

OT 102-3 Introduction to Old Testament Exegesis
(Using Genesis and Isaiah)
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Spring Term 2016: Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00 – 11:20AM

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"Turn it [Torah] and turn it again, for everything is in it, and contemplate it and grow grey and old over it and stir not from it, for thou canst have no better rule." *Pirke Avot* (Chapters of the Fathers) 5.25 of the Mishnah.

"Open my eyes that I may behold, wondrous things from your Torah." Psalm 119:18

"Modern readers are so conditioned to look for and ask for the 'moral of the story' that the idea of carefully reading or hearing a story and letting it work on us, trusting a story to do what it will, is an act of patience often beyond our capability." Mark McEntire, *Portraits of a Mature God*

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to exegetical methodologies with regard to the Old Testament. Students will gain greater familiarity with exegetical methods and interpretation of particular texts. In addition, greater facility may be attained in translating and interpreting biblical Hebrew and the use of secondary scholarly literature.

Course Objectives

Students completing this course will be able to:

- 1) Describe various exegetical methodologies including historical/diachronic, literary/synchronic, and theological approaches to the Hebrew Bible.
- 2) Translate Hebrew biblical texts with greater facility.
- 3) Exegete Old Testament passages by asking historical, literary, and theological questions of the text.
- 4) Write an exegetical paper combining multiple methods on a selected biblical passage.

Required Books

- 1) English translation of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. I highly recommend the JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh or a NRSV Study Bible such as The New Oxford or New Interpreters. Many of you already bought one of these bibles for Scripture I.
- 2) Elliger, K. and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967/77. This is the scholarly version of the Hebrew Bible.
- 3) Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009. Or another suitable lexicon such as Brown-Driver-Briggs or HALOT by Koehler & Baumgartner.
- 4) Ronald Hendel, ed. *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- 5) John H. Hayes and Carl. R. Holladay, ed. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook Third Edition*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- 6) Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

Assignments & Evaluation

1) Attendance and Class Participation (5%) Also includes a Bibleworks workshop in library.

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend “all scheduled meetings of the courses” excepting illness or “other valid reasons.” In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify me of their planned absence from class preferably prior to the session. Tardiness also affects classroom dynamics; please make every effort to be ready to start class on time.

Many class sessions will be conducted as "workshops" in which we study a biblical passage in detail with regard to particular exegetical issues. Students should come to class each day *eagerly ready to discuss* the assigned biblical passage and/or readings. Active participation includes, but is not limited to, activities such as listening carefully to others' thoughts, taking notes, asking relevant questions, responding to others' comments, and inviting others into the conversation. It does not include dominating a group or class discussion.

2) Weekly (or so) Translations (with Footnotes) and Exegetical Exercises. (20%)

These 14 exercises are marked and explained in the schedule below with a ∞ sign. Also, see Appendix A for more information. They are due at class time on the date listed in the syllabus. *No late exercises accepted.* [Course Objectives 1, 2, and 3]

3) HLT Reference Sheet on OT Passage. Due Friday, March 11. (10%)

Students will create a 2-page reference sheet that addresses 1 historical, 1 literary, and 1 theological issue within a given OT passage. See Appendix B for additional information. [Course Objectives 1 and 3]

4) Small Group Conversation with Professor on Historical and Literary Issues (20%) April 11-12.

Students will meet in assigned groups (of 4 people max.) with the professor for an hour to present on, and converse about, the historical and literary issues of a pre-assigned biblical passage. The professor might also present a new biblical passage and ask the group to provide historical and literary questions. I will present a handout for additional information. [Course Objectives 1 and 3]

5) 15 page Exegesis Paper (45%) Due in sections throughout the semester.

