



Frances Green *Tree of Life*

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW BIBLE BIBHB500

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary
Spring 2021
Mondays, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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“There is, in a word, nothing comfortable about the Bible – until we manage to get so used to it that we make it comfortable for ourselves. But then we are perhaps too used to it and too at home in it. Let us not be too sure we know the Bible just because we have learned not to be astonished at it, just because we have learned not to have problems with it. Have we perhaps learned at the same time not to really pay attention to it? Have we ceased to question the book and be questioned by it? Have we ceased to fight it? Then perhaps our reading is no longer serious.”

—Thomas Merton, *Opening the Bible*

I. Basic Information

Course Description: Introduction to the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures--Torah, Prophets, and Writings--with emphasis on the order and contents, cultural settings, literary forms, religious themes, and interpretive approaches."

Meeting Places/Times: This course is synchronous and we will meet together for 3 hours weekly via Zoom. During that time, we will alternate time between lectures and discussion, and the last hour will be devoted to small group time. In addition to course readings, there will be asynchronous tasks to accomplish every week on Moodle. The course schedule at the end of the syllabus is designed to help you complete weekly tasks in a timely fashion.

II. Why Study the Hebrew Bible? And What Will We Learn if We Do?

These texts of the Hebrew Bible are the literary products of various communities of ancient Israel who sought to understand their relationship to the Sacred and the moral responsibilities that ensue from that relationship. As the Jewish Bible and the first testament of Christian scripture, these texts are also an important resource for theological and ethical reflection in contemporary religious communities. This term we will explore selected texts of the Hebrew Bible both to understand their significance in the ancient world and to contemplate the complicated ways they might speak to current struggles for ethical and theological insight. Consequently, this is not a survey course in the usual sense, but presumes that it is more important to learn how to interpret the scriptures with theological and ethical sensitivity than simply to review summaries of current scholarly discussions. During this term we will:

- become familiar with the literary and rhetorical character of selected texts of the Hebrew Bible;
- learn to ask critical questions and to apply the techniques and tools of contemporary biblical interpretation;
- become familiar with the social and historical context of biblical texts in order to explore what these texts might have meant to those who lived at the time they were written;
- explore the various characterizations of God in biblical literature and the different understandings of how humans relate to the divine;
- think theologically and ethically about the ways in which the texts of the Hebrew Bible were significant for their historical communities and can continue to function as sacred scriptures in contemporary religious communities.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- articulate a basic understanding of the historical and literary nature of the Hebrew Bible;
- develop and ask critical questions of various types of biblical literature;
- engage respectfully and productively in intellectual discussion about biblical literature;
- think creatively about responsible ways to relate this ancient text to contemporary ethical, social, and theological concerns.

III. What We Will Be Reading/Viewing

To Purchase:

The Jewish Study Bible featuring The Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation, 2nd Edition. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. **9780199978465**. In addition to the biblical texts, there are a number of essays in this volume that we will read. These will be listed as JSB in the syllabus.

Click here for formats and prices: <https://www.amazon.com/Jewish-Study-Bible-Second/dp/0199978468>

Collins, John Joseph. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Third Edition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018. **1506445993**

Click here for formats and prices: <https://www.amazon.com/Short-Introduction-Hebrew-Bible-Third/dp/1506445993>

All additional required materials will be available on Moodle

Highly Recommended Online Resources:

Bible Odyssey: <http://www.bibleodyssey.org>.

A website sponsored by the Society of Biblical Literature. Short essays from Bible Odyssey will be occasionally be assigned, however, you are encouraged to use this resource regularly. Want to know more about the meaning of “dominion” in Genesis? The binding of Isaac? God’s absence in the book of Esther? Search Bible Odyssey! Note: You will likely find this site useful when preparing your interpretive papers.

“How the Bible Was Made” (Yale Open Courses)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfbxB0kKayCQ2Hf6JICCDN6z47ySYxsCW>

“How the Bible Was Made” consists of 24 lectures on the Hebrew Bible by Professor Christine Hayes. As we progress through the topics in this course, links to some of the corresponding lectures will be included on the syllabus and Moodle (The link to the full 24 lectures can be found at the top of the Moodle site). These lectures will help you to gain an overview of the structure, content and themes of biblical books. Again, you will likely find this resource useful when preparing your interpretive papers.

