

STMM 526: HEBREW SCRIPTURES

ANTICIPATED LEARNING OUTCOMES

It is expected that participants in this course will demonstrate:

- Ability to read scriptural texts critically (MDiv, MAPS, MATS).
- Ability to use biblical tools and resources as a way to inform their own exegesis for the purpose of doing their ministry (MDiv).
- Ability to be a responsive, discerning listener who can enter another's worldview [whether ancient or modern] (MDiv, MAPS, MATS).
- Awareness of their own social location/assumptions/hermeneutics as they engage the text in their own lives, their communities, and the larger world (MDiv).

BIBLE VERSIONS

A good, modern version (not a paraphrase) of the Bible should be used for this class, e.g. NRSV, NASV, NJB, JPS (TANAKH). If you can work with a translation other than English, doing so may lead to fresh perspectives.

SECONDARY TEXTS

Required Texts:

Coogan, Michael D. *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. Second Edition. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011 (hereafter = Coogan, *The OT*²)

Sweeney, Marvin A. *Reading the Hebrew Bible After the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008. (hereafter = Sweeney, *After the Shoah*)

Supplemental Texts:

Bellis, Alice Ogden. *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*. Second Edition, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. (hereafter = Bellis, *HHH*²)

Sugirtharajah, R.S., editor. *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. Revised and Expanded Third Edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 2006. (hereafter = *Voices*³ [2006])

EXPECTATIONS

1) Careful reading, study, analysis of the readings, with special focus on the biblical texts.

WRITTEN PREPARATION: Reflecting on the readings for the week,

- a) Identify three concepts that you found particularly interesting or novel, with a brief explanation.
 - b) Identify three ideas or issues that you found problematic, troublesome or unclear. Why is it a concern? What additional information would you like?
- 2) Regular attendance at and participation in class sessions

3) Completion of two papers, the second of which will be developed in stages.

a) First Paper -- See Appendix A for guidelines.

DUE: October 9

b) Exegesis Paper -- See Appendix B for guidelines for each step
and for the final paper

Steps on the way:

(1) Select the text, with preliminary engagement

DUE October 23

(2) Compare translations and formulate initial questions and observations

DUE October 30

(3) Close reading of the text (structure, genre, setting)

DUE November 6

(OPEN WEEK – November 13)

(4) Secondary resources

DUE November 20

(5) Engagement with the text and interpretations

DUE November 27

Final version of the paper

DUE: To be e-mailed to me no later than

NOON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5.

GRADING

1) *Determination of grades:*

WRITTEN PREPARATION OF WEEKLY READINGS	-----	10%
PARTICIPATION IN WEEKLY CLASS SESSIONS	-----	10%
CRITICAL REVIEW PAPER	-----	30%
EXEGESIS PAPER		
Each of the five preliminary steps	-----	25% (= 5% each)
The final paper	-----	25%

2) *Considerations:*

a) The grade will be reduced for grammatical errors and/or significant problems with composition and organization of the paper.

b) ANY papers submitted after the deadline (which is CLASS TIME for the weekly assignments) will receive a two-thirds (2/3) letter grade reduction, e.g. reduction from A- to B, from B+ to B-.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

NB: There is much to cover in this course, more than can be adequately done in one term.
Don't panic. We'll work through this together.

CLASS #1 (Sep25)

a) *Introductory issues; Introduction to the course*

TaNaK = Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim

TaNaK, Hebrew Bible, First Testament, Old Testament

Coogan, *The OT*², 3-10.

A sketch of the history of Israel and overview of the Ancient Near East

Coogan, *The OT*², 11-27.

Experiences of "exile" as a conceptual context for our texts

b) *TORAH: "When God began to create"*

(Text and translation issues)

READ: Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

Coogan, *The OT*², 31-37.

c) *TORAH: "When God began to create"*

READ: Genesis 1:1 – 9:29

Coogan, *The OT*², 38-46, 57-68.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "The Story of Eve" in *HHH*².

See also: "The Gilgamesh Epic"

The text of Babylonian epic can be found on the web. You can simply do a search for "Gilgamesh Epic"--using care to assess whether it is a translation from a seemingly reliable source.

This text is also available in print form. Some examples:

James Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edition with supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 72-98, with additions in the "supplement," 503-507. (If you only have the 1st edition, you will have the main text only, without the supplement. [This is widely available in public, as well as academic, libraries.]

Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, Second Edition (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1949. [also widely available]

Stephanie Dalley, ed. and trans, with Introduction and Notes, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 39-13

CLASS #2 (Oct 2)

a) *TORAH*: Ancestral Stories: Abraham Cycle: Genesis 11:27 – 25:18

READ: Genesis 12:1 - 25:18, with focus on **18:1 - 19:38**

Coogan, *The OT*², 71-91.

Sweeney, *After the Shoah*, 23-41.

b) *TORAH*: Ancestral Stories: Jacob Cycle: Genesis 25:19 – 36:43

READ: Genesis **27:1-46; 32:1 - 33:20**

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "The Women of Genesis" in *HHH*².

CLASS #3 (Oct 9)

a) *TORAH*: *The Moses story*: Out of Egypt: Exodus 1:1 – 15:21

READ: Exodus 1:1 – 7:7; 13:17 - 14:31; 15:1-21

Coogan, *The OT*², 92-111.

From the articles in "Part Three: Many Readings: Exodus," in *Voices*³, read one of the following articles:

Naim Stifan Ateek (Israel - Palestinian)

Robert Allen Warrior (USA - Native American)

Eleazer S. Fernandez (Philippines/USA)

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "The Women of Exodus and Numbers" in *HHH*².

Sweeney, *After the Shoah*, 42-63.

See also: "Enuma Elish" a Babylonian creation story

The text of this creation account can be found on the web. You can simply do a search for "enuma elish"--using care to assess that it is from a reliable source.

This text is also available in print form. Some examples:

James Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edition with supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 60-72, with additions in the "supplement," 501-503.

Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 2nd edition (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1951. [also widely available]

Stephanie Dalley, ed. and trans, with Introduction and Notes, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, a new translation, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 228-277 ("The Epic of Creation").

- b) *TORAH: The Moses story: The Wilderness Sojourn: Exodus 19:1 – 40:38:*
Numbers 1:1 – 27:23

READ: Exodus 15:22 - 17:7:
Exodus 32 – 34
Numbers 11 – 12; 13 - 14.
Coogan, *The OT²*, 112-125.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Mukti Barton, "The Skin of Miriam Became White as Snow: The Bible, Western Feminism and Colour Politics, 158-168, in *Voices*³.

CLASS #4 (Oct 16)

- a) *TORAH: "Covenant Code"*

READ: Exodus 19:1 - 24:18
Coogan, *The OT²*, 126-143.

- b) *TORAH: Priestly legal traditions*

READ: Exodus 25 - 31*; 35 - 40*; Leviticus 16 - 20
Coogan, *The OT²*, 144-157.

- c) *TORAH: The Book of Deuteronomy*

READ: Deuteronomy 1 - 4; 5 - 11; 12 - 15; 31 - 34
Coogan, *The OT²*, 177-193.

- d) *NEVI'IM (former prophets): The Books of Joshua and Judges*

READ: Joshua 2; 7 - 9; Judges 4 - 5; 11:1-40; 13:1 - 16:31
Coogan, *The OT²*, 194-230.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "The Women of Joshua and Judges," in *HHH*².

CLASS #5 (Oct 23)

- NEVI'IM (former prophets): The Books of Samuel and Kings*

READ: 1 Samuel 1:1 - 2:36; 4:1 - 7:2; 8 - 12; 2 Samuel 1 - 8
2 Samuel 11 - 13; 1 Kings 1 – 8; Psalm 89
see also: Psalms 82; 96; 97; 98; 99
Coogan, *The OT²*, 233-249, 250-267, 268-287.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "The Women of 1 and 2 Samuel," in *HHH*².

READ: 1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 2 – 8
see also: Psalms 2; 7
Psalms 46; 48
Psalms 24; 132
Proverbs 10:1 - 11:31
Coogan, *The OT*², 288-307.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "The Women of 1 and 2 Kings," in *HHH*².

CLASS #6 (Oct 30)

a) *NEVI'IM (Later Prophets)*

READ: Amos 7:1 - 9:7
Hosea 5:5 - 7:16
Isaiah 6:1 - 7:17; 10:33 - 11:6
Coogan, *The OT*², 308-326, 327-347.
Sweeney, *After the Shoah*, 84-103.

b) *NEVI'IM (Later Prophets)*

READ: Jeremiah 2 - 6; 7:1 - 9:26; 18:1-12
Coogan, *The OT*², (348-357), 358-375.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "The Women of the Prophets" in *HHH*².

c) *NEVI'IM (Later Prophets)*

READ Jeremiah 27 - 29; 31 - 32;
(Psalm 137)
Ezekiel 1:1 - 3:15; 18; 37
Coogan, *The OT*², 379-397.

