

HEBREW BIBLE 1

1.1 Introduction to Biblical Studies and Hermeneutics 1

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Welcome to Hebrew Bible 1! It will be my pleasure to teach the first unit of this course, introducing you all to some of the challenges and complexities of Biblical Studies and Hermeneutics for the first two weeks, and then briefly surveying the varied Literature of the Hebrew Bible for the next two weeks.

During our first two sessions on Biblical Studies and Hermeneutics we will be exploring together the basic principles used by scholars to read and interpret the Scriptures. Texts are never self-explanatory, as we shall discover; and reading Biblical texts, in particular, is an exercise that is fraught with potential pitfalls that requires patience and nuance on the part of the student who seeks to hear the “Word” of God in the words of these ancient manuscripts.

Assignment #1 for Class on Saturday 5th September 2015

Reading

Please read the Introduction and 1st Chapter of *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* by David Jasper (WJK, 2004) from the Required Reading List. [Feel free to read Chapters 2 and 3 if you so wish, but we won’t be discussing this material in any detail. We will be focusing on parts of Chapters 4 - 7 during our second class on 12th September.]

I will also be posting a PDF of Chapter 2 - “*First Things First: The Bible*” from Craig Hill’s *In God’s Time: The Bible and the Future* (Eerdmans, 2002) on the website, which I would like you all to read. Craig Hill’s brief introduction to Biblical Interpretation (in the context of reading eschatological and apocalyptic texts in the Bible) is a fantastic primer on the main issues and challenges of this subject.

Thinking & Responding

Read carefully the following two passages a few times, with an open mind, trying to imagine (if you can) you’ve never read these very familiar extracts before:

1. Genesis 22:1-14 (Hebrew Bible)
2. John 1:1-18 (New Testament)

Bearing in mind what you read in the opening chapter of David Jasper’s book, don’t think so much about what these passages *mean*, but instead consider how they affect you and how you approach them. Think about your visceral reactions to these texts. What presuppositions and prejudices do you bring to the text? Are you reading with a “Hermeneutics of Faith” or a “Hermeneutics of Suspicion”? Jot down some of your responses and reactions, and come ready to discuss your insights and perspectives.

Also, consider some of the other texts in the Bible that you find perplexing, obscure or frightening, and be willing to share some of your Biblical “discomforts” with the group.