Instructor:  
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SPRING SEMESTER :  
Class meets on Monday and Wednesday 11:15am-1:15pm

Pre-requisite: Hebrew V

Description of Course:
This course entails an introduction to the full complement of Biblical poetry, in its literary and historical context, and to modes of poetic interpretation and analysis. The course will cover selections from the Torah, Psalms, Proverbs, the Book of Job, Lamentations, and the Song of Songs, as well as selections from the Prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. We will discuss poetry within narrative, genres of Prophetic writings, apocalyptic revelations, and wisdom literature.

Goals of the Course:
- Attain a basic familiarity with the content, dating, themes, and canonization of poetic selections in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh).
- Exposure to different genres in the Tanakh, including cosmological history, historical narrative, legal codes, novella, and court tales. (We will look at prophetic oracles, biblical poetry, wisdom literature, and apocalyptic writings in the second semester).
- Acquire a basic familiarity with the methods of critical biblical scholarship and be able to apply them to the reading of biblical texts.
- Enable students to become more adept at reading the Tanakh in the original Hebrew. This will be accomplished by introducing/reviewing some salient features of Biblical Hebrew phonology, morphology, and syntax, and through the usage of the concordance, B.D.B., and grammar resources.

Required Texts:
Any Hebrew Bible. Recommended: The bilingual *JPS Tanakh* or the bilingual Koren edition (preferred!).


Other selected articles and readings will be together as a *Course Reader* (from hereon: *Reader*).

**Highly recommended reference works:**

- Thomas O. Lambdin’s textbook, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, can serve as a rough and ready simplified reference grammar, and is therefore highly recommended for students without extensive experience reading Biblical Hebrew.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

1. Participation (10%). Attendance and active involvement in discussion is critical to progress in this course. Typical preparation consists of close reading of an individual poem or poetic unit, in Hebrew, during Beit Midrash periods; bulk reading of Biblical and extra- Biblical primary sources in English, supplemented by secondary readings.

2. Three Short Assignments (20% each): 1) on “Characteristics of Ancient Biblical Poetry”, due Feb. 20th; 2) on “Wisdom Literature” due March 18th; 3) on “The Prophets” due May 1st.

3. Final exam (30%). The final exam will be cumulative and may address any of the readings and class discussions. Half the exam will be take-home, and the other half will be done in class, to be completed on the last day of classes, Wednesday, May 22nd, 11:15am-1:15 pm.

**Unit 1: Biblical Poetry (4 Weeks)**
1. **Jan. 28th** Introduction to the Art of Biblical Poetry

- **Primary Reading:** Genesis 9:6, 4:23-24.


- **Primary Reading:** Exodus 15.

Handout: Assignment # 1 – Characteristics of Ancient Biblical Poetry, due Feb. 18th

3. **Feb. 4th**, Shirat Devorah

- **Primary Reading:** Judges chapters 4-5.
- **Secondary Reading:** TBD

4. **Feb. 6th**, The Psalms of David

- **Primary Reading:** Psalm 1


5. **Mon. Feb. 11th** Psalms in Liturgy Part I

- **Primary Reading:** Psalm 145


6. **Wed. Feb. 13th** Psalms in Liturgy Part II
• Primary Reading: Psalm 103 (Barchi Nafshi)
• Secondary Reading: TBD

No Class on Monday Feb. 18th, President’s Day

7. Wed. Feb. 20th Song of Songs Part I & Assignment #1 Due!

8. Mon. Feb. 25th, Song of Songs Part II

Unit 2: Wisdom Literature (3 weeks)

• Primary Reading: Job chs. 1-2

• Primary Reading: The First Lament, ch. 3
• Secondary Reading: Harold Fisch “Tragedy is not Enough”, chapter 3 of Poetry with a Purpose, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 26-42 (in Reader)

• Primary Reading: Job chs. 38-41 (this is very difficult poetry – so cover as much as you can; ch. 42 is the denoument – read that in English).

Handout: Assignment # 2 – Wisdom Literature, due March 18th

12. March 11th, Proverbs The Evil Woman/Good Wife
• Primary Reading: Proverbs 7:4-23 and 31 (in Hebrew); Secondary Reading: Alter, The Art of Biblical Poetry, ch. 7: “The Poetry of Wit,” 163-184; Kugel, How to Read the Bible, 506-511 [from ch. 28, Solomon’s Wisdom”]; [in Reader]

13. March 13th, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus)
• Primary Reading: Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) chapters 25-26 (in English).

Unit 3: Biblical Prophecy (7 Weeks)
14. **March 18th** What is Biblical Prophecy? The Initiation into Service  
- Primary Reading: Exod. ch. 3; Isaiah ch. 1 & 6; Jeremiah ch. 1; Ezekiel chs. 2-3.  

15. **March 20th** The Prophet as Intercessor  
- Primary Reading: Jeremiah in the Potters House (Jer. 18:1-23).  

**No Class March 25th – April 2nd – Passover**

16. **Wed. April 3rd**, The Prophet’s Lament  
- Primary Reading: Isaiah ch. 1, Deut. 32  

17. **Mon. April 8th** Hosea and Ezekiel “Israel, the Harlot”  
- Primary Reading: Hosea chs. 1-3 (in Hebrew), Ezek. ch. 15 (English)  

**Handout: Assignment 3 – Biblical Prophecy, due May 1st**

18. **Wed. April 10th** Hoseah: The Call for Repentance  
- Primary Reading: Hoseah ch. 14.  

19. **Mon. April 15th** Isaiah: Prophecy of Consolation  
- Primary Reading: Isaiah 51:12 - 52:12.  

**No Class on Wednesday April 17th, Community Day ANTS**

20. **April 22nd** Amos and Amaziah  
- Secondary Reading: Shalom Spiegel, “Amos and Amaziah” (in *Reader*).

21. **April 24th** Elijah and Ahab, Part I  
- Primary Reading: 1 Kings ch. 17-18, and ch. 21.
22. April 29th  Elijah and Ahab, Part II  
   Primary Reading: 1 Kings 19; 2 Kings ch. 1 and Malachi ch. 3 
   Secondary Reading: TBD

23. May 1st  Jonah, Flight from Prophecy; Third Assignment Due!

24. May 6th  Zechariah and Haggai: Addressing the Communities in Exile 
   • Secondary Reading: Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarot, 439-443.

25. May 8th  Zechariah Part II: Addressing the Communities in Exile 
   • Primary Reading: 2:14-4:7. 
   • Secondary Reading: Michael Fishbane, The JPS Bible Commentary: Haftarot, 162-168 and 262-263.

26. May 13th  Zechariah Part III: Addressing the Communities in Exile 
   • Primary Reading: Zech. 14:1-21 

   No Class May 15th-16th Shavu'ot

27. May 20th  Summary and Review before the Exam

28. May 22nd, Final Exam (in class)

Bibliography (Preliminary)


