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OT 711 Exegetical Studies in the Historical Books

Lawson G. Stone

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This course aspires to equip the student with a working knowledge of biblical Hebrew with the skills needed for theological exegesis of the OT, specifically, the book of Judges. The ultimate goal is competent biblical study within a larger theological method. The course emphasizes the craft of textual analysis, but always against the backdrop of an interpretative approach embracing the history of interpretation, modern critical methods, theological formulation, and reflection upon contemporary questions. This course on the book of Judges also seeks to place exegesis in the framework of use of the Bible in the ministry of preaching and teaching in the church.

Specific objectives: In the process of completing the course, students will:
1) Place a particular passage in the context of the entire book of Judges;
2) Translate passages from the book of Judges accurately and forcibly, using standard grammatical and lexical tools;
3) Evaluate the textual condition of a passage in the book of Judges by assessing the notes in the BHS apparatus;
4) Evaluate selected issues in interpretation, specifically philology, contextual relations, literary form, and historical setting. This entails:
   a) Practice with lexica and concordance;
   b) Analysis of structure, form, and aesthetics using concepts of grammar and syntax;
   c) Preparation of a word, phrase, or formula study;
   d) Review of impact of critical methods and models;
   e) Evaluation of the relative weight and influence of the diverse types of reading on developing a normative teaching and preaching perspective of the passage;
5) Profit from excellence in biblical exposition regardless of the theological bias or historical setting of the source, in particular, appreciating the contribution of so-called "pre-critical" interpreters;
6) Read through the entire book of Judges several times in translation, keeping a log of impressions, ideas, thoughts, devotional insights, questions, etc.
The **means by which these objectives will be reached** include the following:

**Student preparation** of assigned texts is essential. We will work mainly on a close reading of the assigned passages. Close reading includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Solid Translation, with all words accurately analyzed
- Textual apparatus and its implications for interpretation
- Syntactical features identified and assessed
- Key words or phrases identified (maybe even check a reference lexicon)
- The appropriate sections of the two commentaries assigned should be read.
- Some days will be given over to instructor presentations covering specific aspects of exegetical method

Failure to prepare faithfully for class, attend conscientiously, and participate meaningfully will lead to grade reduction of up to 2 degrees (e.g. A- to B) depending on the severity of the deficit.

A **word/formula study study paper** of no more than 2000 words will be prepared by the student, taking a word or phrase that appears significantly in the book of Judges. The word or formula will be assigned by the instructor.

In addition to assigned readings in both commentaries, students should read **the commentary by Daniel Block** in its entirety. This will be reported to the instructor. Failure to complete this assignment will reduce the final grade by 1 degree (e.g. B+ to B).

For **extra credit** students may read **Brensinger's commentary** in its entirety. Note that passages relevant to the assigned texts must be read. Completion of the entire commentary will increase the final grade one degree. (e.g. B+ to A-).

**Additional reading** can also provide **extra credit**. This cannot be reading done for any other class, nor can it be reading done prior to OT 711, nor anything the student has read before. Written notes of reading can be submitted along with a statement of what was read, and for each 400 pages of additional reading, the final grade can be increased by a degree. No more than 800 pages may be submitted for this extra credit.

An **analysis and review of scholarship** on one of the major persons units, events, or interpretative issues in the book of 1500-2000 words will be submitted. This paper will present what the outstanding problems and issues surrounding some important part or person of the book of Judges, with as complete a review as possible of scholarly research. The purpose of the paper is for
the student to become immersed in the scholarship surrounding the
text, and to review it with the student's own study and
conclusions in mind. The paper does not have to break new ground,
nor is the student expected to adjudicate among competing views
or resolve controversies. The purpose is simply to describe the
scholarly work that has been done on the topic chosen. A good
start on the relevant bibliography will be found at the end of
this syllabus.

Note: Due to unavoidable conflicts resulting from students
choosing the same topic, it is hoped that students will not do
depapers on the same subject. Students should confirm their
selection with the professor before Reading Week, and topics will
be accepted on a first-come/first-served basis.

