MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
COURSE SYLLABUS
FALL 2025

OT 3P1051–GUIDE TO BIBLICAL LANGUAGES: HEBREW 1

**INSTRUCTOR:**
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Online Synchronous: This course is offered synchronously online for all students. The course web page on Avenue to Learn (A2L) will offer all resources needed to navigate the requirements for the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

People like to talk about what the Bible means, sometimes even with reference to "the original Hebrew." However, for readers and teachers of the Bible to access useful resources and make insightful observations about the meaning of a text without making regrettable errors, they need to understand how languages make meaning—and how Hebrew makes meaning. This course explores the world of human language: language theory and how it applies to understanding texts. It will also review English grammar—which many students were never taught—as a basis for understanding Hebrew grammar. This will enable students to be better prepared to engage with our main task: learning the basics of Hebrew, focusing on how the linguistic elements lead to meaningful and accurate interpretation. There will necessarily be some memorization of vocabulary and the three main paradigms, but this course will also significantly reduce the amount of memorization usually required in language learning, since the focus is on understanding and application.
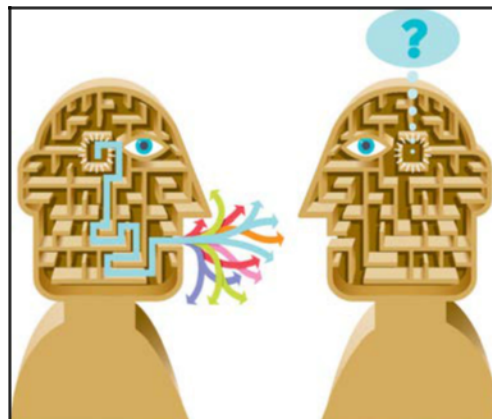
This course will appeal to two types of students:

1. Those who want to begin the process of learning biblical languages, especially those who plan on doing more advanced learning. Subsequent courses will teach the intelligent use of Hebrew resources as well as a more detailed knowledge of the languages and application to the biblical text.

2. Those who do not plan to study biblical languages in depth (or those who are not sure whether they do) but want to understand how languages work, how to move from one language to another, and how to interpret the biblical text responsibly. Those who want to continue with deeper study may do so.

MODE OF DELIVERY

This online course is offered as a synchronous course, which is scheduled to meet synchronously (at the same time) online once a week (Friday mornings 9:00–10:50 AM, Eastern Time) to allow direct interaction between students and the instructor. In addition to the synchronous sessions, course objectives will also be met through reading, written assignments, weekly vocabulary quizzes, a sermon or commentary analysis paper, a midterm and a final exam, as well as asynchronous (on your own time) online activities, including watching videos. Students must have a basic familiarity with computers to participate, including the ability to navigate Avenue to Learn (A2L) course site and make and upload PDFs of assignments to A2L.

There are **four main components** to the course ("**Hebrew Lessons**," "**Applied Grammar**," "**Language Theory**," and "**Mangled Language**"). Students will join the online lectures, read the textbook, watch assigned videos, complete workbook exercises, and participate in online discussions.

Since this is an online course, the question arises about accountability on quizzes and exams. For all quizzes, you are on your honor to not use any notes or tools as you take the quiz. However, the **two major exams must be proctored**. You need to arrange for someone to proctor your exams. It cannot be a relative or classmate. It must be a person in a position of responsibility. For example, you can ask someone with official capacity at your church, such as a church administrative assistant or your small group leader. Your choice needs the instructor's approval. Prior to the exam date, the instructor will **email the exam to the proctor**, who needs to print out the exam from a PDF file, **supervise you taking the exam**, then **scan it back** to the instructor.

Students are also encouraged to meet with the instructors (by appointment either in person or on Zoom) to discuss any questions raised in the forum and/or the assignments. Students should expect to commit **at least 5–6 hours per week** on the course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowing
the word of God

Being
transformed into
Christ's image

Doing
the work of ministry

a. Knowing
   1. To identify major noun and verb grammatical categories in Hebrew
   2. To understand how language makes meaning
   3. To recognize the functions of language (interpersonal, experiential, and textual)
   4. To critique word study methodology
   5. To recognize and memorize some key vocabulary in biblical Hebrew
   6. To recognize and reproduce elementary grammatical forms/paradigms in Hebrew

b.   Being

      1. "To present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Tim 2:15)

