

Bloy House/Episcopal Theological School at Claremont

Spring Term 2018

EP 137
Saturdays 8 to 11am

First Testament Introduction, Second Semester

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Instructor

This semester we will probe into the history of the formation of the Latter Prophets (*Nevi'im aharonim*=Isaiah to Malachi) and the Writings (*Ketuvim*) on the understanding that we probed in the fall semester the history of the formation of the Pentateuch; the Early Prophets (Joshua to Kings, Deuteronomic history); Priestly editing and post-Exilic governance; and Chronicles-Ezra/Nehemiah. This semester there will be an emphasis on Wisdom and the Prophets.

The principal textbooks will be Sanders, Torah and Canon: Second Edition (Cascade Books, 2005) 54-141, and Walter Brueggeman's An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination (Louisville KY: WJK, 2003). We shall also discuss major portions of my The Monotheizing Process (Cascade Books, 2014) and David Carr's Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature (Oxford University Press, 2005). Abraham Heschel's The Prophets (1962) will be of particular help. There will be several handouts, attached by e-mail, intended to aid the student in understanding the Prophets and their importance to the rise and development of Early Judaism in the Persian and Greco-Roman periods.

Of course, the essential text is the Bible itself. The New Revised Standard Version as well as the older RSV are recommended; others may be used if approved by the instructor or for comparison with the NRSV.

Objectives:

1. To learn to use the Covenant Lawsuit Paradigm and to apply it to understanding the message of the great prophets of the Iron Age.
2. To comprehend the significance of the Hermeneutic Triangle in applying it for understanding how the prophets cited their authority by causing the pre-Exilic Recitals of ancient Israel and Judah to apply to the issues encountered during the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian crises.
3. To grasp the significance of the role of (and memory of) the great prophets in the transition from the old kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the rise of Judaism in the Persian Period.
4. To understand the role of Wisdom thinking throughout biblical history, its effect on prophetic thought, and its importance in the rise of Judaism.

5. To grasp the chronology and major aspects of Early Judaism in the late Iron to Hellenistic/Roman eras.
6. And to comprehend the role of the Ketuvim, especially the Psalter and the Five Scrolls in the liturgical life of Early Judaism through to the time of Jesus.
7. To understand the origins and development of the monotheizing process that issued in the claim of Judaism and hence Christianity to believe in the One God of All; and to understand the reasons for the origins and development of canons of literature in Early Judaism.

Evaluation of the student's performance will be based on the two required papers and on class discussion. The papers will count for 40% of the grade each, and class performance 20%. Class discussions of lectures and assigned readings are vital to understanding the material.

Two essays are expected from each student. The first will be due on **March 10th**. For that submit an essay showing your understanding of the covenant lawsuit metaphor and of the hermeneutic triangle, with illustrations from your reading of the prophets so far studied. The essay should indicate acquaintance with the beginnings of Early Judaism and its history through to the fall of Jerusalem to Rome in 70 CE as well as the origins and development of the monotheizing process and of canons of literature.

The second paper will be due at the last class session on **May 12**. For that submit an essay showing your understanding of the role of the Prophets in the establishment of Early Judaism—their explanation of the utter failure of old Israel and Judah and effect on the understanding of the monotheizing process carried forward in Early Judaism. The second essay should also show how the Ketuvim or Writings expressed essential traits of Early Judaism.

January 20

After general discussion we will again compare and discuss six of the current canons of the First or Old Testament in use today. Torah and Canon², p. 15, and T&C² pp. vii-xxxii. We shall also study the short essay titled “Judaism” and the power-flow chart and attempt to get an overview of the Iron Age, Persian Period, Greek and Roman Periods followed by the Hellenistic, and discuss what survived of the old pre-exilic traditions into Early Judaism and why.

Issues to discuss: the tri-partite Jewish canon (the Tanakh) and the quadripartite Christian First Testaments; the two major differences between the Tanakh and the First Testament (history and placement of the prophetic corpus). How do these relate to what became the Christian hermeneutic of the quadripartite First Christian Testament and how do they relate to the tension in the Early Church between the so-called Hellenizers and Judaizers? We shall look carefully at the shape of the prophetic corpus in this first session and introduce the covenant lawsuit metaphor and review the hermeneutic triangle and its importance in understanding the prophets. We shall use the Book of Amos to introduce many of these ideas. Come prepared to ask questions about the concept of biblical prophecy, and why prophecy or revelation ceased in Early Judaism for some Jewish groups and did not cease for others.

