



Executive MA program in Jewish Education

Description and Procedure for Classical Hebrew Proficiency Exam

This exam focuses on **reading comprehension** (60%) and **grammar** (40%).

In general, students need to demonstrate that they can read Biblical (stories/narrative and legal texts) and prayer texts with comprehension and recognize grammatical elements required for understanding. These elements are described in detail in the texts and chart on page 3.

Useful texts in preparing for the Hebrew proficiency exam are:

- **The First Hebrew primer: The Adult Beginner's Path to Biblical Hebrew**, Simon, Resnikoff and Motzkin

- **The First Hebrew primer for adults: Biblical and Prayerbook Hebrew**, Simon, Stahl, Motzkin, Anderson, Oakland, Calif. Eks pub. 1983.

The items described in the attached chart and the grammar portion of the exam can also be found in Biblical grammar books. If you are going to look in a grammar book, only look at those items needed for this exam (as described forthwith). Some recommended texts are:

Weingreen, J. **A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew**, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Greenberg, Moshe, **Introduction to Hebrew**, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.:Prentice-Hall, Inc.,1965.

Lambdin, Thomas O. **Introduction to Biblical Hebrew**, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971.

Structure of the exam:

Texts:

* A few sentences and/or a passage from a prayer book will be chosen from the daily weekday prayers.

*1-2 parts of a biblical story / narrative and 1-3 verses of Biblical law/ordinances followed by questions will be chosen from the following chapters:

Genesis: 12, 13, 17, 18, 24 (verses 1-18), 27, 28, 29, 37, 45

Exodus : 2, 20, 21, 22, 31 (verses 12-18)



*Extra credit: You will receive **extra credit** if you successfully complete missing words in a short **modern Hebrew text**. You will NOT lose points if you try and make mistakes.

Examples of questions related to the classical texts:

Reading Comprehension:

- Translation of words/phrases/a verse into English
- Multiple-choice questions regarding words/ phrases/ verse/ content of the paragraph
- Matching between given phrases / sentences with their English translation or their rephrased equivalent in simple basic current Hebrew
- Organizing the text or part of it in logical structure such as chronological order, cause and result etc
- Completing missing words in sentences to demonstrate understanding of content

Grammar

- Identifying roots, Binyanim and pronouns of verbs in the given texts
- Identifying some linguistic elements as demonstrated in the attached chart and re-writing them in other forms in Hebrew/ in few words/ in English in order to demonstrate understanding.

Instructions in all sections are given in English.

Best wishes for your Hebrew language study, and good luck on the exam!

בראשית יב

א ויאמר יהוה אל-אברהם לך-לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל-הארץ אשר אראך. **ב** ואעשה לגוי גדול ואברכהך ואגדלה שמך והיה ברכה. **ג** ואברכה מברכך ומקללך אאר ונברכו בך כל משפחת האדמה --- **ד** ונרא יהוה אל-אברהם ויאמר לזרעך אתן את-הארץ הזאת ויבן שם מזבח ליהוה הנראה אליו. **ה** ויעתק משם ההרה מקדם לבית-אל ויט אהלה בית-אל מים והעי מקדם ויבן-שם מזבח ליהוה ויקרא בשם יהוה. **ו** ויסע אברהם הלוד ונסוע הנגבה. { פ }

בראשית מג

ז ויאמרו שאול שאל-האיש לנו ולמולדתנו לאמר העוד אביכם חי היש לכם אח ונגד-לו על-פי הדברים האלה הודוע נדע כי לאמר הורידו את-אחיכם.



Chart of Grammatical Forms Required for Classical Exam

Linguistic terms	comments	Examples from texts
Possessive pronouns	ארצך = הארץ שלך	(מ)ארצך; (ומ)מולדתך; אביך; שמי; (ל)זרעך; אלה; (ול)מולדתנו; אביכם; אחיכם
Direct object pronouns	אעשך = אעשה אותך	אראת; (ו)אעשך; (ו)אברךך;
Construct/ <i>smichut</i>	בית אביך = הבית של אביך	(ומ)בית אביך; כל משפחת האדמה; בית-אל
Noun and adjective	Plural - גויים גדולים	(ל)גוי גדול
Reversive <i>Vav</i> followed by form of future		ויאמר; ויקרא; ויסע; ויאמרו;
Absolute infinitive	The regular (construct) form ללכת, לנסוע, לשאול, לדעת	הלך ונסוע; שאול; ידוע
Lengthened form of verb		אגדלה; אברכה;
Shortened form of verb		ירא; ויבן; ויעתק; ויט; ויגד
Definite article <i>Hey</i>		הארץ; האדמה; הדברים האלה
Directional <i>Hey</i>	ארצה = אל הארץ	ארצה; הרה; הנגבה
Interrogative <i>Hey</i>		העוד; הידוע
prepositions		אל; מ; ל; ב; את;
Conjugated prepositions		בך; אליו; לנו; לכם; לו