



UNIVERSITEIT VAN STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

Preliminary Report on Short Course 2882
10 Jan to 4 February 2011, Nairobi, Kenya

Introduction

The first half of Short Course 2882 was presented by Prof C H J van der Merwe of the *Centre for Bible Interpretation and Translation in Africa* and the *Department of Ancient Studies* of the University of Stellenbosch from Monday 10 January to Thursday 4 February 2011. The second half of the Short Course will be completed from Monday 30 May to Thursday 23 June 2011. This Short Course is the full equivalent of the 24 credit module Biblical Hebrew 178.

Students

The first half of the short course was attended by 17 students (5 from Uganda, 3 from Malawi, 2 from Sudan, 2 from Botswana, 1 from Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Congo Brazzaville and Namibia). One of the students, Mbakiso Nkanga, arrived a week late. Since he had some basic background in Biblical Hebrew, he managed to catch up to a degree.

Seven of the students already had some background (e.g. attended Biblical Hebrew workshops offered by the UBS) in Biblical Hebrew. However, two of the students did not finish high school. This diversity provided quite a challenge to the teacher. An assessment of each student's level of competency was conducted on the first day of the course. On the basis of the assessment, the students were divided into three groups, with one of the more advanced students as facilitator in each of the three groups. This arrangement worked satisfactorily, but it put an additional burden on the teacher. In future, care needs to be taken that all the students accepted into the course be of more or less the same level of competence.

Teaching and outcomes

Three lectures of an hour each were taught from Monday to Thursday. Every morning the previous day's work was assessed and on Fridays the week's work was assessed. (For details about the daily programme, cf. Addendum 1). In the process, the students completed 11 small assessments and 3 larger ones. Their performance is recorded in Addendum 2. **The average score of 85% is remarkable.** This high score is attributed to several factors.

- Seven of the students already did a basic course in Biblical Hebrew,
- the material covered was very basic (e.g. reading and writing of Hebrew characters, 230 lexical items in their cultural context, grammatical modification of nouns and adjectives, simple verbless clauses, the Qal perf and impf paradigm, simple verbal clauses),
- many of the students are gifted,
- all the students were highly motivated and worked very hard,
- they were well-informed about what they were learning and why,
- students had access to a computer programme they know well (Paratext),
- the students were regularly assessed,
- and students who struggled could immediately receive additional tutoring in the evenings.

Of the 17 students, 3 to 4 (i.e. those who scored below 50% with final larger assessment) may struggle to keep up with the pace in the second part of the course.

Each student received a programme to follow from February to the end of May in order to keep up the knowledge and skills acquired in this part of the course. (See Addendum 3). The success of the second half of the course depends highly on whether students keep to this programme.

During week 4, one of the Malawian students, Alfred Lihelu fell ill. He could neither attend the lectures nor write the final assessments. Arrangements have been made with Mrs. Ilse Visser of the Malawian team to help him to catch up, and complete the assessments he had missed in Malawi.

The following Translation Consultants of the UBS participated in the course in a variety of capacities: Andy Warren (week 1: administration); Samy Tioyé (week 1 and 2: administration, prepare PowerPoint exercises, facilitate small groups); Anastasia Malle (week 2 and 3: facilitate small groups) and Gerrit van Steenbergen (week 3 and 4: facilitate small groups, provide additional tutoring in the evenings, provide Source Language Tools and Paratext training). Misheck Nyirenda, a TC in training, also facilitated a small group in week 4. Ilse Visser, an exegetical aid from Malawi, acted as teaching assistant (i.e. did the grading of papers, additional tutoring of students from Malawi, etc.) during week 1.

The UBS representatives had been briefed about the theoretical frame of reference of the teaching programme. They were informed as often as possible about the rationale of the pedagogical strategies, as well as the need for the moderation of the major assessments, e.g. the major assessments were submitted to the Translation Consultant present for his/her comments. Whenever possible, inputs by the Translation Consultants as far as the teaching strategies are concerned, were incorporated, e.g. the way in which Paratext could be utilized in the teaching process.

Assessments

On 3rd February the module and the venue was assessed by the students.

The majority of the students rated the content, the approach and the lecturer very positively. Three students felt that the pace was too quick for them. The majority rated the venue and the food from satisfactorily to good.

The lecturer did not find all the teaching facilities satisfactorily, e.g. the blackboard was too old to be used effectively, the white board was too small and impractical. However, this forced him to rely more on PowerPoints. Although very time-consuming to prepare, these PowerPoints turned out to be very effective.

As already indicated, the diversity of academic background of the students, put a high demand on the didactic strategies of the lecturer. Although all the UBS personnel were keen to help, the services of a full-time teaching assistant were dearly missed.

The lecturer is of the opinion that the daily schedule could be improved if breakfast is served at 07h00 and not 08h00.

Recommendations

1. The UBS office in Nairobi must please encourage the TC's of each of the students who attended the Short Course to give them time (and where possible encourage them) to keep the assigned learning schedule (cf. Addendum 3).
2. The offer of Ms Visser to act as teaching assistant must be accepted.
3. The Carmelite Retreat House must provide a better black board.
4. Breakfast must be served at 7h00 in the morning.

This will imply that in June the following daily schedule will be followed:

07h00-07h30 Breakfast

07h30-07h50 Devotions

07h50-08h00 Daily Administration

08h00-08h30 Assessment

08h30-09h00 Students prepare for Lecture 1

09h00-10h00 Lecture 1

10h00-10h30 Coffee break

10h30-11h30 Study

11h30-12h30 Lecture 2

12h30-14h00 Lunch break

14h00-15h00 Study

15h00-16h00 Lecture 3

16h00-16h15 Tea break

16h15-17h15 Tutorial



15 February 2011