

The Five Books of Moses

McMaster University, Fall 2004

Lectures: Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:30-11:20, TSH/B106

Tutorial I: Fridays, 11:30-12:20, JHE/326H; Tutorial II: Fridays, 13:30-14:20, BSB/106

Instructor - **Dr. Annette Y. Reed**

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Teaching Assistants –

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The first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—have had a formative influence on ideas about God, humankind, and the cosmos, as well as understandings of ethics, family, history, and nationhood, in Judaism, Christianity, and Western culture more broadly. Termed the Torah in Jewish tradition and the Pentateuch in Christian tradition, these books contain some of the most familiar and famous biblical tales, alongside laws and precepts that shaped Jewish and Christian views of piety and proper ritual practice. At the same time, these books provide precious evidence of the history, religion, and culture of ancient Israel. As such, their study opens a window onto the specific socio-historical circumstances that shaped the words that Jews and Christians would come to cherish as divine Scripture. In this course, we will read through the entirety of these five books. Approaching them from an academic perspective, we shall trace the processes by which these texts came to be formed and consider the multiple socio-historical contexts that informed them, while also analyzing their narrative structures and meaning in their present form.

Course Requirements

- Attendance & participation (10%) – It is imperative that students attend the Lectures and weekly Tutorials. Not only will attendance and participation count for 10% of the final grade, but Lectures will cover material not treated in the textbooks, for which students will be responsible in the Quizzes and on the Final Exam. Tutorial sessions will focus on close readings of key selections from the assigned biblical texts; detailed knowledge of these selections will be assumed in the Lectures and on the Exam. Make sure to have read the assigned passages prior to attending Lectures and Tutorials and to bring your Bibles to both!





- Quizzes (30%) – Three in-class quizzes (20-30 min. each) will consist of identification questions and test knowledge of the biblical sources as well as key concepts from the supplementary readings in Friedman and Blenkinsopp. They are scheduled for October 6th (Genesis), October 25th (Exodus), and November 22nd (Leviticus & Numbers).

- Short Paper (25%) – Due November 1st, the paper will be a short (3-5 pp.) source-critical analysis of a passage from the assigned readings, discussed with reference to Lectures and assigned readings as well as scholarly commentaries. These commentaries will be placed on reserve at Mills. [Paper Guidelines](#)

- Final Exam (35%) – The final exam will consist of identification questions spanning all the material covered in the course, together with 2-3 essay questions.

Required Readings

The following books are required for this course. They are available for purchase at Titles and have been placed on Reserve at Mills:

- HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV Translation), Society of Biblical Literature, 1993. Acceptable alternatives include the Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible with Apocrypha (Oxford UP, 1992), Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text (Jewish Publication Society, 1985), and The Jewish Study Bible: Tanakh Translation, Torah, Neviim, Kethuvim (Oxford UP, 2003). Students who wish to use another biblical translation should consult with the instructor in the first weeks of class.

- Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997.

- Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, New York: Doubleday, 1992.



Statement on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: (1) Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. (2) Improper collaboration in group work. (3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.



Please be aware that Plagiarism includes



quoting and paraphrasing other people's writings or ideas – whether from a book, commentary, website, etc. – without proper citation of the author, book, URL, or so on. I cannot stress this enough: whenever in doubt, always add a reference (whether in a footnote or in parentheses in the body of your paper) making clear the source of your information!

Schedule of Assignments

Monday, September 13 –
Introductory Comments

Wednesday, September 15 –
Approaches to Studying the
Pentateuch

Friedman, pp. 15-49;
Blenkinsopp, pp. 31-
53

Class Handout

Additional resources:

P—Understanding the
Priestly Source, BR

12:03, Jun 1996 By
Victor Hurowitz
(McMaster only)

Scholars Face Off
Over Age of Biblical
Stories, BR 10:04,

Aug 1994 By Richard
Elliott Friedman and
John Van Seters
(McMaster only)

The Documentary
Hypothesis in Trouble,
BR 1:04, Fall 1985 By
Joseph Blenkinsopp



(McMaster only)

Monday, September 20 –
Creation of the Cosmos and
Humankind

Genesis 1-3

Friedman, pp. 50-53;

Blenkinsopp, pp. 12-
28, 54-71

Class Handout

Additional resources:

Eve and Adam, **BR**

4:03, Jun 1988 By

Pamela J. Milne

(McMaster only)



Wednesday, September 22 –
Earliest Human History

Genesis 4-11

Friedman, pp. 53-61;

Blenkinsopp, pp. 71-
97

Class Handout; Chart

Additional resources:

When the Sons of God
Cavorted with the

Daughters of Men, **BR**

3:02, Spring 1987 By

Ronald S. Hendel

(McMaster only)

The Sources of
Genesis 1–11

According to the
Documentary

Hypothesis, **BR** 1:04,

Fall 1985 (McMaster
only)

Disentangling the
Sources of the Flood

Story (Genesis 6:1–
9:29) According to the

Documentary

Hypothesis, **BR** 1:04,

Fall 1985 (McMaster
only)

