

Course Name: BSO521 Historical Background of the OT

Lecturer: Dr. Sheila Gyllenberg

Day and time of course:

Tuesday, October 11 – December 20, 2022
16:00-19:00 (ZOOM)

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School year: 2022-2023

Course Description

This course delves into the history, traditions, customs and religion of Israel and the surrounding nations during the period of the Tanakh (Old Testament). It will give the student a historical framework for the period of the Tanakh, and look at various aspects of government, society, economics and cult in the Ancient Near East, with a focus on shared and unique elements found in Israelite society.

Course Goals

1. To learn about the world into which Israel was birthed: its history, cultures, customs and religions.
2. To deepen our understanding and appreciation of the Hebrew Scriptures, by comparison and contrast with other societies in the ancient Near East.
3. To provide tools for the student to interpret Old Testament events and descriptions in their cultural and geopolitical context.

Learning Outcome

1. The student should have a general chronological framework for the history of the Ancient Near East and know how biblical chronology fits within that framework.
2. The student should have an introductory level knowledge of civilizations in the Ancient Near East that interacted with the people and cultural world of the Bible: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor (the Hittite Empire), Persia and the Levant (Ugarite, Aram, Phoenicia, etc).
3. The student should be able to research the cultural, political and/or historical background of biblical texts, and use these to better understand the text.

4. The student should understand the need to read Biblical texts in light of the text's genre and the biblical author's purpose for the composition.

Course Structure

The lessons will be held through a Zoom format, consisting of lectures and interactive discussions between all participants. There will be 10 three-hour live zoom lectures (with breaks). Recordings will be available to registered students.

Requirements and Grading

Online (open book) Mid-term – covering the reading assignments and lecture material for the first three weeks	20%
Online (open book) end of course exam – covering the reading assignments and lecture material for the last 7 weeks	40%
Discussion Question	40%
Total Grade	100%

Main Texts

A variety of texts and readings will be utilized, including:

Arnold, Bill and Richard S. Hess. *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Freedman, D. N. (ed.). *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 Vols. New York, 1992.

Hays, Christopher B. *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

Notley, Steven R. and Anson F. Rainey. *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World*. Jerusalem: Carta, 2006.

Provan, I., P. Long, and T. Longman. *A Biblical History of Israel*. (Westminster John Knox, 2003)

Vos, Howard F. Wycliffe *Historical Geography of Bible Lands*. Revised Ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003

Yamauchi, Edwin M. *Persia and the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1990.

Most of the readings will be posted on itslearning.

11.10	(hol hamoed sukkot) 1. Geographical Setting, Chronology and Sources 2. History and Culture of Mesopotamia: an overview	Miller & Hayes 1-12 Bright , 488-495 timeline Bright , 33-38, 41-43, 47-51, 56-58. Vos , 1-29 (Mesopotamia) "Mesopotamia" in ABD 4.716-718,
18.10	1. Mesopotamian Mythology 2. Patriarchal Narratives in their Near Eastern context	Arnold and Hess , 23-43 Vos , 497-502 (early Asia Minor) ABD , vol 1, Babylonia, 755-762, 767-777. Provan, Long and Longman , 112-121

