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Introduction to Miqra'ot Gedolot II

Objectives of the Course

This course is a continuation of Bible 6307; it continues to introduce students to medieval Jewish Biblical exegesis. During the semester students will concentrate on: a) developing skills in reading medieval commentaries (comprehension and recitation will be stressed!); b) understanding the methodologies and exegetical goals of each exegete; c) gaining an appreciation for the commentators in their own historical context. We will also continue to explore “the religious significance of the peshat.”

Requirements of the Course

1. Preparation for class, recitation and participation in class discussions [30% of final grade]. Students should prepare the assigned texts for each class, according to the guidelines from last semester.

***Students should come to both class and tutorials ready to recite and translate the day's assigned readings, if called upon.

2. Mid-term [20% of final grade]. The exam will consist of 1–2 texts to translate, with additional questions asked regarding each text. Details about the exam will be distributed one week prior to the test.

3. Written Assignment [20% of final grade]. Details will be distributed some time after the beginning of the semester.

4. Final exam [30% of final grade]. Although the exam will consist primarily of texts to translate, it will pertain also to historical and methodological concerns. A study guide for the final will be distributed towards the end of the semester.

Reading Material

Students are required to bring to each class:

1. A Hebrew Bible; I recommend the small Koren edition for the clarity of its typeface, its convenient size, and its low cost.
2. A Miqra'ot Gedolot and/or copies of the assigned commentaries for the day.

***Please note: no English Bibles or translations of commentaries may be brought to class. You must come into class prepared to read only from a relatively unmarked Hebrew text!

All secondary readings may be found on Blackboard; all students must have valid JTSA email addresses and be able to access the Blackboard system.

Recommended Editions

Students are encouraged to use the *מקראות גדולות הכתר* for all texts for which the *כתר* has been published; for other texts, students may use either *תורת חיים* and other texts published by Mossad Harav Kook (e.g., Rabbenu Bahya) or *מקראות גדולות המאור*.

Sessions

Fridays: January 25; February 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 (!); March 7, 14, 28; April 4, 11; Tuesday, April 15, 29

Tutorial Sessions

Tuesdays: January 22, 29; February 5, 12, 19, 26; March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 8; Friday, May 2

For the regular sessions on April 15 & April 29, the two sections of Bible 6308 will meet together; for the tutorial on May 2, both classes will meet at the same time — but each will meet separately with its own tutor. Stay tuned for classroom information for those dates!

***Please note: In this syllabus, readings that are to be prepared for Friday sessions are listed under the “Commentaries” line 1; readings that are to be prepared for Tuesday tutorials are listed on line 2. Students are responsible for understanding all texts listed in the syllabus, and being able to generate reasonable English translations of them.

Session 1 (January 25): RABBI MOSHE BEN NAHMAN (RAMBAN)Reading:

1. Yaakov Elman, "Moses Ben Nahman/Nahmanides (Ramban)," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Volume I: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages*, edited by Magne Saebo, pp. 416-432. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.

Commentaries:

1. Introduction to Genesis
2. Genesis 11:32; 12:3, 10; 32:26

Session 2 (February 1): RAMBAN (continued)Commentaries:

1. Introduction to Genesis (continuation); Genesis 24:1
2. Exodus 4:9; Leviticus 16:1; Introduction to Deuteronomy

Session 3 (February 8): RAMBAN (continued)

2. Numbers 15:22 [you may wish to prepare this passage in conjunction with Ibn Ezra's commentary on Numbers 15:27 and Milgrom's Excursus #35 in the NJPS Torah Commentary on Numbers]; Exodus 33:6; Exodus 38:8; if there's time go back and do Exodus 37:8

Session 4 (February 15): RABBENU BAHYA BEN ASHERReading:

1. Efraim Gottlieb, "Bahya ben Asher," *Encyclopedia Judaica*
2. Frank Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism," in Arthur Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages*, 313-355.

Commentaries (Handout):

1. Introduction to the Torah; אַחֲרֵי מוֹת to פְּתִיחַתָּא

2. Genesis 1:1; Leviticus 10:1–2; 16:1

Session 5 (February 22): RABBENU BAHYA (continued)

Session 6 (February 29): RABBI YOSEF KARA

Reading:

1. Avraham Grossman, “The School of Literal Exegesis in Northern France,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Volume I: From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages*, pp. 321-371.
2. Robert Harris, “Contextual Reading” in *Discerning Parallelism*, 15-34.

Commentaries:

1. Rashi on Genesis 24:60; then read Rashbam on the same verse; Rashi on Genesis 19:9; 1 Samuel 1:17–18; Isaiah 5:8–10 (excerpts)
2. Judges 5:4; 1 Sam. 1:1–3; 1 Sam. 9:9; Isaiah 1:18

Session 7 (March 7): RABBI YOSEF KARA (continued)

Session 8 (March 14): RABBI ELIEZER OF BEAUGENCY

Reading:

1. Review Robert Harris, “Contextual Reading” in *Discerning Parallelism*, 15-34

Commentaries:

1. Introduction to Isaiah/Isaiah 1:1; Introduction to Ezekiel; Ezekiel 1:1
2. Isaiah 30:15–16; 5:1 (ד“ה אשירה נא לידידי); 7:1; Ezekiel 3:12

Session 9 (March 28): R. ELIEZER (continued)

Session 10 (April 4): RABBI YOSEF BEKHOR SHOR

Reading:

1. Review Robert Harris, “Contextual Reading” in *Discerning Parallelism*, 15-34

2. Sarah Kamin, "The Polemic Against Allegory in the Commentary of Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor" in *Jews and Christians Read the Bible*, 73-98

Commentaries:

1. Numbers 12:8; 16:1; 20:8; Exodus 34:26 (see Exodus 24:19; Deuteronomy 14:21)
2. Genesis 1:2-3; 12:1-2, 10, 11-13

Session 11 (April 11): RABBI YOSEF BEKHOR SHOR (continued)

Session 12 (April 15): RASHI ON PSALMS

Reading:

1. Gruber, Mayer I. *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms*. Vol. 18, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004, 127-135.
2. Signer, Michael A. "King/Messiah: Rashi's Exegesis of Psalm 2." *Prooftexts* 3, no. 3 (1983): pp. 273-278.
3. Grossman, Avraham. "The Commentary of Rashi on Psalms and the Jewish-Christian Polemic." In *Studies in Bible and Education Presented to Professor Moshe Abrend*, edited by Dov Rappel, pp. 59-74. Jerusalem: Touro College, 1996 (Hebrew).

Commentaries (Handout):

1. Rashi's introduction to Psalms; Psalms 2; 21; TBA
2. Psalms TBA

Session 13 (April 29): RASHI ON PSALMS (continued)