



MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE

A Guide to Biblical Languages: Hebrew 1

OLDTEST 3P1051

Fall Term 2026 | Fridays 11:00am–12:50pm | Online Synchronous

INSTRUCTOR:

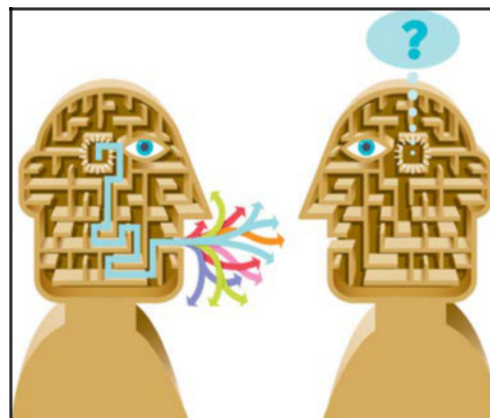
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Online Synchronous: This course is offered synchronously online for all students. The course web page on Avenue to Learn (A2L) will offer all resources needed to navigate the requirements for the course.

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 course is designed as an **online synchronous** learning course, consisting of *both synchronous and asynchronous* learning components. **Synchronous sessions** are scheduled to meet online in real time once a week (**Fridays 11:00AM–12:50PM**, Eastern Time), which will both conclude a **weekly cycle** and start a new one. Each session will be dedicated primarily to reviewing the lessons and workbook exercises from the preceding week cycle to provide further clarification and illustrate application. It will also briefly introduce the new content for the following week cycle, which will be elaborated by the asynchronous components.

Outside of the synchronous class time, a major part of the learning also takes place asynchronously in self-paced activities during the week. The **asynchronous components** of this course include **video** lectures/tutorials (consisting of three major components “*Hebrew Lessons*,” “*Language Theory*,” and “*Mangled Language*”), **reading** and **written assignments** (textbook, workbook, and analysis paper), online **quizzes** and **discussions**. All of the components will be mediated through the Avenue to Learn (A2L) course site. Thus, students must have a basic familiarity with computers to participate in this course, including the ability to navigate A2L, access and download resources, and make and upload PDFs of assignments to A2L.

In general, the **weekly cycle** of this course goes like this: each cycle begins on Fridays *after* the online synchronous sessions. During the week, students will **watch** assigned videos, **read** the textbook, **complete** the workbook exercises, make **discussion** posts on the A2L forum (when applicable), finish the weekly **vocab quizzes** on A2L, and submit **workbook** scans (when collected).¹ All these self-paced learning activities are *due the following week before class* (Friday 11:00 AM). The new content delivered asynchronously over the week will be then reviewed in the following **online session**, where we will answer questions, clarify concepts, consolidate learning, and practice skills. The online session then starts a new cycle by briefly introducing the new topics for the current week, which will be explicated in the textbook and elaborated in the lecture videos.

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, ideally, a person in a position of responsibility. But it cannot be a classmate (preferably not a relative, if possible at all). For example, you can ask someone with official capacity at your church, such as a church administrative assistant or your small group leader. You will be asked to submit your proctor information the week before the exam for 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.

¹ Not necessarily in this order.

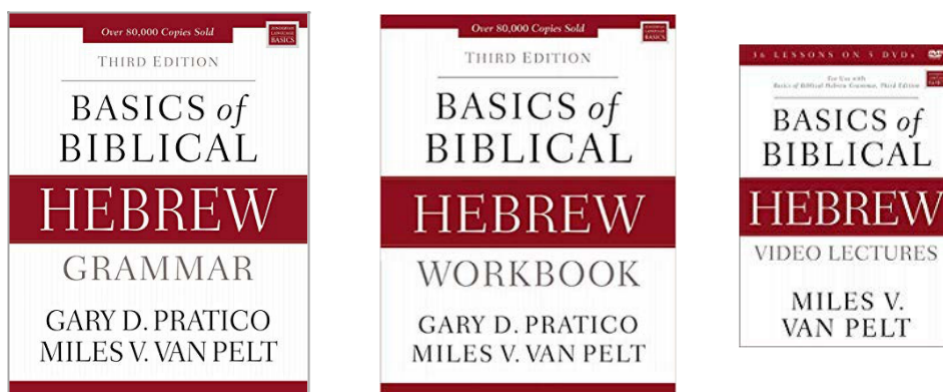
COURSE OBJECTIVES



- 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)
 2. 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. Textbook (required)

