READING GERMAN

for

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

A Grammar and Reader

Carolyn Roberts Thompson

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Preface

When I was first asked to teach a class in reading German for students wanting to pursue graduate work in religious studies, I started looking for a textbook. When I could not find any book I liked (what teacher ever agrees totally with a textbook?), a German professor friend suggested I write my own. It has been a learning experience.

Through the years, I have become increasingly aware of the importance of German scholarship for theological studies. Some German works have been translated into English, but the vast majority have not. Besides that, reading German scholarship in the original language opens the reader to a new way of thinking. Even when I read my German Bible, I often see ideas in a new light.

My hope is that this book will help aspiring students begin to learn German for reading theological materials. It will not be a short trip. I have been learning German for years and am still learning. It is well worth the journey.

I want to thank my husband, James W. Thompson, for taking me to Germany the first time in 1972, a year-long stay that allowed me to begin what has become a passion for me: to open a new world to my students. I also want to thank him for encouraging me in the writing of this book, including correcting my mistakes. Any remaining mistakes are my own.

Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt, weiß nichts von seiner eigenen.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

As an encouragement to those who are trying to understand the readings in this book:

Der Geist einer Sprache offenbart sich am deutlichsten in ihren unübersetzbaren Worten.

—Maria von Ebner-Eschenbach

How to Get the Most from This Book

What is your purpose for reading this book? I assume the answer has to do in some way with your desire to learn to read German, more specifically to read German for theological studies. If that is the case, I want to help you make the most of your time as you begin. It will not be a short read.

I have designed the lessons to expose you to authentic German texts from the start and to acquaint you with the grammar as you read. Each reading is glossed; that is, it has accompanying vocabulary keyed to the text. The grammar needed to understand the text is explained after each reading. To get the most out of the readings, you will need to learn (memorize) as much of the vocabulary as you can. Once a word has been introduced, it is not usually repeated in the vocabulary for subsequent readings. I suggest that you create vocabulary cards and review them often. You may choose to create digital vocabulary cards, but research confirms that writing the words by hand improves retention. Be sure to write the words correctly, however, because it is very difficult to relearn words that you have learned incorrectly.

One bad habit to avoid: Do not write the meanings of the German words between the lines of the reading. If you do so, your eyes will naturally tend to look at the English instead of the German as you read, and this will hinder your learning.

You will also need to learn the grammar, including verb conjugations and noun declensions. German is a highly inflected language, so you will need to learn cases and tenses. As was true of the vocabulary, paradigm tables of various parts of speech are not repeated in succeeding lessons, but for reference a chapter appears at the end of the book containing all the paradigms presented in the lessons. Along with all the paradigms for nouns, verbs, and adjectives, the reference chapter includes many examples and explanations. Do not forget that it is there.

Do the assignment for each reading, and then check your answers at the back of the book. Looking at the answers before you complete the assignment will of course work against your efforts to master the material and hinder your ability to read independently. Many of the assignments say simply "translate the reading." When you check your translations, look carefully at the verb forms (number, tense, mood, and voice). Most German verbs end with a *t* in the third-person singular present tense indicative mood.

Your ear may hear this as the *-ed* of the English past tense and lead you to translate these forms as past tense. Do not fall into this trap. Check the verb forms carefully.

Over one thousand words are defined in these readings. After you finish a reading and its assignment, you should test yourself before proceeding to the next lesson. Can you write the English words by looking at the German words on the vocabulary cards? Have you really learned them? To test yourself, you should try to write the German words by looking at the English words. The more words you learn, the easier it will be to read with speed and comprehension, but mastery comes only through repeated review. A combined list of all the vocabulary words presented in the lessons appears at the end of the book and will prove helpful as you proceed through the lessons.

An index also appears at the back of the book to help you find a concept or term remembered from a previous lesson. Back-of-the-book resources such as the grammatical paradigms, combined vocabulary list, assignment answers, and topical index are intended to help you use this book as a self-teaching tool and get the most from your efforts.

Introduction

Learning a Highly Inflected Language

This textbook is designed for students who want to learn to read theological texts in German. It presupposes some prior knowledge of an inflected language, such as Greek or Latin. German, Greek, and Latin are highly inflected languages, which means that the base forms (the dictionary forms) of words (including articles, nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives) change depending on how they are used in a sentence.

English

1. Verb: **play** is the base form, but it can also be changed to plays, playing, and played, based on how it is used in the sentence.
2. Verb: **be** is the base form, but it can also be changed to am, is, are, was, were, being, and been, based on how it is used in the sentence.
3. Noun: **man** is the base form, but the only other form it ever has is men.
4. Adjective: **old**, but it can also change to older and oldest.
5. Adverb: **happily** never changes its form.

German

1. One word for man is **der Mann**. Its gender is masculine, indicated by the **der**. **Der Mann ist hier** (the man is here). But in the sentence **Ich sehe den Mann** (I see the man), **der** changes to **den** because **Mann** is the direct object (which takes the accusative form), not the subject (which takes the nominative form).
2. One word for ask is **fragen**. It is a weak verb, which means that it follows the pattern of regular verbs. **Der Mann fragt mich** (the man asks me). But **Ich frage den Mann** (I ask the man) can also be expressed as **Den Mann frage ich**. The inflections (changes in the form of the base word) show how the words are used in the sentence (**den** shows clearly that **Mann** is the direct object, not the subject).[1]

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1. The terms *direct object* and *indirect object* will be used when analyzing the grammar of English sentences, but *nominative*, *accusative*, *dative*, and *genitive* will be the terms applied to German nouns and pronouns. See below for an explanation of the cases.

