

Jason Gaines  
Hebrew College, Fall 2011  
jmgaines@brandeis.edu

**Torah Core: Bereshit 1**  
Ancient Context and Modern Criticism

*Serving as ½ of BIBLE 100*

Thursdays, 2:30-4:30 pm  
(plus Tuesday, Oct. 11 at 11:15 am and Monday, Oct. 17 at 2:30 pm)

On Tuesdays, you will study Bereshit with Dr. Lynne Heller through the lens of midrash and rabbinic sources, medieval and modern commentary, literary analysis, and canonical context. With me, you will study Genesis in two different ways: first, in its place as one of many ancient Near Eastern texts; and second, through the methods of modern historical criticism. You will also learn the standard reference grammars and lexica in order to prepare you to successfully read biblical texts on your own.

---

**Required Books**

Berlin, Adele and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*. New York: Oxford, 2004.

(*JSB*) NOTE: The hardcover is almost the same price as the paperback online.

Elliger, K. and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997. (*BHS*) NOTE: I find the paperback flimsy and recommend the hardcover.

Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1997.<sup>1</sup>

Bereshit (BIBLE 100) Course Reader

**Recommended Books**

These resources are on reserve in the *Beit Midrash*, but they are all essential tools for biblical studies that will serve you well in the future. I recommend acquiring them as you are able.

---

<sup>1</sup> This work is more popular than scholarly, and is below the level of this class. However, it is a fantastic read—part PBS special, part detective novel—that will give you a fuller picture of our topic. I ask that you have finished reading it by October 17, but you will benefit by reading it as early as possible.

Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1906. (BDB)

Koehler, Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner, with Johann Jakob Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Trans. M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994-2000. NOTE: They also publish a 2-volume student edition. (*HALOT*)

Jötton, Paul and T. Muraoka. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Subsidia Biblica 27.

Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. with corrections, 2009. (JM)

Kautzsch, E., ed. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Trans. A. E. Cowley. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910. (GKC)

NOTE: Accordance Bible software sells digital copies of BDB, *HALOT*, JM, and GKC. While these versions are easier to search, I feel something important is lost in not thumbing through pages.

## Grading

This class is graded pass/fail, and you will receive only one grade for both Bereshit sections.

Each student is expected to participate in class discussion in a regular and meaningful way. Please tell me before class if you are unprepared (you can receive one “pass” per semester if you tell me before class). Please see me privately if you find it difficult to participate actively in class—we can work together on ways for you to become more effective or feel less nervous.

Attendance is required at all class sessions. Please e-mail [jmgaines@brandeis.edu](mailto:jmgaines@brandeis.edu) beforehand if you will not be able to attend.

## Class Prep

Each class, you will be assigned a Hebrew text (approx. 15 verses). Please prepare this text in advance. Effective preparation requires you be able to:

- Give an original translation of the entire text
- Parse all verbs and explain any grammatical anomalies
- Discuss textual notes in *BHS*
- Discuss any other assigned primary and secondary readings, also to be read before class. (These readings have been kept to a minimum to allow you time to fully engage with Bereshit itself.)

- Discuss at least one modern scholarly Genesis commentary, assigned in advance. Each student will prepare a different one, trading each week. During our class discussion, please bring forward relevant points they raise—and be ready to engage with them critically. The commentaries vary in their relevance and level of detail, but they are the standard reference works on Genesis. They are all in the Beit Midrash (do not remove).
  - a. Alter, Robert. *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004.
  - b. Cassuto, Moshe David (= Umberto). *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. 2 vols. Trans. Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964. First Hebrew ed., 1949.
  - c. Gunkel, Hermann. *Genesis*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Trans. Mark E. Biddle. Macon, GA: Mercer, 1997. First German ed., 1901.
  - d. Rad, Gerhard von. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Rev. ed. Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972.
  - e. Sarna, Nahum M. *Genesis*. The JPS Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
  - f. Skinner, John. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930. First ed., 1910.
  - g. Speiser, E. A. *Genesis*. The Anchor (Yale) Bible 1. New York: Doubleday, 1962.
  - h. Westermann, Claus. *Genesis: A Commentary*. 3 vols. Trans. John J. Scullion. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. Original German ed., 1974.

I recommend adding Gunkel and especially Speiser to your bookshelves.

## Evaluation

### *Critical Editions*

At the start of class on November 10 and December 22, you will turn in typed Critical Editions of the texts covered in class to that point (sessions 1-6 and 7-11, respectively). These will include:

- Your original translations
- Footnotes that explain:
  - Grammatical anomalies

Text critical issues as cited in *BHS*

- A verse-by-verse commentary
- Discussions of:
  - Source criticism
  - Form criticism (*sitz im leben*)

You are encouraged to prepare these Critical Editions throughout the semester so that they require only minor touch-ups when they come due. Take advantage of our class discussions!

### *Final Exam*

At the end of the semester, you will be given a take-home hour-long final exam (due date TBD).

It will contain three parts:

- Translate and annotate four verses we have discussed in class.
- Translate four verses we have not covered in class, but that are of a similar genre.
- React to a paragraph quotation from one of the authors studied during the semester.

There will be choice in all sections. The exam is “closed book”: you may not use any notes or other resources.

