

# Old Testament History & Religion

BIB 101 - Spring, 2007

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## Culture and History of the Old Testament Extra Credit

Pick one of the topics below and write a paper, 3-4 pages long, typed double-spaced, to answer the questions for that topic. In preparation for writing the paper, look up the topic in two or three Bible dictionaries listed below to find answers to the assigned questions. There are other sources available that can be used as well. You will find some of the answers by reading the biblical passages mentioned in the Bible dictionaries. Include a bibliography to indicate the sources you used. Use documentation (footnotes, not endnotes) where appropriate.

*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols., 1992.

*Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul J. Achtemeier, 1996.

*Harper's Encyclopedia of Bible Life*, ed. Madeleine Miller, *et al.*, 1996.

*Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Trent C. Butler, 2003.

*Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, 1998

*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Freedman, 2000

*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 4 vols., 1979-88.

*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, 4 vols. + suppl, 1962-76

*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney, 5 vols, 1999

**Names of God:** What are the major names and titles used for God in the Old Testament?

Where did Israel get these names? What is their significance?

**Canon:** What do we mean by a "canon" of Scripture? How does the Jewish canon differ from the Christian canon? How does the Roman Catholic and Orthodox canon differ from that used by Protestants? Why?

**Abraham:** Briefly tell Abraham's life story. How strong was Abraham's faith through this story? How does this compare with the NT view of Abraham (Hebrews 11)?

**Jacob:** Briefly tell Jacob's life story. What was Jacob like as a person? What is the significance of his name? How does he change in the story?

**Moses:** Briefly tell Moses' life story. What things hindered Moses from being a good leader? How then could he have led the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt?

**Passover:** What is Passover? How was it celebrated in the OT? How is it celebrated by modern Jews? What significance does it have for Christians?

**Canaanites and Philistines:** Who were the various groups of people that were collectively called Canaanites? What was the relationship of the Philistines to Phoenicia and Crete. Why were both of these groups a problem for the Israelites?

**Judges:** What is a Judge? Summarize the period of the Judges, especially emphasizing three or four Judges and their time of leadership. Were these Judges godly people?

**Baal:** Who was Baal? How did Baal fit into the worship practices of ancient Canaanites? Why did Baal worship have so much influence on the Israelites?

David: Briefly tell David's life story. What were his greatest achievements? In what areas did he fail?

Samuel: Briefly tell Samuel's life story, beginning with the prayer of his mother for a child. What role did Samuel play in Israel's history? What was Samuel's relationship with Israel's first kings?

Solomon: How did Solomon get to be king of Israel? How would you describe his reign? What were his greatest achievements? In what areas did he fail?

Priest and Temple: What were the two main responsibilities of Old Testament priests? What role did the Temple play in Israelite society? When and why did the temple and priesthood become a symbol of disobedience to God?

Assyria: What are the major points of contact in the Old Testament between the Israelites and the Assyrians? Why were the Assyrians so feared in the Ancient world? Why could they never totally dominate Israel?

Prophets and Prophecy: Why is the popular concept of prophets as predictors of the future not adequate to describe Old Testament prophets? What was a biblical prophet's primary role? What does it mean to say that a prophet is "called" by God?

Amos, Hosea: When and to whom do these prophets address their message? How do the messages compare? Why is Amos so concerned with social justice? What is the significance of Hosea's use of the metaphor of marriage?

Hezekiah, Josiah: Briefly tell the circumstances surrounding the reign of these two kings. Why are they remembered so positively? What were their major achievements? In what areas did they fail?

Ahaz, Manasseh: Briefly tell the circumstances surrounding the reign of these two kings. Why are they remembered so negatively? What were their major achievements? In what areas did they fail?

Isaiah of Jerusalem: Briefly recount the historical and religious situation at the time of Isaiah's ministry as a prophet. What was Isaiah's original message to Israel. How and why did it change?

Jeremiah: What kind of person was Jeremiah? What was the basic content of his message to Israel? Was his message accepted? Why or why not?

Babylonia, Exile: Briefly recount the important aspects of the Babylonian conquest of Israel. Why did they take captured people back to Babylon? What were the conditions of the exiled people in Babylon, and what was the effect of their condition on their faithfulness to God?

Ezekiel: Briefly tell Ezekiel's life story. What were some of the symbolic actions that he performed? At what point did his message change from negative to positive? Why?

Persia, Return from Exile: Briefly tell how Persia conquered Babylon. Why did the Persian king Cyrus allow the Israelites to return home? What was the Israelite response to this freedom?

Ezra and Nehemiah: Briefly describe the activity of these two leaders in the life of the Israelite community after the Exile. What was Nehemiah's main achievement? Why is Ezra sometimes referred to as the "Father of Judaism?"

Wisdom Literature: What biblical books are referred to as the Wisdom Books? Why are they called this? What is the basic difference between wisdom writings and other kinds of biblical literature?

The Maccabean Wars: Briefly tell the circumstances surrounding the Maccabean rebellion against Greek rule. What precipitated the rebellion? What was the result?