

A Brief Guide to Dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew

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Dictionaries of ancient Hebrew have their share of idiosyncrasies. It is important to remember that there is nothing sacred about the subdivisions of meaning a given dictionary offers.

Three Hebrew-to-English dictionaries deserve mention. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. The first is classic and is based on the work of the great lexicographer Wilhelm Gesenius. The second is based on a revision of Koehler-Baumgartner, another formidable tradition of lexicography. The last is the most innovative, with full coverage of ancient Hebrew inscriptions, DSS vocabulary, and proposals by comparative philologists. It is not yet finished.

(1) Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (repr. of 1906 edition; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004). Known as BDB. Order from [Eisenbrauns](#).

(2) M. E. J. Richardson, ed., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Study Edition. Vols. 1-2* (translation and revision of HALAT [see (4) below]; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002 [1994-1999]). Known as HALOT. Order from [Eisenbrauns](#).

(3) David J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993-). Known as DCH. Order from [Eisenbrauns](#).

- Volume 1, *Alef* (1993)
- Volume 2, *Bet-Vav* (1995)
- Volume 3, *Zayin-Teth* (1996)
- Volume 4, *Yodh-Lamedh* (1998)
- Volume 5, *Mem-Nun* (2001)
- Volume 6, *Samekh-Pe* (2007, forthcoming)

Two Hebrew-to-German dictionaries deserve mention. The first exists in an English edition [(2) above], much revised, and not always for the better. The second, like BDB, is based on the work of Gesenius. It is beautifully done, but not yet finished.

(4) Walter Baumgartner, Ludwig Koehler, and Johann Jakob Stamm, eds., *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament* (5 vols; Leiden: Brill, 1967-1997). Order from [Brill](#). Known as HALAT.

(5) Rudolf Meyer and Herbert Donner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (18th ed.; Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1987-). Order from [Springer](#). Abbreviation: HAT.

1. Lieferung, *alef - gimel* (1987)
2. Lieferung, *dalet - yod* (1995)
3. Lieferung, *kaf - mem* (2005)
4. Lieferung, *nun-pe* (2007)

An excellent Hebrew-to-Spanish dictionary deserves mention. In some ways, this dictionary beats all the others! It is impossible not to learn new things from reading its entries carefully.

(6) Luis Alonso Schökel et al, *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* (ed. Víctor Morla y Vicente; Madrid: Editorial Trotta, ²1999 [1994]). Order from [Distribuciones Libreria de Habla Hispana](#). Abbreviation: DBHE.

Two Hebrew-to-Hebrew dictionaries deserves note. The first is incorporated into a concordance of the Hebrew Bible. Use of this dictionary will significantly improve one's competence in ancient Hebrew. The author attempts to gloss ancient Hebrew words with other ancient Hebrew words as much as possible. The second is the best Hebrew-to-Hebrew dictionary available.

(7) Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament Using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000). Order from [Eisenbrauns](#). A serviceable earlier edition may be purchased from [www.judaicapress.com](#). Abbreviation: NCOT.

(8) Menachem Zevi Kaddari, אוצר לשון המקרא מאלף עד תו *Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew (Alef-Taw)* (Hebrew; Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006). Order from [Eisenbrauns](#).

Beginning students might consider purchasing (1) and (7). Scholars with an interest in classical Hebrew philology will need to have all eight! I leave out a discussion of the electronic versions of these and other dictionaries (where they exist). My hands-on experience with them is too limited.