Now That You’ve Flipped Biblical Hebrew...

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Time was, my Biblical Hebrew students and I sweated grimly in a thrice-weekly race against time. But now, with the lectures recorded (as voice-narrated Keynote/PowerPoint presentations) and moved outside of the classroom as homework, Biblical Hebrew has become the least predictable three hours of our week...because we have time to make of it what we will.

Our in-class activities are of five kinds, built daily around a framework that I designed one summer and have revised annually since. These are:

- **Awkward Cocktail Party:** Dialogues involving basic pleasantries: “Hello”, “My name is...”, “What’s your/her name?”, “How are you?”, “I am well/not bad/poorly”, “See you later!”

- **Walking Around the Room:** Based on a “Total Physical Response” approach developed by Randall Buth and others at the Biblical Language Center. Learners first respond to commands, then narrate actions, revolving around a core set of verbs (stand, sit, go, return, touch, walk) and objects (tables, chairs, doors, windows, walls).

- **What’s This?** A rapid back-and-forth between instructor and students, building Q&A from demonstratives and articles, and a pair of nouns (“books & beasts”) and a pair of adjectives (“large & small”).

- **Children’s Songs:** “Head, Shoulders”, “The Wise Man Built”, “If You’re Happy & You Know It”, even “30 Bottles of Beer”: Translated into Hebrew, they make children again of us all!

- **Walking Field Trip:** There is a sun (or clouds) in the sky, trees on the grass, stones in the path, a sea (we’re lucky there)...you tell me what you find.
For use between sessions, besides the core lectures, I made a resource kit that comprises “A Foundation for Biblical Hebrew”: a set of YouTube Playlists, including an Aleph-Bet series in which students learn by pronouncing Hebrew syllables; the Children’s Songs series; and a vocabulary series teaching Hebrew words and phrases according to their settings in life (Greetings & Pleasantries; Coping Phrases; Dining; In the Classroom; etc). On Flickr, we have a series of slideshows, including frequently-attested or ready-to-hand nouns; common pairs of opposing adjectives; numbers; and colors.

I admit there was a high front-end cost in preparation (mostly me taking long walks with index cards, conversing with people who weren’t there). But being thrown back on my heels as a co-learner among my students has set a fun tone, and produces much more fluent readers than I have ever seen before.

https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2013/10/now-that-youve-flipped-biblical-hebrew/