

Introduction to the Old Testament

You don't need me to tell you that human civilization is very very old. Nevertheless our knowledge of the earliest stages of human civilization, were quite limited for many centuries. That is until the great archeological discoveries of the 19th and 20th centuries, which unearthed, for us, the great civilizations of the ancient near east of which I have drawn a remarkably life-like map here on the board. Mediterranean, I always start with the Mediterranean ocean, the Nile River, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. So, the great civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the area we refer to as the fertile crescent, of which a little part here about the size of Rhode Island, is Canaan. And archeologists in the 19th and 20th centuries were stunned to find the ruins and the records of remarkable peoples and cultures, massive complex empires in some cases. But some of which had completely disappeared from human memory. Their newly uncovered languages had been long forgotten, their rich literary and legal texts were now undecipherable, that soon changed. But because of those discoveries we are now in a position to appreciate the monumental achievements of these early civilizations, these earliest civilizations. And so many scholars, many people have remarked that it's not a small irony that the ancient near eastern people with one of the, of perhaps the most lasting legacy was not a people that built and inhabited one of the great centers of ancient near-eastern civilization. It can be argued that the ancient near-eastern people with the most lasting legacy is the people that had an idea. It was a new idea that broke with the new ideas of its neighbors, and those people are the Israelites. And scholars have come to the realization that despite the bible's pretensions to the contrary, the Israelites were a small, I've actually have represented it here I'm sure it should be much smaller, a small and relatively insignificant group for much of their history. They did manage to establish a kingdom in the land that was known in antiquity as Canaan, around the year 1000. They probably succeeded in subduing some of their neighbors collecting tribute, there's some controversy about that, but in about 922 this kingdom divided into two smaller and lesser kingdoms that fell in importance. The northern kingdom which consisted of 10 of the 12 tribes and known confusingly as Israel was destroyed in 722 by the Assyrians. The southern kingdom which consisted of two of the 12 tribes and known as Judah managed to survive until the year 586 when the Babylonian came in and conquered and sent the people into exile and the capital of Jerusalem fell. Conquest and exile were events that normally would spell the end of a particular ethnic, national group, particularly an antiquity. Conquered peoples would trade their defeated god for the victorious god of their conquerors and eventually there would be a cultural and religious assimilation intermarriage that people would disappear as a distinctive entity. And in fact that is what happened to the 10 tribes of the Northern kingdom to a large degree, they were lost to history. This did not happen to those members of Israel who lived in the southern kingdom of Judah. Despite the demise of their national and political base in 586, the Israelites alone really, among the peoples who have figured in ancient near-eastern history, the Sumerians, the Acadians, the Babylonians, the Hittites, the Phoenicians, the Hittites, the Hittites, the Phoenicians, the Hittites, the Canaanites. They emerged after the death of their state, producing a community and a culture that can be traced through various twists and turns and vicissitudes of history right down into the modern period. That's a pretty unique claim and they carried with them the idea and the traditions of and the foundations of the major religion of the western world, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. So what is this radical new idea that shaped a culture and enabled its survival into later antiquity and really right later into the present day in some form? Well, the conception of the universe that was widespread among ancient peoples is one that you're probably familiar with people regarded the various natural forces as imbued with divine power, as in some sense divinities themselves. The earth was a divinity, the sky was a divinity, the water was a divinity, it has

divine power; in other words the gods were identical with or imminent in the forces of nature. There were many gods, no one god was therefore all powerful. There is very good evidence to suggest that ancient Israelites, by in large, shared this world view. They participated in the very earliest stages in the wider religious and cultic culture of the ancient near-east. However, over the course of time, some ancient Israelites, not all at once, and not unanimously broke with this view and articulated a different view that there was one divine power, one God. But much more important than number, was the fact that this God was outside of and above nature. This God was not identified with nature, he transcended in nature and he wasn't known through nature or natural phenomena, He was known through history, events, and a particular relationship with human kind. And that idea which seemed simple at first and not so very revolutionary, we will see, that's an idea that affected every idea of Israelite culture, and in ways that will become clear as we move