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

2. Workbook (required)

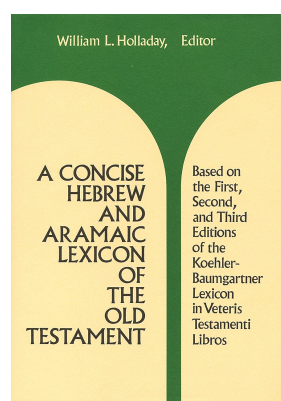
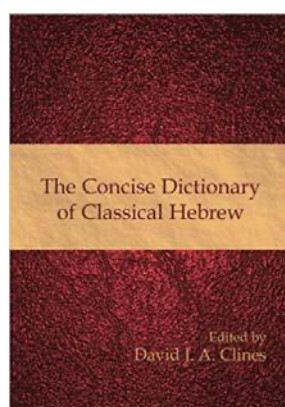
Pratico, Gary D., and Miles Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Workbook*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. ISBN: 978-0310533498

3. Lexicon (required)

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

OR

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 (***)²

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 video lectures are made available on A2L, which will cover the **three main components** of the course (“**Hebrew Lessons**,” “**Language Theory**,” and “**Mangled Language**”). Each component has with corresponding lecture videos, which provide elaborations on the learning materials, introduce supplemental concepts, and demonstrate exegetical applications.

² These video lectures will also be useful for the subsequent online course, Hebrew 2 Morphology OT 3P1051. 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.



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.

Hurlburt Family Bookstore

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, students 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.

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 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.

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.³

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation + Mangled Language Discussion	5%
Workbook Exercises	10%
Vocabulary Quizzes	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%
Sermon or Commentary Analysis	15%
Total Grade	100%

Assignment Details:

Note: Quizzes, workbook exercises, and analysis paper must be submitted to the appropriate Box on Avenue to Learn (A2L) (submissions in PDF format only). Exams must be emailed to the instructor by the proctor.

Participation & Mangled Language Discussion (5%). Discussion posts due by class time (11:00 AM) on Fridays, see schedule. (Outcomes a.2–3; b.1–2; c.3)

- Students are expected to **attend** the weekly synchronous online sessions and to actively participate in the **in-class discussions**.
- On selected weeks (5x in total), a “Mangled Language” video (or PDF) will be posted on A2L, which deals with a “questionable” interpretation of a biblical text involving the use of language. Students will view the material and **post** a thoughtful (but concise!) comment in the discussion forum on A2L. They should also prepare to **share** their comments and **discuss** them in class.

Workbook Exercises (10%). Three submissions, due by class time (11:00 AM) on Fridays, 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 Textbook/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**

³ 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.”

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).
- 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 (20%). Due by **class time (11:00 AM) on Fridays**, 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 **Nov 6 (11:59 PM)**. (Outcomes a.1–6; b.1–2; c.1–3)

- There will be a test on chapters 1 to 10. This will be conducted with the assistance of a proctor. More information will be given in class.

Final Exam (30%). Due by **Dec 18 (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. More information will be given in class.

Sermon or Commentary Analysis (15%). Due by **class time (11:00 AM) on Dec 11**.
(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.

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 Dec 18, 2026 without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (mdcreg@mcmaster.ca).

MDC POLICY STATEMENTS

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresenting the authorship or ownership of written work through deception or other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include copying or using unauthorized aids during tests or examinations; plagiarism, that is, presenting another person’s (or generative AI’s) words, ideas, data, or creative work as one’s own without appropriate acknowledgement and citation; or submitting work for credit in more than one course without instructor permission.

