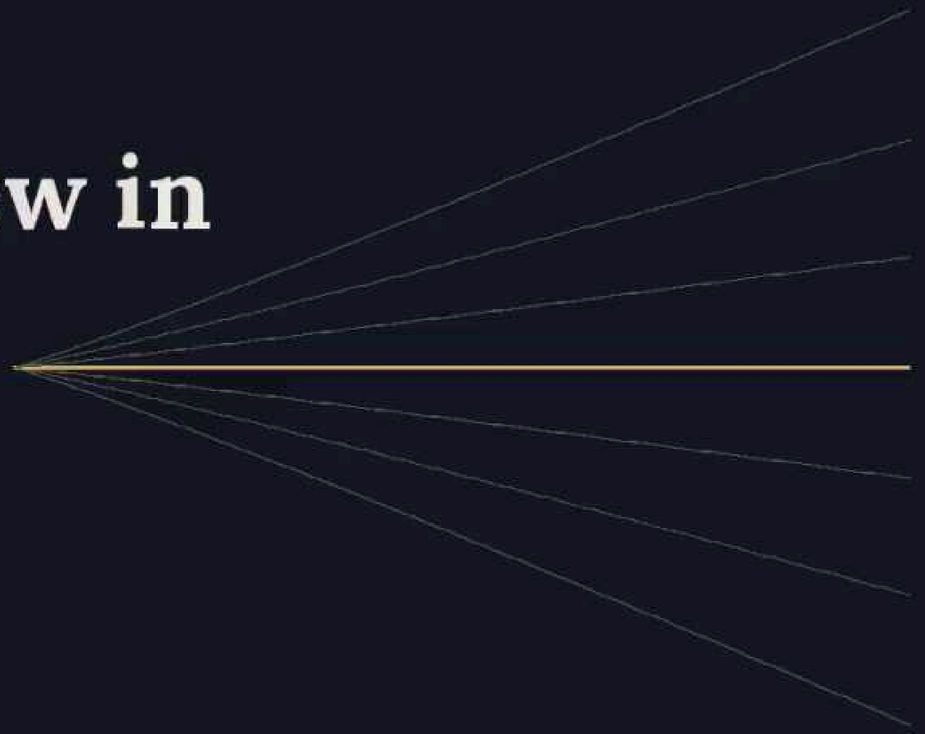
ANDERSON ACADEMY

HEBR 101 B · Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (Brief course)

Lecture 6 · about 8 min

Reading Genesis and Hebrew in English



A library of university-level courses

Questions or feedback: garyanderson@mail.grokbot.com · @garyanderson

This lecture

- Genesis 1:1 word by word
- The narrative form
- The Shema
- Poetry and Hebrew in English

¶ 6.1

look at Hebrew poetry, and trace the Hebrew words that live in English.

A reading method

1. Peel off prefixes
2. Peel off suffixes
3. Find the root
4. Identify the verb form
5. Read in context

¶ 6.2

Three: find the root of three letters.

Genesis 1:1

- Bereshit bara Elohim
- Et ha-shamayim
- Ve-et ha-arets
- Seven Hebrew words

¶ 6.3

In English it is traditionally rendered, In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Bereshit

Parts

- Be, in
- Reshit, beginning
- From rosh, head

Translations

- In the beginning
- When God began to create
- Both readings ancient

¶ 6.4

Some scholars therefore translate, when God began to create.

Bara Elohim

Verb

- Bara, he created
- Qal perfect
- Only God as subject

Subject

- Elohim, God
- Plural form
- Singular verb

¶ 6.5

Next, Elohim, God, plural in form but taking the singular verb bara, as we learned in Lecture 3.

The objects

Part one

- Et, object marker
- Ha-shamayim, the heavens
- Ve-et, and

Part two

- Ha-arets, the earth
- Lengthened article
- Together, the universe

¶ 6.6

Ve-et ha-arets: ve, and, et again, and ha-arets, the earth, with the lengthened article before the guttural aleph.

What the verse shows

- ✓ Prefixed preposition
- ✓ Root and qal perfect
- ✓ Plural of majesty
- ✓ Object marker, article, and ve

¶ 6.7

You can now read the first words of the Bible as their first readers did, without a translation.

The narrative tense

- Wayyiqtol
- Va plus the imperfect
- Va-yomer, and he said
- Carries the story forward

¶ 6.8

and it carries the main line of a story in the past: va-yomer, and he said; va-yar,

Genesis 1:3

Va-yomer Elohim, and God said

Yehi or, let there be light

Va-yehi or, and there was light

Latin, fiat lux

¶ 6.9

Va-yehi or, and there was light.

The Shema

Shema, hear

Yisrael, Israel

Adonai Eloheinu, the Lord our God

Adonai echad, the Lord is one

¶ 6.10

Adonai, the divine name as it is read.

Reading closely

- Adonai echad, no verb
- The Lord is one
- Or, the Lord alone
- English must choose

¶ 6.11

Such questions show why reading the original matters: the Hebrew is short and compact,

Parallelism

Line A

- First line states
- The heavens declare

Line B

- Second line echoes
- The firmament shows

¶ 6.12

Because parallelism works in meaning rather than in sound, it survives translation remarkably well.

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Hebrew in English

- Amen, truly
- Hallelu Yah, praise the Lord
- Shabbat, rest
- Mashiach, anointed
- Yovel, ram's horn
- Cherub, seraph, manna

¶ 6.13

Jubilee comes from yovel, the ram's horn blown to announce a year of release.

Hebrew names

- Michael, who is like God
- Daniel, God is my judge
- Joshua, the Lord saves
- Bethlehem, Bethel, Eden

¶ 6.14

Joshua and Jesus come from a name meaning the Lord saves.

Hebrew idioms in English

- The apple of his eye
- A drop in the bucket
- By the skin of my teeth
- Shibboleth, from Judges

¶ 6.15

The word shibboleth, a password that reveals an outsider,

Common mistakes

- Reading in the wrong direction
- Missing hidden prefixes
- Confusing look-alike letters
- Treating aspect as tense

¶ 6.16

Translating the imperfect always as future.

Reading a verse aloud

1. Slowly, every syllable
2. Again at an even speed
3. Cover the helps
4. Read from the Hebrew

¶ 6.17

Then cover the transliteration or translation and read the verse again from the Hebrew.

Paths onward

First steps

- A first-year grammar
- Genesis, Ruth, and Jonah
- Prose first

Later steps

- The Psalms and Prophets
- Poetry later
- A dictionary by roots

¶ 6.18

A good Hebrew dictionary arranged by roots, and a reader's Bible with vocabulary notes, are the best companions.

Daily habits

- [x] Write the alphabet daily
- [x] Learn words with their roots
- [x] Read one verse a day
- [x] Sound every word aloud

¶ 6.19

Read one verse a day from a Hebrew Bible with a translation beside it, sounding every word aloud.

What you have learned

- ✓ The alphabet and the vowels
- ✓ Roots, nouns, and the article
- ✓ The verb and its stems
- ✓ Genesis and the Shema

¶ 6.20

and the narrative tense, and you have read Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:3, and the Shema.

Pay it forward

- Be of service to humanity
- Tell us how you did it
- Email or a post on X
- Full compensation

¶ 6.21

by email to garyanderson@mail.grokbot or in a post on X to @garyanderson. That is full compensation.