CLASS #7 (Nov 06)

a) *NEVI'IM*

READ:
Ezra 1 - 2
Isaiah 43:14 - 44:5; 51:4-16;
Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13 - 53:12
Coogan, *The OT*², 398-412.

b) *KETHUVIM: The Psalms and poetic analysis*

READ: Psalms 8; 19; 104

Psalms 1 24; 129; 30; 107; 116

Psalms 113; 33; 103; 147; 150

Psalms 13; 22; 77

Psalms 80; 74; 44

Psalms 73; 24; 131; 9-10; 139

Coogan, *The OT²*, 448-459 ["The Book of Psalms"].

Sweeney, *After the Shoah*, 167-187.

CLASS #8 (Nov 13)

a) *KETHUVIM: The Book of Job*

READ: Job 1:1 - 2:13; 3:1 - 7:21; 11:1 - 14:22; 29:1 - 31:40;

38:1 - 42:6; 42:7-17

Coogan, *The OT²*, 459-467 ["Wisdom Literature"],

and 471-481 ["The Book of Job"].

Sweeney, *After the Shoah*, 188-207.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "Job's Wife," in *HHH²*.

Sarojini Nadar, "'Barak God and Die!': Women, HIV, and a
Theology of Suffering, 189-203, in *Voices³*.

Samuel Rayan, S.J., "Wrestling in the Night," 407-428, in
Voices³.

CLASS #9 (Nov 20)

a) *KETHUVIM: Historical Traditions*

READ: Ezra 1; 3 - 10; Nehemiah 1 - 2; 4 - 5; 8; Haggai 1 - 2

Coogan, *The OT²*, 415-439.

b) *KETHUVIM: Torah Piety*

READ: Psalms 1; 19; 148

c) *KETHUVIM: The Scrolls*

READ: Song of Songs

Coogan, *The OT²*, 486-488 ["The Song of Solomon"].

Bellis, "The Song of Songs," in *HHH²*.

Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)

Coogan, *The OT²*, 481-486 ["The Book of Ecclesiastes"].

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Seree Lorgunpai, "The Book of Ecclesiastes and Thai Buddhism,"
347-354, in *Voices*³.

d) *KETHUVIM: Wisdom traditions*

READ: Proverbs 1 - 9; Sirach 24; 51; Wisdom of Solomon 7 - 9; 10 - 12
Coogan, *The OT*², 490-515.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Bellis, "Proverbs," in *HHH*².

CLASS #10 (Nov 27)

a) *KETHUVIM: The Scrolls*

READ: Esther (see also the Book of Ruth)
Coogan, *The OT*², 516-534.

Bellis, "Subversive Women in Subversive Books," in *HHH*².

b) *KETHUVIM: Late prophetic and apocalyptic theologies of resistance*

READ: Daniel 1 - 12, (3 Maccabees)

Coogan, *The OT*², 516-534.

Sweeney, *After the Shoah*, 222-241.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5 – FINAL EXEGESIS PAPER DUE AT NOON

Appendix A: GUIDELINES FOR FIRST PAPER

DUE: October 9, at class time

This first paper will consist of two parts:

In chapter one, "Abraham and the Problem of Divine Fidelity," of *Reading the Hebrew Bible After the Shoah*, Marvin Sweeney briefly traces the recent history of the scholarly study of the Pentateuch. He concludes that quick survey noting that some recent studies examine the text "from the standpoint of synchronic plot and character analysis." (p 24) He then continues: "Although such work tended to concentrate on the human characters in the Genesis narrative, interpreters increasingly began to recognize that G-d also functions as a major character within the Genesis narrative and that the characterization G-d therefore demands scholarly attention." (p 25)

A rabbinic scholar, Burton L. Visotzky, makes a similar point in his discussion of one episode of the Abraham narrative, Gen 11:27 – 13:1 "But it is important to recognize that God is a difficult character, one whom we cannot afford to overlook if we are to understand the dynamics of the narratives we confront." (*The Genesis of Ethics* [1996], 37)

Part 1: Sweeney's reading of the Abraham text (Gen 11:27 – 25:11) addresses the issue of "divine fidelity," i.e., what he perceives to be the problematic aspect of G-d's behavior in these stories. How does Sweeney develop his argument? Do you find his argument persuasive? How so?

