Course Introduction

The course “**Old Testament 1**” includes the general introduction to the Old Testament (OT) as well as the special introduction into individual books of the Old Testament. The general introduction in this course covers the following areas: the languages and the text of the OT, historical and geographical context, basic introduction into interpretation and approaches to the Old Testament, the questions related to the OT canon. The special introduction covers the books of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. Students will acquire the following knowledge and capabilities:

* Practical knowledge of individual writings of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets; acquaintance with their literary characteristics: structure of each individual book, contents and literary features of the books and their respective parts (literary forms, genres), knowledge of literary-theological motifs, knowledge of the canonical context of given biblical books, introductory knowledge of the historical context and the theories of origin (authorship) of the books, knowledge of main approaches to, and interpretation of, the books of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets.
* Students will be able to work with the assigned text of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets, that is, after reading it they are able to recognize its literary forms and genre, and identify characteristic expressions and main motifs, they are also able to place the text in the broader context of the given biblical book

## Course Requirements

The final exam consists of three parts, student must successfully pass each of the three parts of the exam:

1. General introduction to the Old Testament, namely: the basic concepts and terminology, historical and geographical context, the languages of the Old Testament, the text of the Old Testament, the issues relating to the OT canon.
2. Special introduction to the Old Testament, covering the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. This part of the exam requires the knowledge of the content of individual books of the Old Testament, knowledge of their structure, literary characteristics and theological emphases; it also includes basic orientation in the hypotheses of origin of the books and their collections, and of possible specific issues relating to individual books.
3. Critical interpretation of a biblical text. For this part of the examination the student prepares the critical interpretations of selected biblical studies by recent authors, as given below under individual biblical books. Students are expected to get acquainted with all of the assigned studies. They will be asked about one or two of them during the exam.

## Literature

Students will find most of the required information in the three introductory textbooks.

Kaminsky, Joel S., and Joel N. Lohr. *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners: A Jewish and Christian Introduction*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2015.

Rendtorff, Rolf, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press 1991.

Ska, Jean Louis. *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2006.

Other reading is assigned from supplementary literature below, this concerns mostly the issues of general introduction to the Old Testament / Jewish Bible:

Bandstra, Barry L. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. 4th ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth/ Cengage Learning, 2009.

Boadt, Lawrence. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.

Brotzman, Ellis R., *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker 1994.

Brueggemann, Walter, and Tod Linafelt. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*. 2nd ed. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.

Coogan, Michael David. *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Goldingay, John, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Exploring Text, Approaches and Issues*, Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic 2015.

## Organization of topics

1. Introduction to the Bible and the Old Testament
2. Old Testament historical and geographical context
3. Text of the Old Testament, ancient versions
4. The biblical canon(s)
5. Introduction to the Pentateuch
6. Genesis
7. Exodus
8. Leviticus
9. Numbers; Deuteronomy
10. Joshua; Judges
11. The Books of Samuel
12. The Books of Kings
13. Pentateuch; Deuteronomistic History: the origins and the canonical form

# Introduction to the Bible and the Old Testament

## Overview

* Bible – basic concepts, terminology (various perspectives on the Bible, Jewish and Christian structuring of the Bible, the languages of the Old Testament)
* Modern Approaches to the Bible
* Overview of contents of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets

## Comment

Students get acquainted with basic concepts relating to the Bible, specifically to the Old Testament. Various perspectives on the Bible are introduced, such as “Bible as literature”, “Bible as Sacred Writing”, “Bible as a Cultural Phenomenon”. Students are introduced in various concepts of the Bible in different religious traditions, especially to the difference between the Old Testament in Christianity and Tenak in Judaism. Various approaches to reading the Bible are explained with reference to basic hermeneutical concepts. Main characteristics and aspects of Old Testament languages (Hebrew and Aramaic) are also introduced. Brief overview of the contents of relevant biblical books is provided as well.

## Literature for individual study

Goldingay, *An Introduction*, 12–21.

Kaminsky and Lohr. *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 1–42.

## Verifying comprehension

1. What does “Bible” mean in different contexts? What is the difference between the “Old Testament” and the “Tanak”?
2. What are differences between the Roman-Catholic and the Protestant Bible?
3. What are some characteristics of Hebrew and Aramaic?
4. What is the “Masoretic text”?
5. What are main points in the Jewish understanding of and approach to the Jewish Bible?
6. What are some “Jewish” aspects of Jesus’ understanding of the Scriptures? In which way Paul’s interpretation of the Old Testament was significant for the Church?
7. What were some important points in the history of Christianity as far as the understanding of the Old Testament?
8. What are main points of the Documentary Hypothesis?
9. What is the contribution of the holistic approaches to the Bible?

