

# **Psalms and Writings**

## **Prof. Timothy E. Saleska**

### **Concordia Seminary**

#### **1. Course Description**

- *Three weeks* when we discuss how to interpret and use in our ministries the last third of the Hebrew Bible known as *The Writings*
- *Seven weeks* when we read the poetry of David, the מְזוֹמָרִים of Israel. מְזוֹמָרִים; ['Wv]}v' (Good clean fun!)

#### **2. Outcomes**

- The student interprets reality theologically
- The student aspires to life-long growth in theological understanding, spiritual formation, and vocational skills
- The student preaches the Word of God faithfully
- The student teaches the faith of the church capably

#### **3. Course goals**

- To introduce you to *The Writings*, and to cultivate your interest in these varied books.
- To shape your interpretation of these books. We will investigate questions such as: "How do Christians and specifically Lutherans read the books?" "How does this Word of God influence me?" "Does it tell me anything enlightening about my life or my relationship to God?"
- To study individual psalms and give you the skill to interpret them confidently and use them effectively. You will be able to answer questions such as: "What is the speaker trying to do here?" "What does this psalm have to do with me?" "What is this psalm doing to me?"

#### **4. Brief outline**

- First three weeks
  - Survey the post-exilic history of Israel (to Alexander the Great).
  - Study the development of the OT Canon
  - Get familiar with specific texts in the *Writings*
- Last seven weeks
  - How to read Psalms in the light of Christ
  - How to teach and preach on Psalms
  - How to meditate on the Psalms for spiritual strength and formation

#### **5. Bibliography**

- *Required books*
  1. Bonhoeffer. *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*
  2. Bullock. *Encountering the Book of Psalms*
  3. Reardon. *Christ in the Psalms*

4. Steinmann. *The Oracles of God*
5. CTCR Document. *The End Times*

- *Highly Recommended books*

6. *Dictionary of the OT: Wisdom, Poetry, Writings*. IVP
7. Brachter/Reyburn. *A Handbook on Psalms*
8. Davidson. *The Vitality of Worship*
9. Hummel. *The Word Becoming Flesh*
10. Kidner. 2 vols. *Psalms 1-72; Psalms 73-150*
11. Kidner. *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes*
12. Kitchen. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*
13. Kraus. *Psalms 1-59 and 60-150*

- *Recommended books*

14. Anderson. *Out of the Depths*.
15. Bellinger. *Psalms*.
16. Dillard-Longman. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*.
17. Goldsworthy. *Gospel and Wisdom*.

## 6. Schedule

### December

T 2

### Topic

Introduction

### Assignment Due

F 5

Post-exile history

- a. Read E/N
- b. Reflect & Write: *The Critical*

*Incident*

- c. **MDiv**: Key verse (**Hebrew**):

Ezra 9:8

**Deaconess**: 1 paragraph

theological

reflection: How does Ezra

9:8

speak to you?

T 9

Job

- a. Read Job
- b. Reflect & Write: *Descriptive*

*Review*

- c. **MDiv**: Key verse (**Heb**): Job

19:25-26

**Deaconess**: 1 paragraph

theological

reflection: How does Job

19:25-26

speak to you?

- d. Guest: Joel Okamoto

F 12 assignment)	No class-CTS Tourney	<b>Read</b> Steinmann (See Jan 6
T 16 Proverbs  <i>relevance readers?</i>  7:2/Prov 1:7  theological word	Ecclesiastes/Proverbs	a. ½ read Ecclesiastes; ½ read  b. Reflect & Write: <i>What is the of either text for modern</i>  c. <b>MDiv</b> : Key v. ( <b>Heb</b> ): Eccl  <b>Deaconess</b> : 1 paragraph  reflection: How does this speak to you?
F 19  paragraphs: <i>What CTCR?</i>	Daniel/Eschatology	a. <b>Read</b> Daniel b. Reflect & Write: 1-2  <i>is one helpful insight from</i>
<b>January</b> T 6 <i>describing Steinmann's Canon</i>	Canon/Psalms Intro	a. Reflect & Write: <i>1 paragraph the main point of argument about the OT</i>
F 9	Psalms Intro/Psalm 1	a. <b>Read</b> Bullock, 21-82 b. <b>M.Div.</b> -Translate Psalm 1:1-3 c. <b>Deaconess</b> -Write a Devotion: <i>What are the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?</i> <b>(Draft)</b>
T 13	Psalm 1	a. <b>Read</b> Reardon, 1-2 b. <b>MDiv</b> -Translate Psalm 1:4-6 c. <b>Deaconess</b> -Write a Devotion: <i>What are</i>