25.10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. History and Culture of Egypt until the end of the Middle Kingdom 2. Joseph and the Exodus in its ancient Egyptian context. 	Arnold and Hess , 43-45, 46-59, 85-90 Bright , 38-40, 43-44, 51-55, 59-66;
1.11	<i>Elections Day / No Class / Online Midterm Exam</i>	
8.11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mittani, Neo-Hittites and Ugarit: 2. Covenant and Religion in the Late Bronze Age 3. The Settlement Period: Nomadic Society / Agricultural Society 	Arnold and Hess , 152-164 Bright 150-156 Arnold and Strawns , (Ugarit) 139-167 Provan, Long & Longman , 138-147 Vos , 371-389 (Syria). Encyclopaedia Judaica , vol 12, "Nomadism" 1206-09; ABD , vol 1. "Agriculture", 95-98; Miller & Hayes 33-42, 46-51
15.11	<p>Guest Lecturer: Dr. John Relf</p> <p>Death, Afterlife and Resurrection in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East</p>	Friedman and Overton , 35-60.
22.11	<p>Guest Lecturer: Dr. John Relf</p> <p>Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East</p>	ABD , vol 5, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings", 870-891 Greer et al , 349-354, 361-367.
29.11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dynastic State: David and Solomon: Legendary or Historical? 2. Divided Kingdom in its Geopolitical Context: Part 1 Aram -- 9th Century BCE 	Arnold and Hess , 227-261 Hays , 213-231; 287-294 Vos , Egypt, 121-125 Provan, Long & Longman , 216-232, 251-258. Sacred Bridge 157-168
6.12	Divided Kingdom in its Geopolitical Context: Part 2 The Assyrian Empire – 8 th Century	ABD , vol. 4. Mesopotamia: History and Culture of Assyria, 732-755. Arnold and Hess , 342-349
13.12	Divided Kingdom in its Geopolitical Context: Part 3 The Babylonian Empire: 7 th /6 th Centuries BCE Life in exile	Arnold and Hess , 350-382 Hays , 235-238. ABD , vol. 1, Babylonia, 763-767.
20.12	<p>Return to Jerusalem and Rebuilding the Temple</p> <p>The Persian Empire: 6th-5th Centuries BCE</p> <p>Life in exile</p> <p>Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem</p>	Yamauchi , 226-278. Hays , 397-410

General Bibliography

ABD – see Freedman.

Arnold, Bill T. and Brent A. Strawn, eds. *The World around the Old Testament: The People and Places of the Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

Albertz, R. *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*. Translated by J. Bowden. 2 vols. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994

- Alexander, T. Desmond and David Baker. *Dictionary of the Old Testament*. 3 vols. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003.
- Binder, Susanne. Joseph's Rewarding and Investiture (Genesis 41:41-43) and the Gold of Honour in New Kingdom Egypt. Pages 44-64 in *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature: Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3-7 May 2009*. S. Bar, D. Kahn and JJ Shirley, eds. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011.
- Borowski, O. *Agriculture in the Iron Age*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987.
- Bright, John. *A History of Israel*, 4th ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Campbell, A. F., M A. O'Brien. *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations*. Minneapolis, MN. 1993.
- Cross, F. M. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History and the Religion of Israel*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Davis, P. R. *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Dever, W. *What Did the Biblical Authors Know and When Did They Know It? What Archeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel?* Grand Rapids, 2001.
- . *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* Grand Rapids, 2003.
- Faulstich, E.W. *History, Harmony, The Exile & Return*. Spencer, Iowa: Chronology Books, 1988.
- Faust, Avraham. *Israel's Ethnogenesis*. London, UK: Equinox, 2006
- Finegan, Jack. *A Light From the Ancient Past* (Princeton 1947).
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- Flint, P. (ed.). *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, 2001).
- Freedman, D. N. (ed.). *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York, 1992) 6 Vols.
- Friedman, Richard E. and Overton, Shawna D. Death and Afterlife: The Biblical Silence? *Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Part 4. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2000). Pp 35-60.
- Grabbe, Leslie L. *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* Revised Edition. (London: 2017).
- Grayson, A. Kirk. Mesopotamia: The History and Culture of Assyria. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Vol. 4: 732-755.
- Goldstein, J. *Peoples of an Almighty God: Competing Religions in the Ancient World* (New York, 2002).
- Greer, Jonathan S., Hilber, John W. and Walton, John H, eds. *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018)
- Hallo, W. and K. L. Younger. *The Context of Scripture*. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997-2002.
- Halpern, B. *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, 2001).
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- . *Tree and Shrub in our Biblical Heritage* (Neot Kedumim, 1989).
- . *Desert and Shepherd in our Biblical Heritage* (Biblical Landscape Review in Israel, 1991).
- Hoffmeier, James K. David's Triumph over Goliath: I Samuel 17:54 and Ancient Near Eastern Analogues. Pages 87-114 in *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature: Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3-7 May 2009*. S. Bar, D. Kahn and JJ Shirley, eds. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011.
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- O'Connor, Jerome Murphy. *The Holy Land, 4th Ed.* New York, Oxford Press, 1992.
(A 5th edition is now available as well).
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