

Hebrew Bible Beginning Biblical Hebrew I

Professor	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	Course	Version 3.1
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1 Course Description

An introduction to the basic principles of biblical Hebrew with emphasis on morphology, phonology, and syntax, this course is for students who want to study the Old Testament in Hebrew. We will learn basic Hebrew grammar, develop a rudimentary biblical Hebrew vocabulary, and read the Hebrew Bible with an eye toward interpretation of the Bible in the Church. (This course is open to undergraduate students from other universities. Please contact the AST Registrar to enroll as a Letter of Permission student.)

Prerequisites: none. The course is required for HB 2202 and more advanced biblical Hebrew.

2 Learning Objectives

The basic goal of this course is to become proficient in the rudiments of biblical Hebrew. The introductory course is designed for two semesters of study, and it is presumed that students will take the course for the entire academic year. In the first semester students will learn everything from the alphabet to the basics of Hebrew nouns and verbs. In the second semester the emphasis will fall on less regular paradigms (learned inductively) and more complicated syntax. The steady acquisition of vocabulary will be emphasized across both semesters.

Language learning is hard work. It can also be fun and gratifying. To aid in the enjoyment, we will sing songs together, memorize and recite passages of scripture, and assist one another in a variety of ways as we undertake the necessary drills and repetitions.

3 Required Texts & Materials

The following texts are required. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase their own copies.

- [BBH] John A. Cook and Robert D. Holmstedt. *Beginning Biblical Hebrew: A Grammar and Illustrated Reader*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. ISBN 978-0801048869. Study aids are available at <www.bakeracademic.com>.
- [TM] Takamitsu Muraoka. *A Biblical Hebrew Reader: With an Outline Grammar*. Leuven: Peeters, 2017. ISBN 978-9042934900.
- [BHS] *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997. ISBN 978-1598561630. A paperback edition, marketed to students, is also available. Students will be asked to have a critical edition of the Hebrew Bible by the start of the Winter semester. The instructor will provide photocopies in the interim.

4 Supplementary Texts

The following reference works are worth owning and consulting. [Making Sense] in particular contains sound advice on core skills like reading religious texts, writing essays and reviews, revising essays, making oral presentations, and learning languages.

- [Making Sense] Northey, Margot, Bradford A. Anderson, and Joel N. Lohr. *Making Sense in Religious Studies: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN 978-0199026838.
- [SBL2] Collins, Billie Jean, et al. *The SBL Handbook of Style*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1589839649. See the free [Student Supplement](#).

Among the many Hebrew grammars and resources, note the following especially:

- Guides
 - Van Pelt, Miles. *English Grammar to Ace Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
 - Scott, W. R., and H. P. Rüger. *A Simplified Guide to BHS: Critical Apparatus, Masora, Accents, Unusual Letters & Other Markings*. 3rd edition. N. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 1995.

- Grammars

- Pratico, Gary and Miles Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.
- Seow, C. L. *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.
- Weingreen, J. *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1959.
- Martin, J. D. *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar*. 27th edition. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993. This is the grammar I was assigned in Scotland.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm, E. Kautsch and A. E. Cowley. *Hebrew Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910. **GKC** remains a standard Hebrew reference grammar in English, even though Cowley's translation – of the 28th German edition – is now over 100 years old.
- Joüon, P., and T. Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. 2nd edition. Subsidia Biblica 27. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2008. One of the most complete and up-to-date Hebrew grammars in English, **JM** (1st ed. 1991) was revised from a French work first published by Paul Joüon in 1923.

- Lexicons

- Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2004. The **BDB** was originally published in 1906 (note the reliance on Gesenius: [archive.org](http://www.archive.org)).
- Köhler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
- Clines, David J. A. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2011.

5 Course Outline

We will adhere to the schedule in [Table 1](#) as closely as possible, though the professor reserves the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

See the AST website for a list of other [important dates](#).

6 Evaluation

The grade structure for HB 2201 has the following elements.

