

## Study Guide, 2022-2023

### TH5183 The Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy in Christian Perspective (Level 5, 20 Credits)

**Module Leader: Dr Martin Clay**

**[martin.clay@regents-tc.ac.uk](mailto:martin.clay@regents-tc.ac.uk)**

#### **Summary of module content**

The module explores the challenges and possibilities posed by Christian interpretation(s) of the Mosaic Torah. It evaluates a range of hermeneutical models for Christian interpretation of the Torah and constructively explores the significance of the Torah for Christian thought in relation to key themes, such as: theology; revelation; creation; *imago dei*; covenant; law, ethics and justice; social responsibility; sin and atonement; leadership and power.

Hermeneutical and theological challenges presented to Christian theology by the Torah are also evaluated, for example: divine election and particularism; sex and misogyny; divine curses and collective punishment; creation and creationism; history and myth. An eclectic range of methodologies is appropriately deployed within the module, including socio-rhetorical, literary-critical, and feminist criticisms. Comparative case studies, especially with regard to Ancient Near Eastern texts, New Testament and Quranic reception of the Torah, and current scientific theories of human and cosmic origins serve to clarify and deepen understanding of the genre and significance of the Torah.

#### **Learning outcomes**

After completing the module, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate Christian approaches to the Torah, including its theology, anthropology and legal materials.
2. Analyse the significance of the Torah for articulating key themes in Christian thought.
3. Evaluate the theological, hermeneutical, and ethical challenges posed to Christian thought by the Torah.

## Schedule

Lecture week: Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November to Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:20-13:00	<b>The Abrahamic Covenant &amp; the Patriarchs</b>	<b>Open Lecture Series Rev Dr Ernst Lucas Genesis 1-11 in the light of modern science</b>	<b>Priests, Purity and Pollution in the Torah</b>	<b>Politics, Economics &amp; Sex in Deuteronomy</b>
13:00-14:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14:00-17:30	<b>Moses, Exodus and the Covenant at Sinai</b>	<b>Genesis and Modern Science Q&amp;A with Rev Dr Ernest Lucas (1 hour)</b> <i>College Devotions (15:30-17:00)</i>	<b>Theological and Literary Perspectives on Numbers and Deuteronomy (including a guest lecture on Numbers by Joel Turton)</b>	<b>Marriage and Family Law in Deuteronomy (1 hour)</b>

### Seminars and webinars

Date	Session	Topic	Time	Week
<b>Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November</b>	Classroom Seminar	<i>Dr Martin Clay</i> <b>Introduction to the Torah</b>	10:45-11:45	<b>C1</b>
	Zoom Webinar	<i>Dr Martin Clay</i> <b>Guide to Assessments Humanity in Genesis 1-3</b>	12:00-13:00	
<b>Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November</b>	Classroom Seminar	<i>Dr Martin Clay</i> <b>Parallel Texts: A Key to Reading Genesis</b>	10:45-11:45	
	Classroom Seminar	<i>Dr Martin Clay</i> <b>Divine Domestic Abuse? Hagar in Genesis</b>	12:00-13:00	
Focus Lecture Week at Regents				<b>C2</b>
<b>Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Classroom Seminar	<i>Dr Martin Clay</i> <b>The Akedah: Exegetical Exploration</b>	10:45-11:45	<b>C3</b>

	Classroom Seminar	<i>Dr Martin Clay</i> <b>Philosophical Perspectives on the Akedah</b>	12:00-13:00	
<b>Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Classroom Seminar	<i>Dr David Johnson</i> <b>The Reception of the Torah in the Book of Revelation</b>	10:45-11:45	
	Classroom Seminar	<i>Dr Martin Clay</i> <b>The Sodom and Gomorrah Narrative in Genesis 18-19</b>	12:00-13:00	
<b>Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December</b>	Zoom Webinar	<b>Assessment Queries Concluding Reflections on the Theology of the Torah</b>	12:00-13:00	<b>C4</b>

## Assessment

In addition to writing a 2,000 word constructive-thematic research paper on a key theological theme in a book of the Torah, e.g. holiness in Leviticus, students must also submit a 2,000 word research paper on a hermeneutical problem. Questions for this latter paper include:

- 1. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of Denis Lamoureux’s arguments in favour of an evolutionary understanding of human creation, including his rejection of a historical Adam.**

Denis Lamoureux articulates a passionate case for an evolutionary understanding of human creation from an evangelical perspective. You should explore his core hermeneutical claims relating to worldviews and the role of scientific concordism in biblical interpretation, as well as evaluating his exegetical arguments relating to the interpretation of Genesis 2 and the “de novo” creation of Adam. Primary sources for this paper, including the dialogue contained in *Four View on the Historical Adam* are available via Perlego.