1

3. All nouns in German are capitalized, as are other parts of speech when they function as nouns. Below are the main types:
   a. Proper: **Deutschland** (Germany), **Johannes** (John)
   b. Common: **Mann** (man), **Frau** (woman), **Buch** (book)
   c. Adjectives used as nouns: **der Alte** (the old man), **die Alte** (the old woman), **die Alten** (the old people).
   d. Gerunds: **Aussteigen** ([the act of] getting out of [a vehicle])
   e. Past participles used as nouns: **der Gekreuzigte** (the crucified one)
4. Adjectives have specific rules for when endings are added or omitted.
5. Adverbs never change forms.

German has three genders: masculine, neuter, and feminine (see "gender" in the reference grammar at the back of the book). Knowing the gender of nouns is extremely important. A noun's gender is sometimes logical but mostly not. For instance, man (**Mann**) is masculine, and woman (**Frau**) is feminine, but a man's tie (**die Krawatte**) is feminine, and a woman's skirt (**der Rock**) is masculine. The base form of the definite article shows the gender: **der**, **das**, **die**. All plural nouns regardless of gender have **die** as the nominative form of the definite article.

German has four cases: nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive (see "cases" in the reference grammar). Where Greek uses the vocative case, German uses the nominative. Verbs change forms to reflect person, tense, mood, and voice. Paradigms for all these changes can be found in the reference grammar.

Because German is highly inflected, sentence word order is very different from English. Paying attention to all the changes in word forms is extremely important. Failing to do so can cause terrible misreadings. Therefore, learning the paradigms is a must, which entails the following:

1. Always learn the nominative form of the definite article (**der**, **das**, **die**) with the noun. Notice also how the noun forms its plural. All nouns in the plural have *die* as the definite article in the nominative.
2. Learn the principal parts of the verbs (examples in English are *play*, *played*, *played*; *do*, *did*, *done*).
3. Learn the basic sentence parts (subject, verb, prepositional phrases, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions).
4. Learn how to find the conjugated verb in the sentence.
5. Pay attention to basic word order.

Grammatical Categories

Dictionaries vary in the way they present information about words. Below is a description of what you are likely to find and, specifically, how to interpret the vocabulary entries in this book.

German Nouns

The base form is followed by the article, which tells you the noun's gender. Then some information follows in parentheses: first the noun's genitive ending and then the noun's plural ending. (If the plural form of the noun is the same as the singular, the plural is not given.) Finally, the English meaning(s) is given. Below are sample entries for masculine, neuter, and feminine nouns.

Masculine

Mann, der (-[e]s, ⸚er) – the man

From this vocabulary entry, the following information can be gleaned:

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Singular	der Mann	den Mann	dem Mann	des Manns, des Mannes
Plural	die Männer	die Männer	den Männern	der Männer

Herr is also a masculine noun, but it differs slightly from the standard pattern:

Herr, der (-[e]n, -en) – the man, Mr., the Lord

From this vocabulary entry, the following information can be gleaned:

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Singular	der Herr	den Herrn	dem Herrn	des Herrn, des Herren
Plural	die Herren	die Herren	den Herren	der Herren

Neuter

Kind, das (-[e]s, -er) – the child

From this vocabulary entry, the following information can be gleaned:

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Singular	das Kind	das Kind	dem Kind	des Kinds, des Kindes
Plural	die Kinder	die Kinder	den Kindern	der Kinder

Feminine

Frau, die (-en) – woman

From this vocabulary entry, the following information can be gleaned:

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
Singular	die Frau	die Frau	der Frau	der Frau
Plural	die Frauen	die Frauen	den Frauen	der Frauen

The gender and plural form are always the same for certain suffixes. For example, words ending in **-schaft** are always feminine and always form the plural by adding the suffix **-en**. Beginning with reading 20, gender and plural forms will not be given for words ending in the following suffixes, because they follow a consistent pattern.

> Suffixes that are always feminine (the plural ending appears in parentheses):
> -schaft (-en), -ung (-en), -heit (-en), -keit (-en), -tät (-en)
> Suffixes that are always neuter:
> -chen, -lein, -nis (-se), and verbs used as nouns

Note that among the neuter endings, only **-nis** adds a suffix when forming the plural.

German Verbs

Weak and Strong Verbs

The base form of the verb is always the infinitive; "to" is included in the meaning. Vocabulary entries for weak (regular) and strong (irregular) verbs include in parentheses the third-person singular present tense form, the third-person singular preterit (past tense) form, and the past participle before giving the English meaning(s).

	3rd Pers. Sg. Pres.*	3rd Pers. Sg. Pret.	Past Part.
sagen	sagt	sagte	gesagt
sprechen	spricht	sprach	gesprochen

*In dictionaries, the 3rd pers. sg. pres. form is normally not given for weak (regular) verbs because it is always formed in the same way.

