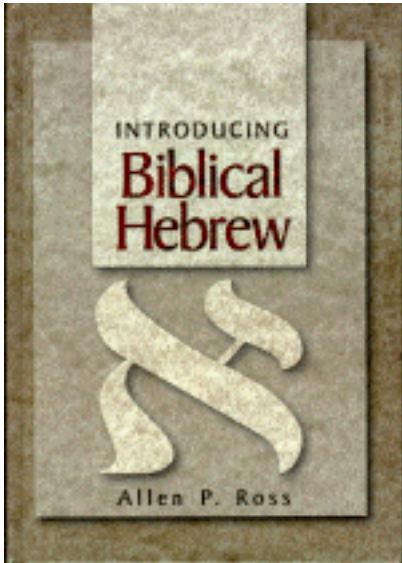


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**Ross, Allen P.**

***Introducing Biblical Hebrew***

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Jan A. Wagenaar  
Utrecht University  
Utrecht, Netherlands

*Introducing Biblical Hebrew* by Ross is a prime example of an exercise book written for students to facilitate their understanding and learning of the basic principles of the language and to prepare them for advanced studies. The material is presented in fifty-four lessons subdivided into three principal parts and preceded by a short introduction into Semitic languages in general and the preservation of Biblical Hebrew in particular (11–16). Lessons 1–6 concentrate on the signs and sounds—consonants and vowels, *shewa*, *dagesh*, and quiescent letters—and introduce the use of the article and inseparable prepositions (17–67). Lessons 7–40 deal with the morphology of the noun, pronoun, and pronominal suffix; regular and irregular verbs along with proposals for a mechanical parsing method; and elementary syntax (69–307). The lessons in parts 1 and 2 list some vocabulary categorized as verb, noun, or other form and offer some exercises. Lessons 41–54 explore syntactical issues and the use of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (309–422). The lessons in part 3 provide a detailed study of morphology and syntax of portions taken from Gen 2–4 and 12–15, concluded by a review of the grammar and syntax found in these texts with cross-references to the full discussion in parts 1 and 2. The last part of the book presents a number of study aids: summaries of the lessons 1–54 (425–78), a Hebrew-English Glossary (479–506), an English-Hebrew glossary (507–43), paradigms of the regular and irregular verbs (544–55), and two tables with the Masoretic Accents. The book is complemented by a subject index (557–65).

The material is arranged in such a way that the book definitely serves the purpose laid out for the work. The presentation of the signs and sounds in lessons 1–6 may well be somewhat simplified and artificial, but as such quite helpful for beginning students. The introduction of *dagesh forte* as doubling a consonant that simultaneously closes the preceding syllable and opens the next and the distinction between vocal *shewa* and silent *shewa* indeed facilitates a student’s grasp of the morphology. The radical omission of medial *shewa* from the introductory parts of the book must from this perspective be commended. Occasional references to medial *shewa* in the morphology (177, 227, 234) without any prior introduction of this phenomenon, however, can only come as a surprise for anyone who has worked carefully through the book and would better be abandoned. The inclusion of the article and to a lesser extent the inseparable prepositions in this part of the work, on the other hand, contributes to the clear organization of the materials in the book, as the use of the article indeed exemplifies the omission of *dagesh forte* in gutturals. This organization is, unfortunately, somewhat disturbed by the inclusion of the omission of *dagesh forte* in words beginning with ך or ם amidst words beginning with gutturals (64).

The presentation of the morphology of noun, pronoun, and verb in lessons 7–40 likewise furthers the learning process. The extensive treatment of prepositions with pronominal suffixes in lessons 13 and 15 and the accusative sign with pronominal suffixes in lesson 16 may seem a little bit tiresome but may indeed occupy the most obvious position in an exercise book in between the noun, pronoun, and adjective (lessons 7–9, 11); the construct state and noun with pronominal suffixes (lessons 12, 14); and the introduction to the regular verb: perfect (lesson 10), participle (lesson 16), and imperfect (lesson 17). Even relatively easy prose texts can hardly be read without knowledge of the prepositions and the accusative sign with pronominal suffixes. The use of the tenses in sequence, the volitional moods, the infinitives, and the verb with pronominal suffixes in lessons 18–24 complete the presentation of the regular verb in Qal before students are introduced to the other stems (lessons 26–31) and last but not least the verbs with gutturals and irregular verbs (lessons 32–40). The thematic grouping of the various items in this part of the book in addition to an extensive subject index makes it relatively easy for students to search the work for particular information.

The didactic principles behind the presentation of many grammatical details may nevertheless be questioned. The inclusion of rare or nonexistent forms in an introduction intended for beginning students may serve little purpose. The attempt to clarify the denominative meaning of the Hiphil by listing הֵעִפִּיר, “he threw dust” (214), is dubious in view of the fact that the verb עָפַר occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible in the Piel. The need to list the unusual imperatives רִשׁ and רִשִּׁׁ from the root רִשׁ next to the regular