- 2. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of John Walton’s interpretation of Genesis 1 as presenting an Ancient Near Eastern understanding of the created world as a “Functional Cosmic Temple”.**

John H. Walton’s theory that Genesis 1 offers a theologically driven account of the creation of the cosmos as YHWH’s cosmic Temple rather than an empirical scientific account of material origins has gained considerable traction amongst the evangelical community and beyond. You should explore Walton’s key claims regarding the nature and purpose of Genesis 1, evaluating the evidential basis provided for his arguments. You should focus your discussion on his core hermeneutical and exegetical claims relating to the reading of Scripture and Genesis 1 in particular, rather than moving into discussion of

the implications of his position for general theological understanding and the wider scientific origins debate. Some (but not all) primary sources for this paper, including the best starting point, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, are available via Perlego.

**3. Critically assess the extent to which the Genesis narrative presents the character of Lot in a positive light.**

Lot is held in high esteem within later Christian and Islamic tradition but biblical interpreters diverge as to whether his narrative portrayal implies a negative assessment of his character. Focussing particularly on Genesis 13-14 and 18-19, explore themes such as greed, hospitality, moral integrity, and patriarchal honour in relation to Lot, including how comparison with parallel accounts of Abraham shape the reader's perception. In addition to the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, use the e-books *Separating Abram and Lot: The Narrative Role and Early Reception of Genesis 13* and *Universalism and Particularism at Sodom and Gomorrah: Essays in Memory of Ron Pierson* to get started before turning to commentaries.

**4. Analyse the extent to which Genesis 37-50 portrays Joseph as a model of wisdom.**

The narrative of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 is arguably a late biblical text that reflects aspects of the Israelite wisdom tradition. In such a reading, Joseph is frequently considered to be an exemplar of wisdom as evidenced through his skill in interpreting dreams, his rejection of sexual temptation and his meteoric rise to strategic power. However, other interpreters dispute such a claim by suggesting Joseph evidences undesirable character traits such as narcissism and vindictiveness. In addition to the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, begin with the section on Joseph in R.W.L. Moberly's *The Theology of Genesis*. Two useful books, in addition to commentaries, are *Living the Dream: Joseph for Today* and *Joseph Wise and Otherwise: The Intersection of Covenant and Wisdom in Genesis 37-50*.

**5. Provide a comparative analysis of laws relating to prevention of poverty in the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomistic Code.**

The Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-23) and the Deuteronomistic Code (Deuteronomy 12-26) are essential for understanding the Sinaitic covenant's ethical vision for Israel's communal life. You should explore the content of laws relating to poverty within their specific literary and Ancient Near Eastern context and analyse whether and how the Deuteronomistic code develops, rejects and/or adapts aspects of the Covenant Code. You may wish to explore themes such as: social structures and target groups of such laws; the demands, protections and sanctions of the laws; the underlying theological rationale for the laws; the literary presentation of the laws. For an introduction to the biblical texts and the theme of social justice, begin with relevant articles in the e-book *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law* and then read the article entitled "The relationship of the legal codes" in the e-book *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*. As well as commentaries, useful books available on Perlego include *Justice for the Poor? Social Justice in the Old Testament in Concept and Practice* and *The Social World of*

*Deuteronomy: A Feminist Commentary* and “*The Book of the Covenant*”: *A Literary Approach*.

**6. Analyse the treatment of the prophet Balaam within Scripture, commenting on the characterisation of Balaam and the theological significance of such literary traditions.**

The Balaam narrative in Numbers 22-25 is simultaneously a satirical comedic farce, a dark and disturbing tale of judgment and a theologically nuanced account of YHWH’s relationship to Israel. Analyse the development of the portrayal of the prophet Balaam in Numbers 22-25 and its theological significance. You may wish to take account of the appearance of Balaam in wider Ancient Near Eastern sources as part of the analysis. Develop the argument further by considering the reception of the Balaam tradition within late New Testament literature – 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation. Do their perspectives conflict with, supplement or simply reprise the earlier tradition in Numbers? In addition to the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, use the e-book *Balaam in Text and Tradition* to get started before turning to commentaries.

**7. Assess the extent to which comparison with Ancient Near Eastern Suzerain-Vassal Covenant treaties can deepen an interpreter’s understanding of the literary form and content of Deuteronomy.**

Comparative study of the Ancient Near Eastern Treat texts and the book of Deuteronomy informs much recent research into Deuteronomy. Explore the debate surrounding the relevance of ANE treaties for interpretation of Deuteronomy but do not focus solely on the issue of primary influence (i.e. Hittite or Assyrian treaties) and the relation of that debate to the dating of Deuteronomy. Rather, you should explore the extent to which comparison with ANE treaties illuminates Deuteronomy’s literary structure, argument/content and the characterisation of YHWH’s relationship with Israel, whether in terms of influence or independence. The best starting point is the relevant chapter in *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, available on Perlego. Then read the section “Part IV: The Legacy of the Ancient Near Eastern Context of Biblical Law” in the e-book *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law*. Useful sources by Jack Lundbom, Daniel Block and Meredith Kline are available on Perlego.

