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 supplemented 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. Since the goal of the course is to enable engagement with the biblical text in its original language, readings in that text will be an on-going priority throughout the semester. That said, we must first build a foundation upon which to develop our reading skills. Therefore, the first part of the semester will focus more heavily on grammar; this will typically be illustrated by readings from biblical passages. Mid-semester, we will begin to split our time between grammar and readings in biblical prose and poetry. Finally, we will spend most of November and December reading the Book of Jonah and analyzing 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.

**COURSE MATERIALS:** (Brandeis bookstore may not have the best available prices.)


**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). Quiz 3 will be taken in class. The other quizzes will be take-home quizzes. 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.
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (reading, completing exercises and/or homework assignments, preparing for quizzes, etc.).

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. Exercises from the textbook will not be handed in or graded. However, we will regularly use the textbook exercises (especially the Hebrew-to-English translation passages from the Bible) for practice in class, so your preparation of that material will factor into your participation grade for the course. All of your graded work for this class should be your own.

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/svpse/academicintegrity/](http://www.brandeis.edu/svpse/academicintegrity/)). 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 within the first two weeks of class so that we can make suitable arrangements.

**Laptops and Cell Phones in Class:** Laptops and cell phones tend to be distracting to me and other students, in part because the temptation to take “just a second” to check email or web updates is hard to resist. Therefore, I ask that all electronic devices be turned off and stowed away during class. If you feel that your learning will be hampered by not having access to your laptop for note-taking or other legitimate purposes, please see me 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

Take-home quizzes and graded homework assignments should be turned in at the start of class on the day they are due. All due dates are subject to change with advance notice to accommodate the needs of the class.

| Week 1: | Aug 27 | • Introduction to course & diagnostic exam  
|         |        | • Read Brettler, “Introduction”  
|         |        | • Introduction to BHS and BDB  
| Week 2: | Aug 31; Sept 2, 3 | • Chs. 1–2: Consonants and vowels  
|         |        | • Chs. 3–4: Cantillation marks and other written symbols  
|         |        | • Ch. 5: Syllabification  
| Week 3: | Sept 9, 10 | • Chs. 6–7: Phonology  
|         |        | • Ch. 8: Definite article and interogatives  
| Week 4: | Sept 16, 17 | • Quiz #1: Chs. 1–5  
|         |        | • Ch. 9: Prepositions and conjunctions  
|         |        | • Ch. 10: Morphology of nouns and adjectives  
| Week 5: | Sept 21, 24 | • Ch. 11: Syntax of nouns and adjectives  
|         |        | • Ch. 12: Bound forms (construct state)  
| Week 6: | Sept 29, 30; Oct 1 | • Homework #1: Chs. 6–12  
|         |        | • Ch. 13: Participles  
|         |        | • Ch. 14: Pronouns  
|         |        | • Ch. 15: Singular pronominal suffixes  
|         |        | • Readings in biblical prose  
| Week 7: | Oct 7, 8 | • Quiz #2: Chs. 6–12  
|         |        | • Ch. 16: Plural pronominal suffixes  
|         |        | • Ch. 17: Numerals  
|         |        | • Readings in biblical prose  
| Week 8: | Oct 12, 14, 15 | • Ch. 18: Introduction to the verb  
|         |        | • Ch. 19: Qal healthy verbs  
|         |        | • Ch. 24: Derived conjugations of healthy verbs  
|         |        | • Introduction to the Gesenius Charts  
|         |        | • Readings in biblical prose  
| Week 9: | Oct 19, 21, 22 | • Homework #2: Chs. 13–19 & 24  
|         |        | • Readings in biblical prose  
|         |        | • Introduction to biblical poetry  
|         |        | • Review for Quiz #3  

| Week 10: Oct 26, 28, 29 | Quiz #3 (in-class): Chs. 13–19 & 24, w/emphasis on the healthy verb  
- Ch. 20: *Qal* verbs with gutterals  
- Ch. 21: *Qal* verbs with initial *myn, yod,* or *aleph*  
- Readings in biblical poetry |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 11: Nov 2, 4, 5   | Ch. 22: *Qal* hollow, third *aleph* and *yod,* and geminate verbs  
- Ch. 23: *Qal* verbs with combined deficiencies and verbal suffixes  
- Ch. 25: Derived conjugations of other verbs  
- Readings in biblical poetry |
| Week 12: Nov 9, 11, 12 | Homework #3: Chs. 20–23 & 25; using BDB and the Gesenius Charts  
- Review of Verbs, Chs. 18–25  
- Introduction to Jonah  
- Readings in Jonah |
| Week 13: Nov 16, 18, 19| Quiz #4: Chs. 20–23 & 25 (closed-note; BDB/Gesenius Charts allowed)  
- Readings in Jonah, cont. |
| Week 14: Nov 23        | Readings in Jonah, cont. |
| Week 15: Nov 30; Dec 2, 3| Homework #4: Jonah  
- Readings in Jonah, cont. |
| Week 16: Dec 7, 9      | Readings in Jonah, cont.  
- Review for Final Exam |