

The Prophets

Welcome to the Josephinum Diaconate Institute's Online Course on *The Prophets*.

The contribution of the prophets of Israel to the biblical corpus and therefore to the beliefs and practices of Jews and Christians who have inherited its implications for faith is unquestioned. A deacon in the Catholic Church should be cognizant of this contribution so he can absorb its lessons into his own moral life, but also so he can successfully communicate them in his preaching and teaching.

The course considers Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah I, II, and III, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Jonah. The first three modules deal with (a) Hebrew religious beliefs as they emerge in the biblical period, (b) issues of methodology and hermeneutics, and (c) elements of the history of Israel in the period in which the prophets we study wrote. The course requires two reflection papers, due in the sixth and the eighth weeks, a final 10 page paper and a one and one half hour final exam. There are two secondary works, sections of which are required reading, one by Thomas Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets* and the other by Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*. We read the prophets in the Jewish Study Bible.

There is a set of lectures for the course and other learning aids are available. We have three or four teleconferences spaced out during the twelve weeks of the course. There are five forums, also spaced out, that raise questions about the readings of the week and call for comments from the students, which are shared by all. The facilitator responds to all the comments raised in these forums.

The goals of the course are: (a) to understand the prophets in their historical setting, (b) learn the meaning of their writings from the Hebrew doctrinal perspective first and then from the dogmatic perspective of the Church, (c) learn to appreciate the similarities and the differences between Jewish and Catholic theological theologies of the prophetic writings, and (d) learn how to use the prophetic writings in your preaching.

Module Outline

- 1 Introduction to the Prophets
- 2 Methods of the Scholars
- 3 History of Israel
- 4 Amos
- 5 Hosea
- 6 Micah
- 7 Isaiah-I
- 8 Jeremiah
- 9 Ezekiel
- 10 Isaiah II
- 11 Isaiah III
- 12 Jonah

Over the next 12 weeks, you will read from the books of the major prophets and several of the minor prophets. You also will read several commentaries that will provide you with background information about the prophets themselves and the people and the nation to which they brought the Lord's messages. Three texts are required, and reading assignments will be made from all during the course:

Abraham J. Heschel, The Prophets. The book was originally copyrighted in 1962. We recommend the HarperCollins paper version published in 2001. The ISBN is 978-0-06-093699-0.

Thomas L. Leclerc, Introduction to the Prophets: Their Stories, Sayings and Scrolls. Paulist Press, 2007. ISBN-13: 9780-089104492-1. The Paulist version is in paper.

Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler and Michael Fishbane, trans., The Jewish Study Bible: Featuring the Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation. Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0195297546.

There are a number of other reference books which you may choose to acquire for your library. First among them is the New Jerome Biblical Commentary. It is more expensive than other texts, but generally is considered to be the authoritative Catholic commentary on the Bible. It is a reference book that will be of use for year.

Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The New Jerome Biblical Commentary. Pearson, 1989. ISBN-13: 978-0136149347

Other books that you may find useful.

A Biblical History of Israel, Iain Proven, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, ISBN-13: 978-0-664-22090-7.

A History of Prophecy in Israel, Joseph Blenkinsopp, ISBN-13: 978-0-664-25639-5.

Meet the Prophets. A Beginner's Guide to the Books of the Biblical Prophets, John W. Miller, ISBN: 0-8091-2899-3.

A Brief History of Ancient Israel, Victor H. Matthews, ISBN: 978-0-664-22436-3.

Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech, Claus Westermann, ISBN: 0-664-25244-3.

Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile, Walter Brueggemann, ISBN: 0-8006-19250-0.

The Prophetic Imagination, Walter Brueggemann, ISBN: 978-0-8006-3287-8.