

TEIILLIM (PSALMS):
READINGS IN BIBLICAL POETRY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In-depth analysis of selected psalms with special attention to genre, literary style, historical setting and expressions of religious sentiment. Major trends in modern scholarship: the historical approach; form-criticism; modern literary methods.

REQUIREMENTS

Preparation of sources and readings on the syllabus *prior* to each class, before which a short quiz will be given. Familiarity with studies and commentaries in the bibliography below, pp. 4-5. Final examination (class fifteen). Research paper (15-20 pages) on a topic chosen in consultation with the professor. Please bring a תנייך (without English) to each class.

Primary source notations:

* - Crucial source; to be reviewed for every subsequent class

[] - Already seen on a previous assignment

() - Study briefly, mainly for comparison with other sources.

SYLLABUS

CLASS 1: INTRODUCTION; FOUR PHASES OF PSALMS SCHOLARSHIP

CLASS 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT; FORM CRITICISM

Psalms 6*, 38*, 88*, 100, 107*, 116*

Compare: I Sam 1:1-2:10*; Isaiah 38*

מ"ד קאסוטו, ספרות מקראית וספרות כנענית, כרך א, עמ' 20-61

CLASS 3: LAMENT AND THANKSGIVING

Psalms 3*, 13*, 30*, 44*, 54*, 80*

C. Westermann, *Psalms: Structure Content and Message*, 5-60

FOTL (= *Forms of Old Testament Literature*), 5-22

(Westermann and *FOTL* readings to be reviewed for classes 10,12)

עמוס חכם, דעת מקרא, הפירוש למוזמורים ג, ו, נד, בהשוואה לתורת הסוגים (form-criticism)

CLASS 4: THE LAMENT-THANKSGIVING CONTINUUM

Psalms 12, 22*, 28, 31, 40*, 41*

Jonah 2*; II Chronicles 20*

Commentaries: Ibn Ezra, Jonah 2:1

FOTL, Psalms 12, 13

דעת מקרא, Psalm 13 (summary and n. 7)

M. Weiss, *The Bible From Within*, 298-314; 435-444

CLASS 5: CONVENTION VS. CREATIVITY

Psalms 23, 62, 131* (find a title for this genre)

Psalms 27, 39*, 42-43*; (Additional Psalms: 4, 11, 16, 61)

Commentaries: *FOTL*, Psalm 23

M. Weiss, *Bible From Within*, 1-73

אייר הופמן, 'המעבר מייאוש לתקווה במזמורי תחינת היחיד'

CLASS 6: IMAGERY

Weiss, *Bible From Within*, 130-163; Psalm 1

Alonso-Schöckel, "The Poetic Structure of Psalm 42-43"

א.ל. שטראוס, בדרכי הספרות, עמ' 15-21, 66-70, 73-78 (מזמורים כג, קלא)

CLASS 7: THEORY OF NEW CRITICISM

Alter, "Psalms," *Literary Guide to the Bible*, 244-262

Cohen, "The Best of Poetry"

עמוס חכם, דעת מקרא, הקדמה, סעיף ו (דרכי התקבולת המקראית)

CLASS 8: PARALLELISM

Psalm 6. Also test theories of parallelism in Psalms 56, 57, 59, 61, 142

Kugel, *Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 1-58; 287-292

Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 3-26; 62-84

CLASS 9: CLOSE READING OF PSALMS 51, 130

Psalms 7, (17), (26), 51*, 139; [6], 130*

Commentaries: *FOTL*, Psalm 7; *Word*, Psalms 51, 130

Skim: Alonso-Schöckel, *Manual of Poetics*, 95-141; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 251-272

CLASS 10: COMMUNAL LAMENT

Review relevant sections in Westermann and *FOTL* readings from class 3

Psalms [44], 60*, 74, 79, [80], 83, 85*

Jeremiah 14*; Joel 1-2*; [II Chronicles 20]

Commentaries: *FOTL*, Psalm 60; *Word*, Psalm 85

דעת מקרא, Psalm 60 n.12; Psalm 85 n.12

CLASS 11: MYTHICAL ELEMENTS IN THE COMMUNAL LAMENT

Psalms 89, 105-106, 108, 123*, 125*, 126; Ezra 9; Neh 9

M. Weiss, *Bible from Within*, 278-293 (Psalm 74)

פירוש ר' אברהם אבן עזרא לתהילים נא כ-כא ; פט א
מ"ד קאסוטו, ספרות מקראית וספרות כנענית, כרך א, עמ' 62-90

CLASS 12: THANKSGIVING, INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL

Review relevant sections in Westermann and *FOTL* readings from class 3

Westermann, *Psalms: Structure, Content and Message*, 60-80

Individual: [22], [30], 32, [40], [107], [116], 118, 138

Communal: 67, 124*, 129; compare Ps 66; Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 26*; [Jonah 2]