# Old Testament Historical and geographical context

## Overview

* Overview of geography of the “Land of the Bible”
* The problem of beginning of history of ancient Israel, the nature of Bible as a historical source
* From Solomon temple to the fall of Samaria
* Judah: from the fall of Northern Kingdom to the Babylonian Exile
* The Exile and the Second Temple period until the end of the Persian period
* From Alexander the Great to the Roman rule

## Comment

Students get an overview of the main periods in the history of Israel. They understand the biblical periodization of history in the context of history of Ancient Near East. They know the most important dates (the fall of Samaria, the beginning and the end of the Babylonian Exile, of the Persian period, the Maccabean revolt). Also, the main geographic features of Syria-Palestine – the Land of the Bible – are introduced.

## Literature for individual study

Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament*, 10–14.

Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, 33–36.

Coogan, *The Old Testament*, 22–32.

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 1–6.

## Verifying comprehension

1. Describe geography of the Land of the Bible. What are the natural borders? What are its main north-south zones?
2. What are the important stages in the Old Testament story line?
3. How does the biblical story relate to the modern view of history of Ancient Near East? Include the most important dates.
4. From which century do we have some external historical data relating to the accounts in the Old Testament (e.g. persons in the Bible known from other sources)?
5. Why is it difficult to uncover the earliest history of Israel by modern critical historiography?
6. What is the Mesha Stela, why is it important?

# Text of the Old Testament, Ancient Versions

## Overview

* Text of the Old Testament
  + History of the text of the Old Testament, theories of the textual development
  + Importance of the Dead Sea scrolls (Qumran)
  + Textual criticism: basic concepts
* Ancient versions of the Old Testament
  + Septuagint, its importance and its later revisions
  + Latin versions (Vulgate)
  + Aramaic and Syriac versions (Targumim, Peshitto)

## Comment

In this lesson students get acquainted with the basic concepts of Old Testament textual criticism. They learn about the Hebrew text of the Old Testament (especially the Masoretic text), also about the Samaritan Pentateuch and about the Qumran texts. Most important ancient versions of the Old Testament are introduced: the Greek Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, Aramaic Targums and the Syriac Peshitto.

## Literature for individual study

Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, 17–21, 37–96, 107–121.

## Verifying comprehension

1. Why is the textual criticism needed? What is its goal? What are the specific issues in the OT textual criticism?
2. What were the most important features in the transmission of the OT text prior to 300 B.C.E.?
3. Why is the period between 300 B.C.E. and 135 C.E. very important in the history of the transmission of OT text?
4. What are so called “Dead Sea Scrolls”? What has been their importance for our understanding of the transmission of the OT text?
5. What is the Masoretic text? What are the important manuscripts of MT?
6. Explain the following terms: Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, Targum, Peshitta, Vulgate.

# The biblical canon(s)

## Overview

* What is the canon?
* Apocrypha, Deuterocanonical Books, Pseudepigrapha
* Origins of the Hebrew Jewish Bible
* Development of the Old Testament Canon
* The Canon in the Perspective of Dead Sea Scrolls

## Comment

The expression “canon” refers to the closed and authoritative collection of writings as defined by the specific community. The development of the biblical canon is closely tight to its function within respective communities. The current Jewish Bible reflects the development, during which the Torah became the first authoritative collection, later accompanied by the collection of Prophets, and even later by the Writings. Somewhat parallel development in the Greek-speaking Jewish diaspora led to the formation of the order reflected in the Septuagint: The Law and the Historical Books, Poetic and Wisdom Books, Prophets, including some books, which were not part of the Hebrew collection. This order has been appropriated by predominantly Greek speaking early Christain Church, while the extent of the Christian Old Testaemnt canon remained and open issue until the time of reformation and the Council of Trent.

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 288–291.

Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament*, 473–489.

Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*,.16–20.

## For further reading

Sanders, James  A. “Canon: Hebrew Bible.” In *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman, 1:837-852.

## Verifying comprehension

1. Explain the concept of “canon”.
2. Explain the terminology regarding deuterocanonical books, apocrypha, pseudepigrapha.
3. What were the stages in the formation of the Hebrew Jewish Bible? What are some ancient sources, which refer to this process?
4. How was the Christian Old Testament formed as canon?

