

1. **SOT 410-01A**

**Pentateuch** <https://csbsju.instructure.com/courses/16932> (this canvas course will be available on January 25)

Spring, 2021

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**Course Description:** The Pentateuch tells a story about the origins of the cosmos and of humans that provides a framework for the origins of the Israelite nation. Through an examination of the Books of Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy, this course will not only aim to understand the message of these books for their original audiences but will also be attentive to how this message has been received through the generations. A special focus of this course will be on how this message has been received in light of scientific theories of evolution and of the origin of the cosmos.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will be able to identify and explain the enduring theological questions addressed in the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy.
2. Students will be able to apply the method by which historical critics try to recover the meaning of the original author(s) and the historical context(s) of these biblical texts.
3. Students will be able to explain how the theology of creation revealed in the book of Genesis can be integrated with the theory of evolution.
4. Students will be able to assess the value of using contemporary social and psychological theories to interpret the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy.
5. Students will be able to articulate how the narratives of Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy have created a worldview and a communal identity that have endured for more than two millennia.
6. Students will be able to show how interpreting Pentateuchal passages from the perspective of Benedictine practices can provide direction to Christian communities on living theological questions of our time (cf. [Higher Education in the Catholic and Benedictine Tradition \(Links to an external site.\)](#)).

**Course Requirements and Means of Evaluation:**

7. Read the assigned biblical passages and accompanying readings from the commentaries.
8. Listening to video presentations assigned for particular classes by the instructor and other presenters, and completing exercises associated with such presentations.
9. Compose a written response of 300-500 words to questions designated for particular readings in each module. These responses are to be posted as designated in the modules either in (1) the **Assignment Section** of Canvas or (2) in the **Discussion Section**. No late submissions (25%).
10. Complete the quizzes associated with videos, podcasts, and other recorded presentations as indicated in the modules (10%).
11. Participation in online discussions as designated in modules either (1) on the **Discussion Board** (10%, no late submissions) or (2) in Zoom small group sessions (Feb 7-13; March 21-27; April 5-10; April 18-24) that are to be recorded (these small group sessions will be scheduled by February 1). (5%)
12. Meet with the instructor for consultation in the first-third (Jan 29-30), second-third (March 19-20), and final-third (April 16-17) of the course (and by appointment). These meetings will be scheduled by February 1.
13. Complete two take-home examinations: Exam #1 assigned on March 2 at 8:00 am and due on March 6 at 4:00 pm; Exam #2 assigned on May 7 at 8:00 am and due on May 14 at 4:00 pm. No late submissions. Each exam will consist of three essay questions requiring a response of no more than 700 words each; a rubric for grading the essays will accompany each exam. (Each exam will count for 25% of the grade).
14. Attend lecture (virtually) by Professor Peter Harrison on March 18 on an aspect of the History of Science (specific topic and time is TBA). He is an invited guest as part of the grant project between the SOT/Sem and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

### **Note on Time Commitment in this Asynchronous Course:**

The time you will be asked to devote to listening to recorded lectures, videos and participating in small groups will be approximately 180 minutes per week (= 3 hours); you are typically expected to devote two hours of time in reading, writing, etc. in preparation for each hour of class time; thus, the estimated time for completing the activities of this course is 9-10 hours per week.

### **Grades:**

A = 96-100

A- = 93-95

B+ = 88-92

B = 84-87

B- = 81-83

C+ = 76-80

C = 70-75

**Required Texts:**

15. Kathleen O'Connor, *Genesis 1–25A* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2018).
16. Mark Smith, *Exodus: New Collegeville Bible Commentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011). Library e-book <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csbsju/detail.action?docID=465> (Links to an external site.)
17. Edward Owens, *Deuteronomy: New Collegeville Bible Commentary* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011). Library e-book <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csbsju/detail.action?do> (Links to an external site.)

# Module One, Part I (Jan 25-30): Introduction + Genesis 1-11 The Primeval History

The first week will address the issues of: (1) exegetical method, (2) scientific cosmology and evolutionary theory, (3) the experience of wonder at the beauty of the cosmos as an approach to appreciating the complementarity of theology and science.

**Reading Assignments and Videos to be Viewed on Jan 25-30:**

- "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," presented by the Pontifical Biblical Commission to Pope John Paul II on April 23, 1993 (PBC 1993); [https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC\\_Interp-FullText.htm](https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm) (Links to an external site.)
1. Read section I.A-F on "Methods of Interpretation."
  2. Listen to the video lecture. (Shared file emailed Jan 22-23).

