



Course Syllabus - DRAFT

KNB 2127HF – Hebrew Reading and Exegesis

Knox College, Toronto School of Theology

Winter 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Brian P. Irwin, Associate Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Scripture
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Teaching Assistant: N/A

Course Identification

Course Number: KNB2127HF
Course Format: Lectures and translation
Course Name: Hebrew Reading and Exegesis
Course Location: Room TBA, Knox College, 23 Kings College Circle
Class Times: Mondays, 11:10am–1:00pm
Prerequisites: One year or equivalent of introductory Biblical Hebrew

A. Course Description and Student Learning Goals

This course builds on students' knowledge of introductory Hebrew grammar to engage them in the reading and interpretation of Hebrew narrative (selections from Jonah, Ruth & other passages). Emphasis is on building Hebrew vocabulary and confidence in reading and on developing exegetical skill. This course will be delivered synchronously and will typically involve a two-hour weekly class meeting held via Zoom. Prerequisite: two semesters of Elementary Biblical Hebrew.

The Learning Goals listed below relate to the following areas:

- a) Understanding of Area Content (**UAC**)
- b) General Academic Skills (**GAS**)
- c) Ministerial and Public Leadership (**MPL**)
- d) Personal and Spiritual Formation (**PSF**)

Upon successfully completing this course, the student will:

- 1) have an improved knowledge of the principles of Hebrew grammar and syntax, particularly as applied to Old Testament exegetical problems (**UAC**)
- 2) read and translate Hebrew narrative with greater fluency and with an improved working vocabulary (**UAC**)
- 3) be able to exercise the basic exegetical skills necessary for interpreting Hebrew narrative effectively and faithfully for today (**GAS, MPL**)
- 4) demonstrate the research and writing skills necessary for graduate-level Old Testament study (**GAS, MPL**)
- 5) demonstrate ethical behaviour, taking responsibility for the expectations of course and showing respect and willingness to listen in the learning atmosphere including class discussions and small groups (**PSF**)

B. Course Resources

Required Texts

Required texts are available on-campus or online at the University of Toronto Bookstore (<https://uoftbookstore.com/textbooks/>) or from the online retailer of your choice.

For weekly reading and exercises:

- Chisholm, Jr., Robert B. *A Workbook for Intermediate Hebrew: Grammar, Exegesis, and Commentary on Jonah and Ruth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2006. (approx. \$39.49)
- Brotzman, Ellis R. and Eric J. Tully. *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016. (approx. \$35.00)

For weekly Hebrew reading and translating:

Option 1

- Brown III, A. Philip, and Bryan W. Smith, eds. *A Reader's Hebrew Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.
Students going on to further advanced-degree work in Old Testament may wish instead to acquire, Elliger, Karl, and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Minor ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984). (***you may wish to consult with the instructor prior to the start of class to determine which text is best for you***)
- One of the Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons listed below:
Clines, David J. A., *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009.
Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament...Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson*. (Oxford or Hendrickson)
Holladay, William L. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament Based on the First, Second and Third Editions of the Koehler-Baumgartner Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971.

OR

Option 2

Access to an academic Bible software programme such as *Logos*, *Accordance*, or similar that includes the text of the Hebrew Bible and at least one of the three Hebrew lexicons listed above.

Course Website

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged into Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>. For help with Quercus, visit: <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/46670/pages/support>. Students who continue to experience difficulty after consulting online support should contact Knox's head librarian, Joan Pries (joan.pries@utoronto.ca), for further help.

The professor's college webpage can be found at: <https://knox.utoronto.ca/dr-brian-irwin/>

C. Evaluation

The class consists of a single two-hour session and a one-hour tutorial each week. The assignments and their weights are as follows:

- **Quizzes (75%).** A series of eight quizzes focusing on verbal diagnostics, syntax, and translation of short passages. Quizzes will be approximately 10–20 minutes in length and will be given at the beginning of class. Students will not be permitted to take missed quizzes except in cases where the absence was due to medical necessity or significant personal or family crisis. Students will be allowed to retake failed tests immediately following the next class for a maximum score of 70%.
- **Culminating Exercise (25%).** Students shall complete one of the following assignments (*n.b., Knox College students studying for ordination in the Presbyterian Church in Canada must choose option 4*):
 - 1) *Hebrew Reading Assignment* - Following along diligently in the Hebrew text of Genesis, the student will be required to listen four times to the Book of Genesis being read (e.g., on CD/MP3) in English (each reading takes approximately three hours). Evaluation will be based on the student's written confirmation of having completed the assignment and on an oral examination testing the student's ability to follow along in the Hebrew text with an understanding of grammar and important vocabulary.
 - 2) *Memorisation of a Passage in Hebrew* – The student will have the option of memorizing a significant passage from the Hebrew text of Genesis (approximately half of a page in the *BHS*). Those who choose this option will be expected to do the following: a) recite the Hebrew text orally from memory; b) write out the text (with vowel pointing) in Hebrew; and c) identify all forms (e.g. *Qal* "perfect" 2 m. s. with 3 m. s. suffix, feminine plural noun, *Qal* infinitive construct, etc.) Evaluation will be based on an oral examination administered during exam week.
 - 3) *Vocabulary Assignment* - Using a vocabulary guide such as the ones by Landes (Landes, George. *Building Your Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary: Learning Words by Frequency and Cognate*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001) or Pratico and Van Pelt (Van Pelt, Miles V. and Gary D. Pratico. *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), memorize a block of vocabulary words, amount to be discussed with the Professor (e.g., verbs and nouns occurring over 50 times). Evaluation will be based on a written test administered during exam week.
 - 4) *Exegesis of Two Passages* – As an exercise in exegesis in preparation for preaching, the student will translate and exegete the Hebrew text of two passages to be chosen in consultation with the instructor. The exegesis must include independent inductive observations and must result in at least one exegetically and hermeneutically sound, relevant, and practical idea for preaching, along with a brief statement of how this idea would be developed for preaching (e.g., with subpoints also derived from the text). Due session 12.

