

## OT 3XA3 Petition and Praise from Abraham to Nehemiah

McMaster Divinity College  
Summer 2017



### Course Specializations

Biblical Studies, Pastoral Studies

*Doctor of Practical Theology* students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

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## Summer School May 29 – June 2

Monday: 11:30–4:00 (free lunch)

Tuesday through Thursday: 9:00–4:00

Friday: 9:00–12

### Course Description

“No single practice more clearly defines a religion than the act of praying” (Miller, introduction). This course will examine prayers in the Old Testament and through them come to understand the theology of God on which prayer is based. It will examine the transformation of prayer, particularly the move from lament to penitential prayer as it is found in the post exilic period. The course will situate prayers of the Hebrew Scriptures within their ancient near eastern culture of prayer and within the Old Testament world. Particular attention will be given to prayer in relation to temple ritual. The student will come away with an understanding of the practice of prayer and the theology of prayer through the centuries of Old Testament Scriptures.

### Course Objectives

#### *Knowing*

- The similarities and differences of prayer between Israel and the nations around it
- The diversity, development, and function of prayer throughout the Old Testament period
- The terminology, forms, gestures, times, and places of prayer in the Old Testament
- The understanding of God and people that makes prayer effectual

#### *Being*

- Learning to relate to God through the various modes, times, and places of prayer
- Having an expectation of a personal mystical encounter in relationship with God (a sense that God indeed hears our prayers)
- Knowing that prayer is a vital indicator of the nature of our faith

#### *Doing*

- Expanding the ways in which we pray and reasons for our prayers
- Exploring more of the ways in which we see God’s response to our prayers
- Pondering the prayers of the Bible and how we may continually learn more about prayer
- Countering the tendency of our society to reduce all of reality to one level of knowledge and denying the efficacy of knowledge outside that of the natural world of the senses

### Course Texts

Patrick D. Miller, *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer*, Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995.

Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline, eds., *Seeking the Favor of God*, vol. 1, *The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, Judaism and Its Literature 21, Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2006.

#### *Textbook Purchase*

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College’s book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3 : phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308;

email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

## Course Topics

Terminology and postures of prayer  
Prayers of the Patriarchs  
Prayers of Moses  
Prayer of Hannah  
Prayers of David  
Prayer of Solomon  
Prayer of Hezekiah  
Prayer of Jonah  
Prayers of Praise  
Prayers of Lament  
Prayer in Job  
Prayers of Confession  
Prayers of Penitence

## Course Requirements

### 1. Reading (30%)

Both texts must be read in their entirety. A written report must be provided for each of the texts; each report is for 15% of the course grade. Each report should be about five pages long explaining the goals of the book and showing how it can help us understand prayer as well as Scripture. Book reviews and other aids to understanding may be used to assess the value of the text.

### 2. Prayer in Scripture (40%)

Prayer has various functions; it can serve to educate us about God, give corporate or individual praise, seek God's provision. The study of prayer in Scripture involves various aspects simultaneously: there is a literary setting (the prayer is part of the message of a book), there is a social and cultural setting, prayers take particular forms with various elements, they address particular needs. Every instance of prayer in Scripture is distinguished by aspects that are more important, other aspects are subordinate. *Research* a prayer to address its form, intention, and function according to these various elements. This paper should include all the significant reference material relevant to it, done according to proper research style. It should provide an enhancement of the Biblical understanding of prayer and its purposes. This paper should be 2000–2500 words.

### 3. Theology of prayer (30%)

In the article "Confession as Theological Expression," Mark Boda addresses various theological issue in relation to penitential prayer. Most of these categories pertain to all prayers, especially a theology of God, people, and Scripture. Choose a prayer in Scripture of interest to you and study it for the theology represented in it, which includes all of the categories listed here and others that will be relevant in the prayer itself. This paper should be about 2000 words.

## Course Policies

### *Academic Honesty*

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: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

### *Gender 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.

### *Style*

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mcdstyleguide.pdf>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

## **Bibliography**

Balentine, Samuel E. *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of the Divine-Human Dialogue*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993.

Bautch, Richard. *Developments in Genre between Post-exilic Penitential Prayers and the Psalms of Communal Lament*. SBLAcBib 7. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Boda, Mark J. *Praying the Tradition: The Origin and Use of Tradition in Nehemiah 9*. BZAW 277. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. "From Complaint to Contrition: Peering through the Liturgical Window of Jer 14,1–15,4." *ZAW* 113 (2001) 186–97.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Prayer." Pages 806–11 in *Dictionary of the Old Testament; Historical Books*. Edited by Bill T. Arnold, Hugh G. M. Williamson, and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

Gerstenberger, Erhard. *Der bittende Mensch: Bitritual und Klaglied des des Einzelnen im Alten Testament*. WMANT 51. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981.

Greenberg, Moshe. *Biblical Prose Prayers as a Window to the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel*. Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies 6. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983.

Holladay, William. *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

Knoppers, Gary N. "Prayer and Propaganda: Solomon's Dedication of the Temple and the Deuteronomist's Program." *CBQ* 57 (1995) 229–54.

McConville, J. Gordon. "1 Kings VIII 46–53 and the Deuteronomistic Hope." *VT* 42 (1992) 67–79.

Milgrom, Jacob. *Cult and Conscience: The Asham and the Priestly Doctrine of Repentance*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976.

Plöger, Otto. "Reden und Gebete im deuteronomistischen und chronistischen Geschichtswerk." Pages 35–49 in *Festschrift für Günther Dehn zum 75 Geburtstag*. Edited by Wilhelm Schneemelcher. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1957.

Thompson, Michael E. W. *I Have Heard Your Prayer: The Old Testament and Prayer*. Peterborough: Epworth, 1996.

Tiessen, Terrance. *Providence and Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* Downers Grove, IL: 2000.

Verhoef, P. A. "Prayer." Pages 1060–66 in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 4. Edited by Willem A. VanGemeren. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.

Wilson, Gerald H. "The Prayer of Daniel 9: Reflection on Jeremiah 29." *JSOT* 48 (1990) 91–99.

### **Disclaimer**

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.