These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Preface: Briefly, the name Hebrew is how other nations referred to the Israelites (Ex. 1:15 2:6).

1. In the Hebrew, the word Hebrew is ‘lrbîy ( Hebû) [pronounced ɬɪRib- VREE], which is poorly transliterated as Hebrew. This word, interestingly enough, is found most often in the books of Genesis, Exodus and 1Samuel. Apart from those books, we find it once in Deuteronomy, thrice in Jeremiah and once in Jonah. We first find this mentioned back in Gen. 14:13 in reference to Abraham, when we discussed it in more detail. Strong’s #5680 BDB #720. There are two suggested origins for the word Hebrew.
   a. One possibility is that Abraham had an ancestor named Eber. In the Hebrew, that is ‘Èber ( Hebû) [pronounced ɬɪEber- ver], which means, one from beyond, the other side, across, region on the other side; and is transliterated Eber, Heber, Hebrew, Eberite. Strong’s #5677 BDB #720. There appear to be times in the Bible when a person of a specific name actually has that name changed somewhat, to reflect information about that person.
   b. The other possibility is that the name comes from the verb ‘âbar ( Hebû) [pronounced ɬɪAbar- VAHR], which means to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over. Strong’s #5674 BDB #716. The idea is that Abraham crossed over the Euphrates River to disassociate himself with his heathen roots.

2. Today, we obviously use the names Israel, Israelite and Hebrew synonymously. However, historically, the name Hebrew was first applied to Abraham 500 years prior to the establishment of the nation Israel.

3. Suggested hypothesis: Hebrew is a word used by Israel to designate themselves before foreigners (Ex. 2:6–7, 13 3:18 5:3) and it is a name used by non-Israelites to refer to the Israelites (1Sam. 4:6). In other words, this is a term which separates the Israelites from non-Israelites and is not generally used apart from making such a distinction. However, we find this word used in 1Sam. 13:7 which does not denote such a distinction.

4. In Gen. 14, the chapter of the war of the kings, when the four kings took Lot as a prisoner (he was thought to be a Sodomite because his close proximity to these people), one escaped and came and told Abraham, the Hebrew what had happened. This narrative is probably written by (or recounted by) Abraham who is wandering the land. The man who told Abraham may have thought of him as a foreigner, inasmuch as he was unrelated to the war between the nine kings (Gen. 14:13).

5. In Gen. 39:14, 17, the word is used in what appears to be a derogatory way. Joseph has resisted this woman of Potipher’s many times, so that she becomes frustrated and accuses him of rape.

6. Joseph uses this word when describing himself while explaining his situation to the chief cupbearer in Gen. 40:15. Since there were only a bit more than a few dozen Jews in the world at that time, so that the terms Jew and Hebrew were not yet synonymous. The term Hebrew was applied to Joseph by his accuser (a term he no doubt heard prior to the accusation and during his sentencing because of her accusation), so

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1 This was suggested by Gnana Robinson, 1 & 2 Samuel; Let Us Be Like the Nations; International Theological Commentary; Eerdmans’s Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, ©1993; p. 32. This commentary is not known for having accurate information.
Joseph applies it to himself. Here, in Egypt, it likely refers to those from Canaan or those from beyond the land of Egypt. When the chief cupbearer remembers, he uses this term (Gen. 41:12).

7. Hebrew is used in connection with racial prejudice in Gen. 43:32. Joseph ate alone, his brothers ate at another table, and the Egyptians ate at another table because Egyptians did not eat with Hebrews. Even at that time, they were seen as outsiders.

8. This name had become fully associated with Jews during the period of slavery to the Egyptians between Genesis and Exodus (Ex. 1:15, 16, 19  2:6, 7, 11, 13).

9. God uses this term to apply to the Jews in Ex. 3:18  Deut. 15:12 (see also Ex. 5:3  7:16  9:1, 13  10:3  21:2). Note that these uses were always applied to the Jew when they were in a foreign land (in Gen. 14:13, they were still considered sojourners in a foreign land, even though they were in the land of Canaan).

10. It is significant that this word is not found in Joshua, Judges, Ruth Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, or Isaiah.

11. The Jews became fully associated with the term Hebrew by the time of Samuel; that is, the terms were interchangeable (1Sam. 4:6, 9  13:19  14:11, 21  29:3  Jer. 34:9, 14)

12. The Jews applied this term to themselves (1Sam. 13:3, 7)

13. The Hebrews were also closely associated in the minds of foreigners with Yahweh Elohim (Jonah 1:9)