      2. To be a mature interpreter of Scripture as taught by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:6–16)

      3. While unmeasurable in the context of this course, to allow the Scripture to motivate, form, and transform our faith, worship, and Christian way of life

c.   Doing

      1. To describe the functions of the basic grammatical forms in Hebrew and use them in interpretation

      2. To begin to read and translate Hebrew texts

      3. To interpret the biblical text meaningfully without committing common mistakes

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Texts and Resources
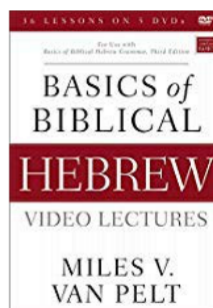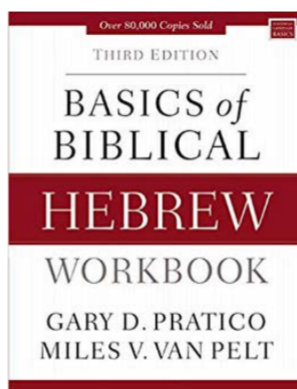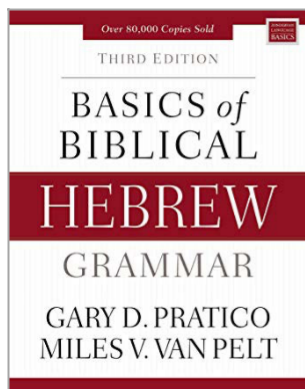
1. Grammar (required)

Pratico, Gary D., and Miles Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Workbook*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. ISBN: 978-0310533498
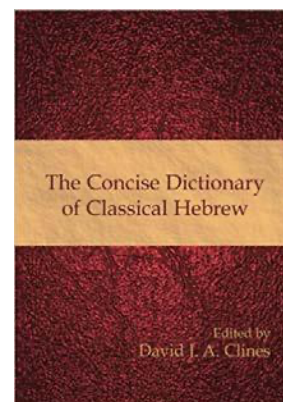
2. Workbook (required)

Pratico, Gary D., and Miles Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. ISBN: 978-0310533559

3. Lexicon (required)

The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew. Edited by David J. A. Clines et al. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009. ISBN: 978-1906055790

4. **BBH Video Lectures (***OPTIONAL***)[1]**

Van Pelt, Miles. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Video Lectures*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.
ASIN: 0310538602

NOTE: Some students say that they prefer learning just from the textbook rather than the BBH video lectures. However, many visual/aural learners find them very helpful. Learning styles differ, and you know yourself best. A sample lecture is available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76IyeFx9jXs. The PPT slides used in these videos will be posted free online. If you do not think the BBH videos will be helpful, you may choose not to use them. You may find that the MDC videos, which are required, are enough.

5. **MDC Video Lectures**

A series of supplemental video lectures are free and available on A2L. They will review and expand some of the concepts discussed in the textbook and during synchronouos lectures.
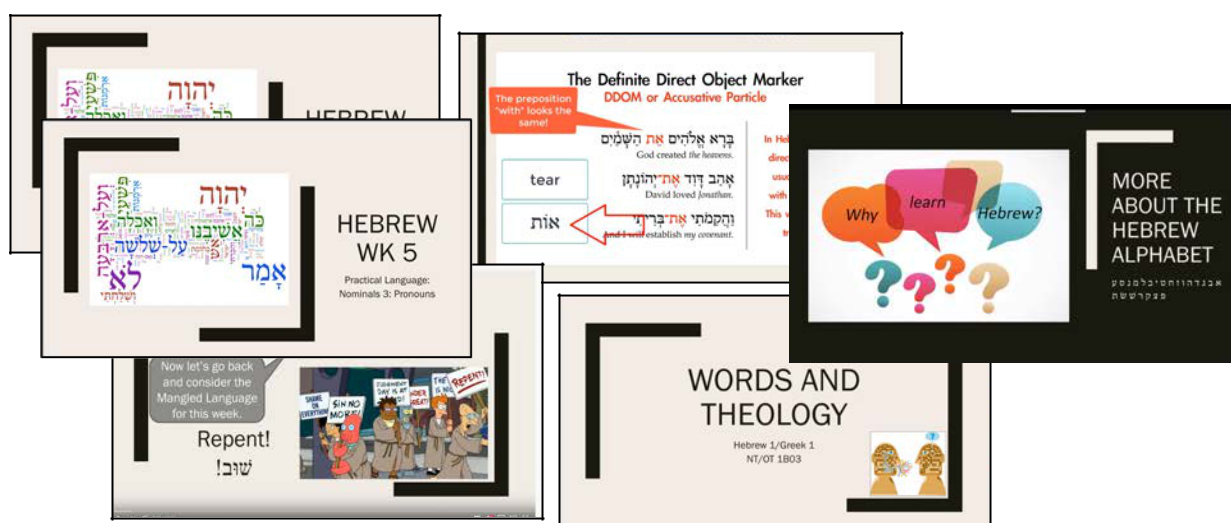
6. **Bible Software (optional)**

I will present some good Bible software options for free download or purchase, as well as discuss responsible use of these very helpful tools. But I ask that you *not* use any Bible software during most of the first semester of study.