# Introduction to the Pentateuch

## Overview

* The origin of the word Pentateuch
* Tetrateuch, Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch?
* Canonical context of the Pentateuch
* Some literary problems of the Pentateuch

## Comment

The first section of the Old Testament is called Pentateuch. It consists of five more or less separate books each with its own title, which, however, together form a unique literary work. The Pentateuch tells a story from the creation of the world up to the point, when Israel is standing at the border to the Promised Land, basically concluding with the report of Moses’s death. Besides telling the story, the Pentateuch is also characteristic for its extended legal and legal-cultic passages. The Pentateuch shows marks of complex composition in the process of its coming into the being, at the same time it presents interesting literary and theological plan.

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, The Old Testament, 6–10, 77–88, 131–132.

Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch,* 1–15, 53–75.

## For further reading

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 51–53.

## Verifying comprehension

1. Explain the following terms: “Pentateuch”, “Enneateuch”, “Tetrateuch”, “Hexateuch”.
2. What are the main reasons, according to Ska, to keep thinking about the Pentateuch as a distinct part of the Bible?
3. What is the explanation of so-called “doublets” or “triplets” in the Pentateuch, for example Gen 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–3:24 or Gen 12:10–20, 20:1–18, 26:1–11?
4. What kind of slightly different literary problem is identified in the Flood Narrative (Genesis 6-9)?

# Genesis

## Overview

* Genesis: Literary, historical and theological introduction

## Comment

Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch. Its first part (Gen 1–11) is called the *Primeval History.* It tells the story about the very beginnings of the world and the humankind, both being God’s creation. The second part (Gen 12–50) is called the *Patriarchal Narratives*, since it contains the stories about the ancient fathers (patriarchs) of the people of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons. The patriarchal narratives can be understood as forming the prologue to the history of the people of Israel.

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 6–10, 77–88, 132–139.

## For further reading

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 55–64.

## Biblical texts for the final exam

Students are expected to have read the whole book of Genesis. However, emphasis during the exam will be on the following sections:

Gen 1-3 (creation, the human fall)

Gen 6:5–9:17 (the Flood)

Gen 12:1–3 (Abram’s call)

Gen 15 (Lord’s covenant with Abram)

Gen 18:1–15 (Epiphany at Mamre)

Gen 22:1–19 (God testing Abraham)

Gen 28:10–22 (Epiphany in Bethel)

Gen 32:23–33 (Jacob wrestling at Jabok)

Gen 37 (Joseph sold to Egypt)

Gen 45:1–13 (Joseph meets with his brothers)

Gen 50:15–31 (Joseph reconciles with his brothers)

## Verifying comprehension

1. What is the overall structure of Genesis? What is the content of its main parts?
2. Compare two creation accounts in Genesis? What are the differences, what are the common motifs? What are traditionally the original literary sources behind these two versions of creation story?
3. The idea of humans being created in God’s image is expressed in: (choose the correct answer(s)):
   1. Gen 1:26–27
   2. Gen 2:7
   3. Gen 3:17–19
   4. Gen 5:1
4. What is the content of the covenant between God and the humankind after the Flood (Gen 9:8–17)?
5. What were the promises given by the Lord to Abram on his call (Gen 12:1–3)?
6. In Gen 15 we read about the special covenant ritual concerning God and Abram. What is the specific content of the covenant, what promises or predictions does it contain, and what are the aspects of the ritual?
7. What was Sarah’s reaction with regard to the announcement of her giving birth to Abraham’s son in her old age?
8. Where in Genesis do we read about the land of Moriah?
9. What was the content of Jacob’s dream vision and audition in Bethel? What was Jacob’s reaction?
10. When wrestling with the Unknown at Jabok, Jacob asks for two thing. Which are they?
11. What are two reasons for hatred of Joseph’s brothers towards Joseph according to Gen 37?
12. What is the theological explanation of brotherly conflict provided by Joseph (see Gen 45:1–15; 50:15–21)?

## Enjoying biblical interpretation

Read the following chapter on the story of Cain and Abel by the British biblical scholar Walter Moberly (Durham). Write three ideas you have found most important. Write a question or a critical point with regard to the main argument of Moberly's interpretation.