*the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?*  
**(Hand in)**

F 16	Psalm 2	<p>a. <b>Read</b> Reardon, 3-4  b. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Psalm 2:1-5  c. <b>Deaconess</b>-Write a Devotion: <i>What are the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?</i>  <b>(Draft)</b></p>
T 20	Psalm 2	<p>a. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Psalm 2:6-11  b. <b>Deaconess</b>-Write a Devotion: <i>What are the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?</i>  <b>(Hand in)</b></p>
F 23 2	<b>Quiz 1</b> /Psalm 8	<p>a. <b>MDiv</b>-open note quiz on Pss 1-2  b. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Psalm 8  c. <b>Deaconess</b>-<i>Reflection-State in sentence the "Big Idea" in Psalm 8 that around this</i>  <i>and then list the questions Psalm 8 raises for you idea?</i></p>
T 27 Robinson, "Psalm	Psalm 8	<p>a. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Ps 8  b. <b>MDiv/Deac</b>-Read M. Eight" work on <i>Descriptive Review</i> of Robinson's chapter (in class)</p>
F 30	Psalm 22	<p>a. <b>Read</b> Reardon, 41-42  b. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Ps 22:1-11  c. <b>Deaconess</b>-Write a Devotion: <i>What are the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?</i>  <b>(Draft)</b></p>

**February**

T 3	Psalm 22	<p>a. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Ps 22:12-22</p> <p>b. <b>Deaconess</b>-Write a Devotion: <i>What are the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?</i> (<b>Hand in</b>)</p>
F 6 <b>projects!</b>	No Class	<b>All students work on their</b>
T 10 22:1-22	<b>Quiz 2</b> /Psalm 22	<p>a. <b>MDiv</b>-open note quiz on Pss 8,</p> <p>b. <b>MDiv/Deaconess</b>-hand in</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>project</b></p> <p>c. Saleska will lead class in the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">22</p>
part 1 of  rest of Ps		
F 13	Psalm 46	<p>a. <b>Read</b> Reardon, 89-90</p> <p>b. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Ps 46</p> <p>c. <b>Deaconess</b>-Write a Devotion: <i>What are the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?</i> (<b>Draft</b>)</p>
T 16	Psalm 46	<p>a. <b>MDiv</b>-Translate Ps 46</p> <p>b. <b>Deaconess</b>-Write a Devotion: <i>What are the most impactful parts of the Psalm for you? Why?</i> (<b>Hand in</b>)</p>
F 20	Wrap up	<p>a. any remaining work</p> <p>b. hand in all papers</p>

**7. Class Procedure and Grading**

- **Note:** For almost every paper or written assignment, students have the option to **pair** up with someone else. For purposes of grading, hand in one paper with both names at the top of the page.
- **Key Verses:** **MDiv**-Translate the Key Verse that is listed in the schedule; **Deaconess students** will write a one-paragraph reflection on each verse. The verses are all significant and meaningful. We will translate them in class. *I will*

also collect the devotions and translation notes. They are easy points if they are at all legible and helpful.

- **Reflection Papers/Devotions:** See schedule for dates these are due. Unless stated otherwise, each paper is one page double-spaced, 12-point font. Each is worth 20 points. Notice the titles for the papers due on December 5 and December 9 (Jan 27). The directions for each are as follows:
  - *December 5 The Critical Incident:* This is a genre that aims to call others together into productive dialogue in order to make sense of a significant experience of uncertainty, conflict, or difference with others who might reasonably disagree. Where these moments might otherwise pass by in a flash, writing about them allows us to freeze-frame them and put them up for discussion.
    - Can you find any examples of critical incidents in Ezra/Nehemiah?
    - How are you making sense of what a critical incident is?
    - What is the writer trying to do through the writing?
    - What do you notice about the "craft" of writing a critical incident? (What genre features do you see the writers using? What design features and conventions? What point of view?)
    - Talk about the "so what" of the incident. Why does it matter? Is it something that a range of people care about—or should care about but don't yet?
  - *December 9 (Jan 27) Descriptive Review:* This is a reflective practice that invites further attention and awareness rather than judgment and evaluation. The goal of this activity of exploring a text is to approach it and the author in a stance of inquiry and of wonder. "Describing requires that I stand back and consider. Describing requires that I not rush to judgment or conclude before I have looked. Describing makes room for something to be fully present. Describing is a slow, particular work. I have to set aside familiar categories for classifying or generalizing. I have to stay with the subject of my attention. I have to give it time to speak, to show itself." (Patricia Carini, *Starting Strong: A Different Look at Children, Schools and Standards*)
    - What did you notice? What do you value?
    - What questions does this work raise for you?
    - What does the writer intend? What is the writer trying to say? What is the writer trying to do?
  - *Devotions (Deaconess)*-Notice that when MDiv students have Hebrew Translation, you will be asked to write a short theological reflection or a 1 page devotion on that text. Because of the creative nature of the longer devotions, you are asked to have a draft ready on the first day we translate and a final copy to hand in on the second day. Your study and reflection will enable you to participate in the class discussions, especially on the days we translate. Each paper is 20 points.

