

# Study Guide

## for How Biblical Languages Work

by Peter Silzer and Thomas Finley

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### Ch. 1

- Do the authors think that Hebrew and Greek are drastically different from other languages? Why or why not?
- What kind of things that you know about English may help you learn about Hebrew and Greek?
- How do the authors define language? What part of this definition stands out to you? Why?
- Explain the five key characteristics of language in your own words. Give an example of each from your own knowledge of English.
- What does it mean that languages are ordered systems? Give an example of a pattern in English. How do you think the fact that languages use patterns can help you learn a language?
- What do the authors mean by the word “conventionalized” in the phrase “Languages use conventionalized symbols”? What makes a symbol conventionalized?
- How does the fact that language is used by groups of people impact the language itself? What examples do the authors use?
- What do you think is the function of language? How does this compare with the eight functions of language taught by Nida?
- Describe each of the eight functions of language in your own words. Which one(s) do you think is(are) primary? Why?
- What are the two aspects of the informing use of language that the authors highlight?
- What positive examples of using language to relate to others do the authors give? What negative examples?
- What are the three essential ways to look at language? How does each reality contribute to our understanding of what was communicated?
- How do the forms of a language relate to the reality that language is an ordered system?
- How is meaning connected to forms?
- Define “synonym” in your own words.
- How does context contribute to understanding meaning?
- Feel free to skip “How Language and Culture Relate” to the end of the chapter.

### Ch. 2

- How are the symbols of writing related to the spoken language? Why is writing necessary?
- What are the limitations of written language?
- What are the positive accomplishments of written language?
- Define Transliteration in your own words. How does transliteration represent a sound for which there is no equivalent in English?

Review the Hebrew and Greek Alphabet charts. Pay attention to the SBL transliteration and ignore the IPA transliteration.

What are the three types of writing systems? How does each represent the spoken language?

How is the Hebrew alphabet similar to English and Greek? How is it different?

Why is it important to learn how to pronounce Hebrew and Greek?

Understand that consonant sounds are made in the different places of the mouth and throat, but don't worry about learning the technical names. They are helpful to understand the rest of this chapter, but not necessary to learn Hebrew and Greek.

What is the difference between consonants and vowels?

Go through the consonant charts, pronouncing each sound and paying attention to how your body makes each sound.

“Fricative” is not a dirty word.

Go through the vowel chart, pronouncing each sound and paying attention to how your body makes each sound.

Review the consonant names, forms and sounds on the charts on pages 55-6 and figure out the example words on p. 56.

Review the names and pronunciations of the less familiar consonants.

Who were the Masoretes and what did they do?

When were Hebrew consonants first used to represent vowel sounds?

Review the vowel sounds and symbols. Fill in the exercises on pp. 60-61.

How and why can letters change their pronunciation over time? Give an example.

How has the way Hebrew is written changed over time? What pattern can you see in the changes that are made?

Review the pronunciation and transliteration tables. When there is a difference, the chart in your course pack is the one you should learn.

What are final forms and where are they used?

What is the significance of a single quotation mark above the beginning of a Greek word? How does the direction of the mark affect the pronunciation.

Review the Greek consonants and vowels and their pronunciation.

Review the similarities of the Greek, Hebrew and English alphabets. What explains the similarities?

### **Ch. 3**

What is the smallest unit of grammar? Define “morpheme” in your own words.

Define “morphology” in your own words.

How does Silzer find and display the different morphemes in English, Spanish and Hebrew?

Notice how the form of the Hebrew words change in relation to the change in their meaning in Silzer's examples.

What are the ways that morphology can change to change meaning?

What is a suppletive form?

How can morphemes be classified?

Define root, affix, prefix, suffix, infix, and circumfix.

What is the difference between a free (unbound) and bound morpheme? Give an example of each.

