

HEBREEUWS

ZACHMANN-CZALOMÓN, I. — Modern-Hebräisch. Grammatishes Handbuch. Verlag Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2012. (24 cm, 325). ISBN 978-3-447-06780-5. € 36,-.

In the words of the author in the Introduction ('Vorwort'), until recently no systematical grammar of Modern Hebrew for the advanced levels of study existed in the German language ('Bis heute fehlt im deutschsprachigen Raum eine systematische Grammatik des Modern-Hebräischen für das fortgeschrittene Studium'). The aim of this book is to meet that need. However, the present book is not a regular systematical grammar, arranged according to more or less universal structural categories, as the reader would perhaps expect. One does not find the usual chapters on the parts of speech and their grammatical functions. Instead, the grammar is presented according to search terms ('Suchwörter') and cross references ('Querverweise'), which are organized in alphabetical order. In other words, the system of the language is to be gathered by way of deduction. Certain topics are discussed under different headings. For example, the perfect tense is discussed under four different headings: *awar* ('Zeitstufe der Vergangenheit'), *Afformativkonjugation*, *Perfekt* and *Zeiten*, each time with slightly different approaches and information, but without (complete) cross-reference.

The search terms used in this book are either in German, Latin or in transliterated Hebrew (the transliteration system is not being clarified). The use of these three languages together makes it clear that different types of readers are addressed at the same time.

On the one hand the book caters for readers and speakers of German, who are interested to know the equivalents of phenomena they know from their own language (or of linguistic phenomena in general) in Hebrew. For instance, 'Auslaut', 'Aussagesatz', 'Austausch', to quote just a few from the beginning of the alphabet.

But on the other hand, one can find such Hebrew terms as *atid* ('Zeitstufe der Zukunft'), *ahach'a* ('Merkwort für die Buchstabengruppe der Kehllaute im Hebräischen: א ה ח ע') and *ajin hapo'al* ('Bezeichnung für den zweiten Konsonanten einer dreikonsonantischen Wurzel'). One might ask how a person who does not know any (Modern) Hebrew would know these technical terms? Conversely, a person who knows these terms, very likely also knows what they mean and does not want to look them up.

The third group of readers aimed at in this book, apparently, are people who are familiar with linguistic terms in Latin, probably readers of Biblical Hebrew. A search term such as 'Afformativkonjugation' yields information about

the past tense and its characteristic usage of endings. The term is being explained as an element in older grammars ('In älteren Grammatiken'), which indeed suggests grammars of Biblical Hebrew.

If it is correct that this book aims at different groups at the same time, this is at no point been made explicit. The introduction is very short and very general, and does not go much beyond what has been mentioned above. One wonders what kind of book the author has had in mind, to be used by whom, with what aim? A closer look at one of the entries, 'Attribut', may serve to make this clear.

The heading starts, as do all headings in this book, with general information about the phenomenon in question, in this case the attribute. Different kinds of attributes are being described, with examples from the German language ('Adjektivattribut: ein *interessantes* Buch, Genitivattribut: der Inhalt *des Buches*'). Only after that the situation in Hebrew is described and reference is made to 'SMICHUT' in the case of the 'Genitivattribut'. For the use of the adjective as an attribute in Hebrew, the reader is referred to 'Adjektiv'.

Next, the Hebrew linguistic term is given for this phenomenon, 'לואי', as well as its etymology, from both of which the (Hebrew) linguistically interested reader may certainly benefit: '(lewai)/*Begleitung, Beifügung* aus [לויה] (lelawot)/*verbinden, begleiten* PI'EL. 'ALEF in dem hebräischen Ausdruck ist aus der syrischen Wurzel dieses Wortes'.

This specific entry does not include bibliographical information, but others do.

So, it appears that the approach chosen is that of the contrastive linguistic description, using general (read: Germanic language) linguistics as a starting point. This approach may be justifiable, but it sometimes leads to strange descriptions. Under the heading '*Geschlecht*' (gender, p. 84), for instance, we are informed that European languages have three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. For all three terms the Hebrew equivalents are given, including neuter, although the latter does not even exist in Hebrew, as is also clearly stated ('Die Kategorie מין סתמי (min stami)/*Neutrum* kommt im Hebräischen nicht vor'). One might ask why a Hebrew term is needed for a phenomenon that does not exist in that language.

The same goes, for instance, for the indefinite article. Under the heading 'Artikel' (p. 20) the Hebrew term תויה סתמית (tawit stamit)/*unbestimmter Artikel* is given and only then the reader is informed that there does not exist an indefinite article in Hebrew ('das Hebräische hat kein Wort für den unbestimmten Artikel').

Another methodological question which is neither posed nor answered anywhere, is which type of Modern Hebrew is presented in this book. Is it the 'normative' language, as prescribed by the formal rules of Hebrew, or is it the 'common use' of more informal contexts, or both? It would have been useful to make this specific, as has been done (using these very terms) for instance in *A Reference Grammar of Modern Hebrew* (2005) by Edna Amir Coffin and Shmuel Bolozky. From the examples given in the book, however, it is clear that what is described here is the normative language. Only occasionally reference is made to spoken Hebrew and specific usage there. For instance, under 'Artikel' (p. 20-21) the rules for the vocalization of the definite article are laid down, but it is also stated that in spoken Modern Hebrew most of the time no differentiation is made and that the vowel *patach* is used all the time ('Im gesprochenen Modernhebräischen

werden meist keine Unterschiede bei der Vokalisierung ... gemacht, sondern der Vokal ist ein PATACH’).

In the book, annoying mistakes have crept, which are not mere typos, but grammatical errors. Here are a few examples:

p. 9: *jameibeinajmi* for *jemeibeinajmi* (this spelling in transliteration, Hebrew spelling is correct)

p. 9: פְּעָלִים מֵתֵאָרִים *pe’alim meta’arim*, with *kamats* and *chataf patach* for *pe’alim meto’arim* with *cholem* and *kamats* (this spelling in Hebrew, spelling in transliteration is correct)

p. 253: ‘Viele Produktionsbezeichnungen im DUAL sind feminine: *mischkafajim* (Brille), *michnasajim* (Hose), *’ofanajim* (Fahrrad), but these words are in fact masculine.

p. 49, 190, 208: ‘*binjanim daguschim*’ for ‘*binjanim deguschim*’.

In general the book shows a careless vocalization, for instance p. 166: הַכֶּנֶס and לְהַכֶּנֶס (the *dagesh* in the *nun* is erroneous), and p. 165: נִקְדָּה (there should be a *dagesh* in the *dalet*).

p. 141: נַסְתִּי לַגֶּרְמָנִיָּה (*nasati lagermania*) for נַסְעִי and *legermania*.

To sum up, let us return to the Introduction, where it is noted that students of Hebrew often feel the need to grasp the character and special characteristics of the Hebrew language (‘Wenn wir [...] Hebräisch lernen, entsteht häufig das Bedürfnis, das Wesen und die Besonderheiten dieser Sprach genauer zu erfassen’). With all due respect to the efforts of the author and the publisher, it is very questionable whether this book fills that need.