אתם
	תִּשְׁלַכְנָה	הִשְׁלַכְתֹּן	אתו
Infinitive מְקוּרִי	יִשְׁלִיכוּ	הִשְׁלִיכוּ	הם
construct גִּטוּי (ל)הִשְׁלִיךְ	תִּשְׁלַכְנָה	הִשְׁלִיכוּ	הנה
absolute מְחֻלָּט הִשְׁלַךְ	תִּשְׁלִיכוּ	הִשְׁלִיכוּ	

Note the short prefix form, mainly for הָאָה & הִיא :

יִשְׁלַךְ ← יִשְׁלִיךְ
וּתִשְׁלַךְ ← וּתִשְׁלִיכֶה

Gradually introduced throughout the course are also frequently occurring verbs lists for all of the prefix and suffix forms, imperative, participle, and infinitives of the five major stems (*qal*, *nif'al*, *pi'el*, *hif'il*, *hitpa'el*). While studying each stem, form, and weak group, students carefully color each list (not printed in color in the textbook) according to detailed color coding instructions given in the relevant lesson (e.g., pink for ל"ה, yellow for פ"נ, green for ע"י & ע"ו). For example, see below for a partial list of the *qal* prefix form (20 out of 55 verbs):

Frequently Occurring *gal* Verbs – Prefix Form

Color Code	green - צ"ח	light green - צ"ח & צ"ח	pink - צ"ח	light blue - צ"ח	royal blue - צ"ח	yellow - צ"ח	grey - צ"ח	brown - guttural צ				
Prefix Form + Past 3ms, 3fs *	3fp	3mp	2fp	2mp	1p	3fs	3ms	2fs	2ms	1s	Root	
	תאבדנה	תאבדו	תאבדנה	תאבדו	תאבד	תאבד	תאבד	תאבדו	תאבד	תאבד	אבד	be lost
									תאבב	תאבב	אבב	love
	תאכלנה	תאכלו	תאכלנה	תאכלו	תאכל	תאכל	תאכל	תאכלו	תאכל	תאכל	אכל	eat
יאמר, ותאמר	תאמננה	תאמנו	תאמננה	תאמנו	תאמר	תאמר	תאמר	תאמרו	תאמר	תאמר	אמר	say
	תאספנה	תאספו	תאספנה	תאספו	תאסף	תאסף	תאסף	תאספו	תאסף	תאסף	אסף	gather
	תבאנה	תבאו	תבאנה	תבאו	תבא	תבא	תבא	תבאו	תבא	תבא	אבא	come
יבנה, ותבן	תבנינה	תבניו	תבנינה	תבניו	תבנה	תבנה	תבנה	תבניו	תבנה	תבנה	אבנה	build
ינהי, ותנהי	תנהינה	תנהיו	תנהינה	תנהיו	תנהי	תנהי	תנהי	תנהיו	תנהי	תנהי	אנהי	be
	תלכנה	תלכו	תלכנה	תלכו	תלך	תלך	תלך	תלכו	תלך	תלך	הלך	go, walk
	תמרגנה	תמרגו	תמרגנה	תמרגו	תמרג	תמרג	תמרג	תמרגו	תמרג	תמרג	המרג	kill
	תזכרנה	תזכרו	תזכרנה	תזכרו	תזכר	תזכר	תזכר	תזכרו	תזכר	תזכר	זכר	remember
	תסונקנה	תסונקו	תסונקנה	תסונקו	תסונק	תסונק	תסונק	תסונקו	תסונק	תסונק	סונק	be strong
יחיה, ויחיה	תחינה	יחי	תחינה	יחי	תחי	תחי	תחי	תחי	תחי	תחי	חיה	be alive
	תדענה	ידעו	תדענה	ידעו	ידע	ידע	ידע	ידעו	ידע	ידע	ידע	know
	תלדנה	ילדו	תלדנה	ילדו	ילד	ילד	ילד	ילדו	ילד	ילד	לד	give birth
	תצאנה	יצאו	תצאנה	יצאו	יצא	יצא	יצא	יצאו	יצא	יצא	צא	go out
	תיראנה	יראו	תיראנה	יראו	ירא	ירא	ירא	יראו	ירא	ירא	ירא	fear
	תירדנה	ירדו	תירדנה	ירדו	ירד	ירד	ירד	ירדו	ירד	ירד	ירד	go down
	תירשנה	ירשו	תירשנה	ירשו	ירש	ירש	ירש	ירשו	ירש	ירש	ירש	inherit, displace
	תשבנה	ישבו	תשבנה	ישבו	ישב	ישב	ישב	ישבו	ישב	ישב	ישב	sit, dwell

*Only ע"ח/צ"ח & צ"ח verbs (as well as verb אבד) in which changes from their regular prefix form are very obvious are presented in this column.