### **Please Be Aware**

I do not allow the use of cell phones or laptops in class, as they can be disruptive to you and your classmates. (I will have my laptop in case we need to run electronic concordance searches.)

You may bring a dedicated tape recorder to class if you wish. If you have a documented disability that requires you to use a computer, please see me to discuss an exception.

The college and I require the highest level of academic honesty. While you will study with a *hevruta*, you must do all class preparation for yourself. (In other words, you and your *hevruta* cannot divide the work then trade notes.) In your research and writing, you will build upon the work of other scholars. However, you must always give proper credit and citation.

Any student with a documented disability that will affect his or her work for this course should see me immediately so that I can make proper and reasonable arrangements and accommodations.

## **Class Schedule & Assigned Readings**

*Please prepare all material in advance of the lesson*

### **Session 1: *Yom Echad***

Thurs, Sept 15 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 1:1-5

Read in English:

- Genesis 1-11 (skim parts)
- Psalms 104 (an alternate account of creation)

Secondary Reading:

- SKIM: “Introduction” in E.A. Speiser, *Genesis*, The Anchor (Yale) Bible 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1962), xvii-lxxvi. (I will e-mail you this in advance.)
- START READING: Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1997).

### **Session 2: Priestly Creation**

Thurs, Sept 22 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 1:6-19

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 1:1 – 3:24

Secondary Reading:

- “‘Literary’ Criticism” and “Form Criticism” in John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*, rev. and enl. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 20-44. NOTE: What Barton calls “literary” criticism, most scholars and I call “source” criticism.
- Your assigned commentary

### **Session 3: ANE Creation Myths**

Tues, Oct. 11 (11:15-1:15)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 1:20 – 2:4a

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 1:1 – 3:24
- Psalm 82 (on the “Divine Council”)

Secondary Reading:

- Tzvi Abusch, “Cuneiform Writing,” *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 196-98.

- Enūma Eliš, the Babylonian Creation Myth, Tablets I – VI (ln. 120), in Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005), 436-73.
- Your assigned commentary

#### **Session 4: Adam and Eve**

Mon, Oct 17 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 2:4b-24

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 1:1 – 3:24

Secondary Reading:

- FINISH READING: Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible*.
- SKIM: Theodor H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 24-50.
- Your assigned commentary

#### **Session 5: Tree of Knowledge**

Thurs, Oct 27 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 2:25 – 3:24

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 1:1 – 3:24

Secondary Reading (not in course packet):

- Chapters 1, 2, and 5 in Hermann Gunkel, *The Stories of Genesis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. John J. Scullion, ed. William R. Scott (Berkeley: BIBAL Press, 1994), 1-26, 93-108.<sup>2</sup>
- Simo Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), 160-61. (Will be handed out in class)
- Your assigned commentary

#### **Session 6: Cain and Abel**

Thurs, Nov 3 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 4:1-16 and 23-26

---

<sup>2</sup> This book is out-of-print, so I am not assigning the entire book. However, I highly recommend you find it used online (or get the copy reserved in the Beit Midrash) and read it in its short entirety. When ordering, do not confuse it with Gunkel’s similarly-titled *The Legends of Genesis*.

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 4-5

Secondary Reading:

- Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 325-334 (§ 31.1).
- Your assigned commentary

### **Session 7: Evil on Earth**

Thurs, Nov 10 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 6:1-7

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 6 – 9
- Num 13:1 – 14:45

Secondary Reading:

- Ronald Hendel, “The Nephilim Were on the Earth: Genesis 6:1-4 and its Ancient Near Eastern Context,” *The Fall of the Angels*, ed. Christoph Auffarth and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Themes in Biblical Narrative 6* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 11-34.
- Your assigned commentary

### **Session 8: The Waters Are Coming**

Thurs, Nov 17 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 6:9 – 7:5

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 6:1 – 9:17

Secondary Reading:

- Adele Berlin, “Reading Biblical Poetry,” *JSB*, 2097-2104.
- Your assigned commentary

### **Session 9: Flood by Source**

Thurs, Dec 1 (2:30-4:30)

Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 7:6-23

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 6:1 – 9:17

## Secondary Reading:

- Martin Jan Mulder, “The Transmission of the Biblical Text,” *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading & Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Mulder (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 87-132.
- Your assigned commentary

**Session 10: ANE Flood Myths**

Thurs, Dec 8 (2:30-4:30)

## Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 7:24 – 8:14
- Study Gen 8:15-22 in Hebrew, but “full preparation” is optional

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 6:1 – 9:17

## Secondary Reading:

- J. M. Sasson, “Gilgamesh Epic,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1024-27. (Get in Beit Midrash)
- The Epic of Gilgameš, Tablet XI, in Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London: Penguin, 1999), 88-99.
- Your assigned commentary

**Session 11: Priestly Covenant, Redux**

Thurs, Dec 15 (2:30-4:30)

## Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 9:1-17

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 6:1 – 11:32

## Secondary Reading:

- Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 1-25.
- Your assigned commentary

**Session 12: Tower of Babel**

Thurs, Dec 22 (2:30-4:30)

## Prepare in Hebrew:

- Gen 11:1-10

Read in English in *JSB*:

- Gen 1:1 – 11:32

## Secondary Reading:

- Your assigned commentary