The **sblfonts** Package

David Purton*

2026/01/15 v1.0

Abstract

The **sblfonts** package provides a LaTeX style for setting up font and language support for documents conforming to the requirements of the Society of Biblical Literature. Greek and Hebrew languages are supported using the SBL fonts. If these fonts are not available then fonts included with TeXLive are used.

Contents

1   Introduction

This package is intended to be used with the SBL fonts and a Unicode TeX engine (`lualatex` is recommended). The SBL fonts are free for personal use and can be downloaded from `https://www.sbl-site.org/resources/fonts/`. It is, however, possible to use the package with any Unicode font and there is limited support for 8bit fonts under `pdflatex` (in particular pointed Hebrew is not easily possible).

1.1   Usage

To use default LaTeX fonts, load the package with no options. The LaTeX source is shown in Figure 1 and the output is shown in Figure 2.

In reality, you will want to install the SBL fonts, use `lualatex`, and load the package with `\usepackage[sblfonts]{sblfonts}`. Note that it is not necessary to mark up inline Greek and Hebrew with `lualatex`.

---

*Email: `dcpurton@marshwiggle.net`

```latex
\documentclass{article}
\usepackage{sblfonts}
\begin{document}
\begin{quotation}
  \selectlanguage{polytonicgreek}
  Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
  οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.
\end{quotation}
\begin{quotation}
  \selectlanguage{hebrew}
  בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ: והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך
  על־פני תהום ורוח אלהים מרחפת על־פני המים:
\end{quotation}
Inline Greek (\foreignlanguage{polytonicgreek}{Ἐν ἀρχῇ}) and Hebrew
(\foreignlanguage{hebrew}{בראשית}) are also possible.
\end{document}
```

Figure 1: Example LATEX source showing default Greek and Hebrew fonts.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ: והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על־פני תהום ורוח אלהים מרחפת על־פני המים:

Inline Greek (Ἐν ἀρχῇ) and Hebrew (בראשית) are also possible.

Figure 2: Example output showing Greek and Hebrew in default LATEX fonts.

1.2 Bug Reports and Feature Requests

Bug reports and feature requests can be made at the sbltex GitHub repository. See https://github.com/dcpurton/sbltex.

2 Package Options

mainfont mainfont = ⟨*package*⟩ | ⟨*fontspec name*⟩   Default: *unset*

Set the main font. Under `pdftex` this is the name of a font package to load. Under Unicode engines it should be a fontspec name which is passed to `\babelfont`. The optional arguments passed to the package or `\babelfont` can be specified in the `mainfontoptions` option.

mainfontoptions mainfontoptions = ⟨*package options*⟩ | ⟨*fontspec options*⟩   Default: *unset*

The optional arguments passed to the font package under `pdflatex` or `\babelfont` under Unicode engines.

grfont grfont = ⟨*NFSS font*⟩ | ⟨*fontspec name*⟩   Default: *unset*

Set the Greek font. For `pdflatex` this should be an NFSS font name which supports the LGR encoding. For Unicode engines this should be a fontspec font name. If unset, then under `pdflatex` the default font is `grmn1000` and under Unicode engines the default font is CMU Serif or `mainfont` if it supports Greek.

hefont hefont = ⟨*NFSS font*⟩ | ⟨*fontspec name*⟩   Default: *unset*

Set the Hebrew font. For `pdflatex` this should be an NFSS font name which supports the NHE8 encoding. For Unicode engines this should be a fontspec font name. If unset, then under `pdflatex` the default font is `david` and under Unicode engines the default font is DavidCLM or `mainfont` if it supports Hebrew.

In reality, `pdflatex` is really only supported for interest. You should use `lualtex` for any right-to-left languages.

2.1 Unicode only options

The following options control whether the SBL Greek and Hebrew fonts should be used.

sblfonts sblfonts = true | false | fallback   Default: fallback

This is a shortcut option for setting both `sblgreek` and `sblhebrew` at the same time.

sblgreek sblgreek = true | false | fallback   Default: fallback

This option controls if and when the SBL Greek font should be used. The order of fonts tried for each option is:

true SBL BibLit, SBL Greek, Alegreya.

false `mainfont` (if specified) otherwise CMU Serif. This is useful if the test to detect Greek support in `mainfont` is not accurate.

fallback `mainfont` (if specified and if Greek is supported) otherwise CMU Serif.

sblhebrew = true | false | fallback   Default: fallback

This option controls if and when the SBL Hebrew font should be used. The order of fonts tried for each option is:

true SBL BibLit, SBL Hebrew, Frank Ruehl CLM.

false `mainfont` (if specified) otherwise DavidCLM. This is useful if the test to detect Hebrew support in `mainfont` is not accurate.

fallback `mainfont` (if specified and if Hebrew is supported) otherwise DavidCLM.