What the Babylonian
Flood Stories Can and

Cannot Teach Us

About the Genesis

Flood, **BAR** 4:04,





Nov/Dec 1978 By
Tikva Frymer-Kensky
(McMaster only)

Monday, September 27 –
Abraham Cycle

Genesis 11:26-25:11
Blenkinsopp, pp. 98-
133

Class Handout; Chart

Additional resources:

The Patriarchal Age:
Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob, *Ancient Israel*,
1999 By Ronald S.
Hendel and P. Kyle
McCarter Jr.
(McMaster only)

Hagar's Expulsion—A
Tale Twice-Told in
Genesis, **BR** 2:04, Fall
1986 By Zefira Gitay
(McMaster only)



Wednesday, September 29 –
Jacob Cycle

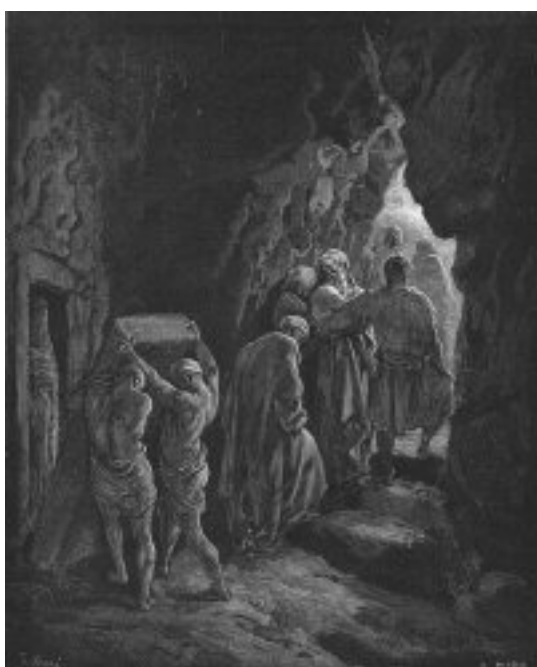
Genesis 25:11-36:42
Friedman, pp. 62-69

Class Handout

Additional resources:

Deception for
Deception, **BR** 2:01,
Winter 1986 By
Richard Elliott
Friedman (McMaster
only)

The Patriarch Jacob—
An “Innocent Man”,
BR 2:01, Winter 1986
By Carl D. Evans
(McMaster only)



Monday, October 4 – Joseph
Story

Genesis 37-50
Blenkinsopp, pp. 134-
160

Class Handout

Additional resources:

Excavating the Tribe



of Reuben, **BAR**
27:02, Mar/Apr 2001
(McMaster only)
Dreamer, Schemer,
Slave and Prince, **BR**
14:02, Apr 1998 By
Arnold Ages
(McMaster only)

Wednesday, October 6 –
Israel in Egypt
Exodus 1-6
****QUIZ 1**
(GENESIS)**



Monday, October 11 –
Thanksgiving; no class

Wednesday, October 13 –
Plagues, Passover, and the
Exodus

Exodus 7:1-15:21

Class Handout

Friedman, pp. 150-73

Monday, October 18 – Law
and Covenant

Exodus 15:22-24:18

Class Handout

Class Handout #2

Blenkinsopp, pp. 183-
209



Wednesday, October 20 –
Tabernacle, Golden Calf, and
Renewal of Covenant

Exodus 25-40

Class Handout

Class Handout #2

Friedman, pp. 173-206

Monday, October 25 –
Sacrifice

Leviticus 1-7

**** QUIZ #2**

(EXODUS)**

Class Handout

Wednesday, October 27 –
Priestly Ordination



Leviticus 8-10
Blenkinsopp, pp. 220-23

Class Handout

Monday, November 1 –
Purity and Impurity
Leviticus 11-16
****PAPER DUE****

Class Handout

Wednesday, November 3 –
The Holiness Code
Leviticus 17-27
Blenkinsopp, pp. 223-25

Class Handout



Monday, November 8 –
Preparations for Departure to Sinai

Numbers 1:1-10:10
Blenkinsopp, pp. 160-182

Class Handout

Wednesday, November 10 –
From Sinai to Kadesh

Numbers 10:10-20:21
Friedman, pp. 207-33

Class Handout



Monday, November 15 –
From Kadesh to Moab
Numbers 20:22-36:13
Blenkinsopp, pp. 229-242

Class Handout

Class Handout #2

Wednesday, November 17 –
Remembering the Past

Deuteronomy 1:1-4:40
Friedman, pp. 89-100

Class Handout

Monday, November 22 –
****QUIZ #3,
LEVITICUS &
NUMBERS****



Wednesday, November 24 –
Looking forward to the
Future

Deuteronomy 4:41-
11:32

Friedman, pp. 101-149

[Class Handout #2](#)

Monday, November 29 –
Laws

Deuteronomy 12-26

Blenkinsopp, pp. 209-
20

[Class Handout](#)



Wednesday, December 1 –
Blessings, Curses, and the
Death of Moses

Deuteronomy 27:1-
34:12

Friedman, pp. 234-45

[Class Handout](#)

FINAL EXAM – December
11, 4pm [Study Guide](#)



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