

HEBREW AND TEXT PREPARATION: INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

At Hebrew College, we enable our students to cultivate a personal relationship with Torah as a member of the community of people contributing to the ongoing emergence of Torah in the world. To do, students must gain significant knowledge of Hebrew language and skills for decoding sacred Jewish texts in the original.

OUR APPROACH

Hebrew language instruction at Hebrew College enables students to read and interpret sacred Jewish texts of all eras of Jewish tradition. The curriculum focuses on teaching the grammatical building blocks of the language to enable text study.

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

As part of the admissions process, applicants must complete a Hebrew placement exam to help determine placement level. Candidates for Shanah Aleph also take a text skills assessment. It is common for applicants to need to do additional learning to be ready to start in either Mekorot or Shanah Aleph. Our faculty provide feedback about placement and guidance for how to continue to grow to be ready to start in our program. Please be in touch with Rabbi Daniel Klein, Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Life, for copies of these tests and to develop preparation plans.

MEKOROT REQUIREMENTS AND PREPARATION

Requirements: Applicants must have completed the equivalent of two years of college level Hebrew to enter *Mekorot*, our preparatory year immersion program. They should be familiar with basic Hebrew grammar, including the conjugation of regular verbs in the major *binyanim*: *qal*, *niph'al*, *pi'el*, *hiph'il* and *hitpa'el*.

Preparation

We recommend taking Hebrew courses at a local university or as part of an intensive ulpan, such as at Middlebury College or in various places in Israel. Many people also choose to work with a private tutor. If you need or want to work with someone virtually, we recommend contacting [Ulpan Or](#), which is familiar with our program and our learning expectations.

To prepare for *Mekorot*, we recommend learning: [Ivrit Min HaHatchalah](#) (*Hebrew from Scratch*), volumes 1 and 2 in their entirety with a particular focus on learning *binyanim* mentioned above.

SHANAH ALEPH REQUIREMENTS AND PREPARATION

Hebrew Language

To be ready to start in Shanah Aleph, people must have:

- substantial Hebrew vocabulary,
- fluent oral reading of vocalized texts,
- knowledge of Hebrew grammar, including
 - the ability to analyze and produce verbs forms in *qal*, *niph'al*, *pi'el*, *hiph'il* and *hitpa'el* with sound roots and III-γ (ה"ל) roots; and in *qal* and *hiph'il*, with hollow (ע"ו") roots
 - the ability to analyze and produce the forms of nouns in the plural, in construct, and with possessive suffixes
- the ability to read and comprehend unvocalized Hebrew texts.

To acquire this knowledge, people generally need to have taken the equivalent of three years of college level Hebrew. In Shanah Aleph, you will take an intensive Hebrew grammar course in the fall and a Biblical Hebrew course in the spring.

Strongly Recommended

In addition to Hebrew language courses and tutoring, we strongly recommend you read aloud the equivalent of 20 pisukim or so a day in Sefer Bereshit or other Biblical or liturgical passages. The key is to read a manageable amount each day, striving for accuracy in pronunciation, *not speed*.

Rabbinic Texts

To be ready for Shanah Aleph, students must be able to:

- Read and translate with accuracy Mishnah texts that do not have punctuation and nikkud
- Read Rashi script with fluency

Learning Suggestions

- Learn Mishnah from a Vilna Shas because it is unvocalized and has Rashi's commentary written in Rashi script. You can find an [online version here](#).
- Check your accuracy in reading the Mishna with an addition that has vowels and punctuation, such as the Albeck or Kehati editions or [this online site](#).
- Depending on your level, work with a tutor and prepare text in chevruta
- Learn Mishna Berachot and any of the following Mishnaic texts:
 - Shabbat, Chapter 12
 - Yoma, Chapter 6 and 8
 - Sukkah, Chapter 2
 - Bava Metzia, Chapters 1-3
 - Sanhedrin, Chapter 1

Tanakh

We expect all students who enter Shanah Aleph to have at least a general overview level knowledge of the historical books in Tanakh as well as more specific knowledge of the Book of Genesis.

Required

- Read the entire Sefer Bereshit in English
- Read the first five parshiyot of Sefer Bereshit in Hebrew

Recommended

1. Read the historical books of the Hebrew Bible in English - Joshua through 2 Kings
 - a. Read one chapter a day.
 - b. To help you retain the information, consider creating a grid of the main events, characters, places, chronology, questions/issues. For example, see [this](#) link.
2. Read some or all of these excellent resources:
 - a. [The Jewish Study Bible](#)
 - b. [Who Wrote the Bible?](#) by Richard Elliot Friedman
 - c. [How to Read the Bible](#) by James Kugel
 - d. Watch [this](#) lecture series by Christine Hayes of Yale University