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OT 610 Pentateuch

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Department of Inductive Biblical Studies

OT(IBS)610 3 hours
PENTATEUCH (Inductive Biblical Studies)
Prerequisite: NT(IBS) 510 or 511

David L. Thompson†

Fall 2001

I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of Genesis through Deuteronomy. It builds on the methodology of the first Inductive Biblical Studies course by further use of what has been previously learned and by emphasizing the study of books as wholes. Accordingly, there is special focus on the initial survey of books as wholes, the interpretation of parts of books in the context of the books as a whole and the synthesis of books. In addition, attention is given to thinking, valuing and living biblically by learning how to apply Scripture to life and ministry.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. Methodology.** By the end of the course the student should be able evidentially and contextually to:
1. Interpret books-as-wholes and any of their parts in light of the whole;
 2. Evaluate and apply passages thus interpreted;
 3. Correlate the theology of the passages studied to the teaching of other biblical materials, thus moving toward a biblical theology.
- B. Content.** The student shall be able to:
1. Think through the contents of each book of the Pentateuch studied in the course without recourse to the printed text, identifying major passages and delineating major themes;
 2. Demonstrate the importance of a sound methodology for interpretation, including specific examples from the Pentateuch;
 3. Use a general knowledge of the historical and religious background of the Pentateuch in the interpretation of these books.
- C. Attitude.** The student should desire and intend to:
1. Apply the inductive method to other biblical books;
 2. Make the Pentateuch the object of life-long study;
 3. Use the Pentateuch as a resource for preaching, teaching and living.

III. CLASS RESOURCES

- A. Required Texts**
Revised Standard Version of the Bible or some other contemporary, standard (non-paraphrasing) version with minimal editorial clutter in the layout. NRSV, NASB, and NIV are also fine.
Bible Study That Works. Revised edition. Evangel Press, 1994. David L. Thompson
- B. Library Reserve**
Achtmeier, Elizabeth. Preaching from the Old Testament. Westminster/John Knox, 1989.
Brueggemann, Walter. Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination. Fortress, 1993.
_____. Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles. Westminster/John Knox, 1997.
Craddock, Fred B. Preaching. Abingdon, 1985.
Holbert, John C. Preaching Old Testament: Proclamation and Narrative in the Hebrew Bible. Abingdon, 1991.

† Significant features of the lessons in this syllabus reflect work, teaching and syllabi of Dr. Robert A. Traina, F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies Emeritus, distinguished teacher of English Bible at Asbury Theological Seminary, 1966-1988. They are used here with the permission of Dr. Traina and with my deep appreciation.

Long, Thomas G. The Witness of Preaching. WJK, 1989.
 Miller, Donald G. The Way to Biblical Preaching. Abingdon, 1957.

C. On-line resources

The following (and other) materials will appear in an email (First Class) folder in your campus, First Class, e-mail desk top.

- PowerPoint Slides and other documents. Copies of the Power point overheads/slides and other materials we use in class will be lodged here for your review and, if desired, duplication.
- Pentateuch Studies. Some selected studies I have done on Pentateuchal texts but which we will not use in class will be found here.

WARNING. If you do print Power Point materials BE SURE TO MARK "PURE BLACK & WHITE" IN THE PRINT DIALOGUE BOX in order to avoid pools of ink on your paper or the library floor (It is not a pretty sight.).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE. Materials we will use in class will in some cases be posted here long before their use in class.

- You should consider these materials secondary sources.
- They should be consulted only after you have done your own work and then only with proper documentation and critical interaction. Undocumented use of these materials will be considered plagiarism. These materials are not a substitute for interaction with regularly published secondary sources.

CAMPUS EMAIL SERVICE. If you have not established you on-campus First Class email service you will need to do that to access these materials (See Kevin Heickes, BC 323). No cost to you for this.

C. Library reserve resources.

- Some of materials available digitally and additional materials are available in hard copy in a "Pentateuch" box at the library reserve desk.
- Robert Traina. Methodical Bible Study.

IV. COURSE PROCEDURES

A. Inductive Studies of the Pentateuch.

The most important part of the course will be the student's own, independent, direct studies of the Pentateuch, due at class time and on the dates assigned.

A word about "**independent.**" It is understood that these lessons are primarily to be notes of the student's own direct study of the Bible, with reference to secondary sources only as is appropriate--to minimally interpretive works during the course of study and to more interpretive works only after considerable interpretive study of one's own. Then the student will be expected to give evidence of critical interaction with interpretive sources used. Appropriate use of secondary sources is encouraged, indeed required. But when secondary sources are used, clear documentation will appear. This is sufficiently important from methodological and instructional, not to mention moral perspectives that unacknowledged appropriation of significant information and ideas from interpretive or introductory resources will be considered plagiarism. **Plagiarism** will certainly lead to a grade of zero for the lesson involved and may constitute grounds for failure in the course and other disciplinary action as provided in Guidelines for the Asbury Experience: 2000-2001.

Independent here excludes reference all reference to any previous student's work in the course and undocumented use of lecture notes from any previous semester of OT(IBS)610 and undocumented use of course materials made available on library reserve and on line. It is assumed that the student's notes and all work submitted for this course is the student's own work, done specifically for OT(IBS)610, and not previously submitted as part of any

other course's requirements. Exceptions to certain aspects of these procedures, when group study is suggested, will be clearly announced.

B. Format & Submission of Papers.

To facilitate handling by my office and especially by SPO personnel:

1. **Each lesson** should contain on the front page, upper right corner:
 - Student's SPO
 - Student's name (please print, large "font")
 - Lesson numeral and page number (IV-1, IV-2)
 - Date due/Date completed, e.g., "Due Sept 18 / Done Sept 16"

On succeeding pages you need only put your last name and the lesson-page enumeration. Staple or paper-clip every multi-sheet work submitted. No guarantees made on preservation of unsecured "stacks" of paper submitted.

The placement and order of this information are important for SPO handling. Do not center your name and SPO down in the middle of the cover page. Do put this info in the upper right hand corner (portrait orientation).

2. Please write/print on one side only of paper.

C. Evaluation and Feedback

1. Lessons. All lessons are due, complete at class time as assigned on the dates posted with each lesson and will be reviewed for credit. Selected lessons will be graded for written feedback.
2. Classroom instruction and interaction.
3. Peer consultation. Group work will be encouraged on several lessons and also in class to make insights and instruction from colleagues available.

