

236). The same term is used for a scribe's knife that was used for cutting papyrus and trimming reed pens (228; and, in rabbinic times, for erasing, 229). Another term (מורר) referred to an instrument that was used only for shaving or cutting the hair of the head (222, 236).

In chapter 7 Koller deals with the meaning of מכרתיהם. This term is usually taken to mean weapons, probably swords (238). Koller rejects this interpretation on contextual and morphological grounds (241). Following Dahood, he convincingly suggests the definition "scalpel" (243).

Chapter 8 brings the most important conclusions together in a helpful summary, categorizing cutting tools and defining the Hebrew words. Koller also summarizes and evaluates the types of data used in his study: comparative Semitics, foreign terminology, archaeology, epigraphic Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, and lexical semantics. This list illustrates the breadth and comprehensive nature of Koller's impressive research. Seventy pages of bibliography, along with indices of texts, Hebrew words, authors, and subjects make this a valuable reference work.

This book will be important for Hebrew lexicography, studies of everyday life in ancient Israel, and interpretation of archaeological evidence. It will also be of interest to those studying agriculture, weapons, and crafts in ancient Israel. It is a welcome addition to the Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series.



The New Syriac Primer: An Introduction to The Syriac Language, by George Anton Kiraz. Gorgias Handbooks. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2013. Pp. xxiv + 277. Paper. \$70.73. ISBN 9781593333256.

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The New Syriac Primer of George Kiraz is published in the series Gorgias Handbooks. The copy reviewed is the second printing (with corrections; 2013) of the third edition of this handbook. The first Edition (*Syriac for Beginners*) was published in 1984, the second edition (*The Syriac Primer*) was published in 1990, and the third edition was first printed in 2007. This handbook for beginners in Syriac has grown over the years into an excellent handbook to be used for a first introduction to Classical Syriac. It follows an inductive approach, is written in a very clear style, and contains many Syriac texts spanning two millennia. The primer is primarily based on West Syriac, with the Estrangelo and East Syriac scripts presented in chapter 8. This chapter also contains notes on the differences between the pronunciation of West and East Syriac. The remainder of the book follows the West Syriac tradition. Recordings of the readings in the book are available on the website of Gorgias Press. The recordings contain the Syriac as well as an English translation of the sentence or section read. These recordings are of a very good quality and a very good aid for a student of Syriac to master the West Syriac pronunciation. It would have been interesting to have the readings of chapter 8 in an East Syriac pronunciation as well.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to reading and writing Syriac. The letters of the alphabet are discussed in groups of three and four, with description of the form and pronunciation of the consonants and the vowels, using the West Syriac notation of the vowels. The student is also informed of the variations in the forms of the consonants in the cursive script. The discussion of each group includes readings and exercises. The pace of this chapter is quite slow, helping the student to master the script and pronunciation.

Chapters 2–5 present the basic elements of Syriac grammar. Each chapter is divided into a number of sections. These sections follow a standard pattern in most instances, starting with new words, followed by sentences to be read and new concepts. Each section concludes with an exercise. The book as a whole has more than forty exercises linked to these different sections. The readings are used as an introduction in each section, to aid the inductive approach to instruction in Syriac. Chapters 2–5 deal with gender, number, tense, and prefixes and suffixes.

Chapter 6 consists of twenty sections, with larger passages for reading and a discussion of more complex issues in Syriac grammar and literature, such as word order, the forms of Syriac poetry (with, for example, readings from Saint Ephrem), numerals, and many other important matters. The readings in this chapter reflect something of the history of Syriac literature from the beginnings to the present. Chapter 7 contains a systematic presentation of the Syriac grammar presented in the previous chapters, dealing with the writing system, phonology, morphology, pronouns, nouns, verbs, and numbers. Chapter 8 was mentioned above. Chapter 9 has a discussion of some practical matters, such as the use of dictionaries, as well as a brief discussion of Garshuni, the writing of other languages in the Syriac script.

The introduction to the book discusses the history of the Syriac language and literature. Some indication of developments in the language, apart from the differences between West and East Syriac, would have been enlightening. Can the difference in the pronunciation of the *pe* in West (f) and East (p) Syriac be attributed to the influence of Arabic? Was the use of the active participle as a present tense the result of external influences on Syriac (cf. the similar use of the participle in Modern Hebrew), or can that use be traced to the earliest stages of Classical Syriac? It is understandable that a first teaching grammar cannot deal with these matters in detail, but some discussion of issues like these could have helped a student to understand something of the historical development of the language and the script.

From 6.18 up to the penultimate entry, the page numbers of the entries in the table of contents are wrong.

This primer can be regarded as one of the best introductory teaching grammars available today. The way it is structured and the availability of the recordings of the readings make it also a very good tool for a person who wants to learn Syriac without the aid of an instructor. It can be recommended for use in the classroom and for personal study.



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