- Listen to podcast entitled “Beauty as a Compass for Truth, by Frank Wilczek and Krista Tippett (<https://onbeing.org/programs/frank-wilczek-beauty-as-a-compass-for-truth/#transcript> (Links to an external site.); 50 minutes). Then complete the **Quiz**.
- Read timeline on “From the Big Bang to the Advent of Homo sapiens” in William P. Brown, *Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Creation* (New York/Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2010) 73-74. [brown 7 pillars evolution.docx](#) [\\_download](#)
- View “[Endless Forms Most Beautiful \(Links to an external site.\)](#)” by [Films for the Humanities & Sciences \(Firm\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#), [Films Media Group. \(Links to an external site.\)](#) Located at Alcuin Library online at <https://csbsju.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=Endless+Forms+Most+Beautiful&format=Video> (Links to an external site.). Take **Quiz** on video.

### Writing Assignment (due at Noon, January 29):

- Read Genesis 1 and Psalms 8 and 19. Reflect on the question: “When you look at the nighttime sky and then read Genesis 1, Psalms 8 and 19, what does this experience tell you about the significance of humans in the created world?” Then post a 300-500 word written response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, January 29 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section).

# Module One, Part 2 (Jan 31 - Feb 6) 6) Gen 1:1-3:24 Creation of Cosmos and Its Inhabitants

January 31 – February 6

## A. Gen 1:1–2:4a: Creation and Sabbath

Read: Gen 1:1–2:4a; O’Connor, pp. 1-44.

View video lecture on “Wonder of Creation” (Shared file will be emailed to you by Jan 30).

**Writing Question(s):** “What is the purpose of the cosmos and the cause of life on earth according to the big bang theory and the theory of evolution? Does the account in Genesis 1 complement or contradict these scientific explanations?” Post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, February 4 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section).

Reading Questions:

- Did God create the world from nothing or from material that needed to be ordered? What was the point of the ordering of creation according to Genesis 1?
- Why is it erroneous to claim that Genesis 1 reveals that God created the world in six days measuring 24 hours each?
- How does Genesis 1 describe the place and identity of humans in the created order? According to Genesis 1, what is the relationship of humans to the rest of creation and to God?
- Does Gen 1:1–2:4a promote an anthropocentric understanding of creation, or does it check or put limits on such an understanding of reality where all creation exists for the sake of humans? What does it mean to say that humans are theomorphic (see Gen 1:26-28)?
- Does the structure of Gen 1:1–2:4a promote the claim that the Sabbath is both an institution and a practice central to the Yahwistic faith (cf. Exod 20:8-11)? If so, how?
- **Optional resource:** “What is the Big Bang Theory?” by Matt Williams, [Universe Today](https://phys.org/news/2015-12-big-theory.html) (Links to an external site.)<https://phys.org/news/2015-12-big-theory.html> (Links to an external site.)

### **B. Obedience vs. Disobedience: Individual, Social, and Cosmic Consequences**

- Read: Genesis 2:4b–3:24, O’Connor, 45-73
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Reading Questions:

- Explain the origin, function, and purpose of the trees in the Garden of Eden and the serpent.
- How do mind and matter factor into our understanding of the origin and evolution of the cosmos? Is truth about reality conveyed primarily through objective data or through subjective insight?

View the video lecture: (Shared file emailed to you by Jan 30)

**Write** a response of 300-500 words to the following question on the **Assignment Section**: “The pursuit of knowledge without limit will bring disorder into the human community. Defend or refute this statement by anchoring your explanation in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2-3.

**Optional Resource -- View "Big Bang and Evolution.pptx "** - (shared file; powerpoint slides, but with no accompanying recorded lecture)

# Module One, Part 3 (Feb 7-13)

## Gen 4:1-7:24 Order and Disorder: The Origin of Evil

February 7 - 13

### A. Gen 4:1–7:24 Order and Disorder/Genealogy and Fragmentation

Read: Gen 4:1–7:24; O'Connor, 75-130.

Read: Chart of Priestly and non-Priestly Strands [Flood Story -- Priestly and non-Priestly Strands](#)

-- JEPD source theory [JEPD](#)

View the recorded Powerpoint Presentation (Shared File sent via email by February 6)

Writing and Discussion Assignment:

“The increase in evil in the world was due not only to human sin but also to supernatural forces. Is the flood an appropriate remedy for disorder in the world? What is the image of God presented in Genesis 4–6? **How does a historical-critical interpretation of Gen 6:1-8 contribute to your understanding of the image of God in Genesis 4–6?”**

Write a 300-500 word response and post both on the **Assignment Section** and on the **Discussion Section** by Noon, February 11 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting).

### Participate in a Small Group Discussion on Zoom:

Small group discussions of the writing question and the reading questions above have been scheduled for February 12. You will receive Zoom invitations.

Reading Questions:

- Why did God accept Abel's offering and not Cain's? What challenge does this action by God present to us who try to gain direction from this passage?
- What is the impact of bloodshed on the ecology of the world? Does the ground curse Cain or does God curse him?
- Compare and contrast the genealogy of Gen 4:17-26 with that in Gen 5:1-32.

- Who is Enoch? Why would he be an important figure in the imagination of the Jewish people in the centuries leading up to the time of Christ?
- Why did evil increase in the world according to Gen 6:1-8? If someone has experienced trauma in an abusive relationship, does Gen 6:1-8 detract or assist in this person's healing?
- In Gen 6:9-11, what does God think of the humans he has created?

