

SP/HB6/715 (3) The Book of Genesis as a Spiritual Text

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan Kaplan
Phone: 604-827-4742 Email: ldkaplan@vst.edu
Office hours during term: by appointment

Purpose: In the Book of Genesis, complex narratives invite the reader to reflect on issues of deep spiritual, existential, and philosophical importance. Issues include divine nature, human nature, dreams and visions, reconciliation, and family relationships. Guided by close reading of selected narratives, and employing interpretive techniques from the Jewish midrashic, kabbalistic, and Hasidic traditions, along with ecumenical depth psychological traditions, we will explore the issues from scholarly and personal perspectives.

Competence Objectives:

Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to:

- Summarize the narrative and describe the style of the Book of Genesis
- Explain and apply a variety of Biblical interpretive techniques
- Clearly articulate spiritual questions raised by the Book of Genesis
- Develop personal answers to selected questions, informed by Biblical and scholarly sources

Format: Fall term 2015, Tuesdays 2:00-5:00 pm, September 15, 22, 29; October 6, 13, 20; Nov 3, 10, 17, 24; Dec 1. Course activities include lecture, discussion, and small group activities.

Identification of the levels at which the course can be taken: Certificate, Basic (Diploma/MA/M.Div) or Advanced (Th.M).

Required reading:

Fox, Everett. *The Five Books of Moses*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2000

Soloveitchik, Joseph B. *The Lonely Man of Faith*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1965

Additional shorter readings, drawn in part from the selected bibliography, will be available on moodle.

Assignments: Attendance in accordance with VST policies; thoughtful, engaged participation in class discussion and activities; completion of assigned readings; three 750 word reflection papers demonstrating personal engagement, awareness of at least one interpretive approach, and mastery of relevant content; and final paper on a selected topic demonstrating course competencies. Details will be available in the syllabus.

Certificate-level students are required to complete three reflection papers. Basic-level students complete the three reflection papers and a 2500-word final paper involving research (5 sources) beyond the course readings. Advanced-level students complete three reflection papers and a 4000-word final paper involving significant research (10 sources) beyond the course readings.

Prerequisites: HB 500.

Selected bibliography:

Alter, Judah A. *The Language of Truth*, trans. Arthur Green. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2012.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011.

Brettler, Mark. *How to Read the Jewish Bible*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Cherry, Shai. *Torah Through Time: Understanding Bible Commentary from the Rabbinic Period to Modern Times*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2007.

Edinger, Edward F. *The Bible and the Psyche: Individuation Symbolism in the Old Testament (Studies in Jungian Psychology no 24)*. Toronto, ON, Canada: Inner City Books, 1986.

Fox, Everett. *The Five Books of Moses*. New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2000

Freedman, Harry and Maurice Simon. *Midrash Rabbah*. Hindhead, Surrey, UK: Soncino Press, 1992

Goldstein, Elyse, ed. *The Women's Torah Commentary*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000.

Green, Arthur. *Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003

Husser, Jean-Marie. *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999.

Matt, Daniel C. *Zohar: Annotated and Explained*. Woodstock VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2002.

Neusner, J. *An Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999.

Slater, Jonathan, *A Partner in Holiness, Vol. 1, Genesis and Exodus*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2014.

Soloveitchik, Joseph B. *The Lonely Man of Faith*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1965

Zornberg, Aviva Gottlieb. *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire*. New York, NY: Jewish Publication Society, 1996

A more detailed syllabus will be available later this summer.