Moberly, R. W. L. “Genesis 4: Cain and Abel.” In *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*, 88–101. Old Testament Theology. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

# Exodus

## Overview

* Exodus: Literary, historical and theological introduction

## Comment

The book of Exodus is the second book of the Pentateuch. It tells the story of Israel’s multiplication in Egypt, about the oppression of Israel by the Egyptians, and how God led Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness. After arriving at Mount Sinai, God makes a covenant with Israel. The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) are part of this covenant, as well as other laws and instructions. Israel breaks the covenant during the golden calf incident, so it must be renewed by God through Moses mediation. The narrative culminates, when God descends from the top of Mount Sinai to the mobile sanctuary, which is built according to God’s instructions. The book of Exodus can be structured as follows:

1. Israel in Egypt: God versus Pharaoh (1:1–15:21)
2. “On the Road” Through the Wilderness (15:22–18:27)
3. Israel at the Mountain of God: Covenant and Worship (19:1–40:38)

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 10–14, 88–94, 139–144.

## For further reading

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 65–75.

## Biblical texts for the final exam

Students are expected to have read the whole book of Exodus. However, emphasis during the exam will be on the following sections:

Exod 2:1–10 (Moses’ Birth)

Exod 3:1–4:17 (Moses’ Call)

Exod 7:1–12:42 (The Plagues, Passover, Exodus from Egypt)

Exod 14:1–31 (Crossing the Sea of Reeds)

Exod 19:1–19 (Sinai Theophany)

Exod 20:1–17 (Decalogue)

Exod 21:1–11 (The Case of a Hebrew Slave)

Exod 24:1–11 (Ratification of Sinai Covenant)

Exod 32–34 (The Golden Calf and the Covenant Renewal)

## Verifying comprehension

1. What are the main sections of Exodus?
2. How does the Exodus narrative explain the name “Moses”?
3. The story about Moses’s call speaks about “this mountain (Exod 3:12), by which is meant (choose the correct answer(s))
   1. Mount Sion, as a city of a future Davidic king.
   2. Mount Hermon, as a boundary of the Promised Land.
   3. Sinai/Horeb, as a place of worship, to provide a “sign” for Moses.
4. Give at least five of the “plagues” against Egypt.
5. What are the words, by which Moses encourages the Israelites on the shore of the Sea of Reeds, as the pharaoh’s army is approaching?
6. According to Exod 19, how were the Israelites to prepare for the Sinai theophany? What were the outer characteristics of the theophany?
7. What is the reason for keeping the sabbath according to the Exodus version of the Decalogue? What other biblical text can be found behind this explanation?
8. What is the so-called “Book of Covenant” in Exodus?
9. What were the main parts of the covenantal ritual in Exod 24? What kind of extraordinary event took place after the ritual?
10. What was the difference in the situation of a Hebrew male slave versus the Hebrew female slave according to Exod 21:1–11?
11. What was the role of the Levites during the golden calf episode?
12. After the golden calf incident Moses asks God for something (Exod 32–33)… What is it?
13. What happens at the end of Exodus?

## Enjoying biblical interpretation

Graham Davies is an Old Testament scholar from Cambridge. In the following chapter he presented a nice reflection on the book of Exodus. Read it and write three ideas you have found most important. Write a question or a critical point with regard to the main argument of Moberly's interpretation.

Davies, Graham I. “The Theology of Exodus.” In *In Search of True Wisdom: Essays in Old Testament Interpretation in Honour of Ronald E. Clements*, edited by Edward Ball, 137–52. JSOT Supplement Series 300. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

# Leviticus

## Overview

* Leviticus: Literary, historical and theological introduction

## Comment

The book of Leviticus may be seen as the center of the Pentateuch. It deals with the question of God’s Presence in Israel from the cultic and priestly perspective. Usually it is structured according to supposed collections of instructions:

1. Sacrificial Laws (1:1–7:38)
2. Priestly Instructions (8:1–10:20)
3. Laws on Clean and Unclean (11:1–15:33)
4. The Day of Atonement (16:1–34)
5. Holiness Code (17:1–26:46)
6. Additional Laws (27:1–34)

Some scholars (Rendtorff is among them) doubt, that the “Holiness Code” creates a distinctive part in the structure of the book. Consequently they suggests alternative structures.

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 94–105, 144–147.

Ska, Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch, 40–52.

## For further reading

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 77–83.

