

JWST 100

David Stern

Williams

651 Williams

Tu Th 10:30-12

Office Hours: Tu Th
12:30-1:30

Overcoming Catastrophe:

Responses to Suffering in Jewish Literature from the Bible to the Holocaust

The aim of this course is to study the tradition of literary responses in Jewish literature to the experience of catastrophe and national suffering. We will study works composed in response

to seven catastrophes in Jewish history, from the destruction of the first Temple in 586 B.C.E to the Holocaust in this century. The syllabus is accordingly divided into seven sections.

Requirements:

- 1) PREPARATION and PARTICIPATION in discussion are expected from all members of the class. Members of the seminar are expected to complete all reading assignments before class.
- 2) PAPERS: There will be two short papers (approximately five pages each), and a take-home final. More details about these assignments will be discussed in class.
- 3) LISTSERV: The class will have a listserv. Every student will be asked to write and post a summary of at least one class during the semester, and there may be additional requests to post responses to readings before class in order to stimulate discussion.

Books: All reading assignments are in two bulkpacks that will be available at Campus Copy (3907 Walnut, tel: 386-6410). One bulkpack is the Source-Reader, and you are required to buy that volume. The other volume-- a xerox of an out-of-print book, Heritage, by William Hallo, David Ruderman, and Michael Stanislawski-- is a brief (250 pp. long) history of the Jews from which I have assigned background readings for each section of the course. You are encouraged to buy this volume; I will place the one library copy on reserve in Rosengarten.

1) Jan.14: Introduction

I: The Destruction of the First Temple (586 B.C.E.)

- 2) Jan. 16: "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," editor's introduction and lines **294-379;**
457-505

Heritage, pp. 4-33
Leviticus 26
I Kings 17:1-23; 23:31-25:30
Lamentations 1

3) Jan. 21: **Lamentations 3**

4) Jan. 23: Heritage, pp. 35-41 Psalms 137
Ezekiel 37
Isaiah 40,
53

5) Jan. 28 Continuation

II: Hellenistic Persecutions (c. 160 BAC.E.)

6) Jan. 30: Heritage, 41-48

E. Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the
Maccabees, 93-135
Daniel 3, 7

2 Maccabees 6-7

III: The Destruction of the Second Temple and the Great
Rebellions (70. C.E.- 135 C.E)

7) Feb. 4: Heritage, pp. 48-81 2 Esdras 9:38-10:59 Recommended:
Background reading from Chaim Raphael, The Walls of
Jerusalem, (pp.46-83)

N.B. YOU MUST LOOK UP ALL VERSES IN BIBLE THAT ARE CITED
IN MIDRASHIC PASSAGES

Story of R. Yohanan b. Zakkai and R. Joshua
(from Fathers According to R. Nathan, Chap. 4)

Eikhah Rabbah I.1

IV.4 (Raphael, p.173

IV.3 (Raphael, pp. 157-158)

8) Feb. 6: Eikhah Rabbah 11.2 (Raphael, p.102 111.7 (Raphael,
p.103) IV.11 (Raphael, p.201-2 111.21
(Raphael, p. 104-5)

Feb. 11: Eikhah Rabbah 1.3 (Raphael, pp. 94-95) 1.56 (Raphael, p. 96) III.1
(Raphael, p. 102-03) "Two Narratives About God"

Feb. 13: Eikhah Rabbah 1.46 (Raphael, p.168-69) 1.50 (Raphael, p.169-173)
11.4 (Raphael, pp. 192-94) Midrash Eleh Ezkerah

11) Feb. 18: Continuation

IV: The Medieval Ashkenazic World All-13th C.)

12) Feb. 20: Heritage, pp. 103-118

"The Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson"
Recommended: Ivan Marcus, "From Politics
to
Martyrdom," Prooftexts 2 (1982), pp. 40-52.

13) Feb. 25: Genesis 22

David Bar Meshullam, "The Sacrifices" (p. 242)
Ephraim of Bonn, "The Slaughter of Isaac and His
Revival" (pp. 243-246)
Barukh of Magenza, "The Martyrs of Blois" (p.247)

V: The Sephardic World in the Middle Ages (11th- 15th C.)

14) Feb. 27: Heritage, pp. 81-103

Maimonides, "The Epistle on Martyrdom" (pp.165-
81); Recommended: Discussion, pp. 182-204)

15) March 4: Heritage, pp. 118-148

H.H. Ben-Sasson, "The Generation of the Spanish
Exiles Considers Its Fate"
Solomon Ibn Verga (selections in David
Roskies, Judah Ben David, "Know Judah and
Israel")

VI: Russian Poczroms and World War I (1880-1918)

16) March 6: Heritage, pp. 148-191.

Saul Tschernichowsky, "Barukh of Mayence"

17) March 18: "Oracles of Kishinev, 1903" (in Roskies, The
Literature of Destruction, pp. 144-159) H.N.
Bialik, "Upon the Slaughter"
"The City of Slaughter"

18) March 20: Z. Schneour, "Revenge"

19) March 25: Continuation

VII: The Holocaust (11-1945) and Yiddish Literature

19) March 27: Heritage, pp. 215-247

Chaim Grade, "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseynner"

20) April 1: Kadya Molodowsky, "God of Mercy" Jacob Glatstein,
"Without Jews" Abraham Sutzkever, selections from
Burnt Pearls

21) April 3: I.B. Singer, "The Last Demon"

VII: In Israel: Response from Zion

22) April 8: Eikhah Rabbah, 1.51 (Raphael, pp.180-81) Aharon
Megged, "The Name"

23) April 10: Uri Zvi Greenberg, "To the Mound of Corpses in
the Snow"; "[II) To God in Europe"; [V] God and
His Gentiles
Amir Gilboa, "Isaac" and "In the Darkness" Hayim
Gouri, "Heritage"
Dan Pagis, checked poems

- 24) April 15: S.Y. Agnon, "At the Outset of the Day" "The Sign"
- 25) April 17: Aharon Appelfeld, "Bertha"
- 26) April 22: Passover 27) April 24: Conclusion