- **Two quizzes** over the grammar and syntax of psalm verses translated in class. These are thirty-minute quizzes. They cover grammar/syntax, themes, and the assigned readings in Reardon, *Christ in the Psalms*. All quizzes are open notes. You are allowed to use *only* your own written notes for the quizzes.
- **Project:** Students have some options. (100 points)
  - **MDiv Option One:**
    - Exegetical Study according to the Instructions Below (You may pair up for this activity)
  - **MDiv Option Two:**
    - Preach an actual sermon in a real church on a psalm that we don't cover in class. (No old or already preached sermons allowed.) If you choose this option, you need to: **a.** Hand in a final copy of the sermon with information on where and when it was preached and **b.** write a 3-4 page reflection on the experience. Talk about how you approached the text, why it interested you, what you saw as its main message, difficulties, problems, questions, how did the hearers react? (Ask a couple people for feedback) etc.
  - **Deaconess Option One:**
    - Exegetical Study according to the Instructions Below (You may pair up for this activity)
  - **Option for Everyone:**
    - Science for Seminaries Project: Read the Chapters and Chapter Excerpts provided by the instructor and write a 5-6 page paper interacting with them and reflecting on how the viewpoints they present might affect your Christian vocabulary and the way you tell the Christian story. How might they influence how you would answer the question "What is man (Psalm 8)?" How might they change your approach to Christian Instruction and Witness?
- **Class participation is an essential part of this class.** Make sure you have the reading and translation completed as assigned and plan to actively participate in class discussion. If you fail to prepare adequately, you will miss the pleasure of conversation. *Analyzing the individual psalms and discussing their meaning brings rich personal reward.* Your active and thoughtful participation is imperative to the success of this class. But more than that, your active engagement in the class also furthers your formation as pastors of God's people. Remember, we are not simply individual learners.
- In order to give you the opportunity to help each other with your class preparation, I encourage you to divide yourselves into study groups (max of 6), according to your own preferences. I challenge you to meet at least once a week

to study, and discuss the assigned texts and to pray for and encourage each other.

- During the Psalms part of the course, you must have your BHS text in front of you. I want you to translate from BHS and use the notes that you have written. Do not read from a computer printout of the text with translation in the margins. Bible programs should be used outside of class to help in your preparation, but not in class. We will be focusing on translating as we read. Your own notes, *without* a fully written out English translation, will be the most helpful for you.

### Exegetical Study Directions

1. In order to practice the desirable habits of collaboration, and mutual learning, you have the option of working on this paper in groups of two maximum. (Don't ask for three.) Both of you will be responsible for the finished product, and both will receive the same grade.
2. For this study, analyze any psalm of your choosing. (If you have not done anything in the Psalms of Ascent (Pss 120-134), I would recommend one of these. They are short and beautiful poems.
3. Please follow the directions below. Be sure to mark each part of your paper clearly. Check grammar and spelling because I take these into consideration in grading. Coherence and clarity are the keys.

#### Part 1: Translation and Notes (Due: Tuesday, February 10)

- A. Translate the Psalm. Divide your translation carefully into *cola* and *strophes*. Commentaries will help you with this interpretive step.
- B. For the text notes, consult commentaries and grammars.<sup>1</sup> Make sure you understand the text and grammar problems in the psalm, and write only notes that defend or explain your translation. (Don't add trivial notes that aren't insightful.) Be meticulous and thorough on this point. You are looking for observations that give insight into the meaning of the psalm. *Deaconesses: Do your work in translation-compare translations and look at commentaries for how and why translators make the decisions they do.*

#### Part 2: An Account of the Psalm's Meaning: In Two Parts (Due: Friday, February 20)

Part One: Identify this part clearly in your paper as "Part One." Interpret the psalm by answering the questions: *What is the speaker doing?* And

---

<sup>1</sup>Important grammars: Waltke-O'Connor. *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*; Joüon-Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*; Williams. *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*; Gesenius. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*; Arnold, Choi. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*; van der Merwe, Naudé, Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*.



*What am I doing as I read?* I want you to keep asking yourself questions such as the following: What assumptions am I making? What conclusions am I reaching? What expectations am I forming? What attitudes am I entertaining? What am I anticipating? Can I identify with the voice? What is the speaker doing? What is he trying to accomplish? Where are the emotional shifts in the psalm? Are there climaxes or anticlimaxes in the psalm? The formal characteristics of the text should be regarded as cues for you to engage in activities. The speaker's activities and your activities are what are being described. *Summarize your argument in the first half of your paper. Make sure your writing is clear and coherent.*

Part Two: Identify this part clearly in your paper as "Part Two." *Building* on the first part, give a distinctly Christian reading of the psalm, enabled by your beliefs about God, his Son, the relationship between OT and NT, the intentions of the Author, and so on. Again, summarize your argument in clear and coherent prose. This section, separate from the first, will look most like a devotion or Christian meditation on the Psalm.

Your argument in both "Part One" and "Part Two" *together* should total between 6-7 pages of double-spaced prose (*Times* 12 point font). For both parts you are expected to consult articles and commentaries. Please footnote any direct or indirect references to these other works using the acceptable shortened form (i.e., *author, title, page*) and key these to a complete bibliography at the end of your paper.