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**Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner
Baumgartner, Walter and Johann Jakob Stamm, eds.**

***The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
(The New Koehler-Baumgartner in English): ש ת***

Translated by M. E. J. Richardson

Leiden: Brill, 1999. Pp. vi + 438, Cloth, No Price
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The English translation of the 3rd edition of the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon* (hereafter *HAL*) by Koehler, Baumgartner, Baumgartner, and Stamm is outstanding. The lexicon expands greatly on the earlier standard lexicon by Brown-Driver-Briggs, and it also provides substantial improvements over the other recent English-language lexicon of biblical Hebrew—*The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, 1993–). Briefly stated, the volumes provide the most comprehensive lexical treatment of biblical Hebrew in any language. Nevertheless, the fact that the English volumes are translations from German raises questions about how this lexicon will stand up against other lexica that were originally written in English. This review deals with this questions as well as focusing on other differences between *HAL* and other English-language lexica of biblical Hebrew.

The *Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon* (hereafter, *BDB*) has been the standard lexicon for at least the twentieth century, and in many ways it is still the preferred lexicon for most students of biblical Hebrew. Although it is dated and does not contain a century's worth of scholarship nor references to Semitic texts (including the Dead Sea Scrolls) found in the last 100 years, the lexicon is very accurate, albeit not exhaustive, for most Hebrew words found in the Old Testament. The lexicon is especially strong for words occurring more than 3–4 times in the Hebrew Bible and where there is not an immediate need for bibliographical references. Indeed, in the vast majority of cases that are encountered by students of the Hebrew Bible, *BDB* is perfectly adequate.

One should ask the question, “Why would a student want to be merely adequate when something else better is available?” The answer is purely a practical one of size and money—*BDB* is an affordable one-volume lexicon whereas *HAL* is a projected five volumes with a cost of over \$400.00, while the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* was suspended without completion at 4 volumes and a similar price to *HAL*. Since most students are not able to lug around five volumes and because of the exorbitant price, *BDB* will remain the standard for most students, pastors, and rabbis. However, *HAL* has surpassed the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* as the most authoritative and complete lexicon for those who can afford the space and price.

The chief difference between *HAL* and the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* is that while the latter wrongly presupposes that Hebrew is synchronic, the former rightly recognizes that Hebrew is a diachronic language that developments over time and that Hebrew lexemes are related to Semitic cognates. The only advantage of the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* is its extensive use of semantic and syntagmatic analysis. However, this type of analysis is most helpful with the most common words, and these are the very lexemes that are the best known. It is thus less likely that students will turn to a lexicon for these words. Moreover, the extensive treatment of common words leads to entries that are so long that they are no longer helpful. In other words, the main advantages of the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* are due to analysis where the lexicon tries to act as a concordance, but in these cases it is much easier for a student to use an actual concordance.

As mentioned, *HAL* is particularly helpful for words that occur with low frequency in the Hebrew Bible because it makes extensive use of Semitic cognates and references to bibliography on particular words. Not only is this true of the German original, but the English translation greatly expands and updates these references. The translator, M. E. J. Richardson, not only has made this edition more user friendly by adding more paragraph divisions, spacing, and reducing the number of abbreviations, he has updated the bibliography and references to other standard reference works for cognate languages. Most notably, Richardson has added references for the recent volumes of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* and the new edition of Hoftijzer and Jongeling’s *Dictionary*. The translator has also made sure that the English translations of the German glosses of Hebrew words are appropriate, and most of the longer quotations of biblical texts follow the NRSV translation. These steps have minimized the awkwardness of using a translation of a translation as a lexicon.

In summary, the lexicon is excellent and should be in the library of every scholar of Biblical Hebrew. There are even some features that would make it desirable, even though not necessary, for scholars who already own the German edition. The only drawbacks are its size and price. It is truly a shame that the publisher has not seen fit to make a one-volume edition available at an affordable price so that all students of Hebrew could utilize this wonderful lexical tool.