

# HEBREW EXEGESIS, FALL 2026

Stephen J. Smith, Ph.D. (ssmith@rts.edu)

WEDNESDAY 1pm-3pm

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION (According to the RTS Catalogue)**

This course introduces basic tools for interpreting the Old Testament. Attention is given to a working knowledge of biblical Hebrew and to principles of interpretation

### **Required:**

Course workbook (distributed by the professor)

Hebrew Bible (BHS)

Brotzman, Ellis R. and Eric J. Tully. *Old Testament Text Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016.

Khan, Geoffrey. *A Short Introduction to the Tiberian Masoretic Bible and its Reading Tradition*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2013.

Kohler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Study Edition. 2 vols. Translated and edited by M.E.J. Richardson. Boston: E.J. Brill, 2001. (HALOT)

Stuart, Douglas. *Old Testament Exegesis*, 4th edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Van Der Merwe, Christo, H., Jacobus A. Naude, and Jan Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 2nd edition. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017.

\*I highly recommend buying the electronic versions of BHS and HALOT for Accordance/Logos (and van Der Merwe if available).

### **Highly Recommended:**

Ralph's Septuagint (LXX) ([here](#)) and the NETS translation ([here](#)), Bible software versions. The NETS translation is free online [HERE](#). However, buying it on Bible software will allow you to run the module in parallel with the LXX text (which is really helpful).

\*Disclaimer: Amazon links are merely to show which version I recommend.

Brisco, Thomas V. *Holman Bible Atlas: A Complete Guide to the Expansive Geography of Biblical History*. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014.

Currid, John D. and David P. Barrett. *ESV Bible Atlas*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010

Hardy, H.H. and Matthew McAfee, *Going Deeper with Biblical Hebrew: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the Old Testament*. B & H Academic, 2024.

Lanier, Gregory R. *The Septuagint: What It Is and Why It Matters*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021.

Mangum, Douglas and Josh Westbury, eds. *Linguistics & Biblical Exegesis*. Lexham Method Series. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017.

Noonan, Benjamin J. *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2020.

Noonan, Jennifer E. *A Handbook of Second Language Acquisition for Biblical Studies: Insights of Modern Language Instruction for Teaching Biblical Languages*. Wilmore, KY: Glossa House, 2022.

Pinker, Stephen. *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New York: Penguin Books, 2015.

Rasmussen, Carl G. *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible: Revised Edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010

Van Pelt, Miles V, ed. *Basics of Hebrew Discourse: A Guide to Working with Hebrew Prose and Poetry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.

Walton, John H., David W. Baker, and Daniel I. Block, eds. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE AND GOALS**

The course proceeds from the conviction that proficiency in exegesis depends upon the ability to process Hebrew texts meaningfully and increasingly automatically. This course is therefore designed to develop the students' ability to read, process, comprehend, and interpret Biblical Hebrew texts with increasing fluency and accuracy. A notable and important consequence will be increased enjoyment of, and motivation for, engaging with the biblical text in the original language.

The assigned Hebrew texts (see the schedule below) are not randomly selected. Rather, they cohere around a single theme for reasons discussed more on the first day of class: the Old Testament's theology of kingship and covenant identity. The culminating text (Ezekiel 37:24–28) forms the basis for the course's exegesis paper.

All assigned Hebrew texts contain predominantly high-frequency Hebrew vocabulary. Students completing Hebrew 1 and 2 should already recognize approximately 95–98% of the vocabulary in the assigned texts.

This deliberate limitation of vocabulary load is based upon findings from second language acquisition research indicating that reading comprehension develops most effectively when readers already know the overwhelming majority of the words in a text. The goal of the course is therefore not primarily the acquisition of large amounts of new vocabulary, but the development of greater fluency, automaticity, and comprehension with vocabulary and grammatical patterns students have already encountered in Hebrew 1 and 2.

Students will complete weekly assignments from the course workbook (distributed by the professor). These assignments are designed to enable the study to interact meaningfully and more proficiently with the Hebrew text during the classroom sessions.

Generally speaking, the first hour of class will focus on increasing reading proficiency and comprehension, while the second hour will emphasize exegetical method and the use of key exegetical resources (e.g., lexicons, theological dictionaries, text criticism, commentaries, etc.). Notably, students will actively practice the use of these resources in class.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. Weekly Preparation and Participation — 25%**

All students are expected to actively and consistently participate in all outside and inside class activities / assignments.

### **2. Weekly Quizzes — 20%**

Students will complete a weekly quiz at the beginning of each class. The quiz will cover material from the student's out-of-class workbook assignments for the week.

### **3. Paper Scaffolding Assignments — 15%**

Students will complete short written assignments throughout the semester that progressively develop, and build towards, the final paper.

### **4. Final Exegetical Paper — 35%**

Students will write an exegetical paper on Ezekiel 37:24–28. Further instructions will be distributed during the semester.

### **5. Bible memorization — 5 %**

Students will memorize Deuteronomy 6:4-9 in Hebrew (see course schedule below).

## GRADING SCALE

A (97-100) 4.00  
A- (94-96) 3.66  
B+ (91-93) 3.33  
B (88-90) 3.00  
B- (86-87) 2.66  
C+ (83-85) 2.33  
C (80-82) 2.00  
C- (78-79) 1.66  
D+ (75-77) 1.33  
D (72-74) 1.00  
D- (70-71) 0.66  
F (below 70) 0.00  
I (incomplete) –  
W (withdraw) –  
S (satisfactory) –  
P (passing) –

## ATTENDANCE AND LATE WORK

Students are required to both attend *and* participate in class. Failure to do either will result in a considerable negative impact on your final grade. The penalty for late work is **one reduced letter grade per day**. Please come to class prepared, i.e., have any assignments completed before class.

## SPECIAL NEEDS

Students requiring special accommodations should contact me at the beginning of the course.

## DISCLAIMER

This syllabus is meant to reflect the learning objectives, format and other information necessary for students to appraise the course. But please note that I reserve the right to modify any portion of the syllabus as may become necessary.

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

	Date	Topic	Assignment Due
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	Aug 26	Syllabus, course vision, diagnostic reading assessments	None
	Sept 2	Deuteronomy 5:1-10	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 1
	Sept 9	Deuteronomy 6:1-9	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 2  Memorization: Deut 6:4
	Sept 16	Deuteronomy 17:14-20	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 3
	Sept 23	2 Samuel 7:8-17	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 4  Memorization: Deut 6:4-5
	Sept 30	1 Kings 3:1-9, 14	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 5
	Oct 7	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>
	Oct 14	1 Kings 8:22-30	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 6  Memorization: Deut 6:4-6
	Oct 21	1 Kings 8:33-34, 46-53	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 7
	Oct 28	Psalms 99	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 8
	Nov 4	Ezekiel 37:15-28	Workbook: TBA Paper scaffold 9  Memorization: Deut 6:4-7
	Nov 18	<b>NO CLASS: ETS / SBL</b>	Workbook: TBA
	Nov 25	Guided Paper workshop	Workbook: TBA  Memorization: Deut 6:4-8
	Dec 2	Guided Paper workshop	Workbook: TBA
	Day of Final	Final Paper Due	Final Paper Due Memorization: Deut 6:4-9