Students will write an exegesis paper on a selected passage from Genesis or Isaiah (see Appendix C). This paper will be completed throughout the semester in sections and receive feedback in order to strengthen the final product. [Course Objective 4]

Translation of Passage 1 pg <i>Draft</i> (5%)	Due Monday, Feb 22
Historical/Diachronic/Author Section 5 pg <i>Draft</i> (10%)	Due Monday, March 21
Literary/Synchronic/Text Section 5 pg <i>Draft</i> (10%)	Due Monday, April 11
Theological/Existential/Reader Section 5 pg <i>Draft</i> (10%)	Due Monday, April 25

Final Paper with revisions and thesis (HLT statement) 15 pages (10%) Due Friday, May 13*

*I need a final paper from those graduating by Wed. May 11 so you can participate in ceremonies.

Course Policies:

Academic Honesty: All work turned in is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an *early* date, since violations of seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.

Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Students requiring accommodation for a physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) within the first few days of the course and should speak with me as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments.

Inclusive Language: Our use of language, personally and as a community, is a powerful tool of both healing and oppression. In order to establish a more egalitarian environment and in accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. Avoid language for people that excludes part of the population or perpetuates stereotypes. Do not assume masculine gender when the gender of the person is unknown. See http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

When referring to God, students are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors. The God of the Hebrew Bible is envisioned in both personal and non-personal ways, as well as masculine and feminine terms. Naming God exclusively as "He" does not capture this splendid diversity.

Policy on late work: All written assignments are due on the date given in the syllabus. Assignments submitted late will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

Use of electronic devices in class: I ask that we create a time and space in the classroom to set aside such distractions as email, Facebook, and texting in order to engage our minds and hearts. Do not send or read text messages during class. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask me for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking. You may not access the Internet during class time. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites, will be grounds for dismissal from the session and will negatively affect the course grade.

Course Schedule

INTRODUCTIONS

Friday, Feb 5

Introduction to course & syllabus

What is Exegesis?

Translation and Exegetical Exercise: Genesis 2:4b and following

Wednesday, Feb 10

Introduction to Exegesis: HLT

Discuss HLT Assignment

Class Readings: Hayes, 1-16

Tiffany and Ringe, 14-22, 89-93, 95-102

Friday, Feb 12

Introduction to BHS and lexicons using Genesis 1.

Practicing HLT statements

∞ Translate and footnote Genesis 1:1-3 for class. Propose one historical, one literary, and one theological question for Genesis 1.

TRANSLATION

Wednesday, Feb 17

Bible Translations through the Centuries

Class Readings: Sandra L. Gravett, Karla G. Bohmbach, F. V. Greifenhagen, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008): 42-45 [CAMS]

Friday, Feb 19

Translation and Its Consequences

Class Readings: Hendel, 157-175

∞ Bring to class a ½ page response to the question, "Pastor, which Bible translation is the best?" The response should include an educational component based on our readings this week (obviously attuned to your audience) as well as a pastoral component.

HISTORICAL ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS

Wednesday, Feb 24

Grammatical Criticism & Text Criticism

Introduction to the "Tools of the Trade": Concordances & Word Studies, Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, Journal Articles, Commentaries

Class Readings: Hayes, 34-47, 72-82.

Sandra L. Gravett, Karla G. Bohmbach, F. V. Greifenhagen, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008): 46-53. [CAMS]

Tiffany and Ringe, 225-234.

See Appendix D of syllabus.

Friday, Feb 26

Test Case: Genesis 4, Cain and Abel (focusing on Translation Issues, Text Criticism, and Grammatical Criticism)

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Genesis 4:1-4 to class. Also write down 2 places where modern English translations differ on their translation of Genesis 4:1-16. Also, look up in your lexicon 2 Hebrew words from this passage and write a summary of what you learned about the words from the lexicon.

Wednesday, March 2

Historical Criticism I: Reading Like an Ancient Israelite

Test Case: Isaiah 7:10-16

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Isaiah 7:13-14 to class. Also take notes on the historical context of this passage based on the Blenkinsopp reading. What, in brief, was going on in ancient Israel when this text was written? How is that information important to the interpretation of this text?

Class Readings: Hayes, 53-61

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 227-34. [CAMS]

Friday, March 4

Historical Criticism II

Test Case: Genesis 17 (Priestly Covenant)

∞ Bring your translation (with footnotes) of Genesis 17: 1-8. Go to the library and research in Genesis commentaries about the historical context of this passage. Write a page summary of your research.