- View this Ted Talk: Childhood trauma isn't something you just get over as you grow up. Pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris explains that the repeated stress of abuse, neglect and parents struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues has real, tangible effects on the development of the brain. This unfolds across a lifetime, to the point where those who've experienced high levels of trauma are at triple the risk for heart disease and lung cancer. An impassioned plea for pediatric medicine to confront the prevention and treatment of trauma, head-on.

This video was produced by TEDMED. TED's editors featured it among our daily selections on the home page. [https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine\\_burke\\_harris\\_how\\_childhood\\_trauma\\_affects\\_health\\_across\\_a\\_lifetime?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en) (Links to an external site.). Take **the quiz** on this video.

# Module One, Part 4 (Feb 14-20)

## Gen 8:1-11:34 The Flood and Its Aftermath

February 14-20

### Gen 8:1–11:32 The Flood and Its Aftermath

Read: Gen 8:1–11:32; O'Connor, 131-86.

Genesis 8-11 [Genesis 8-11](#)

View Zoom Lecture on Genesis 8-11:

Share recording with viewers:

<https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/z6345f14l4dhD6Bt8b8ppdKTq7PPJkxSfr5Tr-nhZ6d4wcShHkFUCXfc4otBE8QB.nCdy5XQ9OaiW5HuF> (Links to an external site.)

### Reading Questions:

- From both a literary and a theological perspective, what is the significance of God's "remembering" in Gen 8:1?
- What is the image of God presented in Gen 8:1-11:34? Does the God portrayed here create the way forward for a community that has undergone disaster?
- Would you join an expedition to find Noah's ark in the mountains of eastern Turkey? Why or why not?
- Was Noah authorized to offer sacrifice on coming forth from the ark?
- On what basis can the covenant with Noah in Gen 9:8-17 be characterized as a "cosmic covenant"? How does this covenant differ from other biblical covenants?
- Why was Canaan cursed in 9:25-27?
- Why does O'Connor label the flood story a disaster story? If the flood was a divine punishment for sinful humans, how would this account of the flood story assist a community that has lost everything in war, exile, or natural disaster?

### Writing Assignment for Assignment Section:

"How do God's actions and decrees in the aftermath of the Flood contribute or inhibit making the world a habitat for humans and animals? How do humans resist God's plan for the world in the story of the Tower of Babel? What moral or spiritual challenge is posed to the reader by the story of the Tower of Babel?"

Post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, February 18 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section).

### Listen to the Podcast:

"Mushrooms and the Magic of Life" by [Dr. Craig Heacock \(Links to an external site.\)](#), an adolescent and adult psychiatrist and addiction specialist in Colorado who hosts the psychiatric storytelling podcast "Back from the Abyss" <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/back-from-the-abyss/id1469826718> ([Links to an external site.](#));

On the **Assignment Section**, write a response of 300-500 words on the following three points by February 20 (midnight, 12:00 AM):

- Briefly summarize the session.
- What was the main thing you learned about trauma in this session?



- Why does O'Connor read the book of Genesis through the lens of trauma theory? Do you find this approach helpful?

# Module Two, Part 1: Gen 12:1 - 20:18 Abraham and Sarah: Vocation, Family, Land, and Covenant

February 21-27

## Gen 12:1–20:18 Abraham and Sarah: Vocation, Family, Land and the Covenant Relationship

Read: Genesis 12:1–20:18; O'Connor, 187-295.

View video Powerpoint lecture (posted by February 20)

[gen 12-20](#)

Share recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/Mp-THFIOf4S3pQZXoSAh6UG4ijy1HjQXfb9IIKYmniJvNVrO6-f1hdvTCSsP6kn.u\\_J3WTNrH\\_ahz2Wt](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/Mp-THFIOf4S3pQZXoSAh6UG4ijy1HjQXfb9IIKYmniJvNVrO6-f1hdvTCSsP6kn.u_J3WTNrH_ahz2Wt) (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment (to be posted only as your initial post on the **Discussion Section**):

“How is the reality of “promise-making” integral to the life of Abram, Sarai, and their offspring? In light of Genesis 12–17, what role can “promise-making” play in the life of 21<sup>st</sup> century individuals who wish to live a meaningful life? How do promises shape the identity of individuals and groups?”

After posting a 300-500 word response to this question on the **Discussion Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, February 25 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section), respond to two other students' postings by Noon, February 27 (see Rubric for Discussion Board).

Reading Questions:

- What is the promise made to Abram?
- Compare and contrast Abram and Lot.
- Explain the significance of Hagar in the Abraham stories.
- Why does Sarah's barrenness play a key part in the Abraham stories?
- Compare and contrast the meaning and function of covenants with God for Noah and Abraham.

- How can Abraham be lifted up as one who approaches life realistically and points for us a way toward integrating religious faith with the science of evolution?