3 Implementation

```
1  ⟨*package⟩
2  ⟨@@=sblfonts⟩

3  \NeedsTeXFormat{LaTeX2e}
4  \ProvidesExplPackage{sblfonts}{2026/01/15}{1.0}
5    {Society of Biblical Literature Font and Language Set Up (DCP)}

6  \keys_define:nn { sblfonts }
7    {
8      , mainfont        .tl_set:N    = \l__sblfonts_mainfont_tl
9      , mainfontoptions .clist_set:N = \l__sblfonts_mainfont_options_clist
10     , grfont          .tl_set:N    = \l__sblfonts_grfont_tl
11     , hefont          .tl_set:N    = \l__sblfonts_hefont_tl
12    }

13 \sys_if_engine_opentype:T
14   {
15     \keys_define:nn { sblfonts }
16       {
17         , sblfonts  .choices:nn = { true, false, fallback }
18                                   {
19                                     \str_set:NV
20                                       \l__sblfonts_sblgreek_str
21                                       \l_keys_choice_str
22                                     \str_set:NV
23                                       \l__sblfonts_sblhebrew_str
24                                       \l_keys_choice_str
25                                   }
26         , sblfonts  .default:n  = { true }
27         , sblgreek  .choices:nn = { true, false, fallback }
28                                   {
29                                     \str_set:NV
30                                       \l__sblfonts_sblgreek_str
31                                       \l_keys_choice_str
32                                   }
33         , sblgreek  .default:n  = { true }
34         , sblgreek  .initial:n  = { fallback }
35         , sblhebrew .choices:nn = { true, false, fallback }
36                                   {
37                                     \str_set:NV
38                                       \l__sblfonts_sblhebrew_str
```

```
39                                             \l_keys_choice_str
40                                         }
41             , sblhebrew .default:n = { true }
42             , sblhebrew .initial:n = { fallback }
43         }
44     }
```

```
45 \ProcessKeyOptions
```

3.1 Language Set Up

\babelprovide macros need to be run outside of ExplSyntax.

```
46 \ExplSyntaxOff
```

```
47 \newcommand*{\@sblfonts@load@american}{%
48     \babelprovide[import, main]{american}}
49 \newcommand*{\@sblfonts@load@polytonicgreek}{%
50     \babelprovide[import, onchar=ids fonts]{polytonicgreek}}
51 \newcommand*{\@sblfonts@load@hebrew}{%
52     \babelprovide[import, onchar=ids fonts]{hebrew}}
```

```
53 \ExplSyntaxOn
```

__sblfonts_load_languages: Load American, Polytonic Greek and Hebrew languages using babel.

```
54 \cs_new_protected:Nn \__sblfonts_load_languages:
55     {
56         \tl_if_eq:NnT \languagename { nil }
57             { \@sblfonts@load@american }
58         \@sblfonts@load@polytonicgreek
59         \@sblfonts@load@hebrew
60         \babeladjust{ select.write = shift }
61     }
```

```
62 \cs_set_eq:NN \@sblfonts@load@languages \__sblfonts_load_languages:
```

(*End of definition for* __sblfonts_load_languages:.)

```
63 \sys_if_engine_opentype:TF
64     {
65         \RequirePackage { fontspec }
66         \sys_if_engine_luatex:T
67             { \RequirePackage [ bidi=basic, provide*=* ] { babel } }
68         \sys_if_engine_xetex:T
69             { \RequirePackage [ bidi=default, provide*=* ] { babel } }
70     }
71     {
72         \RequirePackage [ NHE8, LGR, T1 ] { fontenc }
73         \RequirePackage [ bidi=default, provide*=* ] { babel }
74     }
```

\babelprovide macros need to be run outside of ExplSyntax.

```
75 \ExplSyntaxOff
76 \@sblfonts@load@languages
77 \ExplSyntaxOn
```

3.2 Font Set Up

__sblfonts_load_default_greek_font: Load the default LaTeX Greek font.

```
78 \cs_new_protected:Nn \__sblfonts_load_default_greek_font:
79   {
80     \babelfont [ polytonicgreek ] { rm }
81       [
82         Extension      = .otf ,
83         ItalicFont     = cmunti ,
84         BoldFont       = cmunbx ,
85         BoldItalicFont = cmunbi
86       ]
87       { cmunrm }
88   }
```

(*End of definition for __sblfonts_load_default_greek_font:.*)

__sblfonts_load_default_hebrew_font:

```
89 %
90 %   Load the default \LaTeX\ Hebrew font.
91 %
92 \cs_new_protected:Nn \__sblfonts_load_default_hebrew_font:
93   {
94     \babelfont [ hebrew ] { rm }
95       [
96         Extension      = .otf ,
97         UprightFont    = *-Medium ,
98         ItalicFont     = *-MediumItalic ,
99         BoldFont       = *-Bold ,
100        BoldItalicFont = *-BoldItalic
101      ]
102      { DavidCLM }
103  }
```

(*End of definition for __sblfonts_load_default_hebrew_font:.*)

```
104 \sys_if_engine_opentype:TF
105   {
```

Use main font for Greek and Hebrew if it supports it unless SBL fonts have been explicitly asked for. **Note:** Some fonts support only monotonic Greek, but there generally isn't a way to tell this without checking which glyphs are actually present.

```
106     \tl_if_empty:NTF \l__sblfonts_mainfont_tl
107       {
```

