

OT1013 Elements of Biblical Hebrew
Section 1: Wednesday/Friday 10:00 am - 11:20 am
Section 2: Tuesday/Thursday 1:30 pm - 2:50 pm
Gardencourt 206

Instructor

Steve Cook
Email: scook@lpts.edu
Phone: 615-463-7562 (cell)

Office Hours

Gardencourt 308
Tues/Thurs 3-5 PM

NOTE: I generally respond quickly to email, however, I am most responsive during “regular” working hours. You may call me if the need arises – especially if there is an emergency. I have given you my cell phone number because it is the best way to make sure that you reach me. I always have my cell on me, but I might not always be at my desk when you call. Also, you are welcome to drop by my office outside of posted “office hours.” If I am in, and I tend to spend a lot of time in the office, my door is open.

Class Assistants

Section 1:	Erin Gill	Email: erin.gill@my.lpts.edu
Section 2:	Alex Becker	Email: alex.becker@my.lpts.edu

There are two student assistants for this class. The assistants will help during class sessions with homework review. They will also schedule and maintain regular times outside of class for tutoring. You are encouraged to utilize these sessions – especially to work on items on which you need to improve. Tutoring sessions are not meant to replace or substitute for the time you should spend doing the homework yourself.

Course Description/Learning Outcomes

This is a one-semester course that introduces students to the grammar and vocabulary of Biblical Hebrew, use of a Biblical Hebrew lexicon (or dictionary), and working with the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) for translation. This course is also preparation for the spring term course on exegesis. At the end of this first semester, students should have acquired:

1. An understanding of many basics of Biblical Hebrew grammar.
2. A basic Biblical Hebrew vocabulary.
3. The ability to utilize a Hebrew lexicon (or dictionary) for looking up words and identifying forms of words.
4. A familiarity with BHS for reading/translating the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (this fourth point will be more fully developed in the exegesis class).

Learning Biblical Hebrew

Learning biblical Hebrew can be one of the most satisfying and rewarding experiences of one's theological education. Knowing the ancient language, one can read the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament *in Hebrew*, better converse with secondary literature that takes the Hebrew text as its point of reference, better understand what one reads when one reads a translation (NRSV, NIV, NJPS, etc.), improve sermon preparation, and more.

It might be the case that Hebrew is among the more challenging subjects a person studies in her or his education. There are several reasons for this. Hebrew grammar differs from that of English or other foreign languages that students have often learned prior to Hebrew. In terms of vocabulary, Hebrew does not include many words that sound the same in Hebrew and in English *and* mean the same thing – like the German *schwimmen* and the English *swim*. Furthermore, to learn Hebrew, students must memorize a good amount vocabulary. Learning vocabulary is essential, however. With a base of vocabulary, one spends less time looking up words in a lexicon (or dictionary) and better recognizes parts of speech and sentence structure – which helps with translating.

It bears noting that, in some ways, Biblical Hebrew is actually easier to learn than some other languages. Hebrew does not have many, if any, “false friends” like the French *attendre* (“to wait for”) and the English *attend* (as in “to be present at an event”). And, Biblical Hebrew's vocabulary is relatively small in comparison with modern languages and some ancient languages.

Finally, I just want to say that learning Hebrew can be, and should be, fun. As you begin to acquire and use your skills, you will have moments of genuine excitement. And the more and better you learn, the more exciting things can get. Upon completion of this one-semester course and the following course on exegesis, you will have learned things that you can use and appreciate for a lifetime.

Inclusive Language

The official LPTS language on inclusive language is as follows:

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible [NRSV, NIV, NJPS, and the like] do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance, http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

With this in mind, when we translate Biblical Hebrew we will follow the seminary standards for inclusive language.

The Name(s) of God

The god of the Hebrew Bible goes by many names. Many draw upon an ancient, Semitic word for “god” – *el* or *ilum* (these two are really the same thing; drop the “um” on *ilum*, and you will see it). You can find this ancient Semitic word in names for God like Elohim (Gen 1:1), El-Shaddai (Gen 17:1), and El-Elyon (Gen 14:18).

The most sacred name for God in the Hebrew Bible is written with the consonants Y-H-W-H. These four letters together are referred to as the Tetragrammaton or Tetragram. English translations have historically reproduced the Tetragrammaton as “Jehovah” or “THE LORD” (in small capital letters). When vocalizing Biblical Hebrew, people traditionally read/vocalize “Adonai” when encountering the Tetragrammaton. This practice is known as a “perpetual *Ketib/Qere*” (*Ketib* = “that which is written” [in this case, Y-H-W-H]; *Qere* = “that which is read” [in this case, “Adonai”]). We will follow this convention in class. When translating the Tetragrammaton for written or oral presentation, students are asked to use “Adonai,” “Holy One,” “God,” “G-d,” or “Ha-Shem” (“the Name”). For discussion about Christians speaking or writing the Tetragrammaton with vowels, the following comes recommended:

Van Wijk-Bos, Johanna W.H. “Writing on the Water – The Ineffable Name of God.” In *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, edited by Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky, 45-59. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000.

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another’s language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Attendance, Preparation, and Participation	15%
Short Quizzes (at least weekly)	30%
Mid-Term Exam	20%
Final Exam	35%

NOTE: Make-up quizzes will be allowed only in the most special of circumstances. Also, please keep in mind that quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class periods. This means that you need to make it to class on time in order to have the full amount of time devoted to quizzes – generally 10 to 15 minutes.