Reviews of scholarship will be presented in class during the last
third of the semester. We will try to process 2 per class
session. Each student will have a maximum of 25 minutes to
present, and no more than 10 additional minutes for discussion,
or a total of 35 minutes for the complete presentation. I will
schedule presentations to take us serially through the book of
Judges in the most logical manner possible.

An **exegesis paper** of no more than 3000 words on a passage in
Judges not covered in class. The passage should be about 4-6
verses and may be selected by the student. The paper should
present:

1. The major **textual** difficulties of the passage
2. An analysis of the passage's **syntactic** structure, style, and
   narrative flow
3. An analysis of the passage's main **grammatical and lexical**
   features
4. An analysis of the passage's **form, setting, and background,**
   to the extent these are discernable
5. A discussion of the **distinctive theological themes** expressed
   in the passage, seen in the framework of the book, the former
   prophets, the theological traditions of the OT, and potential
   points of contact with the NT
6. Reference throughout to the **appropriate secondary**
   **literature.**

Note that secondary literature should be largely standard,
refereed scholarly works and not popular books, study Bibles,
web-sites, etc. Likewise, use of obsolete reference tools should
be avoided. Special care should be taken when using resources
included in computer programs. These are typically obsolete and
in the public domain, and are of limited usefulness for their
scholarship. Excessive use (i.e. more than about 20%) of non-
scholarly or obsolete sources will cause a reduction of the
grade.
7. A discussion of the **devotional and experiential** dimension of
   the passage's meaning, including reference to appropriate
   commentary literature
8. A sketch of a **sermon** to preached from the passage
9. A carefully worked out **translation** that captures as fully as possible all the facets of meaning that your exegesis has uncovered.

Note this is not an outline of your order of presentation, but rather a list of issues and concerns that need to be addressed in the course of your research. The paper should conform to standard research paper form and style, with appropriate footnotes and bibliography. At no point may a student present work done for a previous class, or work for which the major portion was completed for a previous class. Work is to be completed specifically for this course, and is to be the student's own work.

Note: **Written work** must be completed according to a standard form and style. This is formal academic writing and your care, style, and approach should reflect this. Written work may be submitted in hard-copy or as a Microsoft Word document attached to an e-mail.

A **log of the student's 3 readings of the book of Judges** in translation will be kept, and will be submitted 3 times in the semester for inspection. Students are required to read the book of Judges in translation, and keep in written, dated form, a log or journal of impressions, questions, insights, ideas, prayers, etc. that come to mind. As long as the journal or log clearly indicates the book have been read, it may assume any format the student wishes. Note, there is no "right or wrong" on this assignment! Students may use any translation they wish. Students do not have to write notes on every single passage, but hopefully the reading will stimulate many thoughts and ideas. If students wish, a different English translation may be read each time. The main requirement is that this be done regularly, and with a degree of devotional sensitivity and openness. The log will be collected on the dates below:

October 5, 2000: First Reading  
November 3, 2000: Second Reading  
December 7, 2000: Third Reading  

Logs will be graded A, B, or C (unless not submitted, in which case, a zero is recorded). I presume your log receives an A unless it is clearly sketchy, un-engaged, hasty, or sloppy. Similarly, it is expected that reading will occur evenly through the term. Logs that were completed all at once or largely near the deadline will likely be graded lower. The log need not be beautiful or especially neat as long as I can read it. **Electronic submission of logs is not permitted.**

The grade will be calculated as follows:  
Word/Formula Study  25%  
Review of Scholarship  30%
Exegesis Paper 35%
Log 10%
Other Grade Adjustments as noted above then apply to the final grade

Schedule of Assignments
To be announced
Course Materials

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia is the standard critical text for this course.

**Hebrew Lexicons:**

Köhler-Baumgartner, Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Brill: Multiple Volumes through late 1990’s, also on CDROM)


Brown-Driver-Briggs is now obsolete and is not acceptable for submitted written work. HALOT is now the standard reference lexicon for biblical Hebrew. Use it.

**Hebrew Grammars:**

E. Kautzsch, A. E. Cowley, rev. and ed., Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar, 2nd ed., 1910. For years the standard, and still useful, but now supplanted by


For Hebrew Syntax:

• Ronald Williams, An Outline of Hebrew Syntax (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2nd ed. 1976). Though commonly used, this syntax is extremely inadequate.

