

School of Biblical Hebrew

A new, old approach to source language training for translation and the Church

As people interested in Bible translation, we wish to follow principles that will honor the Lord. From the history of the Church we have much to learn so that we may integrate principles from the past with challenges of the present and future.

The Jerome principle:

Work from the source language that God inspired and invest in its study

Jerome translated the Bible from the source language(s) rather than from translations. He chose to learn Hebrew, and to move to Israel to complete that, even though other leaders and his colleagues felt that the Greek Septuagint was sufficient and many felt that it was to be preferred. Jerome produced the Latin Vulgate, a translation that served the Western Church for over a millennium and still serves as a textual, historical, and exegetical resource.

The Monterey principle:

Invest in whatever it takes to do the language job right

During World War 2, the US faced a language crisis that could not be answered by the status quo in academia. They needed serious language programs that would produce second language users in the shortest time possible. They invested in building the Defense Language Institute, now residing in Monterey, Calif., and they developed innovative techniques that encouraged the growth of a new field of second language acquisition.

The Church today:

Opportunities and challenges

Today the Church is blessed with opportunities and challenges. We have the challenge of training for 1,000-4,000 Old Testament projects, but we also have access to a revived Hebrew environment, something unique in the history of the world's languages. The two principles above will lead us to design the most efficient training in biblical Hebrew for Bible translation that we can.

What follows below is a new program in Biblical Hebrew.

Participants do in Israel what is best done in Israel, they internalize Biblical Hebrew, and we assume that this will be complemented by training in linguistics, translation theory and cross-cultural communication elsewhere, either before or afterwards as a necessary supplement.

The program follows best practices that are advised by language learning professionals. The American Council for Teaching of Foreign Languages recommends that the target language should be used in a classroom 90% of the time or more, and preferably outside of the classroom as well.

Special Program in Biblical Hebrew

Participants in this program will be trained to read the Hebrew Bible with a sensitivity to its linguistic, cultural and literary nuances so that they may make independent, responsible, exegetical decisions based directly on the Hebrew text. They will also be able to access secondary literature material in Hebrew like the *Da`at Miqra* commentary series on the Hebrew Bible. The program is maximally efficient and follows best language practices¹ by running the courses, field trips, and living conditions 90+% in Hebrew rather than a second language. In-depth perspectives of discourse grammar, literary genre, and culture, are an integral part of this program at all levels.

Course Overview:

¹ <http://www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/use-the-target-language-the-classroom>

Biblical Hebrew

Oral Foundations of Biblical Hebrew

6 credits

Intermediate

Part One

4 credits

Part Two

4 credits

Advanced-Intermediate

Narrative texts

3 credits

Legal texts

2 credits

Poetic texts and psalms

2 credits

Advanced

History of Hebrew Language

3 credits

Seminar and paper

3 credits

Biblical Hebrew Total

27 credits

Texts, Land, and Culture

Classroom teaching

2 credits

Field trips

3 credits

Texts, Land and Culture Total

5 credits

Modern Hebrew

Aleph

1 credit

Aleph+

1 credit

Bet

3 credits

Bet+

3 credits

Gimel

3 credits

Gimel+

2 credits

Dalet

3 credits

Modern Hebrew Total

16 credits

SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL HEBREW TOTAL

48 CREDITS

Sample Course Calendar

Modern Hebrew	Aleph	Aleph+	Bet	Bet+	Gimel	Gimel+	Dalet		
		INTERMEDIATE		ADVANCED-INTERMEDIATE			ADVANCED		
Biblical Hebrew	Oral Foundations in Biblical Hebrew	Intermediate Biblical Hebrew - Part One	Intermediate Biblical Hebrew - Part Two	Narrative Texts	Poetic Texts and Psalms	Legal Texts	History of the Hebrew Language	Seminar on Selected Texts	Final Paper
Texts, Lands & Culture		Field Trips	Field Trips	Classroom Teaching	Field Trips				
	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7	Month 8	

Course Overview*

First session

Oral Refreshment of Biblical Hebrew

6 credits, intensive

In order to learn biblical Hebrew at a fast pace and to internalize it, a person must re-orient and re-map their cerebral neurons to process biblical Hebrew as a human language. This module provides an opportunity for those with a previous background in biblical Hebrew to re-lay the foundations of biblical Hebrew so that it is integrated within the oral-aural networks of the brain. Participants will practice responding and using the language in a supportive, playful environment. Natural language processes will be speeded up, as will reading skills. This module becomes the foundation for the further development of the program and persons with advanced analytical knowledge of biblical Hebrew have profited from this module and recommend it.

Introduction to Modern Hebrew: Aleph

1 credit

The first module provides orientation in a new language environment: Hebrew. The most useful phrases and words for daily living are used. The many connections with Biblical Hebrew in vocabulary and morphology are highlighted, as well as differences like the lack of the thematic verb system (*we-qatal*, *way-yiqtol*).

Second session

Intermediate Biblical Hebrew: Part One

4 credits, intensive

This course integrates the syntax, morphology and discourse structures (textlinguistics) of Biblical Hebrew. Biblical texts are read and questions and answers are conducted orally in Biblical Hebrew. The classroom functions 90% or more of the time in Biblical Hebrew. The morphology of the verb system is reviewed, both regular and weak verbs. There is a special focus on discourse grammar and textlinguistics. This looks at the syntax and the structural and explicit choices that a biblical author makes in writing a text.

