

## **GOT 521 OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUNDS**

### **Instructor Information:**

Office Location: 301 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Old Main)  
Phone Numbers: Office – 920-206-2361 Cell and Text – 920-206-8816

### **Required Textbooks**

1. Barry Beitzel, *The New Moody Atlas of the Bible*, new ed. Chicago: Moody, 2009 [you must have the new edition for the course].
2. Philip King and Lawrence Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
3. Students will also do three book reviews. I recommend that you wait to purchase books for the reviews until after the first week of class.
4. Recommended: Edwin M. Yamauchi and Marvin R. Wilson, eds. *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity*. 3 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2014). This three volume set is in production, but it is broader in scope than King and Stager and more theologically conservative.

### **Course Description/Prerequisites:**

A study of the history and literature of the time from Moses to Malachi with an emphasis on the social and political influences affecting the biblical world and other background information necessary for a complete understanding of the Old Testament.

### **Institutional Objectives:** The course addresses the following institutional objectives:

1. Written Communication: Students will write correctly and cohesively with compelling argumentation.
2. Critical Analysis: Students will evaluate concepts from a biblical worldview with logical reasoning and intellectual honesty.
3. Cultural awareness: Students will respond to the dynamics of culture with discernment while showing respect to all people as image-bearers of God.
4. Biblical Ethics: Students will make moral judgments based on biblical principles.

### **Course Goals:**

1. To learn the correct and incorrect uses of archaeological information.
2. To understand the basic geography, and climate of Israel and the ancient world.
3. To understand the issue in debates over the historicity of Genesis 1-11 and the defense of these texts as historical narrative.
4. To appreciate how covenant concepts prevalent in most ancient cultures were used to express the nature of the relationship established by God with Abraham,

Isaac, Jacob and finally national Israel.

5. To understand how the expansion of the great empires (Assyria, Babylon and Persia) affected Israel's history.
6. To start to appreciate the cultural institutions and social influences present in Israel, and the degree to which they may have changed over the millennium of Israel's national history as recorded in the Old Testament.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Given the correct and incorrect uses of archaeological information, students should be able to list the various positions and demonstrate why the correct use is to provide background information, providing that the text of scripture was used as the heuristic grid for such data.
2. Given the course discussion, notes and reading, students should be able to label basic geographical features, roads, and climate patterns in Israel and Mesopotamia.
3. Given the course discussion of Genesis 1-11, students should be able to articulate the reasons that the text's genre is narrative history and give several representative examples from creation science supporting that designation.
4. Given the function of ancient covenants and the specific formulations of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, students should explain how the Pentateuch presents Yahweh as the benevolent king and of Israel.
5. Given the course discussion of Assyria, Babylon and Persia, students should discuss how the fluidity of empire borders and the uneven nature of their expansion influenced Israel's history as presented in the following books: Isaiah, Jonah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.
6. Given the lectures and reading in *Life in Biblical Israel*, students should be able to demonstrate how an understanding of socio-cultural background enhances student understanding of several sample texts.

### **Course Requirements:**

1. **Weekly Notes and Videos:**
  - a. For weeks 1 and 2, read through the course notes as you watch the videos.
  - b. Beginning with week 3, videos are generally recommended, but not required.
  - b. Videos should be played back at 1.25 or 1.5 speed. Students adept at taking notes may wish to watch at 1.5 speed, though it may be too fast to follow.
2. **Tests:** There will be two timed tests over course notes. Tests generally consist of several essays based on the course notes. No notes, books, etc. may be used for tests.
3. **Required Reading:** See the course schedule chart for due dates.
  - a. Barry Bietzel, *The New Moody Atlas of the Bible*, 14-206, 220-24. (195 total pages)
  - b. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 1-390.

#### 4. **Reading Journal**

- a. This assignment is completed in conjunction with the reading in the required texts.
- b. Entries will be made in the MyMaranatha site for this course. To maintain a copy for your personal use, however, I recommend writing your journal in Word, then copying and pasting it into the correct location.