The perfect tenses (present perfect and past perfect) are formed by using a form of **haben** or **sein** with the past participle. Specific rules determine whether **haben** or **sein** is used with a particular verb (see "haben" and "sein" in the reference grammar). Verbs that require **sein** to form the perfect tenses will include **ist** with the past participle in the vocabulary entry (see **kommen** below). The form of **ist** changes based on the subject of the sentence and the tense of the verb (see "sein" in the reference grammar).

	3rd Pers. Sg. Pres.	3rd Pers. Sg. Pret.	Past Part.
kommen	kommt	kam	ist gekommen

Especially in the later readings, you will often see only the infinitive form listed in the vocabulary along with one of its meanings, even if the word in the reading is a noun, adjective, or adverb. For example, die **Bedeutung** is from the verb **bedeuten**. If you recognize the root, you will also know what the other forms mean. Learning the roots and recognizing them in other words will greatly increase your vocabulary. However, not all words that look alike have the same meaning, which you will discover as you progress in your knowledge of the language.

Reflexive Verbs

Dictionaries sometimes indicate that a verb is reflexive by adding **sich** to the entry. Other dictionaries add **vr** (for *verbum reflexivum*, reflexive verb). To help you remember that a verb is reflexive, you should include **sich** when you learn the verb—repeating, for example, **sich setzen**. In this book, **sich** will precede the verb (e.g., **sich setzen**) in the chapter vocabulary lists but will follow the verb (e.g., **setzen sich**) in the combined glossary at the back of the book to preserve alphabetical order.

Spelling Changes over Time

The German language has undergone many changes through the centuries. For example, when **Bäcker** was broken at the end of a line of type in older books, the hyphenated form was **Bäk-ker**, but now it is **Bä-cker**. The last official German spelling changes were made in 1996. The readings in this book appear as they did in the original works at the time of their publication, but current spellings are observed in the textbook discussions of grammar and vocabulary.

The Alphabet

German has the same twenty-six letters as English, with four additional characters: ß, ä (ae), ö (oe), ü (ue). The letter ß (pronounced es-tzet) is a double s; however, there are specific rules (revised in 1996) for its use. For example, books printed before 1996 will have **daß** ("that" as a subordinating conjunction), but books printed after that date will have **dass**. In anything written after August 1, 2006, **daß** is considered a misspelling. However, **daß** still appears in books printed before this date. Likewise, **Nuß** is now **Nuss**, but **Fuß** is still **Fuß**. The reason is that the *u* in Fuß is pronounced differently than the *u* in Nuss. New learners of German will probably not be able to detect this difference initially.

The only letters that can have an umlaut (two dots above the letter) in German are **a**, **o**, and **u**. The umlaut changes the pronunciation of these vowels. In older works, one often sees the letter *e* joined to **a**, **o**, or **u** in place of the umlauted letter. For example, you will see Maenner instead of Männer.

In the vocabulary lists in this book, ⸚ indicates that the last **a**, **o**, or **u** in the noun has an umlaut in the plural form of the word. When the diphthong **au** receives an umlaut, the umlaut goes over the **a** (Haus, Häuser). For an explanation of diphthongs and their pronunciation, the following websites may be helpful:

lets-learn-german.com/german-language /beginning-german/diphthongs

101languages.net/german/diphthongs.html

thoughtco.com/pronunciation-and-alphabet -4076770

Pronunciation: A Few Generalizations of the Basic Sounds

Even though your goal is to read German, you will want to pronounce the words correctly if you are presenting a paper at a conference, for example. You can hear how a German word should be pronounced by keying the word into the search window of one of the following websites:

dict.tu-chemnitz.de

dict.leo.org

dict.cc

In the table below, a letter or letter combination is given in the left column. The middle column presents a German word containing the letter(s), and the right column offers an English word whose boldface letter is roughly equivalent in pronunciation.

	German	English
a	**V**ater	f**a**ther
b	**B**ett	**b**ed
	gi**b**	hi**p**

	German	English
c	**C**afe[1]	**c**afe
d	**D**orf	**d**one
	Ra**d**	ro**t**
e	**B**ett	b**e**d
	eng	**a**ngel
	-**er**	**air**
f	**f**ett	**f**at
g	**g**ib	**g**et
	-i**g**[2]	-i**zh**
	Ta**g**	Ta(**k**)[3]
h	**h**elfen	**h**elp
i	g**i**b	**it**
	ihn	**ea**t
j	**j**etzt	**y**olk
k	**K**arte	**c**ard
l	**L**ampe	**l**amp
m	**M**utter	**m**other
n	**n**ein	**n**o
o	Br**o**t[4]	r**o**te
p	**P**ur**p**ur	**p**o**p**
q	**qu**er	[**k**ver]
r	**r**ot	**r**[5]
s	**s**itzen	**z**ip
st-	**St**empel	**sht**
str-	**Str**aße	**shtr**
t	**t**un	**t**une
	tut	**t**oot
u	**u**nten	m**oo**n
v	**V**olk	**f**olk
w	**W**asser	**v**an

