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**Biblical Theology:**  
**Bible- Soul's Journey to Completion**

Dr. Yosef Leibowitz

**Course Number:** 702.2183

**Class Time:** TBA

**Class Location:** TBA

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Biblical Theology: The Journey of the Soul in Biblical Stories.

The Bible is a book of theology. It presents its theology in a particular non-linear style. It does not state things directly but hints at concepts which the reader has to understand and expand upon. In order to decipher this style we need to pay close attention to the text. First we have to pay attention to specific words which sometimes have double meanings. We have to explain particular thoughts and then place them in the larger picture.

The Bible can be divided into two major themes - the nature of the human soul and the mission of the People of Israel. This class will examine the texts that deal with the nature of the human soul.

The semester will include the creation of the human in the image of God in Genesis Chapter One, the Garden of Eden and the creation of man and woman, the Cain and Able story, the binding of Isaac, parts of Ecclesiastes and Job and the Book of Jonah. We will concentrate on the use of specific words, and double meanings. The purpose is not only to understand these texts but to give students the tools to read the Bible in the proper way.

Preparation - The preparation for each class involves a close reading of the text. Students can use any commentary that they wish, both classical commentaries and modern ones but they should first work on the text itself. The two key tools are a Biblical Dictionary and a Concordance.

There will be a midterm exam and a final. You will also be asked to submit a paper that analyzes a particular text in depth. You will be given a choice of texts.

Grades will be determined by:

Final exam	40%
Midterm	20%
Paper	20%
Class participation	20%

## Syllabus

### Theme One

#### Man in the Image of God - Genesis Chapter One

We will examine the whole context of this creation story and its purpose. This will include a comparison to Chapter Two, an examination of the creation of the Human in Chapter 1:26 especially the use of the term "the Image of God, the hierarchy within creation and the use of the terminology "and God saw and it was good. We will examine what it means that God created the Sabbath. We will also discuss the concepts of linear and cyclical time and the role that it plays in the world today.

### Theme Two

#### The Garden in Eden Chapter Two and Three

The Garden of Eden is one of the most enigmatic stories in the Bible. What was the purpose of the Garden, what were the two central trees, who was the snake, were Adam and Eve ever destined to remain in the Garden and what are the consequences of their eating and what happens to the Garden in the end of the story. We will also examine where else in the Bible the Garden appears.

Part of this story is also a second depiction of the creation of Man and Woman. We will examine that as well

### Theme Three - Cain and Abel

The story of the first human birth gives rise to the first human murder. The story of Cain and Abel gives rise to love, possession, giving, anger, murder and denial. It is a story which hints at the challenge of human life and its possible success or failure. A careful reading of the text reveals much of the quandary and the two brothers represent two metaphors of human life.

### Theme Four - The Binding of Isaac

The command to Abraham raises the question of devotion to God and concepts of morality. The text hints at the dilemmas. We will also explore from other later stories what was Isaac's experience in this story.

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The Biblical narrative after the story of Cain and Abel turns to the second theme, namely the choosing of Abraham and the building of the People of Israel. The story of the binding of Isaac is the exception to this. All of the rest of the five books of the Torah and all of the books of the Prophets deal with the unfolding history of the People of Israel (which is the theme of the second semester) The only exception to this is the Book of Jonah.

#### Theme Five - The Book of Jonah

We will read the entire four chapters of the Book. We will analyze the structure of the Book, and the themes behind it. We will examine why Jonah refused his mission and the symbolism of how God brings him back to the task, The key to the Book is the metaphors that lie behind it.

#### Theme Six - The Book of Job

We will concentrate on the first two chapters of the Book and the last two. The Book gives answers to the theological question of why the righteous suffer, and what piety is. We will also examine its connection to the story of creation in Genesis Chapter One and the Book of Jonah.

#### Theme Seven - The Book of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes represents one of the more difficult books of the Bible. We will spend at least three sessions examining in detail the text. We will analyze key words, and how they are used with different meanings. We will also analyze the structure of the Book and its critical approach to other themes in the Bible.

#### Theme Eight - Psalms

We will examine Psalms that deal with the nature of the individual soul. Each Psalm represents a separate them and individual content.

#### **Readings:**

Biblical Dictionary - Hebrew as a language has changed over the years. You must look up words in a Biblical dictionary. It might help you to know the modern usage of the terms as well.

Concordance - Many words can be best understood by examining how they appear in other passages in the Bible. A concordance will give you the variations of the root of the word and where else it appears in the Bible.

Translations of the Bible - All translations are interpretations. It is how the translator understood the word. For key words it is good to look at more than one translation. Translations into all languages are helpful.

### Other Readings

Any commentary to the text you are preparing will be helpful. Here are a few which I recommend:

Samson Raphael Hirsch: *The Pentateuch*

Nechama Leibowitz: *Readings on Bereshit*

Nachum Sarna: *Understanding Genesis*