



MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE  
COURSE SYLLABUS  
FALL 2023

OT 1B03—GUIDE TO BIBLICAL LANGUAGES: HEBREW 1

**INSTRUCTOR:**

**John W. Hilber, PhD**

Divinity College Room 203

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**GRADUATE ASSISTANT:**

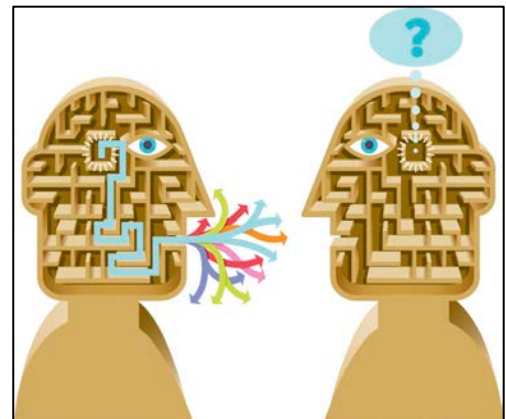
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**Online Asynchronous:** This course is asynchronous; however, due to the nature of language learning, **optional** weekly online synchronous workshops will be offered using Zoom. Days and times will be arranged to optimize availability to students. There is a course web page on [Avenue to Learn](#) (A2L) that 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

**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 be asynchronous** online learning. 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. **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 (“Mangled Language,” “Language Theory,” “Hebrew Lessons,” and “Applied Grammar”). 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 professor’s approval. Prior to the exam date, the professor 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 professor.

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

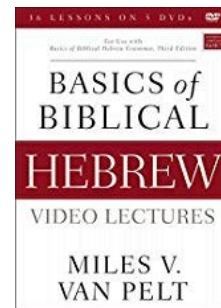
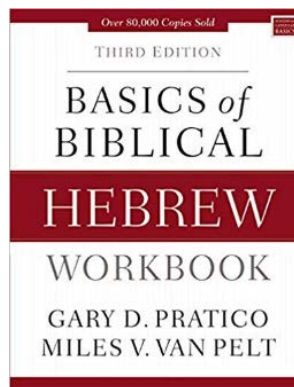
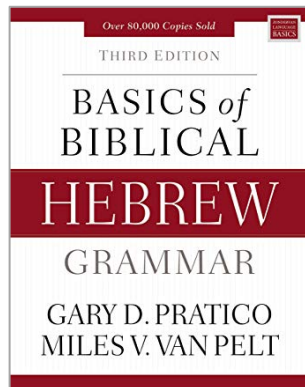


- a.  Knowing
  1. To identify major noun and verb grammatical categories in Hebrew
  2. To understand how language makes meaning
  3. To recognize the functions of language (interpersonal, experiential, and textual)
  4. To critique word study methodology
  5. To recognize some key vocabulary in biblical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

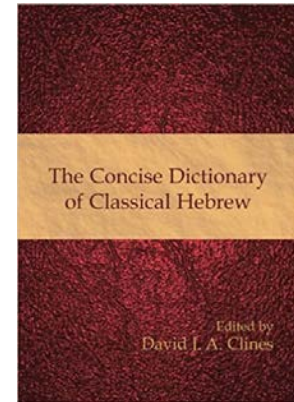
Pratico, Gary D., and Miles Van Pelt. *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Workbook*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019. ISBN: 978-0310533498

#### 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**(\*\*\*)<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.



<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.

## 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](mailto: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.

**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)	20%
Vocabulary Quizzes	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Sermon or Commentary Analysis	20%
Final Exam	30%
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.** Relates to 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.

**Workbook Exercises 20%.** Due as detailed below. Relate to 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. 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. Relates to Outcomes a.5; c. 2.

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%.** Due by Nov 5. Relates to 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.

**Sermon or Commentary Analysis 20%.** Due by Nov 26. Relates to 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 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 30%.** Due by Dec 7 at noon. Relates to Outcomes a.1-6; b.1-2; c.1-3.