	German	English
x	E**x**empel	[e**ks**emple]
y	T**y**p	[t**u**pe] (long u)
z	**Z**oo	[**ts**o]
ä	K**ä**se	[k**ay**zuh]
	älter	[**e**lter]
ai	K**ai**	fr**y**
au	Fr**au**	**ou**ch
äu	**äu**ßern	[**oy**sern]
ie	s**ie**[6]	[**zee**]
	Famil**ie**	**ee**[7]
ei	fr**ei**[8]	fr**y**
eu	n**eu**[9]	Tr**oy**
ö	**ö**de	—[10]
ü	l**ü**gen	[l**yu**gen]
c	**C**äsar	[**ts**aesar]
	Celsius	[**ts**elsius]
ch	Ba**ch**	—[11]
	Be**ch**er	—[12]
th	**Th**ron	[**t**rone]
ck	ba**ck**en	lo**ck**

[1]Loan words are discussed below.
[2]Listen to zwanzi**g** at dict.cc.
[3]Listen to Ta**g** at dict.tu-chemnitz.de.
[4]The o sound has many variations.
[5]Listen to the German **r** sound at www.thegermanproject.com/german-lessons/german-pronunciation.
[6]The diphthong **ie** is almost always pronounced as long e (e.g., Theologie).
[7]The "uh" sound is barely audible; ie is rarely pronounced this way—mostly in French loanwords.
[8]The diphthong **ei** is almost always pronounced as long i.
[9]The diphthongs **äu** and **eu** are pronounced the same.
[10]Listen to **ö**de at forvo.com/word/%C3%B6de/#de.
[11]Listen to Ba**ch** at dict.tu-chemnitz.de.
[12]Listen to Be**ch**er at dict.tu-chemnitz.de.

German Word Order

German word order is much more flexible than English word order. However, the placement of the conjugated verb in German is not very flexible. While your goal is to read German texts fluently, at the beginning you will need to be able to find the subject and verb quickly. Studying the

example sentences below will help you understand the logic of various kinds of German sentences. But first, a couple of definitions are needed:

Phrases are groups of words that convey meaning. Types of phrases include prepositional phrases, verb phrases, and noun phrases.

Clauses must have a verb and, with few exceptions, a subject. Types of clauses include simple sentences, dependent clauses, and relative clauses.

Now let us look at various types of German clauses, focusing especially on the position of the conjugated verb.

1. Conjugated verb in the second position
   a. Indicative statements:
      i. Ich **gehe** jetzt in die Stadt. (I'm going to town now.)
      ii. Wir **feiern** morgen seinen Geburtstag. (We are celebrating his birthday tomorrow.)
   b. Open-ended questions:
      i. Wann **gehen** Sie nach Hause? (When are you going home?)
      ii. Warum **haben** Sie das gesagt? (Why did you say that?)
2. Conjugated verb in the first position
   a. Imperatives (commands):
      i. **Gehen** Sie jetzt in die Bibliothek! (Go to the library now.)
      ii. **Komm** bald wieder zurück! (Come back soon.)
   b. Yes-no questions:
      i. **Sind** sie immer noch krank? (Are they still sick?)

      ii. **Bringen** sie die Getränke mit? (Are they bringing the drinks?)
   c. Subjunctive (wishes, opposite of reality):
      i. **Hätte** ich genug Geld! (Had I enough money!)
      ii. **Wäre** ich Millionär! (Were I a millionaire! *Or*, If I were a millionaire!)
   d. Conditional ("if" is understood):
      i. **Rede** ich noch weiter, so werden sie mir nicht mehr zuhören. (If I keep talking, they will not listen to me anymore.
      ii. **Spricht** er zu leise, dann kann sie ihn nicht hören. (If he speaks too quietly, she cannot hear him.)
3. Conjugated verb in the last position
   a. Subjunctive (wishes, opposite of reality) when the clause begins with a subordinating conjunction (e.g., *if* or *as if*):
      i. Wenn ich genug Geld **hätte**! (If I had enough money!)
      ii. Wenn ich Millionär **wäre**! (If I were a millionaire!)
   b. Subordinate clauses:
      i. Ich meine, dass ich dahin **gehen soll**. (I think that I should go there.)
      ii. Sie haben uns nie gesagt, ob er **mitkommt**. (They [*or* You] never told us whether he was coming.)
   c. Relative clauses:
      i. Hier ist das Buch, das ich **gesucht habe**. (Here is the book that I was looking for.)
      ii. Wer ist der Mann, den ich gestern **gesehen habe**? (Who is the man whom I saw yesterday?)

4. What can appear in the first position?

a. Nouns, pronouns, and noun phrases (subj., dir. obj., ind. obj.):

i. **Der Mann** ist hier. **Ihn** sehe ich. **Ihm** gebe ich das Buch. (The man is here. I see him. I give [will give, am giving] him the book.)

ii. **Er** war gestern nicht hier. (He wasn't here yesterday.)

iii. **Fahren mit der Bahn** ist preisgünstig. (Traveling by train is economical.)

b. Prepositional phrases:

i. **Mit ihm** gehe ich gern spazieren. (I like to go for a walk with him.)

ii. **Für dich** tue ich das gern. (For you I will gladly do that. *Or* I will gladly do that for you.)

c. Adverbs or adverbial phrases:

i. **Gestern** war er nicht hier. (He wasn't here yesterday.) **Plötzlich** hat es angefangen zu regnen. (Suddenly it started to rain,)

ii. **Wahrscheinlich** kommt er nie wieder. (Probably, he will never come again.)

iii. **Gestern in der Nacht** war er nicht hier. (He wasn't here last night.)

d. Subordinate clauses:

i. **Wenn es regnet**, gehen wir nicht in den Wald. (When it rains, we don't go into the woods.)

ii. **Ob sie morgen kommen**, wissen wir nicht. (We don't know whether [*or* if] they are coming tomorrow.)

