

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL HEBREW
Fall semester 2012

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Course Description

In this course we will learn the elements of biblical Hebrew on the basis of the grammar called *The First Hebrew Primer – The Adult Beginners Path to Biblical Hebrew – Third Edition* (Oakland, CA: EKS Publishing, 1992), by Ethelyn Simon, Irene Resnikoff and Linda Motzkin, a very student-friendly book. The study of language is always time-consuming and students need to manage their time carefully so they achieve a balance between Hebrew and their other classes. Memorization is a key part of learning any language and this is no less so for Hebrew. Hebrew is not so much a difficult language as one that is strange to Western perceptions because of the difference in alphabet as well as direction of reading. Daily reading practice will do much to become more familiar with the language; read a few words or sentences every day for 10 minutes in addition to working on assignments.

Required texts:

The First Hebrew Primer – The Adult Beginners Path to Biblical Hebrew – Third Edition (Oakland, CA: EKS Publishing, 1992), by Ethelyn Simon, Irene Resnikoff and Linda Motzkin CD's and Supplement.

This grammar originated with the late Ethelyn Simon as a result of her attempt to learn Hebrew as an older adult. Two other editors worked with her on the grammar which is published by Claudia at EKS publishing.

Flashcards to help memorizing vocabulary listed in the Primer, available in the bookstore.

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

Yay! You no longer have to wrestle your way through Brown/Driver/Briggs, also called BDB, or spend a fortune on the newest lexicon by Koehler/Baumgartner.

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

English Bibles: The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003)

The Jewish Study Bible (These Bibles will also be used in the Scripture I course)

These Bibles will become more important as the course progresses and during the Second Semester Exegesis course.

Course Objectives

The main objective of the course, besides gaining sufficient knowledge of the Hebrew language, is to foster enthusiasm for and commitment to the Hebrew language so it will continue to inform the student's ability to critically and imaginatively interpret Scripture. Sufficient knowledge of the Hebrew language means to read biblical texts making use of the original language with the help of lexical tools and examining the networks of meaning embedded in the text. Some regular practice of memorizing vocabulary will help to minimize the time spent looking up words. Introductory Hebrew is followed by Hebrew Exegesis, which affords the opportunity to improve reading, translating and interpretive skills at a steady rate. In addition, a course in reading and translating biblical Hebrew is offered each semester.

Method

The class will meet in two sections, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10-11:20 and 4:30-5:50. Smaller group meetings will facilitate processing grammar and questions. The groups will begin the class period with simple exercises to create a spirit of cooperative and relational learning. In addition the instructor will introduce a Hebrew WORD and its field of meaning at each class session to stimulate interest in the use of the language as it enables understanding of Scripture.

Class assistants will be on hand at all times and will set time aside outside of class to help with questions, homework and preparation for tests. These times will be announced at the beginning of classes. There will be regular in-class reflection on Hebrew concepts arising from the keywords introduced, as well as written tests during the course, a mid-term test and a final.

Requirements and grading

- 1 . **In preparation for this course**, all students are expected to have worked through the first sections in Grammar book dealing with alphabet, special letters, simple reading (pp.1-24). There will be two prep sessions to help with this during TSE.
2. Homework to be checked during class.
3. Written tests, roughly every other week. Some of the tests will emphasize vocabulary, others will be oriented toward grammar and translation. Since the course is not designed to prepare you to speak the Hebrew language, translations in tests will be from Hebrew to English and not vice versa.

4. There will be one mid-term examination, immediately following Research and Study week and a final test during exam days in December.
5. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Excuses must be cleared with the instructor ahead of time. All homework and other assignments need to be completed on time.

Class Attendance, Preparation and Participation	30 %
Short Quizzes	30%
Mid-term	15%
Final exam	25%

Policy on Inclusive Language:

In speech and in written assignments, it is the policy of the school to avoid divisive terms that reinforce stereotypes or are pejorative. We do not use language that leaves out part of the population, perpetuates stereotyping, or diminishes importance. We do not use male pronouns (such as “men”) to refer to a group that includes females as well.

Direct quotations from translations of the Bible 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. (For a resource see: Van Wijk-Bos, Johanna W.H. . Reimagining God - The Case for Scriptural Diversity, [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1995].