## Biblical texts for the final exam

Students are expected to have read the whole book of Leviticus. However, emphasis during the exam will be on the following sections:

Lev 1:1–17 (The Law of Burnt Offering)

Lev 11:1–47 (Clean and Unclean Animals)

Lev 16:1–34 (The Ritual of Atonement)

Lev 19:1–19 (“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”)

Lev 25:1–17 (Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee)

## Verifying comprehension

1. What are the main legal collections in Leviticus according to Rendtorff? What is his view on the so-called “Holiness Code”?
2. Describe main phases of the burnt offering according to Lev 1:1–17.
3. Give examples of three clean and three unclean animals. What were the specific prohibitions with regard to the unclean animals?
4. What procedures were part of the Ritual of Atonement according to Lev 16? What was the main purpose of the ritual?
5. What should be the reason for the sanctification (or holiness) of the Israelites according to Lev 19:1–19? What specific areas of life are explicitly mentioned in this text?
6. What is the relationship between the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee in Lev 25? What was characteristic for these special years?
7. What are some differences in similar laws in the legal codes of the Pentateuch? Describe on specific cases, for example the law regarding the slaves, the Decalogue, or other legal texts.

## Enjoying biblical interpretation

The *Purity and Danger* by Mary Douglas, first published in 1966, became one of the most influential books in the humanities. The chapter devoted to the concept of purity in Leviticus has exercised similar influence in the area of biblical studies. Even though certain aspects of Douglas’ theory have been criticized by other scholars, and later also by Douglas herself, it remains a “must read” for all serious students of the Bible and religion in general. Read it, and try to summarize Douglas’ main points.

Douglas, Mary. “The Abominations of Leviticus.” In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.*, 42–58. London: Routledge, 1984.

# Numbers, DEUTERONOMY

## Overview

* Numbers: Literary, historical and theological introduction
* Deuteronomy: Literary, historical and theological introduction

## Comment

The fourth book of the Pentateuch is called Numbers. It describes preparation for the departure of Israel from Mount Sinai (Num 10:10 marks the end of so-called “Sinai Pericope” stretching from Exod 19:1 to Num 10:10). After the departure the key moment is Israel’s refusal to enter the Promised Land (13:1–14:45). As a result, God destines the whole generation to finish their lives wandering in the desert; it will only be the new generation, that will enter the Promised Land. Typical for Numbers are various lists and counts, and the book itself can also be structured according to two censuses (cf. Num 1:2 and 26:2), by which we get two, admittedly uneven parts. The Numbers is a book of many genres, it includes narrative, poetry, law… The main theme is the movement towards the Land, despite the failure of Israel.

The last book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, is presented as a final speech of Moses to Israel just before the people enters the Promised Land. By this, the formative narrative and law for Israel is sealed. The narrative frame of Deuteronomy presents Moses speaking to Israel “in the land of Moab” (1:5). Towards the end of the book Moses gives the leadership over to Joshua, in the last chapter Moses dies.

Deuteronomy can be structured according to the editorial notes referring to Moses’ speeches to Israel. The core of the book is so called Deuteronomic Code (12–26)

1. The Story of the First Generation (1–25)
2. The Story of the Second Generation (26–36)

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 14–20, 147–157.

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 85–99.

## Biblical texts for the final exam

Students are expected to have read the whole book of Numbers. However, emphasis during the exam will be on the following sections:

Num 1:1–54 (The First Census)

Num 10:11–36 (Leaving Sinai)

Num 13–14 (Spies Sent to Canaan)

Num 22–24 (Balák a Bileám)

Deut 4:1–19 (The Significance of the Commandments)

Deut 6:1–9 (Shema Yisrael)

Deut 8 (Living in the Promised Land: Gratitude and Temptation)

Deut 12:1–14 (The One Place of Worship)

Deut 17:14–20 (The Law for the Kings of Israel)

Deut 30:11–14 (“The Word Is Very Near to You”)

Deut 30:15–20 (“Choose Life…”)

## Verifying comprehension

1. How can the book of Numbers be best structured?
2. What kind of report about Canaan brought the spies to the Israelites (Num 13)? What was the reaction of the people and of other involved characters?
3. What are the main characters in the Balaam narrative, and what is the plot of the narrative?
4. What is the formal structure of Deuteronomy? What is its core part?
5. Deut 4:1–19 reminds the readers/listeners of the importance of commandments given at Sinai. What are some of the emphases of this text?
6. What is part of the *Shema Yisrael* text in Deut 6:1–9?
7. According to Deut 12, at what point in time should the worship in Israel take place only on one chosen place? Why was this important for the authors of Deuteronomy?
8. What are main points in the royal agenda according to Deut 17:14–20? What possible royal tasks are not mentioned in Deut 17:14–20?
9. What kind of theology of Divine commandments (or of Divine law, resp. word of God) is expressed in Deut 30:11–14?
10. What kind of punishment threatens Israel in case they do not follow God’s commandments after settling in the Promised Land (cf. Deut 8 and Deut 30:15–20)?