through the course and learn more about biblical religion and biblical views of history, it was an idea that ensured the survival of ancient Israelites as an entity as an ethnic religious entity. In various complicated ways, the view of an utterly transcendent God, with absolute control over history made it possible for some Israelites to interpret even the most tragic and catastrophic events such as the destruction of their capitol and the exile of their remaining peoples, not as a defeat of Israel's God or even God's rejection of them, but as a necessary part of God's larger purpose or plan for Israel. These Israelites left for us the record of their religious and Cultural Revolution in the writings that are known as the Hebrew Bible collectively. And this course is the introduction of the Old Testament. It is the expression of the religious life and thought of ancient Israel and as a foundational document of western civilization. The course has several goals; first and foremost, we want to familiarize you with the contents of the Hebrew Bible. We're not going to read every bit of it word for word, we will read some chunks of it quite carefully and others we will work, we will choose selections. But you will get a very good sense and a good sampling of the contents of the bible. A second goal is to introduce you to a number of approaches to the study of the bible, different methodological approaches that have been advanced by modern scholars but some of which could be quite old. And at times we will play the historian, at times we will be literary critics. How does this work as literature? A times we will be literary and cultural critics. What is it that the Israelites were saying in their day and in their time and against who and for what? A third goal of the course is to provide some insight into the history of interpretation. This is a really fun part of the course. The Bible's radically new conception of the divine, it's a revolutionary depiction of the human being as a moral agent, its riveting saga of the nation of Israel, their story has drawn generations of readers to it to ponder its meaning and message. And as a result, the Bible has become the base of an enormous edaphic of interpretation and commentary and debate, both in traditional settings but also in academic universities and secular settings. And from time to time, particularly in section discussion, you will have occasion to consider the ways in which biblical passages have been interpreted, sometimes in very literal in contradictory ways over the centuries, that could be a really fun and exciting part of the course. A fourth goal of the course is to familiarize you with the cultural of ancient Israel as represented in the Bible against the backdrop of ancient near-eastern setting, it's historical and cultural setting. Because the archeological discoveries that are referred to in the ancient near-eastern east revealed to us the spiritual and cultural heritage of all of the inhabitation of the region, including the Israelites. And one of the major consequences of these finds is the light that they have shed on the background and the origin of the materials in the bible. So we now see that transitions in the bible did not come out of a vacuum. Their early chapters of Genesis, Genesis chapters 1-11 there known as the primeval history which is a very unfortunate name because these chapters are really not best read or understood as history in the conventional sense. But

these 11 chapters owe a great deal to ancient near-eastern mythology. The creation story in Genesis draws upon the Babylonians and is epically known as the Enuma Elish. The story of the first human pair in the garden of Eden which is in Genesis chapter 2 and 3 has clear affinities with the epic of Gilgamesh, that's a Babylonian and Syrian epic in which a Syrian embarks on this exhausting search for immortality. The story of Noah and the flood which occurs in Genesis 6-9 is simply an Israelite version of an older flood story that we have found copies of, a Mesopotamian story called the Epic of Atra-Hasis . A flood story that we also have incorporated in the epic of Gilgamesh. Biblical traditions have roots that stretch deep into older times and out into surrounding lands and traditions. And the parallels between the biblical stories and the ancient near-eastern stories that they parallel has been the subject of intense study. However, it isn't just the similarity between the biblical materials and the ancient near-eastern sources that is important to us. In fact, in some ways it's the dissimilarity that is remarkably important to us, the biblical transformation of a common near-eastern heritage in light of its radically new conceptions of God, and the world, and humankind. We'll be dealing with this in some depth but I'll give you one quick example. We have a Sumerian story about the 3rd millennium B.C.E. going back 3,000 millennium B.C.E. It's the story of Ziusudra and it's very similar to the Genesis flood story of Noah. In both of the Sumerian and Israelite story, you have a flood that is the result of a deliberate divine decision. One individual is chosen to be rescued, that individual is given very specific instructions on building a boat, he's given very specific instructions of who to bring on board, the flood comes and exterminates all living things, the boat comes to rest on a mountaintop, the hero sends out birds to reconnoiter the land, when he comes out of the ark he offers a sacrifice to the god, the same narrative