

Hinneh – Biblical Hebrew The Practical Way
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הִנֵּה is a text and workbook which offers an innovative curriculum balancing two major demands of an introductory language program: the presentation of the most frequently occurring lexical and grammatical examples, and the sequencing of the material in a way that allows for easier teaching and learning. The הִנֵּה approach creates, encourages and ensures a rigorous, but non-intimidating and meaningful learning experience. To that end, students are provided with what is deemed necessary information for the introductory stage, postponing minute linguistic details for later, should they wish to continue beyond this level. Attention is given to presentation of the broad picture of how Biblical Hebrew behaves, as well as to imparting the most efficient and effective skills and tools that will allow students to access much of the biblical text early on.

Competence is expected regarding the most frequently occurring vocabulary\(^1\) and the understanding of basic grammatical rules. Proficiency is gradually built through the wide exposure to, and translation exercises of, a large number of actual biblical verses, prose, and poetry. All of the above is supported with a Tool Box containing: frequently occurring vocabulary lists in different categories (nouns, prepositions etc.); frequently occurring verb lists organized by form and stems, with color coding instructions for easier recognition of root groups; a variety of paradigms; and different parsing charts. This Tool Box, together with a lexicon for the less common vocabulary, serves as a scaffolding to support the students on their way to more independent reading and better appreciation of authentic biblical texts.

Throughout the הִנֵּה program, common vocabulary and basic grammar are presented and experienced as exercises through actual biblical passages, including passages from formative narrative and poetic texts that are level-appropriate.

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\(^{1}\) e.g. about 100 nouns and 50 qal verbs in Vol. I, as well as about 120 verbs of the remaining stems in Vol. II.
The most unique feature of the הִנֵּה program is the way the biblical verb, its tenses and moods, are imparted. The prefix form\(^2\) is the first verb form to be presented through examples, with its wide array of possible translations into English tenses. Students’ attention is then drawn to the clear-cut cases of the prefix preceded by the יִפְסָל\(^3\); only then, less common tenses and moods in the prefix form (not preceded by the יִפְסָל), are more thoroughly discussed, with their varied possible interpretations. Students are offered a simplified model for interpreting the prefix form, while always considering context. The suffix form and other verb forms are presented in a similar fashion.

Grammar is certainly important in learning a new language, and this program revolves mostly around grammar rules. At the same time, students are encouraged to integrate the results of their lexical and grammatical findings with information extracted from context in order to reach a sound understanding.

The development of the הִנֵּה program is derived in large part from my experience as a teacher of Modern Hebrew and program developer; my study of language acquisition and learning; as well as my work as a literary translator\(^4\). Insights from these experiences have contributed to my choices of objectives, approaches, priorities, and methodologies. A few of my articles explain the rationale behind the הִנֵּה program.

Students and instructors will find working with הִנֵּה efficient, effective, and rewarding. הִנֵּה offers a solid first round of Biblical Hebrew learning spiral. Students who complete this introductory course will find that much of the biblical text, prose and poetry, has already opened up to them. The fewer who chose to continue their study, will be able to do so on a wide lexical and grammatical basis which will facilitate their delving into deeper linguistically oriented deliberation.

\(^2\) Imperfect, יִכְּתֵל

\(^3\) יִפְסָל is a new term coined here, to avoid the confusing array of commonly used terminology such as: רָסַפְרָן, consecutive, conversive, reversing, etc.

\(^4\) Nine books translated from the Modern Arabic literature into Hebrew