



MCMMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE  
COURSE SYLLABUS  
FALL 2022

OT 1B03—GUIDE TO BIBLICAL LANGUAGES: HEBREW 1

**INSTRUCTOR:**

**John W. Hilber, PhD**

Divinity College Room 203

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**CO-LECTURER:**

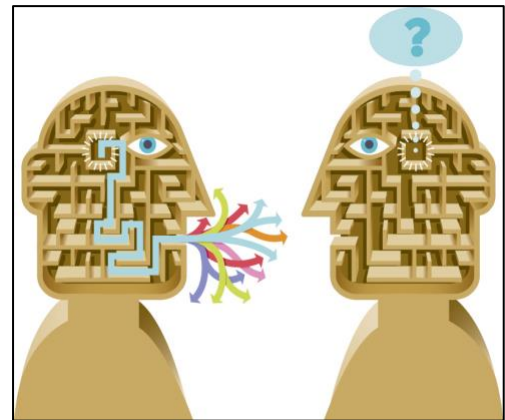
**Stephen Choi, ThM**

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**Online Asynchronous/Synchronous:** Most of the work is asynchronous. **Weekly online synchronous workshops will be held using Zoom on Wednesdays from 2pm–3:50pm.** 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



**Synchronous** learning is online or distance education that happens in real time, whereas **asynchronous** learning occurs through online channels without real-time interaction. This course will include a blend of both asynchronous and synchronous online learning. Students must have a basic familiarity with computers to participate, including the ability to navigate Avenue to Learn (A2L) course site, participate in synchronous sessions using Zoom, and make and upload PDFs of assignments to A2L.

This course will be conducted as a “flipped classroom.” Most of the course content are delivered asynchronously. Video lectures/tutorials will be made available each week. Weekly online synchronous meetings will be held on Wednesday from 2:00-3:50 pm. There are three main components to the course (“Mangled Language,” “Language Theory,” and “Practical Language”). Students will view the assigned video lectures, study the handouts, and then complete exercises before coming to the synchronous meeting. The weekly online sessions (via Zoom) will be dedicated to answering questions, clarifying concepts, consolidating learning, discussing interpretation, and practicing skills. We will go through our weekly routine on the first day of class.

Since this is an online course, all tests and exams will be proctored remotely using the Respondus system. Detailed instructions will be given on A2L and in class. 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



- a.  Knowing
  - To know the major grammatical categories in English and Hebrew
  - To understand how language makes meaning
  - To understand the functions of language such as the interpersonal, experiential, and textual
  - To understand what constitutes a legitimate “word study”
  - To recognize and understand key biblical vocabulary in Hebrew
  - To begin to learn the grammatical forms/paradigms in Hebrew
- b.  Being
  - “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)

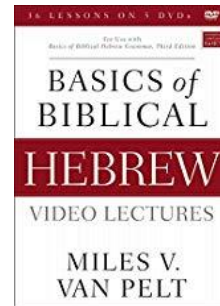
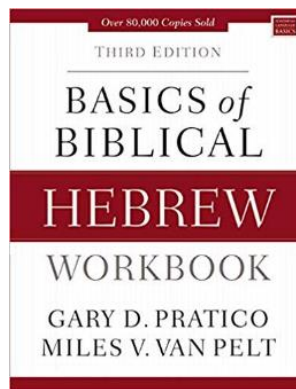
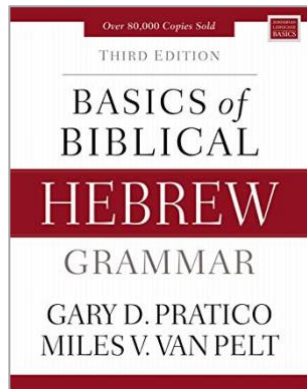
- To be a mature interpreter of Scripture as taught by the Spirit (1 Cor 2:6–16)
- To allow the Scripture to motivate, form, and transform our faith, worship, and Christian way of life

c.  Doing

- To describe how choices in language affect the meaning of the biblical text
- To describe the functions of the basic grammatical forms in Hebrew and use them in interpretation
- To begin to read and translate Hebrew texts
- To interpret the biblical text meaningfully without committing common mistakes