View video lecture by Ron Cole-Turner on recent developments in evolutionary story of humans. <https://www.gtu.edu/centers/ctns/ctns-video-and-events> (Links to an external site.)

Cole-Turner published the paper he read at the above URL as [ron cole-tuner human origin.pdf](#) [\\_download](#)

Complete **Quiz** by midnight, February 27.

# Module Two, Part 2: Feb 28 - March 3 Gen 21:1 - 23:20 Abraham and Sarah: Promise of an Heir in a Fragile World

## 1. Gen 21:1–23:20 Abraham and Sarah: Promise of an Heir in a Fragile World

Read: Genesis 21:1—22:24; O'Connor, 297-322

View video Powerpoint lecture

[Genesis 21-23](#)

(Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/H8TiQFxReO3AaF3PIr8nprcBH8qLxllfGT7FJnvpS8\\_1D3rq2iAOS803BWAMZZki.k-IIG\\_R4OZeNCcHb](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/H8TiQFxReO3AaF3PIr8nprcBH8qLxllfGT7FJnvpS8_1D3rq2iAOS803BWAMZZki.k-IIG_R4OZeNCcHb) (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment:

“Compare and contrast the image of God presented in Gen 18:16-23 with that presented in Gen 22:1-14. How would you invite a group of college-age students to embrace this God as one who can accompany them through life?”

Post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, March 3 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting).

**Exam #1** assigned on March 2 at 8:00 am and due on March 6 at 4:00 pm

Reading Questions:

- The promise of a son is more central to the Abraham cycle of stories than the promise of the land. Defend or refute this statement with reference to the biblical accounts about Abraham as much as possible.
- What is the image of God present in the account of the testing of Abraham or the near sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:1-14)? Did God require child sacrifice prior to the time of Abraham's test?
- How does addressing the problem of human suffering from the lens of trauma theory differ from doing so according to the lens of the theory of evolution?

# Module Three, Part 1: March 14-20 Genesis 25-36 Jacob Stories

**Genesis 25-36 Jacob Cycle.pptx March 14 – 20**

**Jacob Stories: Genesis 25—36**

Read: Gen 25:19–36:43.

[Genesis 25-36 Jacob Cycle.pptx](#) [\\_download](#)(part I: chapters 25-27)

View video Powerpoint lecture (posted by March 14 9:00 am).

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/HbkcvSVw6y8Tp32enPiqkhTox\\_DVOvxW3j2RmOF3g0IGwccGuBM2ZdmY37AyYtJv.eS7fPnCTPofgoDFT](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/HbkcvSVw6y8Tp32enPiqkhTox_DVOvxW3j2RmOF3g0IGwccGuBM2ZdmY37AyYtJv.eS7fPnCTPofgoDFT) (Links to an external site.)

Part II: Genesis 28-31 [Genesis 28-31 Jacob in Mesopotamia.pptx](#) [\\_download](#)

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

<https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/eCKo-P4N-AwVsfTBVJDqWMspvPftW6KhS1rCvBb9wi7wZ02NFzf3Eta8dKHw .tndZHn8XmGEqa4iA> (Links to an external site.)

Part III: [Genesis 32-36.pptx](#) [\\_download](#)

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/OJA9tKoAb7D9X5kpCKd9eokcglInEA9WXeu2WlyG1N5g5Jezg\\_nzwiVx8oXfpp-ee.gHj0y7NShqwstydV](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/OJA9tKoAb7D9X5kpCKd9eokcglInEA9WXeu2WlyG1N5g5Jezg_nzwiVx8oXfpp-ee.gHj0y7NShqwstydV) (Links to an external site.)

optional: Reading Notes on Genesis 23-36 [Reading Notes Westermann on Genesis 23-36.docx](#) [\\_download](#)

Writing Assignment:

Compare and contrast the characters of Jacob and Esau. Why would the Israelite tradition remember Esau in this way? How can Jacob's practice of deception fit with his image as a hero within the Israelite tradition? How does Jacob's relationship with YHWH compare with that of Esau?

Then post a 300-500 word response on the **Discussion Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, March 18 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section). Then respond to two other students' postings by Noon, March 20 (see Rubric for Discussion Board).

Reading Questions:

- Compare and contrast the ways that the theme of rivalry figures in the Abraham and Jacob stories. Identify places in Genesis 12–33 in which Abraham or Jacob have functioned as tricksters.
- How much authority does Rebecca exercise within the households of her father Bethuel and of her husband Jacob?
- Describe the characters of Rebecca, Rachel, and Laban. What roles do they play in the communication of the divine blessing to the peoples?
- Compare and contrast the characters of Jacob and Esau. Why would the Israelite tradition remember Esau in this way? How can Jacob's practice of deception fit with his image as a hero within the Israelite tradition?
- What is the image of God communicated by Jacob's wrestling with the angel in Gen 32:23-33? Explain fully.
- What is the significance attached to the promise of land in the Abraham and Jacob stories?
- Why do the sons of Jacob treat Hamor, Shechem, and the Canaanite men so violently in Genesis 34?

