

## SYLLABUS: THE BOOK OF ISAIAH, 1-39

Hebrew Studies 513/751

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### 1. Course description

*Overview:* A focused study of selections from Isaiah 1-39, with particular attention to chapters 1-12. We will concentrate on philological, rhetorical, and ideological aspects of the book, examining what Isaiah is depicted as saying to his hearers and the rhetorical means he used. Underlying this study will be the question of how the book came down to us in the form that it has. To wit, in what sense does the Book of Isaiah preserve for us his oracles and in what sense is it a literary work?

*Methodological Focus:* Textual Criticism. We will take advantage of the text-critical resources for Isaiah, including Qumran materials, the Göttingen edition of LXX-Isa, the Leiden Peshitta (for those who have had Syriac), the Vulgate (for Cate), and the *Hebrew University Bible* edition of Isaiah. In addition, we will benefit from the cumulative wisdom and experience of Emanuel Tov as recorded in his *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2012).

### 2. Readings in Isaiah

- a. In class: We will read, translate and discuss units from Isaiah 1-39 (primarily 1-12). Prepare *at least* 10 verses ahead and be ready to read the text, offer a "literal" translation, discuss text-critical issues, analyze grammar and syntax, interact with (at least) Williamson (through chapter 5) and Wildberger, and contribute your own observations. I will expect you to exhibit the same skills on the exams, reflecting also issues raised during our class discussions.  
We will begin with 1.1-2.5; 4.2-6; 5.1-7; 6.1-13; 7.1-25; 8.1-18; 9.1-6; 10.20-34; 11.1-16.
- b. Additional translation for exams (regardless how much we cover in class)  
First exam: Chapters 1-15  
Final exam: Chapters 19-22; 24-27; 30-35

### 3. Oral reading: I will assign verses in meaningful units to each member of the class in rotation for oral reading (this is in addition to reading each verse as we encounter it). Practice your passage in advance so that you can give a correct and meaningful oral rendition.

### 4. Exegetical cruxes and salient issues of the book. We will encounter numerous challenges in reading Isaiah, most of which will arise in the course of our study of the text and some of which I will be able to flag for you in advance. The following are more or less perennial issues in the study of Isaiah that everyone should keep in mind as we approach the relevant passages.

- a. 1.4. — What does אִיִּי signify? What is the form and function of אִיִּי oracles? How does אִיִּי function here? See especially the discussion by Zobel in *TDOT*, s.v.
- b. 1.11 — What is Isaiah's attitude toward the cult and how does it compare with Amos' attitude (5.21-25)?

