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**The books of the bible**

01-002-80/81

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Lecture

2 credits

**A. Goals of the Course**

The course will explore the first half of the book of Genesis. The narratives which will be analyzed – The Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel – are amongst the most famous stories in the Bible as well as in world literature. The narratives will be examined from a modern literary perspective and in light of their Ancient Near Eastern background. Our examination will emphasize the methodological differences between varying exegetical approaches such as midrash, medieval Jewish exegesis and modern literary methods. We will examine the structure of the book of Genesis and of the individual narratives and emphasize literary features such as chiastic structure, wordplay and contrast and the relationship between the literary form of the narratives and their meaning. Our investigation will relate to important exegetical questions such as the significance of the different divine names and the contradictions between the varying accounts of creation. Using modern philological, literary and analytical tools, we will appreciate the beauty, complexity and the theological message behind the ancient narratives.

**B. Contents of the Course**

## Topics

1. Genesis 1–3: The Creation Stories

The structure of chapter 1 and its significance. Opposites in creation. Poetry and Prose within the narrative. The biblical perspective on creation in comparison to Ancient Near Eastern mythology.

The Story of the Garden of Eden and the debate revolving allegorical interpretation. The uniqueness of the Eden narrative and a suggestion for a new allegorical interpretation.

The two creation stories: similarities and differences. Different exegetical approaches to the contradictions. Midrashic interpretation in contrast to Rav Breuer, Rav Soloveitchik, Robert Alter and modern literary approaches.

2. Genesis 3–5: Cain and Abel and their descendants

The conflict between brothers motif and the preference of the younger over the firstborn. Literary features: contrast, asymmetry and key–word. The descendants of Cain and Abel and the function of genealogical lists in Genesis.

# Teaching Plan for Course

**Lecture 1**

Introduction to exegesis: Different methods of interpretation. The Story of the 7 days of Creation. Determining the boundaries of the narrative. Source and logic of the chapter division. Structure and method of the story.

סימון א', "משמעותם הדתית של הפשטות המתחדשים", **המקרא ואנחנו** (עורך א' סימון), תל אביב תשל"ט, עמ' 133- 152

Bland K.P. "The Rabbinic Method and Literary Criticism" in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, vol. 1 (ed. K.R.R. Gross Louis, J.S. Ackerman T.S. Warshaw), Nashville 1974, pp. 16- 23

קאסוטו מ"ד, **פירוש על ספר בראשית סדר בראשית, סדר נח וחלק מסדר לך לך**, ירושלים תשכ"ה, עמ' 1- 9

Wenham G.J., *Genesis 1-15* (WBC), Waco, Texas 1987, pp. 5- 10, 34- 35

**Lecture 2**

Sabbath contrasted to the rest of the days. Differentiation between poetry and prose in the Bible. Intertwining of poetry within prose.

שמעון צ', **הנגדה בסיפור המקראי: האמצעי הספרותי והדרמה של בחירה**, חיבור לשם קבלת תואר דוקטור לפילוסופיה, אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, רמת-גן תשס"ט, עמ' 94- 98

Polak F.H., "Poetic Style and Parallelism in the Creation Account (Gen. 1.1- 2.3)" in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition*  (eds. H.G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman, JSOTSS 319), Sheffield 2002, pp. 2- 31

**Lecture 3 and 4**

Methodological distinctions between *peshat* and *derash*. Source sheet with commentaries on the story of creation. Exegetical Methods of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Radak. Anti-mythological polemics in the creation narrative.

A source-sheet will be handed out including interpretations of Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Radak.

**Lecture 5**

The structure of the story of the Garden of Eden and its significance. Chiastic structure as a key to revealing the meaning of the narrative. Measure for measure in the narrative. The function of the long exposition with regard to the rest of the narrative. The repercussions of the sin. On the status of women in the story of the Garden of Eden.

שמעון צ', **הנגדה בסיפור המקראי: האמצעי הספרותי והדרמה של בחירה**, חיבור לשם קבלת תואר דוקטור לפילוסופיה, אוניברסיטת בר-אילן, רמת-גן תשס"ט, פרק שישי

Jobling D., "The Myth Semantics of Genesis 2:4b – 3:24", *Semeia* 18 (1980), pp. 41- 49

Hauser A.J., "Genesis 2-3: The Theme of Intimacy and Alienation" in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (eds. Clines D.J.A., Gunn D.M. & Hauser A.J., JSOTSS 19), Sheffield 1982, pp. 20-36

Walsh J.T., "Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach" *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 161-177

Van Wolde E.J., *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2-3*, Assen 1989

Patte D. & Parker J.F., "Structural Exegesis of Genesis 2 and 3", *Semeia* 18 (1980), pp. 55-75

Culley R.C., "Action Sequences in Genesis 2-3", *Semeia* 18 (1980), pp. 25-33

Slivniak D.M., "The Garden of Double Messages: Deconstructing Hierarchical Oppositions in the Garden Story", *JSOT* 27 (2003), pp. 439- 460

**Lectures 6 and 7**

The polemic regarding allegorical interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden and a novel interpretation of the story.