You may complete up to two of this video lectures for extra credit. See details below.

A Note About the Diversity of Readings:

The attempt to cultivate a diversity of perspectives in a syllabus always presents both opportunities and challenges. This course attends to issues of diversity in multiple ways, including not only the authors we will read, but a focus on issues of identity construction and communal formation in the Bible, as well as attention to the voices/perspectives of marginalized and/or secondary characters within biblical texts.

Due to our subject matter, I have foregrounded the perspectives of Jewish authors, while also seeking to bring in those representing African-American, Asian, Latino/a, womanist, feminist, childist, and queer perspectives, etc. When preparing your exegetical essays, you are encouraged to take into consideration a diversity of sociocultural interpretations.

IV. Class Expectations (Preparation, Participation, Attendance, Decorum)

- ❖ **Please come well prepared to participate in each class session.** There are 24 books in the Hebrew Bible (39 if we go by the Old Testament listing!), so we will cover a larger amount of material in a short period of time. To get the most out of this course, it is expected that each student will spend *a minimum* of 3 hours of study per credit (i.e., 9 hours) each week.
- ❖ **Class sessions will be a mixture of lecture and class conversation.** This means that we are all responsible for the learning experience that takes place in class. Read carefully, commit yourself to the subject matter, think deeply, and be willing and ready to share your questions and observations.
- ❖ You are encouraged to show your commitment to other members of the class by making sure that your own contributions are **informed, thoughtful, concise, and pertinent** to the discussion, and by attentively listening to and respectfully engaging with your colleagues.
- ❖ Students are expected to **regularly check their Garrett e-mail (i.e. daily)** for any updates on assignments, additional class information, or changes in the class schedule.
- ❖ In order to help you prepare for our class meetings, a number of **study questions** will be provided on Moodle to guide your reading and thinking. You **DO NOT** have to submit written answers to these questions, however you should dedicate some time to thoughtfully pondering them before and during reading.
- ❖ **Late assignments** will be accepted only in cases of serious illness or family emergency. Such cases must be certified by a nurse/doctor/dean. Extensions will be considered only if they are negotiated in advance. Otherwise late assignments will be penalized 1/3 letter grade per day.
- ❖ **Zoom:** Please observe the following rules of etiquette during our Zoom conversations:
 - Try to log online from a quiet, distraction-free environment. Keep your Audio on mute until you want to speak. We must work together to limit background noise.
 - Enable Video so that we can see you during class discussions.
 - On the bottom of the Zoom window, click on “Participants” and “Chat.” Two pop-up windows will open on the right side of your screen.
 - During our session, use the “Raise Hand” feature (on the bottom left of the Participants window). Be sure to unmute yourself to talk.
 - You may use the Chat box to make a point or ask a question, and the professor will attempt to respond as she is able. Remember that Chat is public, and may be recorded, and archived.
 - Have a plan for taking notes (paper and pencil, digital notepad, Word/Pages doc).
 - I plan to record all Zoom class sessions and may post excerpts in case one of you is not able to attend class on that day.

V. Additional Policies and Procedures

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- Academic integrity and plagiarism: (See 19-20 Handbook, 12, 78-83) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- Writing and citations: The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (19-20 Handbook, 84)
- Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/studentlife/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- Inclusivity/Diversity: The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed.... All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 19-20 Handbook, 9)
- Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (19-20 Handbook, 19)
- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations

- Student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. See the *Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities* policy and process set out in the Academic Handbook (19-20 Handbook, 12). Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Registrar.
- Extensions: For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (19-20 Handbook, 20)

VI. Assignments

Your graded expectations and assignments for this course are as follows:

Class Participation (20%) – General expectations for class participation are discussed above. In addition to large group discussions, all students will participate in one-hour Havruta sessions. In Judaism, the Aramaic word havruta, meaning “friendship,” refers to small groups studying Jewish texts together. These sessions will provide you with the opportunity to go deeper with course materials and engage in more direct discussion with your peers.

Moodle Forums (6) (20%)

Open-Book Review Quizzes (6) (30%) – The review quizzes will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, term identifications and short answer.

Exegetical Project/Interpretive Paper (30 %) You will construct an exegetical outline and an interpretive paper during the course in order to become familiar with the exegetical process. Each week you will be given an exegetical step to accomplish towards the completion of your outline or paper. An additional handout will be provided to guide you in this process.

