

# **A PRIMER OF HEBREW**

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A Primer of Hebrew by Charles Prospero Fagnani

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BY

CHARLES PROSPERO FAGNANI

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1903

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## INTRODUCTION

THE following manual is not put forth as a Hebrew grammar, but simply as a primer of the Hebrew language. Its object is to give a general survey of the principal phenomena of the language, with a view to putting the student, in the shortest possible time and with the minimum of arduousness, in position to begin reading and translating with the use of lexicon and grammar. The standpoint is not that of a contribution to Hebrew philology, but purely practical and empirical. The material has been at times forcibly systematized and some current definitions modified, but only for the sake of simplicity and ease of acquisition; subsequent study will very easily furnish the few readjustments thus made necessary.

The work is a growth; it has been the slow result of ten years of experience in teaching elementary Hebrew. During the first six of these, the author used Davidson's "Introductory Hebrew Grammar" as a text-book, but he gradually was obliged to rearrange and modify the material until, four years ago, he gave up the use of Davidson's Grammar and substituted dictated notes of his own. For four years these notes have been used, tested, revised, corrected, simplified, until they have attained their present form. The chief motive in printing is to save the seminary students the labor of copying some fifty foolscap pages of hektographed material, but the hope is entertained that the Primer may prove useful to a larger circle. The book can be used without an instructor. The attempt has been made (with but partial success, necessarily) to anticipate every possible question a

student would be likely to ask (and which students actually have asked) and to guard against all conceivable aberrations from the path marked out, which path will inevitably lead the patient learner in time (say about two months, at the rate of a lesson a day) to the goal proposed; to wit, a sufficient equipment for beginning the study of the original text of the Old Testament with the standard helps, lexical and grammatical.

It is hoped that ministers who have forgotten their Hebrew may find in this little work an inducement to begin over again at the beginning; the difficulties of Hebrew are chiefly at the outset, and it is here that simplification and gradatim arrangement can be of most service. Perhaps Sunday-school teachers and other students of the Bible may be tempted to explore a field whose difficulties are not so insuperable as they are traditionally supposed to be.

C. P. F.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,  
NEW YORK CITY,  
June, 1903.



## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

As a rule progress should be made at the rate of one lesson a day. Lessons VII and VIII may conveniently be treated as one. In Lesson X the Table of Prose Accents is merely for reference, and need not be memorized. It is advantageous to commit to memory gradually, if it can be done without too much effort, the two hundred words of the Vocabulary, most of them words of frequent use. The Verbal Paradigms should be memorized until they can be easily repeated, especially pages 92 and 93, on which all the others are founded. The Oral Exercises from Lesson XV on are given without vowel points. The correct supplying of these is the best test of the student's mastery of the lesson. Those studying by themselves should copy these Oral Exercises from the book, inserting the required vowels. Occasional review of their work will enable them to detect errors unnoticed at first.

It is important that the habit be formed of pronouncing all the Hebrew audibly while engaged in study, so that facility may be acquired in pronunciation and reading. Exaggerated carefulness and distinctness at the outset will soon make the tongue limber in the utterance of the unaccustomed sounds.

After Lesson X it is advisable to procure a Hebrew Old Testament, and make a practice of reading aloud a little every day.

For classes conducted by a teacher the following routine is suggested as a basis:—

1. Collect the written exercises.
2. Written quiz, comprising not more than five or six questions, testing knowledge of the lesson for the day.

These questions may be written one by one by a student at the blackboard, thereby giving opportunity to the teacher to correct the exercises.

3. Collect the quiz papers.
4. Student at the board writes the answers to the quiz questions while the teacher corrects the quiz papers.
5. Return of quiz papers and written exercises corrected.
6. A certain proportion of the class are sent to the blackboard with slips of paper on which are questions to be answered.
7. Meanwhile the remainder of the class is drilled on the Oral Exercise in the Primer.
8. Correction of the blackboard work by the teacher or by those in the class who detect any errors.
9. Questions by students on any points not clear.
10. Assignment of lesson for next day.

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