

**AN INTRODUCTORY GRAMMAR OF
RABBINIC HEBREW**

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BY

MIGUEL PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ

TRANSLATED BY
JOHN ELWOLDE



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FOREWORD

This practical teaching grammar for students who already have a reasonable knowledge of Biblical Hebrew was initially developed over the period 1990 to 1992 as a handbook for courses in Rabbinic Hebrew at the University of Granada. Each unit concludes with vocabulary and twenty exercise texts relating to the grammatical point at issue in the unit. The exercises are generally drawn from tannaitic literature, and the student should find everything required to deal with them in the book. Many of the early exercises come from Abot, which, although not typical of the Mishnah, is more accessible to the beginner in rabbinic language and thought.

Each unit is divided into six sections: Introductory text, Morphology (including a presentation of diachronic matters), Grammar and usage, Phraseology, Vocabulary, and Exercises. The introductory texts and short explanations are designed to introduce the student to the language and concepts of the *tannaim*. Each introductory text exhibits the linguistic feature covered by the unit, although it serves primarily as a starting-point for discussion of literary, theological, historical, and methodological issues.

Overall, the work is divided into four parts: Nouns (including pronouns and adjectives), Verbs, Particles (including prepositions, conjunctions, and adverbs), and Clauses. The part dealing with clauses includes sentence syntax and the use of the conjunctions, but excludes the syntax of the noun and of the verb, which are dealt with in the first two parts.

The Introduction gives an account of the present state of Rabbinic Hebrew research, including a discussion of (1) the relationships of early—or tannaitic—Rabbinic Hebrew to its later—or amoraic—variety, to classical and later Biblical Hebrew, and to the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and (2) the nature of Rabbinic Hebrew as a spoken language in the light of modern studies in phonetics, vocabulary, and dialect. The Bibliography at the close of the book should be helpful to readers wishing to pursue particular issues further, although it is not exhaustive.

It is not only the pedagogical orientation of this book that clearly sets it apart from M.H. Segal's *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford, 1927), but also its use of manuscripts—rather than printed editions—of the Mishnah (notably Codex Kaufmann), its general avoidance of later—amoraic—Rabbinic Hebrew, and its inclusion of texts from the early *midrashim*.

Texts from the Mishnah follow either C. Albeck's edition or, if preceded by 'K', Codex Kaufmann. For the Tosefta, the editions of M.S. Zuckerman and S. Lieberman are followed, and for the Mekhilta, Sifra, Sifre to Numbers, and Sifre to Deuteronomy, those of J.S. Lauterbach, I.H. Weiss, H.S. Horowitz, and L. Finkelstein, respectively.

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Dr J.F. Elwolde of the Dept. of Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, brought the Spanish original to the attention of scholars through his review in *The Society for Old Testament Study Book List* of 1993. His English version incorporates many minor additions and corrections as well as an improved bibliography and a greatly expanded set of indices. We are extremely grateful to Anne Lee, a student in Dr Elwolde's department, who entered the vast bulk of the exercises into the computer, and who, with Rosemarie Kossov, a graduate student, helped with the proofreading; thanks are due as well to Martin F.J. Baasten of the University of Leiden, for his help with the passage from Contini on p. 186, and Kate Dove Davis, a colleague of Dr Elwolde, who helped with the production of the camera-ready copy. We should also like to record our thanks to the publishers, E.J. Brill, especially in the persons of Hans van der Meij, who oversaw the commissioning and progress of the translation, and Anne Folkertsma and her successor, Mattie Kuiper, for their helpfulness at the beginning and end of the publishing process. The publication has been funded in large measure by a grant to the publishers from the Dirección General del Libro y Bibliotecas of the Ministerio de Cultura in Madrid and was undertaken as part of a research project, *Lengua y Literatura del Judaismo Clásico*, sponsored by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (PB93/1161).