Extra Credit: You may complete up to two “How the Bible Was Made” videos for extra credit (each extra credit = 1/3 letter grade). After completing the video, write a brief summary (3-5 sentences) describing three things you learned from the lecture. Send the summary to the professor via email. The extra credit for each video must be completed during the week in which the video is listed in the course schedule.

Grade Scale:

A	94-100
A-	90-93.9
B+	87-89.9
B	84-86.9
B -	80-83.9
C +	77-79.9
C	74-76.9
C -	70-73.9
D	69.9-60
F	<60

VI. Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1: Monday, February 1: Course Introduction

In Class (2/1): Pre-Course Surveys
Introductions and Syllabus Overview
Interpretation and Location
The Bible and the Jewish Context

Week 2: What Kind of Literature Are We Reading?/Introduction to Torah

Complete (Tues, 2/2): __Moodle Forum #1 (What's That Story About Again?)

Read/Watch

(Wed/Thurs, 2/3-2/4):

__Review Study Questions
__Genesis 1-11 and excerpts from Enuma Elish (Do NOT read until after completing Moodle Forum)
__Collins, Introduction, Chapters 1-3,
__Beal, "What is the Bible?" (video)
__Walker and Wright, "How was the Bible Formed?"
__Breed, "How Was the Bible Written and Transmitted?"
__Fewell/Gunn, "Strategies for Reading" (pp. 1-12 only)
__JSB: Brettler, Marc Zvi, "Gender in the Bible"
__Felder, "Race, Racism and Biblical Narrative"
__Magonet, "Did They Fall or Were They Pushed?"
__*Recommended:* How the Bible Was Made: "The Parts of the Whole"

Begin (Fri, 2/5):

__Exegetical Project
(Observations/Questions/Perspectives)

In Class (Mon, 2/8):

The Bible as Literature/ What Do Stories *Do*?
History and Historiography
Introduction to Genesis
Biblical Parallels
Texts and Translations
Havruta Sessions

Week 3: Torah, Continued

Read/Watch

(Tues/Wed, 2/9-2/10):

__Review Study Questions
__**Briefly examine*** Genesis 12-50
__Read closely: Genesis 12-23; Exodus 1-6:13

- __ Collins , Chapters 4, 29
- __ JSB: Lipschits, “The History of Israel in the Biblical Period”
- __ Fewell/Gunn, “Readers and Responsibility”
- __ Fewell/Heard: “The Genesis of Identity in the Biblical World”
- __ Tribble, “A Flawed Character” (p. 1 only)
- __ JSB: Tov, Emanuel, “Textual Criticism”
- __ *Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: “Stories of the Patriarchs”

*What do I mean by **briefly examining** a book (or a large section of a book) in the Bible? This means a bit more than skimming; to the best of your ability, become familiar with the genre(s), structure and content of the book. A few strategies and tools that will help:

1. Peruse the introductions to the book in JSB.
2. Peruse the book and look at the section titles that divide the passages and the outline of margin notes; as time permits, linger over stories/sections that interest you.
3. Take note of the structure and themes of the book as outlined in Collins and other secondary materials (some of you will find it helpful to examine the biblical material first and then read Collins, while others may find it helpful to read Collins first).
4. Watch the corresponding “How the Bible Was Made” (Yale Courses) lecture, which will be listed on the syllabus and Moodle each week.

Complete (Thurs, 2/11): __Moodle Forum #2 (Why Tell *That* Story?)

Work On (Fri. 2/12): __Exegetical Project (Translations/Hebrew Terms).

In Class (Mon, 2/15): Genesis, Continued
 Introduction to Exodus
 Methods of Interpretation
 Canon
 Havruta Sessions

Week 4: Torah, Continued

Read/Watch

(Tues/Wed, 2/16-/2/17): __Review Study Questions
 __Collins, Chapters 5-7
 __Briefly examine Exodus, Numbers and Leviticus
 __Read closely: Exodus 19; the Decalogues (Exodus 20:1-17;
 Deuteronomy 5:1-18) the Covenant Code (Exodus 20:18-23:33)

the impurity laws (Leviticus 11-15); the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26), Numbers 25, and the discovery of “the book” (2 Kings 22-23)