Initially set Greek and Hebrew to CMU Serif and David CLM

```
108         \__sblfonts_load_default_greek_font:
109         \__sblfonts_load_default_hebrew_font:
110       }
111       {
112         \babelfont { rm }
113           [ \l__sblfonts_mainfont_options_clist ]
114           { \l__sblfonts_mainfont_tl }
115         \fontspec_if_script:nF { grek }
116           {
```

```
117          \str_if_eq:VnT \l__sblfonts_sblgreek_str { fallback }
118            { \__sblfonts_load_default_greek_font: }
119        }
120      \fontspec_if_script:nF { hebr }
121        {
122          \str_if_eq:VnT \l__sblfonts_sblhebrew_str { fallback }
123            { \__sblfonts_load_default_hebrew_font: }
124        }
125      }
```

Try to load SBL fonts if asked for.

For Greek: SBL BibLit, SBL Greek, Alegreya

For Hebrew: SBL BibLit, SBL Hebrew, Frank Ruehl CLM

Note: The SBL font is strongly advised for biblical Hebrew. Alegreya and Frank Ruehl CLM are included in TeXLive so should be present.

```
126      \str_if_eq:VnT \l__sblfonts_sblgreek_str { true }
127        {
128          \fontspec_font_if_exist:nTF { SBL ~ BibLit }
129            {
130              \babelfont [ polytonicgreek ] { rm }
131                [
132                  ItalicFont     = SBL ~ BibLit ,
133                  BoldFont       = SBL ~ BibLit ,
134                  BoldItalicFont = SBL ~ BibLit
135                ]
136                { SBL ~ BibLit }
137            }
138            {
139              \fontspec_font_if_exist:nTF { SBL ~ Greek }
140                {
141                  \babelfont [ polytonicgreek ] { rm }
142                    [
143                      ItalicFont     = SBL ~ Greek ,
144                      BoldFont       = SBL ~ Greek ,
145                      BoldItalicFont = SBL ~ Greek
146                    ]
147                    { SBL ~ Greek }
148                }
149                {
150                  \babelfont [ polytonicgreek ] { rm }
151                    [
152                      Extension   = .otf ,
153                      UprightFont = *-Regular ,
154                      ItalicFont  = *-Italic ,
155                      BoldFont    = *-Bold ,
156                      BoldItalic  = *-BoldItalic
157                    ]
158                    { Alegreya }
159                }
160            }
161        }
162
```

```
163    \str_if_eq:VnT \l__sblfonts_sblhebrew_str { true }
164      {
165        \fontspec_font_if_exist:nTF { SBL ~ BibLit }
166          {
167            \babelfont [ hebrew ] { rm }
168              [
169                ItalicFont     = SBL ~ BibLit ,
170                BoldFont       = SBL ~ BibLit ,
171                BoldItalicFont = SBL ~ BibLit
172              ]
173              { SBL ~ BibLit }
174          }
175          {
176            \fontspec_font_if_exist:nTF { SBL ~ Hebrew }
177              {
178                \babelfont [ hebrew ] { rm }
179                  [
180                    ItalicFont     = SBL ~ Hebrew ,
181                    BoldFont       = SBL ~ Hebrew ,
182                    BoldItalicFont = SBL ~ Hebrew
183                  ]
184                  { SBL ~ Hebrew }
185              }
186              {
187                \babelfont [ hebrew ] { rm }
188                  [
189                    Extension = .ttf ,
190                    UprightFont = *-Medium ,
191                    ItalicFont = *-MediumOblique ,
192                    BoldFont = *-Bold ,
193                    BoldItalic = *-BoldOblique
194                  ]
195                  { FrankRuehlCLM }
196              }
197          }
198      }
```

Override Greek and Hebrew fonts if specified in **grfont** and **hefont** options.

```
199      \tl_if_empty:NF \l__sblfonts_grfont_tl
200        {
201          \babelfont [ polytonicgreek ] { rm } { \l__sblfonts_grfont_tl }
202        }
203      \tl_if_empty:NF \l__sblfonts_hefont_tl
204        {
205          \babelfont [ hebrew ] { rm } { \l__sblfonts_hefont_tl }
206        }
207    }
208    {
```

For **pdflatex**, load font using a package.

```
209      \tl_if_empty:NF \l__sblfonts_mainfont_tl
210        {
211          \RequirePackage
212            [ \l__sblfonts_font_options_clist ]
```

```
213          { \l__sblfonts_font_tl }
214        }
```

Override Greek and Hebrew fonts if specified in `grfont` and `hefont` options.

```
215      \tl_if_empty:NF \l__sblfonts_grfont_tl
216        {
217          \DeclareFontFamilySubstitution
218            { LGR }
219            { \rmdefault }
220            { \l__sblfonts_grfont_tl }
221        }
222      \tl_if_empty:NF \l__sblfonts_hefont_tl
223        {
224          \DeclareFontFamilySubstitution
225            { NHE8 }
226            { \rmdefault }
227            { \l__sblfonts_hefont_tl }
228        }
229    }
230  \endinput
231  ⟨/package⟩
```