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## OT 705 Biblical Aramaic

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## OT 705 BIBLICAL ARAMAIC

Spring Semester, 1999

9:00-9:50 T, Th, F

Instructor: Bill T. Arnold

### I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

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

### II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

### III. COURSE PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

#### A. Method of Instruction

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

#### B. Textbooks

##### Required:

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

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

Rosenthal, Franz. *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995.

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

Recommended:

Cook, Edward M., "The Orthography of Final Unstressed Long Vowels in Old and Imperial Aramaic," in *Sopher Mahir: Northwest Semitic Studies Presented to Stanislav Segert*, ed. E. M. Cook (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), pages 53-68.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Word Order in the Aramaic of Daniel*. Malibu, CA: Undena, 1986.

Dove, John F. "An Introductory Grammar of Biblical Aramaic: A Text and Workbook," (Unpublished MA thesis; Ashland Theological Seminary, 1994).

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. and Stephen A. Kaufman, *An Aramaic Bibliography, Part 1: Old, Official, and Biblical Aramaic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992).

Jerusalmi, Isaac. *The Aramaic Sections of Ezra and Daniel: A Philological Commentary* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1978).

Johns, Alger F. *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Andrews University Monographs, 1; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1963).

## C. Assignments

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

## D. Examinations

There will be two examinations during the semester (see schedule below). In addition, vocabulary and grammatical quizzes will be assigned as appropriate.

## E. Research Paper

During the semester, the student will write a brief paper of no more than 2500 words on the topic of his or her choice from the list below (approximately 8-10 pages). The paper should conform to "Chicago Manual Style," chapter 7 in *Form and Style*, by Slade, Campbell, and Ballou (available in the bookstore). The student should make sure his or her name is clearly visible on the first page of the paper along with the SPO number. The paper should be stapled in the upper left corner with no bindings or folders of any kind. The paper is due at the beginning of class on May 14. There will be a penalty for late papers (one-third letter grade after the beginning of class on May 14 and a whole letter grade after May 15).

The topics will be chosen by March 19 and reported to the instructor on an index card that day. The purpose of this project is to provide background information for a better comprehension of the Aramaic language and the specific sections of Scripture under study. The following list of topics is partial. Other topics may be chosen in consultation with the professor.

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

#### IV. Student Evaluation

Class performance/notebook	35%
Vocabulary Quizzes	15%
Examinations	25%
Research Paper	25%

#### V. Tentative schedule of assignments

Feb 9	Introduction
Feb 11	Ezra 1:1-4:8 (English) Kaufman, "Languages (Aramaic)," <i>ABD</i> IV, 173-178 (course packet). <u>Collateral</u> : Fitzmyer, "Phases," 57-84 (course packet).
Feb 12	Ezra 4:8-12
Feb 16	NO CLASS
Feb 18	Ezra 4:13-19; Rosenthal, 1-63
Feb 19	Ezra 4:20-5:2
Feb 23	Ezra 5:3-10 Millard, "Arameans," <i>ABD</i> I, 345-350 (course packet).
Feb 25	Ezra 5:11-17
Feb 26	Ezra 6:1-8
Mar 2	EXAMINATION #1
Mar 4	Ezra 6:9-18
Mar 5	Ezra 7:1-11 (English); 7:12-20 (Aramaic)
Mar 9	Ezra 7:21-26; Daniel 1:1-2:4a (English)
Mar 11	Daniel 2:4b-11

Mar 12	Daniel 2:12-16 Arnold, "Use of Aramaic," 1-16 (course packet).
Mar 16	Daniel 2:17-24
Mar 18	Daniel 2:25-30
Mar 19	Daniel 2:31-38; PAPER TOPICS DUE
Mar 23	Daniel 2:39-49
Mar 25	Daniel 3:1-5 Driver, "Book of Daniel," 110-19, 323-25 (course packet).
Mar 26	Daniel 3:6-12
Mar 30	Daniel 3:13-20
Apr 1	EXAMINATION #2
Apr 2	GOOD FRIDAY – NO CLASS
Apr 13	Daniel 3:21-30
Apr 15	Daniel 3:31-4:6
Apr 16	Daniel 4:7-13
Apr 20	Daniel 4:14-20
Apr 22	Daniel 4:21-27
Apr 23	Daniel 4:28-34
Apr 27	Daniel 5:1-5 Arnold, "Wordplay," 479-482 (course packet)
Apr 29	Daniel 5:6-12
Apr 30	Daniel 5:13-20
May 4	Daniel 5:21-28
May 6	Daniel 5:29-6:5
May 7	Daniel 6:6-13 Arnold, "Wordplay," 482-485 (course packet)
May 11	Daniel 6:14-20
May 13	Daniel 6:21-28
May 14	Daniel 7:1-8; PAPER DUE
May 19	Daniel 7:9-28

## VI. Appendix: Contents of Course Packet

- Kaufman, Stephen A. "Languages (Aramaic)," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* IV, 173-178.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A., "The Phases of the Aramaic Language," in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), pages 57-84
- Millard, Alan R. "Arameans," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* I, 345-350.
- Wilson, Gerald H. "An Index to the Biblical Passages Cited in Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 24.1(1979), pages 21-24.
- Mitchel, Larry A. *A Student's Vocabulary for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), pages 52-65 and 83-88.
- Arnold, Bill T. "The Use of Aramaic in the Hebrew Bible: Another Look at Bilingualism in Ezra and Daniel," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 22.2(1996)1-16.
- Driver, G. R. "The Aramaic of the Book of Daniel," *JBL* 45(1926), 110-19, 323-25.
- Arnold, Bill T. "Wordplay and Narrative Techniques in Daniel 5 and 6," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112.3(1993)479-485.
- Layton, Scott C. "Old Aramaic Inscriptions: Literary Sources for the History of Palestine and Syria," *Biblical Archaeologist* 51.3(1988), 172-189.
- Kaufman, Stephen A. "The Pitfalls of Typology: On the Early History of the Alphabet," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 57(1986), 1-14.