Textbook Purchase: All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

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[1] These video lectures will also be useful for the subsequent online course, Hebrew 2 Morphology OT 2C03. The video lectures are not available in our bookstore. They may be purchased online from Amazon or Chapters-Indigo as a set of discs that covers both Hebrew 1 and 2, or purchased a download from https://vimeo.com/ondemand/bbh. For the download options there is "instant delivery." They may also be available from other sources, such as Christianbook, LLC.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

This is a helpful resource for Hebrew students unfamiliar with English grammar:

Van Pelt, Miles V. *English Grammar to Ace Biblical Hebrew.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

This is an excellent resource for doing <u>appropriate</u> word studies:

Baxter, Benjamin J. *"In the Original Text It Says": Word-Study Fallacies and How to Avoid Them.* Critical Christian Issues. Gonzalez, FL: Energion, 2012.

Vocabulary Resources (keyed to the text):

Pratico, Gary D., and Miles Van Pelt. *Old Testament Hebrew Vocabulary Cards*. ISBN: 978-0310534181.

Van Pelt, Miles. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary Audio*. Audible Audiobook. ASIN: B07LCSPFNT.

(A number of other vocabulary and supplemental resources are given on A2L.)

Online Resources:
Course Website (http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/) Log in with your MAC ID.
STEPBible (https://www.stepbible.org) STEP ("Scripture Tools for Every Person") is a free online Bible study tool which allows users to open and compare a Bible alongside one or more other Bibles in any language, including Greek and Hebrew texts.
Animated Hebrew Jonah (http://www.animatedhebrew.com/jonah/jonah_01.html) This free site is very helpful in learning to pronounce Hebrew.
Quizlet (https://quizlet.com) This is a helpful online flashcard tool (website and APP) for vocabulary memorization.[2]

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Workbook Exercises (Including Self-Corrections)	15%
Vocabulary Quizzes	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%
Sermon or Commentary Analysis	15%
Mangled Language Discussions	5% (bonus)
Total Grade	100%

Assignment Details:

Note: All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate Assignment Box on Avenue to Learn (A2L) <u>in PDF format only</u>.

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[2] You can create your own flashcards for each chapter/week or search for existing lists created and shared by other users (but always double check for errors). A link is provided on A2L in the folder "Vocabulary Resources" in module "Welcome to Hebrew; Syllabus; & Resources."

Workbook Exercises (20%). Three submissions, see schedule. (Outcomes a.1, 5–6; c.1, 2)

- Students will complete weekly exercises from the BBH Workbook that involve the use of material covered in the **BBH Text/Videos**.
- Students are required to **complete <u>at least</u> the alternate questions** in each section (1, 3, 5, etc. or a, c, e, etc.). Many students choose to do more for extra practice. In addition, students are expected to check their answers against the answer key and indicate **evidence of self-correction** in their workbook (e.g., mark the correct answers with a check mark, circle out mistakes and put the right answers with a different color).
- These exercises will be **collected and graded on <u>four</u> different dates**, based upon timeliness, completeness, and evidence of individual effort (e.g., parsing and tentative translations), and self-correction (there is no penalty for incorrect answers as long as students indicate self-correction).
- Students will **memorize** only the 3 most frequent **paradigms**. More details will be posted on A2L.
- Each **online class** will dedicate first part of the class time to discussing and answering questions about these exercises to help you learn. We will work through examples together.

Vocabulary Quizzes (15%). Due at the end of **each week**, see schedule. (Outcomes a.5; c.2)

- You will be responsible for learning roughly 250 common words in Hebrew. Each vocabulary quiz consists of twenty Hebrew vocabulary words, where the students will be asked to give an English gloss for each. The vocabulary will be taken from the BBH 3rd edition materials and quizzed *weekly* on A2L (the first quiz will be on alphabet and vowels).

Midterm Exam (20%). Due by **Oct 31 (11:59 PM)**. (Outcomes a.1–6; b.1–2; c.1–3)

- There will be a test on chapters 1 to 9. This will be conducted with the assistance of a proctor. More information will be given on A2L.

Final Exam (30%). Due by **Dec 12 (11:59 PM)**. (Outcomes a.1–6; b.1–2; c.1–3)

- There will be a test on chapters 1 to 16. This will be conducted with the assistance of a proctor. Information will be given in class.