Note: Students planning to write their exegesis papers on a passage in Genesis, need to read Hendel, *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*, 47-70, soon in order to understand source criticism for the historical section of your paper.

Wednesday, March 9

Form Criticism: Structure and Genre

Test Case: Isaiah 6:1-13 (do not translation; just read in English)

Class Readings: Hayes, 104-113

Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, (FOTL; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996): 132-136.
[CAMS]

Friday, March 11

More on Genre Criticism

Summary of Historical Criticism, Strengths and Weaknesses

HLT Assignment Due

LITERARY ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS

Wednesday, March 23

Literary Criticism Introduction: Reading Like a University English Major

Historized Prose Fiction

Trible and Rhetorical Criticism

Class Readings: Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Basic Books, 1981): 23-46. [CAMS]
Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism* (Fortress, 1994): 101-106. [CAMS]

Wednesday, March 30

Literary Approaches

∞ Write a one page response to Hendel's reading of the Jacob cycle. Pay close attention to how he reads the story. What is he doing? How is he reading? NOT what does he say about Jacob? But what's the methodology?

Class Readings: Hendel, 13-27

Friday, April 1

Reading Biblical Narrative

Fokkelman and Abraham Cycle: Narration Time

Class Readings: J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999): 55-72 [CAMS]

Test Case: Genesis 27

Wednesday, April 6

Test Case: Genesis 37: 12-36 in Literary Perspective

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Genesis 37: 29-33. Also, bring to class 3 literary questions related to this story (Gen 37:12-36).

Friday, April 8

Test Case: Isaiah 40: 1-11

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Isaiah 40:1-5. Also, bring to class 2 literary questions.

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS

Wednesday, April 13

Theological Interpretation Introduction: Reading Like a Theologian

Test Case: Isaiah 2:1-5

Class Readings: Hendel, 196-214

Friday, April 15

Canonical Criticism

Test Case: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

∞ Bring a translation (and footnotes) of Isaiah 53: 3-6. Also consult commentaries to determine where in the NT this passage is quoted, alluded to, etc.

Class Readings: Hayes, 152-164

Wednesday, April 20

Test Case: Genesis 22: 1-19, The Near-Sacrifice of Isaac

∞ Respond to Moberly's chapter on Gen 22 by focusing on his theological argument. What does he see as the primary theological issue(s) of this passage? What do YOU see as the theological issues within this passage?

Class Readings: R. W. L. Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge University Press, 2009): 179-199. [CAMS]

Friday, April 22

Feminist / Gender / Queer Criticism

Genesis 19

∞ Write a 1-page response to the Hendel article on Gender and Sexuality focusing many on the author's methodologies principles, assumptions, interpretive moves, etc. How are they doing exegesis?

Class Readings: Hendel, 71-91

Hayes, 167-73

Wednesday, April 27

Rabbinic Interpretation

∞ Write a 1-page response to the Hendel chapter on Rabbinic interpretation that provides your understanding and assessment of this type of biblical interpretation. What were the rabbis doing with the text?

Class Readings: Hendel, 119-135

CONCLUSIONS: PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Friday, April 29

Exegesis within the Larger Framework or Circle of Biblical Interpretation

Class Readings: Tiffany and Ringe, 25-66

Wednesday, May 4

Test Case: Genesis 2: 4b-25 in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspectives

∞ Write for class today one historical, one literary, and one theological question concerning Genesis 2: 4b-25. No answers, just questions.

Class Readings: Hayes, 178-190

Friday, May 6

Putting in All Together

Test Case: Isaiah 58: 1-12 in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspectives

∞ Write for class today one historical, one literary, and one theological question concerning Isaiah 58:1-12. No answers, just questions.

Class Readings: Feasting on the Word handout

Appendix A

Hebrew Translations with Footnotes

When the syllabus asks students to translate a given set of verses, students should provide their own translations of the text using the BHS, your dictionary/lexicon, and Bibleworks. You may want to consult *several* English translations after you have the general sense of the verse; be careful however—it is fairly easy to spot when someone is simply copying from a translation. Strive for a translation that captures the Hebrew word order and grammatical features (e.g., translate participles as participles); elegant English is not necessarily the goal.