elements are in these two stories. It's just wonderful when you read them side by side. So what is of great significance though is not simply that the biblical writer is retelling a story that was clearly went around everywhere in ancient Mesopotamia. They were transforming the story so that it became a vehicle for the expression of their own values and their own views. In the Mesopotamian stories for example, the Mesopotamian gods act capriciously, the gods act on a whim. In fact, in one of the stories, the gods say, "oh people they're so noisy, I can't sleep let's wipe them all out." Alright, that's just the rationale, there's no moral scruple. They destroy these helpless but stoic humans who are chafing in their tyrannical unjust and uncaring rule. In the biblical story, when the Israelites told the story, the modified it, it's God's uncompromising ethical standards that lead him to bring the flood in an act of defying justice. He is punishing the evil corrupt beings that he so lovingly created and whose degradation he can't bear to witness. So it's providing a very different message. So when we compare the bible with the literature of the ancient near-east. We'll see not only the incredible culture and literary heritage that was obviously common to them, but we'll see the ideological gulf that separated them and we'll see how biblical writers so beautifully and cleverly manipulated and used these stories as I said, as a vehicle for an expression of a radically new idea. They drew upon these sources, but they blended and shaped them in a particular way. And that brings to a critical problem facing anyone who seeks to reconstruct ancient Israelite religion or culture on the basis of the biblical materials. That problem is the conflicting perspective between the final editors of the text and some of the older sources that are incorporated into the bible, some of the older sources that they were obviously drawing on. Those who were responsible for the final editing, the final forms of the text had a decidedly monotheistic perspective, ethical monotheistic perspective and they intended to impose that perspective on their older source materials. And for the most part they were successful, but at times the results of their efforts tend to be a deeply conflicted, deeply ambiguous text. And again that's going to be one of the most fun things for you as readers of this text if you're alert to it, if you're ready to

listen to the concofity of voices that are within the text. In many respects the bible represents or expresses a basic discontent with the larger cultural milieu in which it was produced. And that's interesting for us because a lot of modern people have a tendency to think of the Bible as an emblem conservatism. We tend to think of an old fuddy duddy document, it's outdated, it had outdated ideas. And I think the goal of this course is that you read the bible with fresh eyes so that you can appreciate it for what it was and in many ways what it continues to be, a revolutionary cultural critique. We can read the bible with fresh, and appreciative eyes only if we first acknowledge and set aside some of our presuppositions about the bible. It's really impossible in fact that you not have some opinions about this work because it's an intimate part of our culture. So even if you've never opened it or read it yourself I bet you can recite me a line like "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," and I bet you don't really know what it means. "The poor be always with you," I'm sure you don't really know what that means. These are phrases that we hear and they create a within us a certain impression of the text and how it functions. Versus are quoted, they're alluded to whether to be championed and valorized or to be lampooned and pilloried. But we can feel that we have a rough idea of the bible, and a rough idea of its outlook, but what we have are popular misconceptions that comes from the way it is used and misused. Most of our cherish suppositions on the Bible are based on astonishing claims that others have made on behalf of the Bible, claims that the Bible has not made on behalf of its self. So before we proceed, I need to ask you to set aside for the purpose of this course, some of the more common myths, I have a little list for ya. The first is the idea that the Bible is a book. It's not a book, we can get rid of that one. Okay, the Bible is not a book, with all of that it implies that it has a title message, a single author, that's what we think of when we think of a conventional sense of a book. It's a library, it's an anthology of writings or books written and edited over an extensive period of time by people in very different situations in very different issues and stimuli, some political, some historical, some philosophical, some religious, some moral. There are many types of genres of material in the Bible, there's narratives, wonderful narrative stories, there's all kinds of law, there are cultic and ritual texts that prescribe how some ceremonies are supposed to be performed, there are records of the messages of profits, there are lyrical poetry, there's love poetry, there are proverbs, there are psalms of thanksgiving and lament. So there's a tremendous variety of material in this library and it follows from the fact that it's not a book, but an anthology of diverse works. That it's not an ideological monolith. And this is not something that a lot of students struggle with. Each book or strand of tradition within each book within