ר' סעדיה גאון, **פירוש רב סעדיה גאון לבראשית** (מהדורת צוקר), ניו יורק תדש"ם, עמ' 283- 284

Wenham G.J., "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story", *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Division A: The Period of the Bible), Jerusalem 1986, pp. 19- 25

**Lectures 8 and 9**

A comparison between the two creation narratives. Different methodologies for grappling with contradiction. Chazal, Rishonim (Rashi and Radak), biblical criticism, modern literary analysis. Diachronic as opposed to synchronic approaches.

בריואר מ', **פרקי מועדות**, ירושלים תשנ"ג, מבוא, עמ' 14- 16

Alter R., *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, New York 1981, pp. 141- 147

Reis P.T., "Genesis as Rashomon: The Creation as Told by God and by Man", *Bible Review* 17 (2001), pp. 26- 33

**Lecture 10**

A comparison between the biblical view of creation and Mesopotamian mythology.

Lambert W.G., "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis", *JTS* 16 (1965), pp. 287 – 300

Frymer-Kensky T., "The Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for Our Understanding of Gen. 1- 9", *BA* 40 (1977), pp. 147- 155

Oden R.A., "Transformations in Near Eastern Myths: Gen. 1- 11 and the Old Babylonian Epic of Atrahasis", *Religion* 11 (1981), pp. 21- 37

**Lecture 11-12**

Cane and Able. The biblical motif of the preference of the younger brother. How the narrative builds up the literary tension between the brothers. Derash and Peshat on verse 8.

Brichto H.C., "Cain and Abel" in *IDBS*, Nashville 1976, pp. 121-122

Goldin J., "The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong", *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 27- 44

Greenspahn F.E., *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible*, NY 1994, pp. 91-92; 132- 133

Levin S., "The More Savory Offering: A Key to the Problem of Gen. 4:3- 5", *JBL* 98 (1979), p. 85

Fishbane M., *Text and Texture: Close readings of Selected Biblical Texts*, NY 1979,pp. 23- 27

**Lecture 13**

Literary analogy between the Garden of Eden narrative and the Cane and Able narrative. The structure behind the first three narratives of the Bible.

ברמן יהושע, "הערה מתודולוגית לביסוס האנלוגיה הנרטיבית בסיפור המקראי", **בית מקרא** נג (תשס"ח), עמ' 31- 46.

נבו יהושפט, "פרשת קין והבל : סיפור בחירה ותשובה", שמעתין 167 (תשסז) 13 -24

Aurin, H.C, "Your urge shall be for your husband?: A new translation of Genesis 3:16b and a New Interpretation of Genesis 4:7", *Lectio Difficilior* 1(2008) (e journal)

# Select Bibliography

Alter R., *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, New York 1981

Fokkelman J.P., *Narrative Art in Genesis*, Amsterdam 1975

Fokkelman J.P., "Genesis" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*(ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode), Cambridge, Mass. 1987, pp. 36-55

Hauser A.J., "Genesis 2-3: The Theme of Intimacy and Alienation" in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* (eds. Clines D.J.A., Gunn D.M. & Hauser A.J., JSOTSS 19), Sheffield 1982, pp. 20-36

Sternberg M., *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, London 1985

Walsh J.T., "Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach" *JBL* 96 (1977), pp. 161-177

Wenham G.J., *Genesis 1–15* (WBC), Waco, Texas 1987

בר-אפרת ש', **העיצוב האמנותי של הסיפור במקרא**, תל אביב תש"ם

ברויאר מ', **פרקי בראשית** (2 כרכים), אלון שבות תשנ"ט

זקוביץ י', **מקראות בארץ המראות**, תל אביב 1995

פולק פ', **הסיפור במקרא**, ירושלים 1994

קאסוטו מ"ד, **פירוש על ספר בראשית סדר בראשית, סדר נח וחלק מסדר לך לך**, ירושלים תשכ"ה

קיל י', **ספר בראשית: פרשיות בראשית–לך לך** **(דעת מקרא)**, ירושלים 1997