The colorful results of each list (and eventually, all lists of 5 major stems and all forms) allow learners to create the larger picture of the complex Hebrew verb system and internalize it. These frequently occurring verbs lists

are continuously used when reading passages such as the above three examples.

The verb parsing chart shown below, leads students to the right entries for verbs found in the above example passages in either the Tool Box or the lexicon. Here too, students are expected to work thoughtfully, not only mechanically, and reflect on the questions asked:

- *Who/what is the subject of the verb* (Column 6),
- *Who/what is referred to by the pronominal suffix?* [if applicable] (Column 3),
- *Where is the verb on the time-line?* = tense or mood¹⁰ (Column 11).

¹⁰Answers for the various irreal moods need not utilize formal linguistic terms, but such words as: command, promise, blessing, possibility, condition, worry, etc., which demonstrate students' understanding of the passage and its context. For the *Hinne* way in teaching the biblical 'tense' system, see (2010 חלבה).

Verb Parsing Chart

12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Translation of the Verb in the Text Considering both Parsing and Context	Where is the Verb on the Time Line? or In What Mood?	*	Stem	Root	Short Prefix Form ? Yes/-	Who/What is the Subject of the Verb	Person of Subject	Grammatical Verb Form	Person in D.O.S. & To Whom/What it Refers	Direct Object Suffix (D.O.S)	Verb as in the Text
she ran	past	a	קל	רץ	yes	Ruqah	3fs	prefix			רָצָה
she drew (water)	past	a	קל	טב		Ruqah	3fs	Prefix			טָבְּחָהּ
I knew you	past		קל	ידע		The LORD	1s	suffix	2ms Yimeyah	ה	יָדַעְתִּי
you came out	past		קל	נצ		Yimeyah	2ms	prefix			נִצַּחְתָּ
I sanctified you	past		הפעיל	קדש		The LORD	1s	suffix	2ms Yimeyah	ה	קִדְּשָׁתְךָ
I appointed you	past		קל	טן		The LORD	1s	suffix	2ms Yimeyah	ה	טָנַחְתְּךָ
let us be wise/shrewd	consecutive		הפעיל	חכם		the Egyptian	1p	prefix			חָכַמְנוּ
they may multiply			קל	רבה		עם בני ישראל	3ms	prefix			רָבּוּ
they may be added	worry, possibility	b	נפעל	סף		עם בני ישראל	3ms	suffix			סֻפְּחוּ
they may fight		b	נפעל	לחם		עם בני ישראל	3ms	suffix			לָחֲמוּ
they may rise, come up		b	קל	עלה		עם בני ישראל	3ms	suffix			עָלוּ

* a. 1 past (consecutive) + prefix form: רָצָה, b. 1 consecutive + prefix form: רָצָה, c. 1 consecutive + suffix form: רָצָה, d. 1 consecutive + other forms

Thus, with the help of various tools and parsing charts, students can integrate their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, take context into account, understand the text, and provide sound translation.

ASSESSMENT

The three graded parsing charts (nouns, prepositions and, particularly, verbs) are also invaluable for instructors, who will find them excellent assessment tools. When regularly checking and correcting students' translations and their corresponding parsing charts, in homework as well as exams, instructors can:

- monitor students' progress,
- spot problematic issues and discuss them in class
- evaluate students work and mark it.

QUIZZES

Practice through original biblical texts, together with heavy use of the Tool Box reinforces students' familiarity with common vocabulary and its different categories (nouns, verbs of the various stems and root groups etc. (This reduces significantly the need for rote memorization and, in turn, saves much time and energy looking up vocabulary when practicing and writing exams, as well prepares students for studying beyond the introductory course. Still, instructors may occasionally choose to construct context-less quizzes to ensure that their students are familiar with the frequently occurring vocabulary. The following example is taken from a quiz given when completing the study of the five major stems in all forms (6 out of 100 common verbs offered in the quiz).