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

For further assistance:

http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

The name(s) of God

The God of the Hebrew Bible goes by various names. Many draw on the ancient, Semitic, word for “god,” – *el* or *ilum*. You can find a form of this in the word *Elohim* (Gen.1:1), *El-Shaddai* (Gen.17:1), and *El-Elyon* (Gen.14:8).

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 these letters as “Jehovah” or THE LORD (in small caps). When vocalizing Biblical Hebrew, people traditionally read “Adonai,” when encountering the Tetragram. This practice is known as a “perpetual Ketiv/Qere (Ketiv= that which is written [in this case YHWH]; 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 “Adonia,” “Holy One,” or “Holy God,” or “Ha-Shem” (= the Name). For discussion about Christians speaking or writing the Tetragrammaton with vowels, see the following:

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*. Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel Kamisky ed. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000):49-59.

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. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an early date, since violations of seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.

Internet and Cell Phones

The use of laptop computers during class is discouraged. Cell phones are to be turned off. Exceptions may be requested from the instructor.

COMMENTS

- It will be tempting to think of this course as a “hoop” you need to jump through in order to finish your degree program and to leave all your hard-gained knowledge behind as soon as the first year is over. It is our hope that students will continue to apply the principles of Hebrew and put into practice the basic learnings of the course not only during the rest of their Seminary career but as they become teachers and pastors in their religious community.
- Before you know it, you will be dealing with fairly complex grammatical rules. You should take great care not to fall behind in this class for it will be almost impossible to catch up. Try to relax and keep studying, especially vocabulary and reading. Even if things don't make sense at first, they will most likely do so at second and third consideration. Studying too long at one time may be counterproductive. Find a method that works for you. Blocks of half-hour periods of studying with a break may work better than hours of uninterrupted concentration. Be sensitive to your brain. If it feels that it has stopped taking things in, give yourself a break, and return to the work later. If your brain stops working in the middle of class, try to keep listening, in spite of your frustration. Keep your attention as much as possible on the presentations; this is not the sort of class in which you can afford to tune the teacher out. Save your questions for the periods provided by the instructor and sessions with class assistants.

- We will begin at a fairly slow pace with one lesson per class session. When possible we will pick up more than one lesson at a time.
- Vocabulary is always included in assignments and will therefore not be separately listed.
- Oral reviews are also included and we will practice these in full session as much as possible.
- If you still need work on the alphabet, recognizing the letters, writing and naming them, by the end of the first class, use tutorial sessions for help.
- If the quantity of assignments seems overwhelming, remember that exercises are often repetitions of the same grammatical rule.
- THE SECRET OF LEARNING HEBREW: MEMORIZE, MEMORIZE, MEMORIZE.

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Anticipations:

- *You will probably feel that there is too much new vocabulary to memorize and that it's all too much, too much. Without a basic vocabulary there is not much one can do with a language, however, so word memorization will be a part of the course. Whether this comes easy to you or not, it will at times feel uninteresting theologically and boring. It is one of those tasks that has to be done. It may help to call to mind that all we do, also and perhaps especially the memorization of Hebrew vocabulary, we do "ad maiorem Dei gloriam," that is to say "for the greater glory of God."*
- *Your instructors cannot always read your minds, so let them know when you think you are being stretched to an unreasonable degree. Although in language instruction there is a certain amount of material that must be dealt with, we will try to be as flexible as possible about the schedule.*

CLASS SCHEDULE [This schedule may be modified depending on the progress of the class – it will be the same for both sections].

Before classes begin know your alphabet and vowel sounds. Unless specified otherwise, homework will be checked during class sessions orally. Be prepared to read Hebrew words aloud. Do some of the work every day rather than blocking out large amounts of time to get ready for class sessions. Make memorization and reading a part of your every day work habits.

Note that the biggest chunks of homework occur between Thursdays and Tuesdays. The oral reviews at the beginning of each lesson are important tools for reading and memorization skills.

The introduction of a Hebrew word and concepts arising from it will be a part of each class session and is not separately listed, except for the first session. It is called A WORD.

In preparation for Thursday September 6, practice reading the names on p.25 of the Primer. Know the names and sounds of the Hebrew Alphabet (check p.402), and of the vowels.