In addition to this translation, students are expected to include *at least one footnote* per biblical verse that speaks to other interesting English translations, lexicon gleanings, or text critical matters. So, one could note the places you differ or disagree with modern translations. Or one could jot down the ancient versions' variants (found in the critical apparatus).

EXAMPLE

Isaiah 2:1-2

¹The matter¹ that Isaiah son of Amoz envisioned concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In future days², the mountain of the house of ADONAI³
will be established at the head of the mountains
and will be lifted up above the hills.
All the nations will flow to it like a river.⁴

¹ JPS and NRSV translate “word,” which is appropriate to the Hebrew word. Yet, how can one “envision” a “word”?

² JPS translates “In the days to come,” which is nice because the oracle seems to refer to an unspecified, future time period. Some interpreters have understood (wrongly in my opinion) the time reference to concern eschatological matters, i.e., the end of time.

³ “the mountain of the house of ADONAI” is a reference to the Jerusalem Temple Mount.

⁴ The Hebrew verb used here has as a derived noun, “river,” so that the nations are presented as a river flowing naturally up to the Temple.

Appendix B
“H-L-T Reference Sheet” on OT Passage
Due Friday, March 11. (10% of final grade)

Brief Summary of Assignment:

Students will create a 2-page reference sheet that addresses 1 historical, 1 literary, and 1 theological issue within a given passage of the Old Testament.

Further Details/Instructions:

Students should begin this assignment by selecting an OT passage. Select a narrative or passage that contains approx. 10-20 verses, or about a chapter. Do not try to write on more than a chapter and do not select 3 verses. I suggest that you find something relatively unfamiliar that was particularly interesting to you as you read for Scripture I. If you email me your passage, I will approve/disapprove it (completely optional). Provide the scripture passage reference (e.g., Genesis 10, or Deut 34) at the beginning of the paper.

Next, students should review class lectures and readings related to historical, literary, and theological questions and formulate one of each. This is not a casual or quick step to glide over. I am looking for two things here. First, do your 3 questions fit the correct categories? Second, what is the quality of the question? So, please make sure that your formulation of a question truly fits each category well. Additionally, take the time to make your questions nuanced and rich, not generic and stale. For example, a good, but not great, historical question is: “When was this text written?” While that question fits the historical category, it will not earn full points because it is rather standard (and has now been given as an example!). Ask great questions!

Finally, students should do some research in the library using commentaries, bible dictionaries, books, journal articles, etc. in order to write a short $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ page answer for each question posed. Students may access library materials online but may not use general Internet sites or Wikipedia. I am not asking for a full research paper; I do not expect fully developed, intricate answers that delve deeply into the issues. Instead, students should write a succinct answer clearly and simply. For example, if one asks the traditional question “When was this text written?” as your historical question, then one might consult one or two commentaries on the passage and possibly a bible dictionary in order to get a general idea of when scholars date the passage and why. So, you would write a paragraph stating, for example, that the passage was probably written during the Babylonian exile because of these 2 factors in the text. Cite your research materials properly. I imagine that one might begin by summarizing the research and answering the question fully in a page or so; then, edit the material to $\frac{1}{2}$ page of extraordinary clear writing.

This assignment must fit onto 2 pages. No exceptions. I will read and comment on drafts that are emailed to me by Friday, Feb 26.

Grading Rubric for HLT Assignment:

Grammar, Style, Clarity of Expression	10 points
Historical Question (correct category and quality)	10 points
Literary Question (correct category and quality)	10 points
Theological Question (correct category and quality)	10 points
Historical Answer	20 points
Literary Answer	20 points
Theological Answer	

Appendix C

Suggested Biblical Passages for Exegesis Paper

(You must receive approval for a passage not on this list;
if it is not here, it is probably covered during our class time.)