1. Students are expected to complete all lessons and exercises from [[BBH](#)], and to study and master all sections (§) from [[TM](#)]. **Quizzes** based on the weekly assignments will be given regularly. Some of these may come directly from [[BBH](#)].
2. A cumulative **midterm exam** will be given in the last half of the sixth class.
3. A comprehensive **final exam** will be given in the last half of the twelfth class.

The breakdown for the semester's total work is shown in [Table 2](#).

AST's [Academic Calendar](#) provides guidelines and detailed criteria for academic assessment. Marks are assigned by letter grade using these benchmarks (summarized in [Table 3](#)). Note that, at AST, a grade of "C" is deemed "Unsatisfactory."

L. BBH Grammar Lesson	TM	Due Date
1. שלום, The Consonants	§1	13 Sept.
2. The Vowels		
3. שוּא (Shəva)		
4. דָּגֶשׁ (Dagesh)		
5. Subject Pronouns: Singular	§3–4	20 Sept.
7. Copular Clauses		
6. Nouns: Singular		
8. The Article and the Interrogative הַ	§5–7	27 Sept.
9. לְ of Possession: Singular		
r-1. מִקְרָא א (Reading 1)		
10. Nouns: Plural and Dual	§8	4 Oct.
11. Subject Pronouns: Plural		
12. יֵשׁ and אֵין	§9–10a	11 Oct.
13. Conjunction וַ and Prepositions בּ, ל, מִן		
14. שְׁאֵלוֹת (Questions)		18 Oct.
r-2. מִקְרָא ב (Genesis 3א)		
☞ Midterm Exam (last half of class)		
~. No Class: AST Fall Term Break		25 Oct.
15. Verbs: A Preview	§11	1 Nov.
16. קָל Perfect Conjugation: Singular		
17. לְ of Possession: Plural	§12–15	8 Nov.
18. Word Order		
r-3. מִקְרָא ג (Genesis 22א)		
19. קָל Perfect Conjugation: Plural	§16–17	15 Nov.
20. סְמִיכוֹת (Bound Nouns)		
21. The Irreal Use of the Perfect Conjugation	§18–19	22 Nov.
22. Attached Pronouns: Singular		
23. קֵל Imperfect Conjugation: Singular		
r-4. מִקְרָא ד (Genesis 37א)		29 Nov.
24. The Infinitive	§20	
25. The Adverbial Infinitive		
26. Objects	§21–22	6 Dec.
r-5. מִקְרָא ה (Genesis 3ב)		
☞ Final Exam (last half of class)		

Table 1: Schedule of Lessons & Readings

Quizzes	40%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

A+	94–100	Exceptional
A	87–93	Outstanding
A–	80–86	Excellent
B+	77–79	Good
B	73–76	Acceptable
B–	70–72	Marginally Acceptable
C	60–69	Unsatisfactory
F	0–59	Failure
FP	0	Failure due to Plagiarism

Table 3: Outline of Grades at AST

7 Other Course Policy

Late work will not be accepted, except in genuinely extenuating circumstances. Students must submit something before the deadline if they wish to receive credit. Unless I state otherwise, written assignments are to be uploaded by 11:59 PM on the date indicated.

Essay submissions must be typewritten, double-spaced, and formatted as PDFs. They should be free from error. In this course they should follow SBL Style (see [SBL2] in [section 4](#), above). As a reminder, AST also upholds an Inclusive Language Policy.

Plagiarism, if **detected**, will result in failure of the course.

Students should request permission to record a class or lecture. If permission is granted, or if recordings are provided (as in the case of an online course), I stipulate that all recordings be for personal use only. They may not be shared or distributed.

If you have abilities or disabilities that require modifications to the assessment process or other aspects of this course, please advise the course instructor as soon as possible.

Finally, I encourage the conscientious use of laptops, tablets, and other technology in my classes. In classroom settings, realize that, as **cognitive psychologists have demonstrated**, “laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers.” Do your part to foster an environment of open dialogue by honouring the presence of your classmates. In online settings, consider both the physical environment in which you choose to work and the virtual environment that you help create through your participation in various forums. Let your engagement in this course be marked by rigour and charity alike.