<i>Translation – Infinitive only</i>	<i>Stem</i>	<i>Root</i>	<i>Hebrew Verb</i>	
to believe	הפעיל	א.מ.ן	הֶאֱמַנְתִּי	1
			שָׁמְרָהּ	2
			בִּקְשׁוּ	3
			וַיִּשָּׁבַע	4
			אֲשַׁתְּחֶהָ	5
			הוֹשַׁעַת	6

Unlike translation exercises and exams, the expectations from students for answering quizzes of this kind are limited. Students are only expected to demonstrate their familiarity with common vocabulary and an ability to identify it at a glance. In the above quiz, for example, they are asked to identify only the root, stem and meaning of each entry (English infinitive),

not the person or tense. When writing a quiz, students are *not* allowed to use the lexicon or the Tool Box.

EXAMS

When drawing to the conclusion of any major stage in the introductory course, longer biblical passages than those offered in the textbook may be offered for review-practice and in exams. These may be meaningful formative passages of any genre, whether narrative texts retelling the journeys of the patriarchs, the wandering of the Israelites, and the lives of judges, kings and prophets; legal texts, including those related to Shabbat and holidays, or poetic sections from Prophets or Psalms.. The choice of content may depend on students' and instructor's interest, school objectives, approaching holidays, topics discussed in related courses etc. Students find satisfaction and encouragement when working on longer meaningful texts.

When looking for a longer text for review-practice or exam, one should try to find a text with a good distribution of the grammatical items recently studied and others previously learned. The following method, applied to ISamuel 19, is helpful to the instructor when examining the makeup of any text and the distribution of its components.

שמואל א פרק יט

(ט) **וַתְּהִי רוּחַ ה'** רָעָה אֶל שְׂאוּל וְהוּא בְּבֵיתוֹ יוֹשֵׁב וְחַנִּיתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ
 וְדוֹד מְנַגֵּן בָּיָד: (י) **וַיִּבְקֹשׁ שְׂאוּל לַחֲכֹת** בַּחֲנִית בְּדוֹד וּבִקִּיר **וַיִּפְטֹר** מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוּל
וַיֵּן אֶת הַחֲנִית בִּקִּיר וְדוֹד **נָס וַיִּמָּלֵט** בַּלֵּילָה הוּא: (יא) **וַיִּשְׁלַח שְׂאוּל מַלְאָכִים** אֶל **בֵּית דָּוִד לְשַׁמְרוֹ** וּלְהַמְיָתוֹ בְּבִקֹר
וַתֵּגֵד לְדָוִד מִיכָל אִשְׁתּוֹ לֵאמֹר אִם אֵינְךָ **מִמָּלֵט** אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ
 הַלֵּילָה מִחַר אֶתָּה מוֹמֶת: (יב) **וַתֵּרָד** מִיכָל אֶת דָּוִד בְּעֵד הַחֲלוּן **וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבְרַח וַיִּמָּלֵט**:
 (יג) **וַתִּשָּׂא מִיכָל** אֶת הַתְּרָפִים **וַתִּשֶׂם** אֶל הַמָּטָה וְאֶת **כְּבִיר הָעֲזִים** שְׂמָהּ מִרְאשֵׁיתוֹ **וַתִּכְסֶּה** בַּבֶּגֶד: (יד) **וַיִּשְׁלַח שְׂאוּל מַלְאָכִים** לְקַחַת אֶת דָּוִד וְתֹאמָרָה חֲלָה הוּא:
 (טו) **וַיִּשְׁלַח שְׂאוּל** אֶת הַמַּלְאָכִים לִרְאוֹת אֶת דָּוִד לֵאמֹר **הֲעָלוּ**
 אֹתוֹ בַּמָּטָה אֵלַי **לְהַמְתּוֹ**: (טז) **וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים** וְהִנֵּה הַתְּרָפִים אֵל הַמָּטָה וּ**כְבִיר הָעֲזִים**
 מִרְאשֵׁיתוֹ: (יז) **וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוּל** אֶל מִיכָל לָמָּה כָּכָה רַמִּיתִנִּי וַתִּשְׁלַחִי אֶת אֵיבִי
וַיִּמָּלֵט וַתֹּאמֶר מִיכָל אֶל שְׂאוּל הוּא **אָמַר** אֵלַי **שְׁלַחֲנִי** לָמָּה
אֲמִיתִךְ: (יח) וְדָוִד בָּרַח **וַיִּמָּלֵט וַיָּבֹא** אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל הַרְמָתָה **וַיֵּגֵד** לוֹ אֶת כָּל
 אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לוֹ שְׂאוּל וַיֵּלֶךְ הוּא וּשְׁמוּאֵל **וַיֵּשְׁבוּ** בְּנֵיּוֹת: (יט) **וַיֵּגֵד** לְשְׂאוּל
לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה דָוִד בְּנֵיּוֹת בְּרָמָה: (כ) **וַיִּשְׁלַח שְׂאוּל מַלְאָכִים** לְקַחַת אֶת דָּוִד וַיֵּרָא
וַיִּרָא אֶת לִהְקֵת הַנְּבִיאִים **נִבְאִים** וּשְׁמוּאֵל עֹמֵד נֹצֵב עֲלֵיהֶם וַתְּהִי עַל מַלְאָכָיו
שְׂאוּל רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ גַּם הֵמָּה: (כא) **וַיִּגְדּוּ** לְשְׂאוּל וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ
גַּם הֵמָּה וַיִּסָּף שְׂאוּל וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים שְׁלֹשִׁים וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ גַּם הֵמָּה: (כב) **וַיֵּלֶךְ** גַּם
 הוּא הַרְמָתָה וַיָּבֹא עַד בּוֹר הַגְּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂכּוֹ **וַיִּשְׁאַל וַיֹּאמֶר**
 אֵיפֹה שְׁמוּאֵל וְדָוִד **וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בְנֵיּוֹת בְּרָמָה**: (כג) **וַיֵּלֶךְ** שָׁם
 אֶל נְיוֹת בְּרָמָה וַתְּהִי עָלָיו גַּם הוּא **רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ** עַד
בָּאוּ בְנֵיּוֹת בְּרָמָה: (כד) **וַיִּפְּשֹׁט** גַּם הוּא בְּגָדָיו **וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ** גַּם הוּא
 לִפְנֵי שְׁמוּאֵל וַיִּפֹּל עַרְס כָּל הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל הַלַּיְלָה עַל כֵּן **יֹאמְרוּ** הַגִּם שְׂאוּל
בְּנִבְיָאִם:

