Recommended Reading List: Master of Arts in Theological Studies, Old Testament
Briercrest Seminary

Students should understand that completion of the readings on this list is not required to graduate with a Master’s degree in Old Testament from Briercrest Seminary (students should consult the seminary catalogue for program requirements). This list is only recommended for students who wish to develop a level of competency in the main areas of study of the Old Testament. A book’s presence on this list does not imply that it is being “endorsed” in its entirety, only that it is important and helpful for that area of study.

Starred books under each heading are highlighted as being “must-reads” for graduate level work in Old Testament.

Ideally, this is a list for students to work through during and after their program in order to ground themselves as insightful and wise interpreters of the Old Testament.

1) Biblical Texts
Although MA OT students at Briercrest are encouraged to read the entire OT in English and as much of the OT in Hebrew as they’re able, the following texts are crucial to read in Hebrew:

*Torah*: Genesis 1-25; Exodus 1-7, 12-24; Deuteronomy 4-12

*Prophets*: 2 Kings 16-25; Isaiah 1-12, 40-55

*Writings*: Psalms 90-106, Proverbs 1-10

2) Secondary Scholarly Literature

Textual Criticism and the Masora


Exegetical Method and Genre


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¹ Tov is perhaps the premier OT text critic in the world, and this book is perhaps the book on textual criticism.

² This guide is the best writing I have found on the foundational steps of interpreting a biblical passage; every MA OT student should read and apply it carefully. It informs much of what I do when I teach Hebrew exegesis.

³ This book is a classic, exciting to read, which shook the foundations when it was published. A more involved but still deeply insight book along the same lines is Meir Sternberg’s *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985).
Old Testament Introduction
*Childs, Brevard. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.6*

Hebrew Grammar, Linguistics, Philology
*Waltke, Bruce, and M. O’Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.8*

The Ancient Near East

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4 Although Carson focuses more on NT exegesis, this is a brief, clear, indispensable guide for avoiding errors in logic in making exegetical arguments.
5 This is the single best introduction to the books of the Old Testament that I know of, and very much worth buying.
6 Childs’ hermeneutical approach to the OT—the particular way in which he’s relating historical-critical and final-form approaches to the text—is complex, and I have a number of reservations about it. But he has such a powerful sense of the Bible as Scripture, and has been so influential in the field—no matter how much people disagree with him, he’s fundamentally changed how scholars think about the Bible—that he is worth reading carefully.
7 A relatively brief and readable grammar, focusing on syntax, with copious examples; should be read straight through.
8 I had to read this straight through as a student and don’t recommend you try. The section on the verb is unnecessarily long (I prefer the approach taken by van der Merwe, et. al., in *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*), but this book is still a must-have for reference.
9 Strong on morphology and a discourse approach to the verb, but not to be used without other grammars as a balance (e.g., weak on use of definite article). Should be read straight through.
10 Again, I don’t recommend reading this grammar straight through; but, although dated in some ways, no OT student should be without this classic and authoritative grammar.
11 This book, together with Barr’s *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, is a classic on the technicalities of the text of the OT, as well as right and wrong ways to handle them.
12 Another volume which could be read for this subject is Peter Cotterell, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation.* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999).


History of Israelite Religion


Old Testament History and Archaeology


Old Testament Theology


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\(^{13}\) Without necessarily superseding Pritchard’s earlier and comparable *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (abbreviated as ANET), these volumes are the most up-to-date and comprehensive translations of important ANE texts. While they probably can’t be read cover-to-cover, students should not fail frequently to consult these volumes.

\(^{14}\) See also Walton’s earlier book *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context* (2d edition; Library of Biblical Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) is also very much worth consulting. Mark Smith’s *The Early History of God* is recommended for those interested specifically in Ugaritic.


\(^{16}\) A superb exploration of methodological issues from an evangelical perspective.


\(^{19}\) Very helpful selection of readings from major OT theologians.
Theology of Scripture

Canon and Early Biblical Transmission and Interpretation

3) Extrabiblical Hebrew and Northwest Semitic Texts

The texts listed below can sound intimidatingly obscure. However, northwest Semitic inscriptions, whether written in Hebrew, Moabite, Phoenician, or Ugaritic, are all extremely similar to Biblical Hebrew and have all been extensively studied; students with even one year of Biblical Hebrew will find them easy to read with a good guide (Gibson is extremely user-friendly). Doing so provides invaluable insight into the writing and thought-world of the Hebrew Bible at a very low level of effort. In a similar way, giving attention to post-biblical Hebrew and Aramaic strengthens one’s ability with Biblical Hebrew and gives unique insight into how the OT was interpreted.

I was given the advice, as a graduate OT student, to invest time in one area of pre-biblical Semitic texts and in one area of post-biblical texts. I focused on Ugaritic and the Rabbinic commentaries found in Miqraot Gedolot, finding both to be very helpful and well worth the effort.