D. Grade

1. Components.

Lessons	
I	05%
II - V	20%
VI - IX	25%
X - XII	25%
XIII	25%
2. Grading Criteria and Criteria of Excellence
The stated course objectives and the directions in the appendixes, especially Appendixes I, II and V provide the bases of evaluation. Careful attention should be paid particularly to the appended materials.
3. Assessment Reflected in Grade
(See Seminarian: The Catalogue Edition for grade values.)
 - A = Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives
 - B = Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
 - C = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
 - D = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
 - F = Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives.
4. Late work.
Except in cases of emergency or by previous arrangement with the instructor, work submitted late may be accepted for credit but will not normally be graded.

E. Extra-credit Research and Bibliographic Review.

Students wishing to earn extra credit should request an extra credit assignment sheet from the instructor. It outlines an approximately 15 hour investment whereby a semester grade can be raised one level (e.g., A- to A). This work is due by 5:00 p.m., Friday, December 14.

F. Course Requirements (See also Appendix I)

1. Completion and submission of assignments and lessons in writing as assigned. At least 70% of the lessons must be completed to earn credit in the course.
2. Punctual attendance at all classes for the entire class. Two class sessions of absence are allowed without penalty. Every absence beyond that will cancel 0.5 credit for one lesson, unless provisions are made for make up work. Responsibility for negotiating and completing such "make up" rests with the student.
3. Responsible handling of difficulty with class content or requirements, of late work, of absences or other matters related to participation in the class.

V. INDUCTIVE STUDIES IN THE PENTATEUCH

Suggestions:

1. *Read through an entire assignment before beginning it.*
2. *Recall that items numbered separately are often interrelated and best considered together and done in light of each other.*

**FOUNDATIONS
LESSON I 5%**

LESSON I. SYLLABUS & FOUNDATIONS

DUE SEPT 6-20 AND OCTOBER 16

1. Read through the syllabus, sections I-IV, establishing the base of our mutual accountability for acquaintance with their contents. Review also the bibliography and appendixes also, so you will know of the resources there. Due, Thursday, September 6.
2. Read Bible Study That Works, revised edition. Write a 500 word (excluding headings), typed, critical interaction with this work. The critical interaction is due Thursday, September 13.
 - If you have already read BSTW,
 - 1) Select another text (or equivalent portion thereof) from Bibliography B, "Text to Sermon," concerns, to read and review on the same schedule as BSTW, **or**
 - 2) Read 100 pages of most interest to you in Robert Traina, Methodical Bible Study, and write the response; or
 - 3) Suggest another hermeneutical reading you would like to do.
3. Begin reading the book of Genesis and giving brief, descriptive (vs. interpretive), associative titles to each chapter. Submit Thursday September 20.
4. Read one of the works on preaching or preaching the Old Testament listed in Select Bibliography V.A. Write a 500 word (excluding headings), typed, critical interaction with this work. Due October 16

**GROUP ONE:
LESSONS II - V (20% of semester grade)**

LESSON II. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS

SEPT 18

If possible, work on this lesson in a group of 2 or 3 colleagues. Approach the work as *independent colleagues consulting, not* as persons working on a group project.

1. Title the chapters/segments. Discern the general nature of the materials also (BSTW 27-31; MBS 53-59).
2. Locate and title the main larger units and sub-units in the book (beyond the segments). Identify a **few, major structural relationships** operative between these and in the book as a whole (BSTW, 32-43; MBS 38-66). Briefly describe the specific materials involved in each structure. Give references.

3. Ask a brief, coherent set of **interpretive questions** regarding each major structural relationship observed (adapting those in Appendix III to this specific content) and record them with each major set of structural observations (BSTW, 44-49).
4. On the basis of your structural observations, identify the **strategic areas** which provide insight into the book as a whole. Guided by your structural observations, give reasons for each selection in terms its relationship to the content of the book as a whole. It may be helpful also to state these together with each law (Appendix I#13).
5. Tentatively identify **literary forms and genres** of book-level significance.
6. Observe the **atmosphere/tone** of the book.
7. Note data bearing on such **critical questions** as author, place, date of writing, history of composition, recipients, etc. **Approach these questions inductively** from the book itself, not from introductory remarks in your study Bible or from other secondary sources. You will have plenty of time to consult these sources during the course of further study.
8. Note other **major impressions and questions** relating to the book as a whole.
9. Present your major findings (content, structure, strategic passages, etc.) on a book chart. You may need a legal size sheet for books of this size.

LESSON III SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

SEPT 25

Apply Lesson II to this book.

LESSON IV. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

OCT 02

Apply Lesson II to this book.

LESSON V. SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

OCT 09

Apply Lesson II to this book.

**GROUP TWO:
LESSONS VI - IX (25% OF GRADE)**

LESSON VI. GENESIS 25:19-35:29. SECTION SURVEY AND INTERPRETATION

OCT 16

INTERPRETIVE FOCUS: 32:22-32 IN THE CONTEXT OF CHS. 32-33

If possible, work on this lesson in a group of 2 or 3 colleagues. Approach the work as *independent colleagues consulting*, not as persons working on a group project.

1. GENERAL NOTES ON APPROACH TO LESSONS SUCH AS VI & VII, WHICH TOGETHER MOVE FROM SURVEY ON THROUGH APPLICATION OF A UNIT.
 - a. Devote no more than half of your time (3.5 - 4.5 out of 7.5 - 9.0 hours) to the section survey (Gen 25-35). This should be entirely independent, inductive work.
 - b. Think of your work interpretive work (no. 3 below) in two stages:
 - 1) Independent, inductive analysis of the text (including opening survey) and other primary sources.
 - 2) Interactive, consultative work with interpretive secondary sources.
 - c. Do the majority of your independent, inductive analysis of the text and its context for interpretation in this lesson. Do the interactive, consultative work with interpretive secondary sources at the outset of the next lesson, moving on there to additional analysis and reflection of your own prompted by that consultation.
 - [d. In that next lesson we will complete the interpretation and move on to evaluation and application.]
2. SURVEY OBSERVATION OF GENESIS 25:19-35:29.

