

RAPID READING Hebrew Poetry: The Book of Psalms

HDS 1625/CLAS-HEB 130AR

Thursdays 12:00-1:59pm, Location: Swartz G41

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READING THE PSALMS

I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.
(Psalm 30:1-3, KJV)

The book of Psalms presents one of the key poetic texts of Hebrew Bible, showing great variety of style and emotion, from lamentation to praise. This course provides a flexible and group-oriented approach to “rapid” reading larger quantities of biblical Hebrew poetry using a wide selection of psalms, along with selected texts from the prophetic corpus. The focus of the course is on facility in recitation and translation, but also includes a review of vocabulary and advanced grammar, as well as discussion of poetic syntax. Because students come to the course with various backgrounds in classical Hebrew, the assignments, readings, and exams may be individualized, allowing some students to focus more on grammar questions, others on facility in recitation and translation, as needed. This course may be considered preparatory for advanced seminars in both Hebrew Bible narrative and poetry.

Prerequisites

Two years of Classical Hebrew, or equivalent, is recommended, however, course assignments may be adjusted to suit student needs.

Objectives

This course seeks to develop the student’s knowledge of biblical Hebrew through in-depth study in biblical poetry, and to increase facility in reading larger quantities of poetic texts on a weekly basis. Specific goals include:

Read and translate *a broad selection of Psalms* in their entirety.

Develop an understanding of the basics of Hebrew poetic style and syntax.

Improve facility in recitation and sight-reading of Hebrew texts through prepared passages and in-class group translation exercises.

The course does not cover exegetical or theological questions related to these texts and acknowledges that multiple interpretations of the MT are possible, producing multiple acceptable “correct” translations.

Required Texts:

A standard Hebrew Bible text. The BHS is recommended, but other texts may be used with instructor approval.

Elliger, Karl, Wilhelm Rudolph, Adrian Schenker, Donald R Vance, George Athas, and Yael Avrahami. 2014. ***Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia***. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.

For vocabulary building:

Pelt, Miles V. Van, and Gary Davis Pratico. 2019. ***The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic***. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Recommended Texts:

Any standard English-language translation of the Hebrew Bible, such as:

Coogan, Michael David, Marc Zvi Brettler, Carol A Newsom, and Pheme Perkins. 2018. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Fully revised fifth edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Berlin, Adele, and Marc Zvi Brettler. *The Jewish Study Bible*. Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2014.

A standard reference grammar may be useful.

Commentaries

Mowinckel, Sigmund. 1962. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. New York: Abingdon Press.

Gunkel, Hermann, James Muilenburg, and Thomas M. Horner. 1967. *The Psalms: a Form-Critical Introduction*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Crenshaw, James L. 2001. *The Psalms: an Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans.

Ho, Peter C. W. 2019. *The Design of the Psalter: A Macrostructural Analysis*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications.

Resources:

Bible read aloud in Hebrew (<https://mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/ptmp3prq.htm>) or (<https://torahclass.com/audio-bible-in-hebrew/>) or (<https://archive.org/details/HebrewOldTestamentReadByAbrahamSchmueloff>)

Soundcloud: Dr. Steven Anderson

BDB: Brown, Francis, et al. The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic. Hendrickson Publishers, 1979.

HALOT: Holladay, et al. A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Brill, 1971.

ACCORDANCE: <https://accordancebible.com/> -- apparently the HDS library maintains an accordance account for student use. Check with the librarians!

Even-Shoshan Concordance: (Review) <http://hebrewbiblescholar.com/even-shoshan-concordance/> ; https://www.amazon.com/New-Concordance-Bible-Thesaurus-Language/dp/965170098X/ref=pd_lpo_1?pd_rd_i=965170098X&psc=1

Quinta: https://www.amazon.com/Biblia-Hebraica-Quinta-Introduction-Megilloth/dp/3438052784/ref=sr_1_5?keywords=hebrew+bible+quinta&qid=1661708150&s=books&srefix=hebrew+bible+quint%2Cstripbooks%2C102&sr=1-5

Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament: Botterweck, G. Johannes, et al. Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament. Eerdmans, 1974.

Waltke-O'â€™Connor: Waltke, Bruce K., and Michael Patrick. O'Connor. An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax. Eisenbrauns, 1990.

Weingreen: Weingreen, J. A, Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew. 2nd ed., Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1959.

Kutz: Kutz, Karl V., and Rebekah L. Josberger. Learning Biblical Hebrew. Lexham Press, 2018.

Anchor Bible Dictionary and Commentary Series

Assessment and Grading

The focus of the course is on developing comfort and facility in reading larger quantities of Hebrew poetic texts. As such daily reading/study of the texts and class participation are vital.

Participation (50%) Attendance at all class sessions is important for developing reading and translation skills. This includes preparation of the texts as required for comfort in reading the text aloud in Hebrew, followed by translation (without the use of prepared notes). Classes would typically include recitation of a short, prepared passage by each student, and then a group reading and translation of selected passages from the weekly assigned texts (3-10 Psalms, or extracts from Psalms). Students are encouraged to use online recordings of the texts as part of their preparation, and to read the texts slowly with a focus on comprehension and attention to pronunciation and Masoretic markings. Translation of poetry is always difficult; group support and discussion of syntax and vocabulary difficulties is encouraged.

Translation Quizzes (30%) Translation of selected passages from the assigned texts, including short, relevant questions on grammar (midterm and final). These will be take-home quizzes, no set time limit. The final quiz will also include translation of a similar text(s) not covered during the semester.

Recitation Assignments (20%) Two Psalms are to be chosen by the student for memorization and recitation to the class, the first during weeks 4-6 of the semester, and the second during weeks 9-11.

Extra credit options Extra credit questions will be included in all graded assignments. Additional options

(up to 20% of grade) include a class presentation or a short paper addressing historical, exegetical, or translation issues in the assigned texts.

Grading Scale

A standard grading scale will be used: 90-100 (A); 80-90 (B); 70-80 (C), etc.

Weekly Assignments:

Week 1: Psalms 1-2; Sightreading: Psalm 3; Background: 2 Sam 7:8-16; 1 Chron. 16

Week 2: Psalms of Praise: 145-150

Week 3: Psalms 1, 41, 42, 72, 73, 89, 90, 106, 107, 150

Week 4: Exam 1 – Translation and discussion of psalms

Week 5: Psalms of Asaph: 50, 73-77, 79-83; Read 78 in English

Week 6: Psalms of Korah: 42-49, 84, 85; Read 87-88 in English

Week 7: Psalm of Heman: 88; Psalms of Divine Kingship: 93-99; Psalm 23, 51

Week 8: SPRING BREAK

Week 9: Psalms of Ascent: 120-134

Week 10: Exam 2 – Translation and discussion of psalms, weeks 5-9; Recitation

Week 11: Class Favorites: 19, 22, 56, 64, 69, 110, 119:1-16 (Hebrew, rest in English), 137

Week 12: Psalms of Wisdom: 1, 14, 37, 73, 91, 112, 119, 128;

Psalms of Lamentation: 12, 14, 44, 58, 60, 144

Week 13: Exam 3 – Translation and discussion of psalms, weeks 11 and 12; Recitation