Miguel Pérez Fernández
Granada, March 1997

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Unit 18 Imperfect

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Unit 19 Participle

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1. SDt 329: the responsibility of the individual before God. 2. RH use of **ת-** in feminine and **ם-ן-** in plural participle. 3. *Qal*. A. Active **קָטַל**, intransitive/stative **קָטַל**; feminine **קָטַלְתָּ** and **קָטַלְתְּ**; morphological and semantic relationship of stative participle and adjective; replacement of statives by actives; **יָכוֹל**, **יָכוּלָה**. B. Suffixed forms of participle: **שׁוֹמְרֵי**, **פּוֹרְטֵי**, **גּוֹזְרֵי**. C. Feminine singular passive participle in **ת-**: **אֲמוּרָה**, **אֲמוּרָה**; as nominalized adjective: **גְּרוּשָׁה**. D. Feminine singular participle in **ת-** in *ayin-waw* and *lamed-he* verbs: **רָצָה**, **בָּאָה**. E. Active participle in **ל**. F. Passive participle in **ל**: **שְׁלוּחָה**. 4. *Nif'al*: **נִשְׁעִיתָ**, **נִקְרַאתָ**, **נִשְׁעִיתָ** preferred over BH **נִקְטַלְתָּ** and **נִשְׁעִיתָ** for **נִשְׁעִיתָ** and **נִשְׁעִיתָ**. 5A. *Pi'el*: BH paradigm retained; **מְהִיבָה/מְהִיבָה**. 5B. *Pu'al*: BH paradigm retained; feminine participle of *lamed-he* verbs in **ת-**: **מְגִיבָה/מְגִיבָה**; omission of preformative *mem*: **מְמַעֵט** for **מְמַעֵט**. 6. *Hitpa'el* and *Nitpa'al*: assimilation of **ת-** of preformative more common than in BH. 7A. *Hif'il*: feminine participle in **ת-** (as LBH) for BH **מְקַטְלָה** (for **מְקַטְלָה**). 7B. *Hof'al*: with **u** for BH **o** (**מְקַטְלָה**); feminine participle in **ת-** in *lamed-he* verbs: **מְכַפֵּת**. 8. Nominal character of participle, especially in ‘construct’. 9. Tempo-

ral and modal aspects of participle. **10.** Participle in atemporal statements; relationship of stative participles and adjectives; relationship of *Qal* passive and *Nif'al* participles. **11.** Plural participle, without subject, in impersonal, indefinite, general statements or those that imply God as agent. **12.** Participle expressing habitual actions in past and future (liturgical atemporality) or adding vividness to account. **13.** Participle as adverbial modifier of main verb: יֹשֵׁב, עוֹמֵד, יוֹשֵׁב, etc., especially in *meshalim*. **14.** הוֹלֵךְ, etc., with participle, expressing continuous or progressive action. **15.** Participle as complement of הִתְחִיל 'begin' and דֶּרֶךְ בְּנֵי אָדָם 'the way of human beings'. **16.** הָיָה + participle. **A.** Expressing continuous action in past. **B.** Expressing continuous action in future. **C.** Expressing continuous action in imperative mood. **D.** Expressing continuous action in infinitive mood. **E.** Expressing pluperfect. **17.** Participle with future reference. **A.** In idiomatic speech, indicating immediate future or an event about to happen. **B.** In exegetical writing. **C.** In expressions employing imperfect in BH. **D.** סוֹף שֶׁ-/סוֹף + participle expressing eschatological or inevitable future. **E.** עָתִיד + participle expressing eschatological future. **18.** Imperative connotation of participle in expressions of immediate or inevitable future and in halakhic formulations or statements of principles; permissive significance in positive contexts. **19.** Participle in halakhic suppositions. **20.** Passive participle as a gerundive or expressing destiny. **21.** Passive participle with active meaning. **22.** Participle negated with לֹא, אִין, but not אַל. **23.** הָיָה יוֹשֵׁב וְדוֹרֵשׁ. **24.** בְּמַהֲדָּבְרִים אֲמֹרִים. **25.** בְּמַצִּינוּ לְמַדִּים.

Unit 20 *Infinitive*

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1. SDt 355: development of oral law sanctioned by Moses. **2.** Disappearance of infinitive absolute in RH; infinitive construct with לְ, מִלְ; negated by שֶׁלֹא; development of negative form of infinitive in BH, LBH, etc. **3.** *Qal* infinitive based on imperfect; table of forms; occasional retention of BH structures. **4.** Assimilation of *lamed-alef* to *lamed-he* forms of infinitive: לְקָרוֹת, לְמַלְאוֹת. **5–6.** Elision of preformative ה־ in *Nif'al* and *Hif'il* infinitive: לִיכְנֹס, לִיבַטֵּל, לִינַשׂא, לִיעֲשׂוֹת, לִיפָרֵת, לִיבַטֵּל. **7.** RH infinitive with לְ only accepts object suffixes. **8.** Abandonment of BH בְּצִאָתוֹ, בְּצִאָתוֹ constructions. **9.** Functions of infinitive: as subject or object (complement) of verb; expressing purpose; used attributively, modifying noun; used modally, as

