

A GUIDE TO THE USE OF HALOT

BETHEL SEMINARY



CENTER FOR BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

PAUL W. FERRIS JR., Ph.D

1 PREPARATION

NOTES:

- 1.1 Familiarize yourself with the sigla on p. xii. and then check on abbreviations, pp. xii-xxiv as necessary as you use the lexicon.
- 1.2 HALOT (Koehler & Baumgartner's *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*) will prove helpful in determining the meaning of a given term in a given passage, and in determining or verifying the proper morphological analysis of a term that proves difficult to parse.
- 1.3 Remember that a dictionary does not "dictate" the meaning of a word. Rather it records the lexicographer's observations of the current usage of a term. Meaning is determined by custom and common usage at a given time as well as by the conscious choice of the user (writer or speaker).

2 USING THE LEXICON

- 2.1 HALOT uses alphabetical arrangement of both the shrosh and any derived forms. In most cases, derived words have an alphabetical entry of their own, e.g. מִשְׁפָּט entry, p. 651. The entry treating the shrosh will commonly refer to derived forms, e.g., שָׁפַט entry, p. 1622 ff. Lists derived forms appear at the end of the article, e.g., p. 1626b. The entry will commonly begin with a treatment of etymology and cognates. Aramaic words are treated separately at the end of the Hebrew section.
- 2.2 Note the primary gloss(es) suggested by the lexicographers (in bold type right after word classification).
 - 2.2.1 If the glosses given seem fairly straightforward and seem clearly to suit the context, there is probably no need for any further lexical analysis.

- 2.2.2 If there are several possible meanings given, or if they seem unclear in the context, further analysis is warranted.
- 2.3 Check to see if the passage you are studying is cited in the article.
Note that an entry marked by a † cites all occurrences of the word.
- 2.4 Take note of both extra-biblical usage and cognates in other languages (cited immediately following the entry form). These may be instructive but not determinative.
- 2.5 Pay special attention to how the binyan and aspect (tense) affect the meaning. E.g., if your passage uses the H (hiph`il) binyan, you'll want to do most of your analysis in other passages that use the same binyan. E.g., look up למד, ירה, מצא, שכל, etc.
- 2.6 Be sure you have checked each possible shresh. E.g. גור, הלל.
- 2.7 Does your author use the term elsewhere and, if so, does he define or otherwise explicate the term himself? (If the article is marked by a dagger, indicating that all passages are cited, HALOT can be used somewhat like a concordance.)
- 2.8 Work objectively to narrow a field of comparable usages (chronologically, grammatically and possibly even topically) by classifying usage and meaning of the various occurrences.

3 SYNTHESIS

- 3.1 Be sure to take good notes on your work, recording lexicon page and quadrant references, to conserve the results of your efforts.
- 3.2 Determine that you will record the results of your own reflection on the data.
- 3.3 Decide whether it would be most effective for you to start your own "dictionary" file or to file your notes by passage reference. The former is probably best for "theological" terms, idioms and the like, the latter for matters pertaining more to a given passage.

4 EXERCISE

- 4.1 What can HALOT tell you about מְתַאֲמָצֵת in Ruth 1:18?
- 4.2 What is the distinction between the two shreshim, גאל?
- 4.3 What is a גֹּאֵל and what are his functions?

4.4 What does the compound word “trans-gress” mean in English? How do Peter and Penny Parishioner typically understand the term?

4.5 What can HALOT tell you about פִּשְׁעֵיכֶם in Amos 5:12? Summarize the semantic range of the verb. In what ways does this understanding nuance the noun? How does this affect your understanding of Amos’ intent in this context?