



**MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE  
COURSE SYLLABUS  
SUMMER 2016  
Monday, May 2–Friday, May 6**

**OT 3XA3 JUDGES: MURDER AND MAYHEM IN CANAAN (OT 3XA3)  
INSTRUCTOR: MARY L. CONWAY, PH.D.  
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Samson Slaying the Lion by Goran Gecovski

I am available for appointments before and after class and at lunch time. My office is in Rm 228. Please arrange an appointment ahead of time, in person or by email, if possible.

To access your course materials, please go to **Avenue to Learn (A2L)** at <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>




## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Although the book of Judges is sometimes viewed as a wonderful collection of stories about Old Testament “heroes,” by others it is considered a shocking account of apostasy, murder, and mayhem. What is the role of this enigmatic book in the history of God’s people and the contemporary Christian church? Are its characters to be emulated or condemned? This course will examine the book of Judges in its historical, canonical, and theological contexts. It will use exegetical and literary approaches in an attempt to understand the book more fully and to discern its message for the church today.

**Program Specializations:** Biblical Studies (OT), Pastoral Studies, Christian Worldview.

## II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

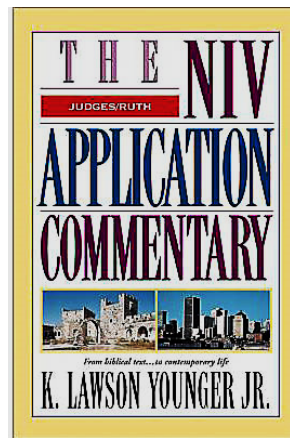
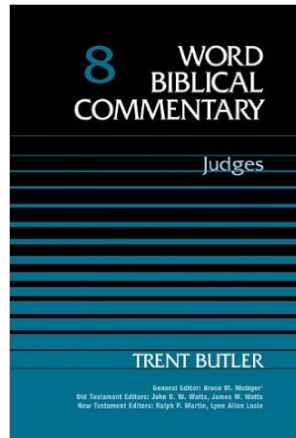


- a.  Knowing
- To understand the basic content of the book of Judges and its historical and canonical context
  - To understand the practical and spiritual relevance of the book of Judges to God's people in their historical context and for the Christian church today
- b.  Being
- To embrace the relevance of the book of Judges for the contemporary church and today's society
  - To appreciate the ways in which God's character and purpose are revealed in the book of Judges and respond in ways that lead to spiritual and intellectual growth
  - To grow to love God and humanity more through the internalization of the concepts in these books
- c.  Doing
- To demonstrate the ability to think critically and ask meaningful questions of the text
  - To develop greater competence in clearly articulating and communicating biblical and theological ideas in oral and written form
  - To demonstrate competence in interpreting one of the narratives in Judges and relating it to the New Testament and Christian life today by using methods such as historical grammatical exegesis, literary analysis, thematic study, and theological interpretation
  - To relate the book of Judges to various ministries and specializations in today's church and culture

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### A. REQUIRED TEXT

One of the following commentaries:



**Butler, Trent C. *Judges, Word Biblical Commentary 8.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2009. ISBN 978-0849902079 or Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. ISBN 978-0310521754.** Appropriate for Biblical Studies students, especially if you have some Hebrew. (Available for Logos.)

or

**Younger, K. Lawson. *Judges and Ruth. The NIV Application Commentary.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002. ISBN 978-0310206361.** Appropriate for Pastoral Studies and Christian Worldview students. Note: It transliterates the Hebrew. (Available for Logos. [Google Preview](#))

**Note:** All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, R.E.A.D. On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. You may also contact R.E.A.D. On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1. Phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Website: <http://webhome.idirect.com/~readon/bookstore.html> [XBkEducation](#). Texts may be ordered ahead and sent to your home or purchased on the first day of class.

#### B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING:

- Block, Daniel Isaac. *Judges, Ruth. The New American Commentary 6.* Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999. (Available for Logos and Kindle. [Google Preview](#))
- Chisholm, Robert B., Jr. *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth.* Kregel Exegetical Library. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2013. (Will soon be available for Logos. [Google Preview](#))
- Webb, Barry G. *The Book of Judges.* NICOT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012. (Available for Logos. [Google Preview](#))

## C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

### 1. Reading about the book of Judges: Due on Friday, May 27, 2016 at 11:30 pm; 15% of final grade.

Students will read **at least 250** pages of their chosen commentary. You will also read from other commentaries, monographs, and articles as you research your assignments for **at least an additional 500 pages**. You will submit a chart modelled on the one below detailing your reading. In the second column you will summarize briefly some interesting things that you learned from each text (focusing on things that are relevant to your specialization), give the page(s), and respond to this information in some way, by commenting/questioning/challenging/suggesting/agreeing/disagreeing, etc. (about 150-200 words for each). You should have 10 or more entries from a variety of sources. See the rubric on A2L.