gerund. **10.** לומר introducing direct speech or quotation. **11.** Infinitive + על with imperative significance; -ל [הר] עלי as cohortative. **12.** -ל, עתיד ל- + infinitive expressing inevitable; עומד ל- 'be about to'. **13.** מה אנו? הן אין עליך לומר/לדון כלשון האחרון אלא. **14.** אהה/הוא ... ל- לעשות. **15.** אין עליך לדון אלא כדין הראשון, כלשון הראשון ל-...; להביא, להוציא; ... כ-

Unit 21 Imperative

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1. SDt 49: 'Be gracious and merciful just as God is gracious and merciful'; the *al tiqre* rule. **2–3.** Differences between RH and BH imperative: loss of feminine and lengthened forms (קטלה, קטלה); paradigm of RH imperative; use of *scriptio plena* for 'o' vowel. **4A.** Reappearance of *waw* in *pe-yod* verbs: התורה. **4B.** Loss of *nun* in *pe-nun* verbs: טול, תן. **5.** Imperative of ה'יה as though from ה'יה; Aramaic influence. **6–7.** Restricted use of imperative even in positive commands. **8.** ה'יה imperative + participle/adjective emphasizing continuity or repetition. **9.** ה'יה אומר. **10.** הנראה ש-

Part III Particles

Unit 22 Prepositions and conjunctions

159

1. Sot 9.15: human virtues and divine gifts. **2.** Prepositions and conjunctions as particles of relation. **3.** Prepositions as nouns in construct state. **4.** Conjunctions as prepositions determined by ו- clause. **5.** Disappearance of BH particles in RH. **6.** Inseparable and other prepositions in RH; new forms: אחר, הימנה/הימנו, כמות, אביית. **7.** Accumulation of particles in creation of new RH prepositions. **8.** List of conjunctions. **A.** Copulative and disjunctive. **B.** Interrogative. **C.** Comparative. **D.** Temporal. **E.** Conditional. **F.** Causal. **G.** Final. **H.** Consecutive. **I.** Concessive. **J.** Adversative. **9.** Difficulty of categorizing prepositional meanings. **10.** -ב: local, instrumental, adjectival (*beth essentiae*), 'in relation to'; בלא. **11.** -ב: זכה ב-, בלא. **12.** -ל: introducing indirect complement (e.g. אמר לו), final clause, expressing 'ethic dative', 'possession', replacing ב-, על, את, אלא. **A.** -ל: אמר, את, על, ב-, replacing ב-, אמר, את, על. **B.** -ל: אמר, את, על, ב-, replacing ב-, אמר, את, על. **C.** -ל: אמר, את, על, ב-, replacing ב-, אמר, את, על. **D.** -ל: introducing agent of passive verb. **13.** Uses of object-marker את. **14.** מן expressing origin, provenance, separation. **A.** Partitive מן in place of an indefinite pronoun. **B.** הימנה, הימנו. **15.** על: comparative, causal, conveying obligation. **16.** על יד/על יד.

modal adverbs כֶּךָ, כֵּן, אֵף. 5. Adjectives and comparisons of superiority, inferiority; כְּרִי. 6. Compound prepositions. A. כְּנִגְד. B. כְּדֶרֶךְ. C. כְּיוֹצֵא ב-. 7. כִּשְׁם שֵׁ. 8. Formulas expressing analogy: מָה as comparative particle. A. *Gezerah shawah*: מָה ... אֵף. B. *Heqqesh*: מָה ... אֵף. C. *Qal wa-homer*: מָה אִם + קַל וְחֹמֶר שֵׁ. 9. אִם לְמִדְתִּי ... אֵף/כֶּךָ. D. על אַחַת כְּמָה וְכְמָה, אֵינוּ דִין שֵׁ. 10. Equalizing comparisons: לְעִשׂוֹת ... כֹּ-, עֲשֵׂה זֶה כְּזֶה. Inclusive formulas of comparison: לְ-, ... בְּ-, ... וְשֵׁלֵא בְּ-. A. אַחַד/אַחַת ... וְאֶחָד, בֵּין ... בֵּין, בֵּין שֵׁ- ... וּבֵין שֵׁ- וְשֵׁלֵא לְ-. B. בֵּין כֶּךָ וּבֵין כֶּךָ. 11. כְּמוֹ כֵּן. 12. כְּמוֹת שֶׁהוּא הִיא. 13. כְּמוֹת שֶׁהוּא הִיא.