By differently marking the various components, one gets a clear idea of the frequency of each grammatical element in the text under consideration, and thus how suitable it may be for the specific stage of the course. This can be done by:

- highlighting verbs color coded by stems: *qal*-yellow, *nif'al*-green, *pi'el*-red, *hif'il*-blue, *hitpa'el*-purple,
- encircling possessive suffixes,
- arrows to declined prepositions and pronouns,
- bold fonts for construct chains,
- underlining verbless clauses.

Looking at the make-up of the above chapter, one can see that it well represents the above mentioned grammatical items, including the five major

stems, which appear in different verb forms and root groups. This text may, therefore, be suitable for practice and exam towards the end of the introductory course.

Once a text is chosen, it needs further preparation before being offered to students. First, it may have to be shortened to fit the time frame available for the assignment or exam. However, this should not interfere with the flow and cohesiveness of the text. For example, when preparing I Samuel 19 (originally consisting of 15 verses and 272 lexemes) for an exam, I used only 70% (13 verses and 195 lexemes), but kept the narrative flow:

שמואל א פרק יט

(ט) ותהי רוח ה' רעה אל שאול והוא בביתו יושב וחנניתו בידו ודוד מנגן ביד:
 (י) ויבקש שאול להכות בחנית בידו ויפטר מפני שאול ויך את החנית בקיר ודוד נס וימלט בלילה הוא:
 (יא) וישלח שאול מלאכים אל בית דוד לשמו ולחמיתו בבקר ותגד לדוד מיכל אשתו לאמר אם אינך ממלט את נפשך הלילה מחר אתה מומת:
 (יב) ותד מיכל את דוד בעד החלון וילך ויברח וימלט:
 (יג) ותקח מיכל את התרפים ותשם אל המטה ואת כביר העצים שמה מראשיתיו ותכס בבגד:
 (יד) וישלח שאול את המלאכים לראות את דוד ...
 (טו) ויבאו המלאכים והנה התרפים אל המטה וכביר העצים מראשיתיו:
 (יז) ויאמר שאול אל מיכל למה ככה רמיתני ותשלחי את איבי וימלט ותאמר מיכל אל שאול הוא אומר אלי שלחני למה אצמיתך:
 (יח) ודוד ברח וימלט ויבא אל שמואל הרקמה ... וילך הוא ושמואל וישבו בניות:
 (יט) ...
 (כ) וישלח שאול מלאכים לקחת את דוד וירא את להקת הנביאים נבאים ושמואל עמיד ... עליהם ותהי על מלאכי שאול רוח אלהים ויתנבאו גם המה:
 (כא) ויגדו לשאול ...
 (כב) וילך גם הוא הרקמה ...
 (כג) ... ברקמה ותהי עליו גם הוא רוח אלהים וילך הלוח ויתנבא ... על כן יאמרו הגם שאול בנביאים:

To avoid unnecessary obstacles and facilitate analysis and comprehension, the text should also be didactically laid out. *Didactic Layout* (1993 הרמתי) presents a text in a more transparent and easier to grasp format. It allows efficient use of the limited time available and therefore the reading of longer and more interesting texts.