the biblical collection sounds its own distinctive note in the symphony of reflection that is the Bible. Genesis is concerned to account for the origin of things and wrestles with the existence of evil, the existence of idolatry, and suffering in a world that is created by a good God. The priestly texts in Leviticus and Numbers emphasize the sanctity of all life, the ideal of holiness of ethical purity. There are odes to human reason, and learning, and endeavor, the wisdom book of Proverbs. Ecclesiastes reads like an existentulous writing of the 20th century, it scoffs at the vanity of all things including wisdom and espouses a positive existentialism. The Psalms are very individual writings that focus on individual piety and love and worship of God. Job, possibly the greatest book of the Bible, I won't give away my preferences there, challenges conventional religious piety and arrives at the bittersweet conclusion that there is no justice in this world, or any other, but that nonetheless, we're not excused from the thankless and perhaps ultimately meaningless tasks of righteous living. One of the most wonderful and fruitive facts in Jewish history is that later Jewish communities chose to put all this stuff in the collection we call the Bible. They chose to include all this dissonant voices together. They didn't strive together to settle the conflicts, neither did we, not should we. They didn't, we shouldn't each book, each writer,

each voice reflects another thread in the rich tapestry of human experience, human response to life, and its puzzles, human reflection on the sublime and the depraved. And that leads me to my second point which is, that Biblical narratives are not pious parables about saints, okay not pious tales. They're psychologically real literature about very real and realistic people in life situations, they're not stories about pious people whose actions are always exemplary and whose lives should be models of our own. Despite what Sunday schools curricula will often turn them into, and despite what they would have us believe. There is a genre of literature that details the lives of saints, Hagiography, but that came later, and is largely something we find in the Christian era, not found in the Bible. The Bible is found human, not superhuman beings and their behavior can be scandalous, it can be violent, it can be outrageous, lude, vicious, but at the same time like real people they can turn around and act in a way that is loyal and true above and beyond the call of duty, they can change, they can grow. But it's interesting to me is that when they open the Bible for the first time, they close it in a shock of disgust. Jacob is a deceiver, Joseph is an arrogant spoiled brat, Judah remains as obligations to his daughter in law and goes and sleeps with a prostitute, who are these people? Why are they in the Bible? And the shock comes from the expectation that the heroes from the Bible are somehow being held up as perfect people, that's just not a claim that's made by the Bible itself. So biblical characters are real people with real compelling moral conflicts with ambitions and desires and they can act shortsightedly and selfishly. But they can also like real people, learn and grow and change, and if we work too hard and too quickly to vindicate characters just because they are in the Bible, then we miss all the good stuff, we miss all the morals the sophistication, the deep psychological insights that have made these stories such timeless interests. So read it like you would read any good book with a really good author that makes some really interesting characters. Thirdly, the Bible's not for children. I have a twelve year old and eight year old and I won't let them read it. Those Bible stories for children books, they scare me, they really scare me. It's not suited for children, the subject matter in the Bible is very adult, particularly the narrative texts. There are episodes of treachery, and incest, and murder, and rape, the Bible is not for naive optimists. It's hard hitting stuff and it speaks to those who are courageous enough to acknowledge that life is rife with pain and conflict, just as it's filled with compassion and joy, it's not for children in another sense. Like any other literary masterpiece, the Bible is characterized by a sophistication of structure and style and an artistry of theme and metaphor, and believe me that's lost in adult readers, quite often. It makes its readers work, the Bible doesn't moralize, or rarely moralizes, it explores moral issues and situations, puts people in moral issues and situations, the conclusions have to be drawn by the reader. There are also all kinds of paradoxes and subtle puns and ironies and in section where you'll be doing a lot of your close reading work. Those will be something that will be drawn to your attention, you'll really begin to appreciate them in time. The fourth myth we want to get rid of, the Bible is not a book of theology, it's not a catechism or a book of systematic theology, it's not a manual of religion. Despite the fact that at a much later time, very complex systems of theology are going to be spun from particular interpretations of biblical passages. You know there's nothing in the Bible that really corresponds to prevailing modern, western notions of religion, what we call religion. And indeed there's no word for religion in the language of ancient Hebrew, there just isn't a word religion. With the rise of Christianity, western religion came to be defined to a large degree by the confession of or the intellectual ascent to certain doctrinal things of belief. Religion became defined primarily as a set of beliefs, a catechism of beliefs or truths that required your ascent. What I think of is the catechism is a notion of religion. That is entirely alien to the world of the Bible. It's clear that in biblical times and in the ancient near-east generally, religion wasn't a set of doctrines that you ascribed to. Alright, to become an Israelite later on a Jew, the