For our next session read all of Amos using the Lawsuit Metaphor. Pencil in the margin beside each verse or periscope the numbers 1 to 7 to indicate your understanding of what Amos is reported to have said.

January 27

Read T&C² pp. 54-103, Brueggeman pp.209-14 and 223-28, and Heschel on Amos, and read Amos chs. 1-9 and Hosea chs. 1-14, the two of the classical prophets who addressed the Northern Kingdom, the way you read Genesis without writing up the exercise. Come prepared to discuss the meanings of the words “prophet” and “prophecy,” as they are found in the First Testament, and the kinds of roles played by those called “prophets” in the Bible. What were the differences between prophets of the word and prophets of the spirit?

Be prepared to discuss the roles of sages and prophets. What biblical figures seemed to combine the two? Discuss the main difference between “true” and “false” prophets. What roles did they play in the biblical story?

Use the covenant lawsuit metaphor and the hermeneutic triangle while reading Amos and Hosea, and come ready to discuss the “covenant lawsuit metaphor.” What is the importance of each of the seven categories for understanding a Prophet? What were the two appeals to authority the prophets made? To what did they refer to validate a) what they said, and b) why they had the authority to say it? Similar to the critical outline assignment last semester, this time read the Books of Amos and Hosea assigning a number 1 to 7 by pencil in the margins to indicate which of the categories in the covenant lawsuit metaphor you think the verse or passage expresses.

In preparation re-read all nine chapters of Amos and all fourteen of Hosea using the seven categories of the covenant lawsuit metaphor and the hermeneutic triangle in doing so. Put a small pencil mark in the margin beside each verse or passage indicating which of the seven applies to that passage. Remember that neither the prophets nor their disciples used the metaphor; it is a tool drawn from critical readings of the text. Some passages may express more than one category and some may seem not to express any; that is normal.

Class time will be spent in discussing how use of the lawsuit metaphor and of the hermeneutic triangle help in analyzing the messages of the prophets. If at all possible it is necessary to discern by use of the triangle what the needs of the community were that the prophet was trying to meet. Mind you, rarely did the people or their leaders agree with the prophet’s view of the need, much less the mode of addressing it he proclaims. What role did Wisdom play in Amos’ interpretation of tradition (authority)? By what authority did Amos claim that God would punish his own people? Recalling Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic History, be prepared to discuss how they relate to what Amos and Hosea say.

February 10

Read Heschel and Brueggeman pp. 233-36 and 159-middle of p. 166, the seven chapters of Micah and the following passages of the eighth century Isaiah: Chs 1-2, 5-8, 9:8-21, 10:1-19, 22:1-14, 28:1—32:8. Isa 36-39; 2 Kgs 18-20; and 2 Chrons 32 provide the setting.

In contrast to Amos and Hosea, who addressed the people in Northern Israel, Isaiah and Micah addressed those in the South, all four of them during the time of the expansion of the neo-Assyrian Empire—the socio-political situation of the bottom right angle of the triangle. Refer again to the power-flow chart.

Again use the seven categories and the triangle as you read the Isaiah text to see what the message of each prophet was. Be prepared to discuss the appeals to authority of each, what each viewed as the sins of the kingdom and of the people, how each spoke of the coming punishment, and what effect the adversity was to have in the vision of the prophet. To what tradition of authority did Micah appeal and to what Isaiah? Were they the same or were they different?

February 24

Read Heschel and Brueggeman ppp. 240-44 and 177-190, Habakkuk chs 1-2, and Jeremiah chs. 1-32. Again use both the lawsuit metaphor and the triangle. We will take these two sessions to discuss Jeremiah, the crucial prophet of the late Iron Age. We know more about Jeremiah the person than about any other prophet.

We will focus on Habakkuk and his message at the end of the Iron Age kingdom of Judah. How would you relate Hab 2:4 and Isa 18:16? Might Habakkuk have been a disciple of Isaiah's? Does the lawsuit metaphor help in understanding Habakkuk?

Also we will discuss in depth the appeals to authority in Jeremiah, both categories 1 and 2. Read Jer 1-7. What were those appeals and how did Jeremiah express them?

March 10

We will focus on how the lawsuit metaphor helps in understanding Jeremiah. Read all of Jeremiah, or as much as you can responsibly read in preparation. Where are the so-called confessions of Jeremiah located? What do they tell us about the prophet and about his appeal to personal authority? What are the metaphors that Jeremiah used to speak of the coming adversity and what are the metaphors he used to express the “transformation” that the adversity was supposed to cause in the people? How was the view of God changing? How could Jeremiah call Judah's enemy God's servant?