Didactic layout, as used here for either shorter or longer passages, could be regarded as scaffolding which eventually (beyond the introductory course) will be removed. A didactic layout is created in the following manner:

- complex sentences are broken up to clauses, each in its own line;
- English notes are added to explain context (mostly for shorter passages);
- beyond-level parts of text, helpful for context, are not omitted, but rather printed in different font with their English translation added;
- depending on the stage in the course, beyond-level parts of text (not essential for context) are removed and replaced by [...],
- familiar forms are added in brackets to words with unusual/difficult formation or spelling (for example: (ההוא) נס וימלט בלילה הוא (ההוא));
- certain words or elements may be printed in bold or larger fonts for emphasis;
- quotation marks are added;

A text with a good distribution of the required elements, may be didactically laid out and made compatible with various stages in the course. Thus, for example, the above text may be used each time with fewer grammatical elements omitted, and more text left untranslated. The following are the same four verses (excerpt of the 13 above verses) didactically laid out for three different learning stages¹¹:

a. After all the basics (e.g., the verbless clause, noun, possessive suffixes, preposition, construct chain) have been learned, and before the verb has been introduced:

<i>And _____ was _____</i> <i>And David was playing _____</i>	וַתְּהִי רוּחַ ה' רָעָה אֶל שָׁאוּל וְהוּא בְּבֵיתוֹ ... וַחֲנִיתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ וְדָוִד מַעֲגֵן בְּיָד	1
<i>And Saul sought to strike _____</i> <i>but he slipped away _____</i> <i>And he struck _____</i> <i>And David fled and escaped _____</i>	וַיִּבְקֹשׁ שָׁאוּל לְהַכּוֹת בְּחִנִּית דָּוִד וּבִקְרִי וַיִּפְטֹר מִפָּנָיו שָׁאוּל וַיִּדָּ אֶת הַחֲנִית בִּקְרִי וְדָוִד נָס וַיִּמְלֹט בַּלַּיְלָה הוּא (ההוא)	2
<i>And Saul sent _____</i> <i>to watch him and to kill him _____</i> <i>And Michal _____ said _____</i> <i>Unless you save _____</i> <i>_____ will be killed.</i>	וַיִּשְׁלַח שָׁאוּל מַלְאָכִים אֶל בֵּית דָּוִד לְשָׂמְרוֹ וּלְהַמִּיתוֹ בַּבֹּקֶר וַתַּגֵּד לְדָוִד מִכָּל אֲשֶׁתּוֹ ... אִם אֵינְךָ מַמְלִט אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ הַלַּיְלָה מִיָּד אֲתָה מוֹמֵת	3

¹¹ Please note: actual translation exercises are offered to students in a much clearer fashion than the way they appear here due to space limitations.

And Michal let David down _____ And he went, and he fled, and he escaped	וַתַּרְדּוּ מִיכָל אֶת דָּוִד בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבְרַח וַיִּמָּלֵט	4
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b. After the *qal* prefix and suffix forms with all their major root groups are introduced:

_____ _____ _____ And David was playing _____	וַתְּהִי רוּחַ ה' רָעָה אֶל שָׁאוּל וְהוּא בְּבֵיתוֹ ... וַחֲנִיתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ וְדָוִד מִנְּגֵן בְּיָד	1
And Saul sought to strike _____ _____ And he struck _____ _____ ...	וַיִּבְקֹשׁ שָׁאוּל לְהַכּוֹת בְּחִנִּית בְּדָוִד וּבִקְרִיר וַיַּפְטֹר מִפָּנָיו שָׁאוּל וַיִּךְ אֶת הַחֲנִית בְּקִיר וְדָוִד נָס ... בְּלִילָה הוּא (ההוא)	2
_____ _____ To watch him and to kill him _____ And Michal _____ said _____ Unless you save _____ _____ will be killed.	וַיִּשְׁלַח שָׁאוּל מַלְאָכִים אֶל בֵּית דָּוִד לְשָׂמְרוֹ וּלְהַמִּיתוֹ בְּבִקְרִיר וַתִּגְדּוּ לְדָוִד מִיכָל אִשְׁתּוֹ ... אִם אֵינְךָ מַמְלִיט אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ הַלֵּילָה מִחֶר אֲתָה מוּמָת	3
And Michal let David down _____ _____	וַתַּרְדּוּ מִיכָל אֶת דָּוִד בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבְרַח ...	4

c. When almost all of the Hebrew verb system with its five major stems (not the *pu'al* and *huf'al*) have been learned:

