



MCMMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
Hebrew I: A Guide to Biblical Languages
OT 3P1051

Spring Term 2026 | May 4–June 26, 2026 | Online Asynchronous

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

INSTRUCTOR:

Yadi Hu, MA

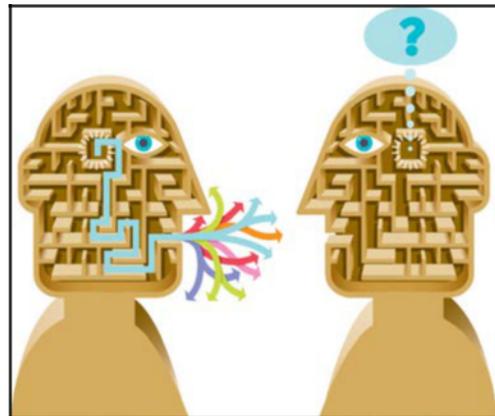
Email: hul14@mcmaster.ca

Online Asynchronous. OPTIONAL weekly livestream workshops will be held using Zoom at times mutually set. There will be a course web page on [Avenue to Learn](#) (A2L).

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

While synchronous learning is online or distance education that happens in real time, asynchronous learning occurs through online channels without real-time interaction. This course will include **asynchronous lessons** available on A2L. Students must have a basic familiarity with computers to participate, including the ability to navigate Avenue to Learn (A2L) course site, as well as to make and upload PDFs of assignments to A2L. Meanwhile, **optional synchronous workshops** will be offered using Zoom. These optional, weekly workshops will be dedicated to answering questions, clarifying concepts, consolidating learning, discussing interpretation, and practicing skills.

There are **four main components** to the course (“**Hebrew Lessons**,” “**Applied Grammar**,” “**Language Theory**,” and “**Mangled Language**”). Students will view the assigned video lectures, study the handouts, and then complete exercises.

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 8–12 hours per week** on the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES



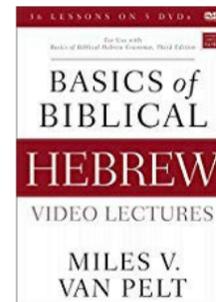
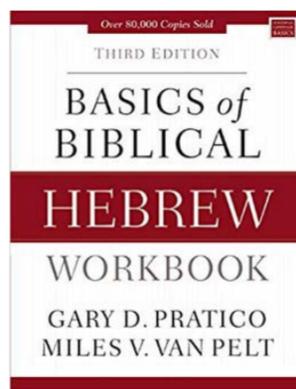
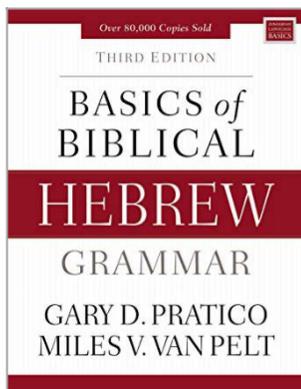
- a.  Knowing
 1. To identify and list major noun and verb grammatical categories in Biblical Hebrew
 2. To understand and explain how language makes meaning
 3. To articulate the major functions of language (interpersonal, experiential, and textual)
 4. To memorize key vocabulary in Biblical Hebrew and be able to provide basic English glosses from memory
 5. To reproduce elementary grammatical forms/paradigms in Biblical Hebrew

- b.  Being
1. To appreciate the importance and value the knowledge of the original language for exegeting and interpreting the Hebrew Bible
 2. To deepen one's relationship with God by allowing the Scripture to motivate, form, and transform our faith, worship, and Christian way of life
 3. To be a diligent and mature interpreter of Scripture

- c.  Doing
1. To critique word study methodology
 2. To describe the functions of the basic grammatical forms in Hebrew and use them in interpretation
 3. To begin to read and translate Hebrew texts with the aid of standard lexicon
 4. To interpret the biblical text meaningfully without committing common mistakes or exegetical fallacies

COURSE RESOURCES

Textbooks and Resources



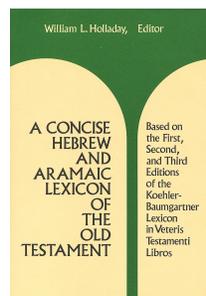
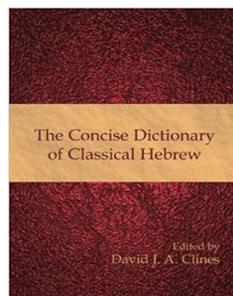
1. Grammar (required)

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 (either one)



Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009. ISBN: 978-1906055790

Holladay, William Lee, ed. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner*. 10th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988. ISBN: 0802834132