First class: Thursday September 6: Becoming acquainted exercise [we will try to have a short exercise at the beginning of each class; they will not be listed hereafter]. A WORD. Review of chs. Chs. 3 and 4. Introduction to Hebrew nouns and verbs. Definite and indefinite articles.

Homework for Tuesday September 11: Memorize vocabulary on p.26. Read through the lessons discussed so far, note questions and have them ready for class.

Translate exercises 1, 2, and 3 on p.29, 6 on p.30. Practice adding the definite article to the nouns in exercise 4. Take ten minutes each day to practice reading (the names on p.25 are helpful for this practice). Translate exercises 5 and 7 from English to Hebrew on p. 30. Write these out for yourself and read them aloud.

Tuesday September 11: Homework on pp.29 and 30. Lesson 5. Introduction to gendered nouns and verbs. The conjunction “and,” the preposition “from,” use of “it.” Practice exercise 6, p.37.

Homework for Thursday September 13: Memorize vocabulary, p. 32. Exercises 1, 2 and 3, p. 36. Oral review p.39.

Thursday September 13: Homework check, p.36. Lesson 6: Oral review. Masculine and feminine noun plurals, regular. Irregular plurals. Plural verbs. Inseparable prepositions.

Homework for September 18 and 20: Memorize all your vocabulary so far learned (see posted vocab list) Prepare exercises 6 on p.37, and 8, p.38. exercise 7, p.48 and 8, p.49. Read oral review p.50.

Tuesday September 18: Brief written quiz, emphasis on vocab. Lesson 7: The Perfect tense.

Verb charts in the perfect tense, beginning with the third masculine singular. Negative sentences.

Homework for Thursday September 20: Memorize verb chart. Translate exercise 3, p.54. exercise 11, p.58.

Thursday September 20: Homework check. Lesson 8. Oral Review p.59. Direct object in a sentence. Direct object in the Hebrew sentence. Three irregular verbs. Idiomatic

usage of certain expressions. Usage of “there was” and “there were.” The preposition “between.” Translation issues.

Homework for September 25 and 27: Exercises 5, 6, p.55; 9, p.57. exercise 2, 5, p.65, exercise 7, p.66. Read and translate A Tall Tale, p.68. Memorize new vocabulary, pp.51 and 60. Prepare to read oral review Lesson 9, p.70

Tuesday September 25: Homework check. Oral review p.70. Word pairs (known in traditional grammars as the Hebrew construct chain).

Homework for Thursday September 27: Exercise 4, p.76. Oral review p.81.

Thursday September 27: Homework check. Oral review p.81. Lesson 10: Recognizing word pairs/construct chain in the plural. Definition and lack of definition in construct chains.

Homework for October 2 and 4: Memorize all vocabulary studied so far (make use of your flashcard set 1). Prepare exercise 7, p 77. A Tall Tale 79 and 80. Exercises 1, 2, 3 p.87. A Tall Tale pp.89/90. Oral Review p.93.

Tuesday October 2: Brief quiz, emphasis on vocab. Lesson 11. The Imperfect tense in Hebrew. Recognition and Translation. Verb charts.

Homework for Oct.4: Exercise 5, p. 100. Oral Review, p.105.

Thursday October 4: Homework check. Lesson 12. Irregular Verbs: Drop letter Imperfects: *yada', laqah, yashav, halakh, amar* and *akhal*. Identification of dropped letters.

Homework for October 9 and 11: Exercise 4, p.99. Ruth, p.104. Exercises 1 and 2, p.109, exercise 5 and 6, p.110; Ruth p.114. Oral Review p.115.

Tuesday October 9: Homework check. Lesson 13: Noun sentences: how to translate Hebrew sentences that lack a verb. How to translate the extra pronoun. The use of *yesh*, usage of *'eyn* and *lo'*. Imperfect of the verb *hayah*. This and These.

Homework for October 11: Exercise 3, p.120. Ruth, p.125. Oral Review p.126.

Thursday October 11: Homework check. Lesson 14. Adjective, form and usage. The word *me'od*. This and These, and That and Those. *Min* in comparisons.

At this point we are about half-way through the grammar if all has gone well. There will be a mid-term following Research and Study week. Review sessions of the

grammar will be provided during Research and Study week by instructor and class assistants. The mid-term will consist of questions concerning Hebrew grammar and a translation of Hebrew sentences. The test will be administered electronically on the evening of October 23 and will be returned to the instructor electronically following the guidelines that accompany the test.