## Enjoying biblical interpretation

The problem of violence is a difficult theological issue in Old Testament theology. Why is violence part of the God-created world? Why God allows violence to be part of the community of his people? Why is violence even part of the legal system? Viktor Ber offers a view on violence in legal procedures in his chapter on Deuteronomy 16:18–17:13. What are the main ideas of Robert Cover, which Ber applies to the biblical legal texts? Have you found his explanation of violence in legal procedures persuasive?

Ber, Viktor. “Violence in Legal Procedures (Deut 16:18–17:13).” In *Nomos and Violence: Dimensions in Bible and Theology*, edited by Viktor Ber, 63–75. Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel / Contributions to Understanding the Bible 35. Zürich: LIT, 2019.

# Joshua; JUDGES

## Overview

* Former Prophets: An Introduction
* Joshua: Literary, historical and theological introduction
* Judges: Literary, historical and theological introduction

## Comment

Joshua is the first book in the corpus of the Former Prophets in the Jewish canon (Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings). In the Christian Bible the book also starts a new part within the canon, the so-called “Historical books” (sometimes the Pentateuch is also considered as part of Historical books). Contrary to the Former Prophets The Historical books include also the book of Ruth (inserted between the Judges and the 1 Samuel), following the 2 Kings the Historical books in the Christian canon include other books. Similar to the Pentateuch, the individual books of the Former Prophets are on one hand distinct books each on its own, on the other hand they are in many ways interconnected. Still within this corpus, the books of Joshua and Judges are relatively independent, while the two books of Samuel as well as the two books of Kings are more interrelated. In the Greek Septuagint (and consequently in the Latin Vulgate) they are all together named 1–4 Kings (Βασιλείων/Regum). The biblical scholars assume, that the Former Prophets were edited under the influence of Deuteronomy, therefore they are also called *Deuteronomistic History*.

The book of Joshua describes the succession of Moses by Joshua. Joshua’s authority is presented as derived from Moses and the Mosaic Law (*Torah*) – see Deut 34:9–12 a Josh 1:5–9. The book recounts Israel’s entry into the Promised Land. The book can be structured in the following way:

1. The Occupation of the Land (1–12)
2. The Allocation of the Land (13–22)
3. Covenant Renewal (23–24)

The first part is a theological narrative about the preparation for the entry to the Promised Land, and also the story of its conquest. The second part describes the division of the land among the tribes, it also speaks about the Levite cities and the cities of refuge. An episode about the tribes in Transjordan is included too. The third part is a kind of epilogue. It contains Joshua’s admonitions and exhortations to Israel (written in Deuteronomistic style). It also recounts the ritual renewal of the covenant with God, and gives a report about three graves (of Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar).

The book of Judges narrates events following the conquest of the Promised Land and before the institution of the king is established in Israel. The book of Judges has two main parts:

1. Introduction (1:1–3:6)

2. The Stories of the Judges (3:7–16:31)

3. The Confusion in the Promised Land (16–21)

The introduction reports initial achievements, but also serious problems in the process of Israel’s taking the possession of the Land. In its second part it presents the basic theological scheme of the book: The cyclic structure of Israel’s apostasy: God’s punishment through the foreign nations – Israel’s crying out to the Lord – God’s liberating Israel through the so judges – short period of obedience – another deeper apostasy.

The stories about the judges in their current setting within the book seem to reflect the above theological scheme. The stories present judges as local military leaders in case of the major judges (or as local important representatives of the community in case of the minor judges).

The last part of the book is characterized by the formula “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.” In this part the judges are not mentioned any more. Instead, the narrative accounts two stories, each starting with a problem of sin on the level of a family and gradually reaching the level of the tribes of Israel (the story of Micah’s idolatry and the Danites, the story of the rape in Gibeah and the resulting war against Benjamin).

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 20–29, 164–170.

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 103–121.

