

The material below was part of the syllabus prepared by Dru Johnson, Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at The King's College in New York City, for his course, "Introduction to the Literature of Hebrew Scripture." At the time, he used an advanced draft of *Justice for All*. The King's College is a non-denominational Christian college.

GENESIS

Regarding the readings:

Genesis
Justice for All, Introduction, Ch. 1 "The Jewish Bible's Unique Understanding of God"
Enuma Elish
Gilgamesh

Answer the following:

Considering the matters of political power, animals, land, and the gods, what are some of the distinguishing features of the Genesis text in relation to its counterparts in Egypt and Mesopotamia (*per Unterman*)? How could the Genesis creation account be seen as a reaction to other political powers and gods in the Ancient Near East?

EXODUS

Regarding the readings:

Exodus
Justice for All, Ch. 2 "The Revelation at Sinai"
Hammurabi Code
"The Castle Doctrine and Stand-Your-Ground Law" (<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2012/rpt/2012-R-0172.htm>)
"Texas justifiable homicides rise with 'Castle Doctrine'" (<http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Texas-justifiable-homicides-rise-with-Castle-3676412.php>)

Answer the following:

Considering Unterman's analysis of the Babylonian laws in contrast to the biblical laws, which legal code does the "Make My Day" story most closely resemble – Babylonian or biblical – and why? In your best estimate, what values took priority in states that created a Castle Doctrine (i.e., "Make My Day," "Stand Your Ground," "Duty to Retreat," etc.) law? What value takes priority regarding human life, property, and happiness in the Torah and why?

LEVITICUS & NUMBERS

Regarding the readings:

Leviticus
Numbers
Justice for All, Ch. 4 "The Primacy of Morality over Ritual"

Answer the following:

What is the connection between morality and ritual according to Unterman? Do we think of the moral and ritual life as tied together today? Apart from religious rituals, do we look for explanations of immoral behavior in ritual practices today?

DEUTERONOMY

Regarding the readings:

Deuteronomy
"Evidence of Cannibalism Found at Jamestown Site";

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/02/science/evidence-of-cannibalism-found-at-jamestown-site.html>

Justice for All, Ch. 2 "The Revelation at Sinai"; Ch. 3 "Providing for the Disadvantaged"

Answer the following:

Is punishment enough to deter disobedience? Imagine sitting on a ship in a port along the British coast, preparing to leave on a ship for Jamestown, New World in 1605. Suddenly, a revered and pious man warns you that if the ethical life of these people at the new outpost does not follow the Scriptures closely, you will all eventually starve to death, eat the corpses of your children, and be attacked by local tribes day and night. Only a handful would survive. Would you still go?

Although Deuteronomy paints an even more brutal future for Israel than what happened at Jamestown (cf. Deut 28; "Evidence of Cannibalism"), was this a deterrent? What kind of society (including Exodus and Leviticus) is Deuteronomy picturing for Israel that could avoid such a tragedy?

JOSHUA

Regarding the readings:

Joshua

Justice for All, Ch. 5 "The Requirement of 'Return'"

Listen: *This American Life* episode: "What Happened at Dos Erres," approximately one hour long
[thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/465/what-happened-at-dos-erres]

Answer the following:

- 1) According to Unterman, how is repentance a radical concept in the ancient world?
 - 2) Quite simply, what are the reasons for divinely commanded warfare stated in Joshua? Why was there no room for repentance amongst the Canaanites?
 - 3) In the Dos Erres tragedy, why was repentance not a concern for the soldiers who committed the atrocities? In other words, why didn't the soldiers let the villagers repent?
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KINGS

Regarding the readings:

1-2 Kings

Justice for All, Ch. 3 "Providing for the Disadvantaged"

Answer the following:

Considering Unterman's analysis of care of the poor, widow, and orphans:

- 1) How is 1-2 Kings a grand indictment of the failure to care for the fringes of society?
 - 2) How do prophets signal God's care for the exploitable fringes in and around Israel?
 - 3) How does the worship of false gods enable a system of exploitation of the poor, the widows, and the orphans?
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EXILE

Read:

Daniel

Jeremiah

Ezekiel

Justice for All, Ch. 6 "The Establishment of Hope"

Watch: "Ten Dollars and a Bus Ticket," [youtube.com/watch?v=go0MHkCIHXA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=go0MHkCIHXA)

Answer:

Babylon was not home for Israel. In the same way the prisoners in "Ten Dollars and a Bus Ticket" are

exiled from “normal life,” Israel was away from home and living under a power structure alien to “normal life.”

- 1) According to Unterman, how would the ancient view of God’s forgiveness comfort Israelites who lost their temple in Jerusalem?
 - 2) Would Assyria, Babylon, and Persia share the same hope if they were the ones being exiled by their gods?
 - 3) Like the inmate in the video who contemplates what he should do upon release, how should Israel prepare for her release from Babylon? What does she lack being away from Canaan? What should Israel do to ensure that she does not become a repeat offender?
 - 4) What do the prisoners interviewed *regularly* cite as an obvious reason for their life choices? What were they missing and how does the Hebrew Bible incorporate the need for children to be guided (think: Deuteronomy)?
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RETURN

Read:

Ezra

Nehemiah

Haggai

Malachi

Bonnie L Pattison, "Ministry to the Poor and Spiritual Worship of the Church," *Poverty in the Theology of John Calvin*, 309–45 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

Justice for All, Ch. 3 “Providing for the Disadvantaged”; Ch. 4 “The Primacy of Morality over Ritual”

Answer:

Considering the special concern for the poor *that Calvin discerns from the Hebrew Bible*:

- 1) How is concern for the poor rooted in the teaching of the Torah and the life of Israel as a whole?
- 2) Why must the newly returned Israelites be especially careful about how they arrange their priorities (e.g., Neh 5)?
- 3) How are worship at the Temple and the poor interrelated? What will happen to Israel if they cannot reconcile their worship and treatment of the poor?