- a. Building on the segment titles from your book survey, discern and title the **main units and sub-units** within this section.¹ The titles should be brief, accurate, descriptive, non-interpretive, associative.
 - b. Identify a **few, major structural relationships** operative in this unit as a whole (i.e., covering well over half the material). Briefly describe the specific materials involved in each structure. Always give references. Cf. BSTW, 32-43; MBS. 36-67.
 - c. Based on your structural observations, identify the **strategic passages** which provide insight into the unit as a whole, when viewed from the perspective of these particular structures. Guided by your structural observations give reasons for each selection in terms of its relationship to the materials of the unit as a whole. It may be helpful also to state these with your presentation of each major structural law (App. I#13).
 - d. Identify the set of structural observations you regard as most important to an understanding of this unit or which isolates the unit's most important theological claim(s) or which enables you most readily to work on our selected focus passage. Focusing on these observations, pose a coherent set of **interpretive questions** regarding your observations and the structure itself (See Appendix I #10-12 and Appendix III; BSTW, 44-49).
 - e. Identify **literary forms or genres** employed in the section as a whole as you are able.
 - f. Describe the **atmosphere/tone** of the unit.
 - g. Note data relevant to compositional history, probable first readers, etc., i.e., who wrote this? to whom? for what reasons? At this stage these will be *very* tentative conclusions though meaningful.
3. INTERPRETATION of this unit as a *whole by concentration on an important passage, Genesis 32:22-32*, in its section (and book) context.
- a. Preparation: bring forward the questions you posed above (1.d), or generate questions in the course of your preliminary observations and use those to guide your work.
 - b. Answer these questions as thoroughly as your time will allow by gathering evidence from both objective and subjective determinants. This will involve especially analysis of selected features of the unit itself and careful inferential reasoning based on your analyses and all other evidence (BSTW, 49-64). Answering the definitive question, "What is involved in...?" is often an excellent way to focus the initial stages of analysis, moving then to basic definition and other matters.
 - 1) Record observations and inferences, separating them clearly using either the two-column format, indentation of inferences, or some other indicator that helps you clarify your thinking process at this point.
 - 2) Number observations and give Bible references. Do not simply quote the text. Probe, analyze, describe, label. Say something about what is in the text.
 - 3) Avoid non-significant rehearsal of grammar and go beyond even significant grammatical analysis to other matters.
 - 4) Actually draw inferences from your observations. Don't simply rephrase your observations as inferences.
 - 5) Pay careful attention to Appendix V in this work.
 - c. Begin by a survey/study of the literary structure and/or story/plot development of the subsection (chs. 32-33) and a detailed analysis of the focus passage (33:22-32), drawing inferences from both efforts.
 - d. If it is necessary to move beyond immediate-context definition of key terms, consult published word studies (See VI.D) or do your own strictly limited inquiry of a word's use (See Appendix II).

¹ In larger units, such as 11:27-25:11 and others, in order to keep within the time limits that make this work manageable, one must move immediately to naming the chapters/segments and then the groups of segments ("sub-sections" of the "section," 11:27-25:11), and then the section as a whole. In a brief sections like 2:4-4:26 one can name the paragraphs, then the segments (i.e., groups of paragraphs), then the section as a whole.

- e. Save time for reflection on rational and implicational questions related to and based on the matters you have studied.
 - f. Summarize your findings from this independent, inductive work.
We will continue this interpretive process in the next lesson.
 - g. After you have done your own analysis and consulted various relatively non-interpretive sources for such matters as historical-social context, consult two or three critical interpreters of your passage (with clear documentation). Interact critically with these resources, integrating the results into the answers to your interpretive questions.
 - h. Return to the text for further analysis of your materials and reflection on your findings in light of your research.
 - i. Summarize your findings.
 - j. Remember: in the preceding work, you are aiming at a significant, integrated interpretation of a significant feature of the unit as a whole, not a collection of disconnected answers to miscellaneous questions.
4. Synthesis of interpretation
- a. List in full sentences the main theological claims this text and context make, as you have interpreted them.
 - b. Purpose. In light of your work, to whom do you think this unit might have been addressed. That is, what problems, misunderstandings, weaknesses, community needs, human needs, etc. might it have been addressed and why?

LESSON VII. GENESIS 25:19 - 35:29 INTERPRETATION, EVALUATION, APPLICATION OCT 23
CONTINUATION OF PREVIOUS LESSON *WITH FOCUS ON GENESIS 32:22-32.*

If possible, work on this lesson in a group of 2 or 3 colleagues. Approach the work as *independent colleagues consulting, not* as persons working on a group project.

1. INTERPRETATION, CONTINUED. Pick up the interpretive process where you left off in the previous lesson, hopefully at 3f. You should just be turning to your consultative research with other interpreters. Complete the interpretation assignment in Lesson VI on through the synthesis. This should issue in a set of theological claims addressed to a certain audience with suggested needs.
2. EVALUATION. Select one or two of these major theological claims and evaluate it/them, using the same two phase approach you did to interpret the passage. That is, first do your own inductive, analytical evaluative work and then consult and interact two or three major "evaluators." If appropriate return to further evaluative analysis of your own spawned by this interaction.
 - a. Locate other biblical passages, Old Testament and New, which deal with the same issues as does your target passage in its context, getting before you the canonical dialogue on these matters.
 - b. Discern what these various passages "do" with the claims of your passage, discerning how these claims are evaluated in the process.
 - c. Be alert to the historical and cultural contexts from which the various voices in the dialogue speak.
 - d. Remember to draw *evaluative* inferences at this stage, not more interpretive inferences.
 - e. In this process separate observation from inferences/conclusions, as in the interpretive process.
 - f. Summarize your evaluative findings, often the claims of your target passage as *they have been evaluated* by the canonical dialogue.
 - g. When you have concluded this major independent, inductive phase of your evaluation turn to other "evaluators" for their evaluative treatment of your passage or the passages you have consulted in the canonical dialogue (with clear documentation). See BSTW2:82-84. As with interpretation, interact critically with these resources, being clear as to how they have contributed to your findings or not.

- f. Summarize your final evaluative findings.
3. APPLICATION.
- By creative imagination, ponder the continuities and discontinuities between the worlds of the biblical writers and their ideal first readers and your/our worlds.
 - Use the "Whole-Life Application Probe" to prompt insight on areas of life touched by your text and the claims it makes as evaluated.
 - Use suggestions in BSTW2:86-93 to build application.
 - List from this research and reflection the things you believe you could legitimately proclaim from this text. Actual lesson and sermon preparation would involve selecting and ordering these in a way appropriate to the given time and place and people to which you would be speaking.

