

AMES/JWST 356; AMES/JWST555;  
Rel Studies 418;Comp. Lit. 556

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### Ancient Interpretation of the Bible

This is a course about READING; specifically about the different ways in which a single book, the Bible, has been read (and misread) through the centuries and particularly in the ancient and early medieval periods by Jews and Christians. We will also consider the uses to which some contemporary literary theorists have put these ancient modes of interpretation as models and precursors for their own literary interpretation and criticism, but the main emphasis of the course will fall on intensive readings of major ancient Jewish and Christian exegetes, with a view to considering their exegetical approaches historically as well as through the lens of contemporary critical and hermeneutical theory. We will also consider how the respective religious and theological beliefs of these interpreters both shaped *and* were shaped by the ways they read Scripture. As a consequence, this will also be a course about the early development of Judaism and Christianity.

Requirements: Two short papers (5-6 pp.), and either a take-home final or a longer paper due at the end of the semester. And most important: active class participation.

Texts: The following books are available at the Penn Book Center, on 34<sup>th</sup> St. near Sansom:

#### Required:

Augustine, On Christian Doctrine (Bobbs-Merrill)

Rowan Greer, Origen (Paulist)

The Oxford Study Bible (Oxford). Henceforth referred to as OSB

David Winston, Philo (Paulist)

#### Recommended:

H. Chadwick, The Early Church

James Kugel and Rowan Greer, Early Biblical Interpretation (Westminster)

2) Readings, marked on the syllabus with an asterisk, are all in a bulk-pack available at Wharton Reprographics. N.B. The Bulkpack includes a collection of readings from Karlfried Froehlich, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church. The collection is found at the very end of the Bulkpack, and is referred to in the syllabus as Froehlich.

#### Course-Plan

1-2) Sep. 5-10: Introduction and Modern vs. Ancient Exegesis

Genesis 21-22

\*E.A. Speiser, Genesis, on Gen.22, pp.161-66

- \*Rashi on Gen. 22
- \*Augustine, City of God XVI.32
- \*Philo, On Abraham, pp. 85-101

Philo and Allegorical Interpretation

Winston, Philo, pp. 79-95, 137-41 (and notes at end of book).  
Recommended: pp. 1-37.

3-4) Sep. 12-17: Philo

Gen. 5-7; Lev. 18

Winston, Philo, "On the Giants," pp. 61-71 (and notes at end of book).

5-6) Sep. 19-24: Interpretation at Qumran

Gen. 37:1-11; 40-41

Daniel 2; 7.

Habakkuk

\*"Commentary on Habakkuk" (G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, pp. 235-42)

C.A. Newsom, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Jewish Literature," in OSB, pp. 101-111.

Recommended: \*Vermes, Intro. pp. xiii-57

\*L. Schiffman, Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 223-41.

7-8) Sep. 26-Oct. 1: Re-Writing and Translating the Bible

Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10; Zechariah 1:12; Daniel 9:20-27

Exod. 12:8-11; Deut. 16:7; II Chron. 35:10-18.

Exod. 3:7-9; 8: 8:20-24; Isaiah 19.

1 Samuel 12; Ps. 51.

\*"The Genesis Apocryphon" (G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English, pp. 252-59.) Cf. Gen. 5; 12:10-20

Compare the beginning of the Genesis Apocryphon about Noah's birth to \* I Enoch, 106

\*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen. IV-VI (from J. Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature

Recommended: \* James Kugel, The Bible As It Was, pp. 1-35.

9-10) Oct. 3- 8: Midrash (early Rabbinic Interpretation): Legal Interpretation

Kugel and Greer, Early Biblical Interpretation, pp. 13-106.

R. Goldenberg, "Hebrew Scriptures in Early Post-Biblical Judaism," in OSB, pp. 122-128.

\*David Stern, "Midrash," from Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought, ed. A.A. Cohen and P. Mendes-flohr, pp. 613-20.

Exodus 21:22-25; Lev. 24:17-22.