Extrabiblical Hebrew Inscriptions
*Texts*: Gezer Calendar; Mesha Inscription (Moabite Stone); Siloam Tunnel; Yavneh Yam; Lachish Letters 2-5; Arad Letters 1, 17, 18, 24.


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20 There are as many OT theologies out there as there are scholars; Waltke and Goldingay are listed above because I have the greatest of respect for them as scholars and theologians. But if you want to read more widely in this area, you will have to get into the work done by Brueggemann, von Rad, Eichrodt, James Barr, etc.
23 Beckwith’s book is involved and challenging, but an important (and somewhat controversial) argument that the OT canon as we have it was basically fixed at the time of Jesus. (Most scholars would argue that it was more fluid and open—at least with regard to the third part of the canon—at this time.)
24 Gibson gives the text, translation, and comprehensive notes on grammar and ideology, with references to OT material.

**Phoenician Texts**

*Texts:* Ahiram, Yehimelek, Eshmunazar, Kilamuwa, Karatepe

**Resources:** SSI, KAI, COS, ANET

**Ugaritic Texts**

*Texts:* A good selection of mythological, epistolary, and ritual Ugaritic texts is found in Segert’s grammar, pages 151-168; I would especially recommend translating KTU 2.38 (letter from the King of Tyre to the King of Ugarit); 1.109 (offering list); 1.100 (incantation against snakebite); as well as the mythological poetic texts on pages 157-59, 161-68.


**Qumran Texts**

*Texts:* Hodayot Scroll, columns 1-2; Rule of the Community, cols. 1-3; Rule of the Congregation, cols. 1-2; Pesher Habbakuk, cols. 6-8.


**Postbiblical Hebrew**


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25 Even for those without German, this book is of great use, because the text and very simple notes on translation are given. The *Context of Scripture and Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* will also translate and discuss these texts.

26 Segert’s grammar is very helpful in “spoon-feeding” Ugaritic to students with knowledge of Hebrew. He includes a grammar, paradigms, practice texts, and a glossary. As above, COS and ANET will translate most of these texts.

27 This book is your one-stop resource for reading all texts Rabbinic. You can also search it online at: http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/TABS/Jastrow/

28 The Mishnah is the first collection of Rabbinic interpretations of and extrapolations on Torah, compiled about 200 AD. It contains a section called “The Sayings of the Fathers,” which is the best place to start. Mishnaic Hebrew is not difficult, and this will get you into the Rabbinic way of appropriating the Bible. The edition listed above includes study notes in Modern Hebrew. For a translation of the entire Mishnah, see H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), or consult an early edition of the Sayings of the Fathers in Charles Taylor, ed., *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers* (Library of Jewish Classics; New York: Ktav, 1969). It is also available online at http://www.mechon-mamre.org/

29 This is a very helpful translation and explanation of Rashi’s verse-by-verse commentary on Torah, which includes the Hebrew text and Rashi’s comments in Hebrew as well. It is, in other words, a translation of a commentary and a


**Aramaic**

*Texts, Biblical:* Daniel 2-4; Ezra 4-5  
*Old Imperial:* Zakir, Sefire I and III  
*Achaemenid:* Petition to rebuild temple; Ahiqar  
*Qumranic:* Genesis Apocryphon  
*Targumic:* Genesis 49 (Onqelos), Deuteronomy 33 (Onqelos), Isaiah 53, Habakkuk 3, Song of Songs 4

**Resources:**


Early Aramaic texts are also discussed in *SSI, KAI, COS, ANET*.

Also be aware of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, which lists texts and gives parsing help for all known Aramaic texts: [http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/index.htm](http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/index.htm)

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commentary on that commentary. See also [http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm) for a translation of Rashi’s commentaries on every book of the OT.

30 This is a re-edition of the verse-by-verse commentaries by Rabbis on different books of the Bible. It is laid out in a very helpful way as a study Bible (with the OT text in bold print, and the comments of the Rabbi immediately following in unpointed square script). Reading this stuff is invaluable for getting a better grasp on Hebrew and learning about an interpretative tradition very different from one’s own. My recommendation is, out of the thousands of pages of Rabbinic literature, you read the “Sayings” and get a Mikraot Gedolot of your favorite OT book (search abebooks.com to find it). I list Isaiah above only because it’s my favorite.

31 Neusner is the current authority on Rabbinic Judaism; this book is a superb entry point to Rabbinic theology and hermeneutical assumptions and method. Neusner also gives examples of Hebrew and Aramaic from the Talmud and translates them. His *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* is also very much worth reading for a broader introduction to midrash, etc.


33 For Aramaic, this is the place to start—he “spoon-feeds” you simplified biblical Aramaic according to the grammar he’s taught you, moving to full-fledged biblical texts and extra-biblical texts. For this interested, this book is a must-have.

34 Rosenthal gives Aramaic texts from their earliest known origins past the biblical period, as well as helpful glossaries for each period. His book is short but expensive, so ILL it and photocopy.

35 These are invaluable translations and explanations of interpretive technique of the Targumim.