**Attend virtual lecture by Professor Peter Harrison on March 18** (8:00 pm CDT; the lecture will be recorded). Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers: <https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/OQ55YpRsiNZDATzFdkV3mFQ4ayEgm120UWljl68S9BqU3EvjoCFxastnAYDBGDIA.DjrCwKSrADr2pA7w> (Links to an external site.)

## Christianity and the Rise of Science

It is often thought that modern science developed largely independently of, or even in opposition to, religion. Historians of science, however, have proposed various ways in which religion played a significant role in the emergence of modern science. This lecture will set out some of the ways in which Christianity contributed positively to the rise of science, taking in ideas about laws of nature, the social legitimacy of science, and the methods and motivations of individual scientists.

Here is a short bio:

Peter Harrison is an Australian Laureate Fellow and Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Queensland, Australia. He was previously the Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at the University of Oxford. His work deals with the historical relations between science and religion, and more specifically the philosophical, scientific and religious thought of the early modern period. He has written more than 100 articles and book chapters and his six books include *The Territories of Science and Religion* (2015).

Optional: The preface and first chapter (22 pp total) of Peter Harrison's book, *The Territories of Science and Religion*, [Harrison Science & Religion ch. 1.pdf](#)

[1.pdf](#) [\\_download](#)

Written response on Assignment section to the following two questions: (1) what was the main point of Harrison's lecture? (2) How did his presentation assist in understanding how the texts of Genesis can bring meaning into the lives of the people of our time?

# Module Three, Part 2: March 21-27 Genesis 37-50 Joseph Story

March 21- 27

## Joseph Story: Genesis 37–50

A. Read: Genesis 37:1–50:26.

View video Powerpoint lecture.

[Genesis 37-50.pptx](#) [\\_download](#)

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/P6utcKrnEKOx-gvMv6rm5b7RveNwJSHufDcYIGoKgE2IsdY0LFCfveBCGQK2OH\\_I.nMqWpa5ZYACUTgAu](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/P6utcKrnEKOx-gvMv6rm5b7RveNwJSHufDcYIGoKgE2IsdY0LFCfveBCGQK2OH_I.nMqWpa5ZYACUTgAu) (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment:

“What role does the theme of rivalry play in the Joseph story? On the basis of the Joseph story, explain how guilt can be a corrosive force which undermines or hinders the impact of the newness of God’s gracious actions in the human community.”

Post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, March 25 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section).

Reading Questions:

- Explain why the story of Judah and Tamar is located within the Joseph story in the biblical account.
- Explain why King Solomon would have treasured the Joseph story.
- How does the Joseph story give a positive disciplinary value to suffering?

B. Listen to the live interview of Rabbi Rachel Mikva on her book, *Dangerous Religious Ideas*, by Dr. John Merkle on March 23 at 11:45 - 12:45.

[Click here to join webinar \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Rabbi Mikva on Dangerous Religious Ideas](#)

A link to the recording of this interview will be provided here after the event [https://youtu.be/m8jIQGu\\_Zss](https://youtu.be/m8jIQGu_Zss) (Links to an external site.). Here are notes on the event that may prove helpful [rabbi mikva john merkle.docx](#) [\\_download](#).

Writing Assignment: What hopeful signs for the future does Rabbi Mikva contend can be provided by the growth in mutual understanding between the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)?

Post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by midnight March 27.

# Module Four, Part 2: April 5-10, Exod 12:1 - 20:26 The Sinai Event: Covenant with YHWH

April 5 – 10

**The Sinai Event: Covenant with YHWH**

Read Exod 12:1–20:26; Smith, pp. 166-180.

View video Powerpoint lecture.

[Exodus 12-20.pptx](#) [\\_download](#)

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/kTYiAlwAHj-rRu85ea6juhZp8lZcT09Ea1JhYSDkW\\_LLZVqksQgZICvH9T0D9PuN.Mzg0GLxepXoX-H1q](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/kTYiAlwAHj-rRu85ea6juhZp8lZcT09Ea1JhYSDkW_LLZVqksQgZICvH9T0D9PuN.Mzg0GLxepXoX-H1q) (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment:

“How does liturgy shape the communal memory of the events of Passover and the Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 12–15)? Include within your response an explanation of: (a) The origin and significance of the feast of Passover. What is the relationship between the Passover feast and the feast of Unleavened Bread? (b) The relationship of the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) to the double version of the crossing of the sea in Exod 14:10-31. How does this poem function as a pivotal point in the narrative of the Book of Exodus?”

Then post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, April 8 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting).

Participate in a Small Group Zoom discussion at a scheduled time on Thursday or Friday (April 8, 9). The questions posed in the writing assignment will be the starting point for the discussions. The reading questions below may also be discussed.