Sermon or Commentary Analysis (15%). Due by **Dec 12 (11:59 PM)**. (Outcomes a.1–4; b.1–2; c.1–3)

- Evaluate and critique a sermon, article, or an excerpt of a commentary (which will be provided by the instructor) in terms of the handling of the original Hebrew language. Students should utilize what they learn in class and identify the common exegetical and linguistic fallacies. At least **3 resources** other than lexicons and grammars must be consulted. The entire report should be around **6–8 pages** and must follow the "**McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines** for Essays and Theses." Details will be provided on A2L.

Bonus Activity: Mangled Language Discussions (up to 5% bonus). (Outcomes a.2–3; c.3)

- Each week a question will be posted in a discussion on A2L. It will deal with a "questionable" interpretation of a biblical text involving the use of language. Students who read and respond with a thoughtful comment to these will earn up to a 5% bonus mark in the course. These will be expanded on in the follow-up Mangled Language videos.

Policy for Late Assignments:

Marks will be deducted for late assignments if there is no valid reason, such as illness (a doctor's note may be required) or serious family crisis. The **deduction** will be **3% per day**. Extensions must be approved before the due date.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR, ATTENDANCE, AND PARTICIPATION

- All thoughtful student participation is welcome. There are no "dumb questions" or "stupid answers." Students will respect the contributions of other students, although they may disagree, and respond to them without ridicule or scorn.
- Students are expected to attend all online classes. Missing a class in order to work on other assignments is a consequence of poor planning and is unacceptable. If you are genuinely ill or there is a serious emergency, your absence is acceptable. Please email the instructor to explain.
- Students are expected to be on time for class. Admittedly, unavoidable delays do occasionally happen. If you arrive late, please email an explanation to the instructor <u>after</u> class.
- Students are also expected to stay for the entire class session.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender- inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

For Online (Asynchronous) Courses
– Presence and Meaningful Participation

Presence and participation in this course are expected. Faculty know from many years of experience that a student's level of presence and participation in the course will impact how well she or he will score in the course. Although there are exceptions to this rule of thumb, low levels of presence and participation tend to translate to low grades; mediocre presence and participation tend to translate to mediocre grades; and high levels of presence and participation tend to translate to higher grades. A word needs to be said about what constitutes "presence" (attendance) and "participation" in an asynchronous course. Students must establish a record of participation in academically related activities to meet the expected level of attendance and meaningful participation. Be aware that merely logging into the online class is not, by itself, sufficient as a demonstration of attendance and participation by the student. "Academically related activities" certainly includes participation in and completion of the course requirements that are described below. Additionally, just as students are expected to engage with the course content/materials throughout the week outside of the learning management system (A2L), so also students are expected to engage one another in formative dialogue "outside of class." This is an important part of belonging to and maintaining a community of learning and is a staple ingredient in what constitutes "presence."

– Online Etiquette

It is critical in any MDC class that students show respect for classmates and the instructor. This is even truer in the online environment because many of the non-verbal cues that we use to interpret what a person is communicating to us are not present online (except, perhaps in video posts). Therefore, it is especially critical that we be mindful of how our words will be interpreted by those who are reading them. As the instructor of the course, it is my responsibility to monitor communications to ensure that all students feel comfortable expressing their views in a respectful manner. Most if not all courses at MDC are devoted to the interpretation of Scripture. Invariably there will be disagreements; these disagreements must be discussed and negotiated in a respectful manner. This applies to individual and group communications involving the instructor and the others enrolled in the course. The instructor