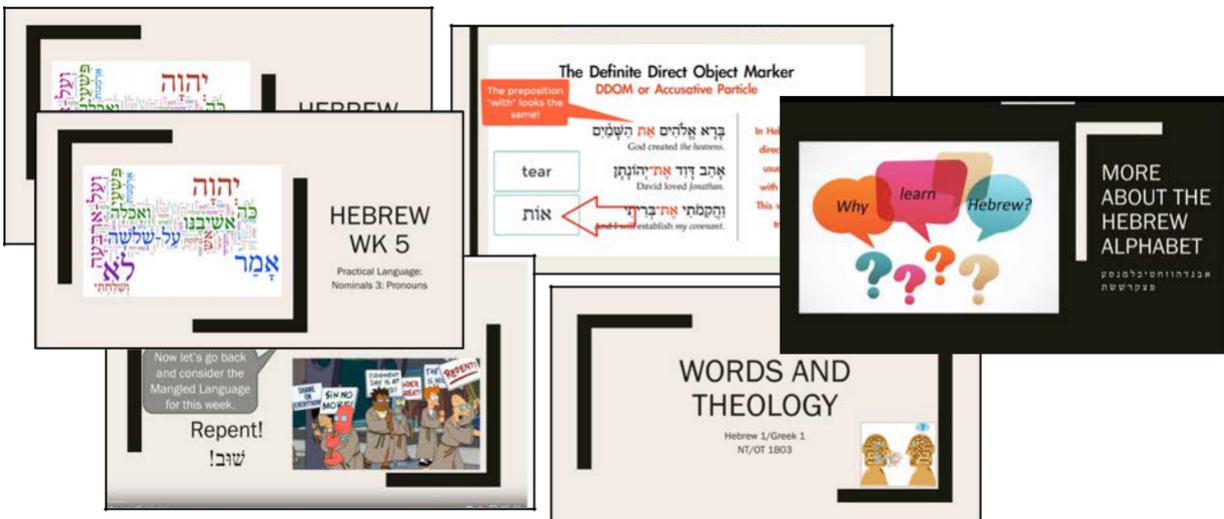
4. BBH Video Lectures (optional)¹

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 (required)

A series of video lectures has been prepared specifically for this course, focusing on language theory and interpretation. They also review and expand textbook concepts. They are free and available on A2L.



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.

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.

Textbook Purchase: All required and recommended books 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.

Other Suggested Resources

Helpful resource for Hebrew students unfamiliar with English grammar:

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

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 first semester. Making one’s own vocabulary flashcards also has advantages for learning.)

Exegetical Resource (for doing appropriate 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.

Online Tools

STEPBible (<https://www.stepbible.org>) STEP (standing for “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

COURSE GRADING SCALE AND ASSIGNMENT WEIGHTS

Grading Scale

Percent Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Point (12pt Scale)	Grade Point (4pt Scale)	Grading Guidelines
90–100	A+	12	4	for work displaying mastery of the subject matter, creativity, and individualized integration of insights and their relationship(s)
85–89	A	11		
80–84	A-	10		
77–79	B+	9	3	for work displaying a good level of competence and comprehension
73–76	B	8		
70–72	B-	7		

² A complete vocab set for BBH has been created for this course which will be made available to you (link is provided on A2L), although you can also create your own flashcards for each chapter/week as you like.

Activity/Assignment Weights

Workbook Exercises (Including Self-Corrections)	10%
Mangled Language Discussions	5%
Vocabulary Quizzes	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%
Sermon or Commentary Analysis	20%
Total Grade	100%

COURSE ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate Assignment Box on Avenue to Learn (A2L) in PDF format only. Exams must be emailed to the instructor by the proctor.

Workbook Exercises (10%). Due: see schedule for submission dates. (Outcomes a.1, 4–5; b1; c.2–3)

- 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 at least 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 three 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).
- The **online workshops** will focus in part on discussing and answering questions about these exercises to help you learn. We will work through examples together.

Mangled Language Discussions (5%). Due: see schedule. (Outcomes a.2–3; b.1–3; c.1–4)

- For selected weeks (5x in total), a question will be posted in a discussion on A2L in the “Mangled Language” section. It will deal with a “questionable” interpretation of a biblical text involving the use of language. Students will watch or read the material and respond with a thoughtful (but concise!) comment in the discussion forum on A2L.

Vocabulary Quizzes (20%). Due: see schedule. (Outcomes a.4; c.3)

- 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: 11:59pm, June 7. (Outcomes a.1–5; b.1, 3; c.1–4)

- 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: 11:59pm, June 26. (Outcomes a.1–5; b.1, 3; c.1–4)

- There will be a test on chapters 1 to 16. This will be conducted with the assistance of a proctor. Information will be given on A2L.

Sermon or Commentary Analysis (20%). Due: 11:59pm, June 26. (Outcomes a.1–3; b.1–3; c.1–4)

- 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 Press Style Guide](#).” Details will be provided on A2L.

