

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 101

Welcome to **GENESIS 101: The Week of Creation, Part 1**.

This course is designed to be an in-depth study of Genesis 1:1 – 13 through: text analysis, Hebrew vocabulary study, relevant deeper digs, field trips, activity worksheets and personal reflections. This study course is the first of a two-part study on the week of Creation and is suitable for ages 12 and up. No prior knowledge of the Bible or the Hebrew language is necessary.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are:

- To investigate what Genesis 1:1 - 13 *literally* says and means according to its source language.
- To learn all the Hebrew words identified by Strongs in Genesis 1:1-13.
- To gain a thorough understanding of Genesis 1:1 – 13.
- To establish a strong foundation for understanding the rest of the Bible.
- To provide a basic knowledge/understanding of how to effectively study the Bible.

To complete this course, you will simply **need this study workbook** and a willingness to do the work.

COURSE OUTLINE

The GENESIS 101 course is broken into 8 chapters:

- This Course Introduction
- Six 5-day sessions of Personal Study
 - Genesis 1:1
 - Genesis 1:2
 - Genesis 1:3-5 – “Day One”
 - Genesis 1:6-8 – “Day Second”
 - Genesis 1:9-10 – “Day Third”, part 1
 - Genesis 1:11-13 – “Day Third”, part 2
- A Final Review

This workbook is designed to equip & inspire you in your personal study of the Biblical text.

Through the GENESIS 101 course we will study the Biblical text through these means:

- *DAY 1: TEXT ANALYSIS*

So often we read a passage in the Bible and base our understanding of its meaning on: the English words used in our favored translation, the way they are situated in the passage, and our modern cultural understandings of those words. We never think to consider alternate perspectives, let alone the source text. We simply assume it all says the same thing.

In GENESIS 101 we are not going to just read the text, we are going to analyze it, a piece at a time.

First, we will give a preliminary reading of the portion being studied to gain a general idea of that text at present, and then we will see how it compares to its *source language* to identify any discrepancies. Then, we're going to consider multiple translations of the text based on two different sources: the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) and the Greek Septuagint (LXX), to see alternate perspectives, and we'll note similarities, variances and other points of interest and record our observations.

- *DAY 2: VOCABULARY ANALYSIS*

In this section we are going to lookup the Hebrew words used in this text to find their definitions and related words, and then we'll look beyond the definitions to see the root meanings of these words.

A NOTE ABOUT STRONGS' CODING SYSTEM

This course focuses on the Hebrew words identified by way of the Strongs' coding system; they are *base* words.

The actual Hebrew words found in the source text include additional letters and/or markings to denote such things as prepositions, article adjectives, verb tense, and/or whether something is plural.

For example, the first word identified by Strongs in Genesis 1 is "RE'SHIYTH" (H7225), which is a noun, but in the English, it reads "*In the beginning*". The word translated as "*beginning*" is "*re'shiyth*", but there's a Hebrew letter, "*beyt*", attached to the start of the word to denote the preposition "*in*".

Our study is going to only focus on the Strongs' identified *base* Hebrew words.

We'll use the *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Lexicon* to explore the meanings of these words.

- *DAY 3: VOCABULARY ANALYSIS (CONTINUED)*

In this section we are going to explore each source word from the studied text as they appear elsewhere in the Bible to gain further understanding of its meaning through the context of its usage.

And then, considering our analysis, we will determine a Universal Personal Translation (UPT) for each Hebrew word.

Depending on how much you want to delve into this portion of study, additional references in which these source words appear are also provided.

- *DAY 4: TEXT ANALYSIS REVISITED*

In this section we'll look up Hebrew words by their Strong's numbers and read them in the order of the Hebrew source text. Then, we'll write our own personal translation of the passage being studied based on the analysis we've done thus far and compare our translation with those we considered on DAY 1 and record any notes of interest.

- *DAY 5: REVIEW AND REFLECTION*

In this section we'll quiz our knowledge of the Hebrew words studied and the order in which they appear in the source text. Then, we'll exercise our understanding of them by explaining what the text means in our own words. We'll also go on periodic Creation Appreciation Excursions (aka field trips) related to the studied text and record our observations.

BIBLE STUDY TIPS

The purpose of this course is to *equip you in your personal* study of the Biblical text surrounding the week of creation. It is not designed to tell you what to think. **You are encouraged to think for yourself.** But not only that, the intention of many of these exercises is to help you think outside the box.

The story of creation has been told so many times that it is very familiar even to those who have never picked up a Bible. It is easy to assume that you know the creation account already. But you may be surprised to learn something new when you closely examine the text, particularly the definitions of the words used in the *source* text.

Also, this narrative has typically been framed within a specific paradigm of belief, and it is difficult to see it any other way. But we need to **let what the text says shape our understanding**, not let our present understanding define the text. This guide will help you see different perspectives of the same text, provided you take to heart the following tips along the way.

TIP #1: SUSPEND YOUR BELIEFS SO AS TO EXAMINE THE TEXT OBJECTIVELY.

Since the subject of the creation account in Genesis 1 is so prevalent in our modern culture today, many, if not most, of us have already established beliefs concerning it.

You may believe this account to be the gospel truth or you may believe it to be a fable or myth.

You may believe in "God" and already know something about Him and/or His nature. You may not.

You may believe the six "days" of creation are 24-hour periods of time consisting of 60-minute hours made up of 60-second minutes, or that these days are broader ages of time, or that there were gaps in time, or something else.

Regardless of what exactly you believe, your beliefs will naturally influence how you read this text. In fact, they will likely limit your ability to learn from it.

If you want to get the most out of this study, I recommend suspending your beliefs during your study time to enable you to examine the material objectively.