Required Books

At first glance, this list of books may seem like a lot, and expensive. However, one cannot learn Biblical Hebrew without BHS, a lexicon, and a grammar. The other two required texts are both very worthwhile resources. You have to buy one of these (*Jewish Study Bible*) for Scripture I. The laminated sheet with a sketch of Hebrew grammar is relatively inexpensive.

Berlin, Adele, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael A. Fishbane, eds. *Jewish Study Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

The *Jewish Study Bible* (JSB) presents the New Jewish Publication Society (NJPS) translation of the Masoretic Text (MT) presented in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). The NJPS does not use any other Hebrew manuscripts or ancient translations. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the New International Version (NIV), on the other hand, do use other Hebrew manuscripts and ancient language translations, e.g., Hebrew scrolls from Qumran (a.k.a. the Dead Sea Scrolls), the Greek Septuagint (LXX), and the Latin Vulgate. So... when you are translating the Hebrew Bible using the MT presented in the BHS for this class, and you want to see how someone else has translated the same thing, the NJPS translation provided in the JSB can provide useful, comparable assistance.

NOTE: Oxford did not produce the translation used in the *Jewish Study Bible*. The Jewish Publication Society produced the translation known as NJPS, and Oxford uses it by permission for the *Jewish Study Bible*. Similarly, study Bibles like *HarperCollins Study Bible* and *Oxford Annotated Study Bible* present a translation (the NRSV) created by someone else. The New Revised Standard Version translation committee created the NRSV. As you go through seminary, do not confuse publishers of study Bibles with the producers of translations!

Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

This is the most affordable, up-to-date, one-volume Hebrew dictionary (or lexicon) on the market. While this is not the most thorough lexicon (the best costs \$250 retail), it should be more than serviceable for our class and useful for the future. Even if you already have a lexicon (e.g., BDB, HALOT, or Holladay), I want everyone to have and use this dictionary. I make this a required text to facilitate class instruction, discussion, and, ultimately, learning of the class as a whole.

Elliger, K. and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967/77.

This is the current, complete critical edition of the Hebrew Bible. It is often known as BHS. It presents a Masoretic Text (MT) of the Hebrew Bible and footnotes that detail variant readings found in other Hebrew manuscripts and ancient language translations. BHS comes in various sizes at various prices. I have ordered the small paperback edition, the compact hardback edition, and the large (standard) hardback edition for the bookstore. You may choose which one of the three you want to have and use. For ease of reading, the large (standard) edition comes recommended. The smaller editions fit better in backpacks and cost less.

Kittel, Bonnie Pedrotti, Victoria Hoffer, and Rebecca Abts Wright. *Biblical Hebrew: Text and Workbook*. 2nd revised edition by Victoria Hoffer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

This is the grammar for the class. Keep in mind that a grammar is a means to an ends. At the end of the day, the most important texts are the BHS and your lexicon (dictionary). Grammars help you bring the two together in a productive way. There is much that I like about this grammar.

Pratico, Gary D., and Miles V. Van Pelt. *Biblical Hebrew: Laminated Sheet*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2005.

This is a relatively inexpensive summary of Hebrew grammar presented conveniently on several laminated pages. I want everyone to have this as a resource to which we will refer as we move through the grammar.

Other Possibly Helpful Resources/Other Books on Reserve

Hoffer, Victoria. *Biblical Hebrew: Supplement for Advanced Comprehension*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. (ISBN: 9780300098631)

This is a supplement to the grammar. As the grammar has enough to work with within it, I am not requiring this for the class. However, I do want you to know about its availability. I will place a copy on reserve.

NOTE: Another resource that I am not requiring you to purchase is a 3-CD set associated with the grammar that helps with vocalization. The third of these, by the way, covers the vocabulary listed in the back of the back of the grammar. I will place the 3-CD set on reserve.

Mitchel, Larry A. *A Student's Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1984.

This book provides a list of Hebrew vocabulary arranged by frequency of use in the Hebrew Bible. It could be a productive tool for reviewing the vocabulary emphasized in this class. Basically, it is not as “busy” as the vocabulary list in the back of the grammar, and you might find this helpful. You might want to photocopy the first several “sections” of the book to use as we move through the semester.

Landes, George M. *Building Your Hebrew Vocabulary*. SBL Resources for Biblical Study 41. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.

This is another Hebrew vocabulary resource. This groups words by “roots.” In many ways, this approach can help you achieve a deeper Hebrew vocabulary than Mitchel’s approach. For an intro class, I give Mitchel the nod for usefulness, but I want to inform you of this excellent text. After you have learned more about how Hebrew words are formed, you might want to spend some time with this to reinforce understanding. For example, look at the first entry on page 47 and notice how different nouns relate to the verb “to eat.”

Key Dates for the Semester

NOTE: This schedule only intends to provide key dates for the semester. I will announce the grammar reading and assignments for each week at the end of class on Thursday or Friday (depending on your section). Please note that I want everyone to attend a session at which we will cover Hebrew consonants and vowels BEFORE the semester begins. There is much to do in this one semester. Having spent some time with just the consonants and vowels before the actual semester begins will make life much easier and more rewarding.

DATE TBD	Hebrew Consonants and Vowels Instruction
9/8 (Section 2) or 9/9 (Section 1)	First Day of Class
10/20 (Section 2) or 10/21 (Section 1)	Mid-Term Exam
10/24-10/28	Research and Study Week: NO CLASS
11/21-11/25	Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS
12/6 (Section 2) or 12/7 (Section 1)	Last Day of Class
12/9	Exam Review Sessions
12/12-12/13	Research and Study Days
DATE TBD	Final Exam