

Shanah Heh
Torah Core
Dr. Judith Kates
judkat@comcast.net
617-738-7974

Devarim
Fall, 2008
BIBLE 500

Course Outline

We will work our way through the text of the entire sefer, the last book of Chumash. Each week we will concentrate on a theme or themes central to the distinctive teachings of this book, but we will attempt to accumulate knowledge of the text as a whole, so that we can understand how the themes permeate the book, relate to each other and develop. We will also explore the connections between this sefer and previous books of the Torah, taking seriously its self-definition as both retrospective and prospective teaching.

A constant goal of this class will be to put in regular conversation with each other traditional commentary and modern historical scholarship. To that end you should prepare the section of the sefer assigned each week with 2 regular commentaries: 1) Rashi (since Rashi frequently paraphrases Sifrei Devarim this will also put you in regular touch with the oldest midrashic traditions) 2) either the commentary in the Jewish Study Bible (edited by Berlin and Brettler), by Bernard Levinson, one of the best and most original Deuteronomy scholars working today or the commentary in the JPS Torah Commentary series on Deuteronomy, written by Jeffrey Tigay, also an outstanding contemporary scholar

Each week a section of Devarim will be assigned along with commentary in various forms. After the first introductory class, one or two students each week will prepare to teach part of the class, based on additional reading and investigation of the texts and themes which the entire class will be studying in that particular week.

For your final project you will construct a “deuteronomic” account of your experience preparing for the rabbinate: that is, you will identify and articulate a teaching goal or goals that will shape what you recount of your memories and how you tell your story so as to persuade your readers of the “lessons” (in the broadest sense) you hope to impart. This will be submitted in written form at the end of the last week of classes.

Course Schedule

Sept. 10 Introduction

Jewish Study Bible, Introduction to Deuteronomy (Bernard Levinson)

Robert Alter – Five Books of Moses , Introduction to Deuteronomy, pp. 869-877

2 Kings (Melakhim Bet) 22-23 (parallel in 2 Chronicles 34-35)

for traditional understanding of this narrative, Abarbanel on Melakhim Bet 22:1

Devarim 1: 1- 5

Sept. 17 Devarim 1:1- 3:22

Memory, Re-telling, Re-visioning

Review Exodus 18, Numbers 11: 1- 30

Numbers 13- 14

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, chap. 1, “Biblical and Rabbinic Foundations: Meaning in History, Memory and the Writing of History”

Sept. 24 Va’etchanan 3:23- 4: 43

Moshe- Leader/Teacher- Leader vs Teacher

Rashi on 3:23- 9

Tanchuma Yashan Va’etchanan 1

Devarim rabbah 2:2, 2:3

Note- look also at Deut. 32:48- 52

Oct. 29 Va’etchanan 4:44- 7:11

B’rit- Memory/Re-enactment

Study/Interpretation

Review Exodus 19- 20

Review Alter comments on Deut 5 in his introduction

Study all notes to chap. 5 in Jewish Study Bible

Tigay, JPS Torah Commentary, Excursus 6 “Moses and Monotheism”

Moshe Greenberg, “The Decalogue Tradition Critically Examined” in Ten Commandments in History and Tradition ed. Ben-Zion Segal

Nov. 5 Sh’ma- Deut 6 (compare Deut 11)

LOVE

James Kugel, How to Read the Bible, pp. 353- 355

Jon D. Levenson, Sinai and Zion, “The Wedding of God and Israel,” “The Ever-Renewed Covenant” pp. 75-86

Sifrei 31 , 32(in part)- see Rashi also

Ibn Ezra and Rashbam on 6: 4

Tigay, JPS Torah Commentary, Excursus 10 and 11

Moshe Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1- 11 in Anchor Bible series, introduction pp. 78-81

William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 25.1

Nov. 12 Ekev 7:12- 11:25

"Deuteronomic World View"- Reward and Punishment

Moshe Weinfeld, "Reward and Punishment" in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School"

"YHWH your God chose you as a treasured people" (7:6)"-Chosen-ness
note especially 7: 1-11

10: 12- 22

search a concordance for the root BET-CHET- RESH (bachar) in Torah (i.e. Chumash)

Joel S. Kaminsky, "Election in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: Law and Holiness" in Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election, pp. 95- 105

Golden calf- 9: 6- 10:5

Review Exodus 32- 34

Nov. 19 Re'eh 11: 26- 16: 17

A Theological Treaty

Marc Brettler, How to Read the Bible, pp. 90- 92

Weinfeld, Anchor Bible, pp. 6- 9

Note the framework formed by 11: 29- 30 and 27: 1- 26

Centralization of Sacred Space

Israel Knohl, The Divine Symphony, chap. 5 "Israel's Debate over God's Sanctuary", especially pp. 82- 85 "Priestly Torah vs Deuteronomy"

Nov. 26 Shof'tim 16: 18- 21: 9

Law and Justice

16:20- Rashi and others in Mikra'ot G'dolot on this verse

We will study the intimate and complex relationship between laws in Devarim and the laws given in Exodus 21- 23 (the "Covenant Code"). Use Jewish Study Bible and/or Tigay to determine the mitzvot found in both sources and pick one to

study in detail, reading the language closely and studying both the modern commentary and Rashi and other m'farshim on the relevant verse(s).

Weinfeld, Deuteronomy in Anchor Bible series, pp. 19- 24

Bernard Levinson, "The First Constitution: Rethinking the Origins of Rule of Law and Separation of Powers in Light of Deuteronomy", Cardozo Law Review, vol. 27:4

Dec. 3 Ki Teitzei 21: 10- 25: 19

Women and Family Law

Women's Bible Commentary, chapter on Deuteronomy by Tikva Frymer- Kensky

Ki Tavo 26:1- 29: 8

Personal/National Memory as Ritual

Blessings and Curses

Note: beginning of theme of Torah as a written book 28:58ff

Dec. 10 Nitzavim- Va'yelekh 29:9- 31: 30

Covenant Renewal

Sefer Hatorah Hazeh- Torah and Writing

pay attention through both parshiot to:

KAF- TAV-BET- katav

SHIN-VAV-BET- shuv

SAMEKH-PEH- RESH sefer

Pay special attention to Rashi and [if you can] others on the page on the following verses:

29: 9, 12, 14, 28

30: 3, 6 –look at Sforno [Ramban interprets in messianic vein]

Rashi again on 30: 11, 12, 14

Recommended: Tigay in JPS Commentary- Excursus 28

Notes in the Jewish Study Bible on chapter 31

Ha'azinu- V'zot Hab'rakha 32:1- 33: 29

Poetry

On Ha'azinu study Sifrei- Finkelstein edition, pp. 331- 333 (end at line 3)

Rashi on 32:1

On V'zot hab'rakha study Sifrei –Finkelstein edition- pp. 391- 392 (through line 16)

Dec. 17 Chapter 34

Death of Moshe- Final Chapter of Torah

Prospective and Retrospective

Sifrei Devarim 339- Finkelstein edition, pp. 388- 389

Tanchuma Yashan- Va'etchanan 6

Midrash Petirat Moshe (Jellinek, Beit HaMidrash II)

bBaba Batra 14b- 15a (selected passage)

Nehemia Polen, "Sealing the Book with Tears: Divine Weeping on Mount Nebo and in the Warsaw Ghetto"

Week of Dec. 22

Final Project- Sefer Hatorah Hazeh