imperative שׂר is unclear (255), as both occur only in the Hebrew Bible in the pausal forms שׂר (2x) and שׂרִי(1x). The same may hold true for some information provided in the vocabulary. The infelicitous link suggested between Hebrew אָרֶץ and English “earth” in the vocabulary may well be the result of misplaced enthusiasm on the part of the author (41). The necessity to record the double gender of עַיִן “eye, well,” which is only used as a masculine noun in the meaning “engraved eye” (96), and the double gender of עַיִן, which is attested only once as a masculine noun in the Hebrew Bible (124), is not immediately clear. Moreover, the classification of עֵבֶר as a plural of עֵבֶר is simply wrong (124), as the word עֵבֶר occurring once in the Hebrew Bible (1 Sam 13:21) has long been recognized as a measurement. The exercise material may once in a while give occasion to raise one’s eyebrows. The clause “God is righteous and man is evil” (75) may well be theologically dubious but is infinitely better than “Who is righteous? The Lord is righteous. Who is evil? Adam is evil” (62). However, what is one to think of “Eat with me all the days of your life and I will never forsake you”? (231). Finally, the fragments taken from the book of Psalms, which abound in the exercises from lesson 29 onward, may more often than not be too difficult for beginning students.

The treatment of several grammatical phenomena may likewise be criticized. The subsumption of the dual for words with and without a feminine ending under the single common dual אֵין without any reference to the transformation that takes place in words with the feminine ending יָ, does not contribute to a clear presentation of the morphology (71). The notion of a common dual may also have caused the omission of the—not uncommon—construct state for dual nouns with a feminine ending in the paradigm of the noun (101). The distinction made between the long imperfect, the short jussive, and the short preterite with consecutive *waw* may admittedly help students to grasp the differences between these three tenses: that is, the *waw* consecutive is a morphological element that marks the following “imperfect” as a preterite. Unfortunately, the advantages gained by this approach are given up quite easily by the consistent rendering of the *waw* consecutive preceding a preterite in translation with “and” in parenthesis (137). Similar criticism may be voiced on the adherence to the traditional distinction between perfect with *waw* consecutive and perfect with *waw* conjunctive by means of the tone (138–39). It may a priori be very unlikely that such a major opposition as traditionally assumed for perfect with *waw* consecutive and perfect with *waw* conjunctive could in any one language only be expressed in the first-person singular and the second-person singular masculine of a limited number of regular verbs. The range of meanings covered by perfect with *waw* consecutive obviate the need of the regularization tendency to supplement imperfect, imperfect with *waw* consecutive and imperfect with *waw* conjunctive, perfect and perfect with *waw* consecutive with a perfect with *waw* conjunctive.

The presentation of syntactical issues in lessons 41–54 is more or less in accordance with their occurrence in the portions from Gen 2–4; 12–15 selected for close reading in this part of the book. A systematic treatment of Biblical Hebrew syntax can of course not be entirely dependent upon the appearance of syntactical issues in selected reading portions, but Ross does nevertheless succeed in adducing many examples from the texts in question. The numerous cross-references to morphology and syntax in the concluding review of grammar and syntax help students to find their way in this part of the book as well. Minor errors in the leading questions that are supposed to help students with their close reading are a little unfortunate. The form  $\text{יִרְשָׁה}$  does not exhibit vowel reduction before a pronominal suffix, as  $\text{יִרְשֵׁה}$  is a verb with an *a*-class theme vowel (367).

The introduction to the use of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*—the Masoretic notes, the critical apparatus, texts, and versions—in lessons 41–54 illustrates the aim of the book to be more than an introductory grammar into Biblical Hebrew by contributing to the development of exegetical and critical study of Scripture (9). Unfortunately, the information listed in these lessons is on more than one occasion inaccurate, outdated, or wrong. The small  $\text{⌘}$  marking an open paragraph was not “originally used to start a new line after an empty or incomplete line” but rather indicates in late manuscripts that the line in question was originally left empty or incomplete (311). Nowadays the recension of Theodotion is dated about 250 years earlier than the end of the second century A.D. suggested by Ross (332). The Codex of Leningrad is of course not the earliest surviving copy but merely the oldest *complete* copy of the Masoretic Text (332). The sigla  $\text{ⲉ}^f$  and  $\text{ⲉ}^L$  do not refer to Targum Jonathan to the Prophets but specify two modern-day printed editions of the Targum based on the Codex Reuchlinianus by Paul de Lagarde (379). Moreover,  $\text{ⲉ}^L$  does not refer to a Targum to the Prophets, but to a Targum to the Hagiographa!

The summaries of the 54 lessons included in part 4 of the book are without a doubt the highlight of the study aids. The “lessons at a glance” are excellent abstracts presenting the essence of the lesson in question in less than one page. Cosmetic imperfections are the introduction of the term *gerund*, which was not mentioned before in the lesson on the infinitive construct (446), and the inconsistent layout of the summary of the lesson on the Pual, which, unlike the summaries of the lessons on Niphal, Piel, Hithpael, Hiphil, and Hophal, begins with the meaning of the verbal stem in question (452). Quite awkward, on the other hand, is the organization of the English-Hebrew glossary with the Hebrew in the left and the English equivalents arranged alphabetically in the right column.

Finally, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* has unfortunately not escaped the fate of errors and misprints suffered by many a first edition of a new Biblical Hebrew grammar. It is nevertheless a shame to see an author rob himself of much of the credit he deserves for

his commendable effort by an increasing number of errors, misprints, and mistakes, in addition to numerous inaccuracies in the presentation of grammatical and syntactical phenomena, which could easily have been avoided had the manuscript in question been thoroughly proofread or used on a trial base in classroom teaching by a couple of his colleagues in the field.