

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND  
INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER, MAY 2011

TITLE OF PAPER : A STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT  
COURSE CODE : IDE T2P1  
DURATION : 3 HOURS  
INSTRUCTIONS : a. Choose and answer four questions in all.  
b. Write in clear, grammatically correct sentences.

All questions are worth 25 marks

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**IDET2P1 A Study of the Old Testament (M), May 2011**

**Question 1**

Explain the merits and demerits of using the alternative terminology such as “First Testament”, “Former Testament”, “Hebrew Bible” and “Jewish Canon” to the term “Old Testament”.

**Question 2**

Conduct a sociological reading of the following *pericope* in Genesis 27:1-40:

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called his elder son Esau and said to him, ‘My son’; and he answered, ‘Here I am.’<sup>2</sup> He said, ‘See, I am old; I do not know the day of my death.’<sup>3</sup> Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me. ‘Then prepare for me savoury food, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die.’

<sup>5</sup> Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, <sup>6</sup>Rebekah said to her son Jacob, ‘I heard your father say to your brother Esau, <sup>7</sup>“Bring me game, and prepare for me savoury food to eat, that I may bless you before the LORD before I die.”’<sup>8</sup> Now therefore, my son, obey my word as I command you. <sup>9</sup>Go to the flock, and get me two choice kids, so that I may prepare from them savoury food for your father, such as he likes; <sup>10</sup>and you shall take it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.’<sup>11</sup> But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, ‘Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a man of smooth skin. <sup>12</sup>Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him, and bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.’<sup>13</sup> His mother said to him, ‘Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my word, and go, get them for me.’<sup>14</sup> So he went and got them and brought them to his mother; and his mother prepared savoury food, such as his father loved. <sup>15</sup>Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob; <sup>16</sup>and she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. <sup>17</sup>Then she handed the savoury food, and the bread that she had prepared, to her son Jacob.

<sup>18</sup> So he went in to his father, and said, ‘My father’; and he said, ‘Here I am; who are you, my son?’<sup>19</sup> Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, so that you may bless me.’<sup>20</sup> But Isaac said to his son, ‘How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?’ He answered, ‘Because the LORD your God granted me success.’<sup>21</sup> Then Isaac said to Jacob, ‘Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not.’<sup>22</sup> So Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, ‘The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands

are the hands of Esau.’<sup>23</sup> He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him.<sup>24</sup> He said, ‘Are you really my son Esau?’ He answered, ‘I am.’<sup>25</sup> Then he said, ‘Bring it to me, that I may eat of my son’s game and bless you.’ So he brought it to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.

<sup>26</sup> Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Come near and kiss me, my son.’<sup>27</sup> So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said,

‘Ah, the smell of my son

is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.

<sup>28</sup> May God give you of the dew of heaven,

and of the fatness of the earth,

and plenty of grain and wine.

<sup>29</sup> Let peoples serve you,

and nations bow down to you.

Be lord over your brothers,

and may your mother’s sons bow down to you.

Cursed be everyone who curses you,

and blessed be everyone who blesses you!’

<sup>30</sup> As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting.<sup>31</sup> He also prepared savoury food, and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, ‘Let my father sit up and eat of his son’s game, so that you may bless me.’<sup>32</sup> His father Isaac said to him, ‘Who are you?’ He answered, ‘I am your firstborn son, Esau.’<sup>33</sup> Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, ‘Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all\* before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!’

<sup>34</sup> When Esau heard his father’s words, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, me also, father!’<sup>35</sup> But he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing.’<sup>36</sup> Esau said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob?\* For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away my blessing.’ Then he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’<sup>37</sup> Isaac answered Esau, ‘I have already made him your lord, and I have given him all his brothers as servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?’<sup>38</sup> Esau said to his father, ‘Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!’ And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

<sup>39</sup> Then his father Isaac answered him:

‘See, away from\* the fatness of the earth shall your home be,

and away from\* the dew of heaven on high.

<sup>40</sup> By your sword you shall live,  
and you shall serve your brother;  
but when you break loose,\*  
you shall break his yoke from your neck.'

### Question 3

Demonstrate how the primeval writers portray the theme of evil in the narratives contained in Genesis 1-11. [25]

### Question 4

Identify and describe elements of patriarchal religious beliefs and practices as reflected in the narratives in Genesis 12-50. [25]

### Question 5

Explain the concept of holiness as embodied in the cultic regulations in the book of Leviticus. [25]

### Question 6

Describe the socio-political setting of the book of Amos in order to show the relevance of the prophet's message to its historical context. [25]

### Question 7

Explain Jeremiah's theological critique of the state of Jewish religious piety as recorded in Jeremiah 7.

#### **Jeremiah 7**

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup>Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. <sup>3</sup>Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you\* in this place. <sup>4</sup>Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is\* the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

5 For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, <sup>6</sup>if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, <sup>7</sup>then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors for ever and ever.

8 Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. <sup>9</sup>Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not

known, <sup>10</sup> and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are safe!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? <sup>11</sup>Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the LORD. <sup>12</sup>Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. <sup>13</sup>And now, because you have done all these things, says the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer, <sup>14</sup>therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name, in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. <sup>15</sup>And I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinsfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim.

16 As for you, do not pray for this people, do not raise a cry or prayer on their behalf, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you. <sup>17</sup>Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? <sup>18</sup>The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink-offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger. <sup>19</sup>Is it I whom they provoke? says the LORD. Is it not themselves, to their own hurt? <sup>20</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: My anger and my wrath shall be poured out on this place, on human beings and animals, on the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched.

21 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. <sup>22</sup>For on the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices. <sup>23</sup>But this command I gave them, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you.' <sup>24</sup>Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but, in the stubbornness of their evil will, they walked in their own counsels, and looked backwards rather than forwards. <sup>25</sup>From the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; <sup>26</sup>yet they did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks. They did worse than their ancestors did.

27 So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. <sup>28</sup>You shall say to them: This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips.

<sup>29</sup> Cut off your hair and throw it away;  
raise a lamentation on the bare heights, \*

for the LORD has rejected and forsaken  
the generation that provoked his wrath.

30 For the people of Judah have done evil in my sight, says the LORD; they have set their abominations in the house that is called by my name, defiling it. <sup>31</sup>And they go on building the high place\* of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire—which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind. <sup>32</sup>Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it will no more be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter: for they will bury in Topheth until there is no more room. <sup>33</sup>The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the animals of the earth; and no one will frighten them away. <sup>34</sup>And I will bring to an end the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of the bride and bridegroom in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for the land shall become a waste. [25]

#### **Question 8**

What is religious formalism? Demonstrate how this portrayed and denounced in the messages contained in two prophetic books of your choice. [25]

#### **Question 9**

Discuss significant aspects of the theological polemic against idolatry presented in the book of Second Isaiah. [25]

#### **Question 10**

Identify and discuss internal evidence in the book of Proverbs that demonstrates the family context of Jewish wisdom. [25]

#### **Question 11**

“The book of Job represents a crisis of faith”. Discuss this proposition with reference to relevant aspects of the contents of the book. [25]

#### **Question 12**

Identify and explain the historical improbabilities contained in the book of Daniel. [25]