\*"Mekhilta" Tractate Nezikin (Lauterbach ed.), Vol. III: 66-69

Exod. 22; 23:14-20; Deut. 14:3-21.

\* "Mekhilta" Tractate Kaspā, III: 187-96.

\* "Sifra: The Exegetical Rules..." in Froehlich, pp. 30-36. (See note above under Bulkpack.)

\* S. Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: 1950), "Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture," pp. 47-82.

11-12) Oct. 10-15: Midrash: Non-Legal Interpretation

Gen. 1-2.

"Genesis Rabbah" (Porton, 161-223)

Cp. Plato, Symposium 189d-190d (speech of Aristophanes);

Recomm.: A. Altmann, "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends," Jewish Quarterly Review 35 (1944-5), 371-91. (SRR)

\* Eikha Rabbah 4:11 and 3:21 (two parables)

13-14) Oct. 17-22: The Rebellion Against Midrash

\* E. Greenstein, "Medieval Bible Commentaries," (from Back to the Sources, ed. B. Holtz), pp. 213-59.

\* Selections from Karaite Anthology, ed. L. Nemoy

\* Commentary of RaSHBaM on Gen. 22.

15-16) Oct. 24-29: Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament

The Gospel of Matthew 1-4

Galatians 3-4

\* Lamentations Rabbah, pp. 178-79

The Letter to the Hebrews

Kugel and Greer, pp. 109-45.

Chadwick, The Early Church, pp. 1-31, 41-53

17-18) Oct. 31-Nov. 5: Gnostic Exegesis and the Christian Response

\* Marcion, "The Antitheses" (from The Writings of St. Paul, ed. W. Meeks)

\* The Secret Book of John (from The Gnostic Scriptures, ed. Bentley Layton; with introduction, pp. 7-51)

\* "The Letter of Ptolemy to Flora" (from The Gnostic Scriptures, ed. Bentley Layton; with introduction, pp. 306-15)

\* Irenaeus, Selection from Against Heresies in Froehlich, pp. 44-47.

Kugel and Greer, pp. 145-76.

Chadwick, 32-41, 54-93

19-20) Nov. 7-12: The School of Alexandria and Origen

Grant, pp. 52-62

Kugel and Greer, pp. 177-79

Greer, Origen, 1-37 (Introduction); 171-216 (On First Principles, Bk. 4).

Chadwick, 94-115

- 21) Nov. 14: Origen  
 Homily XXVII on Numbers (Greer, 245-69)
- 22) Nov. 19) Passover through the Lens of Judaism and Christianity  
 Exodus 12-13  
 \*Mishnah Pesahim 10  
 \*Pages from the Haggadah (pp. 57-59)  
 Mark 14-16; Matthew 26-28; Luke 22-23; John 1:29; 18:28-19:37;  
 1 Corinthians 11:17-27  
 \*Quotes from In Sacra Pascha, Clement of Alexandria  
 \*Melito, "Homily on the Pascha" (pp. 172-73)
- 23) Nov. 21: The Song of Songs According to Origin and the Rabbis  
 Greer, pp. 217-44 (Prologue to the Commentary on the  
 Song of Songs)  
 \*Commentary to the Song of Songs, pp. 58-62  
 \*Song of Songs Rabbah, pp. 20-30
- 24) Nov. 26: The School of Antioch  
 Grant, pp. 63-72  
 \* Selections from Diodore of Tarsus, in Froehlich, pp. 82-94  
 \* Selections from Theodore of Mopsuestia, in Froehlich, pp. 95-103  
 Chadwick, pp. 192-212
- 25-26) Dec. 3-5: April 17-19: Augustine  
 Grant, pp. 73-82  
 Augustine, On Christian Doctrine  
 Chadwick, pp. 213-236
- 27-28) : Luther and Spinoza  
 Readings to be assigned

David Stern

## Bibliography on Interpretation

Books available in the Semitics Reading Room (Van Pelt 4 West) are marked as (SRR). Articles or chapters which I have xeroxed will also be on the shelf in that room, and are marked as (R); please do not remove them from the room except to make your own copies.