We will compare the texts of Jeremiah in the MT and in the LXX and attempt to understand the differences, remembering that the Jeremiah of most all Christians, until Jerome's Vulgate began to be read after the 4th century CE, was the Greek Jeremiah.

The first paper is due on March 10.

March 24

Read Heschel, and Brueggeman 191-207, and Ezekiel chs. 1-37.

Where did Ezekiel speak and preach? How had the needs of the people changed or stayed the same according to Ezekiel? Was Ezekiel a prophet of the Word or of the Spirit? Or both? Where is the “call” of Ezekiel? How was it like Jeremiah’s and how unlike it? How does Ezekiel express the sin of the people? Where do we find the passages that express category 6?

After considering Ezekiel we shall review the prophetic movement and consider why it was so important to Early Judaism even while the concept of the cessation of prophecy began to take root.

April 7

Read Heschel and Brueggeman pp. 166-75 and 263-70, and all of Isaiah chs 40-66, especially 40-55.

Is there a “call” passage in these chapters? If not, why not? When did the “Second Isaiah” live and where? What traditions did he call upon for his category 2? How did he interweave them? What was the bottom right angle of the triangle? What problems and needs did he address? Where are the four “Suffering Servant Poems” and what issues did they address? How was the view of God changing? How would you express the view of God in this section of Isaiah? How could God call Cyrus the Great God’s messiah? Whom else did Cyrus influence on the world scene at a later time?

Read Isa 61 carefully. Then read Luke 4:16-30. Jesus read a portion of the Isa 61 passage (in Greek *apud* Luke) but he also referred to what other passages (1Kings 17 & 2 Kings 5) in his sermon? What effect did that have? Why did the people change in response to Jesus’ sermon from their reaction to his reading the Isaiah passage to their reaction after he preached on it?

April 14

Read Brueggeman pp. 293-317 on Wisdom and Job, T&C² pp. 111-135; and read Job 1-31.

What in the Bible is Wisdom? How was wisdom expressed? How did the sage and the prophet differ and how were they alike? The covenant lawsuit metaphor does not work well in reading Wisdom literature. Why? How is God viewed in Wisdom thinking? Read 2 Sam 12 and 14 and be prepared to discuss the way wisdom was expressed by Nathan and the Wise Woman of Tekoa?

What is the problem that the Book of Job presents? How does the poet address the problem? How was prophetic tradition expressed in the Book of Job. How did Jeremiah influence Job’s thinking? Read Jer 20:14-18 again and compare it with Job 3. How, however, is the message of the Book of Job different from that of Jeremiah? What does Yahweh’s response to Job’s confession mean (Job 42:7)?

Recalling discussions of last semester, how does the Chronicler's view of history differ from that of the Deuteronomic historian (Joshua to Kings)? How did Torah relate to the Temple in Early Judaism and then how did it replace the Temple in later Rabbinic Judaism?

April 28

Read the handouts about the Psalter and Brueggeman pp. 271-91. Come prepared to discuss the importance of the Psalms in Judaism and Christianity. What are the major types of Psalms in the Psalter? How were they used in ancient Israel and Early Judaism? But, since they are "canonical" how could they be used when there was no king or no temple? Is that a legitimate use? Why?

Read as much of Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) as feasible. What would have been the function of such 'wisdom' literature in Early Judaism?

Read and discuss the "Five Scrolls" in the Ketuvim and their role in Jewish life.

May 12

Re-read the second introduction to T&C² and the epilogue. Read also Carr's Writing, pp. 3-14, 111-73, 253-85.

What has this course been about? Again, what are the two meanings of the word "canon" and which is the more important for understanding a Bible as a canon? What was/is the monotheizing process?

On the external factors that shaped canons out of ancient school curricula, no one has collected and analyzed the pertinent data from the Ancient Near East and from the Eastern Mediterranean region better than David Carr. How does his work relate to what we have been doing?

How should this year's course prepare one to study the NT? What is the largest component part of the NT? Why would Christians believe that the Jesus movement or the Early Church was the successor of ancient Israel and why would Pharisees and Rabbis believe that rabbinic Judaism was the heir? What does this say about the multivalency of the First Testament that it could be claimed by two quite different expressions of the "true Israel" after the first century of the common era?

The second and final paper is due today, May 12 (see above p. 2).