

**A HEBREW
CHRESTOMATHY; OR,
LESSONS IN READING
AND WRITING HEBREW**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649092048

A Hebrew chrestomathy; or, Lessons in reading and writing Hebrew by William Henry Green

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BY

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NEW YORK:

JOHN WILEY, 535 BROADWAY.

1864.

ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1863, by
W. H. GREEN,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

JOHN E. TROW,
PRINTER, STENOGRAPHER, AND ELECTROTYPEN,
No. 39 Greene Street, New York.

LOAN STACK

GIFT

PJ4571

G8

1864

PREFACE.

THE value of grammatical exercises and of selected courses of reading, carefully annotated to suit the wants of beginners, has long been recognized in the classic tongues. But the study of Hebrew, even in our best institutions, is prosecuted at comparative disadvantage for lack of such aids. The student plods laboriously through the Grammar, adding paradigm to paradigm and rules to rules, until his memory is overloaded with the confused and ill-digested mass. He is then set at translating, but is embarrassed in his use of the Lexicon by his imperfect familiarity with the letters, and especially by the difficulty of distinguishing the radical or primary forms of words in all the metamorphoses to which they are subjected from prefixes, suffixes and inflections; and what renders this process yet more vexatious and trying is, that words thus painfully sought for are forgotten almost as soon as they are learned, and must be looked for afresh perhaps in the very next sentence. He is next confronted by the idioms of the language in the arrangement of words, the structure of sentences, and the use of peculiar forms of expression. Unless these are pointed out, and the true key furnished for their explanation, the finer and more delicate sort will likely be unnoticed, while others will be passed over with a vague and imperfect understanding of their real nature.

Those methods may well be distrusted, which propose to impart knowledge without proportionate toil. No valuable result can ever be gained without effort. The acquisition of a language involves a familiar acquaintance with its grammatical forms, the meanings of its words, and the entire multitude of its idioms: and this cannot be secured without time and labour. The problem is not how these can be dispensed with, but how they can be expended in the most profitable manner and be

made productive of the largest results. No doubt energy and pains may be successful in surmounting the obstructions which beset the most rugged path. But if the way were first carefully prepared, unnecessary obstacles removed, and a helping hand given in case of need, a wearisome toil might be converted into a pleasant occupation, and patient diligence would be crowned with an ampler reward.

The thorough mastery of the Hebrew, as of any other tongue, implies a facility both in translation and in composition. These are so distinct that exclusive occupation with one will not beget the other, and yet so related that neither can be perfect unless both are possessed. While, therefore, the former is the end principally aimed at, the latter may serve an important purpose as subsidiary to it. Accordingly the first part of this Chrestomathy is devoted to the work of analysis and translation; the second part to that of composition.

The first part begins with a series of exercises designed to accompany the original study of the Grammar. Those on page 1 are for the practice of the student in the orthographic rules contained in the sections there designated. Those on pages 2-8 illustrate the verbal paradigms. These are to be translated, and each form should at the same time be analyzed or divided into its significant elements, the meaning of each separately stated, and the law of their combination given. Thus, *הִקְטִילוּ ye (masc.) have killed* consists of *קטל*, the ground form of the Kal pret. § 82. 1 and *הִ* abridged from 2 m. pl. pron. *הִקְטִיל* § 85. 1. *a* (1), the former losing its pretonic Kamets in the combination § 85. 2. *a* (4). And *יִקְטִלוּ they (masc.) will kill* consists of *י* from 3 m. pron. *יִקְטִלוּ* § 85. 1. *a* (2), which before a vowelless letter becomes *י* § 85. 2. *a* (1), and *קטל* const. inf. § 84. 2, the basis of the future § 84. 3, which loses its vowel § 85. 2. *a* (2) before *י* abridged from the plur. ending *וּ* § 85. 1. *a* (2). Before proceeding to any given exercise the corresponding paradigm and the verbs of that class in the vocabulary should be thoroughly committed to memory.

The nouns of the vocabulary are to be learned in connection with the rules for gender, number and suffixes, and will furnish examples for declension and the practice of these rules. To facilitate their employment for this purpose, they are classified

according to the nature of their final syllable, and a fresh survey is given of all the rules applicable to each. The rest of the vocabulary is to be committed in connection with those parts of the Grammar to which they relate. The student will thus become familiar with the practical meaning and employment of grammatical forms as he learns them. And by the time that he has completed the Grammar, he will know the meanings of 250 words of frequent occurrence, being the entire number that is to be found in the first three chapters of Genesis. These chapters he will then be prepared to read without being obliged to have recourse to a dictionary.

The passages selected for reading have been chosen with a view to their intrinsic interest, their progressive difficulty, and the variety of their style and character. The notes are at the outset chiefly grammatical and of the most elementary kind, directing the attention of the student to those matters of form and of construction, which he is expected thenceforward to investigate for himself. The aid thus given both by the suggestion of principles and by references to the Grammar, is gradually withdrawn as the presumed progress of the student renders it superfluous; and questions of criticism and interpretation are admitted to greater prominence, thus applying the knowledge of the language as it is gained to its most important end, the exposition of the Holy Scriptures.

This Chrestomathy is not designed to supply a complete course of Hebrew reading for theological students. Its aim is not to supplant the more general study of the Old Testament in the original, but to prepare the way for it. It has long been, and still is, a favourite wish of the author that a knowledge of Hebrew might be required in order to admission into our theological seminaries. If students entered upon their theological course with such a measure of forwardness in Hebrew as is required in Greek, the two great departments of Biblical learning could be brought nearer to a level. The time now spent upon mere grammatical routine and elementary linguistic training might then be devoted to the more serious work of the interpreter. In view of the growing importance of Old Testament studies, which bid fair to be yet more than they have been the battle-ground of Christianity and unbelief, and in view of the

vastness and momentous character of subjects, which from the limited time afforded are now of necessity utterly neglected or but slightly touched, the suggestion is here earnestly made to my brethren in theological instruction and in ecclesiastical supervision, whether that cannot be done in this country which the last General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland has recommended there. Cannot the study of Hebrew be begun and some satisfactory progress made in it in our colleges and academies?

It may be thought that this would be to crowd what belongs purely to a single profession into institutions of a broader basis and a more general character. But why might it not be introduced as an optional study, as it is in the Prussian gymnasia, and as the modern languages are in the most of our collegiate institutions? Much might be said to vindicate for the Hebrew another than a purely professional interest, and to challenge for it the attention of the liberally educated generally, both as the representative of a family of tongues strikingly different from that with which we are most familiar, and as containing a literature venerable from its antiquity and sacred as the gift of inspiration, with its products of exalted genius and its peculiarities as remarkable as those of the people amongst whom it had its origin.

If, however, this be aspiring to more than can be hoped for, and the theological curriculum must remain as it is, this volume is offered as a manual for the first year of Hebrew study. Its size has been graduated by the amount supposed possible for that term, and it has been prepared with the definite design throughout of fitting students to appreciate and profit by those lectures in criticism and interpretation which form the more advanced parts of their course. The text adopted is, with a few slight corrections from other sources, that of Halm, except in the Psalms, where Baer's new and accurate edition has been followed. In the preparation of the notes the best critical commentators have been consulted; and though the pedantry of parading their names in so elementary a work has been avoided, this opportunity is taken of acknowledging in the general the aid which has been derived from these sources upon every page.

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