Commentaries: *FOTL*, Psalms 22, 124; *Word*, Psalms 67, 124

CLASS 13: HYMNS

Psalms 29, 33, 65, 113*, 117 (Additional psalms: 145, 146, 147, 149, 150)

C. Westermann, *Psalms: Structure Content and Message*, 81-96

C. Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 15-35

CLASS 14: CULTIC SETTING

A. Psalms 47, 93, (96, 97, 98, 99)

B. Psalms 46, 48, (76, 87)

C. Psalms 8*, 19A, 104; compare Ps 148

D. Psalms (78, [105],) 135-136

Commentaries: *Word*, Psalms 8, 47

FOTL, Psalms 19, 48, 135-136, 137

דעת מקרא, Psalms 48, 135-136 (summaries)

N. Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms*, 70-96; 152-166; 178-188 (Psalms 19, 48, 93)

For the Final (class 15) : H. Gunkel, *Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alonso-Schöckel, Luis. "The Poetic Structure of Psalm 42-43," *JSOT* 1 (1976) 4-21

----- *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (Rome, 1988)

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York, 1985)

----- "Psalms," *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed., R. Alter and F. Kermode (Cambridge, MA, 1987), 244-262. Findings of recent Psalms scholarship; modern literary criticism.

Cohen, Mordechai Z. "'The Best of Poetry': Literary Approaches to the Bible in the Spanish Peshat Tradition," *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 6 (1995/6): 15-57.

Gunkel, Hermann. *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans., T. Horner (Philadelphia, 1967). Abridged version of Gunkel's seminal work. 5th floor library folder ("Gunkel")

Kugel, James. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven, 1980)

Sarna, Nahum. *On the Book of Psalms* (New York, 1993). Essays on selected Psalms; emphasis on historical setting. Uses, but does not confine himself to, form criticism.

Simon, Uriel. *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Sa'adia Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra* (New York, 1991)

Watson, Wilfred G.E. *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield, 1986)

Weiss, Meir. *The Bible from Within* (Jerusalem, 1984). Applies modern literary theory to biblical literature; polemics against form-criticism.

Westermann, Claus. *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. K.R. Crim and R.N. Soulen (Atlanta, 1981). Revises genres identified by Gunkel; outlines their literary structure.

----- *The Psalms: Structure, Content and Message*, trans., R.D. Gehrke (Minneapolis, 1980).

הופמן, יאיר. 'המעבר מייאוש לתקווה במזמורי תחינת היחיד', תרביץ נ"ה (תשמ"ו) 161-172

קאסוטו, משה דוד. ספרות מקראית וספרות כנענית, ירושלים תשמ"ג

שטראוס, אריה לודוויג. בדרכי הספרות, ירושלים תשל"ו

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MODERN COMMENTARIES:

חכם, עמוס. דעת מקרא: ספר תהילים. ירושלים תשל"ט

Dahood, Mitchell. *The Anchor Bible: Psalms* (New York, 1965-70; 3 volumes). Focuses on (and at times overstates) Ugaritic parallels to Psalms.

Gerstenberger, Erhard. *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Vol. XIV: Psalms, Part 1* (Grand Rapids, 1988); *Vol. XV Psalms, Part 2 and Lamentations* (Grand Rapids, 2001). Meticulous application of form criticism.

* *Word Biblical Commentary* (good overall commentary with extensive bibliography):

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|------------|--|
| Volume I | Psalms 1-50, by Peter Cragie (Waco, 1983) |
| Volume II | Psalms 51-100, by Marvin Tate (Dallas, 1990) |
| Volume III | Psalms 101-150, by Leslie Allen (Waco, 1983) |

פירושי הראשונים (מהדורות מיוחדות)

תהילים עם תרגום ופירוש הגאון רב סעדיה, תרגם לעברית: הרב יוסף קאפח (ירושלים תשכ"ו)

פרשן-דתא והוא פירוש רש"י על נ"ך, חלק ג: תהילים, מהדורת יצחק מאהרשען (Maarsen), דפוס צילום, ירושלים תשל"ב

רד"ק: הפירוש השלם על תהילים, מהדורת אברהם דרום, ירושלים תשל"ט

פירוש לספר תהילים חברו רבי מנחם ב"ר שלמה המאירי, מהדורת יוסף חיים הכהן, ד"צ ירושלים תשל"א

מדרשים:

מדרש תהילים המכונה שוחר טוב, מהדורת שלמה באבער (ד"צ ירושלים תשל"ז)

ילקוט המכירי, מהדורת שלמה באבער (ד"צ ירושלים תשכ"ד)

ילקוט שמעוני