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.

## **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, for example, the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), 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.

**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	Interpretation <sup>2</sup>	Language Theory	Hebrew Lessons	Applied Grammar <sup>3</sup>
1	Sept 11–17	<b>Mangled Language:</b> Games with Letters	<b>No Theory Lesson</b>	<b>Aleph-bet, Vowels, Pronunciation:</b> Names, Forms, Sounds. BBH 1-2	<b>More about:</b> the Alphabet
2	Sept 18–24  Aleph-bet and Vowel Quiz Sep 24	<b>Mangled Language:</b> “Soul” (Deut 6:5)	<b>Theory 1:</b> Functions of Language	<b>Aleph-bet, Vowels, Pronunciation:</b> BBH 3.	<b>More about:</b> Vowels
3	Sept 25–Oct 1  Wkbk 1 to Ch 5 Sept 26  Vocab 1 to Ch 5 Oct 1	<b>Mangled Language:</b> “Repent”	<b>Theory 2:</b> Words and Theology	<b>Nominal Systems 1:</b> Parts of Speech. Person, gender, number. Nouns (Paradigm), Article, Conjunction Waw. BBH 4-5	<b>More about:</b> Nouns
4	Oct 2–8  Vocab 2 to Ch 7 Oct 8	<b>Mangled Language:</b> “smallest/young est” (1 Sam 11)	<b>Theory 3:</b> Form and Function; Syntax and Semantics	<b>Nominal Systems 2:</b> Phrases and Prepositions, Adjectives BBH 6-7	<b>More about:</b> Prepositions
5	Oct 9–15 Thanksgiving Oct 9	<b>Reading Week</b>	<b>Reading Week</b>	<b>Reading Week</b>	<b>Reading Week</b>
6	Oct 16–22	<b>Mangled Language:</b> What is “Messiah”?	<b>Theory 4:</b> Lexicons for Hebrew and Word Studies	<b>Nominal Systems 3:</b> Pronouns: personal, relative, demonstrative, interrogative. BBH 8	<b>More about:</b> Lexicons and Etymology

<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.



7	Oct 23–29  Wkbk 2 to Ch 9 Oct 24  Vocab 3 to Ch 9 Oct 29	No Mangled Language	No Theory	Nominal Systems 4: Pronouns: objective, possessive. BBH 9	More About: Pronouns
8	Oct 30–Nov 5 Midterm Exam to Ch 9 Due by Nov 5	No Mangled Language	No Theory	Nominal Systems 5: Construct Chains; Numbers. BBH 10-11  Midterm Exam thru Chapter 9	More about: Construct Chain
9	Nov 6–12  Wkbk 3 to Ch 13 Nov 7  Vocab 4 to Ch 13 Nov 12	Mangled Language: Seeing Visions	Theory 5: Exegetical Fallacies	Verbal Systems 1: Tense/Aspect/Mood; Stems; Qal Perfect Strong (Paradigm). BBH 12-13	More about: The Perfect “Tense”
10	Nov 13–19  Vocab 5 to Ch 14 Nov 19	Mangled Language: Shaddai	Theory 6: Discourse	Verbal Systems 2: Finite/Non-finite; Qal Perfect Weak. BBH 14	More about: Weak Verbs-Perfect
11	Nov 20–26  Analysis Nov 26	Mangled Language: Finding “Oil”	Theory 7: Literalism & Relevance Theory	Verbal Systems 3: Qal Imperfect Strong (Paradigm). BBH 15	More about: The Imperfect
12	Nov 27–Dec 3  Wkbk 4 to Ch 16 Nov 28  Vocab 6 to Ch 16 Dec 3	No Mangled Language	No Theory	Verbal Systems 4: Qal Imperfect Weak. BBH 16	More about: Weak Verbs-Imperfect
13	Dec 4–8  Exam due by Thurs, Dec 7, by noon.			Exam thru Chapter 16	