LESSON VIII. EXODUS 19 - 24. SECTION SURVEY AND INTERPRETATION OCT 30
INTERPRETIVE FOCUS: 19:1-6

Apply Lesson VI to this section of Exodus.

LESSON IX. EXODUS 19 - 24. INTERPRETATION, EVALUATION, APPLICATION NOV 06
CONTINUATION OF PREVIOUS LESSON WITH FOCUS ON EXODUS 19:1-6

Apply Lesson VII to Exodus:1-6 in its section and book context. This will involve reference to the previous lesson as well.

**GROUP THREE:
LESSONS X - XII (25% OF GRADE)**

LESSON X. LEVITICUS 1 - 7. SURVEY, INTERPRETATION, EVALUATION, APPLICATION NOV 13
INTERPRETIVE FOCUS ON LEVITICUS 1:3-17.

Apply Lessons VI and VII to this unit and this focus passage.

LESSON XI. NUM 13:1-14:45 SURVEY, INTERPRETATION, EVALUATION, APPLICATION NOV 27
INTERPRETIVE FOCUS ON NUMBERS 14:4 - 10, WITH INTERPRETIVE ATTENTION TO THE
WHOLE SECTION.

Apply Lessons VI and VII to this unit and this focus passage.

LESSON XII. DEUTERONOMY 4:44-11:32 DEC 04
SURVEY, INTERPRETATION, EVALUATION, APPLICATION
WITH INTERPRETIVE FOCUS ON DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

Apply Lessons VI and VII to this unit and this focus passage.

**FINAL LESSON
LESSON XIII (25% OF GRADE)**

LESSON XIII. SYNTHESIS AND FINAL LESSON: TUESDAY, DEC 11, 1:00 - 3:00 P.M.
DEUTERONOMY 29-34, WITH FOCUS ON 30:15-20

NOTICE:

EXCEPT BY PRIOR ARRANGEMENT THIS LESSON WILL BE ACCEPTED ONLY FROM
PERSONS ATTENDING THE FINAL SESSION.

- Survey 29-34
- Interpret 30:15-20 in considerable detail and relate significant features of this paragraph to the larger context of Deuteronomy (especially 27:1-28:68; 4:44-11:32 and chs. 31-34) and the Pentateuch as a whole.

3. Select a main truth from your findings in the study of 30:15-20 in context and Evaluate it. Remember that evaluation goes beyond citation of Scripture to the drawing of *evaluative* inferences.
4. Apply this aspect of your Deuteronomy 30:15-20 findings thus evaluated.
5. Be guided by the instructions of Lessons VI - VII in this process.

This lesson is due at the beginning of class and serves as our "final." We will be engaged for the full two hours on this and other important integrative matters. Plan now to be there.

DEC 14 (F) ALL WORK DUE

- LESSON XIII DUE AT CLASS TIME MONDAY
- ALL OTHER WORK, INCLUDING EXTRA CREDIT WORK (SEE IV.E) DUE BY 5:00 PM., FRIDAY, DEC 14.

VI. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

See Section I below for extended bibliographies

A. METHOD, HERMENEUTICS, AND PROCLAMATION (marked "•"); popular presentations^P

- Achtemeier, Elizabeth. Preaching from the Old Testament. Westminster/John Knox, 1989.
- Alter, Robert A. The Art of Biblical Narrative. Basic Books, 1981.
- _____. The Art of Biblical Poetry. Basic Books, 1985.
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- Cotterell, Peter and Max Turner. Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989.
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- _____. Theological Diversity and The Authority of The Old Testament. Eerdmans, 1987.
- Green, Joel B. and Max Turner (eds.). Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies & Systematic Theology. Eerdmans, 2000.
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- Silva, Moisés. Has The Church Misread the Bible? The History of Interpretation in Light of Current Issues. Vol. 1 of Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. New Horizons in Hermeneutics. Eerdmans, 1992.
- Thompson, David L. Bible Study That Works. Revised edition. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1994.^P
- Traina, Robert A. "Inductive Bible Study Reexamined in the Light of Contemporary Hermeneutics," Interpreting God's Word for Today. Ed. J. E. Massey and Wayne McCown. Warner, 1982.

_____. Methodical Bible Study. 1952. Zondervan, 1982.

B. PENTATEUCH/HEXATEUCH STUDIES

- Arnold, Bill T. and Bryan E. Beyer. Readings from the Ancient Near East. Baker, forthcoming.
- Brueggemann, Walter, and Hans Walter Wolff. The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions. Atlanta: John Knox, 1978.
- Childs, Brevard S. Introduction to the Old Testament As Scripture. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.
- Coats, George W. Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God. JSOT Supplement Series, no. 57. Sheffield: JSOT, 1988.
- Clines, David J. A. The Theme of the Pentateuch. Sheffield: JSOT, 1978.
- Fretheim, Terence E. The Pentateuch. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Abingdon, 1996.
- Hamilton, Victor P. Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982
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- Livingston, Herbert G. The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
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- Whybray, R. N. The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study. JSOT Supplement 53. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987.

C. INDIVIDUAL BOOKS

For individual books, see Biblical Resources for Ministry (Bibliography F below).
 Arnold, Bill T. Encountering the Book of Genesis. Baker, 1999.

D. WORD STUDY RESOURCES

Concordances and Indexes

- † Alsop, John., ed. An Index to the Revised Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek Lexicon. Zondervan, 1979. Ref PA 881 .R38 1979
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SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR WORK

FORMAT

1. Check "format" section of syllabus for lesson-cover info, e.g., name, SPO, due/completion date.
2. Organize work so that the relationship between parts and the relative importance of the items is clear.
3. Separate observations from inferences (interpretive & evaluative), using either two column format or other clear means for distinguishing the two.
4. Show by notes and format that you understand the connection between the parts of the study process.

