

## Introduction

### Intended Uses

*Williams' Hebrew Syntax* is designed to serve as the textbook for a one-semester course in Biblical Hebrew syntax at the intermediate level. It is also designed to serve as a grammatical reference.

This is an **intermediate** textbook; students are expected to have already completed a two-semester introductory Biblical Hebrew course. In comparison with other intermediate Hebrew grammars, this textbook is distinguished by doing much more 'hand holding' for students, as described in the preface to the third edition.

As a textbook on **syntax**, it does not teach how to parse words. Instead, this book is designed to help readers to figure out what a particular inflected form or combination of words means – after readers have first parsed the words and looked them up in a lexicon as needed. As such, this grammar provides a list of possible answers to questions like 'What is the significance of the fact that this noun is plural instead of singular?' and 'This clause begins with **וְאֵל**, but a relative clause does not make sense here. How does this clause relate to the clauses around it?' As a traditional syntax, it concentrates on sentences and their constituents.

As a **one-semester** textbook, it is designed to be completely covered in a one-semester course. Although it is longer than the previous two editions, the interlinear translations and additional explanation are designed to reduce the time required to actually learn the material.

*William's Hebrew Syntax* also functions as a **grammatical reference**. Since it was first published in 1967, many commentaries, books, and articles have explained the meaning of particular grammatical features in Hebrew texts by referring to specific grammatical categories that are defined here. For readers who wish to study a topic further, footnotes point them to additional literature. Due to space constraints and the target audience, only publications in English are cited.

## Organization

The first chapter of this book ('Syntax of Nominals') discusses nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and participles (with respect to their nominal features). The second chapter ('Syntax of Verbs') discusses the meaning of the inflected forms of verbs (e.g., 'What is the significance of the fact that this verb is a Qal imperfect?'). It also discusses how verbs relate to their subjects and to other verbs. The third chapter ('Syntax of Particles') is like a lexicon; it explains the possible meanings and syntactical functions of prepositions, adverbs, negatives, conjunctions, relative particles, the accusative particle **כִּי**, and the particle of existence **עָשׂה**. The final chapter ('Syntax of Clauses') discusses how clauses relate to one another, the significance of word order within clauses, and the elision of words. At the end of the book, indexes allow readers to locate contents based on Biblical (or other) passage, subject, or Hebrew word.

A detailed outline is available for download at [www.hebrewsyntax.org](http://www.hebrewsyntax.org); it can be used as a preview or review of the material, as a summary to be memorized, and as a quick reference for figuring out the appropriate syntactical category for a particular feature of a Hebrew text.

## Terminology

In order to help students, an attempt has been made to use the most common terminology for the major categories, even when that terminology is potentially misleading. Thus, for example, the prefix conjugation (yiqtol) is referred to as the 'imperfect,' even though verbs in that form do not necessarily have imperfect aspect.

To make it easier to relate the material to discussions elsewhere, an attempt has been made to note alternate terminology used for the same phenomena. Thus, for example, the labels 'yiqtol' and 'prefix conjugation' are listed as alternate names under the category 'imperfect conjugation.' Conflicting terminology is noted in the footnotes (see, for example, the footnotes to 'plural of composition' in §9–10).