Bereshit (Genesis) Part II  
BIBLE 101  
“Joseph and His Brothers”  
Rabbinical Students, Hebrew College Spring 2013 DRAFT

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FALL SEMESTER  

Bereshit (Bible 100)  

Tuesdays 11:15 am – 1:15 pm; Thursdays 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Description  

Colorful coats, dreams and near fratricide, famine, exile, and reconciliation mark the dramatic narrative of Joseph and His Brothers in the last third of Bereshit. This course will engage in a careful reading of the biblical text, drawing on midrash as well as modern literary responses, from Israeli poetry to Thomas Mann's great novel. In addition to honing our text skills, we will consider various themes such as the problem of continuity/discontinuity (toledot), dreams and their interpretation, models of recognition and teshuvah, and family secrets and shame.

Requirements:

- “Genres and Themes in Biblical Literature” (Bible 502a/502b) or the academic equivalent; Hebrew VI or above and/or the approval of the professor.

Goals of the Course:

- Reinforce text reading skills of the Humash in the original Hebrew, by reviewing some salient features of Biblical Hebrew phonology, morphology, and syntax, and through the usage of the concordance, B.D.B., and grammar resources.
Review critical approaches to biblical scholarship: Source Criticism (the Documentary Hypothesis), textual criticism, and form criticism. Develop skills to access how *Bereshit* is read in its *sitz im leben* (lit. “setting in life”, historical context).

Train ourselves in the distinction between *peshat* (plain meaning, contextual reading) and *derash* (applied or extended meaning of the text), and the tools each level of exegesis requires.

Learn to read the biblical text carefully, with an eye to discovering the “exegetical gap” or “hook” upon which the classic interpreter may base his or her reading. We will focus on reading Rashi and his midrashic sources in order to discern “What is Rashi’s question?”

Introduce students to traditions of interpretation and their respective literary forms: exegetical midrash (e.g. *Bereshit Rabbah*), the “Re-written Bible” of the Pseudepigrapha (e.g. Jubilees), homiletical midrash (e.g. *Tanhuma Yelamdenu*), and narrative midrash (e.g. *Avot deRabbi Natan*, *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*).

Sensitize ourselves to the literary patterns, feminist perspectives, as well as major themes in the Book of Genesis: covenant, overturn of primogeniture, type scene, barren wife motif and so forth.

**Required Texts:**

- Any Hebrew Bible. Recommended: The bilingual *JPS Tanakh* or the bilingual Koren edition (preferred!).
- *Miqra’ot Gedolot* on *Bereshit* (including Rashi, Ramban, and Ibn Ezra); recommend *Etz Haim* (published by Mosad Ha-Rav Kook).
- Sarna, Nahum. *Understanding Genesis* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1966, 2nd ed. 1970) [From hereon *Sarna*]
- All other readings will be placed on Reserve in the library and/or uploaded to “Schoology”.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

1. **Participation** (10%). Attendance and active involvement in discussion is critical to progress in this course. Preparation for class each week entails thorough Havruta study in of a section in *Bereshit* in the original Hebrew (up to 20 verses), plus a *daf mekorot* (source sheet with guideline questions for the Beit Midrash), and at least one secondary source, introducing a critical article/reading pertinent to the passage at hand.

2. **Weekly Reflection Papers/Divrei Torah** (60%). These ten written assignments entail weekly reflections on the primary readings, *parshanut* and articles that we will be reading over the course of the semester. They should serve as the basis for future *Divrei Torah* for your future congregations. The work (2-3 pages double-spaced, up to 500 words) will be posted to Schoology or Google.docs every
week. I will then respond with suggestions/feedback and open the papers up for peer review (at the discretion of the student).

3. **Final Project: Teaching a Passage from Bereshit** (30%). Each student will submit one lesson plan, including sources (included at least one Medieval exegete, midrash and/or modern literary piece) and present it to the class as a model *shiur*:
   a) By Thurs. March 21st, you are to submit a detailed (2-3 pages) outline of your shiur, with clear questions, sources for study, and secondary sources (modern commentary) that you will be drawing upon. In the last 5 weeks of classes, students will be presenting their model *shiurim*, and then write up a post-evaluation. This will be due on the final day of classes, Thurs. May 23rd.

1. **First Week of Second Semester** (Classes 1 & 2)

   **Tues. Jan. 29**<sup>th</sup> *Toledot Ya’aqov*
   **Gen: 37:1-4:** An overview of the chronology; Jacob and Joseph – parallel lives; “son of his old age”; origins of favoritism & sibling rivalry; Rashi on Gen. 37:1-4; *Breshit Rabbah* 84:2 and Midrash Tanhuma VaYeshev 1.

   **Thurs. Jan. 31**<sup>st</sup> Joseph’s Dreams and their Interpretation
   **Gen: 37: 5-11.** “A dream which is not interpreted is like a letter which is not read”

   Who interprets the dreams? Why these symbol? The brothers’ response: jealousy, hatred.

   Source: b. Berakhot, Or haChaim, and Zohar

   #1 -- First Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>!

2. **Second Week** (Class 3 & 4):

   **Tues. Feb. 5**<sup>th</sup> What happened in Shechem and Dothan?
   **Gen. 37:12-28.** What role does Jacob play? And Joseph with his “hineni”? Why Shechem? Who is the mysterious man Joseph encounters? Compare of Reuben and Judah’s respective roles at the cistern. Sources: *Breshit Rabbah*, *Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*

   **Thurs. Feb. 7**<sup>th</sup> The Sale and the Consequences
   **Gen. 37:29-36; Amos 2:6**


   #2 -- Second Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>!