SURVEY

5. **Distinguish** between various **levels of structure**-- clause, paragraph, segment, and book-level. Segment level structure, e.g., should relate to significant amounts of material in the whole segment.
6. Give sufficient information with your structural observations to make your meaning clear. Present **more than an list of structural labels** . Use survey already to lay out preliminary analysis of the materials related to the structures you are working on.
7. Distinguish between **recurrence of significantly related** items which form a **meaningful pattern** over a unit and a collection of miscellaneous items (e.g., a series of questions on unrelated topics).
8. Generally one must **go beyond simple recurrence** to describe adequately the "logic" in a unit. Recurrence will often be present; **press on to see the logic**.
9. Generally three to five major sets of structural observations will be required to a unit's structure well. Proliferation of structures may signal a fragmented view (Some should be combined? omitted?).
10. Focus a **full, well ordered set of interpretive questions** (Def. > Reason > Impl.) on a single set of observations, so you are not defining one item, reasoning about another, pursuing implications of still another and in the process covering none of them well.
11. Direct interpretive questions both to the materials and to the structures which bind them together.
12. Select your most important set of structural observations and focus your questions there, or ask questions of those items you intend to pursue interpretively. Asking many additional questions is certainly not "wrong," but uses valuable time.
13. Select **key passages on the basis of your structural observations**. Support your choice by reference to those structural observations. Select short passages.
14. Approach **critical issues inductively** too! Do not launch "survey" with study of scholarly works.
15. Distinguish a book's main character from its author.

OBSERVATION-INTERPRETATION-EVALUATION-APPLICATION

16. Proceed **inductively!** Go from evidence to interpretation! Let the material speak for itself.
17. Be **accurate!** Describe what is actually there!
18. **Actually observe; don't just quote** the text.

19. **Actually make observations, not just cryptic remarks.** Label. Describe. Probe. Say something coherent **about the text**.
 20. Make sure your "observations" are **actually observations**, not already interpretations.
 21. Go **beyond grammatical identification** to probe significance.
 22. Make **specific** observations re. specifics of the text.
 23. Remember the **Bulldog** picture. Hang on! Press to second and third round observations/inferences.
 24. **Be selective** but **be thorough**.
 25. Work with a single interpretive question or a couple of closely related questions. Carry through before moving to other questions.
 26. **Reason clearly.** Make sure your **evidence as stated supports the inferences** drawn from it. Make sure **inferences actually do follow** from the evidence cited.
 27. **Actually infer!** Don't simply rephrase observations and think you are inferring, nor substitute additional observation for the drawing of interpretive inferences.
 28. **Actually infer!** Don't ask more questions here unless you must. Consider posing these questions in the form of possible inferences to be adjudicated later.
 29. Entertain **various possible inferences**
 30. **Techno-alert! DON'T JUST DOWNLOAD DATA.** Analyze, process, use that data.
 31. **Work systematically** through the various determinants relevant to the question you are answering. Purse one fully; then move to the next.
 32. Pursue **beyond definition**. Deal with reasons and implications also after your basic, definitional work.
 33. Make **periodic summaries** of your findings and then bring them together in a final, integrative summary.
 34. **Distinguish evaluation from interpretation.** Draw evaluative conclusions. Words such as "affirms, revises, expands, rescinds," etc. normally appear, as opposed to inferences still addressing meaning.
 35. **Distinguish interpretation from application.** Talk of what the text meant to "them," not what "I/we" should think or do. Apply after you have interpreted.
 36. **Distinguish evaluation from application**, the question of cross-cultural relevance from the actual specification of that relevance for a particular culture.
 37. Remember to include the **community of faith/scholars** among your objective determinants.
 38. Give **adequate bibliographic** information on sources: author, title, page, at the very least. Note the **author (vs. editor)** of all resources.
 39. Don't present ideas from secondary sources as your own, either in observations or inferences.
 40. Use **interpretive secondary sources** after your own research, including word study tools such as TWOT, TDOT, TDNT, NIDNTT.
 41. **Interact** with interpretive sources. Don't simply cite as authorities without evaluation. Use criteria applied to your own work--evidence? reasoning?
- If you have questions, see me. Shalom. DLT. Jan. 1998

WORD STUDY SUGGESTIONS

UP-FRONT WARNINGS:

- **Computer Bible Programs.** Don't just download data—lists of meanings, Strong's numbers, "prime roots," etc. No! No!
- **Strong's Concordance.** Use only as a concordance or for its numbers. Do not use as a dictionary.

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1. The **goal:** discern the word's basic meaning; what it denotes and connotes.
2. Begin with **preliminary survey** of meaning from standard **Hebrew or Greek lexicons**.*
3. Use **translations/versions** ancient and modern, English and non-English to further gather a **preliminary** understanding of your word. Regard the LXX [OT], Vulgate, Targum [OT], KJV, RSV, NIV, etc. already as **commentaries** on your word, secondary sources already.
4. **Do not use etymology** unless the word's use or that of the family to which it belongs is very limited or its meaning is otherwise obscure. And then use etymology as supplementary, not definitive, evidence. Let the place of etymology in your own word use inform you here.
5. Use a **concordance** that allows you to locate the Hebrew/Greek word in question, either Strong's, Young's, Wigram's or the biblical language concordances.
6. For this class either **study all occurrences** of a word or **give a cogent justification for the selection** of the occurrences cited. Do not use *ad hoc*, random, "illustrative" passages. If necessary, limit the range of your study by: a) Corpus (Pauline, Prophetic, Deuteronomic, Wisdom, Psalms); b) Book itself, if there are several occurrences; c) Given form, e.g., the imperative of "return," *shub* or d) Given expression, "return to me." Draw tentative conclusions when based on limited samples.

DOING THE WORD STUDY

7. Regard the **word as a cipher** (lacking meaning, i.e., = "x") or use the biblical language word itself to refer to it in order to avoid prejudicing your findings, e.g., *ruach*, or *pneuma*, not "spirit/wind."
8. Cite each occurrence. **DON'T SIMPLY QUOTE** the verse or cite a string of references. **Describe the word's use** in each context. Be particularly attentive to the data informing you of the word's basic meaning.
9. **Draw inferences** regarding the meaning in your passage, if the particular use appears to be relevant.
10. Remember the **Bulldog** picture here too. In working with each reference, hang on! Press on to second and third level observations and inferences. **Probe. Dig. Look. Reflect.** Don't move on so quickly.
11. Remember the **central task** of word study: **to discover the word's basic meaning**, beginning with the assumption that you do not know what it means. Drawing inferences about various other agendas related in some way to your word is a secondary concern, not primary.
12. Be very careful then to **distinguish** between a) the **meaning of the word itself**, from b) important **ideas** in the context **related to it** but not actually an essential part of the word's actual meaning. Don't load a word's "meaning" with all the items related to it in its various occurrences.
13. **Begin with the immediate book context.** Then proceed to the corpus (e.g., Pauline) or works with similar theological or historical or ideological concerns (e.g., Deuteronomic history, wisdom literature, prophetic, post exilic, etc.).
14. If you are dealing with a **metaphor/simile** ("the booth of David, "like chaff"), first you must discern the word/expression's **concrete** meaning. Then you can infer the **metaphorical meaning**.
15. Be alert to **patterns of use, clusters of meaning**, shades and nuances which differ from setting to setting. Attempt to determine **which best fits your passage**. Do not build a conglomerate (cf. 12).
16. Recognize **informative** and non-informative **uses** and capitalize on the former.
17. Draw conclusions, choosing between possible meanings on the basis of weightiest evidence, on the basis of uses most like your passage, not simply frequency.
18. **After your own examination** of the word's use, supplement and enrich your work by reference (as you have time) to **theological word books**, such as TWOT, TDOT, TDNT, etc. Be particularly alert here for information on extra-biblical uses of the word in cultures influencing your writer. Use critically. Interact.