Reading Questions:

1. What is meant by “sacred time” in Exod 12:2-3? How does “sacred time” differ from “profane time”?

2. Describe the ritual prescriptions for the Passover meal.
3. Why is the “manipulation of blood” important? How does the explanation in 12:21-23 (J) differ from that in 12:12-13 (P)?
4. Why is the bread unleavened? Describe the feast of the Unleavened Bread. What are clues that this feast of Unleavened Bread was originally separate from the feast of the Passover?
5. If the blood of the Passover lamb is a shield against “the destroyer,” who is “the destroyer,” according to Smith?
6. How long were the Israelites in Egypt according to Exod 12:40-41? according to Gen 15:13? according to 1 Kings 6:1? How does Smith interpret these numbers?
7. Who may participate in the Passover celebration?
8. How does the material in Exod 12:43-51 point to “a growing priestly corpus of texts” (p. 165 [56])?
9. What is the point of a ritual for “redemption of the firstborn” in Exod 13:11-16? How does Smith explain the joining of the Passover feast with the feast of Unleavened Bread (p. 166 [57])?
10. What is the relationship between the last plague (death of the first-born) and the rite of redeeming the first-born male in Exod 13:11-16?
11. Explain the Jewish and Christian re-use of the Passover ritual after AD 70.
12. How does Exod 13:1-16 emphasize the handing on the Exodus tradition from one generation to the next?
13. Why does Smith entitle the section Exod 14:10-31 as a double version of the crossing? Briefly describe each version.
14. Briefly describe the content of the commandments contained in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17), the Code of the Covenant (Exod 20:22–23:19), and the priestly instruction in Exodus 25–31, 35–40.
15. How can Smith claim that the Sinai covenant is “timeless and eternal yet also added to over time” (p. 66)?
16. How are the complaints in the wilderness in the Book of Exodus assessed differently from those in the Book of Numbers?
17. How does the healing of the bad water in Exod 15:25 make Moses look like Elijah? Chronologically, who lived first: Moses or Elijah? When and where was the E source composed?
18. Smith identifies Exod 16:1-36 as primarily a priestly passage. What characteristics show the priestly hand at work in vv 1-15? in vv 16-30? in vv 32-33?
19. How does Moses gain credibility or legitimacy as leader of the Hebrew slaves or Israelites in Exodus 19–20?
20. How can the worship of the Israelites at Mount Sinai be seen as a confirmation of Moses’ call and commissioning in Exodus 3–4?
21. Explain the significance of the command that Israel have no images or statues within its place of worship.
22. How did the Ten Commandments come to assume the form that they currently have in Exodus 20:1-17? How can one say that the Ten Commandments reveal or disclose essential knowledge of God?



# Module Four, Part 1: March 28 - April 1 Exod 1:1 - 11:10 Moses and YHWH versus Pharaoh

March 28 – April 1

## Moses and YHWH versus Pharaoh

Read: Exodus 1:1–11:10; Smith, pp. 133-163.

View video Powerpoint lecture.

[Exodus 1-11.pptx](#) [\\_download](#)

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/dG0QIX6MgrrQZZNu3S8qJu3TkOyzq0TJan1C\\_Bxa7LpG6uNlzfcYasrJBiQIjuY.1DGzgRyj1clh3Bdd](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/dG0QIX6MgrrQZZNu3S8qJu3TkOyzq0TJan1C_Bxa7LpG6uNlzfcYasrJBiQIjuY.1DGzgRyj1clh3Bdd) (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment:

“Explain how the revelation of God’s name as Yahweh discloses the character of Yahweh. How does image of YHWH conveyed by the name YHWH fit with the image of God in Exod 4:24-26? How are we to make sense out of God’s intents and actions in Exod 4:21-26?”

Post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, April 1 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section).

Reading Questions:

- How do the Israelites come to know who God is?
- Why would the Egyptians would be afraid of the Hebrews according to Exodus 1? What are we to make of the irrepressible growth of the Israelites in Exod 1:12?
- Do you see any analogies with the current debate in America over immigration and the concern of the Egyptians in Exod 1:8-10?
- Shiphrah and Puah were justified in lying. Defend and refute this statement.