5. What can appear first in a sentence or clause while not technically being in first position?

a. Direct address (Johann, Frau Schneider, etc.):

i. **Johann**, wo bist du? (John, where are you?)

ii. **Meine Freunde**, was sollen wir jetzt machen? (My friends, what shall we do now?)

b. Interjections (ja, nein, ach, etc.):

i. **Ja**, das tue ich. (Yes, I'll do that.)

ii. **Nein**, das tue ich nie. (No, I never do that.)

c. Coordinating conjunctions (und, aber, etc.):

i. Zuerst komme ich in die Stadt, **und** dann rufe ich dich an. (First I will come to town, and then I will call [*or* phone] you.)

ii. Ich möchte mit euch gehen, **aber** ich habe zu viel zu tun. (I would like to go with you all, but I have too much to do.)

When you encounter more complicated sentences, go back to the basics above. Mark off the individual clauses, analyze them separately, and determine how the clauses are related to each other. Find words or phrases that convey ideas such as cause, effect, time, problem, solution, or sequence.

The Role of the Comma in German

Commas are helpful in German. While many of the comma's uses are similar to English, there are some differences. Study these uses.

1. Appositives
   a. Josef Schmelling, Präsident der Schuhfabrik, kommt heute. (Josef Schmelling, president of the shoe factory, is coming today.)
   b. Ich besuche heute Josef Schmelling, den Präsidenten der Schuhfabrik. (Today I will visit Josef Schmelling, the president of the shoe factory.)
2. Compound sentences[2]
   a. Mein Sohn kommt morgen, denn er hat nächste Woche Ferien. (My son is coming tomorrow, for he has [his] vacation next week. / My son is coming tomorrow because he has [his] vacation next week.)
   b. Ich wollte gestern kommen, aber ich konnte nicht. (I wanted to come yesterday, but I was not able to.)
3. Dependent clauses
   a. Als ich jung war, wollte ich immer schwimmen gehen. (When I was young, I always wanted to go swimming.)
   b. Ich konnte gestern nicht kommen, weil ich zu viel machen musste. (I was not able to come yesterday, because I had too much to do.)
4. Relative clauses
   a. Der Mann, der gestern hier war, ist mein Freund. (The man who was here yesterday is my friend.)
   b. Die Frau, mit der ich nach Dallas fahre, ist eine Kollegin. (The woman with whom I am driving to Dallas is a colleague.)
5. Infinitive phrases (short infinitive phrases that have no objects sometimes omit commas)
   a. Ich habe keine Zeit, mit dir ins Kino zu gehen. (I don't have time to go to the movie with you.)
   b. Er hat keine Lust, heute Abend einen Film zu sehen. (He has no desire [does not want] to see a movie this evening.)
   c. Er geht in die Stadt, um einen Mantel zu kaufen. (He is going to town [in order] to buy a coat.)
6. Series
   a. Ich bringe einen Kuchen, zwei Salate und eine Kanne Kaffee mit. (I will bring a cake, two salads, and a carafe of coffee.)
   b. Er geht in die Stadt, kauft ein und kommt um acht Uhr zurück. (He will go to town, shop, and come back at 8:00 p.m.)
   c. Da er in die Stadt geht, einen Mantel und Schuhe kauft und nicht vor elf Uhr zurückkommt, kann ich heute nicht mit ihm sprechen. (Since he is going to town, buying a coat and shoes, and not coming back before 11:00 p.m., I cannot speak with him today.)
7. Introductory phrases
   a. Ja, ich komme. (Yes, I am coming.)

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2. German can join two complete sentences with just a comma and no coordinating conjunction, which in English is considered a comma splice and unacceptable in formal writing.

b. Nein, ich gehe nicht. (No, I am not going.)

c. Doch, ich gehe. (Yes, I am going. [in response to a negative question])

d. Frau Mock, was machen Sie jetzt? (Mrs. Mock, what are you doing now?)

e. Bitte, kommen Sie hierher. (Please, come here.)

Suggestions for Learning to Read German Fluently

Since you are reading this book, I can assume that you want to be able to read German well enough to use it in your scholarly research. The suggestions below are based on my experience teaching graduate students to read German.

1. Do not rely on Google Translate or other such programs. While translation software is getting better, it still cannot correctly translate sophisticated sentences. Also, typing each sentence into a translation program takes time. If you rely on this technology, you will never be able to read German fast enough to make it worthwhile, much less enjoyable.

2. Once you work through a passage in this book, you should reread it several times. Reread it until the word order feels natural. This takes time.

3. After you finish this course, continue to read a little German every day.

German-English Online Dictionaries and Other Aids

Definitions are supplied for the vocabulary in the readings, so you will not need a dictionary until you have worked through almost every reading. As you begin reading on your own, however, you will need a good dictionary. There are several excellent online dictionaries, but no German dictionary is fully comprehensive, so you should familiarize yourself with several. When you look up a word, do not just stop with the first-offered definition, but look for other meanings. Listed below are some of the best and most useful German-English dictionaries.