A special note about Generative AI: Students are expected to do their own thinking and write their own papers and assignments. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work. The use of AI to produce content that is then submitted as though it were the student's own work constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. While AI tools may be used to correct errors in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI must not be used to translate assignments from a student's native language into English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in the English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

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 in which they are enrolled. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. 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

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 student will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments. When referencing biblical texts, students should preserve the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God while using gender-inclusive language when referring to human beings. Biblical quotations should be taken from a gender-inclusive translation such as: NRSVue (2022), NIV (2011), CEB (2011), NLT (1996), or CEV (1995).

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** <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS COURSE POLICY

Attendance & Participation

- This course meets live online at the scheduled times. Attendance and active participation are required.
- Join the session on time; late arrivals disrupt the class and may affect your participation grade.
- Sessions may be recorded for review, but recordings do not replace live attendance.

Technology Requirements

- A reliable internet connection (tested before class time),
- A device with audio and video capability
- The correct video conferencing platform installed (Zoom, for this course).

Webcam & Environment

- Students must keep their microphones muted except when speaking to minimize background noise.
- Students must keep their webcams on throughout the class session.
- Students must dress appropriately.
- Students must ensure their surroundings are free from unnecessary distractions. Professional virtual backgrounds are permitted.

Netiquette

- Be respectful and courteous in all interactions.
- Use the “Raise Hand” feature before speaking; avoid interrupting others.
- Keep chat messages on-topic; avoid ALL CAPS, sarcasm, or humor that could be misinterpreted.
- Stay focused—do not multitask during class.

Communication

- Check your email and the LMS regularly for updates, schedule changes, and supplementary materials.
- Monitor any additional communication channels used for the course.

Accessibility

- This course is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment. If you require accommodations, please follow the instructions in the Student Handbook.
- Live captions and accessible materials are available upon request.

Privacy

- Class sessions may be recorded for educational purposes and shared only with enrolled students. Recordings must not be distributed outside the course.
- Respect the privacy of peers: do not share images, voices, or contributions outside the class environment.

Unavoidable Absence

- If a ***student*** must miss a class due to extenuating circumstances such as illness, please email the instructor as soon as possible to explain the situation. The online session may be recorded for review (on condition that every participant gives consent). It is highly recommended that the student schedule a follow-up meeting afterwards to go over any missed content. Please note that, by default, the student is still expected to complete the asynchronous learning components for the week (e.g., lecture videos, quizzes, and exercises)—but a reasonable extension may be granted depending on the circumstance.
- In the event the ***instructor*** must miss a class due to extenuating circumstances such as illness, communication will be sent via A2L. A supplemental lecture video will be posted on A2L to make up for the missed class session. Additional office hours will be available upon return for

Zoom drop-ins or by appointment to address any remaining questions. Details will be communicated on A2L.