Reading	Summary and Response
Block, <i>Judges, Ruth</i> , 21-585.	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Pellentesque quis nisi erat. Suspendisse convallis sagittis consequat. Curabitur sollicitudin sapien sed ipsum ultricies, quis vehicula sem accumsan. Ut viverra blandit metus in tempu ... (p. xx)
	Cursus felis et, vestibulum erat. Nulla pellentesque sapien sed nisi dictum. Curabitur ipsum ... (p. xx-xx)
	Proin at nulla hendrerit, cursus felis et, vestibulum erat. Nulla pellentesque sapien sed nisi dictum. Curabitur ipsum ultricies, quis vehicula sem accumsan ... (p. xx)
Mehlman, "Jephthah's Daughter," 87-132.	Ne eos ipsum delectus. Minim nostrud iuvaret cu ius, pri ne quas vocibus, nec albucius platonem evertitur ei. Tacimates cotidieque sit in. Est an errem vocent. Vim latine facilisis iracundia ut, eu voluptua periculis mea. Cu eos falli forensibus, duo dico graeci eloquentiam cu, his cu ullum inciderint voluptatibus. Est omnium cetero graecis id, mea tation elaboraret comprehensam ad. At usu euripidis concludaturque... (p. xx)
Yee, <i>Judges and Method</i> , 68-85.	Morbi ut orci eget elit blandit ornare in id leo. Morb ut neque sollicitudin auctor sapien sed eu massa faucibus iaculis sed ut sem. Has alterum fabulas ut, dolore quodsi eligendi vis et, qui doming fabulas probatus ea. ... (p. xx)
Younger, <i>Judges and Ruth</i> , 245-290	Suspendisse convallis sagittis consequat. Curabitur sollicitudin sapien sed ipsum ultricies, quis vehicula sem accumsan. ... (p. xx-xx)
	Vim ad dicunt numquam elaboraret, an ius falli doming saperet, sed eripuit maiorum scripserit cu. Ne ius splendide ... (p. xx)
Deist, "Murder in the Toilet," 263-72.	Ne eos ipsum delectus. Mea assum consectetuer id, ex modo tempor pro. Qui ut essent intellegat, mel ex veniam ceteros, ad nobis nostrum platonem vix. Ad agam tollit utinam sit. His no dicat offendit, fugit possim cum no, est liber tamquam ea. Ei nam inani nominavi, iudico omittam menandri pro ne. Qui ea causae inciderint. Rebum partem eam te, suas semper ea eos. Mel ad bonorum inimicus. Porro tamquam lobortis mei ad... (p. xx)
Lindars, "Gideon and Kingship," 315-26.	Ea eam movet sensibus, ponderum consetetur interpretaris eos id. An qui minim. Suspendisse convallis sagittis consequat. Curabitur sollicitudin sapien sed ipsum ultricies, quis vehicula sem accumsan ... (p. xx)
Matthews, "Hospitality in Judges," 250-89.	Nullam tincidunt, nisi eget molestie sodales, risus purus placerat enim, nec mollis leo tortor sed nibh. ... (p. xx-xx)

## **2. Seminars: Evaluated in class on Wednesday and Friday, May 4 and 6, 2016. 15% of final grade.**

During the week, there will be two seminars involving the discussion of articles on relevant topics (see below). These articles are available in full text through ATLA and/or are posted on A2L. Students should read the articles ahead of time and be actively involved in both of the discussions. Questions should demonstrate critical thinking and may include exegetical, thematic, interpretive, literary, historical, theological, ethical, and pastoral issues. Comments and responses should be thoughtful, detailed, well-supported, and refer to the articles and the text of Judges where appropriate. You will be evaluated on the amount and quality of your participation in these seminars; see sample questions and the rubric on A2L. **Note: It is suggested that you read these articles before the course week begins.**

### **Seminar #1: Judges as History and Literature**

- Brettler, Marc Zvi. "[Never the Twain Shall Meet? The Ehud Story as History and Literature.](#)" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 62 (1991): 285-304.
- Christianson, Eric S. "[A Fistful of Shekels: Scrutinizing Ehud's Entertaining Violence \(Judges 3:12-30\).](#)" *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 1 (2003): 53-78.
- Halpern, Baruch. "A Message for Eglon: The Case of Ehud Ben-Gera." In *The First Historians*, 39-75. San Francisco: Harper& Row, 1988. ([Google Books](#) preview available; available on A2L)
- Stone, Lawson G. "[Eglon's Belly and Ehud's Blade: A Reconsideration.](#)" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128, no. 4 (2009): 649-63.