*e.g., BDB = Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon (Hendrickson); KB = Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (eds.), Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros (E. J. Brill, 1958); AG = William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (trans.), A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (The University of Chicago Press, 1979); Thayer's = Joseph Henry Thayer, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Hendrickson).

**STANDARD INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS
BASED ON SELECTED STRUCTURAL OBSERVATIONS**

USING THESE QUESTIONS

1. These are sample, "generic" questions of the sort you can ask, guided by the structures. As patterns they are helpful, but also boring. They will come to life if you pour into these patterns the specific content of any particular book or passage you are working with.
2. For example, instead of simply asking after studying Psalm 1, "What is involved in this contrast?" ask "What is involved in the psalmist's contrast between the righteous, their character and fate, on the one hand, and the wicked on the other?" Instead of simply asking, "What is the meaning of the main elements in this contrast?" ask "What is the meaning of the major elements in the psalmist's contrasting picture of the righteous and the wicked?" And so on.

SEMANTIC STRUCTURES

CAUSATION OR SUBSTANTIATION. Materials: What is involved in this cause and this effect? What is the meaning of each of major elements in the cause(s) and the effect(s), and of the cause and effect as a whole? How does this cause produce these effect? How does this effect follow from this cause? What are the full implications of these findings? Structure: What is the significance of this causal structure? Why is this causal or substantiative presentation used? What is implied by the causal or substantiative structure?

CLIMAX. Materials: What is involved in the high point of the unit, and in the materials leading to it? What is the meaning of each? How do the preceding materials lead to this high point? What are the full implications of these findings? Structure: Why does the author use this climactic movement? What is implied by such a presentation?

COMPARISON. Materials: What is involved in each of the elements compared, and what is the meaning of each element? What is the meaning of the other important elements involved in the presentation of this comparison? How does the comparison illuminate the element being compared to it? Wherein are they similar? What are the full implications of these findings? Structure: Why does the writer use comparison? this comparison? What are the implications of the comparison itself?

CONCESSION. Materials: What is the involved in each aspect of the concession, the concession itself ("though...") and the unexpected item ("yet...") related to it? What is the meaning of the major elements in each? What would one have expected to follow the concessory statement, instead of what appears? How does the "yet-clause" differ from what one might have expected? How does the concession clause lead to the "yet-clause?" Why does the concession appear? What is implied by these findings? Structure: Why does the writer structure the materials thus? What is implied by the concessory structure itself?

CONTRAST. Materials: What is involved in the contrast? What is the meaning of each of the major elements involved in the contrast? What are the differences between the contrasted elements, and what is the meaning of these differences? What is implied by these findings? Structure: What is the significance of the contrast itself? Why does the author present the material in this contrasted fashion? What is implied by the use of this contrast?

CRUCIALITY/PIVOT. Materials: What is the meaning of the major elements involved in the pivotal point in this unit? What is involved in each? How does the pivot serve to change the direction of the unit? How does what precedes lead to it, and how does what follows flow from it? What are the implications of these findings? Structure: Why does the author use such cruciality? What is implied by the presentation of pivot in this unit?

INSTRUMENTATION. Materials: What is involved in both the means and the end(s)? What is the meaning of the means used and end(s) intended or produced? What is the meaning of the other elements involved in this instrumental presentation. How do the means serve as instruments for realizing the ends, and how is the end made possible through the means? What are the implications of these findings? Structure: Why does the author structure these elements instrumentally? What may be implied by this?

INTERROGATION. Materials: What is involved in each question (problem) and each answer (solution)? What is the meaning of the major elements involved in the question and the answer? What do the question and the answer mean? How does the answer/solution respond to the question/problem? What are the full implications of these findings? Structure: Why does the writer use this movement from question/problem to answer/solution? What is implied by this structure?

ORIENTATION (INTRODUCTION). Materials: What is involved in the preparatory materials, and in those materials for which they prepare? What is the meaning of the major elements in both? How do these materials serve to orient the reader for what follows? How does what follows relate to this orientation? Why such an introduction? What is implied by these findings? Structure: Why does the writer thus structure the work? What is implied by the orientation structure itself?

PARTICULARIZATION/GENERALIZATION. Materials: What is involved in the general statement(s) and in the particulars? What is the meaning of the major elements of both the general statement and its particulars? How does the general statement illuminate the particulars, and vice versa? What are the full implications of each?

RECURRENCE/CORRESPONDENCE. Materials: What is involved in each of the recurring elements, and what is their meaning? Why are they repeatedly cited? What is implied by these findings? Structure: Why does the writer make recurring mention of these matters? What is implied by this recurrence?

SUMMARIZATION. Materials: What is involved in the components in the summary? What is the meaning of each? How do they summarize the content of the unit? What are the full implications of these findings? Structure: What does the writer use such a summary? What is implied by the summarization?

RHETORICAL STRUCTURES

CHIASM. Materials: What is the meaning of the major elements placed in the chiasmic order, and what is involved in them? To what semantic structure does this chiasm apparently relate, and how does this rhetorical device function with reference to it? What do these findings imply? Structure: Why does the writer place these elements chiasmically? What may be implied by the structure itself?

INCLUSIO. Materials: What is meaning of the major elements arrayed in this inclusio? What is involved in them? To what semantic structure does this inclusio apparently relate, and how does this rhetorical device function with reference to it? What do these findings imply? Structure: Why does the writer place these elements thus? What may be implied by the structure itself?