__JSB: Holtz, Shalom, “Reading Biblical Law”

__Brown, William "Ten Commandments"

__Hoffman, Joel "Decalogue as a Moral Code"

__Rees, “[Re] Naming Cozbi”

__*Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: Exodus: From Egypt to Sinai”

Complete (Thurs, 2/18): __Review Quiz #1

Work On (Fri 2/19): __Exegetical Project (Narrative Analysis/Secondary Sources)

In Class (Mon 2/22): Exodus, Continued
Introduction to Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
Israelite Law
Methods of Interpretation, Continued
Havruta Sessions

Week 5: The Deuteronomistic History

Read/Watch

(Tues/Wed 2/23-2/24):

__Review Study Questions

__Briefly examine Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges

__Read closely: Deut. 11, 20; Josh 2-11; Judges 1-3, 19-21

__Collins, Chapters 8-10

__Powell, “Delight Desire and Drag: The Saga of the Gibeonites and the Queering of Covenant Theology”

__Warrior, Robert, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians”

__Clines, David, “Methods in Old Testament Study”

__*Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: The Deuteronomistic History: Life in the Land”

Complete (Thurs, 2/25): __Review Quiz #2

Work On (Fri, 2/26): __Exegetical Project (Historical/Historiographic Analysis)

In Class (Mon, 3/1): Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, Continued
Introduction to the Deuteronomistic History
The Why of Interpretation
Havruta Sessions

Week 6: The Deuteronomistic History, Continued

Read/Watch

(Tues/Wed, 3/2-3/3):

- __Review Study Questions
- __Briefly examine 1 and 2 Samuel
- __Read Closely: 1 Samuel 9-20, 25; 2 Samuel 11-13, 21;
- __Collins, Chapters 11-12
- __Alter, Robert “Characterization and the Art of Reticence”
- __Amit, Yairah, “Whom to Believe?”
- __JSB: Sweeney, Marvin, “Historical and Ideal Davidic Kingship”
- __Jones and Powell, “Rizpah: A Midrash on Grief”
- __*Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: “The Deuteronomistic History: Prophets and Kings”

Complete (Thurs, 3/4):

- __Review Quiz #3

Work On (Fri, 3/5):

- __Exegetical Project (Interpretive Approach/Finalize Thesis)

In Class (Mon 3/8):

The Deuteronomistic History, Continued
1 and 2 Samuel/Kingship in Israel
Havruta Sessions

Week 7: The Deuteronomistic History, Continued

Read/Watch

(Tues/Wed, 3/9-3/10):

- __Review Study Questions
- __Briefly examine 1 and 2 Kings
- __Read Closely: Exodus 32, I Kings 11-12; 2 Kings 17: 1-23, 21-25; 1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 18-20;
- __Collins, Chapters 13-14
- __*Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: “The Deuteronomistic History: Response to Catastrophe”

Complete (Thurs, 3/11):

- __**Exegetical Project Due**

In Class (Mon 3/15):

The Deuteronomistic History, Continued
1 and 2 Kings
Prophecy in 1 and 2 Kings
Havruta Sessions

Week 8: Prophets

Read/Watch

(Tues/Wed, 3/16-3/17):

- __Review Study Questions

- __ Collins, Chapters 15-16
- __ Briefly Examine Amos, Hosea, Micah and First Isaiah 1-39
- __ Read Closely: Amos 7-9, Hosea 1-3; Micah 2; Isaiah 5:1-7, 6-9
- __ Brueggemann, Walter *The Prophetic Imagination* (Excerpt)
- __ Bridgeman, Valerie, "I Will Make Their Boys Princes': A Womanist Reading of Children in Isaiah"
- __ Williamson, H. G. M., "How Many Isaiahs Were There?"
- __ *Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: "Literary Prophecy: Hosea and Isaiah"

Complete (Thurs, 3/18): __Moodle Forum #4

Begin (Fri, 3/19): __Interpretive Essay (Observations/Questions/Perspectives)

In Class (Mon, 3/22): Introduction to Prophecy
Amos, Hosea and First Isaiah
Prophecy and Social Critique

Monday, March 29 and Monday, April 5 – NO CLASSES (Spring Break/Easter Monday)

Week 9: Prophets, Continued

Read/Watch

(Tues/Wed, Apr 6/7):

