

Women in the Bible

Stevenson 36

Rabbi Shlomie Chein

Course Description:

This will be a seminar style course in which we will closely examine and critically analyze many of the biblical narratives pertaining to female characters. Students will be required to read (translations) of the original texts, pose their own questions, suggest answers, and explore possible intent and meaning of the narrative. Students will be required to prepare presentations prior to each class, present their papers during class, and be involved in class discussions. As a group we will analyze the various student presentations and explore additional theories. We will examine stories such as Eve and her experiences in the Garden of Eden, Sarah and her relationship with her maidservant turned concubine Hagar, Tamar's affair with Judah, the journey of Ruth and more.

(The class outline – below – is specifically bare of secondary readings in order to allow students to explore an unadulterated version of the original texts and to avoid slanting the class discussion towards any particular interpretation/direction).

Required Readings:

Sections of the Hebrew Bible (Translated).

Course Requirements:

Students will be required to read translated sections of the Hebrew Bible and submit a one page analysis of their reading by 5:00pm on the day prior to each class. The analysis must include one or more of the following: questions, critique, answers, or possible intended message of the story. A mere synopsis of the reading will not be considered sufficient. (Students have the option of working on their analysis alone or with a partner).

During class students will be randomly selected to present their paper/thoughts to the class, and everyone will be required to be involved in the ensuing discussions.

At the end of the course students will be required to write a five page paper about the character and/or life of one of the female personalities we explore.

Grading:

Grades will be evaluated on the following basis:

- Attendance/participation: 20% (more than 2 absences can result in being dropped from the class)
- Weekly paper (submitted, on time, quality): 40%
- Final paper: 40%

Course Outline:

Section I - *Setting the Tone: Life, Women, and Relationships*

1. **Eve: *Forbidden Knowledge***
 - a. Course introduction
 - b. Eve. *Genesis 1:(1)26-31, 2:4-25, 3:1-21(24)*
2. **Sarah and Hagar: *Womanhood and Motherhood***
 - a. Sarah. *Genesis 11:27-32, 12:1-20, 20:1-18, 23:1-20.*
 - b. Hagar. *Genesis 16:1-16, 17:15-22, 18:1-15, 21:1-21*
 - c. Keturah. *Genesis 25:1-6*
3. **Rebecca: *Kind Maiden with an Iron Clad Will***
 - a. Rivkah. *Genesis: 22:20-24, 24:1-67, 25:19-28, 26:34-35, 27:1-46, 28:1-5.*
4. **Rachel and Leah: *Trials and Triumphs of Sisterhood***
 - a. Rachel & Leah. *Genesis 29:1-35, 30:1-24, 31:1-35, 35:16-20*

Section II - *The Bold, the Brave, and the Beautiful*

5. **Heroines: *Before every Man there is a Woman***
 - a. Yocheved & Miriam. (*Genesis: 46:8-27*) *Exodus: 1:8-22, 2:1-10, 6:16-20. Numbers: 26:58-60. Exodus: 15:20-12. Numbers: 12:1-16, 20:1-2.*
 - b. Devorah & Yael. *Judges: 4:1-24, (5:1-31).*
6. **Renegades: *Crossing Enemy Lines***
 - a. Princess of Egypt. *Exodus 2:1-10.*
 - b. Rahav. *Joshua 2:1-24.*
 - c. Abigail. *Samuel I 24:1-22; 25:1-42.*
 - d. Delilah. *Judges 16:(1)4-31.*
7. **Esther: *Procuring Half the Kingdom***
 - a. Esther. *The book of Esther.*

Section III – *Mysterious Relationships*

8. **Incest and Adultery: *Wanting What You Can't Have***
 - a. Daughter's of Lot. *Genesis 19.*
 - b. Tamar & Amnon. *Samuel II, chapters 13 and 14*

c. Potifar's Wife. *Genesis 39-1-23.*

9. Ruth: *The Road Less Traveled*

a. Ruth. *The book of Ruth.*

10. Behind the Veil: *Two Sides to Every Story*

a. Tamar & Judah. *Genesis 38.*

b. Two Harlots & King Solomon. *Kings I, 3:(1)16-28.*