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Texts and Resources



#### 1. Grammar (required)

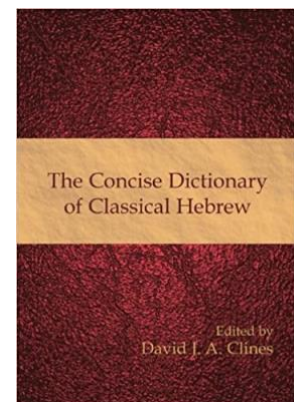
Pratico, Gary D., and Miles Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. ISBN: 978-0310533498

#### 2. Workbook (required)

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

#### 3. Lexicon

*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)<sup>1</sup>

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)

Near the end of the semester, I will present in class some good Bible software options for free download or purchase, as well as discuss responsible use of these very helpful tools. But I strongly advise 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 College's book service, READ On Bookstore, located in the Hurlburt Family Bookstore off Cullen Hall, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3; phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). You can arrange to have books sent to you. Other book services may also carry the texts.

<sup>1</sup> 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 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.

**Animated Hebrew Jonah** ([http://www.animatedhebrew.com/jonah/jonah\\_01.html](http://www.animatedhebrew.com/jonah/jonah_01.html)) This free site is very helpful in learning to pronounce Hebrew.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Exercises (Practicing the Grammar)	30%
Vocabulary Quizzes	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Sermon or Commentary Analysis	20%
Final Exam	20%
Total Grade	100%

**Assignment Details:**

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

**Bonus Activity: Mangled Language Discussions: up to 5% bonus.**

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.

**Practical Exercises 30%.** Due on October 6, October 20, November 11, December 6 at 11:30 pm. Marked on the schedule with \*.

Students will complete weekly exercises from the BBH Workbook that involve the use of material covered in the BBH Text/Videos. 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. **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. These exercises will be collected and graded on four different dates. Students will memorize only the 3 most frequent paradigms. More details will be posted on A2L.

**Vocabulary 10%.** Due as detailed below.

You will be responsible for learning roughly 250 common words in Hebrew. You will be required to give an English gloss for each. The vocabulary will be taken from the BBH 3<sup>rd</sup> edition materials and quizzed online regularly on A2L.

**Midterm Exam: Hebrew 20%.** Week of October 31–November 4.

There will be a test on chapters 1 to 9 during the week of October 31. This will be conducted with online video monitoring at a time mutually agreeable to the students and the proctor. More information will be given on A2L.

**Sermon or Commentary Analysis 20%.** Due on Tuesday, Nov 29 by 11:30 pm (marked on the schedule with **\*\***)

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 5 resources other than lexicons and grammars must be consulted. The entire report should be around **8 pages** and must follow the “McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses.” Details will be provided on A2L.

**Final Exam 20%.** Due by Friday, December 9

Information will be given in class.