Jew isn't a word we can use until about this time, so most of our time we are going to be talking about the ancient Israelites. To become an Israelite, you simply joined the Israelite community, you lived an Israelite life, you died an Israelite death, you obeyed Israelite law and custom, you revered Israelite lore, you entered into the historical community of Israel by accepting that their fate and yours should be the same. It was sort of the process of naturalization, what we think of as naturalization. So the Hebrew Bible just isn't a theological textbook, it contains a lot of narratives and its narrative materials are an account of an odyssey of a people, the nation of Israel. They're not an account of the divine, which is what theology means, an account of the divine. However, having said this, I should add that although the Bible doesn't contain formal statements of religious belief or systematic theology, it treats issues many moral issues and some existential issues that are central to the later discipline of theology. But it treats them very differently, it's treatment of these issues is direct, it's implicit, it uses the language of song, and poetry, and paradox, and metaphor. It uses a language in a style that's very far from the language and style of later philosophy and abstract theology. Finally, on our myth count, I would point out that I don't really need to cross this out, this is something we need to discuss. I would point out that the Bible was formulated, and assembled, and edited, and modified, and censored, and transmitted first orally and then in writing by human beings. The Bible itself doesn't claim to have been written by God, that belief is a religious doctrine of a much later age, and even then one wonders how literally it was meant. It's interesting to go back and look at some of the earliest claims about the origin of the biblical text. Similarly, the so-called five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, the first five books we call the Pentateuch of Moses nowhere claimed to have been written in their entirety by Moses. That's not something they say themselves. Some laws and Exodus, you know the book of the covenant and things, yes it says Moses wrote those down, but not the whole five books that traditions later will ascribe to him. The Bible clearly had many contributors over many centuries and the individual styles and concerns of those writers, their political and religious motivations, portray themselves frequently. I leave aside the question of divine inspiration, which is an article of faith in many biblical religions it's no doubt an article of faith for people in this very room. But there is no basic incompatibility between believing on faith in the divine inspiration of the Bible, and acknowledging the role that human beings have played in the actual formulation, and editing, and transmission, and preservation of that same Bible. And since this is a university course and not perhaps a theological course or within the theological setting, it's really only the latter, the demonstrably human component that will concern us. It's very easy for me to assert that are interest in the human Bible will be centered on the culture and the history and the literature and the religious thought of the ancient Israel, in all of its diversity rather than questions of faith and theology. But the fact remains that the document is the basis for the religious faith of many millions of people, and some of them are here now. It is inevitable that you will bring what you learn in this course into dialogue with your own personal religious beliefs. And for some of you, I hope all of you that will be enriching and exciting. For some of you it may be difficult, I know that and I want you to rest assured that no one in this course wishes to undermine religious faith any more than they wish to promote or proselytize for religious faith. Religious faith simply isn't the topic of this course, the rich history and literature and religious thought of ancient Israel as preserved for us over millennia in the pages of this remarkable volume that is our topic. And so our approach is going to academic, especially given the diversity of people in this room, that's really all that it can be so that we have common ground and common goals for our discussions. But it has been my experience that from time to time students will raise a question or ask a question that is prompted by a commitment, a prior commitment to an article of faith. Sometimes they are not even aware that that's

