

1-1-2001

OT 705 Biblical Aramaic

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OT 705 BIBLICAL ARAMAIC

Spring Semester, 2001

9:30-10:45 T & Th

Instructor: Bill T. Arnold

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course introduces the student, who already has a working knowledge of Biblical Hebrew, to this cognate language used in Ezra and Daniel. With the addition of Biblical Aramaic, the student will have a well-rounded linguistic and cultural context for interpreting the Old Testament.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. To broaden the student's understanding of Old Testament faith through firsthand experience with the original languages.
- B. To provide the student with a basic understanding of Aramaic grammar in general, and to develop a reading knowledge of the Aramaic sections of Ezra and Daniel in particular.
- C. To equip the student with a basic vocabulary of Biblical Aramaic.
- D. To demonstrate the elementary principles of comparative Semitics through comparison of Aramaic with Classical Hebrew.
- E. To increase the student's facility in Classical Hebrew by gaining a working knowledge of this additional Semitic language.

III. COURSE PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Method of Instruction

The course will have few lectures, primarily at the beginning to introduce and orient the student to the study of Aramaic, its location among the ancient Semitic languages, and its affinities with Biblical Hebrew. Most of the course will assume a seminar format in which discussion will center on specific Aramaic texts assigned for each class session. Points of discussion will involve grammatical details, interpretive methodology, comparative Semitic observations and any questions stemming from the student's work on the text.

B. Textbooks

Required:

Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907. Repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979.

Elliger, K., and W. Rudolph. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967-1977.

Rosenthal, Franz. *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*. 6th ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995.

Course Packet available in the bookstore (see appendix below for contents).

Recommended:

- Cook, Edward M. "The Orthography of Final Unstressed Long Vowels in Old and Imperial Aramaic." Pages 53-68 in *Sopher Mahir: Northwest Semitic Studies Presented to Stanislav Segert*. Ed. E. M. Cook. Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- _____. *Word Order in the Aramaic of Daniel*. Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1986.
- Dove, John F. "An Introductory Grammar of Biblical Aramaic: A Text and Workbook." M.A. thesis, Ashland Theological Seminary, 1994.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A., and Stephen A. Kaufman. *An Aramaic Bibliography, Part I: Old, Official, and Biblical Aramaic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992.
- Greenspahn, Frederick E. *An Introduction to Aramaic*. Atlanta: Scholars, 1999.
- Jerusalmi, Isaac. *The Aramaic Sections of Ezra and Daniel: A Philological Commentary*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1978.
- Johns, Alger F. *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*. Andrews University Monographs 1. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University, 1963.

C. Assignments

Students will be required to complete readings assigned throughout the course (see tentative schedule below). The student will keep a notebook or file which logs her or his readings of the Aramaic texts assigned, including specific verses read and dates completed. The notebook shall include parsing for especially difficult verbal forms, discussions of grammatically complicated sentences, comparative Semitics observations and any vocabulary notes needed to prepare for class discussion.

D. Examinations

There will be two examinations during the semester (see schedule below). In addition, vocabulary and grammatical quizzes will be assigned as appropriate. The final examination will be an opportunity for the student to treat a pericope selected from Daniel 7:9-28, commenting on all verbal forms, comparative Semitic observations, and interpretive issues arising from the text. The final examination will be on May 16 (1:00-3:00 pm).

E. Research Paper

During the semester, the student will write a brief paper of no more than 2500 words on the topic of his or her choice from the list below (approximately 8-10 pages). In matters of form and style, the paper should follow Patrick H. Alexander, et al., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). The student should make sure his or her name is clearly visible on the first page of the paper along with the SPO number.

The paper should be stapled in the upper left corner with no bindings or folders of any kind. The paper is due at the beginning of class on May 16. There will be a penalty for late papers (one-third letter grade after the beginning of class on May 16 and a whole letter grade after May 17).

The topics will be chosen by March 15 and reported to the instructor on an index card that day. The purpose of this project is to provide background information for a better comprehension of the Aramaic language and the specific sections of Scripture under study. The following list of topics is partial. Other topics may be chosen in consultation with the professor.

1. The rise of the Arameans and their role in the ancient Near East.
2. Aramaic and its position in the Semitic family of languages.
3. Characteristic features of Old, Imperial, Middle and Late Aramaic, and the position of Biblical Aramaic in this schema.
4. The Neo-Babylonian Empire and the biblical witness to its role in history.
5. The Persians and Judah's restoration period, especially as they relate to the Aramaic portions of Ezra.
6. Greek rule in the Levant, the Hasmonean period, and implications for the Book of Daniel.

IV. Student Evaluation

Class performance/notebook	25%
Vocabulary Quizzes	15%
Examinations	40%
Research Paper	20%

V. Tentative schedule of assignments

Feb 6	Introduction
Feb 8	Ezra 1:1-4:8 (English) Kaufman, "Languages (Aramaic)," <i>ABD</i> 4:173-178 (course packet). <u>Collateral</u> : Fitzmyer, "Phases," 57-84 (course packet).
Feb 13	Ezra 4:8-12 Rosenthal, 1-63
Feb 15	Ezra 4:13 – 5:2
Feb 20	Ezra 5:3-17 Millard, "Arameans," <i>ABD</i> 1:345-350 (course packet).
Feb 22	Ezra 6:1-8
Feb 27	EXAMINATION #1
Mar 1	Ezra 6:9-18

	Ezra 7:1-11 (English) Ezra 7:12-20 (Aramaic)
Mar 6	Ezra 7:21-26 Daniel 1:1-2:4a (English) Daniel 2:4b-11
Mar 8	Daniel 2:12-16 Arnold, "Use of Aramaic," 1-16 (course packet).
Mar 13	Daniel 2:17-30
Mar 15	Daniel 2:31-38 PAPER TOPICS DUE
Mar 20	Daniel 2:39 – 3:1-5
Mar 22	Daniel 3:6-12 Driver, "Book of Daniel," 110-19, 323-25 (course packet).
Mar 27	Daniel 3:13-20
Mar 29	EXAMINATION #2
Apr 3	Daniel 3:21-33
Apr 5	Daniel 4:1-13
Apr 17	Daniel 4:14-25
Apr 19	Daniel 4:26-34
Apr 24	Daniel 5:1-10
Apr 26	Daniel 5:11-20
May 1	Daniel 5:21-30
May 3	Daniel 6:1-13
May 8	Daniel 6:14-25
May 10	Daniel 6:26 – 7:8 PAPER DUE
May 16	FINAL EXAM on Daniel 7:9-28

VI. Appendix: Contents of Course Packet

- Kaufman, Stephen A. "Languages (Aramaic)." Pages 173-78 in vol. 4 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. "The Phases of the Aramaic Language." Pages 57-84 in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 25. Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979.
- Millard, Alan R. "Arameans." Pages 345-50 in vol. 1 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Wilson, Gerald H. "An Index to the Biblical Passages Cited in Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 24 (1979): 21-24.
- Mitchel, Larry A. *A Student's Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984. (bibliography at pages 52-65 and 83-88)
- Arnold, Bill T. "The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible: Another Look at Bilingualism in Ezra and Daniel." *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 22 (1996): 1-16.
- Driver, G. R. "The Aramaic of the Book of Daniel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 45 (1926): 110-19, 323-25.