**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.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Wk	Date	Interpretation (MDC Videos on A2L) <sup>2</sup>	Language Theory (MDC Videos on A2L)	Why Learn Hebrew? <sup>3</sup> (MDC Videos on A2L)	Practical Hebrew (BBH Videos/Text and MDC Videos)
1	Sept 12–16	<b>Mangled Language 1:</b> TBA	<b>Introduction and Syllabus</b>	<b>More about:</b> the Alphabet	<b>Aleph-bet, Vowels, Pronunciation:</b> Names, Forms, Sounds. BBH 1-3
2	Sept 19–23	<b>Mangled Language 2:</b> Theologizing	<b>Theory 1:</b> Functions of Language	<b>More about:</b> Vowels	<b>Aleph-bet, Vowels, Pronunciation:</b> Continued.
3	Sept 26–30 <b>Aleph-bet and Vowel Quiz</b> Sep 27	<b>Mangled Language 3:</b> TBA	<b>Theory 2:</b> Words and Theology	<b>More about:</b> Nouns	<b>Nominal Systems 1:</b> Parts of Speech. Person, gender, number. Nouns (Paradigm), Article, Conjunction Waw. BBH 4-5
4	Oct 3–7 <b>Vocab 1 to Ch 5</b> Oct 4 <b>Wkbk to Ch 5</b> Oct 6*	<b>Mangled Language 4:</b> Soul	<b>Theory 3:</b> Form and Function; Syntax and Semantics	<b>More about:</b> Prepositions	<b>Nominal Systems 2:</b> Phrases and Prepositions, Adjectives BBH 6-7
5	Oct 10–14 <b>Thanksgiving</b> Oct 10 <b>Vocab 2 to Ch 7</b> Oct 11	<b>Mangled Language 5:</b> Word Studies and Lexicons	<b>Theory 4:</b> Lexicons for Hebrew and Word Studies	<b>More about:</b> Pronouns	<b>Nominal Systems 3:</b> Pronouns: personal, relative, demonstrative, interrogative. BBH 8
6	Oct 17–21 <b>Wkbk to Ch 9</b> Oct 20* <b>Vocab 3 to Ch 9</b> Oct 21	<b>Mangled Language 6:</b> TBA	--	<b>More About:</b> Lexicons (Gen 3:16)	<b>Nominal Systems 4:</b> Pronouns: objective, possessive. BBH 9
7	Oct 24–28	Intensive Hybrid Week—No Class			
8	Oct 31–Nov 4 <b>Term Test to Ch 9</b> Due by Nov 4	<b>Mangled Language 8:</b> TBA	--	<b>More about:</b> Construct Chains	<b>Nominal Systems 5:</b> Construct Chains; Numbers. BBH 10-11  <b>Midterm Exam thru Chapter 9</b>
9	Nov 7–11 <b>Wkbk to Ch 12</b> Nov 11*	<b>Mangled Language 9:</b> Visions	<b>Theory 5:</b> Exegetical Fallacies 1	<b>More about:</b> The Perfect as “Past Tense”	<b>Verbal Systems 1:</b> Tense/Aspect/Mood; Stems; Qal Perfect Strong (Paradigm). BBH 12-13
10	Nov 14–18 <b>Vocab 4 to Ch 12</b> Nov 15	<b>Mangled Language 10:</b> Be Holy	<b>Theory 6:</b> Exegetical Fallacies 2	<b>More about:</b> “Tense” (Adam and the Genome)	<b>Verbal Systems 2:</b> Finite/Non-finite; Qal Perfect Weak. BBH 14
11	Nov 21–25 <b>Vocab 5 to Ch 14</b> Nov 22	<b>Mangled Language 11:</b> Hebrew Discourse	<b>Theory 7:</b> Meaning, Choice, Ranks	<b>More about:</b> The Imperfect	<b>Verbal Systems 3:</b> Qal Imperfect Strong (Paradigm). BBH 15

<sup>2</sup> These are short (15–20 min) videos dealing with misinterpretations. An opportunity for bonus marks.

<sup>3</sup> These are short (10–15 min) examples of the interesting application of Hebrew to actual Bible study to show why learning Hebrew is relevant. No assignments are involved.

12	Nov 28–Dec 1 <b>Analysis</b> Nov 29** <b>Vocab 6 to Ch 16</b> Dec 3	<b>Mangled Language 12:</b> TBA	<b>Theory 8:</b> Discourse (Hebrew)	<b>More about:</b> Wayehi 'ה'!	<b>Verbal Systems 4:</b> Qal Imperfect Weak. BBH 16
13	Dec 5–9 <b>Wkbk to Ch 16</b> Dec 6* <b>Exam</b> due by Dec 9	--	<b>Theory Review:</b> Summary	--	<b>Exam thru Chapter 16</b>

## 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 professor 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 professor after 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 the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

### Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one’s academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>.



**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.