## Biblical texts for the final exam

Students are expected to have read the whole book of Joshua. However, emphasis during the exam will be on the following sections:

Josh 3–4 (Crossing the Jordan)

Josh 5:13–15 (The Commander of the Lord’s Army)

Josh 6:1–21 (The Fall of Jericho)

Josh 24:1–28 (The Covenant Renewed at Shechem)

Judg 2:11–23 (The Pattern of Apostasy, Punishment, and Mercy)

Judg 6:11–24 (Gideon’s Call)

Judg 7:1–22 (Gideon’s Victory)

Judg 16:4–31 (Samson and Delilah)

Judg 17–18 (Micah’s Idolatry and the Danites)

## Verifying comprehension

1. What are the major sections in the book of Judges?
2. How is described the origin of the Gilgal memorial and what was its significance according to Josh 4?
3. What the man with the sword told Joshua at Jericho in Josh 5:13–15? Can you think of some similar event in the Pentateuch?
4. What were the specific means of conquering Jericho? How would you describe them in general?
5. What is the structure of the covenant renewal at Shechem according to Josh 24:1–28? What kind of literary-theological context does it Rendtorff connect with?
6. What are the main units in the book of Judges?
7. What kind of pattern is suggested by Judg 2:11–23 for the stories of Judges? How can it be perceived in the remaining parts of the book of Judges?
8. Describe the significance of Gideon’s narrative in the context of Judges.
9. What was the mystery of Samson’s strength, what biblical commandment does it relate to?
10. Compare the role of the Levites in Judg 17–18 and Judg 19–21?

## Enjoying biblical interpretation

In the second half of the 20th century the biblical studies became more and more influenced by various synchronic approaches. Structuralism, new literary criticism and study of poetics of narratives belong in this category. Philip Satterthwaite in his article on Judges 17–21 has based his reading of biblical text on these methods.

Satterthwaite, Philip. “‘No King in Israel’: Narrative Criticism and Judges 17-21.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44, no. 1 (1993): 75–88.

# The Books of Samuel

## Overview

* The books of Samuel: Literary, historical and theological introduction

## Comment

The books of Samuel tell the story of the beginnings of the monarchy in Israel. The main characters are the prophet Samuel, who anoints the kings of Israel, the first king Saul, who displays mostly negative aspects of monarchy, and king David, who sets the positive example for the kings of Israel and Judah. Nonetheless, the narrative also shows some positive aspects of Saul, as well as it includes negative evaluation of some of David’s acts.

The two books of Samuel were originally one composition, the division between the books is later and artificial: The story of David begins in 1 Sam 16 and runs through the whole 2 Samuel. The books are also closely connected to the following books of Kings, as the last days of David are recounted in 1 Kings.

The outline of the books of Samuel:

1. The Story of Samuel (1 Sam 1–7)
2. The Beginning of the Monarchy: The Story of Saul (1 Sam 8–15)
3. The Story of David, the Model King for Israel (1 Sam 16–2 Sam 24):
   1. The Story of David’s Rise (1 Sam 16–2 Sam 8)
   2. The Succession Narrative (2 Sam 9–2 Sam 24)

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 29–37, 105–112, 170–174.

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 123–134.

## Biblical texts for the final exam

Students are expected to have read the whole of 1–2 Samuel. However, emphasis during the exam will be on the following sections:

1 Sam 3:1–21 (Samuel’s Vocation)

1 Sam 12:1–25 (Samuel’s Farewell Speech and the Transition to the Monarchy)

1 Sam 16:1–13 (David’s Anointing)

1 Sam 17:1–54 (David a Goliath)

2 Sam 7:1–29 (Nathan’s Dynastic Oracle)

2 Sam 11 (David and Bathsheba)

2 Sam 12:1–15 (Nathan’s Parable)

## Verifying comprehension

1. What are main parts of the narrative in 1–2 Samuel?
2. What is so called “Succession Narrative”? What are its prominent literary characteristics?
3. What is the message received by Samuel from God during Samuel’s first prophetic experience?
4. After Saul becomes the king, Samuel speaks to Israel. What is his evaluation of monarchy on that occasion?
5. Why and under what circumstances (characters, place…) David’s anointing takes place?
6. What was David’s equipment for the combat with Goliath? Why is David confident he would beat Goliath (compare David’s explanation for Saul and David’s speech to Goliath before the combat)?
7. What is God’s reaction in Nathan’s oracle towards David’s plan to build a house for God?
8. How David solved his involvement with Bathsheba?
9. How Nathan convicted David of his sin? What punishments were announced to David?

## Enjoying biblical interpretation

The final chapters of the Books of Samuel have been recognized as important reflections on David’s life and his royal career, as well as on the monarchy in Israel as such. Walter Brueggemann, a well-known Old Testament scholar from the United States, interprets 2 Samuel 21-24 as a theological-political reflection on David, his rule, and his mediating role as king.

Brueggemann, Walter. “2 Samuel 21–24: An Appendix of Deconstruction?” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (1988): 383–97.

