

Bible Stories as You've Never Heard Them
Wed / Begins October 22 / 7:00-8:15 pm
Dr. Ed Silver

How old is the Torah? Who were the Babylonians? What's a "judge"? What did Jerusalem look like in antiquity? Did King David really exist? And what was so important about the Temple, anyway? Over two semesters, The World of the Bible will explore the historical, cultural, and religious environment of ancient Israel and emerging Judaism. This semester, we shift focus from the origins of the ancient Israelites as an ethnicity to consider how these people fared during the monarchic period and beyond. We will discuss the rise of Mesopotamian empires during this era, and situate the emergence of the Hebrew speaking kingdoms in the Levant in response this pressure. As in the past semester, our emphasis will be on assessing recent trends in archaeology and situating these in relation to the Biblical account. Our discussion will encompass the rise of temple-based religious ritual, the emergence of aniconic, proto-monotheistic worship of YHWH, and the shift from localized, sacrificial worship to forms of religious identity and expression centered on text.

Required Textbook: Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible by Yairah Amit

Class Number	Date	Topic
1	October 22	Stories, Scrolls, Codexes and Canons
2	October 29	The Origin of Writing Culture in the Ancient Near East
3	November 5	Reading the Bible as Literature
4	November 12	Gaps and Gap-Filling
5	November 19	Plot Structure (Micro and Macro)
6	December 3	Characterization
7	December 10	The Narrator
8	December 17	Wordplay
9	January 7	"Foolproof Composition" and the Meaning of Biblical Stories
10	January 14	Reading in Context(s)
	January 21	<i>(Make up class if needed)</i>

Class Schedule and Readings

Class 1 – Stories Scrolls and Codexes and Canons

John Barton, “What is a Book? Modern Exegesis and the Literary Conventions of Ancient Israel” in *Intertextuality in Ugarit & Israel*, Johannes C. de Moor, ed. (Brill 1998): 1-14.

Class 2 – The Origin of Writing Culture in the Ancient Near East

Kirta, Mesha Stele, Siloam Tunnel Inscription

Simon Parker, “Ugaritic Literature and the Bible,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 63 (2000): 228-231.

Class 3 – Reading the Bible as Literature

Exodus 14, 15 ; Judges 4, 5 ; Ruth 1-4

Amit, pp. 1-32

Robert Kawashima, “ From Song to Story: The Genesis of Narrative in Judges 4 and 5. Prooftexts 21 (2001): 151-178

Class 4 – Gap and Gap-Filling

Gen 22; 24

Erich Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar” in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1969)

Class 5 – Plot Structure (Micro and Macro)

Judges 3; 13-16

Amit, pp. 33-68

Class 6 – Characterization

Judges 10-16

Amit, pp. 69-92

Class 7 – **The Narrator**

Exodus 1-15

Amit, pp. 93-102

Class 8 – **Wordplay**

Gen 1-11; Gen 37-50

Martin Buber, “Leitwort Style in Pentateuchal Narrative” in Scripture and Translation (Indiana Univ. Press, 1994); 114-128

Class 9 – **“Foolproof Composition” and the Meaning of Biblical Stories**

Gen 34

Meir Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, pp. 41-57; 441-474

Fewell, D.N and D.M Gunn, “Tipping the Balance: Sternberg;s Reader and the Rape of Dinah” JBL 110 (1991): 193-211.

Class 10 – **Reading in Context(s)**

Gen 38

Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg, “Sex and the Single Girl: Dina, Tamar, and the Corrective Art of Biblical Narrative” BTB 47 (2017), 195-204.