Genesis 1 (First Creation Account)	Isaiah 1:1-20 (Judgment Oracle)
Genesis 11:1-9 (Tower of Babel)	Isaiah 5:1-7 (Song of the Vineyard)
Genesis 15 (Covenant with Abraham)	Isaiah 11:1-9 (Peaceful Kingdom)
Genesis 23 (Death and Burial of Sarah)	Isaiah 19: 1-15 (Oracle about Egypt)
Genesis 28: 10-22 (Jacob's Dream at Bethel)	Isaiah 42: 1-9 (Servant Song)
Genesis 29: 1-14 (Jacob Meets Rachel)	Isaiah 45: 1-8 (Cyrus, the anointed)
Genesis 32: 22-32 (Jacob wrestles at Peniel)	Isaiah 49: 1-13 (Servant Song)
Genesis 33 (Jacob and Esau Meet)	Isaiah 54: 1-17 (Zion poem)
Genesis 34: 1-31 (Rape of Dinah)	Isaiah 59: 1-15a (oracle of judgment)
Genesis 37: 1-11 (Joseph Dreams)	Isaiah 61: 1-11 (Spirit of God on me)
Genesis 38 (Judah and Tamar)	Isaiah 62: 1-12 (Zion's salvation)
Genesis 39 (Joseph and Potiphar's Wife)	Isaiah 66: 1-4 (right worship)

Appendix D

Old Testament / Hebrew Bible Exegetical Tools

1) Dictionaries / Encyclopedias

Anchor Bible Dictionary. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000.

HarperCollins Bible Dictionary. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

Hayes, John H., ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*. 2 vols. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

Meyers, Carol, ed. *Women in Scripture: a Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Currently 3 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006 –

Hepper, F. N. *Baker Encyclopedia of Bible Plants: Flowers, Trees, Fruits, and Vegetables*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.

Losch, Richard R. *All the People in the Bible: an A-Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Metzger, Bruce M. and Michael D. Coogan. *The Oxford Guide to People & Places of the Bible*. New York: Oxford, 2001.

Ray-Schwartz, Donald. *Noah's Ark: an Annotated Encyclopedia of Every Animal Species in the Hebrew Bible*. Aronson, 2000.

Van der Toorn, Karel, Bob Becking, et al. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*. Boston: Brill, 1999.

2) Atlases

Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Carta Bible Atlas*. 4th ed. Jerusalem: Carta, 2002.

Curtis, Adrian, ed. *Oxford Bible Atlas*. 4th ed. NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Dowley, Tim, ed. *The Baker Atlas of Christian History*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997.

Pritchard, James B. *The Harper Atlas of the Bible*. New York: Harper and Row, 1987.

3) Concordances

A specific concordance matches a Bible version.

Goodrick, Edward W. and John R. Kohlenberger, eds. *NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan,

Metzger, Bruce M. *NRSV Exhaustive Concordance*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991. Moulton and Geden. *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*. 6th edition, ed. by I. Howard Marshall. London: T.&T. Clark, 2002.

Reference: BS 2302 .M8 2002

Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Updated ed. Hendrickson, 2007.

Whitaker, Richard E., and John R. Kohlenberger. *Analytical Concordance to the NRSV of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; New York: Oxford, 2000.

4) Commentary Series

Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries

Anchor Bible

Berit Olam

Hermeneia

International Critical Commentary

Interpretation

JPS Torah Commentary

New Century Bible Commentary

New International Commentary, Old Testament Series

New Interpreter's Bible

Old Testament Library

Westminster Bible Companion

Word Biblical Commentary

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture/Old Testament

5) One Volume Commentaries

Adeyemo, Tokunboh, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

The HarperCollins Bible Commentary. Rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000.

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990.

Newsom, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *Women's Bible Commentary, Expanded Edition*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

The Oxford Bible Commentary. NY: Oxford, 2001.

Queer Bible Commentary (ed. Guest, Goss, West, Bohache);

Global Bible Commentary (ed. Patte);

The International Bible Commentary (ed. William R. Farmer);

The Africana Bible (ed. Hugh R. Page Jr.)