

OT 4001 Reading Old Testament Hebrew
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Spring 2023
Wed 11:00 AM
The Winn Center

Prerequisites

Elements of Biblical Hebrew

Instructor Contact

Justin Reed

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Office Hours: email for appointment

Course Description

In this course, students who already have a basic foundation in biblical Hebrew will work through translating passages from the books of Judges and Ruth in order to refine their skills in translation and vocalization of the Hebrew text. In the course of our translation exercises, students will develop their own philosophy of translation reflecting their unique interests and values.

Learning Goals

By completing this course, students will:

1. Demonstrate competence in basic biblical Hebrew vocabulary.
2. Practice identifying Hebrew roots and stems.
3. Increase their confidence and ability in vocalizing biblical Hebrew.
4. Practice demonstrating a critical awareness of the interpretive decisions involved in translation as well as their own role in such decision making.

Required Books

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)

A Lexicon from among the choices below, or another approved by instructor:

- *Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew English Lexicon* (BDB)
- *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT)
- Holladay, William. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)

Recommended Book

Hackett, Jo Ann. *A Basic Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (Hackett)

Grading

Translation Preparation	25%
Participation	50%
Final Presentation	25%

Assignments

Translation Preparation

Each week, students must follow the instructions below for their translations. In each hyperlink in the schedule below, students will find a Google Document that contains the Hebrew text that needs to be translated. A complete assignment includes each of the following steps:

1. Read through the entire biblical chapter in English. Since we are only translating a small portion of each chapter, reading the whole chapter will give you some context for the translation.
2. Read and translate the assigned verses FROM YOUR OWN COPY OF *BHS*. Why? Because *BHS* has text critical notes that are not included in the online document. You should pay attention to these text critical notes when it is relevant to the translation you create. We will occasionally discuss those notes in class.
3. Write your English translation **in a separate document**. You do not need to turn in your English translation. You need to have it prepared for us to discuss in class. (This will directly impact your participation grade.) In your English translation, pay attention to the rules of Hebrew. During class, I will be asking students to break down all the pieces of a sentence.
4. Use the shared Google document to write and discuss footnotes with one another. I will review these footnotes to determine your grade in translation preparation. At every point in which you would write a footnote for translation issues, please put the footnote with the corresponding Hebrew word(s) in this document.
 - a. To add a footnote, click Insert : Footnote.
 - b. Begin the footnote with your own name as indicated in the example below.
 - c. If you comment on the same footnote as someone else, do not add another footnote to the same Hebrew word. Simply add your comment within the same footnote as indicated in the example below.

Participation

During class, additional assessment of the translation will be based upon the following areas:

- vocalization of the Hebrew text
- identification of Hebrew roots
- parsing of verbal stems and conjugations
- explaining one's rationale for translation decisions

Since students know that these are the areas of assessment ahead of time, each student should practice becoming comfortable with these elements of biblical Hebrew as they arise in the course of working on and reviewing homework.

Final Presentations

Every translation includes a litany of interpretive decisions being made (hopefully) consciously and (more often) unconsciously. In this class, students are asked to think critically about those decisions and to come up with a final project that demonstrates their conscientious translation philosophies with regards to the issues of interpretation that students deem most interesting, urgent, productive, misunderstood, etc.

For this final assignment, students can work individually or cooperate with others. Each student will select one issue to explore. Students will prepare presentations that will lead the class to understand the issue in more depth. Each student is allotted approximately 15 minutes, but that may change depending on the number of student presentations.

For the issue discussed, the student **must** address the questions listed below, but students have the liberty to dedicate more time to any one question over another:

- What is the interpretive issue?
- What are some options that have been taken in different translations? Are there options that you find appealing that you don't see in any translations?
- What issues of grammar make each option preferable and not preferable?
- What issues outside of grammar make each option preferable and not preferable?
- Why do you interpret this word, phrase, name, verse, etc. the way that you do?

Students are encouraged to be creative with the medium and content of their presentations.

Course Schedule

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Hebrew Translation</u>
1	2/8	
2	2/15	
3	2/22	Ruth 1:1-7
4	3/1	Ruth 1:8-18
5	3/8	Ruth 2:1-2, 8-12, 19-20
	3/15	READING WEEK NO CLASS
6	3/22	Ruth 3:3-4, 7-11
7	3/29	Judges 2:10-17
8	4/5	Judges 3:15-22
	4/12	Judges 12:1-6
9	4/19	Judges 14:2-3, 8, 14, 17-18
10	4/26	Judges 16:1-4
11	5/3	Final Presentations

Course Policies

Inclusive and Expansive Language

Whether you are aware of this fact or not, Louisville Seminary emphasizes the use of inclusive and expansive language with regards to people in our written and oral communications. This intentionality of language should be representative of the span of humanity with respect to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, as well as physical and intellectual capacities. With gender, for example, “humankind” is an inclusive alternative to the androcentric term “mankind.” For many of us, this type of writing, speaking, and thinking may be new or different and we encourage you to continue to work with it as one aspect of proclaiming the truth of the gospel for all people.

In this course, we will also discuss God with this intentionality of language in mind. While it is clear that the Bible often uses masculine forms to refer to God, the Christian faith has always taught that God is beyond male and female. In keeping with the Christian conviction that God is neither male nor female and the attempt to remain intentional with our language, you are encouraged to either avoid gendered pronouns when referring to God or use pronouns that intentionally reflect the metaphors, theology, or claims you are making. Part of this expectation is that members of this community will be intentional with what we say rather than complicit in perpetuating biases (especially those we do not agree with) based upon our ignorance or lack of effort. To help us remain intentional with our language, the instructor may encourage students, on occasion, to remain cognizant of the language that we use.

Direct quotations and translations from the biblical text need not be altered to conform with this policy; but you may conscientiously alter these as well if you so choose.

Attendance

Prompt attendance is mandatory. Excessive tardiness (in time or frequency) constitutes an absence. Two unexcused absences negate your grading contract. If absences become a problem, students must meet with the instructor regarding the possibility of passing this class.

Excused absences are rarely possible with the consent of the instructor. However, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor ahead of time via email, and you will be required to submit work above and beyond what is required for your peers in order to make up for the absence.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to submit their own work—or their own group’s work in the cases where we have group assignments. The use of any ideas or words from an outside source must be acknowledged by an appropriate citation of the author and source. Failure to follow these guidelines constitutes plagiarism and may result in failure of this course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff at the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center 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.

Policy on Late Work

All translations must be done on time. Students may be offered grace with regards to one day’s translation. Each subsequent late translation will drop your overall grade by half a grade.

Bibliography

- Arnold, Bill T., and John H. Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs. *A Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.
- Hackett, Jo Ann. *A Basic Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.
- Holladay, William L. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner. *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated by M. E. J. Richardson. Study Edition. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Scott, William R. *A Simplified Guide to BHS: Critical Apparatus, Masora, Accents, Unusual Letters and Other Markings*. 4th ed. Berkeley, CA: Bibal Press, 1987.
- Waltke, Bruce K., and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraus, 1990.
- Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. 5th corrected edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.