INTERCHANGE. Materials: What is meaning of the major elements placed in this alternating order? What is involved in them? To what semantic structure does this interchange apparently relate, and how does this rhetorical device function with reference to it? What do these findings imply? Structure: Why does the writer place these elements thus? What may be implied by the structure itself?

SUGGESTIONS FOR OBSERVATION/ANALYSIS
i.e., FOR GATHERING EVIDENCE FOR INTERPRETATION²

OBSERVATION/ANALYSIS

1. What are observations? Any safe, true statements you can make about material (clauses or other units) that could probably not be called into question by a cautious, thoughtful reading of the text. This sort of "observation" (as opposed to simple, grammatical identification: "'created' is a past tense verb") is indeed a form of interpretation, but one that is "low-level." These observations/analyses are evidence from which one can draw inferences, furthering one's understanding of a passage.

2. What sorts of things can be observed? Absolutely anything at all, though one attempts to focus on apparently significant matters. The following list is selective, but may be helpful.
 - a. Structure. What structural relations (semantic, rhetorical, correspondence), bind the unit to surrounding materials, or bind elements within the unit together.
 - b. Grammar. What grammatical relations and roles bind words and phrases to each other? What are the antecedents of pronouns? What parts of speech?
 - c. Inflection. What gender, number, case, person, tense, voice, mood?
 - d. Word Use. How is a given word used, in an immediate passage, in the book, and the larger corpus (cf. App. II, 5)?
 - e. Classification. What labels can be applied to various components of the unit? e.g., concrete, abstract; collective, individual; definite, indefinite; absolute, inclusive, exclusive; negative, neutral, positive; etc. regarding scope, range and other matters.
 - f. Literary matters. What figures of speech are evident? What of genre, style, atmosphere, quotations or allusions to other documents?
 - g. Selection. What appears to be missing, present, substituted, or positioned contrary to expectations?
 - h. Position. Where in space and time (absolute or relative) is the action depicted to be located?
 - i. Criticism. Where do English versions differ from each other and from the biblical language text? What text/redaction/form-critical problems or data are evident? What problems in punctuation exist?
 - j. Emphasis. Where is emphasis to be placed in reading the unit? What of word order? What is old and what is new information in the unit?
 - k. Implication. What appears to be clearly, obviously implied though not stated? What assumptions does the material make? (Be sure not to be too interpretive here. Draw only the safest implications in the course of "observation.")

3. How can format help? The "two-column" format, which places "observations / evidence" in the left column and "inferences / conclusions" in the right column, aims to heighten the student's awareness of the difference between observing/gathering evidence and inferring/drawing interpretive conclusions. Even though the difference between observing and inferring is blurred in some cases, the distinction is very much worth attempting. Some persons prefer a set of observations followed by a set of related inferences. No matter. The hermeneutical awareness, not the format is the point.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Sources marked with asterisk (*) are mandatory for our work.

1. Literary (as synchronic, authorial, literary wholes)
 - a.* Segment Context. Always the first, and usually the most important field examined. Study (i.e., analyze) your segment, paragraph, and clause for useful evidence. Draw extensively upon the observations you have already made.
 - b.* Book Context. Next most important field of evidence. Review your book-level analysis; use concordances as needed.

²Adapted, with permission, from the work of Drs. Joseph Dongell, David Bauer and Robert Traina.

- c.* Corpus Context. All books written by the same author (e.g., Luke and Acts; all of the Pauline epistles; all of John's material) tend to employ the same network of thought and language, though attention to chronological development within a writer's works is needed. Use concordances, chain reference tools, etc. to access.
2. Literary-historical.
- a.* New Testament Context. Great care must be taken here not to force harmonization, not to force one text to interpret another, not to force into alignment linguistic usage and networks of thought. Use concordances, chain reference tools, etc. to access.
- b.* Old Testament. Comprises the "bible" of early Christianity and Judaism. Its materials almost always form the backdrop of NT passages. Use concordances, chain reference tools, etc. to access. Same cautions apply as with NT context.
- c. Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha. The most important extra-biblical field of data for NT interpretation. A fascinating assortment of religious texts.
- d. Rabbinic Materials. The Mishnah (compiled about 200 A.D.) and the Babylonian Talmud (6th Century A.D.) are the most important for our purposes, and contain within them many traditions contemporary with the NT (though dating, etc., remains a major problem in the use of these materials).
- e. Josephus. Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, who narrated much Jewish history in NT times. Lived approximately 37-100 A.D.
- f. Philo. Jewish philosopher, Philo Judaeus, born perhaps ca. 20. B.C. and dying sometime after 40 A.D. Sought to express and understand OT texts and theology in terms of Greek philosophies.
- g. Dead Sea Scrolls. A collection of liturgies, biblical commentaries, poetry and community rules discovered in 1947. Apparently stowed away by a Jewish ascetic sect which flourished near the Dead Sea from about 140 B.C. until about 68 A.D.
- h. "Ancient Near Eastern Texts". Particularly relevant for OT interpretation are various administrative, literary, cultic, historical and other texts of different genres from the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian civilizations, though date and provenance is often problematic. Access through anthologies (such as James B. Pritchard's Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament or D. Winton Thomas' Documents from Old Testament Times) or published word studies.
- i. Collected here are literatures which, on the whole, have lesser impact on NT interpretation: the Targums (Aramaic paraphrases of the OT); the Nag Hammadi codices (discovered in 1945, a library of Christian gnostic writings composed from the 1st to 4th centuries A.D.); New Testament Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha (Christian materials not included in the NT and often "heretical"); Apostolic Fathers (a group of early Christian, non-canonical documents). Greek Non-Literary Papyri (syntax and vocabulary of the NT is illuminated by these mundane materials found in the Egyptian desert); Classical and Hellenistic (Pagan) Literature (Various aspects of NT thought and language can be illuminated by appeal to this massive field of literature.)
3. Literary (diachronic, traditional)
- a. Ancient manuscripts, translations, etc.
- b. Source Criticism
- c. Form Criticism
- d. Redaction Criticism
4. Artifactual. Non-literary materials as are discovered and interpreted by archaeology and historical geography, and the like; e.g., coins, statues, architecture.