what they're doing, and I want you to understand that in most occasions I will most likely respond by having you consider the article of faith that lies behind that questions that is creating that particular problem for you. I'm not going to be drawn into a philosophical or theological debate over the merits of that belief, but I'll simply point out that power why that belief that makes it difficult for you to read or accept what the text is actually and not ideally saying, and leave you to think about that. And I see those as wonderful learning opportunity experiences for the class, those are in no way problems for me. Alright, so let's give a few sort of necessary facts and figures now about the Bible and then I need to talk a little bit about the organization of the course. So those are the last two things we really need to do. Um an overview of the structure of the Bible. So you guys have handouts that should help you here. So, the Bible is this assemblage of books and writings dating from approximately 1000 B.C.E. We're going to hear very diverse opinions about how far back stuff dates, down to the second century. The last book of the Hebrew Bible was written in the 160's B.C.E. Some of these stories, some of these books which we think roughly from a certain date, they will contain narrative snippets or legal materials, or oral traditions that may even date back or stretch back further in time. They were perhaps transmitted orally and then ended up in these written forms. The Bible is written largely in Hebrew, hence the name Hebrew Bible, and there are a few passages in Aramaic. So you have a handout that breaks down the three major components, it's the one that's written two columns per page. Okay for the, we're going to talk in a minute about these three sections so you're going to want to have that handy. These writings have had a profound in lasting impact on three world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. For the Jewish communities who first compiled these writings in the pre-Christian era, the Bible was perhaps first and foremost a record of God's eternal covenant with the Jewish people. So, Jews refer to the Bible as the "Tanak," it's the term you see up here, it should be also on that sheet. "Tanah" which is really letters T, N, and K and they put little A's in there to make it easy to pronounce. Because "Tnk" is hard to pronounce, so "Tanak." Okay, and this is an acronym, the T stands for "Torah" which is a word that means instruction or teaching. It's often translated law and I think that's a very poor translation, it means instruction, way, teaching, and that refers to the first five books that you see listed here, Genesis through Deuteronomy. The second division of the Bible is referred to as "Nevi'im," which is the Hebrew word for prophets. The section of the prophets is divided really into two parts because there are two parts of writing in the prophetic section of the Bible. The first or former prophets continues the kind of narrative pros account of the history of Israel, focusing on the activities of Israel's prophets. Alright, so the former prophets are narrative texts, the latter prophets are poetic and oracular writings that bear the name of the prophet to whom the writings are ascribed. You have the three major prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and then the 12 minor prophets which in the Hebrew Bible gets counted together in one book because a lot of those 12 are very small. The final section of the Bible is referred to as "Ketuvim" in Hebrew which simply means writings and that's probably about 50% of the Hebrew you're going to get in the course so please don't be sacred. You know I've got two or three other terms that will be useful along the way but there's really no need to know Hebrew, I just want you to understand why "Tanah" is the word that is used to refer to the Bible. So the "Ketuvim" or the writings are really a miscellaneous, they contain works of various types and the three parts correspond very roughly to the process of canonization or authoritativeness for the community. The Torah probably reached a fix and an authoritative status first, then the books of the prophets, and then finally the writings, and probably by the end first century all of this was organized in some way. If you look at the other handout you'll see however, that any course of the Bible is going to run immediately to the problem of defining the object of study because people of the Bible served different community over centuries. One of the earliest

translations of the Hebrew Bible was a translation into Greek, known as a "Septuagint." It was written for the benefit but it was translated for the benefit of those who live in Alexandria, Greek speaking Jews in Alexandria Egypt in the Hellenistic period for somewhere around the 3rd or 2nd century B.C.E. The translation has some divergences with the traditional Hebrew text of the Bible as we have it, including the order of the books and some of these are charted for you on the chart that I've handed out. The step two against rationale for ordering the books is temporal. They've clustered books Genesis through Esther, which tell of things past, the books Job through the Song of Psalms or the Songs of Solomon, contain wisdom that applies to the present, and then the prophetic books Isaiah to Malachi that tell of things future. Some copies of the "Septuagint" contain some books not included in the Hebrew canon but accepted the early Christian canon. The "Septuagint," the Greek translation became by in large the Bible of Christianity, or more precisely it became the Old Testament of the Hebrew Bible. The church adopted the Hebrew Bible as a precursor to its largely Hellenistic gospels, it was an important association for it with an old and respected tradition. Our primary concern for the Bible of the ancient Israelite and Jewish community, the 24 books grouped in the Torah, prophets, and writing on that other sheet which is common to