Toronto School of Theology Grading Scale and Standards

The following chart presents the standard used for assessment in this course. It is included in the interests of transparency and to assist students in self-appraisal. If you wish to discuss an assignment to be submitted or a grade that has been received, please feel free to make an appointment with the instructor.

Letter Grade	Numerical Value	GPA	Grasp of Subject Matter	Explanation
"A" range: Excellent: Student shows original thinking, analytic and synthetic ability, critical evaluations, broad knowledge base.				
A+	90–100	4.0	Profound and creative	Strong evidence of original thought, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound and penetrating critical evaluations which identify assumptions of those they study as well as their own; mastery of an extensive knowledge base.
A	85–89	4.0	Outstanding	

A-	80–84	3.7	Excellent	Clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations; broad knowledge base.
“B” range: Good: Student shows critical capacity and analytic ability, understanding of relevant issues, familiarity with the literature.				
B+	77–79	3.3	Very Good	Good critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; good familiarity with the literature.
B	73–76	3.0	Good	
B-	70–72	2.7	Satisfactory at a post-baccalaureate level	Adequate critical capacity and analytic ability; some understanding of relevant issues; some familiarity with the literature.
FZ	0–69	0	Failure	Failure to meet the above criteria.

Late work (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. The penalty for late work is 4% deducted per week late (2% off per half week). *This penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty advisor or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor.* The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course (or the last day of exam week). Students who for exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar’s office in the student’s college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm>) or college grading policy.

Use of Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Tool. Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their written work to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq> [\(Links to an external site\)](#)).

Students who have principled objections to the use of this service should see the course instructor during the first two weeks of the course to arrange an alternative. Typically, this will involve submitting drafts of the assignment at regular intervals throughout the semester. Further information on Turnitin and Quercus may be found at: <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/resources/student-support/>.

D. Course Policies & Information

Policies for courses are contained in the TST Basic Degree Handbook and the Knox Student Handbook. See further, the Syllabus Supplement available from the class Quercus page. In particular, please note the following:

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism Policy. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to the Knox Director of Academic Programmes. For details, see the *TST Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks (linked from <https://tinyurl.com/y47hv9ne>) and the *University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<https://tinyurl.com/y7vrsrhu>). A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (<https://tinyurl.com/ydbcge4g>).

Use of Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude). You may use generative artificial intelligence tools for learning and practicing the concepts in this course, but these tools may not be used for completing assignments in this course. That is, you may use these tools in the same ways you might discuss course content and assignments with your peers, but just as you may not collaborate with your peers to complete assignments, you may not use these tools to complete any assignment or exercise. If you use a GenAI tool, you should use the version of Microsoft Copilot licensed to the University of Toronto, which doesn’t retain data for training purposes. Other tools may and do use data entered by users to train the AI, and unless you hold the rights to the prompts you use, you may be entering copyrighted material without the rights-holder’s permission.

All of this said, I encourage you to think about the moral, ethical, and pedagogical implications of using GenAI. A first step is to complete the University of Toronto’s “[Coursework and GenAI: A Practical Guide for Students](#)” in Quercus. Another step is to read the University of Alberta Library’s “[Ethical Considerations for Using Generative AI](#).” You might also read this research paper, “[Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task](#),” which reports on experiments showing that using GenAI literally makes students stupider.

This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to ensure that evaluations are a fair and accurate assessment of your learning. Though it may be tempting to use generative AI to assist you when completing your assignments, this will simply inhibit your learning. If the work you submit is essentially the output of generative AI, then what have you learned and what value are you adding? Think of it this way: if a potential employer or supervisor can get as much from an AI tool as what you’re able to do yourself, then why should they hire you at all? You should aim to understand course content at a level that far exceeds what an automated tool can achieve. This course—and in particular, each assignment—is designed to help you attain true mastery of the course content. If you have questions or are stuck, please come to office hours, where I’ll be happy to help.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at <http://www.utorid.utoronto.ca/>. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. For help with your UTORid and password or other technological issues the following options are available: email help.desk@utoronto.ca; phone 416-978-HELP; or visit the Help Desk at the Information Commons at Robarts Library.

Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. Forwarding your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. All email communications from students in conjoint programs should be sent from a utoronto email address. Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify

them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

Attendance. Students should be aware that Knox College policy states that 80% attendance at a lecture course is required for credit.

Use of Technology in Class. Laptops and other computing devices may be used in the classroom for note-taking purposes only. The use of the internet is not permitted while class is in session unless it is part of a specific class activity. Students wishing to text message, search for images, fact check etc. should do so during the break or outside of class.

Much of the learning that goes on in the classroom is founded upon mutual disclosure that takes place between the instructor and the student and between students. Parties outside of that learning community have not committed themselves to this relationship of trust. For this and other reasons, permission to record lectures in audio format is granted for use by registered students only. Video recording is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. *Recordings and notes of class lectures may not be electronically reproduced, posted, or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.*

E. Weekly Schedule of Classes, Readings & Assignments

Session 1	Jan. 7	Course Introduction • Grammar Review (Verb Sequence) • Introduction to Ruth and Hebrew Narrative
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Session 2	Jan. 14	Hebrew Reading: Ruth 1:1–6 • Grammar Review (Verb Stems) Assignment: prepare Ruth 1:1–6 (Chisholm, <i>WFIH</i> pp. 7–20, 101–11) Required Reading: • Syllabus • Citing Sources handout • <i>How Not to Plagiarize</i> (http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize)
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הַנָּה	Test: Quiz 1 - Qal Perfect & Imperfect of Strong Verb
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Session 3	Jan. 21	Hebrew Reading: Ruth 1:7–19a • Introduction to Syntax מְלָאכָה: prepare Ruth 1:7–19a (Chisholm, <i>WFIH</i> pp. 111–29) Recommended Reading: • Chisholm, <i>EE</i> pp. 19–29
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הַנָּה	בְּתִן: Quiz 2 - Qal Imperative (2ms, 2fs, 2mp, 2fp), Participle (ms only) and Infinitives Absolute and Construct of Strong Verb
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Session 4 Jan. 28 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 1:19b–22 • Transmission of the Old Testament

מלאכה: prepare Ruth 1:19b–22 (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 129–36)

מקראות

- Brotzman and Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, pp. 1–35

מקראות אחרות

- Chisholm, *EE* pp. 31–56

הנה

בחן: Quiz 3 - “Skeleton” paradigms (i.e., 3ms Perfect, 3ms Imperfect, 2ms Imperative, ms Active Participle, ms Passive Participle, Infinitive Absolute and Infinitive Construct) of the *Niphal*, *Piel*, and *Pual* forms of the strong verb.

Session 5 Feb. 4 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 2:1–3 • Hebrew Texts of the Old Testament

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Last day to consult with instructor on exegesis paper.

מלאכה: prepare Ruth 2:1–3 (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 137–42)

מקראות

- Brotzman and Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, pp. 36–64

מקראות אחרות

- Chisholm, *EE* pp. 57–117

הנה

בחן: Quiz 4 - Skeleton paradigms for the *Hiphil*, *Hophal*, and *Hithpa’el* forms of the strong verb.

Session 6 Feb. 11 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 2:4–17a • Ancient Translations

מלאכה: prepare Ruth 2:4–17a (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 143–63)

מקראות

- Brotzman and Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, pp. 65–96

מקראות אחרות

- Chisholm, *EE* pp. 119–47

הנה

בחן: Quiz 5 - Skeleton paradigms for the Original *Pe Waw* (i.e., ישב) *Qal* and *Hiphil* and of the *Pe Nun* (גש) *Qal* & *Hiphil*.

Feb. 18 TST Reading Week ☉ No Class Meeting

Session 7 Feb. 25 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 2:17b–23

מְלָאכָה: prepare Ruth 2:17b–23 (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 163–72)

מִקְרָאוֹת אֲחֵרוֹת

Chisholm, *EE* pp. 149–86

הַנָּה

בִּחֵן: Quiz 6 – Review quiz on all paradigms covered so far.

Session 8 Mar. 4 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 3:6–15 • Textual Criticism

מְלָאכָה: prepare Ruth 3:6–15 (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 181–95)

מִקְרָאוֹת

- Brotzman and Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, pp. 117–141

מִקְרָאוֹת אֲחֵרוֹת

- Chisholm, *EE* pp. 221–78

הַנָּה

בִּחֵן: Quiz 7 – Translation and Syntax

Session 9 Mar. 11 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 3:16–18 • Reconstructing Texts

מְלָאכָה: prepare Ruth 3:16–18 (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 195–99)

מִקְרָאוֹת

- Brotzman and Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, pp. 219–226

הַנָּה

בִּחֵן: Quiz 8 – Translation and Syntax

Session 10 Mar. 18 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 4:1–12

מלאכה: prepare Ruth 4:1–12 (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 201–15)

Session 11 Mar. 25 Hebrew Reading: Ruth 4:13–17; Ruth 4:18–22

מלאכה: review Ruth 4:13–17, 18–22 (Chisholm, *WFIH* pp. 215–23)

Session 12 Apr. 1 Independent Appointments for Culminating Assignment

הנה Culminating Assignment (25%)