BeoLingus, created and maintained by the Technische Universität Chemnitz	dict.tu-chemnitz.de
Corpora collection, the Deutscher Wortschatz project of Universität Leipzig	corpora.uni-leipzig.de
Deutsch-Englisch Wörterbuch	dict.cc

Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache (DWDS) at the Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (BBAW)	dwds.de
LEO Dictionary Team	dict.leo.org
Linguee	linguee.de

There are, of course, also dictionaries that are German only (i.e., the definitions are given in German), but you will not find them useful until you have achieved a wide and deep vocabulary.

There is also a website to help you correctly conjugate German verbs:

Verbix Verb Conjugation Services (verbix.com /languages/german.html)

You may find it encouraging to know that because English is also a Germanic language, it has

Identifying Parts of a Sentence

Some of the reading assignments will ask you to identify all the words in a sentence or a reading, as in the example below of Matt. 13:44–45.

Key to Abbreviations

Abbr.	Meaning
acobj.	accusative object
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
cocnj.	coordinate conjunction
convb.	conjugated verb
gen.	genitive
genobj.	genitive object
indart.	indefinite article
objprp.	object of the preposition
posadj.	possessive adjective
prn.	pronoun
prp.	preposition
prpph.	prepositional phrase
pstprt.	past participle
relprn.	relative pronoun
sepvb.	separable prefix verb
subconj.	subordinate conjunction
subj.	subject
vb.	verb

main clause

subj.	genobj.	convb.	prp.	indart.	prpph.	adj.	objprp.
Das Reich	der Himmel	ist	gleich	einem	im Acker	verborgenen	Schatz,

relative clause

relprn.	indart.	subj.	convb.	cocnj.	adv.	convb.
den	ein	Mensch	fand	und	[wieder]	verbarg.

main clause

cocnj.	prp.	posadj.	objprp.	convb.	subj.	sepvb.	convb.	prn.
Und	in	seiner	Freude	ging	er	hin,	verkaufte	alles,

relative clause

relprn.	subj.	convb.
was	er	hatte,

main clause

cocnj.	convb.	acobj.
und	kaufte	sie.

main clause

adv	vb.	subj.	prp.	gen.	objprp.
Wiederum	ist	das Reich	gleich	der Himmel	einem Kaufmann,

relative clause

relprn.	adj.	acobj.	convb.
der	schöne	Perlen	suchte.

dependent clause

subconj.	subj.	adv.	indart.	adj.	acobj.	pstprt.	convb.
Als	er	aber	eine	kostbare	Perle	gefunden	hatte,

main clause

convb.	subj.	sepvb.	convb.	prn.
ging	er	hin,	verkaufte	alles,

relative clause

relprn.	subj.	convb.
was	er	hatte,

main clause

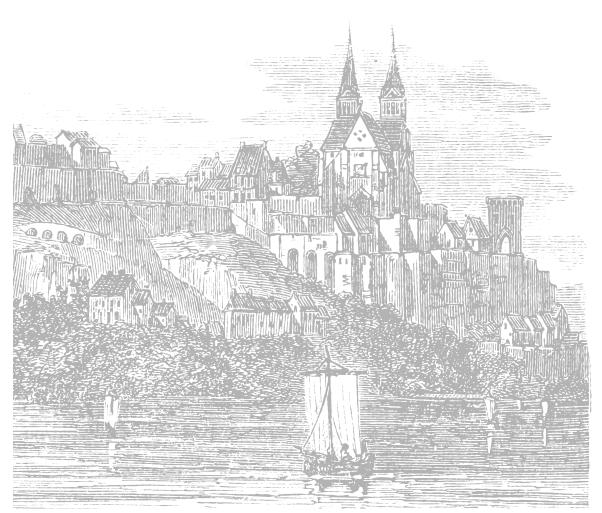| cocnj.	convb.	acobj.
und	kaufte	sie.

many cognates and loan words in common with German. This means that you will sometimes be able to guess correctly the meaning of a German word that looks similar to an English word. However, there are quite a few false cognates ("false friends")—that is, German words that look similar to English words but mean something completely different. Throughout the book I point out words that are false cognates. If a German word looks like an English word, and I have not said that it is a false friend, you should make an educated guess as to its meaning. But if the meaning you have assigned to the cognate does not make sense in the context, look up the word in one of the German dictionaries mentioned above.

Rationale for Readings from the Bible

The first sixteen readings are drawn from the Bible. This allows you to check your translations against the original biblical languages or a modern English version. Being familiar with the Scripture passage will make it easier for you to read and understand the German and allow you to observe how German expresses ideas in ways that are sometimes similar to and sometimes different from English.

READINGS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR READINGS 1–6

Readings 1–6 are from the Old Testament book of Amos according to the Zürcher Bibel. The glossed readings (i.e., with vocabulary defined) are from the 1942 edition; the unglossed readings are from the 2017 edition.

Translate the complete text of readings 1–6, and check your translations against a published English translation. If you have studied biblical languages, you may also wish to check your translation against the original Hebrew. Next, answer the exercise questions, and check your work against the answer key found in the back of the book.