- Did the midwives fear God more than Moses' parents? How could Moses' parents expose him?
- How does Pharaoh's daughter's treatment of infants compare with that of the Hebrew midwives?
- How does Moses' reaction to Pharaoh after he slays the Egyptian taskmaster compare with that of the midwives?
- How does Moses react to the burning bush?
- Describe Moses' call to be the leader of the Hebrew slaves. On what grounds can Moses be identified as a prophet?
- How are we to understand the statement that God will "harden" Pharaoh's heart? If this statement is set in the context of warfare, what nuances or qualifications can be applied to the statement? According to Exod 7:3-5, why does God harden Pharaoh's heart?
- What important elements of priestly theology shape the account of Moses' re-commissioning in Exod 6:2-10?
- What priestly concerns about Aaron come to expression in the genealogy in Exod 6:14-25?
- How many plagues were there in Egypt according to Psalms 78 and 105? Is the account in Exod 7:8–11:10 more historically accurate? How should we interpret these accounts?
- What does the first plague (Exod 7:14-25) tell us about the power of magic and how it relates to the divine world? How do the magicians in plagues three and six make known the superior power of the God of Israel?
- Smith notes that "the third set of three plagues offers an almost apocalyptic conflict between God and Pharaoh" (p. 45). Explain.
- How do weather-imagery in plagues seven and eight and nine (Exod 9:13–10:29) describe God's judgment against the Egyptians?
- Explain the function and purpose of "the hardening of Pharaoh's heart" in the plague accounts.
- Explain the structure and meaning of the three triads of plagues. How does the tenth plague fit into this triadic pattern? In Exod 10:2, the Israelites are instructed by the plague. Why is this significant?

## Module Four, Part 3, April 11-17

### Exod 21:1 -34:35 Covenant-Making and Covenant-Breaking

April 11 – 17

**Covenant-making and Covenant-breaking**

Read: Exodus 21:1–34:35; Smith, pp. 180-201.

[Exodus 19-31.pptx](#)    [\\_download](#)

View video Powerpoint lecture.

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

<https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/FTLI9UsZ1uWzzIPXT5uNcPfEzrRIA908WHZkpo5ajSdNIFNFdoN4oR6MUtVPZh3I.CxGYNjmcvrerphyq> (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment:

“Describe the covenant ceremonies in Exodus 24 that takes place at the base of the mountain (vv 3-8) and on top of the mountain (vv 9-11)? What is distinctive about each? How does Moses’ interaction with the elders and the people in Exod 24:3-11 differ from that in Exod 34:27-35? What is the point of the veil that Moses places over his face?”

Then post a 300-500 word response on the **Discussion Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, April 15 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting on Discussion Board or Assignment Section). Then respond to two other students’ postings by Noon, April 17 (see Rubric for Discussion Board).

Reading Questions:

1. In what ways do the laws of the book of the covenant (Exod 21:1–23:19) reflect the experiences of people settled in an agricultural land rather than of those wandering in a wilderness region?
2. What is the purpose of the description of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–30? How are we to understand the sacrificial system?
3. What parallels can be seen in this tabernacle description in Exodus 25-30 with the story of creation in Gen 1:1-2:4a?
4. How does this tabernacle description help the Israelites’ approach the holiness of God?
5. Why is the Golden Calf episode (Exodus 32) situated here in the account of the Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai?
6. Compare Moses’ intercession on behalf of Israel in Exodus 32–33 with that of Abraham in Genesis 18:16-33.
7. What is the impression the reader is given of the character of Aaron in Exodus 32?
8. What is the significance of episode about the Levites in Exod 32:25-29?

# Module 5, Part 1, April 18-24

## Deut 1:1-16:17 Exclusive Obedience to YHWH and Centralization of Worship

April 18 - 24

Exclusive Obedience to YHWH and Centralization of Worship

Read: Deut 1:1–16:17; Owens, 332-355.

[Deut 1-16.docx](#)    [download](#)

[Deuteronomy 1-16.pptx](#)    [\\_download](#)

View video Powerpoint lecture.

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/4YsVkZ5AJ2lxqqShtGcQURkyxMZEmeO\\_KI7LdvAFkr6YVLCeb8URQpCX6NzXeDbP.OfAnB9EBIS5Cm1oq](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/4YsVkZ5AJ2lxqqShtGcQURkyxMZEmeO_KI7LdvAFkr6YVLCeb8URQpCX6NzXeDbP.OfAnB9EBIS5Cm1oq) (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment:

- Identify three pious practices in Deuteronomy 6–8 that will promote exclusive fidelity to YHWH. How can these practices fit together with the command in Deut 7:2 to exterminate the inhabitants of the promised land and with the command in Deut 10:19 to love the stranger?
- Why does Deut 12:5 command that the Israelites offer sacrifice only in the place designated by YHWH?

Post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, April 24 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting).

Reading Questions:

1. How does the literary artistry of the book of Deuteronomy communicate Moses' exhortation to live in obedience to the covenant?
2. Explain how prophets, Levites, and scribes probably contributed to the composition of the book of Deuteronomy.