N.B. Essays in Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick, Midrash and Literature (Yale: 1986), are referred to as MaL.

### I. General

P. R. Ackroyd et alia, The Cambridge History of the Bible, 3 Vols. (Hereafter CHB.)

J. Baskin, "Rabbinic-Patristic Exegetical Contacts in Late Antiquity: A Bibliographical Reappraisal," in Approaches to Ancient Judaism, V, ed. W.S.Green (Scholars Press: 1985), 53- 79.

G. Bruns, Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern (Yale, 1991)

F. E. Greenspan, ed., Scripture in the Jewish and Christian Traditions (Denver)

Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick, Midrash and Literature (Yale: 1986) (Hereafter MaL)

R. Palmer, Hermeneutics (Northwestern)

J. Rogers and D. McKim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible

P. Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations (Northwestern)

G. Shapiro and A. Sica, eds. Hermeneutics (U. Mass.)

H. A. Virkler, Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation(Baker)

### II. Philo and Early Greek Allegoresis

R. Howard Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," Representations 20 (1987), 1-24.

D. Boyarin, "This We Know to Be the Carnal Israel," Critical Inquiry 18 (1992), 474-505.

Gerald Bruns, "The Problem of Figuration in Antiquity," in Hermeneutics, ed. G. Shapiro and A. Sica (Amherst: 1984) (R)

Gerald Bruns, "Midrash and Allegory", in R. Alter and F. Kermode, The Literary Guide to the Bible (Cambridge: 1987), pp. 625 -46 (SRR)

James A. Coulter, The Literary Microcosm: Theories of Interpretation of the Later Neoplatonists (Leiden: 1976).

R.P.C. Hanson, Allegory and Event, Chap. 2: "Alexandrian and Hellenistic Allegory" (R)

Jean Pepin, Mythe et allegorie: les origines grecques et les contestations judeo-chretiennes (Paris: 1976)

H.A. Wolfson, Philo (Cambridge, Mass: 1947), Vol. 1, pp. 115- 63.

### III. Qumranic Peshet and Ancient Dream Interpretation

Lou H. Silberman, "Unriddling the Riddle," Revue de Qumran 3 (1961-2), pp. 323-64.

A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 46 (1956), pp. 217-37.

W.H. Brownlee, The Midrash Peshar of Habakkuk (Missoula: 1979)  
Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Oxford: 1985), pp. 443-99.  
Michael Fishbane, "The Qumran Peshar and Traits of Ancient Hermeneutics,"  
Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies I (1977), pp. 97-114.  
S. Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, Chap. II ("The Method of Interpreting Dreams:  
An Analysis of a Specimen Dream")  
Ken Frieden, Freud's Dream of Interpretation (SUNY: 1990)  
M.P. Horgan, Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books (Washington, D.C.:  
1979)

#### IV. Ancient Versions and Translations

J. Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature (Cambridge U. Press:197X?)

#### V. Midrash and Rabbinic Exegesis

D. Boyarin, Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash (Bloomington: 1990)  
G. Bruns, "Midrash and Allegory" MaL  
G. Bruns, "The Hermeneutics of Midrash," The Book and the Text,  
ed. R. Schwartz (Blackwell: 1990)  
J. Faur, Golden Doves with Silver Dots (Bloomington: 1986)  
J. Goldin, "From Text to Interpretation and From Experience" to the Interpreted Text,"  
Prooftexts 3 (1983), pp. 157-68.  
Susan Handelman, The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in  
Modern Literary Theory (Albany:  
1982). Cf. D. Stern, "Moses-side: Midrash and Contemporary Literary Criticism,"  
Prooftexts 4 (1984), pp. 193-204.  
J. Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," MaL, pp. 77-103  
A. Mintz, Hurban (New York: 1984), pp. 49-83 ("Midrash and the Destruction") (R),  
with special emphasis on the examples, esp. on pp. 75-76 and 82.  
S. Rawidowicz, "On Interpretation," in Studies in Jewish Thought (JPS)  
D. Stern, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," Critical Inquiry, 15  
(1988), pp. 132-61.  
D. Stern, Parables in Midrash (Harvard, 1991). Esp. Chap. 1.  
D. Stern, "Midrash and the Language of Exegesis," MaL, pp. 105-  
24.

