COURSE OF STUDY 221: Bible II
Old Testament: Law and History

October 2-3 and November 6-7, 2020
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This course seeks to interpret the developing institutions and faith traditions of ancient Israel and examine the varying ways in which the Hebrew people understood crucial events in their history as acts of God. The main focus is on the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament as Scripture, as well as an historical, and literary text. Major topics examined include the origin of the earth and civilization, the earliest covenants, the Exodus from Egypt, the rise of the monarchy and the development of prophecy up to the Eighth Century B.C.

Course Objectives

1) Formation of an historical overview of the early life and faith of ancient Israel.
2) Exegesis of biblical passages that illustrate key points in the history of Israel and the role of Scripture.
3) Reflection on the use of exegesis in preaching and other pastoral functions.
4) Ongoing development of an exegetical methodology.
5) Consideration of the ways God worked in the lives of the people found in these biblical materials.
6) Application of these studies to the concerns and issues of the present church.

A. Books


The Bible. A modern scholarly translation such as the RSV or NRSV is recommended.

B. Instructions

1) Read the assigned chapters and pages, take notes and answer the questions completely. Focus especially on the readings from the Bible. Do not quote extensively from the texts you read. Digest the ideas and information and then put the answers in your own words.

2) Minimum lengths are given for each item of written work.

3) Type your written work on 8½ x 11 inch white paper. Use only one side with one-inch margins and double spacing of lines. Use a 10-11 point font on a computer with a regular type. Do not use script, condensed or all caps.

4) On each page of your work include a header with your name and page number. Begin each section (all capitalized heading) on a new sheet of paper with the appropriate heading at the top. You do not have to repeat the question but use the appropriate number and (where applicable) letter of the question.

5) Ideas and information should be stated in your own words, not in the words of the authors you read. If you do quote from a printed text you must use quotation marks and note the source (including pages) in parentheses at the end of each usage. Quotations should never be more than a sentence or two.

6) Add a title page to each course that includes: a) the name and number of the course and b) your name, c) your Personal identification number (PID) obtained from GBHEM (email Pamela Frost at pfrost@gbhem.org), and the begin date of the course.
7) Staple or clip all pages for each course together, using one staple in the left hand corner.

8) Hand in written work for the class when the course meets in Springfield. Late work is only accepted for year 1 students when the director of the school has granted prior approval.

9) Make a copy of your typed material and bring it with you for your own use during the course. If you have questions about your work please contact the instructor by email or phone.

10) Every attempt will be made to grade all work between the two class meeting times. If that is not possible please bring a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your work to be returned to the second class meeting.

Note on Plagiarism: Using other people’s materials (whether from a book, journal, teacher, another student, sermon or lectionary aid) without documentation is unacceptable behavior. Such activity, known as plagiarism, usually means failure for the course with notification sent to the Conference Course of Study Registrar and the Division of Ordained Ministry. Professors will report all instances of plagiarism to the Director of Course of Study. The Director will arrange for a meeting with the professor and student, and the student will be given an opportunity to explain the situation. The Director, in consultation with the professor, will make a decision about what action is appropriate for a first instance of plagiarism. Such action could include rewriting the material or failure of the course. A brief summary of the meeting will be prepared by the Director and placed in the student’s file in the Course of Study Office and kept there until the student completes the Course of Study Curriculum. If a second instance of plagiarism is documented, the student will fail the course and the Director will determine what other consequences may apply.

C. Assignments

PART I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS AND ORIGINS

1. Read Boadt, 1-68; Curtis 3-62.
   a. What is the Fertile Crescent? How is Egyptian history divided by historians? Name three neighbors of Israel which played a role in the Old Testament story. What are some of the major literary discoveries within the land of Israel? Where does Boadt place the Patriarchal period? When did the period of the Exodus occur? What happened in 722 BC? What are the main geographical regions of Palestine? (1 page)

2. Read Genesis 1-4, 6-7, 11. According to these Genesis chapters, known as the Primeval History, how would you describe God? What is the main problem for humans? Can you find a pattern of how humans relate to God? Is there a progression in human history? (1 page)

3. Read Genesis 12, 15, 22, 25:19-34. What is the basis of the relationship between the Patriarchs (Abraham and Isaac) and God? What events threaten the promises of God to the Patriarchs? How are these threats overcome? (1 page)

4. Read Genesis 37-50. What role does God play in the story of Joseph and his brothers? How is God revealed in the life of Joseph? What part does clothing play in the narrative? What does this story say about family relationships? How are the characters in the story changed by the end? (1 page)

5. Read Boadt 69-126; Curtis 65-76b. What are the four sources for the Pentateuch according to Wellhausen? What names and aspects of God are detailed in the stories of Genesis? (1 page)

EXODUS, WILDERNESS AND THE FORMATION OF A PECULIAR PEOPLE
1. Read Exodus 1-15, 19-20, 24, 32. Also read Boadt, 127-43; Curtis, 77-82. How is the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt a contest between God and Pharaoh? What response to their deliverance does God expect from the Hebrews? What is the response they give? What is the relationship between salvation and law according to Exodus? What is unique about the Ten Commandments? (1 page)

