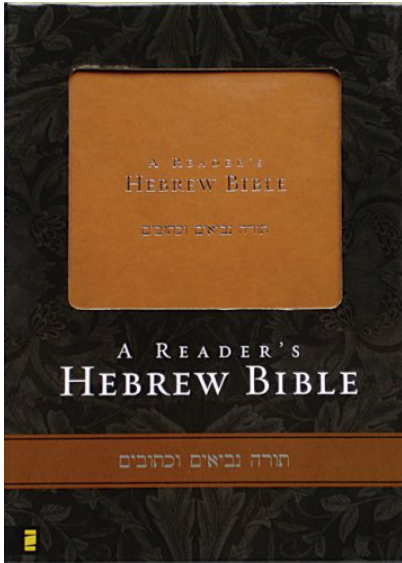


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Brown, A. Philip, II, and Bryan W. Smith, eds.

A Reader's Hebrew Bible

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008. Pp. xxiii + 1652. Paper.
\$49.99. ISBN 0310269741.

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This is the Hebrew equivalent to *A Reader's Greek New Testament*. Those editions are not scholarly Bible editions but very helpful editions also for scholars not quite firm in Hebrew or Greek. The text of *A Reader's Hebrew Bible* (*RHB*) is the Westminster Leningrad Codex 4.4, which is “virtually identical to the text of *BHS*,” as claimed in a Quick User's Guide. An appendix (B) explains the differences. The only text-critical remarks are that the current text has both the Ketiv and the Qere versions, marked with ^K and ^Q respectively, with the ^K reading left unvocalized. The editors claim to have chosen the text of the Leningrad Codex for entirely pragmatic reasons, as it was the most readily available in electronic format, and it is the standard text used in universities, seminaries, and colleges the world over. The textual layout also follows *BHS*, on the whole.

As this is no scholarly edition, there is no text-critical apparatus. Instead, there is a footnote glossary including words occurring fewer than one hundred times, while all words occurring more than one hundred times are included in a glossary (appendix A). Aramaic words occurring fewer than twenty-five times are footnoted the same way. There is no Aramaic glossary. Lexical sources for the glossaries are *HALOT*, *BDB*, and a few others. Verb lemmas are arranged according to the pattern homonym, lemma stem, *HALOT*, *BDB*, and alternate, while nonverb lemmas follow the pattern homonym, lemma, *HALOT*, *BDB*, and alternate. Each biblical book is glossed verse-by-verse.

Since names can be confusing for inexperienced readers of Hebrew, proper names occurring fewer than one hundred times are screened in gray, while names occurring more than one hundred times are not marked out in any particular way. For Aramaic names, the limit is twenty-five times.

RHB is designed to facilitate the regular reading of the Hebrew Bible and to make a student's shift to *BHS* or *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (*BHQ*) as smooth as possible. The editors emphasize that *RHB* is not designed as a tool for translation in a technical sense. It is meant to aid the user in *reading* the Hebrew Bible. It therefore provides glosses, not word definitions. In this the editors point out two benefits: it forces the reader to think through the grammar of the passage; and it helps the reader to render its meaning literally, thereby becoming familiar with the Hebrew and Aramaic way of expressing meaning.

The editors are very clear that the glossaries cannot serve as a replacement for the standard lexica, which are basic for exegesis. Reading a text is no exegesis. *RHB* is designed for reading, not for exegesis. *RHB* cannot replace a scholarly edition either, they emphasize, since for exegesis one needs a text-critical edition, which *RHB* is not.

This is just a few notes from twenty-one pages of often detailed introduction. I have not looked particularly for misprints, but I have not observed any. The Hebrew-Aramaic text needs no comment.

RHB is made and edited by two persons in cooperation: A. Philip Brown II at God's Bible School and College, Cincinnati; and Bryan W. Smith at Bob Jones University Press, Greenville, South Carolina—pious people who have seen it as a service to God to work out what came out to be the *RHB*. Their meticulous work is, in short, admirable—congratulations!

I have used *RHB* for regular reading for some months and have read several of the biblical books, and I conclude that this is a heartily welcome edition. Of course, it cannot replace *BHS*, *BHQ*, or any other scholarly edition, but this is a very helpful first aid for the not so trained Hebrew reader. With this edition the reader does not need to consult a big dictionary for every unknown word; the footnotes and the glossary give a reasonably accurate translation. Not least important, the readers learn the glosses in their literary context. Still, as soon as we come to scholarly exegesis, *BHS* or similar scholarly editions are required.