What is the difference between roots and words?  
How does categorizing types of words (or parts of speech) help us to understand a word and its function?  
Is there always a direct correspondence to the type of word in each language (for instance is a word that is translated as an adjective in English always an adjective in Hebrew)?  
What is the difference between content words and function words? What are the characteristics of each class?  
What is the difference between a derivational affix and an inflectional affix?  
Define the words “number”, “gender”, “person”, and “case”. What do they tell us about nouns?  
What word refers to the changes in nouns and pronouns? What word refers to the changes in verbs?  
Define the words “number”, “gender”, “person”, “tense”, “aspect”, “voice”, “transitivity” and “mood”. What do they tell us about verbs?  
What is the difference between tense and aspect?  
How does Hebrew show possession with nouns?  
How does Hebrew show relationship between two nouns, one of which modifies the other (e.g. king of Israel)? Define “head noun”. Which noun is marked (inflected) to show this relationship?  
How does Hebrew inflect verbs to show change in person, gender, and number? Why are there two conjugations to show this change? How are they different in form? How are they different in meaning?  
Define the words “transitive” and “intransitive”.  
How do Greek nouns and pronouns inflect? In what ways do they change? How do these changes impact the meaning of the words?  
Define the word “concord.” What does this tell us about the use of Greek adjectives?  
What are the characteristics of a Greek participle?  
How do Greek verbs inflect? In what ways do they change? How do these changes impact the meaning of the words?  
Define the word “mood” as used in this chapter. What does the mood tell us about a verb?  
What kind of ways does Hebrew change pronunciation of certain morphemes? Why do they change?  
Briefly describe the different categories of language and how each uses morphology to show meaning. In which category is Hebrew?

#### **Ch. 4**

Define “syntax” and “grammar” in your own words.  
Define “phrases” and “clauses”. How are they different?  
How do you determine which words group together most closely into phrases, then clauses (how do you determine the boundaries)?  
How do these phrases and clauses work together?  
How does word order affect meaning in English? In Hebrew? In Greek?  
How does Hebrew typically put together noun phrases? Greek?

Where are adjectives and determiners found relative to nouns in Hebrew? What is the “standard rule of thumb”? How does Greek relate adjectives to nouns?  
How is the relationship of possession shown in Hebrew? In Greek?  
What is the Hebrew construct state? What is its function?  
What is “concord”?  
Define “intransitive” and “transitive”.  
What are the kinds of ways that Hebrew structures its verb phrases (complement structures)?  
What are the kinds of ways that Greek structures its verb phrases (complement structures)?  
What is a prepositional phrase? What is an object of the preposition and how does it function in a prepositional phrase?  
Define “independent clause” and “dependent clause”. How can you tell the difference between the two?  
Feel free to skim most of the section on Classifying Languages By Word Order, but pay attention to the descriptions of word order in Hebrew and Greek.  
How does Greek treat word order in sentences? Why is this possible?  
How does the particle ’et function in Hebrew?

## Ch. 5

Just a reminder that ch. 5 is not assigned for this class. This chapter contains helpful material, which is left out only for time’s sake. You are encouraged to read it at your convenience.

## Ch. 6

Just a reminder that ch. 6 is not assigned for this class. This chapter contains helpful material, which is left out only for time’s sake. You are encouraged to read it at your convenience.

Define “semantics” in your own words.  
Define the words “denotation” (what a word denotes) and “connotation” in your own words. How are these similar? How are they different?  
How does the discussion of words having more than one meaning fit with what you already know about this concept? What does the distinction between primary and secondary meanings add to your understanding? How does this discussion compare to Carson’s discussion of semantic range?  
How does context help us discover and decide the meaning of a word?  
Define “homonym” and “homophone”. How are these two realities related? How are they different?  
How is polysemy different from homonyms?  
Define “homograph”. Are homographs common in Hebrew? What significance do homographs have for interpreting the Old Testament?  
Define “hyponym”. Are hyponyms more or less specific than the word to which they are related?  
Define “synonym”. Do synonyms mean exactly the same thing in every context? Why or why not?

What are semantic features and how do they help us distinguish shades of meaning that words share or do not share?

What are “antonyms”? What are the three classes of antonyms? How are they different?

What is a metaphor? What are the three parts of a metaphor? How can you understand communication that comes in the form of metaphorical language?

What is an idiom? How can you understand communication that comes in the form of an idiom?

How does Silzer suggest we deal with ambiguous language? What are the two types of ambiguity?

What does Silzer mean by the “agent” of a sentence? Which grammatical term most often corresponds to the agent?

What does Silzer mean by the “patient” of a sentence? Which grammatical term most often corresponds to the patient? What word in Hebrew marks the patient (hint: think about an alien with a big finger)?

What does Silzer mean by the “recipient” of a sentence?

Describe the six semantic roles (functions) in your own words. Are these roles always displayed with the same grammatical structures?

How does Hebrew use passive constructions? Why does Hebrew use passive constructions?

What is “Pragmatics” according to Silzer? What does it contribute to our understanding of God’s Word?

What are the three contexts that Silzer mentions? How does each one contribute to meaning and understanding?

Explain each of the functions of language (how we get things done) in your own words.

What is a rhetorical question? How is it different from a normal question?