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. Assignments **cannot be submitted after June 26, 2026** (the last day of classes for the term). Any missing assignments will receive a grade of “0,” unless the student has already been granted an incomplete or deferral in advance from the Office of the Registrar (mcreg@mcmaster.ca) (see policy for “Incompletes and Deferrals”).

COURSE AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

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, including Generative AI) 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 Generative AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work for you. Using AI to produce content for you and then submitting that content as if you produced 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. Additionally, although there may be value in using an AI tool to correct mistakes in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI is not to be used for translating from your native language to English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

College Style for Submission of Written Work

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the [McMaster Divinity College Press 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), McMaster Divinity College (MDC) is committed to supporting a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Students who require academic accommodations to participate fully in this course must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (<https://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) of McMaster University. SAS will work directly with the MDC Registrar to ensure reasonably appropriate accommodations are in place. Students with accommodations must use the SAS portal to activate the accommodations relevant to each course at the start of each term they are enrolled in. This will generate a notification to course instructors outlining the activated accommodations for the student in their course. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. Accommodations will be implemented once the faculty member has been notified. Accommodations are not retroactive and will not be applied to coursework or activities that have already concluded.

Contact Information:

- **Student Accessibility Services General Inquiries:** sas@mcmaster.ca
- **Roksana Sobota (SAS Representative for MDC):** sobotar@mcmaster.ca
- **MDC Registrar:** mdcreg@mcmaster.ca

VIRTUAL CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR AND PARTICIPATION

Presence and Meaningful Participation

- Students are to observe proper online learning etiquette and manner. 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.
- Please choose a location that allows you to attend the synchronous meeting with the least amount of (expected) distractions and interruptions. A busy café, for example, may not be the best environment for you to participate in various class activities.
- Students are responsible for a device that meets the recommended requirements of running zoom and A2L smoothly and have a fast and reliable internet connection for the meeting.

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.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Wk	Date	Submissions (Due by 11:59pm every Sunday)	Hebrew Lessons (Remember to do the corresponding workbook exercises each week!)	Applied Grammar ³	Language Theory	Mangled Languages ⁴
1	May 4–10	Discussion Post: Introduce yourself! Quiz 1: Alphabet and Vowel	BBH 1: Alphabet (37:02) BBH 2: Vowels (20:46) BBH 3: Syllabification and Pronunciation (30:30)	More about: the Alphabet (13:34) More about: Vowels (20:46)	Theory 1: Functions of Language (39:16)	Games with Letters (7:06)
2	May 11–17	Quiz 2: chs. 2–5	BBH 4: Nouns (23:49) BBH 5: Definite Article and Conjunction (20:07)	More about: Noun and Definite Article (9:35)	Theory 2: Words and Theology (23:55)	“Soul” (Deut 6:5) (16:32)
3	May 18–24	Wkbk: chs. 1–7 Quiz 3: chs. 2–7	BBH 6: Prepositions (15:45) BBH 7: Adjectives (12:48)	More about: Prepositions (8:05)	Theory 3: Form and Function; Syntax and Semantics (25:01)	Young or Small? (1 Sam 11) (4:29)
4	May 25–31	Quiz 4: chs. 2–9	BBH 8: Pronouns (11:33) Supplemental Review ch. 8: Pronoun (28:28) BBH 9: Pronominal Suffixes (20:03)	More about: Pronominal Suffix (8:05) More about: Lexicons and Etymology (19:03)	Theory 4: Lexicons for Hebrew and Word Studies (23:04)	What is “Messiah”? (4:45)
5	June 1–7	Wkbk: chs. 8–11 Midterm: chs. 1–9 (Due: 11:59pm, June 7)	BBH 10: Construct Chain (28:45) BBH 11: Numbers (6:19)	More about: Construct Chain (14:01)	Theory 5: Exegetical Fallacies (28:04)	
6	June 8–14	Quiz 5: chs. 2–13	BBH 12–13: Hebrew Verbal System & Qal Perfect Strong Verbs (27:58)	More about: The Perfect “Tense” (18:42)	Theory 6: Discourse (26:50)	Seeing Visions (5:19)
7	June 15–21	Quiz 6: chs. 2–14	BBH 14: Qal Perfect Weak Verbs (29:22)	More about: Weak Verbs-Perfect (18:40)	Theory 7: Literalism & Relevance Theory (35:46)	
8	June 22–26*	*Everything is due at <u>11:59pm, June 26 (Friday!)</u> Wkbk: chs. 12–16 Final: chs. 1–16 Analysis Paper	BBH 15: Qal Imperfect Strong (17:42) BBH 16: Qal Imperfect Weak Verbs (36:37)	More about: The Imperfect (20:19) More about: Weak Verbs-Imperfect (from 18:41 to 33:43)		

³ These are short examples of the interesting application of Hebrew to actual Bible study to show why learning Hebrew is relevant.

⁴ These are short videos dealing with misinterpretations.