### **Seminar #2: Theology in Judges**

- Boda, Mark J. "Recycling Heaven's Words: Receiving and Retrieving Divine Revelation in the Historiography of Judges." In *Prophets, Prophecy, and Ancient Israelite Historiography*, edited by Mark J. Boda and Lissa Wray Beal, 43-67. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013. (Available on A2L)
- Davis, Dale R. "[Comic Literature—Tragic Theology: A Study of Judges 17-18.](#)" *Westminster Theological Journal* 46, no. 1 (1984): 156-63.
- Martin, Lee R. "[Judging the Judges: Finding Value in These Problematic Characters.](#)" *Verbum et Ecclesia* 29, no. 1 (2008): 110-29.
- . "[Power to Save!?: The Role of the Spirit of the Lord in the Book of Judges.](#)" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16, no. 2 (2008): 21-50.

## **3. Program Specialization Responses: Due Friday, May 20, 2016 at 11:30 pm; 30% of final grade.**

Students will complete **one** of the following assignments which relate the book of Judges to various ministries and specializations in today's church and culture. This project will be evaluated for both creativity and content. Your work should indicate thorough understanding of the book of Judges as well as its contemporary relevance. Reference to secondary sources (books, articles, music, video, websites, etc.) should be given as appropriate for all options, and must be fully documented. Be sure to evaluate the quality of your sources carefully. You will be evaluated according to the

rubric on A2L. Upload your assignments to the specified dropbox on A2L.

**a. Commentary Analysis** (Biblical Studies focus)

Select three different commentaries on the book of Judges and study them carefully. Write a 5-6 page critical review of these commentaries in which you evaluate them for their usefulness in biblical studies. Be sure that you set out your criteria, which may include some of: presuppositions (implicit or explicit), format and organization, use of original languages, historical and cultural background information, consideration of textual issues, breadth of scholarship, cogency of arguments, validity of theological conclusions, contemporary application, etc. Include clear conclusions.

**b. Film Analysis** (Biblical Studies/Christian Worldview focus)

A number of films focus on the story of Samson, such as Cecil B. DeMille's classic *Samson and Delilah* (1949), Anthony Hamilton's *Samson and Delilah* (1984), and Nicolas Roeg's *Samson and Delilah* (1996). Some are better than others! Select one of these movies and watch it, then respond in a paper of 5-6 pages. If you are in Biblical Studies, critically analyze the movie in terms of its portrayal of Scripture. Consider the implications of characterization, historical accuracy, and theological themes. Do NOT simply give a comparison of the content! If you are studying Christian Worldview, compare the worldview of the biblical story to the worldview reflected by the director of the movie. In both cases, focus on what the film says about society's understanding/interpretation of the biblical story of Samson and Delilah.

**c. Sermon Preparation** (Pastoral Studies focus)

Prepare and record (audio or video) a sermon of 20-25 minutes on a passage from the book of Judges that you might deliver at your own church. This sermon must be written specifically for this course and must not be recycled material. Do not rely on online sermon sites and outlines! Your sermon should demonstrate insights that you have gained from this course. Include a typed version of the sermon that includes footnotes of sources, even though you will not read these when you preach. It is appropriate, however, to include in a sermon a phrase such as "In his book, Trent Butler points out that..." Always give credit where credit is due.

**d. Lesson Preparation** (Biblical Studies/Pastoral Studies/Christian Worldview focus)

Create a 30-40 minute Sunday school lesson for grade school children or high school students, or a 40 minute study and activity for a youth group, or a 40-60 minute small group study for adults, that deals with a relevant section of the book of Judges and that integrates the historical context with contemporary relevance. If you are in Biblical Studies, you can focus on biblical literacy and interpretation. If you are in Pastoral Studies you can focus on application. If you are a student of Christian Worldview you can use the lesson to reinforce or challenge contemporary worldviews. Specify the age level and nature of your group. Include the purpose of the lesson, the strategies/activities, and the lesson materials

(handout/PowerPoint/discussion questions/etc.)

**e. Sermon Analysis** (Biblical Studies/Pastoral Studies/Christian Worldview focus)

Locate a printed or an audio/visual sermon about Judges online. Evaluate and critique the sermon in terms of your area of specialization. If you are in Biblical Studies, you may focus on its interpretation of Scripture. If you are in Pastoral Studies you can study the relevance and effectiveness of the message, including its contemporary application. If you are a Christian Worldview student, you can evaluate how the sermon challenges contemporary worldviews and what worldview it hopes to support. Include a copy if it is a printed sermon or the link to an audio/video sermon.

