Iona School for Ministry

Old Testament

September 10, 2022

Exercise in interpretation

The goal of this exercise is to use what we have learned today to interpret a specific text, in accord with the interpretive method presented in Session 4. The only information needed comes from the class presentations and discussions, and from the NRSV translators’ notes and the New Oxford Annotated Bible notes.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9

Read the text aloud

*World in front of the text*

* What is this text about? Are there any cultural preconceptions that we might bring to this text, which might predispose us to read it in a particular way?

*World of the text*

* What is the larger textual unit of which this passage is a part, and how does this passage fit into it? Is there a larger narrative, of which this is but one episode?
* What do the translators’ notes show about the problem of establishing the text? What is at stake in the two different options?
* What light do the NOAB annotations shed on these questions?

*World behind the text*

* In view of what we have covered about the stages of biblical history, what can you imagine as a general historical setting for the textual change evidenced in the manuscripts? In what historical context would the issue that surfaces in these textual variations have been a live question?
* Could this text have existed independent of its incorporation into Deuteronomy? If so, how might a text like this have functioned on its own?

*Back to the world in front of the text: midrash*

* Does the question raised by this text have any relevance to us today in our present cultural situation?
* On what basis might you draw an analogy between what the text says and what you could say to the community of faith?
* What would be the main point of your sermon based on this text?

Take what we did with this text in class, add to it any further observations you’d like to make, write up the finished product, and return it in an editable Word file within one week to michaelhfloyd@yahoo.com.