Biblical Hebrew is a straightforward classical language whose rules are relatively easy to master. This course will offer a systematic foundation in biblical Hebrew grammar followed by readings in biblical texts. The understanding of biblical Hebrew grammar acquired in this class will facilitate a deeper and more accurate analysis of biblical texts, sharpening your interpretation and allowing for a fuller appreciation of this ancient corpus of literature. The first two-thirds of the semester will be spent primarily on grammar; this will typically be illustrated by readings from biblical passages. During the final third of the semester, we will read the Book of Jonah and analyze it from a grammatical and literary perspective.

Students taking this course should have some familiarity with modern Hebrew or with biblical texts. In general, at least one year of college level modern Hebrew or familiarity with biblical texts from a day school will suffice. If you are uncertain concerning the appropriateness of this course for you, please consult your advisor or see me. This course follows a rigorous schedule and swift pace. We will cover a large amount of detailed material, emphasizing precise grammatical understanding of Hebrew texts. Although the course will undoubtedly include some concepts and information familiar to you, do not assume that this will be a particularly easy class. If you have weak language skills and are concerned about your ability to excel in this class, feel free to discuss these concerns with me.

Required Books (available in the Brandeis bookstore, online, and in Judaica Reference):


Study and Evaluation:

Class participation & preparation 15%
4 homework assignments 25%
4 quizzes 25%
Final examination 35%

There will be no midterm exam, but the third quiz will be worth 10% of your final grade (meaning the other three quizzes will be worth 5% each). The material for this course is cumulative, so it is very important that you attend classes and complete the exercises at the end of each chapter.
We will typically cover 2–3 chapters from the textbook each week. You are expected to read each chapter at home before we cover it in class, and to complete the exercises in each chapter after we have discussed it. Unless otherwise stated, exercises from the textbook will not be handed in or graded. That said, we may go over some of the exercises in class, so your preparation of the material could factor into your participation grade for the course. All of your graded homework for this class should be your own.

The first few weeks of class will be spent on the nuts and bolts of Biblical Hebrew grammar, but by the end of September, we will begin to split our time between grammar and text. Each week, you will be assigned a set of biblical verses that you will prepare for class on Thursday. “Preparation” means you should be able to read the Hebrew text aloud, translate it, and explain the grammar and syntax of the passage. I will provide you with worksheets each week to help you prepare these texts.

I will be available during regular office hours and by appointment if you have questions about the course or any of the material we have covered in class. The course syllabus, copies of handouts, reminders and review notes, an answer key for the exercises in the textbook, and other useful materials will be posted on the LATTE page for the class.

POLICIES

Attendance: Attending class regularly is a basic expectation for this course. We will move swiftly through the course material and will not have much time to spend revisiting old material. If you must miss class, please let me know before class begins. You are responsible for all material covered in your absence.

Communication: My primary method of communicating with you outside of the classroom will be through email. It is your responsibility to check your email regularly during the work week, including at least once in the morning before each class meeting.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srscs/ai/index.html). Faculty will refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including, but not limited to, failure on the assignment, quiz, or exam in question, failure of the course, and/or suspension from the University and/or educational programs.

Special Needs: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and you wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please contact me by September 11 so that we can make suitable arrangements.

Laptops and Cell Phones in Class: Laptops and cell phones tend to be distracting. Therefore, I ask that they be turned off and stowed away during class. If you need an accommodation to use a laptop during class, please see me by September 11 to discuss this. If you need to leave your cell phone in “silent” mode because of an emergency, please let me know at the start of class.
PROVISIONAL COURSE SCHEDULE

Graded homework assignments should be turned in at the start of class on the day they are due. Quiz and/or assignment due dates are subject to change with advance notice to accommodate the needs of the class.

Week 1:
Aug 28
- Introduction to course & diagnostic exam
- Read Brettler, “Introduction”

Week 2:
Sept 3, 4
- Chs. 1–2: Consonants and vowels
- Chs. 3–4: Cantillation marks and other written symbols

Week 3:
Sept 8, 10, 11
- Ch. 5: Syllabification
- Chs. 6–7: Phonology

Week 4:
Sept 15, 17, 18
- Quiz #1: Chs. 1–5
- Ch. 8: Definite article and interrogatives
- Ch. 9: Prepositions and conjunctions
- Introduction to BHS and BDB

Week 5:
Sept 22, 23, 24
- Chs. 10–11: Nouns and adjectives
- Ch. 12: Bound forms (construct state)
- Readings in biblical prose

Week 6:
Sept 29; Oct 1, 2
- Homework #1: Chs. 6–12
- Ch. 13: Participles
- Ch. 14: Pronouns
- Ch. 15: Singular pronominal suffixes
- Readings in biblical prose

Week 7:
Oct 6, 8
- Quiz #2: Chs. 6–12
- Ch. 16: Plural pronominal suffixes
- Ch. 17: Numerals
- Readings in biblical prose (Wednesday)

Week 8:
Oct 13, 15
- Ch. 18: Introduction to the verb
- Ch. 19: Qal healthy verbs
- Introduction to the Gesenius Charts
- Readings in biblical prose (Wednesday)
Week 9: Oct 20, 22, 23
- Homework #2: Chs. 13–19
  - Ch. 20: *Qal* verbs with gutterals
  - Ch. 21: *Qal* verbs with initial *nun, yod,* or *aleph*
  - Readings in biblical prose
  - Introduction to biblical poetry

Week 10: Oct 27, 29, 30
- Quiz #3: Chs. 13–19, w/emphasis on the *Qal* healthy verb
  - Ch. 22: *Qal* hollow, third *aleph* and *yod,* and geminate verbs
  - Ch. 23: *Qal* verbs with combined deficiencies and verbal suffixes
  - Readings in biblical prose

Week 11: Nov 3, 5, 6
- Ch. 24: Derived conjugations of healthy verbs
- Ch. 25: Derived conjugations of other verbs
- Readings in biblical poetry

Week 12: Nov 10, 12, 13
- Homework #3: Chs. 20–25 and Using BDB and the Gesenius Charts
  - Review of Verbs, Chs. 18–25
  - Introduction to Jonah
  - Readings in Jonah

Week 13: Nov 17, 19, 20
- Quiz #4: Chs. 20–25 and Using BDB and the Gesenius Charts
  - Readings in Jonah, cont.

Week 14: Nov 24
- Readings in Jonah, cont.

Week 15: Dec 1, 3, 4
- Homework #4: Jonah
  - Readings in Jonah, cont.

Week 16: Dec 8
- Review for Final Exam