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- c. 2.1 — What is the meaning of **בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים**?
  - d. 2.1-5 — The nature of the future projected here and its relationship to Isaiah's eschatology elsewhere? (BTW, what *is* eschatology?)
  - e. 2.1-5 — Compare Micah 4.1-5. Where is the original?
  - f. 4.2-6 — Who constitutes the "remnant" in Jerusalem? Is this the source of the attitude that enraged Jeremiah in Jer 24?
  - g. 5.1-7 — What is the *genre* of this passage? See Adrian Graffy, *Biblica* 60 (1979), 400ff. and J. T. Willis, *JBL* 96 (1977), 337-62.
  - h. 5.25 — What clue regarding the redaction of chapters 5ff. is provided by the refrain, **נְטִיָּה וְעוֹד יָדוּ בְּכָל-זֵאת לֹא-שָׁב אֲפֹ וְעוֹד יָדוּ** (5.25; 9.12, 17, 21; 10.4)?
  - i. 6.1-13 — Form and function of a call vision. In particular, compare 1 Kgs 22.19ff. carefully with Isa 6. How do their common features illumine Isa 6.1-13? See N. Habel, *ZAW* 77 (1965), 297ff.
  - j. 6.3 — The meaning(s) of **כְּבוֹד ה'**. See Weinfeld's article in *TDOT*, s.v.
  - k. 7.10-17 — Interpretations of the Immanuel sign.
  - l. 8.16 — Who are **לְפָנָי**? What is the **הַעֲוִדָה** and what does it contain?
  - m. 9.5 — What have been the various identifications of the **יֵלֶד**? What are the various interpretations of his name?
  - n. 11.2-3 — The qualities of the ideal king. What ANE literary parallels illuminate these attributes and how? How is **וְהָרִיחוּ בְּיָרְאֵת ה'** (v. 3) to be handled?
  - o. 11.10-16 — What type of future is depicted and when is its realization expected? What is the relationship between the **שָׂרֵשׁ יֵשׁי** (v. 10) and the **נִצְרָה/הַטָּר** (v. 1)? Are they the same figure?
5. There will be two exams: 1) Midterm (Thursday, October 24, both class periods): texts covered in class, as well as translations from chapters 1-15, and an essay question on textual criticism; 2) The final (Sunday, December 15, 2:45-4:45): texts covered in class since the first exam, translations from chapters 19-22; 24-27; 30-35, and an essay question.
6. Each student will write a 15-20 page paper on a question having to do either with textual criticism of Isaiah or with the book's compositional history. Pre-approved topics are follow. If you have an alternative question you wish to pursue, please clear it with me by October 15. Papers are due by 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 12. Late papers will be docked one grade step for each 24 hour block following that (e.g., a paper judged to merit an A but turned in between 3:01 p.m. 12/12 and 3:00 p.m. 12/13 would be reduced to an AB).
- a. The Historical Isaiah: What Can we Know? (I recommend taking this topic only if you know German, since study of this issue will benefit from reading the three essays by Köckert, Matthias, Uwe Becker, and Jörg Barthel on "Das Problem des historischen Jesaja," in addition to Williamson's essay (see the bibliography, below).
  - b. The Functions of Isaiah 6 & 7 within Chapters 1-12
  - c. The Fate of Budde's *Denkschrift* (6:1-9:6)
  - d. Isaiah 13-14: What Does Babylon Have to Do with 7<sup>th</sup> Century Judah?
  - d. The Role of Expectations of New Rulers in Isaiah 1-12
  - e. The Place of Chapters 24-27 in the Book

f. Chapter 12: Why Does Isaiah Break into Song?

g. 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>: Its Place in Isaiah's Textual History and Its Value for Textual Criticism

h. Isaiah 13-23: What is a **שׁוֹפָר** and What Are All of Them Doing Here?

7. Your final grade will be a composite of your grades on the papers and the two exams, with the exams weighing most heavily. Participation in class discussion could have an affect on border-line grades.
8. The versions will play an important role in this course, especially given the methodological focus on textual criticism. We may wind up devoting some sessions exclusively to them, G especially, since LXX-Isaiah has an atypical translation "style" within the Septuagint.
9. Rosh Hashanah commences at sunset on Thursday, September 5. If this or any other religious observance conflicts with class, please let me know. University policy exempts students from attending classes or for completing exams and submitting assignments on those days.
10. Office hours: I will be available the hour following class and by appointment. Please feel free to approach me with any problem, concern or question you have.
11. To be read and discussed in class (Housman's article and the chapters from my book will be made available electronically)  
Housman, A. E. "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism." In *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman*, vol. 3. J. Diggle and F. R. D. Goodyear, eds. Cambridge, 1972, 1058-69.  
Tov, Emanuel. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Third edition. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011.  
Troxel, Ronald L. "What Is a Prophetic Book?" (chapter 1) and "The Book of Isaiah" (chapter 11) in *Prophetic Literature: From Oracles to Books* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
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- Barton, J. "Ethics in Isaiah of Jerusalem." *JTS* 32 (1981) 1-18.
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- Clements, Ronald, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem* (JSOT Supplements, 13. Sheffield, 1984).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Structure and Composition of Isaiah 1-39," in idem, *Isaiah 1-39*, NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1980) 2-11.
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