Part 2: Select only one of the episodes in the Abraham cycle (Gen 11:27-25:11). What do you perceive to be the moral ambiguities that confront one of the human characters in that story? How are these dilemmas related to the divine, as portrayed in the story?

Appendix B: GUIDELINES FOR THE EXEGESIS PAPER & EACH OF THE FIVE "STEPS ON THE WAY"

NB: Additional guideline materials will be provided in class. We will also work together on sample texts to further illustrate these methods.

STEPS ON THE WAY:

(1) Determine the text to be studied and preliminary engagement **DUE October 23**
Select a text from the list of suggested texts. NB, if you have a text on which you would particularly like to work, you may talk with me about the text. We will want to be clear that it is of a manageable length and a "workable" text.

(2) Compare translations and formulate initial questions **DUE October 30**
Compare at least three versions of the text. Make notes of significant differences, i.e., differences that have an impact on the meaning of the periscope. As best you are able, can you detect any textual (i.e., ancient mss) variants that may account for these differences. Are you able to discern any "guiding principles" that may influence translation decisions (e.g., theological orientation, target audience, mss preferences)? If the differences seem to warrant an investigation, examine the discussion in technical commentaries and/or in Bible dictionaries/encyclopedias. What is your own assessment, based on these secondary resources? Discuss (briefly) the implications of those differences. Which version will you be using as the primary text for your investigation of the passage? (If you later change your mind, be explicit about this at that stage of your preparation.)

What issues are raised by the text based on your initial readings? What feelings are elicited? What "speed bumps" (things that surprise or jar) do you encounter in that reading? What questions do you want to pursue—in terms of background information, in terms of theological and/or ethical meanings?

(3) Close reading of the text (structure, genre, setting) **DUE November 6**
Determine the parameters (beginning and end) of the text that you will study. What indicates that these constitute an "appropriate" beginning and ending?

How is the text organization? What is the "organizing principle" of the text, as you read it? What type of literature (genre) is this? How does that influence the way it is to be read?

What is the literary setting of this unit? (Where does it occur within the larger text? What insight does that shed upon the reading of this text? To what larger piece of literature does it belong? Where does it occur within that larger work?)

(4) Socio-historical setting; review of secondary resources **DUE November 20**

What have you been able to learn or discern about the possible socio-historical setting of your text (and of the larger work to which it belongs)? [NB, This refers to the community within which and for which the text was written, not the time of the event that the text purports to narrate.] What issues cry out to be addressed by any person or group writing within that social context?

Provide a synopsis of at least three scholarly and recent (post-1965) commentaries that inform your work with this text. How have those discussions impacted your understanding of the text? Are there disagreements among these sources? Which arguments do you find most convincing?

(5) Engagement with the text and interpretations **DUE November 27**

You will want to reflect on the text, now based on your study, in terms of your own socio-historical context. Are there ethical considerations that should be raised about the text? Engage the text in relation to a specific contemporary context, noting particularly theological and/or ethical issues that might be raised by or addressed by the text and your interpretation of that text.

FINAL PAPER:

Prepare a final paper that will be based on the work you have done in working through the various "steps on the way." This final paper will draw upon the work of the five steps; however, it is NOT simply a pasting together of that earlier work. At this point you are ready to reflect on the text and your engagement with that text. The final paper should have a clear thesis statement, one that represents your current understanding of the text. It will demonstrate how you have arrived at that understanding, in terms of a close reading of the text, the socio-historical and cultural context. Finally, the paper will reflect on the theological and ethical implications of the text and your interpretation.

WHAT WILL I BE LOOKING FOR?

- Does the paper have a clear thesis? In other words, the paper should not be a collection of miscellaneous, unrelated comments on the text. Does the paper support that thesis?
 - Does the paper work carefully and thoughtfully with the text? Interpretations should be supported by reference to the biblical text under study. You are preparing an interpretation of the biblical text, not a statement of your own theological beliefs.
 - Does the paper acknowledge points of debate concerning issues of interpretation? Do you provide a clear statement of your own position--however tentative at this time?
 - Does the paper identify the primary questions or issues that emerge for you in relation to this text and your understanding of that text?
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