#### 5. **Book Reviews**

- a. Rather than a traditional research paper, each student will complete 3 book reviews. These should be original reviews, and you may not read other reviews on the book in journals.
- b. Read no less than 600 pages for the book reviews. This will bring the total reading in the course to 1,200 pages. If you choose to review longer books, some skimming of the material is acceptable, provided that you still accurately assess the content.
- c. Form Requirements:
  - Reviews should be 5 ½ -7 pages in length.
  - Use subject headings. Do not use a title page. At the top of the first page, give a standard heading, followed by the bibliographic information for the book you are reviewing.
  - Use parenthetical citations with page numbers only for anything that you quote from the book. Use footnotes only if citing a book other than the book you are reviewing.
- d. Content Requirements:
  - Introduction (½ page): Introduce the broad topic that the book addresses and lead into the contribution this particular book seeks to make to the issue.
  - Main Body (4 - 5 pages): Summarize the content of the book.
  - Critique (1-1 ½ pages): Two paragraphs are required. In one paragraph discuss whether or not the book has methodological problems because the authors used background information to skew the interpretation of certain portions of scripture or adopted liberal/critical theological positions. If the book had no methodological problems, discuss why it was methodologically sound (Note: the introductory section of the course notes will help you make the determination regarding how well the book did this). In a second paragraph, give several examples where considering the background information was helpful for your understanding of some portion of the Old Testament. The second paragraph may require additional research in outside sources.
- e. Books for the first review (choose 1):
  - John Currid, *Against the Gods* (160 pages).
  - John Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths* (185 pages).

- f. Books for the second review—people groups and general customs (choose 1):
- Bill T. Arnold and Brent A. Strawn, eds. *The World around the Old Testament: The People and Places of the Ancient Near East* (500 pages: Can skim portions—need not read the whole book)
  - Alfred Hoerth, Gerald Mattingly and Edwin Yamauchi, eds., *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (320 pages).
  - Victor H. Matthews, *The Cultural World of the Bible: An Illustrated Guide to Manners and Customs*. (268 pages)
  - Edwin Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (500 pages: Can skim portions—need not read the whole book).
- g. Books for the third review—specific customs (choose 1):
- Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (166 pages)
  - William Domeris, *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty among Biblical Peasants* (178 pages)
  - Richard Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (342 pages).
  - David Hopkins, *The Highlands of Canaan: Agricultural Life in the Early Iron Age* (260 pages)
  - Nathan McDonald, *What did the Ancient Israelites Eat? Diet in Biblical Times* (100 pages)
  - Jeffrey Niehaus, *God at Sinai* (365 pages).
  - Timothy Willis, *The Elders of the City: A Study of the Elders-Laws in Deuteronomy* (312 pages)
  - Christopher J. H. Wright, *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament* (265 pages).

**Course Grade:** Scale and Breakdown

A 94	B+ 88	C+ 79	D 64	12% Reading/Reading Journal 13% Discussion Forums 35% Exams 40 % Book Reviews
A- 91	B 85	C 76	F 0-64	
	B- 82	C- 73		

1. On the grading scale: “A” indicates that the work was superior in comparison with the general seminary and graduate school population. “B” indicates that the work was good work, on par with that done by the average seminary student. “C” generally indicates that the student grasped the essential concepts vital for the completion of the assignment, but that the work was lacking in some area. “D” and “F” indicate that the student did not complete the assignment at an adequate level.
2. Program Grade Requirements: In order to graduate, a student must earn a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (including a maximum of two Cs) in any MA program, or a minimum grade point average of 2.5 in the M.Div. program.