Topics for Exploration in Detailed Observation³

It is easy, when doing Detailed Observation, to fall into the rut of generating Observations, Questions, and Possibilities about too narrow a range of topics. One could, for example, note all the differences between translations and every important grammatical feature while failing to explore any of the “silences” of the text or any its literary character. The following list may be used to broaden the scope of inquiry and to prevent a limited approach to the text. This list may be consulted continually as the student works verse-by-verse throughout a text.

- A. Basic Content:** The journalist’s friends of “who? what? where? when?” prove useful to us as well. The matters of “why” and “how” can be particularly powerful tools probing deeply below the surface.
- B. Word Meanings:** Each word can be lifted up and examined like a rock. Too often we carelessly assume the meanings of obscure words, or download heavy theological meaning into unsuspecting words.
- C. Sequences and Orders:** The order in which words appear may signal emphasis. The order in which items are mentioned may serve to rank their importance.
- D. Grammar and Syntax:** The grammatical relationships between words can be a rich source of insight. Verb tenses, noun cases, pronoun antecedents and the like often provide the careful reader with issues of interpretation.
- E. Literary Issues:** A host of matters await to be recognized by readers, including symbolism, authorial style, use of figures of speech, irony, characterization, plot movement, emphasis, and the like.
- F. Textual Issues:** The original wording of a text may be in some doubt, given differences in ancient manuscripts. Some of these differences may show up when comparing different Bible translations, though not all will.
- G. Translational Issues:** At various points, translations may depend upon the same original-language wording but translate (and/or interpret) a passage differently.
- H. Logical Connections:** Ideas and events may be connected to each other through the relationships of cause-effect (causation); question-answer, problem-solution (interrogation); similarity (comparison); difference (contrast); part-whole or whole-part (generalization or particularization); claim-proof (substantiation); stage setting or reader orientation (preparation); and the like.

³ From the work of Joseph Dongell, used with permission and gratitude in David Thompson’s IBS classes. Pentateuch Fall 98.

- I. Intertextuality:** A passage may include within itself a quotation of or an allusion to some other literary work (often a NT quotation of or allusion to an OT passage).
- J. Documentary History:** A passage may consist of the author's merging or compilation of different sources. Some of the seams of composition may be visible in a close reading the passage.
- K. Historical Context:** A reader may be alert for matters pointing to: 1) specific cultural issues and values involving either the characters in a narrative or the writer of the passage; 2) specific motivations of the writer, and specific purposes of the writer with relation the readers; 3) the general historical, political, economic, and cultural framework of the passage.
- L. The Unstated:** This avenue of attention always yields interesting results, and points us to the "iceberg principle" that what is seen (explicitly written) is only 10% of the iceberg (all that is implied in the communication). One may notice: 1) a speaker's unstated assumptions; 2) information *not* supplied by the speaker or writer; 3) gaps and silences in stories or arguments; 4) the clear implication of a passage, though left unstated by the writer or speaker.
- M. Selections:** Every element in a discourse has been chosen instead of other possible selections. In large measure, these "choices" constitute the "meaning" of a passage. One can begin to learn the significance of "selections" by imagining a vertical skewer stuck through each word of a sentence, and by picturing on each skewer (above and below the word in the sentence) the other words not selected at that position in the sentence. For example, Psalm 23 declares "The *Lord* is my shepherd", not God is my shepherd; "the Lord is *my* shepherd", not your shepherd, not our shepherd; "the Lord is my *shepherd*", not my king, my prince, or my father; "the Lord *is* my shepherd", not was, or will be my shepherd. The significance of "The Lord is my shepherd" comes into sharper focus when the *rejected* choices come into view.
- N. The Problematic:** Any *apparent* difficulties of a passage often provide rich avenues of exploration, particularly: 1) apparent tensions or contradictions; 2) apparent loose ends; 3) surprises to the reader; 4) apparent impossibilities or unlikelyhoods. Most of these prove not to be "problems with the Bible" but the Bible's own invitation to a more profound encounter with itself.

Added Advice Regarding Observations

Many find it difficult to avoid weaknesses in Observations. Three areas have tended to be troublesome, as expressed in the following questions often asked by students:

A. How can I "go beneath the surface"?

A "depth problem" can often be helped by attending particularly to these topics among those listed above: 1) matters of "how" and "why" in the category of

Basic Content; 2) Logical Connections; 3) The Unstated; 4) Selections; and 5) The Problematic.

B. Do all of my Observations have to be “profound”?

No. Most Observations (and perhaps many questions) will be routine, serving to record accurately the various bits of information provided by the text.

C. How can I be certain my Observation is a fact, not merely an opinion?

We suggest that a “fact” be understood as something “relatively certain”, rather than something provable only by the most rigorous logic. If we can think that 90% of an imaginary group of careful, dispassionate readers would agree that our statement about the text is “true”, based solely upon their reading of the text, then we can consider our statement to be an Observations. Otherwise, it should be recorded as a Possibility.

D. How can I avoid merely repeating the words of the text?

Here is a most nagging and challenging difficulty. Remember, an Observation is a statement *we readers make about the text*, not simply the words of the text itself! Three strategies will help. 1) Pinpoint exactly what the focus of your Observation is. Typically, Observations which merely repeat a sentence of text have not focused on a specific aspect of the text. 2) You may also find it helpful to start your Observation with the words “I notice that” This sets you up to be making a statement about the text. 3) Use an italicized key word or term to help you state the exact focus of the Observation.

E.g.:

“I notice that the *scope* of...

“I see that the *time* of...

“I observe that the *agent* of...

“I realize that the *manner* of...

“I notice that the *translation* of...

“I see that the *cause* of...

“I observe that the *purpose* of...

“I realize that the *character* of...

A wide variety of such key terms can help you identify the specific focus of your Observation: location, time, sequence, manner, order, position, arrangement, selection, identity, character, characteristic, orientation, shape, color, dimension, rate, frequency, atmosphere, attitude, circumstance, designation, relationship, purpose, similarity, difference, cause, effect, result, reason, agent, instrument, means, problem, solution, general, particular, set item, scope, range, content, ambiguity, silence emphasis, limit, extent, exclusion, action, event, number, mode, audience, speaker, role, assumption, presumption, implication, climax, progression, movement, context, setting, repetition, recurrence, series, assertion, negation, implication, connection, description, alternation, summation, expansion, reaction, style, structure, plot, conclusion, theme, division, material, classification, destination, origin, source, object, etc....