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	וַתְּהִי רוּחַ ה' רָעָה אֶל שָׁאוּל וְהוּא בְּבֵיתוֹ יוֹשֵׁב וַחֲנִיתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ וְדָוִד מִנְּגֵן בְּיָד	1
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	וַיִּבְקֹשׁ שָׁאוּל לְהַכּוֹת בְּחִנִּית בְּדָוִד וּבִקְרִיר וַיַּפְטֹר מִפָּנָיו שָׁאוּל וַיִּךְ אֶת הַחֲנִית בְּקִיר וְדָוִד נָס וַיִּמָּלֵט בְּלִילָה הוּא (ההוא)	2
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	וַיִּשְׁלַח שָׁאוּל מַלְאָכִים אֶל בֵּית דָּוִד לְשָׂמְרוֹ וּלְהַמִּיתוֹ בְּבִקְרִיר וַתִּגְדּוּ לְדָוִד מִיכָל אִשְׁתּוֹ לֵאמֹר אִם אֵינְךָ מַמְלִיט אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ הַלֵּילָה מִחֶר אֲתָה מוּמָת (killed)	3
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	וַתַּרְדּוּ מִיכָל אֶת דָּוִד בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבְרַח וַיִּמָּלֵט	4

Students, mostly in Jewish and Christian seminaries, who through their first language translations are already familiar with the Hebrew Bible and its

formative texts, have an advantage when reading such texts in the original Hebrew. They already have the outline of such a story and its context in mind when trying to decipher it in the original language. Students that lack this background may find the content very foreign. They are, therefore, advised to read any English translation of the *whole* chapter from which the text was drawn (in our example all of the 24 verses of ISamuel 19, not only the 13 offered) before starting their work on the assigned text. On the exam, they receive the English translation of the *whole* chapter on a separate sheet to read for a few minutes only, and then hand it back. Now, with a general idea of the topic, they can start reading and interpreting the assigned Hebrew text.

During exams, as during practice, students should be permitted, and in fact expected, to use both the Tool Box and the lexicon. This allows them to demonstrate their ability to independently¹² and efficiently integrate their knowledge with the use of these resources, and demonstrate what they know, their skills, and their common sense in interpreting the text, culminating in their ability to create a solid translation. Hopefully, they will keep using the same strategies while reading the Hebrew Bible beyond the introductory course.

REDUCING AFFECTIVE FILTER

The affective component of learning was seriously considered when creating the *Hinneh* curriculum and its practice and assessment system. Many students are intimidated by the Biblical Hebrew course, perceiving it as insurmountable or at least difficult. It has been argued that in the process of learning an additional language stress and anxiety could act as a *filter* which blocks, or impedes, the absorption of even comprehensible input, and prevents learners from effectively attending to it (Krashen 1987). Exaggerated expectations, not compatible with the time available, whether for the introductory course as a whole or for any specific assignment, may cause stress and create filters that obstruct learning and good performance. While designing practice and testing material for the *introductory* level, instructors should therefore avoid, or reduce to minimum, unnecessary requirements such as:

- recreation of paradigms with vowels;
- English to Hebrew translation exercises;

¹²And yes, I would like to emphasize, that ‘independently’, as far as I am concerned, means: *with* the help of such aids.

- memorizing vocabulary with no context;
- text layout lacking transparency;
- prohibiting use of lexicon and tools during exams.

The goal is not only to reduce stress, but also to allow students to concentrate on what is important at the introductory level: building their proficiency and confidence in accessing straightforward biblical texts. Moreover, reduced stress frees up time and energy to deal with longer and more challenging texts.

CONCLUSION

The practice and assessment system for the introductory level described in this article reflects realistic, but high expectations. It fosters students' independence when reading and interpreting complex but straightforward biblical texts. This system also allows the instructors to get a clear picture of the students' progress, their understanding of the material learned, and the quality of their interpretation work.

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