# The Books of Kings

## Overview

* The books of Kings: Literary, historical and theological introduction

## Comment

The books of Kings, after solving the question of David’s succession, tells the story of the monarchy at its peak during Solomon’s reign. However, the division of the monarchy takes place just after Solomon’s death. From that point on the story follows the development in the two separated kingdoms, which eventually leads to the destruction of both kingdoms – first the Northern Israel, finally also the kingdom of Judah. The books of Kings are structured by the regnal formulae, which (when relevant), synchronize the reign of the kings in both kingdoms. These schematic paragraphs are sometimes expanded by shorter or even by more complex narratives, in which the important persons are the prophets.

## Literature for individual study

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 37–55, 174–183.

Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners*, 135–143.

## Biblical texts for the final exam

Students are expected to have read the whole of 1–2 Kings. However, emphasis during the exam will be on the following sections:

1 Kgs 3:16–28 (The Judgement of Solomon)

1 Kgs 8:1–21 (Solomon Dedicates the Temple)

1 Kgs 10:1–10 (The Queen of Sheba)

1 Kgs 12:1–33 (Breaking Up of the Kingdom)

1 Kgs 18:1–46 (Elijah on Mount Carmel)

1 Kgs 19:1–21 (Elijah on Mount Horeb)

1 Kgs 21 (Naboth’s Vineyard)

2 Kgs 2:1–18 (Elijah Taken Up to Heaven)

2 Kgs 5:1–27 (Naaman the Aramean)

2 Kgs 17:1–41 (The End of the Northern Kingdom)

2 Kgs 22:1–20 (The Book of the Law and Josiah’s Reforms)

2 Kgs 25:1–25 (The Fall of Jerusalem and the Exile)

## Verifying comprehension

1. What are the main units of 1–2 Kings?
2. What is meant by the expression “regnal formula” / “regnal formulae” in the Books of Kings? What elements does a typical regnal formula consist of?
3. What was the case, during which Salomon demonstrated his wisdom?
4. How was manifested God’s Presence in the temple on its dedication by Salomon?
5. In what part of the Salomon narrative appears the story about the queen of Sheba? What is the literary function of this episode in the Salomon narrative?
6. According to 1 Kgs 12:1–33 Israel refused the rule of the Davidic dynasty, which resulted in the division of the monarchy into Judah and Northern Israel:
   1. Where the meeting took place, during which Israel refused the Davidic king?
   2. Who was the refused king?
   3. Who became the leader and consequently the first king in the Northern Kingdom?
7. What was the reason for the contest on Mount Carmel, in which Elijah took part?
8. After killing the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah reaches Mount Horeb. What does he experience there?
9. What was the case of Naboth’s vineyard? Who were the main participants?
10. What were the circumstances of Elijah assumption according to 2 Kgs 2:1–18?
11. What is the role of Gehazi in the story about Naaman the Aramean?
12. Who was the last king of Northern Israel?
13. What were the reasons given by 2 Kgs 17:1–41 for the fall of Northern Israel?
14. What was the so called “Josianic reform”? What was the main impulse, what was the result?
15. Who was the last king of Jerusalem during its ultimate fall? Who and why destroyed Jerusalem and the temple?

# Pentateuch; Deuteronomistic History: the origins and the canonical form

## Overview

* The Pentateuch as a whole: its composition, the final form, the hypotheses of its origin
* The Deuteronomistic History: relationship to the Pentateuch, redaction or redactions, the historical context

## Comment

Regarding the origins of the Pentateuch, since the 19th century the research was dominated by so-called “new documentary hypothesis”. This assumed four main sources of the Pentateuch (JEDP). However, later some of the assumptions and results of the theory were questioned (the existence of the Elohistic source, the dating of the Yahwist). Moreover, other methods and approaches developed, namely the form criticism, the redaction criticism, the history of traditions and approaches which emphasize the canonical form of the text.

## Literature for individual study

Brueggemann and Linafelt. *An Introduction to the Old Testament,* 35–47.

Rendtorff, *The Old Testament*, 157–164, 183–188.

Ska, Jean Louis. *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch,* 217–234.

## Verifying comprehension

1. What main sources of the Pentateuch were assumed by the classic documentary hypothesis (Wellhausen)?
2. What is Rendtorff’s view of the origin of the Pentateuch?
3. Why have some scholars thought that Pentateuch should be viewed as unfinished literary work? What were some suggested solutions to this?
4. Explain, what “Deuteronomistic History” means, and why this term is used.
5. What are the main points of the theory of Persian imperial authorization regarding the composition of the Pentateuch?
6. What is meant by the theory of the Citizen-Temple Community?