



Yeshiva University

THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

The Book of Genesis: Syllabus

Semester: Spring 2023

Course Number: BIBL 1209H L [CRN: 12544]

Sessions Meet: M/W 11:50am—1:05pm [Location: TBD]

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Dov Lerner (dov.lerner@yu.edu)

Course Overview

This course will provide a comprehensive survey of and meditation on the book of Genesis, specifically through the lens of ethics. We will begin with some introductory material concerning the genre of Genesis and narrative, more broadly, as a mode of ethical instruction. And then we will turn to a section by section analysis of the text's structure, themes, characters, and theologies, as seen through the readings of major exegetes, from the sages to the commentators of today—with a central focus on the claims of Leon Kass's *The Beginning of Wisdom*. From the dawn of life to the death of the Egyptian viceroy, we will assess the ethics embedded in the text and the tales that have shaped the Jewish imagination for millennia.

Required Texts

For this course there are no material's that you will be required to purchase—all readings will be made available on canvas or are available online and will be linked or indicated on the canvas page.

Attendance and Participation

This class is a collaborative endeavor and depends for its success on your steady attendance and informed participation, so your final grade may well be swayed by the quality—in addition to the quantity—of your participation in class. Poor attendance (i.e., more than three absences during the term and/or frequently arriving late to class) will lower your final course grade noticeably.

Due Dates

Assignments must be turned in on the date and hour they are due unless an extension has been arranged in advance. If you anticipate needing an extension, please let me know well before the due date. Readings listed above a particular date are to be read for that date.

Please be aware of the University's *Academic Integrity Statement* as all students are expected to abide by it, and note the following two announcements:

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services, rkohn1@yu.edu during the first weeks of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of your accommodations.

Academic support is available to you if you are having any difficulties that could include the following but are not limited to these: understanding assignments, navigating research papers, issues with time management of your schedule and your life or general college adjustment, please make an appointment with Dr. Beth Hait. She is available Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am - 6pm. To make an appointment, go to yu2.mywconline.com. Click on the arrow next to "Academic Advisement" and scroll down to "Student Academic Support".

Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Midterm – 40%

Final – 50%

Week 1: Welcome

Readings: n/a

January 19th: Welcome and Overview

Week 2: Introduction I—The Purpose of the Book

Readings: **Rashi** 1:1; **Ramban** 1:1; **Netziv** Introduction; **R. Sacks**, “*The Book of Teaching*”

January 24th: Ethical Introductions

Readings: **Matthew R. Schlimm**, *Ethics, Emotion, and Experience: The Power of Stories*

January 26th: Narrative Ethics

Week 3: Introduction II—The Shape and Start of the Book

Readings: Y. Grossman,

January 31st: Narrative Landscape

Readings: Genesis 1

February 2nd: Awesome Beginnings

Week 4: Bereishit

Readings: Genesis 2-6

February 7th: Fratricide and Founding

Readings: Genesis 7

February 9th: Paternity and Piety

Week 5: Noach

Readings: Genesis 8-11

February 14th: The Failures of Civilization

Readings: Genesis 11-12

February 16th: Meeting Abraham

Week 6: Lech Lecha

Readings: Genesis 12-17

February 21st: Sand and Stars

Readings: Genesis 18

February 23rd: Guests and God

Week 7: Vayera

Readings: Genesis 18-19

February 28th: Social Justice

Readings: Genesis 20-22

March 2nd: Banishments & Bindings

Week 8: MIDTERM

Readings: n/a

March 7th: PURIM

Readings: n/a

March 9th: *MIDTERM*

Week 9: Chayei Sara—Toldot

Readings: Genesis 23-25

March 14th: Genetics, Ethics, and Ego

Readings: Genesis 26-27

March 16th: Next Generation

Week 10: Vayetze

Readings: Genesis 28-29

March 21st: Divinity Within

Readings: Genesis 30-31

March 23rd: Moved by Love

Week 11: Vayishlach

Readings: Genesis 32-33

March 28th: Character and Power

Readings: Genesis 34-36

March 30th: The Moral Compass

Week 12-13: PESACH

Week 14: Vayeshev

Readings: Genesis 37-38

April 18th: Triggering Trauma

Readings: Genesis 39-40

April 20th: The Urgency of Now

Week 15: Miketz

Readings: Genesis 41-42

April 25th: Forgetfulness and Family

Readings: Genesis 43-44

April 27th: Fate and Responsibility

Week 16: Vayigash

Readings: Genesis 44-45

May 2nd: Words and Power

Readings: Genesis 46-47

May 4th: Farewell and Welfare

Week 17: Vayechi

Readings: Genesis 48-50

May 9th: Going Home

Readings: n/a

May 11th: The End of the Beginning

May 22nd @ 11:59pm: *Final Assessment Due*