Once you have completed the reading and the accompanying explanations and assignments, review the grammar and vocabulary found at the end of each lesson. Then take the quiz, which tests your retention of vocabulary and irregular verb forms. Check your answers against the glossary in the back of the book.

1

Amos 2,1–3

¹So spricht der Herr: Wegen der drei Freveltaten von Moab, wegen der vier nehme ich es nicht zurück: weil sie die Gebeine des Königs von Edom zu Kalk verbrannt haben. ²Ich lasse Feuer los wider Moab, dass es die Paläste von Kerijoth verzehre; und Moab kommt um im Getümmel, beim Kriegslärm, beim Schall der Posaune. ³Und ich vertilge den Herrscher aus seiner Mitte, und mit ihm töte ich all seine Fürsten, spricht der Herr.

so	so, thus
sprechen (spricht, sprach, gesprochen)	to speak
Herr, der (-[e]n, -en)	the man, Mr., the Lord
wegen (+ gen.)	because of
drei	three
Freveltat, die (-en)	heinous deed
von (+ dat.)	of
vier	four

zurück•nehmen (nimmt zurück, nahm zurück, zurückgenommen)	to take back
ich	I
es	it
nicht	not
weil	because
sie (nom. pl. pron.)	they
Gebein, das (-[e]s, -e)	skeleton; (pl., formal prose) bones, mortal remains
König, der (-s, -e)	king
zu	to
Kalk, der (-[e]s, -e)	lime (mineral); calcium (anatomy)
verbrennen (verbrennt, verbrannte, verbrannt)	to burn, incinerate, cremate
haben (hat, hatte, gehabt)	to have
los•lassen (lässt los, ließ los, losgelassen)	to let go of
Feuer, das (-s)	fire

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wider (+ acc.)	against
dass (sub. conj.)	that
Palast, der (-[e]s, ⸚e)	palace
verzehren (verzehrt, ver-zehrte, verzehrt)	to devour, consume
und	and
um•kommen (kommt um, kam um, ist umgekommen)	to die, perish
Getümmel, das (-s)	turmoil
bei (+ dat.)	by, with, during
Kriegslärm, der	noise of war (der Krieg, -[e]s, -e: war; der Lärm, -[e]s: noise)

Schall, der (-s, -e or ⸚e)	sound
Posaune, die (-n)	trumpet
vertilgen (vertilgt)	to destroy, eradicate (weeds)
Herrscher, der (-s)	ruler
aus	out of, from
sein(-) (poss. pron.)	its
Mitte, die (-n)	midst, middle
mit (+ dat.)	with
ihm (dat.)	him
töten	to kill
Fürst, der (-en, -en)	prince, ruler

2017 Edition

[1]So spricht der HERR:
Wegen der drei Vergehen von Moab und wegen der vier nehme ich es nicht zurück, denn die Gebeine des Königs von Edom hat es zu Kalk verbrannt:
[2]Ich sende Feuer gegen Moab, und es wird die Paläste von Kerijot fressen! Und Moab kommt um unter Getöse, beim Kriegslärm, zum Klang des Horns!
[3]Und ich tilge den Richter aus seiner Mitte, und mit ihm töte ich alle seine Obersten!, spricht der HERR.

Grammar and Vocabulary

Verbs

Present Tense

Verb forms are classified as *weak* or *strong*. Weak verbs all follow a regular pattern. Strong verbs do not, but even they fall into certain types of patterns.

Kommen is a strong verb, but it is regular in the present tense.

ich komm**e**	wir komm**en**
du komm**st**	ihr komm**t**
er/es/sie komm**t**	sie/Sie komm**en**

Lassen, **sprechen**, and **nehmen** are "stem-change" verbs. That is, the vowel in the base part of the verb undergoes a change in certain forms. In the present tense, for example, the vowel in the second- and third-person singular forms changes.

	a > ä		e > i		e > i	
Person	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
1st	la**sse**	la**ssen**	spr**e**che	spr**e**chen	n**e**hme	n**e**hmen
2nd	l**ä**sst*	la**sst**	spr**i**chst	spr**e**cht	n**i**mmst	n**e**hmt
3rd	l**ä**sst*	la**ssen**	spr**i**cht	spr**e**chen	n**i**mmt	n**e**hmen

*****Läßt** is an older form, which you will see in works published before 2000.

Verbs with Separable Prefixes

German has many verbs that consist of a base word with a prefix attached. Two points are very important to know about these verbs.

1. Very often, but not always, the meaning of the verb is simply a combination of the meaning of the prefix and the meaning of the base word. Knowing how to decipher these words will help you build your vocabulary.
2. When a verb with a separable prefix is the conjugated verb of the sentence, the base word is conjugated and placed in the second position, and the prefix moves to the end of the clause.

In translations of the Bible, the prefix often does not move to the very end of the clause, but it does separate from the base word. You must always look at the end of the clause to see if a prefix is there, because it will change the meaning of the conjugated verb.