**f. Novel/Movie Worldview Analysis** (Christian Worldview focus)

Select a novel or movie that has a situation, theme, or character type in common with the book of Judges. This does not need to be a “Christian” novel or movie. For example, you could choose a novel/movie that deals with ineffective or effective leadership, social violence, or interfaith dialogue and relationships. There are limitless possibilities. In a paper or 5-6 pages, compare the worldview of Judges (of the Israelites and/or the narrator) to the worldview portrayed in the novel (by the characters and/or the author). Examine both similarities and differences but do NOT simply list them. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these worldviews? How does each inform the other?

**4. Major Research Paper: Due Friday, June 3, 2016 at 11:30 pm; 40% of final grade.**

Students will prepare a research paper of approximately 15-18 pages, double spaced.

- **Biblical Studies Specialization:** Exegetical paper on a specific passage of Scripture.
- **Pastoral Studies Specialization:** Interpretation/Application paper with an emphasis on understanding and applying the text in today’s church.
- **Christian Worldview Specialization:** Thematic paper with an emphasis on application to contemporary worldviews and issues.

At least 10 academic secondary sources are required for these papers, and all must be used and cited in the paper. Sources may include the class texts, monographs, commentaries, and articles from journals or books. Sources must NOT include web sites (other than on line databases for articles, unless with the instructor’s permission), one volume Bible dictionaries, study Bibles, Bible translations, and dated devotional commentaries (such as Matthew Henry’s). Note, however, that Christian Worldview and Pastoral students may wish to use relevant websites as additional resources that illustrate contemporary worldviews or application issues. Recent sources are preferred.

Please avoid lengthy quotations from these sources; integrate the information into your own writing, **documenting paraphrase as well as direct quotation**. Do not include a lengthy paraphrase with an all-encompassing footnote at the end of the paragraph. Material must be processed and integrated with your own ideas with each borrowed

idea referenced separately. Do not include lengthy biblical quotations. Note: Often, references to other parts of the Old or New Testaments are very appropriate, but you **MUST** demonstrate their relevance in your paper, not assume it. Upload your paper to the dropbox on A2L.

**Your written work will be evaluated according to these four groups of criteria. See the detailed rubrics for each paper on A2L.** (Based on Ontario Ministry of Education documents.)

- I. **Knowledge and Understanding:** Knowledge is the mastery of subject specific content; understanding is the comprehension of the content's meaning and significance. It may be demonstrated by coverage of all relevant issues, adequate background information, deep engagement with the texts and with sources, explaining the significance of biblical passages, etc.
- II. **Thinking and Analysis:** The use of critical and creative thinking skills and processes such as planning, organizing, classification, research, critical analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. It may be demonstrated by logical organization, a clear thesis, logical flow of ideas, compelling evidence, effective use of sources, effective conclusions, etc.
- III. **Application:** The use of knowledge and skills to make connections within existing contexts and with new contexts. It may be demonstrated by the use of knowledge and skills to solve problems and resolve conflicts, the relating of the themes of one book to another, the relating of OT ideas to the NT, the relating of biblical concepts to issues and problems in current society, etc.
- IV. **Communication:** The conveying of meaning in appropriate ways to an audience. It may be demonstrated by the use of correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar, by clear organization of ideas, by the use of clear academic language, by full and correct documentation of sources, by pacing and tone in sermons, etc.

**a. Exegetical Paper (Biblical Studies):**

Students will select one self-contained pericope from Judges (other than the Ehud Story) and complete an exegetical analysis. The paper should include:

- i. A clear statement of the thesis in the introduction
- ii. Comments on literary/redaction history (only if relevant to your interpretation)
- iii. The historical and cultural context of the passage and book
- iv. A detailed exegesis of the entire pericope
- v. Reference to the Hebrew of the original text (if you have taken Hebrew; if not, rely on commentaries that discuss the Hebrew)
- vi. Explanation of how your pericope fits within the book of Judges as a whole
- vii. Theological reflections on the pericope (integrate with your exegesis)
- viii. Connections to the rest of the OT, NT
- ix. A clear conclusion

**b. Interpretation/Application Paper (Pastoral):**

Students will select a passage from the book of Judges, interpret/exegete it, and suggest contemporary applications for the church. The paper should include:

- i. A clear statement of the thesis in the introduction



- ii. A deep engagement with the passage in its historical context
- iii. Exegesis of any significant or controversial verses
- iv. Contemporary theological reflections on the passage
- v. Relevant connections to other parts of the OT, NT
- vi. Suggestions for practical/pastoral applications for church members today
- vii. A clear conclusion

**c. Thematic Paper (Christian Worldview):**

Students will trace the development of a theme throughout the book of Judges.