will expect that you will give some thought to your postings. Excessive postings are also frowned upon because these amount to dominating the discussion. Please limit your postings to less than 200 words. Instructors reserve the right to ask students to take a step back to allow others discussion time if she or he feels that an individual is dominating the discussion. In your responses, please try to be clear which point your response refers to. Students who violate these guidelines may be dismissed from class.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is the property of the instructors and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wk	Date	Submission: Quiz & Workbook (Due by Class Time)	Synchronous Lecture: Topics	Supplemental Videos (Due by Next Class Time)	Assignment: Reading & Workbook & Discussion Post (Due by Next Class Time)
1	Sept 12	**Discussion Post:** Self-Introduction	**Introduction & Syllabus** **Aleph-bet, Vowels, Pronunciation:** Names, Forms, Sounds (BBH 1–2)	**More about:** the Alphabet (Acrostics) (13:34)	**Read:** BBH 1–2 **Workbook:** chs. 1–2
2	Sept 19	**Quiz 1:** Aleph-bet and Vowel	**Pronunciation:** Syllabification (BBH 3) **Language Theory:** Functions of Language	**More About:** Vowels (Vocalization) (20:46)	**Read:** BBH 3 **Workbook:** ch. 3 **Mangled Language:** Prophecy in a Name (7:06) **Discussion Post:** Prophecy in a Name?
3	Sept 26	**Quiz 2:** Vocab chs. 2–3	**Nominal Systems 1:** Parts of Speech, Person/Number/Gender (P/N/G), Nouns (Paradigm), Article, Conjunction Waw (BBH 4–5) **Language Theory:** Words and Theology	**More about:** Noun and Definite Article (9:35)	**Read:** BBH 4–5 **Workbook:** chs. 4–5 **Discussion Post:** "Soul" (Deut 6:5) **Mangled Language** (*visible *after* the posting): "Soul" (Deut 6:5) (16:32)
4	Oct 3	**Quiz 3:** Vocab chs. 2–5 **Wkbk Submission 1:** chs. 1–5	**Nominal Systems 2:** Phrases and Prepositions, Adjectives (BBH 6–7) **Language Theory:** Form and Function; Syntax and Semantics	**More about:** Prepositions (8:05)	**Read:** BBH 6–7 **Workbook:** chs. 6–7
5	Oct 10	**Quiz 4:** Vocab chs. 2–7	**Nominal Systems 3:** Pronouns-personal, relative, demonstrative, interrogative, objective, possessive (BBH 8–9)	**More about:** Pronominal Suffix (8:05)	**Read:** BBH 8–9 **Workbook:** chs. 8–9 **Mangled Language:** Young or Small? (1 Sam 11) (4:29) **Discussion:** "Smallest/Youngest" (1 Sam 11)
6	Oct 17		**Reading Week (Thanksgiving)**		
7	Oct 24	**Quiz 5:** Vocab chs. 2–9 **Wkbk Submission 2:** chs. 1–9	**Nominal Systems 4:** Construct Chains (BBH 10) and Number (BBH 11) **Midterm Review:** BBH 1–10	**More about:** Construct Chain (14:01)	**Read:** BBH 10 **Workbook:** ch. 10
8	Oct 31	**Midterm Exam:** chs. 2–10	**Midterm Exam** (No Class)	**Language Theory:** Lexicons for Hebrew and Word Studies (23:04) **More about:** Lexicons and Etymology (19:03)	**Read:** BBH 11 **Workbook:** ch. 11 **Mangled Language:** What is "Messiah"? (4:45) **Discussion Post:** What is "Messiah"?
9	Nov 7	**Quiz 6:** Vocab chs. 2–11	**Verbal Systems 1:** Tense/Aspect/Mood (TAM); Stems; Qal Perfect Strong (Paradigm) (BBH 12–13)	**More about:** The Perfect "Tense" (18:42)	**Read:** BBH 12–13 **Workbook:** chs. 12–13
10	Nov 14	**Quiz 7:** Vocab chs. 2–13 **Wkbk Submission 3:** chs. 1–13	**Verbal Systems 2:** Finite/Non-finite; Qal Perfect Weak (BBH 14) **Language Theory:** Exegetical Fallacies	**More about:** Weak Verbs-Perfect (18:40)	**Read:** BBH 14 **Workbook:** ch. 14 **Mangled Language:** Seeing Visions (5:19) **Discussion Post:** Seeing Visions
11	Nov 21	**Quiz 8:** Vocab chs. 2–14	**Verbal Systems 3:** Qal Imperfect Strong (Paradigm) (BBH 15) **Language Theory:** Discourse	**More about:** The Imperfect (20:19)	**Read:** BBH 15 **Workbook:** ch. 15 **Mangled Language:** Shaddai (13:13) **Discussion Post:** Shaddai
12	Nov 28	**Quiz 9:** Vocab chs. 2–15	**Verbal Systems 4:** Qal Imperfect Weak (BBH 16) **Application:** StepBible and Bible Software	**More about:** Weak Verbs-Imperfect (from 18:41 to 33:43)	**Read:** BBH 16 **Workbook:** ch. 16

13	Dec 5	**Quiz 10:** Vocab chs. 2–16 **Wkbk Submission 4:** chs. 1–16	**Verbal Systems Review:** Continue review for exam by focusing on verb paradigm memorization and even numbered exercises in Workbook (not for submission).	**Language Theory:** Literalism & Relevance Theory (35:46)	**Discussion Post:** Finding "Oil"
14	Dec 12	**Analysis Paper:** Sermon or Commentary Analysis **Final Exam:** chs. 1–16	**Final Exam (No Class)**		