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	Dates	<u>Asynchronous Learning</u> (Due by Class Time on Fridays)					Topics at <u>Synchronous Sessions</u>	
		Hebrew Lesson Videos	Language Theory Videos	BBH & Workbook	Assignments & Quizzes	Mangled Language & Discussion Posts	BBH Review + Workbook Q&A	Applied Grammar Topics
1	Sept 14– Sept 18	BBH 1 (37:02)		BBH 1		Discussion Post: Self-Introduction	Introduction & Syllabus BBH 1: Aleph-bet	Acrostics (Psalms & Lamentations) Typing in Hebrew
2	Sept 19– Sept 25	BBH 2 (20:46) BBH 3 (30:30)	Functions of Language (39:16)	BBH 2–3	Quiz 1: Aleph-bet and Vowel	Video: Prophecy in a Name (7:06) Discussion Post: Prophecy in a Name?	BBH 2: Vowels, Pronunciation BBH 3: Syllabification	Vocalization
3	Sept 26– Oct 2	BBH 4 (23:49) BBH 5 (20:07)	Words and Theology (23:55)	BBH 4–5	Quiz 2: Vocab chs. 2–5		BBH 4–5 (Nominal Systems 1): Parts of Speech, Person/Number/Gender (P/N/G), Nouns (Paradigm), Article, Conjunction <i>waw</i>	“God commanded the ‘ <i>man</i> ’” (Gen 2:15–16)
4	Oct 3– Oct 9	BBH 6 (15:45) BBH 7 (12:48)		BBH 6–7	Quiz 3: Vocab chs. 2–7 Wkbk 1: chs. 1–7	Discussion Post: “Soul” (Deut 6:5) Video (*visible <i>after</i> the posting): “Soul” (Deut 6:5) (16:32)	BBH 6–7 (Nominal Systems 2): Phrases and Prepositions, Adjectives	“‘ <i>In</i> ’ my flesh” (Job 19:25–26)
5	Oct 10– Oct 16	Reading Week (No Class)						
6	Oct 17– Oct 23	BBH 8 (11:33) BBH 9 (19:36)	Form and Function; Syntax and Semantics (25:01)	BBH 8–9	Quiz 4: Vocab chs. 2–9		BBH 8–9 (Nominal Systems 3): Pronouns (personal, relative, demonstrative, interrogative), pronominal suffixes (objective, possessive)	“Immanuel” (Isa 7:14)
7	Oct 24– Oct 30	BBH 10 (28:45) BBH 11 (6:19)	Lexicons for Hebrew and Word Studies (23:04)	BBH 10 (BBH 11)	Quiz 5: Vocab chs. 2–11 Wkbk 2: chs. 8–10	Video: Young or Small? (1 Sam 11) (4:29) Discussion Post: “Smallest/Youngest” (1 Sam 11)	BBH 10–11 (Nominal Systems 4): Construct Chain and Number Nominal System Review: BBH 1–10	“His name will be called....” (Isa 9:5–6)
8	Oct 31– Nov 6		Lexicons and Etymology (19:03)		Midterm Exam: chs. 1–10 (Due by 11:59pm, Nov 6)		Midterm Exam (No Class) <i>*Supplemental Lecture Videos:</i> Nominal System (Optional)	
9	Nov 7– Nov 13	BBH 12–13 (27:58)		BBH 12–13	Quiz 6: Vocab chs. 2–13	Video: What is “Messiah”? (4:45) Discussion Post: What is “Messiah”?	BBH 12–13 (Verbal Systems 1): Tense/Aspect/Mood (TAM); Stems; Qal Perfect Strong (Paradigm)	“Perfect” Verbs vs. Past “Tense”
10	Nov 14– Nov 20	BBH 14 (29:22)	Exegetical Fallacies (28:04)	BBH 14	Quiz 7: Vocab chs. 2–14		BBH 14 (Verbal Systems 2): Finite/Non-finite; Qal Perfect Weak	StepBible and Bible Software

11	Nov 21– <u>Nov 27</u>	BBH 15 (17:42)	Discourse (26:50)	BBH 15	Quiz 8: Vocab chs. 2–15	Video: Seeing Visions (5:19) Discussion Post: Seeing Visions	BBH 15 (Verbal Systems 3): Qal Imperfect Strong (Paradigm)	“Imperfect” Verbs
12	Nov 28– <u>Dec 4</u>	BBH 16 (36:37)		BBH 16a BBH 16b	Quiz 9: Vocab chs. 2–16 Wkbk 3: chs. 12–16		BBH 16 (Verbal Systems 4): Qal Imperfect Weak	
13	Dec 5– <u>Dec 11</u>		Literalism & Relevance Theory (35:46)		Paper: Sermon or Commentary Analysis		Verbal System Review: BBH 12–16 * <u>Supplemental Lecture Video:</u> Weak Verbs (33:44, Optional)	
14	Dec 12– <u>Dec 18</u>				Final Exam: chs. 1– 16 (Due by 11:59pm, Dec 18)		Final Exam (No Class)	