Unit 27 Temporal clauses

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1. SNm 58.1: the thirteenth rule of Rabbi Ishmael; the harmonization of Scripture. 2–3. Lists of temporal conjunctions in BH and RH. 4. Subordination conveyed through parataxis. 5. Simultaneous action expressed through juxtaposed nominal clause. 6. Perfect, participle with temporal/conditional significance. 7. New conjunctions in RH due to loss of consecutive tenses. 8. כֶּשֶׁ. 9. מִשֵּׁ. A. With imperfect. B–C. With perfect (and עַד שֵׁלֵא). 10. עַד שֵׁ. A. With imperfect. B. עַד שֵׁלֵא. C. Used modally: with רִצָּה. D. Used exegetically. 11. עַד כְּרִי שֵׁ. 12. קוֹדֵם שֵׁ. 13. אַחֲרֵי שֵׁ, קוֹדֵם שֵׁ. 14. כִּי וְכִי שֵׁ. 15. Compounds with כָּל שְׁעָה שֵׁ-, כָּל זְמַן שֵׁ-, and זְמַן שְׁעָה. A. distributive, conditional/modal, comparative uses. B. Temporal aspect not always central. 16. עַד שֵׁלֵא יֹאמַר יֵשׁ לִי בְדִין.

Unit 28 Conditional clauses

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1. Ned 3.11: circumcision. 2. Conditional particles of BH and LBH. 3. RH conditional particles: אִם; לוֹ, אִם replaced by אֵלּוּ (comparative); אֵפֶלּוּ (concessive); וּבִלְבַד שֵׁ-. 4. Formulation of conditions without conditional particle. A. With perfect, participle in protasis. B. רִצּוֹנֶךָ לְ-, רִצּוֹנֶךָ שֵׁ-. 5. Two-member halakhic conditional statements: מִי שֵׁ-, etc.; הוּא אֵילָן. 6. הוּא אֵילָן introducing condition. 7. Uses of אִם. A. In real conditions; apodosis with הָרִי; with perfect, especially indicating future perfect; with participle; with imperfect, especially of רִצָּה. B. With הָיָה + participle, expressing pluperfect. C. וְאִם לֹא expressing alternative negative condition. D. In indirect questions. E. In oath formulas. F. In *qal wa-homer* arguments. 8. Irreal particles. A. אֵלּוּ. B. אֵפֶלּוּ/אֵפֶלּוּ. C. כֵּאלּוּ. D. אֵלּמָלָא. E. אֵלּמָלָא מִקְרָא כְּחוּב. 9. אִם לְמִדְתִּי, אִם לְמִדְתִּי. 10. אִם לְמִדְתִּי, אִם לְמִדְתִּי.

<i>Unit 32 Adversative clauses</i>	244
1. SDt 313: Abraham's love for God. 2–3. Adversative, restrictive, and exceptive particles in BH, LBH, and RH. 4. Copulative -וְ with adversative value. A. Linking two opposing terms or concepts. B. With different tenses in coordinated clauses. C. With personal pronoun following -וְ; -וְהוּא שְׁ. 5. אָבָל לֹא; אָבָל לֹא; אָבָל ... לֹא אֵין contrasted with אֵין ... אָבָל; אָבָל אִם; אָבָל בְּ-, אָבָל כִּי. 6. אָבָל. A. אָבָל ... לֹא אֵין. B. לֹא כִי אָבָל. C. אֵין תִּלְמוּד לִדְבַר אָבָל ... אֵין. D. אָבָל שְׁ, אָבָל שְׁ, without preceding negative. 7. וְגַבְלָבְד שְׁ-. 8. חוּץ מִן. 9. אֵין לִי אָבָל. 10. ... אָבָל ? ... אֵין לִי אָבָל.	
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