2. Read Leviticus 16, 19, 25, Numbers 13-14. Also read Boadt, 144-63. What is the role of sacrifice for the people of Israel? What is the role of ethics or doing good? What is the role of faith or obedience to God? What expectations does God have of the people of Israel in regard to the land? What danger is there in Israelite disobedience? (1 page)

3. Read Deuteronomy 12, 28, 34. Deuteronomy is a second giving of the Law or Torah on the edge of the promised land. Chapter 12 will play a key role in the history of Israel that follows. What does this chapter command the Israelites to do? What is the result for Israel of obedience or disobedience according to chapter 28? What is the fate of Moses according to Deuteronomy 34? What problem does this chapter cause for the idea that Moses wrote all of the first five books of the Bible? Why is it necessary to repeat the Law? (1 page)

THE CONQUEST OF THE LAND AND THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

1. Read Boadt, 164-93; Curtis 83-90; Joshua 21:43-45; Judges 2. What is the disputed issue regarding the complete conquest of the land of Israel? Which view of the conquest do you find convincing? Why? (1 page)

2. Joshua 24, Judges 4. What is meant by a "tribal league" and how would such a league relate to faith in God? What was the role of the judge in Israel? What kinds of conflicts arose with the local culture? What aspects of Canaanite religion made it a temptation for the Israelites? (1 page)

PART II

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MONARCHY IN ISRAEL

1. Read 1 Samuel 1-5, 8-12, 15-17, 28, 31; Boadt, 194-210.
   a. What was the role of Samuel in bringing a king to Israel? What other roles does Samuel play? How is he a “transition figure”? (1/2 page)
   b. How is Saul chosen? Why is Saul rejected? How is a successor to Saul chosen? How does Saul come to an end? How is kingship in Israel to be different from the nations? (1 page)

2. Read 2 Samuel 3:1; 5, 7, 11-12, 24; Curtis 91-102. How did David come to power? What were the accomplishments of his kingdom? What were David’s failures? How can he be called a man after God’s own heart? What was the role of the prophet Nathan in David’s kingdom? Is it a necessary role? (1 page)

3. Read 1 Kings 1-3, 6-8, 11-12; Deuteronomy 17:14-20; Boadt 254-56.
   a. What were the chief claims to fame of Solomon? What were his fatal flaws? Was the king to have unlimited power according to Deuteronomy? What was the king to avoid? How does Solomon measure up? (1 page)
   b. What happened to Solomon’s kingdom after his death? What pressures led to a split according to Boadt? What are the two new states which result? Which stayed with a descendant of David? What changes in worship did the division bring? (1 page)

MONARCHY AND PROPHECY IN THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS
1. Read 1 Kings 16-19; 21; Boadt 257-69; Curtis, 103-14. What is the role of the King of Israel according to Elijah and the biblical writers? How does Ahab fail in that role? What is the role of Jezebel in that failure? What is the response of the prophet to the failure of the Israelite king? (1 page)

2. Read 2 Kings 2, 5, 9-10, 15-17.


   b. What role did prophecy play in Jehu’s coup? Is Jehu viewed as a positive king by the writers of 2 Kings? Why or why not? (1/2 page)

   c. What led to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom or Israel? What was ultimately to blame according to the book of Kings? Would a modern secular historian be likely to see the same causes? What happened to the “ten lost tribes” of Israel? How was Judah able to survive? (1 pages)

AMOS

1. Read Amos 1-8; Boadt, 270-81.

   a. Amos 1-2 opens the book with a series of judgments on the neighbors and traditional enemies of Israel. How might the Israelite audience of Amos have felt to hear these judgments? How would that have changed when Judah and Israel are included in the condemnations? On what basis are the foreign nations judged? On what basis are Judah and Israel judged? (1 page)

   b. Is God pleased with the worship of the Israelites at Bethel and Gilgal according to Amos 4? How has God tried to get the Israelites’ attention? Has it worked? What is needed according to Amos 5 to correct their worship? (1/2 page)

   c. On what basis does Amos plead with God for mercy in chapter 7? Who tells Amos to leave Bethel? Why does Amos say he must prophesy when he is not a prophet? What is the judgment Amos speaks against his opponent? Compare and contrast the role of Amos with that of either Nathan or Elijah. (1 page)

   d. How have the Israelites mistreated the poor according to Amos 8? Will the day of the LORD (vv 9-10) benefit Israel? What kind of famine will God send upon the land? (1/2 page)

HOSEA

1. Read Hosea 1-14, Boadt, 281-84.

   a. Hosea 1-3 interweaves the family life of Hosea with the message of God. What do the marriage of Hosea and the names of his children have to do with God’s relationship with Israel? What relationship do the references to Jezreel have with the coup of Jehu in 2 Kings 9-10? Where else in the Old Testament is the Valley of Achor mentioned? (1 page)

   b. Who is the defendant in the lawsuit of Hosea 4:1-3? Who is the plaintiff? What is the crime? How does this relate to the Ten Commandments? Ephraim is another name for the Northern Kingdom or Israel in Hosea. What are some of the things Hosea condemns Ephraim/Israel for in chapters 7-10? Is Israel’s failure something new? (1 page)

   c. Several striking metaphors are used to describe God in Hosea 11-14. Name at least three of those metaphors and tell how each characterizes God’s relationship to the people of Israel. Why is God described with such metaphors? (1/2 page)