Consider treating your purpose for studying Genesis 1:1-13 is so that you can simply learn what the text literally says regardless of what it may mean. Then later, you can determine what to do with your beliefs in light of what you learn.

TIP #2: ASSUME YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THE MATTER BEING STUDIED.

Oftentimes we have preconceived ideas about how things work which can really limit our ability to learn something new. And when these ideas are so ingrained in us, they can subconsciously influence the way we see things, blinding us from seeing something else.

Pretend you know nothing. After all, this course is called GENESIS 101. It is a fundamental course on the origin of this world and the life therein; everything there is to learn about this world is based on this foundation.

Pretend you never heard that the world was “created”, or that there even was a “God”.

Pretend you are a child who knows nothing about the “universe”. You know nothing about the earth as a planet or about the sun, moon and stars in relation to all the planets in “our solar system”. You are oblivious to all of this, and you are hearing about the formation of this world for the very first time.

The purpose of studying is to learn. Let us make the conditions of our study conducive to learning all that we can.

Assume you know nothing.

TIP #3: UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRANSLATIONS & DEFINITIONS.

We are going to be spending a lot of time looking at words in this study...words in English and words in Hebrew. And we are going to be relying heavily on the Strong’s Concordance and the Brown-Driver-Brigg’s Lexicon for our study, so we need to get a few things straight that oftentimes are confusing.

TRANSLATIONS

The KJV Bible is an English translation of two source texts: The Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew Tanakh using what is called the Masoretic Text (MT), and the New Testament is translated from a series of documents written in Koine Greek, which is called the Textus Receptus (TR).

The purpose of a translator is to take something from one language translate/interpret it into another language. While the translator will likely use a word that carries the closest meaning to the source word, he is generally limited to the number of words he can use, and he must make the sentences in which the words appear make sense.

Also, some languages have a lot more words to choose from than others.

CONCORDANCE

The Strong's Concordance is a Biblical reference book that has applied a coding system to every Hebrew word in the Old Testament and every Greek word in the New Testament. And this concordance lays out every verse of the KJV Bible in which each coded Hebrew and Greek word appears, along with its English translations. It serves as an index of Greek & Hebrew words created to aid in locating these words in the Bible; It is not meant to be a dictionary.

While the Strong's Concordance may provide a kind of definition, this definition is often derived from how these words were translated in English, it is not usually based on their lingual origin.

DEFINITIONS

The Brown-Driver-Brigg's Hebrew Lexicon, however, *is* a dictionary, and it provides definitions based on word origins.

The goal of this study is to examine the lingual definitions of the Hebrew words in Genesis 1:1-13 and to primarily rely on that for our learning the meaning of the text. It is not to derive understanding based on the definitions of English translated words.

TIP #4: THERE IS NO CAPITALIZATION OR PUNCTUATION IN THE HEBREW TEXT.

In the English language we typically use capitalization and punctuation whenever writing something. These help in communicating our ideas. But the text from which our English Bibles are translated do not have either of these. Be aware of this.

The benefits of using punctuation is to aid in our communication. It can draw our attention to certain portions of the text, telling us when to pause or stop. It can reveal when someone else is speaking, or how to group certain thoughts. And different English translators will employ different punctuation in their translations based on their understanding of what the source text is conveying, but this is guesswork. They do not have any punctuated text to go on. The source text is typically just a string of words.

Keep this in mind. Because if we're not cognizant of this, we can easily think the way a text reads in English with its accompanying punctuation or capitalization is set in stone. It's not. There are different ways of reading a string of words. And depending on where we put emphasis, the meaning of a sentence can be altered dramatically.

TIP #5: BOTH TRANSLATIONS & DEFINITIONS CAN BE BIASED.

Given that the role of a translator is to interpret one language into another, and if there is great diversity between the two languages, he/she must make a judgment call in choosing the right words to communicate what he/she feels was the author's true intent.

Presumably the translator will exercise objectivity in his/her translation to remain loyal to the author's words. But the authors were not around in the days of the translators to help clarify their intentions in their writing.

Also, language is fluid. Words can take on new meanings over the course of generations and other cultural factors can affect one's understanding of them. So, be mindful of this.

Consider multiple translations and allow for some wiggle room in how these words can be translated.

And as much as I'd like to believe dictionary definitions are completely objective, I have found that not always to be the case. Just be wary of this.

TIP #6: NOTE HOW HEBREW WORDS CAN BE HIDDEN BY ENGLISH WORDS.

I've found many times one Hebrew word to be translated multiple ways across multiple verses, and the end user is typically unaware that these different English words all have the same Hebrew word source.

And then there are different Hebrew words that can be translated as the same English word, leaving the end user unaware of this.

This is where doing a study of the source text comes in very handy. I recommend making a habit of *always* checking the source text.

TIP #7: CHAPTER & VERSE DESIGNATIONS ARE NOT SET IN STONE.

While we have divided this course into smaller chunks of verses for the purpose of focused study, it is important to note that the source text was not necessarily divided by these verse designations. So, don't let how the text is divided up limit how you read and understand the material. Consider removing the verse numbers to see how the passages read without interruption.

STUDY TIPS in REVIEW:

1. Temporarily Suspend Your Beliefs.
2. Assume You Know Nothing.
3. Understand the Difference Between Translations & Definitions.
4. There Is No Capitalization or Punctuation in the Source Text.
5. Both Translations and Definitions Can Be Biased.
6. Hebrew Words Are Often Hidden Behind the English.
7. Chapter & Verse Designations Are Not Set in Stone.

FINAL REMARKS

Your Maker has given you the ability to learn, to reason things out. He has provided you with a sound mind as well as a natural world from which you can learn. Use them. Trust yourself. Ask questions. Seek answers. Be patient. Stay flexible. Enjoy the journey.