- __Review Study Questions
- __ Collins, Chapters 17-18
- __ Briefly Examine Jeremiah, Lamentations and Ezekiel
- __ Read Closely: Jeremiah 1, 24, 27-29; Lamentations 1; Ezekiel 1, 8, 18, 37, 43.
- __ Excerpt from Carr, David *Holy Resilience*
- __ JSB: Hurowitz, Victor, "The Temple"
- __ JSB: Klawans, Jonathan, "Concepts of Purity in the Bible"
- __ *Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: "Literary Prophecy: Perspectives on the Exile"

Complete (Thurs, Apr 8): Moodle Forum #5

Begin (Fri, Apr 9): Interpretive Essay (Translation/Hebrew Terms)

In Class (Mon, Apr 12): Prophecy, Continued
Jeremiah, Lamentations and Ezekiel
Trauma and Exile

Week 10: Prophets, Continued

Read/Watch

- (Tues/Wed, 4/13-4/14):
- __Review Study Questions
 - __Collins, Chapters 19-20
 - __Briefly Examine Isaiah 40-66,
 - __Read Closely: Isaiah 40, 45, 56, 66, Jonah
 - __Linafelt, Tod, Excerpt from *Surviving Lamentations*
 - __Fried, Lisbeth, "Cyrus the Messiah"
 - __Hoffman, Joel, "Was There Really a Virgin Birth in the Bible?"
 - __Whedbee, J. William, "Jonah as Joke"

Complete (Thur, 4/15): __Moodle Forum 6

Work On (Fri, 4/16): __Interpretive Essay Two (Narrative Analysis)

In Class (Mon, 4/19): Prophecy, Continued
Second and Third Isaiah/Post-Exilic Prophecy
The Return from Exile

Week 11: Writings

Read/Watch

- (Tues/Wed, 4/20-4/21):
- __Review Study Questions
 - __Collins, Chapters 21-22
 - __Briefly Examine Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles
 - __Ezra 1, 7, 9-10; Nehemiah 8
 - __Esler, Philip "Ezra-Nehemiah as a Narrative of (Re-invented) Israelite Identity"
 - __Fewell, Danna, "A Broken Hallelujah: Remembering David, Justice and the Cost of the House."
 - __Baker, Cynthia, "The Emergence of Judaism"
 - __*Recommended:* How the Bible Was Made: "The Restoration"

Complete (Thurs, 4/22) __Review Quiz #4

Work On (Fri, 4/23): __Interpretive Essay Two (Historical/Historiographic Analysis)

In Class (Mon, 4/26): The Return from Exile, Continued
Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles
Identity in Yehud

Week 12: Writings, Continued

Read/Watch

- (Tues/Wed, 4/27-4/28):
- __ Review Study Questions
 - __ Collins, Chapters 26-27
 - __ Briefly Examine Ruth, Jonah, Esther, Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees
 - __ Read Closely: Ruth, Esther and Jonah
 - __ Korpel, Marjo C. A. "Memories of Exile and Return in the Book of Ruth"
 - __ Kuan, "Diaporic Readings of a Diasporic Text"
 - __ *Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: "Alternative Visions"

Complete (Thurs, 4/29): __ Review Quiz #5

Complete (Fri, 4/30): __ Interpretive Essay Two (Interpretive Approach/Finalize Thesis)

In Class (Mon, 5/3): Writings, Continued
Ruth, Jonah, Esther, Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees
Returnees and the Diaspora

Week 13: Writings, Continued

Read/Watch

- (Tues/Wed, 5/4-5/5):
- __ Review Study Questions
 - __ Briefly Examine Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Job and Qohelet
 - __ Read Closely: Song of Songs 1-4; Proverbs 1-9; Job 1-14; 38-42; Qohelet 1-4; Read: Psalm 1;13; 22; 44; 79; 84; 136; 137; 148.
 - __ Collins, Chapters 23-25
 - __ JSB: Berlin, Adele "Reading Biblical Poetry"
 - __ Isasi-Diaz, "By the Rivers of Babylon: Exile as Way of Life"
 - __ *Recommended*: How the Bible Was Made: "Biblical Poetry"

Complete (Thurs, 5/6): __ **Interpretive Essay Two Due**

In Class (Mon, 5/10): Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs, Job and Qohelet
Biblical Poetry
The Wisdom Tradition
Post-Course Survey

Review Quiz #6 Due Tuesday, May 11