The paper should include:

- viii. A clear statement of the thesis in the introduction
- ix. A clear explication of the theme and its importance
- x. Analysis of relevant passages that relate to the theme
- xi. Exegesis of any significant or controversial verses
- xii. Theological reflections on the theme
- xiii. Implications of the theme for a contemporary Christian worldview
- xiv. A clear conclusion
- xv. Suggested Themes (there are many others): syncretism in the church; pluralism in society; the role of women; leadership; sin and its impact; justice and mercy; violence; student's choice (must be approved in advance by the professor).

### **C. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK**

All written assignments must be submitted in .pdf format to the designated dropbox on A2L. **Please do not submit other document types**; exceptions are the audio/video sermon or a PowerPoint for the lesson/sermon, etc. All assignments should be double spaced and typed in 12 pt. Times New Roman font. Note that page requirements do not include the title page and bibliography. Please use footnotes, not endnotes. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat Professional, most recent versions of Word have a built in .pdf printer, or there are on-line sites such as <http://primopdf.com> or <http://www.pdf995.com> where you may obtain a free program to convert your document to .pdf format.

Your assignment will be evaluated by means of a rubric on A2L and comments on the .pdf, which will then be uploaded to A2L for you to access. Marks for late assignments will be reduced by 2% per day including weekends, unless there is a compelling reason such as significant illness or the death of a close family member, in which case an extension must be requested as soon as the situation arises and before the due date (email the professor).

**All assignments must adhere to the MDC Writing Style Guide**, available from <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

#### **Inclusive Language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical

texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

## **D. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Assignment	Value
Reading about Judges	15%
Seminar Participation	15%
Program Specialization Responses	30%
Exegetical or Thematic Paper	40%
Total Grade	100%

## **IV. COURSE SCHEDULE**

Day	Time	Topic
Monday	am	Introduction and Lunch
Monday	pm	Background to Judges; The First Introduction (Judg 1–2:5)
Tuesday	am	The Second Introduction (Judg 2:6–3:11); Ehud (Judg 3:12–31)
Tuesday	pm	Deborah and Barak (Judg 4:1–5:31); Gideon (Judges 6:1–8:35)
Wednesday	am	Gideon (continued); Abimelech (Judges 9:1–10:5)
Wednesday	pm	Seminar #1; Jephthah (Judges 10:6–12:13)
Thursday	am	Samson (Judges 13:1–16:31); The First Conclusion (Judges 17:1–18:31)
Thursday	pm	The First Conclusion (continued); The Second Conclusion (Judges 19:1–21:25)
Friday	am	Seminar #2; Concluding Activities

## **V. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR, ATTENDANCE, AND PARTICIPATION**

- Students are expected to be on time for class. Admittedly, unavoidable delays do occasionally happen. If you arrive late, please enter as quietly as possible and give an explanation to the professor after class.
- Students are also expected to stay for the entire class session.
- Computers and tablets should only be used for class related purposes, not for social networking and the like.
- All thoughtful student participation is welcome. There are no “dumb questions” or “stupid answers.” Students will respect the contributions of other students and respond to them without ridicule or scorn.
- Students may eat or drink in class as long as they do so quietly and unobtrusively and clean up afterwards.

## V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Ackerman, Susan. *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel*. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. 1st ed. New York: Doubleday, 1998.
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- Andersson, Greger. *The Book and Its Narratives: A Critical Examination of Some Synchronic Studies of the Book of Judges*. Örebro Studies in Literary History and Criticism. Örebro: Universitetsbiblioteket, 2001.
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- . *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera’s Death*. Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Bar-Efrat, Shimeon. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. JSOTSup 70. Sheffield, England: Almond, 1989.
- . *Narrative Art in the Bible*. London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004.
- Bar, Shaul. “The Oak of Weeping.” *Bib* 91, no. 2 (2010): 269-74.
- Barré, Michael L. “The Meaning of Pršdn in Judges 3:22.” *VT* 41, no. 1 (1991): 1-11.
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- Barton, John. *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*. Revised and enlarged ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

- Bartusch, Mark W. *Understanding Dan: An Exegetical Study of a Biblical City, Tribe and Ancestor*. JSOTSup 379. London; New York, NY: Sheffield Academic, 2003.
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