#### VI. Kabbalistic Exegesis

Harold Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism (New York: 1975), pp. 11-  
92.  
Joseph Dan, "Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah," MaL, pp.127-39.  
Arthur Green, "The Song of Songs in Early Jewish Mysticism," Orim 2 (1987), pp. 47-  
63.  
Moshe Idel, "Infinities of Torah in Kabbalah," MaL, pp. 57.  
Moshe Idel, Kabbalah: New Perspectives (New Haven: 1988), Chapter 9 ("Kabbalistic  
Hermeneutics")  
Betty Roitman, "Sacred Language and Open Text," MaL, pp. 159-75.  
G. Scholem, "The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbalah," Diogenes

79 (1972), pp. 59-80; 80 (1973), pp. 164-94.

Frank Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism," in Arthur Green, Jewish Spirituality, I: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages (New York: 1986), pp. 313-55.

#### VII. Old Testament Exegesis in the New Testament

K. Barrett, "The Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New," CHB I. pp. 377-411

D.A. Carson and H.G.M Williamson, It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture

Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy(Harvard U. Press: 1982)

#### VIII. Early Christian Typology and Allegory

Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York: 1959), pp. 11-76.

J.D. Danielou, From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers, (London: 1960).

Henri de Lubac, Exegese medievale: les quatres sens de l'Ecriture (Paris, 1959-64), 4 vols.

S. G. Sowers, The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews

G Hughes, Hebrews and Hermeneutics

#### IX. Gnostic Exegesis

Harold Bloom, "Criticism, Canon-Formation, and Prophecy," Raritan 3/3 (Winter, 1984), pp. 1-20.

Harold Bloom, The Book of J (New York: 1990)

Birger A. Pearson, "Some Observations on Gnostic Hermeneutics," The Critical Study of Sacred Texts, ed. W.D.O'Flaherty (Berkeley: 1979) (R)

Joel Fineman, "Gnosis and the Piety of Metaphor," The Rediscovery of Gnosticism (Leiden: 1980), I, pp. 289-318

#### X. Origen, Alexandrian Allegory, and the School of Antioch

Elizabeth A. Clark, Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith (New York: 1986), pp. 386-427 ("The Uses of the Song of Songs: Origen and the Later Latin Fathers")

Henri Crouzel, Origen (Harper and Row: 1989), Chap. 4 ("The Interpretation of Scripture")

R.M. Grant, The Letter and the Spirit (London: 1957)

R.C. Hanson, Allegory and Event

Karen Jo Torjesen, Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis (De Gruyter, 1986)

E.E. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Expositions of Origen on Canticles, and the Jewish- Christian Disputation," Scripta Hierosolymitana XXII (Jerusalem: 1971), ed.J. Heinemann and D. Noy.

Burton L. Visotzky, "Jots and Tittles: On Scriptural Interpretation in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures," Prooftexts 8 (1988), pp. 257-70.

M.F. Wiles, "Origen as Biblical Scholar,:" CHB I, pp. 454-89.

M.F. Wiles, "Theodore of Mopsuestia..." CHB I, 489-510.

XI. Augustine and later

Erich Auerbach, "Sermo Humilis," in Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages (New York: 1965), pp. 25-81.

G. Bonner, "Augustine as Biblical Scholar," CHB I, pp. 541-62.

Kenneth Burke, The Rhetoric of Religion (Berkeley: 1970), pp. 1-42; 172-272.

Tzvetan Todorov, Symbolism and Interpretation (Ithaca: 1982), pp. 9-23, 95-170.

J. S. Preuss, From Shadow to Promise: OT Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther (Harvard: 19)

Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (New York: 1952).