

## THE OVERALL ORGANIZATION AND RATIONALE OF THE BOOK

This book is targeted at people who wish to read the Hebrew Bible with comprehension and translate with accuracy, regardless of whether or not they know all the traditional labels which linguists have put on the language. There is a conscious choice to (a) avoid trying to become a reference grammar; and (b) to reduce confusion whenever possible.

From the very beginning this grammar makes it clear that Hebrew is a language. Verbless clauses occur in Lesson 2, and verbs in Lesson 3. However, instead of overwhelming students with chart after chart, a different approach is taken to teaching verbs. We begin with the most common *person* (i.e., the third) and teach the various tenses. The result is that students learn syntax without being bombarded with endless charts of forms. It then moves to the second person, then to the first person.

The overall organization of the book is designed to take students from the more common to the less common. Verbs and verbless clauses are common, so they show up early. The vocabulary also focuses on the most common early, and any vocabulary which occurs less than 50 times is glossed (i.e., excluded from vocabulary lists). Most 50+ words show up in the vocabulary lists. Verb binyanim are also dealt with in roughly the same manner (i.e., more common to less common).

The book also tries to give descriptions that are more general and move to the more specific later. For instance, the description of how verb tenses/aspects work is initially described as past and future. Refinements come much later (i.e., present attitude, present habitual, past habitual). The point is for students to get used to handling the language before fine tuning their skills.

The focus is on the consonantal text. Vowel pointing is hardly considered at all, beyond basic pronunciation. The dagesh is basically ignored, aside from its effects on the pronunciation of specific consonants. Verb differences are only noted if there are consonantal changes or irregularities. Since most Qal and Piel are

consonantly identical, (except the  $\text{נ}$  prefix for the Piel participle and some low-frequency situations<sup>1</sup>), Qals and Piels are introduced together. (Most high-frequency [50+] verbs prefer one binyan or the other.) Pointed and unpointed texts occur in the descriptions and exercises from Lesson 2 on.

There are some things which this grammar does not do. While using a modern pronunciation, it does not try to teach modern Israeli Hebrew. It does not train students to be Tiberian scribes. It does not prepare people to read publicly in a liturgical setting. Further, this grammar does not cover everything. There are elements in many beginning grammars which need to be reserved for more advanced classes.

There are 36 lessons in this grammar, each designed to take two class hours. This means that a three-day-a-week class should finish in a year (including days for exams and reviews), and a five-day-a-week class will finish the textbook at spring break. If you teach the course as a four or five credit class then I recommend that you intersperse "translation days" with later lessons.

---

<sup>1</sup>First- $\text{נ}$  Piels are rare, with only 123 instances which make them different from Qal verbs.