• A. B. Davidson, Hebrew Syntax (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 3rd ed. 1901). Not to be scorned, though old.


**Concordances:**

A. Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible. The new standard work has practically neutralized the usefulness of older works. It is also eclipsed now by software based concordances, but students will find it useful periodically to work with a printed concordance. Texts involve more than statistics!

G. Wigram, The Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament. Gives contexts in English; useful for those whose Hebrew is rusty!

Software: Your preference. I use Accordance for the Macintosh, or Bibleworks for Windows.

**General References**

The Anchor Bible Encyclopedia. New York: Doubleday, 1992. 6 Volumes. Also available on CD-ROM


SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Note: these materials reflect a range of scholarly viewpoint and competence. Some titles are not directly about "Judges" but are relevant to larger issues of interpretation that impinge on the reading of Judges.

Asterisked (*) Sources reflect the professor's personal favorites (for a variety of reasons, not all of which are entirely healthy!) or especially noteworthy contributions

**Scholarly Commentaries**


**Semi-Scholarly (But Competent) Commentaries**


Books On Judges


*Yee, G.,* *Judges and Method* (Augsburg/Fortress, 1995)

Books On Related Issues in Interpreting Judges


*Steiner, George. Grammars of Creation.*

"Nevertheless, there is, I think, in the climate of spirit at the end of the twentieth century, a core-tiredness. The inward chronometry, the contracts with time which so largely determine our consciousness, point to late afternoon in ways that are ontological - this is to say, of the essence, of the fabric of being. We are, or feel ourselves to be, latecomers. The dishes are being cleared. 'Time, ladies and gents, time.' Such apprehension is the more compelling because it runs counter to the fact that, in the developed economies, individual life spans and expectancies are increasing. Yet the shadows lengthen. We seem to bend earthward and towards night as do plants."


*Steiner, George. Review of Literary Guide to the Bible, by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, The New Yorker* January 11,


Articles and Chapters (See also books noted above)

**Judges 1:1-3:6**


Ehud


Deborah-Barak


Gideon


Abimelek


Minor Judges


Jephthah
Note: A great deal of provocative and insightful work on this story has been done by feminist/womanist interpreters. Consult the "Books" sections above..


Samson
Judg 17-18

Spina, Frank A. "The Dan Story Historically Reconsidered." *JSOT* 1 (1977) 60-71; *Judg 19-21*.

"The End of the Book of Judges." In *Proc, 9th World Congress of Jewish Studs*, a; R Giveon; M Anbar, Et Al, 73-80, 1986.


Block D.I., "Echo Narrative Technique in Hebrew Literature; A Study in Judges 19," *WTS*, 52 (1990), 325-341.


*Structure and Theme of the Whole*


The Hero in Oral Tradition and Literature, Ancient and Modern
Chadwick, H. Munro. *The Heroic Age* 2nd Ed. Cambridge, University Press, 1926
Morris, Ian and Barry Powell, eds *A New Companion to Homer...* Leiden, 1996
Segal, Robert A.: *In Quest of the Hero*

*Method Issues*

*Historical Issues*
The Old Testament displays a remarkable literary and theological unity through a variety of genres. The inaugural volume in the HOTE series, Interpreting the Historical Books begins by exploring the components of narrative-setting, characterization, and plot-and then develops the major theological themes in each of the Old Testament historical books (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther). As readers work through Interpreting the Historical Books, they will begin to see and interpret the narrative writings as the writings were intended to be understood. The Division of OT Studies advances specialized academic opportunities to develop maturity in critical thinking skills related to exegetical and apologetical aspects of Old Testament studies, refinement of disciplined habits for ongoing independent study of the Hebrew Bible, and to write a thesis. In order to accomplish the Division of OT Studies curriculum statement, the OT faculty has identified the following Division Learning Outcomes (DLOs):

- **DLO #1**: As an OT scholar, articulate a broad familiarity and understanding with the contents of the OT as seen against its historical and cultural b...
- **SLO #4**: The student will be able to discuss the role of ancient near eastern studies in the exegesis of Genesis 1â€“11. (See DLO #2.)