*Exact dates and course schedule are subject to change

Extra stories are told in Biblical Hebrew in order to illustrate and to help internalize these features. As part of the homework, written explanations about Hebrew structures are provided in English. Recorded material for listening is also included in the homework in order to increase internalization.

Pre-requisite: Oral Refreshment of Biblical Hebrew

Modern Hebrew: Aleph+

1 credit

This provides a continuing interaction with the modern language and the ability to communicate basic needs in a daily context.

3rd session

Texts, Land, and Culture: Field Trips – Part One

1 credit

Various sites in Israel are visited and biblical texts and ancient inscriptions related to the sites are read and discussed in Hebrew. The cultural, historical, and geographical interactions with the biblical texts are emphasized. A description and overview is provided in biblical Hebrew, with a time for questions and answers. Additional questions and answers on location are allowed in English.

4th session

Intermediate Biblical Hebrew: Part Two

4 credits

This continues Intermediate Biblical Hebrew, Part One, and integrates the syntax, morphology and discourse structures (textlinguistics) of Biblical Hebrew.

Modern Hebrew: Bet

3 credits

This continues the use of modern Hebrew, with a focus on using the verb forms in communication and with an introduction to newspapers in easy Hebrew, עברית קלה.

5th session

Texts, Land and Culture: Field Trips – Part Two

1 credit

This is a continuation of the course Texts, Land, and Culture and includes visits to sites and museums. There is an introduction to the high holy days of Rosh ha-Shana, Yom ha-Kippurim, and Sukkot with a focus on biblical roots and related key terms.

6th session

Advanced-Intermediate Biblical Hebrew: Narrative Texts:

3 Credits

An advanced-intermediate course based on the scroll of Ruth and supplemental texts, Gen. 19, Num 25, plus the Moabite stone. Beyond the continued reinforcement of verb morphology and syntax patterns for Biblical Hebrew, there is a focus on understanding the literary choices made by the biblical author(s) and the literary function of the book. This applies the principles of discourse grammar from the Intermediate Biblical Hebrew courses. The instruction includes a spoken Hebrew environment to enhance long-term retention and to facilitate future studies in either advanced Biblical Hebrew or other dialects of Hebrew.

A 5-8 page paper is required on a topic related to exegesis and translation. This may be written in English, French, Spanish, Russian, or Hebrew.

Texts, Land and Culture: Classroom Teaching

2 credits

The module focuses on the cultural configurations of ancient life in Israel, the family, the agricultural cycle, cosmology, legal framework, temple worship, and includes key Hebrew terms for translators.

Modern Hebrew: Bet+

3 credits

This continues the use of modern Hebrew, with a focus on using the verb forms in communication and with an introduction to newspapers.

7th session

Texts, Land and Culture: Field trips – Part Three

1 credit

These are field trips as part of the Texts, Land and Culture course and includes visits to sites and museums.

8th session

Advanced-Intermediate Seminar in Biblical Hebrew Interpretation: Poetry and Psalms

2 credits

This course focuses on Hebrew poetry in the book of Psalms, including psalms of ascent, coronation psalms, and Canaanite psalms. The verbal system within poetry is examined, along with an understanding of the literary styles and structures used by biblical poets. This course increases a student's poetic vocabulary, and gives cultural background to better appreciate the book of Psalms. The instruction includes a spoken Hebrew environment to enhance long-term retention and to facilitate future studies in more advanced Biblical Hebrew or other dialects of Hebrew.

A 5-8 page paper is required on a topic related to exegesis and translation. This may be written in English, French, Spanish, Russian, or Hebrew.

Advanced-Intermediate Seminar in Biblical Hebrew Interpretation: Legal texts

2 credits

This course focuses on selected legal texts in the Torah. Various strata of legal texts are viewed in their intra-biblical relationship as well as their social and historical roles in the history of Israel, opening up a canonical and cultural resource for Christian readers and translators. The instruction includes a spoken Hebrew environment to enhance long-term retention and to facilitate future studies in more advanced Biblical Hebrew or other dialects of Hebrew.

Modern Hebrew: Gimel

3 credits

This continues the use of modern Hebrew, with a focus on using the verb forms in communication. Readings include Israeli newspaper articles.

9th session

Advanced Biblical Hebrew: History of the Hebrew Language

3 credits.

This includes representative readings that illustrate the features and strata of Ancient Hebrew, First-Temple Hebrew, Second-Temple Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew. An understanding of the development of the Hebrew language can be useful in evaluating exegetical proposals in secondary literature.

Modern Hebrew: Gimel+

2 credits

This continues the use of modern Hebrew, with a focus on using the verb forms in communication. Readings introduce Hebrew commentary material from Da'at Miqra on some texts studied in the parallel course, *History of the Hebrew language*.

10th session

Advanced Seminar in Biblical Hebrew Interpretation: Seminar and Paper

3 credits

Three weeks are devoted to lectures and readings around selected texts. The final week is left free for completing a 10-15 page paper that may be written in English, French, Spanish, Russian, or Hebrew.

Modern Hebrew: Dalet

3 credits

This continues the use of modern Hebrew, with a focus on reading academic material. Readings include Hebrew commentary material from *Da`at Miqra* on the texts studied in the parallel biblical Hebrew course.

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