*Deadline*

Full Time Students	Monday 09/01/22
Part Time Students	Monday 13/02/22

## General Bibliography

### *Core Texts*

Desmond Alexander, T., and David W. Baker, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002.

Dozeman, Thomas B. *The Pentateuch: Introducing the Torah*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017.

Hays, Christopher B. *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

Kaminsky, Joel S., and Joel N. Lohr. *The Torah: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2011.

### *General Reading*

Alter, Robert. *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Barmash, Pamela, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Baden, Joel S., and Jeffrey Stackert, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Barrett, Matthew B. and Ardel B. Caneday, eds. *Four Views on the Historical Adam*. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

Benjamin, Don C. *The Social World of Deuteronomy: A New Feminist Commentary*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015.

Block, Daniel I. *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021.

Briggs, Richard S., and Joel N. Lohr. *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah as Christian Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.

C. John Collins. *Reading Genesis Well: Navigating History, Poetry, Science, and Truth in Genesis 1-11*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.

Day, John. *From Creation to Abraham: Further Studies in Genesis 1-11*. London: T&T Clark, 2022.

- Day, John. *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1-11*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
- Davies, Eryl W. *Numbers: The Road to Freedom*. T&T Clark's Study Guides to the Old Testament. London T&T Clark, 2017.
- Gentry, Peter J. and Stephen J. Wellum. *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*. Second Edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publications, 2018.
- Hahn Scott W. *Kinship By Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Hawkins, Ralph K. *Discovering Exodus: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. London: SPCK Publishing, 2021.
- Held, Rabbi Shai. *The Heart of the Torah: Essays on the Weekly Torah Portion*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2017.
- Hendel, Ronald, ed. *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Hoffmeier, James K., Gordon J. Wenham, and Kenton L. Sparks. *Genesis: History, Fiction, Or Neither. Three Views on the Bible's Earliest Chapters*. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Janzen, Mark D., Scott Stripling, James K. Hoffmeier, Peter Feinman, Gary D. Rendsburg, and Rondal Hendel. *Five Views on the Exodus: Historicity, Chronology, and Theological Implications*. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021.
- Jenson, Philip Peter Jenson. *Leviticus: The Priestly Vision of Holiness*. T&T Clark's Study Guides to the Old Testament. London T&T Clark, 2021.
- Lodahl, Michael. *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and the Qur'an Side by Side*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010.
- Lundbom, Jack R. *Deuteronomy: Law and Covenant*. Cascade Companions. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017.
- McEntire, Mark. *Portraits of a Mature God: Choices in Old Testament Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013.
- Provan, Iain. *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. London: SPCK Publishing, 2015.
- Scholz, Suzanne. *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010.

Todd, James M. *Sinai and the Saints: Reading Old Covenant Laws for the New Covenant Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017.

Walton, John H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018.

### *Commentaries*

At undergraduate level, students should focus on using intermediate to advanced level commentaries in their research papers. Single volume commentaries on the Bible will be too general to be of much use, though they may help to orientate you initially. Free online commentaries are too superficial and often very old – they should be avoided. Self-published works should also be avoided – check that commentaries are published by reputable companies, e.g. Baker Academic, Eerdmans, Zondervan, T&T Clark, Fortress Press.

Ideally, reference will be made primarily to commentaries published after the year 2000, though classic volumes such as Brueggemann on Genesis (1986) or Wenham on Leviticus (1995) remain helpful. For this module, the following series will be useful though make sure to check others not listed here, for example the volumes by Waltke (Genesis) and Lundbom (Deuteronomy) which are not part of any commentary series:

**Some recent quality commentaries are easily available via Perlego – see series in bold font below** – and are best searched for by book name + commentary, e.g. “Leviticus commentary”.

- **Intermediate Commentaries**

Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Abingdon)

Apollos Old Testament (IVP Academic)

Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch (Baker Academic)

Cambridge Bible Commentaries on the Old Testament (Cambridge University Press)

Continental Commentaries (Fortress Press)

Interpretation Commentary Series (Westminster John Knox Press)

Kregel Exegetical Library (Kregel Academic)

New American Commentary (Broadman and Holman)

**NIV Application Commentary** (Zondervan)

Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Smyth and Helwys)

**Teach the Text Commentary Series** (Baker)

The JPS Torah Commentary (JPS)

**The Old Testament Library** (Presbyterian)



**Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary** (Brazos Press)

**Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary** (Zondervan)

- **Advanced Commentaries**

Anchor Yale Bible (Yale University Press)

Hermeneia (Fortress Press)

**International Critical Commentary** (T&T Clark)

**International Theological Commentary** (T&T Clark)

International Exegetical Commentary on the Old/New Testament (Kohlhammer)

**New International Commentary on the Old Testament** (Eerdmans)

**Word Biblical Commentary** (Thomas Nelson)