### 3. Late Penalty

- The standard seminary 4% late penalty applies to all class assignments
- Here is the complete policy: You are now studying at a graduate level; expectations are, therefore, high. The Seminary expects you to perform your academic work in a timely fashion. The development of time management skills while in Seminary will greatly benefit you in the future, both in your personal life and in your ministry. Ministry involves managing numerous activities at one time. You are preparing for a life ministry which will focus primarily on serving people. This demands a serious consideration of your own schedule and the schedules of those whom you serve. To encourage you in the development and strengthening of your time management skills, the Seminary has established a Late Academic Work Policy. This policy is the minimum penalty for work not turned in on time. The professor may impose a greater penalty, but not a lesser. Work not turned in on the day it is due will have its grade reduced 4% for each calendar day that it is late. The Seminary realizes that serious extenuating circumstances, such as a lengthy illness or a death in the family, may prevent some students from completing class projects on time. Requests for appropriate extensions for these types of serious circumstances may be made to the Seminary Academic Senate, via a written petition submitted to the Seminary Office. Extensions will only be given for valid excuses. Everyone is busy; therefore, being busy is not an excuse for an extension. Projects turned in under an allowed extension will not be graded higher than a B.
- Late policy for discussion questions:
  - a. Since answering these questions requires interaction with other students during the week they are assigned, late submissions for discussion questions are not accepted.
  - b. In cases where there is a legitimate emergency, students will be assigned makeup work in the form of a reading with a reading summary.

### 4. **Academic Dishonesty.** Academic dishonesty is a serious offense, and it can exist in many forms. For example, the following would be considered a sample of academically dishonest activities that might occur in this class:

- Sharing advance information regarding the content or answers for a test or quiz.
- Receiving advance information regarding the content or answers for a test or quiz.
- Using a previous student's old tests or quizzes as a study guide for this semester's tests and quizzes.
- Handing in the same paper or substituting a similar paper in more than one class without permission.
- Book Reviews. This course has book reviews instead of a traditional research paper. Your review should be your own original work, and you may not read or consult other reviews of the book, whether from published (a journal) or unpublished (a previous student in the class) sources.
- Submitting as your own, materials that have been enhanced by another.

Academic penalties for academic dishonesty range from an F on the particular evaluation to an F in the course. Also, a range of serious disciplinary penalties may apply.

## **Available Services**

**Academic Success Center.** One source for academic help in any course is the Academic Success Center. If you require specific academic help for any reason contact the Student Success Center located in the Cedarholm Library at academicsuccess@mbu.edu.

**ADA Policy-** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, the law requires that all students with disabilities be given a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Student Success Center director at academicsuccess@mbu.edu.

**Technical Support:** If you need technical support due to problems with ZOOM or the MyMaranatha site, email support@mbu.edu or call 920-206-2322.

**Library Resources:** By clicking on “Library” from within the course website you gain access to the MBU Library. It includes full text articles from most of the best theological journals via the Galaxie database and over 100,000 eBooks.

## Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
Wednesday, May 13	Intro to OT background	Syllabus Quiz, Welcome Post
Saturday, May 16		Videos (1-2-3) and Notes, p. 1-13 King & Stager, 1-19 Beitzel, 14-39 (43)
Tuesday, May 19	Geography	Videos (4-5-6-7) and Notes 14-21 Beitzel, 40-66
Saturday, May 23		Beitzel, 66-86 (45) Discussion 1 – Geography
Tuesday, May 26	Genesis 1-11	Videos (Optional: 8-9-10) Notes, 22-40 Discussion 1 Response
Saturday, May 30		Beitzel, 87-97 (11) Discussion 2 - Enuma Elish
Tuesday, June 2	Genesis 12-50	Discussion 2 Response <b>Book Review 1</b>
Saturday, June 6		Videos (Optional 11-12-13-14a) Notes, 41-53 King & Stager, 259-85 Beitzel, 98-105 (35)
Tuesday, June 9	Exodus-Deuteronomy	<b>Test 1</b>
Saturday, June 13		Videos (Optional: 14b-15-17a) Notes, 54-61 Beitzel, 106-25 Discussion 3 – law comparisons
Tuesday, June 16	Judges Era	Videos (Optional: 17b-18-19-20) Notes, 62-73 Discussion 3 response
Saturday, June 20		Beitzel, 126-44 King & Stager, 85-128, 129-75 (108)
Tuesday, June 23		Videos (Optional: 21-22-23-24) Notes, 73-87
Saturday, June 27		King & Stager, 285-317 (50) King & Stager, 319-81 (62) Discussion 4 – Devotional
Tuesday, June 30	Transition to Monarchy Biblical Wine	Videos (Optional: 25-26-27-28a) Required videos (29-30) Notes, 88-103 and 104-31 Discussion 4 response
Saturday, July 4		Beitzel, 145-58 King & Stager, 20-84 (79)
<p><b>Saturday, July 11: Test 2</b>            Tuesday, July 14: King &amp; Stager 176-258, Beitzel 159-80, (104)  <b>Book Review 2: Saturday, July 18</b>            Sat, July 25 Beitzel 181-206, King &amp; Stager 383-90, (33)  <b>Book Review 3: Saturday, Aug. 1</b></p>		