In Amos 2:1–3, the following verbs have separable prefixes:

zurücknehmen	to take back
nehmen	to take
zurück	back, return
loslassen	to let go of
lassen	to let, leave
los	off
umkommen	to die
kommen	to come
um	around

Subjunctive I

There are two subjunctive (German: Konjunktiv) forms of every verb. In this reading, **verzehren** occurs in the present tense of subjunctive I. It looks the same as the regular (indicative) present tense, but instead of translating it as "it consumes, devours," you should translate it as "[that] it may consume/devour" (as a wish, desire) or "it shall/will consume/devour."

Translating into Good English

The present tense in German can be translated into English several ways. For example, the first-person singular of **nehmen** (to take) in the present tense can be translated into English as follows: I take, I am taking, I will take, I shall take, or I have been taking (which implies I still am taking). The context of the German sentence (especially time phrases) determines how one translates the verb into English. For example, when other words are added, **ich nehme die Bücher nach Hause** can be translated as "I take the books home every night," "I am taking the books home right now," "I will take the books home tonight," or "I have been taking the books home every night for ten years."

Nouns

Learning the gender of nouns is absolutely essential. Since word order in German is very flexible, you must observe the form of the articles and adjectives that precede nouns in order to know what function (subject, direct object, indirect object, object of the preposition) the nouns serve in the sentence. You should also learn the plural form for each noun.

Note the order of the cases and genders in the paradigms in this book. Some German grammar books use the Latin paradigm order (nom., gen., dat., acc.). I use a different order (nom., acc.,

dat., gen.) for two reasons: (1) it groups similar endings together, and (2) it groups similar forms of the definite article, **der**, together.

In the chart below, notice that the masculine and neuter definite articles have the same forms in the dative and genitive singular. Also, all nouns (except those already ending in **-en** or **-s**) add **-n** or **-en** to the dative plural form of the base word, and the dative plural definite article has a corresponding **-n**.

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Plural
Nominative	der König	das Feuer	die Mitte	die Schälle
Accusative	den König	das Feuer	die Mitte	die Schälle
Dative	**dem** König	**dem** Feuer	der Mitte	de**n** Schälle**n**
Genitive	**des** Königs	**des** Feuers	der Mitte	der Schälle

A full chart with preceding articles (definite and indefinite) and adjectives appears in the reference grammar in the back of this book (see the Combined Adjective Endings Chart).

Special der-Words

Some masculine words do not follow the normal declension pattern. While a regular masculine noun does not change forms in the singular except in the genitive case, a special group of masculine nouns (called **der**-words) adds an **n** or **en** in every case except the nominative, and these words do not add an **s** or **es** in the genitive singular. Several of these special der-words are essential to reading the Bible and theology. In Amos 2:1–3, you will find the following der-words:

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	der Herr	die Herren	der Fürst	die Fürsten
Accusative	den Herrn	die Herren	den Fürsten	die Fürsten
Dative	dem Herrn	den Herren	dem Fürsten	den Fürsten
Genitive	des Herrn	der Herren	des Fürsten	der Fürsten

The **e** before the final **n** (**Herr[e]n**) is optional in the singular. One old German hymn is titled "Lobe den Herren"—"Praise to the Lord." When you see **den Herren** and **den Fürsten**, you must determine whether the word is being used in the accusative singular or in the dative plural, since the form of the word is the same.

Assignment

1. Learn the present tense conjugation of **kommen**, **lassen**, **sprechen**, and **nehmen**.
2. Learn the declension of the definite and indefinite articles.
3. Learn the vocabulary.
4. Using the information given with the vocabulary, identify each word in the reading according to its function in the sentence. Add rows to the charts below, following the examples given.

a. For nouns: gender, number, case, and function (i.e., subject, direct object, indirect object, object of a preposition, or noun of address). Make a chart for this part. The first noun, article, and verb are given as an example.

Noun	Gender	Number	Case	Function
Herr	masc.	sg.	nom.	subj.

b. For articles (definite or indefinite): gender, number, and case.

Verse	Article	Def./Indef.	Gender	Number	Case
1	der	def.	masc.	sg.	nom.

c. For adjectives: gender, number, and case.

Verse	Adj.	Gender (determined by the noun it is describing)	Number	Case

d. For pronouns: gender, number, case, function (i.e., subject, direct object, indirect object, or object of a preposition), and referent.

Verse	Pronoun	Gender	Number	Case	Function	Referent

e. For verbs (including separable prefix): person, number, tense, mood, and voice.

Verse	Verb	Person	Number	Tense	Mood	Voice
1	spricht	3rd	sg.	present	indicative	active

f. For adverbs: Provide their translation.

Adverb	Meaning
so	thus

g. For conjunctions (coordinating or subordinating): List their function.

Conjunction	Function

h. For prepositions: List their meaning in this reading and their case.

Prep.	Meaning in this reading	Case

i. For interjections: Provide their translation. (There are none in this reading.)

Interjection	Meaning

Quiz for Reading 1

Write the English equivalent for the following words, including the irregular forms given in the vocabulary.

1. zurücknehmen _____
2. drei _____
3. haben _____
4. verzehren _____
5. weil _____
6. wider _____
7. sprechen _____
8. loslassen _____
9. Posaune _____
10. nicht _____
11. töten _____
12. König _____
13. umkommen _____
14. wegen _____
15. Fürst _____
16. sein(-) _____
17. vier _____
18. ihm _____
19. verbrennen _____
20. Feuer _____