3. **Third Week** (Class 5 & 6) Judah and Tamar (Genesis ch. 38)

   **Tues. Feb. 12**<sup>th</sup> Judah goes down from his brothers…”
   **Gen. 38:1-19.** Thwarted *toledot*; mourning (*’er and onen*); levirate marriage; deception/seduction at the crossroads (*Petah ‘Enayim*).

**Thurs. Feb. 14**th Tamar’s Courage and Judah’s Confession

**MODEL SHIUR:** [Jenn Krueger](#)

*Gen. 38: 20-27.*


### #3 -- Third Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday Feb. 17**th**!

### 4. Fourth Week (Class 7 & 8)

**Tues. Feb. 19**th *Gen. 39:1-23* “Yosef ha-tzaddik”

Joseph’s good looks; his master’s wife; Yosef ha-tzaddik; the face (*ikonin*) of his father. Sources: the Quran, *Breshit Rabbah* 87:8, b. Sotah 36b, *Joseph and Asenath*. Secondary Sources: James Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House*, pp. 21-42 (on hold in the library).

**Thurs. Feb. 21**st FAST OF ESTHER *no reflection paper due this week (Purim)*

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**A Purim Special:**

**Scepters, Signet Rings and Masks:**

**Joseph and Esther in the Imperial Court**

### 5. Fifth Week (Class 9 & 10) Joseph in Pharaoh’s Court

**Tues. Feb. 26**th *Gen. 40: 1-23* Joseph as Dream Interpreter

Joseph as keeper of the keys; comparing the cupbearer and the baker’s dreams. Sources: *b. Berakhot* 55b. Gen. Rab. 88:4; Or ha-Chaim on Gen. 40:8.

**Thurs. Feb. 28**th Joseph and Pharaoh’s Dreams


### #4 -- Fourth Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday March 3**rd**!

### 6. Sixth Week (Class 11 & 12)

**Tues. March 5**th Joseph and Asenath (Osnat) – Assimilation?

**Thurs. March 7th**  The Conspiracy of Silence


#5 -- Fifth Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday March 10th!

7. Seventh Week (Class 13 & 14)

**Tues. March 12th** Famine in the Land & The Brothers Go Down to Egypt


**Thurs. March 14th** Plans for a Second Descent to Egypt

**Gen. 42:29-43:14** “Yosef einenu”; Reuben and Judah appeal to their father; the role of the guarantor. Zornberg (as above).

#6 -- Sixth Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday March 17th!

8. Eighth Week (Class 15 & 16)

**Tues. March 19th** The Goblet in the Sack

*Genesis 43:14-34-44:1-9;* Rashi on 43:19; Ramban and Seforno on 44:1; key word: g.n.b.

**Thurs. March 21st** *Proposal for Shiur/Outline & sources due TODAY, March 21st

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9. Ninth Week (Class 17)

**Thurs. April 3rd** The Rope has followed the Bucket;


#7 -- Seventh Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday April 7th!

10. Tenth Week (Class 18 & 19)
Tues. April 9th  1st MODEL SHIUR: __________________________

Thurs. April 11th  The Revelation of Identity and The Narrative of Shame

#8 -- Eighth Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday April 14th!

11. Eleventh Week (Class 20)

**Tues. April 16th** Yom Atzma’ut; Special Shiur: “Joseph’s Legacy and the Bones of Independence

Thurs. April 18th;  2nd MODEL SHIUR: __________________________

12. Twelfth Week (Class 21 & 22)

**Tues. April 23rd** The Reconciliation between Father and Son
*Gen. 45:21-28*; Rashi on 45:24-27; Ramban, Ibn Ezra, and Radak on Gen. 45:25 and 27; *Bereshit Rabbah* 94.

Thurs. April 25th;  3rd MODEL SHIUR: __________________________

#9 -- Ninth Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday April 21st!

13. Thirteenth Week (Class 23 & 24)

**Tues. April 30th**;  4th MODEL SHIUR: __________________________

Thurs. May 2nd;  5th MODEL SHIUR: __________________________

#10 – Tenth Weekly Reflection Paper due Sunday April 28th!

14. Fourteenth Week (Class 25 & 26)

**Tues. May 7th**;  6th MODEL SHIUR: __________________________

Thurs. May 9th;  7th MODEL SHIUR: __________________________

15. Fifteenth Week (Class 27)

**Tues. May 14th** (Class until 1 p.m.) = ‘erev shavu‘ot

8th MODEL SHIUR: __________________________
16. Sixteenth Week (Class 28 & 29)

Tues. May 21st; 9th MODEL SHIUR: ___________________________

Thus. May 23rd LAST DAY of Classes

Final Write up of Model Shiur Due!

Bibliography

Secondary Sources:
Alter, Robert
Fokkelman, Jan P.
Kugel, James
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Menn, Esther Marie
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Sternberg, Meir
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1992 Ma‘aseh Yehuda ve-Tamar: Breshit 39 ba-Mikra, ha-targumim ha’atikim uvasifrut ha-Yehudit (Jerusalem: Mifale ha-mehkar shel ha-Makhon le-madae ha-Yahadut) [Hebrew].
Zornberg, Avivah Gottlieb