3. What is the significance of the ten commandments and the Shema to the theological structure of the Book of Deuteronomy? How are we to understand the words of the Book of Deuteronomy as the authentic speech of Moses?
4. According to Deuteronomy 1, why is the Israelites' fearfulness in the face of death and harm so devastating to their relationship to YHWH?
5. How are we to understand the "ban" that the Israelites were to exercise against their Canaanite neighbors?
6. Explain the connection between land, blessing, obedience, and life in Deuteronomy.
7. In light of Deuteronomy 4, why is the word of God a more appropriate medium for communicating the presence of God than a statue?
8. According to Deut 4:32-40, why is YHWH an incomparable God?
9. What kind of liberation happens in the exodus from Egypt? Is it a freedom to be autonomous or a freedom to live in community?
10. How can YHWH be a jealous God according to Deuteronomy? How can this attribute be justified theologically?
11. On the basis of Deut 5:8-10, refute the statement that the God of the Old Testament is a God of wrath?
12. What is the point of the command to rest on the Sabbath?
13. Does the commandment prohibiting adultery apply equally to men and women?
14. How is coveting related to stealing and lying? How is coveting a form of idolatry?
15. Why is the Shema central to the Book of Deuteronomy? to the life of faith?
16. What does the phrase "YHWH is One" (Deut 6:4) mean? What is the meaning of the statement, "Our God is YHWH, YHWH alone" (Deut 6:4)?
17. What does "love" mean in Deut 6:4?
18. Is the practice of binding copies of the Shema on one's arms or foreheads an example of engaging in magic?
19. Why is this family context for educating in the tradition important?
20. Why does YHWH command the Israelites to exterminate the inhabitants of the land promised to them (Deut 7:2)?
21. According to Deuteronomy 8, why did YHWH take the Israelites into the wilderness?
22. Does God change his mind in response to human prayers (Deut 9:7-29; 10:10-11)?
23. How does the law of sabbatical release (Deut 15:1-23) challenge the Israelites to change not only their behavior but also their attitude toward the poor? How would you describe the wisdom of this law of sabbatical release in terms of its making such a release part of pattern or cycle of communal behavior?

# Module Five, Part 2: April 25- May 1 Deut 16:18 - 28:69 Individual and Collective Responsibility of the Covenant People

April 25 – May 1

## Individual and Collective Responsibility of the Covenant People

Deuteronomy 16:18–28:69, Owens, pp. 355-371.

[Deuteronomy 16-28.pptx](#)     [\\_download](#)

View video Powerpoint lecture (to be posted by 7:00am April 25)

Students: You will need to have the Powerpoint on Deuteronomy 16-18 above opened on your desktop and move through the slides as I offer a commentary on them in the video below. You may be able to minimize the Zoom screen, which will aid the viewing of the Powerpoint slides in coordination with the commentary I provide. [I neglected to "share the screen" on the Zoom recording.] I would also encourage you to use this material as it is helpful to you. The catalog of laws in Deuteronomy 16-25 gives important information about the customary law in ancient Israel and gives concrete illustrations of how the individual Israelite needed to be attentive to the sociopolitical practices of the Israelite family and nation. You might ask how their familial and political practices allow God to be a serious player in their lives in ways that our contemporary ways of life do not.

Copy the link below to share this recording with viewers:

[https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/DGJn6ots0tmflveIzJ1ZVMI-5XPgP1yBrSMn0bM-OP4Fcz8oKC\\_OpfNxunLbbRn.i8iFFXatiTjZfgdE](https://csbsju.zoom.us/rec/share/DGJn6ots0tmflveIzJ1ZVMI-5XPgP1yBrSMn0bM-OP4Fcz8oKC_OpfNxunLbbRn.i8iFFXatiTjZfgdE) (Links to an external site.)

Writing Assignment:

“What is the responsibility of the individual to the group and vice versa throughout the Book of Deuteronomy? How is this concern for the identity and integrity of the group manifested in: (a) a concern for the purity of Israel (Deut 7:2; 21:10-14; 23:9-14; (b) moral order within the family (Deuteronomy 20–24); (c) the offering of the first-fruits in Deut 26:1-4; (d) the intertwining of the fate of the individual with that of the community in the curses in Deut 28:15ff?”

Then post a 300-500 word response on the **Assignment Section** on the Canvas course-page by Noon, April 29 (see Rubric for Initial Written Posting).

Then engage in Small Group Discussion on Zoom. (invitation to be sent by April 28).

#### Reading Questions:

1. Is the king described in Deut 17:14-20 one who will strengthen the fabric of the community? How?
2. What is the difference between a priest and a Levite?
3. How is it possible to distinguish a true from a false prophet? Is the criterion stated in Deut 18:22 sufficient for discerning the truth of a prophecy? What is the criterion in Deut 13:1-5?
4. Why is an unsolved murder a problem in ancient Israel (Deut 21:1-9)?
5. Cite two examples of laws in Deuteronomy 23–24 designed to protect the poor.
6. How is the animosity toward Amalek in Deut 25:17-19 to be understood?
7. What is the point of the credo in Deut 26:5-9 within the ritual of the offering of the first-fruits? How is this confession of faith similar to a psalm of thanksgiving?
8. What is the purpose of the tithe in Deut 14:28-29 and 26:12-15?
9. How does Deut 27:1-10 make provision for the Israelites in the land to remember that they are YHWH's people and to be obedient to Him?
10. Why are blessings and curses outlined in Deut 27:11-26 and 28:1-68?