Tuesday October 23: Lesson 15. Oral Review. “My voice/your voice.” “Your land/my land.” What makes a noun definite?

Homework for October 25: Exercise 3, p.144. Oral Review p.150.

Thursday October 25: Homework check. Lesson 16. Oral Review, p.150. Prepositions and pronoun endings. Expressions of possession in the Hebrew sentence.

Homework for October 30 and November 1: Exercise 6, p.145. A Tall Tale, p.147. Exercises 1, 2, p.158. Exercise 4, p.159. DON'T FORGET TO KEEP MEMORIZING VOCABULARY! WORK ON SETS 1 AND 2 OF YOUR FLASHCARDS.

Tuesday October 30: Homework check. Lesson 17: The reversing Vav. Clipped forms. “He said/she said.” The “Throaty Five” imperfects.

Homework November 1: Exercise 7, p.173; Ruth p.178. Oral Review, p.179.

Thursday November 1: Brief quiz, emphasis on vav reversion, and clipped forms. Homework check. Lesson 18. The Participle. Understanding the form in the target language, understanding and use of the Hebrew participle. N.B. The Hebrew participle is far more flexible in usage and translation than the English participle. It is very important to understand its usage in the Hebrew Bible.

Homework for November 6 and 8: Exercise 3, p.171, exercise 4, p.172. Exercise 1 and 3, p. 187. Exercise 5, p.188. Ruth, p.193. Oral Review, p.194. Note that from now on two lessons will be discussed on Tuesdays and all homework for the week will be checked on Thursdays, with the exception of Thanksgiving week. Do not let this system tempt you to wait with doing your homework.

Tuesday November 6: Lessons 19 and 20. Commands in English and Hebrew (trad. Imperative forms). Distinguishing a mood from a tense. Numbers! 1-10. The English and Hebrew Infinitives. Verb Review.

Homework November 8: Exercise 3, p. 199. Ruth, p.207. Oral Review p.208. Begin working with Flashcards Set 3.

Thursday November 8: Homework check on lessons 17, 18 and 19.

Homework for November 13 and 15: Exercise 4, p.200. Exercises 1, and 2, p. 219. Exercise 4, p.220; Exercise 7, p.221. Ruth, p.225. Oral Review, p.226.

Tuesday November 13: Lessons 21 and 22. Hollow verbs and the sentence in question form. Possessive endings of plural nouns. Idioms. 'Eyn, Hinneh, and Kol with endings.

Homework for November 15: Exercise 3, p.232. Exercise 7, p.233. Oral Review p.240.

Thursday November 15: All homework for the week checked: Lessons 19, 20, and 21.

Homework for November 20: Exercise 5, p.232, exercise 9, p.234 (try to do this exercise while checking a standard translation afterwards). Ruth, p.239. Exercise 3, p.245. Ruth p. 253.

Tuesday November 20: Homework check; no new lessons.

Homework for November 27 and 29: Grammar review; Vocabulary sets 1, 2 and 3. Oral Reviews pp.254 and 255.

Tuesday November 27: Brief quiz, emphasis on vocab. Lessons 23 and 24. New verb patterns: Pi'el and Hif'il.

Homework for November 29: Exercise 3, p.259. Exercise 4, p.276.

Thursday November 29: Homework check, exercises and oral reviews.

Homework December 4 and 6: Exercise 8, p.262. Exercise 6, p.277. A Tall Tale as much as you can translate, pp.278-280.

LAST WEEK OF CLASSES COMING UP!

Tuesday December 4: Lessons 25 and 26: Hif'il variations and Hif'il hollow verbs.

Thursday December 6: Lessons 27, 28, and 29: Nif'al and Hitpa'el variations.

We will give a thorough review of these lessons, and minimize the use of verb forms from Nif'al variations while not using Hitpa'el forms on the final exam. Practice the forms by doing exercises 4, p.291, exercise 4, and 6, p.308 and 4, p.338. We will begin the exegesis course in the spring semester by revisiting these lessons. For the final exam, prep by rehearsing all vocabulary, practicing some extra exercises, attending review sessions.

Final exam day and time to be determined. The exam will be administered electronically and will be returned electronically following guidelines provided.

