

SONG OF SONGS:
READINGS IN BIBLICAL POETRY

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In-depth study of the Song of Songs, diction, structure, imagery, and depiction of human and spiritual love. Literal vs. allegorical readings in rabbinic, medieval and modern commentaries. Emphasis on imagery, parallelism, and their role in biblical poetry.

REQUIREMENTS. Lectures are based on sources and readings (see bibliography, pp. 3 ff.) indicated below, which must be prepared *prior* to class meetings. During the semester: midterm exam (on text of Song of Songs) and two essays. Class 15: final exam, though students may write a research paper instead, on a topic chosen in consultation with the professor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. See p. 3 below. Also consult the following commentaries regularly:

A. Hakham, דעת מקרא: חמש מגילות, a basic, thorough traditional-modern commentary

R. Gordis, *The Song of Songs...: A Study, Modern Translation and Commentary*, a basic, readable modern commentary

M. Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, an especially comprehensive modern commentary

M. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, a fine modern commentary based on a comparative literary perspective

These commentaries and the other assigned readings include references to further relevant studies, which students are encouraged to pursue independently.

SYLLABUS

UNIT 1: Introduction to the Song, Commentaries and Interpretive Approaches

Sources: Rashi, introduction to Song; Ibn Ezra, introduction to Song (both versions)

Readings: Pope 1977:17-229; Cohen 2003:46-48, 263-265

UNIT 2: Introductory Lyrics of the Song, Rashi's Concept of *Peshat*

Sources: Song 1:1-2:7, with Rashi and modern commentaries

Reading: Kamin 1986:11-22

UNIT 3: The Spring-time Lyrics; Rashi's Concept of *Dugma*

Sources: Song 2:7-17, with Rashi and modern commentaries

Reading: Kamin 1991:13-30

ESSAY #1 DUE September 27, 2005. Based on readings for unit 4, describe how Spanish exegetes (Moses Ibn Ezra, Rambam, Ibn `Aqnin) interpreted *Shir ha-Shirim* differently than Rashi.

UNIT 4: Literary Approaches to the Song in the Andalusian Tradition

Sources: Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, introduction (Schwarz ed., pp. 16-19)

Readings: Rosenberg 1990; Cohen 1995/6; Kamin 1991:12*-26*

UNIT 5: Introduction to Parallelism in Biblical Poetry
Reading: Kugel 1981:1-58

UNIT 6: Parallelism and Modern Literary Theory
Reading: Alter 1985:3-61

UNIT 7: Analyzing Biblical Parallelism
Reading: Berlin 1985:1-30; 64-102;127-141

November 15, 2005. **MID-TERM EXAM** on text of *Shir ha-Shirim*, with translation by Gordis and *Da'at Miqra* commentary, including **both introductions** (pp. 3-21).

UNIT 8: Urban and Natural Settings
Text: Song 2:8-17 (review parallelism); 3:1-11
Reading: Felix 1964 (optional)

UNIT 9: Introduction to Imagery in the Song
Sources: Song 4:1-5:1
Reading: Alter 1985:185-203

UNIT 10: Dream and Reality in the Song
Sources: Song 5:2-6:12
Reading: Landy 1987

December 6, 2005. ESSAY #2: Apply methods for analyzing parallelism to remainder of Song.

UNIT 11: Historical and Literary Setting
Sources: Song 7:1-8:14
Reading: Fox 1985:227-252

UNIT 12: Rashi's Commentary on the Song as Cultural Statement
Sources: Rashi on Song 2:7-3:11; 4:1,6,8,16; 5:1-8; 6:1-5, 10-12; 7:1,8,9-10,13; 8:3-4,6
Reading: Kamin 1991:31-72

UNIT 13: Rashi's *Peshat-Derash* Distinction; Philosophical and Kabbalistic Approaches to Song
Sources: Rashbam Gen 37:2; Abraham Ibn Ezra, Safah Berurah 5a
Readings: Rosenberg 1969; Kamin 1986:57-90;109-125;263-274; Ahrend 1994

UNIT 14: Philosophical and Kabbalistic Traditions
Reading: Halkin 1950. Optional: Song of Songs Commentary Attributed to Ramban (Chavel ed.)

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