all Bibles, whether Jewish or Christian, those 24 are the baseline common books. So those are the 24 that we are going to focus on. Old Testament is a theologically loaded term, it sort of suggests the doctrine that the New Testament has somehow fulfilled or surpassed or antiquated the Bible of ancient Israel. You're going to hear me refer to the object of our study as the Hebrew Bible. You may certainly use any other term and you may certainly use the term Old Testament as long as it's clear we're talking about this set of 24 books and not some of the other things that are in the Old Testament that aren't in the traditional Hebrew Bible. It means you're studying less, so that might be good thing. So it's fine if you want to use that, but I will just probably use and prefer the more accurate term Hebrew Bible. Also, while we're on terminology, you'll notice that I used B.C.E. to refer to the period before 0 and C.E. to refer to the period after 0. So the Common Era, and before the Common Era, And on a lot of secondary readings and writings they will be using the same thing. It corresponds to what you know as B.C. Before Christ, and Anno Domini the year of our Lord, it's just a non-Christian centric way of dating it, in a lot of the secondary reading you'll see it. You should get used to it B.C.E. and C.E. Before the Common Era and Common Era. From earliest times Christian made use of the Bible not always in Greek translation. The Christian Old Testament contains some material not in the Hebrew Bible as I've mentioned, and some of these works are referred to as the "Apocrypha," so you will have heard of that term. These were writings composed somewhere around here, so 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E. They were widely used by Jews of the period, they simply weren't considered to be of the same status of the 24 books. I'm glad the pick of the garbage, at 11:10 on Wednesday mornings, but they did become the canon of Catholic Christianity. In the 16th Century their Canonical status was confirmed for the Catholic Church. With the Renaissance and the Reformation, some Christians became interested in Hebrew versions of the Bible. They wanted to look at the Hebrew and not the Greek translation of the Hebrew. Protestant, the Protestant church denied the canonical status of the "Apocrypha", they said they were important for pious instruction, but it excluded them from their canon. There are also some works you may know of, referred to as the "Pseudepigrapha," we'll talk about some of these things in a little more detail later. From roughly the same period, they tend to be a little more apocalyptic in nature, and they were never part of the Jewish or the Catholic canon, but there are some eastern Christian groups that have accepted them in their canon. The point I'm trying to make is that there are very many sacred canons out there, that are cherish by very many religious communities and they're all designated Bibles. So again, we're focusing on that core 24 set that are common to all Bibles

everywhere. The 24 books of what would in fact be the Jewish Tanah. Not only has there been variety regarding the scope of the Biblical cannon, in different communities, but there's been some fluidity in the actual text itself. We don't of course have any original copies of these materials as they came off the pen of whoever it was who was writing them. And in fact, before the middle of the 20th century, our oldest manuscripts, fragments and manuscripts of the Bible dated to the year 1900. That's an awful long distance right? From the events they're talking about, you gotta think about that right? You gotta think about what that means and how were they transmitted and preserved without the means of technology obviously that we have today. And what was so exciting in the middle of the 20th century was the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, I'm sure that you've heard of them. They brought about a dramatic change in the state of our knowledge of Hebrew manuscript evidence. The Dead Sea scrolls were found in caves in the Judean dessert. We used to think they were a library of a secretarian community, now they think it was a pottery factory or something. So maybe they were just shoved there by people fleeing the Roman conquest in 70. So that's up for grabs, but we have this really great collection of scrolls and among them we have found an almost complete copy of every book of the Bible. Or, sorry an almost complete copy of the book of Isaiah, and then partial or fragments of all of the Biblical books, except maybe Esther? Am I wrong about that? I don't think there's an Esther, I think that's the only one. And some of the date back to the 4th and 3rd century. So do you understand now why everybody was so excited? Suddenly we had evidence 13 or 14 hundred years earlier that people were reading this stuff. And you know by in large, it's a pretty constant textual tradition. Sure there are differences, we see that our manuscripts are not exactly like those fragments, but there is a remarkable degree, a high degree of correspondents so that we really can speak of a relatively stable textual tradition, but still some fluidity, and that's going to be interesting for us to think about. There are many translations of the Bible but I would like you to purchase for this course, the Jewish study Bible. So let me turn now to just some of the details, administrative organizational details of the course, the secondary readings that we'll be using. I'm asking