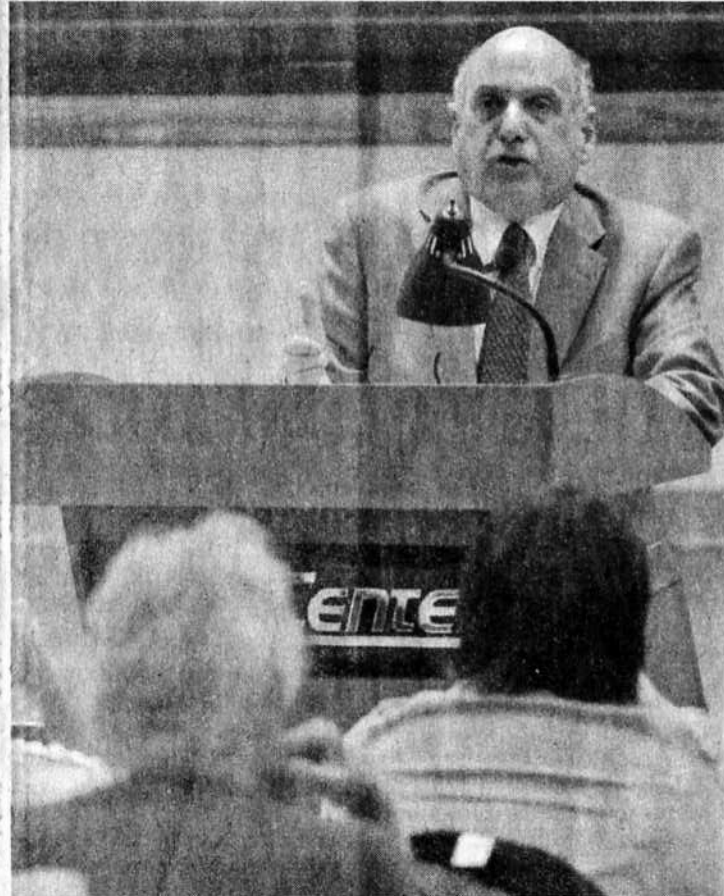


# Lecture explores biblical studies, media portrayals



JEFF SCHORFHEIDE/Herald photo

Professor Leonard Greenspoon speaks to UW students Monday about evolution of biblical teaching methods.

## Jewish Heritage series calls for personalized interpretation of Bible

BY BECKY VEVEA  
News Reporter

University of Wisconsin students, faculty and community members crowded the auditorium of the Pyle Center Monday to hear a professor from Creighton University speak about biblical interpretation and representation in popular American culture.

Leonard Greenspoon's lecture, "Interpreting the Word: Hope, Hype, and Habit in Fifty Years of Biblical Studies," was part of the Jewish Heritage Lecture Series sponsored by The Lubar Institute for the Study of Abrahamic Religions and the UW Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies.

Greenspoon discussed the shifting teaching methods, analysis of interpretation and the media's portrayal of the Bible. He said scholars use two approaches in biblical studies: the linear approach and the personal approach.

"Today, we don't have any experts in biblical studies, and there really are none,"

Greenspoon said.

The personal approach, which Greenspoon said he uses, deals with an individual's experience with the Bible, which can be both an advantage and a disadvantage.

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**Leonard Greenspoon**  
Professor  
Creighton University

"From a pedagogical standpoint, the personal approach is great because a teacher has to be personally invested in the material to really bring insight into the

classroom," said Chris Jones, teaching assistant for an introduction to Judaism course at UW.

The old way of teaching in biblical studies left little to no discussion of what the text actually meant, Greenspoon said. Today, theology is commonly discussed and challenged, resulting in different interpretations of the Bible.

"I can't remember ever sitting down to discuss what the text actually meant," Greenspoon said.

The translations Greenspoon addressed also focused on individual relationships to the text, and he pointed to the secular approach of a Hebrew studies scholar — Max Margoli — to translating the Old Testament, which valorizes Judaism in biblical translation.

"There is some truth to [Margoli's] claim because the Old Testament was written to the Jewish people, but we are so far removed now, I don't believe that Jewish students and scholars have an advantage over others in interpreting the text," said UW sophomore Stephanie Christian, who is currently taking courses in introductory biblical literature and Judaism.

The lecture also included the

influence of new technology on biblical translation.

"There is no question that technology has vastly increased the ability to access ancient manuscripts, but researchers should never let technology completely separate them from the parchment," Greenspoon said.

Another theme of the lecture was the ways the mainstream media portrays the Bible — specifically regarding tabloids — and Greenspoon argued the marketing of Bible translations is nothing new.

"The mainstream media looks for sensational stories and doesn't consult experts, which often misinforms people," Jones said.

Touching on the "hype" part of the lecture, Greenspoon said those responsible for representations of biblical texts in pop culture sometimes take their roles seriously whereas others do not, leaving it up to the reader to look critically at these portrayals.

"When you look at any text, even a news article, personal experiences affect how you read and interpret that story, so you can't really separate the personal from how you analyze that text," Christian said.