## **Selected Bibliography of Primary Sources**

*The Amarna Letters*. Edited and translated by William L. Moran. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Driver, Godfrey R., and John C. Miles. *The Assyrian Laws*. Corrected ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1935. Repr., Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Babylonian Laws*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1952-55.

Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., eds. *The Context of Scripture*. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3d ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Richardson, M. E. J. *Hammurabi's Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary*. The Biblical Seminar 73. Semitic Texts and Studies 2. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000.

The Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World is a 35 volume series containing a translations of texts from throughout ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. I suggest that for research in primary sources you begin with *The Context of Scripture*, but it is necessarily selective in what it includes. For a larger selection of the extant ancient texts, this series is excellent. For a complete listing of available volumes, see [http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/Books\\_WAW.aspx](http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/Books_WAW.aspx). Maranatha's Cedarholm Library and Resource Center has a number of these volumes.

## **Selected Bibliography of Secondary Sources**

Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Land of the Bible*. Rev. and enl. ed. Translated by A. F. Rainey. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979.

Arnold, Bill T. and Brent A Strawn, eds. *The World around the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019.

Bendor, Shunya. *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (beit ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy*. Jerusalem Biblical Studies 7. Jerusalem: Simor, 1996.

Block, Daniel I. *The Gods of the Nations*. 2d ed. Evangelical Theological Society Studies. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000.

Borowski, Oded. *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, Reprint ed. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2009.

Bovati, Pietro. *Re-Establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible*. Translated by Michael J. Smith. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 105. Sheffield: JSOT, 1994.

Chirichigno, Gregory C. *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Journal for the



Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 141. Sheffield: JSOT, 1993.

Currid, John. *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013.

Dearman, John A. *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets: The Conflict and Its Background*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 106. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

Dever, William G. *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

Domeris, William Robert. *Touching the Heart of God: The Social Construction of Poverty among Biblical Peasants*. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 466. New York: T&T Clark, 2007.

Faust, Avraham. *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II*. Translated by Ruth Ludlum. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012.

Herzog, Chaim, and Mordechai Gichon. *Battles of the Bible*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2006.

Hoerth, Alfred J., Gerald L. Mattingly and Edwin M. Yamauchi. *Peoples of the Old Testament World*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.

Hoffmeier, James. *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Hopkins, David. *The Highlands of Canaan: Agricultural Life in the Early Iron Age*. The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series, 3. Sheffield: Almond, 1985.

Howard, David M., Jr. and Michael A. Grisanti. *Giving the Sense*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003.

Kitchen, Kenneth A. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003.

Matthews, Victor H., and Don C. Benjamin. *The Social World of Ancient Israel 1250-587 BCE*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993.

Niehaus, Jeffrey J. *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. *God at Sinai: Covenant & Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*. Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995.

Oswalt, John N. *The Bible among the Myths*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

- Otwell, John H. *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Woman in the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977.
- Paul, Shalom M. *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law*. Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 18. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970.
- Vaux, Roland de. *Ancient Israel*. Translated from the first corrected French ed. by John McHugh. 2 vols. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965.
- Walton, John H. *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2006.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978.
- Walton, John H., Victor H. Matthews and Mark Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000
- Westbrook, Raymond, and Bruce Wells. *Everyday Law in Biblical Israel*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2009.
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