you to pick up the Jewish study Bible, not only for translation of the Tanah, which is a very good translation, but because it contains wonderful scholarly articles in the back. It used to be we had a course packet for this course that was two volumes and now with the purchase of this, I've been able to really consolidate the readings. They're really wonderful, great introductions to the individuals and so I think you will find that this will become like a Bible to you. So you need to pick that up, it's at the Yale book store. I also would like you to pick up this paperback, it's not terribly expensive. We're going to be using it in the first few weeks especially the ancient near-east. The other readings, the secondary readings for the course are all already online. I will be also making them available for Allegra for people who are just wanting to purchase it already printed out so you don't have to do it yourself. But I know some people really prefer to work online, so for the first week of reading you can get started because it is online. I don't think it will be available in Allegra until tomorrow afternoon. The syllabus, as you can see is a pretty thick syllabus, but it's divided into a schedule of lectures and then a schedule of readings. Alright o understand that they are two distinct things there, not only just lectures. The last few pages are a schedule of the actual readings and the assignments that you'll have for the weekend and for the next week's lectures are the readings by Calfman. I really need you to read that before the next class, and I wat you to read it critically. Calfman's ideas are important, but they're also overstated. And so they're going to be interested for us and we're going to be wrestling claims quite a bit during the course of the semester. The secondary reading are heavier at the beginning of the course when we are reading very small segments of biblical texts. That will shift towards the end of the course, you're going to be reading a couple of books in the

Bible and maybe a 10 page article secondary ready, so you know, it's frontloaded with secondary readings. So you know you'll want to get started on the Calfman because for the first few weeks, there's quite a bit of secondary readings, but we're covering just a few chapters of Bible each time in the first few weeks. Sections, we're going to be doing this online registration thing that I've never done before so I hope it works. We do have three teaching fellows for this course, I hope that will be sufficient. Actually if the teaching fellows could at least stand up so that the students could recognize you that would be wonderful. If anyone wants to volunteer we could have a fourth. Okay, so we have two in the back there. We have tutor Sala, raising his hand Sphene over here, they will be running regular discussion sections. And then Christine Caraway will be running a writing requirement section. I don't think that was listed in the blue book, but it should have been listed online that it is possibly to fulfil your writing skills requirement through this course, so Christine will be running that. We will bring on Monday, so please have your schedules as well-formed as they are. On Monday, we will put up times and we will take a straw poll to figure out if we can accommodate everybody within the times. One more extremely important announcement, it's on your syllabus but I want to underline it even more than it is already underlined and bold-faced, I want to underline the importance of the section discussion of this course. In fact, it's really wrong to call them section discussions, it sounds like you're discussing the lectures and the readings and you're really not. The section discussions are a complement to the lectures. What I mean is, this is an awfully big thing just one semester studying, and I can't do it all. And in my lectures I'll be trying to set broad themes and patterns and describe what's going on. But I want you to have the experience of actually sitting and reading amongst the text and struggling with the history of interpretation and passages and how so many of the important things have happened historically because of people's efforts to understand this text. So in sections, a large part of the focus in sections will be on specific passages, reading and struggling with the text, anything I can't do in lecture. This is important because you're final paper assignment will be a paper, and exercise in exegesis of this and interpretation. The skills that you will need for that paper, I am fairly certain are not things that you would have inquired in high school, and if we have some upper classman I don't know, but maybe not even some upper classman would have acquired here yet. Exegesis is a very particular kind of skill and the teaching fellows will be introducing you to methods of exegesis. So, it's really a training ground for the final paper. We have found that people don't succeed in the course in the final paper without the training they get in section discussion, which is why section participation is worth 10% of your grade. However, if there are repeated unexcused absences, there will be an adjustment in the grade calculation and it will be worth 20-25% of your grade, and it will be a negative right? Also, and believe me this is a favor to you. It is definitely a favor to you. These sections are critically important in this course. Okay so, if you have any questions I can hang around for a few minutes, but thank you for coming, we'll see you Monday.