

HBRJD-GA 3311 /RELST-GA 3311

Topics in the Bible:

“Priestly” Writings from the 7th–2nd Centuries BCE

Fall 2022

Thursdays 11:00am–1:45pm

KJCC 109

Prof. Liane Feldman

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Pronouns: she/her

Course Description

In this course we will be looking at the category of “priestly” as it is used by scholars to describe a variety of ancient Israelite and early Jewish literary works. This course will examine a variety of writings from the 7th–2nd centuries BCE related to issues of ritual, cult, temple, priests, and sacrifice. Together we will investigate the possibility of literary relationships between some texts, question assumptions related to “rewritten bible” models, and reevaluate the common assumption that the pentateuchal priestly writings are the “base text” for nearly all later priestly literatures. We will consider each text as a literary work in its own right and as the product of a specific socio-historical context, an approach that will point to diverse and divergent cultic ideologies across Judea and the Diaspora (particularly in Egypt). Some of the texts we may study are: the pentateuchal priestly narrative (P), Ezekiel, Chronicles, documents from Elephantine, the Temple Scroll, the Letter of Aristeas, and the Aramaic Levi Document. Other texts may be brought into our discussions as well.

Knowledge of Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and/or Greek is helpful, but not required for the course. All texts will be made available in English translation.

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation (60%)

Participation will be broken down into two categories for this course:

1. general participation in the week-to-week course discussions (40%)

2. completion of at least two book presentations/summaries (10% each; 20 % total).
 - a. MA students have the option to complete only one book presentation

Final Course Paper (30%)

Students are expected to pursue a research project related to some aspect of “priestly writings” that results in a 20-minute presentation (approximately 3000–3500 words depending on how quickly you speak), to be given at the final meeting of the course. This presentation should include either a handout or slides to help the audience follow your talk.

- **Due October 27:** An abstract (250–300 words) along with the title of your presentation should be submitted via email by 5pm.
- **Week of Oct 31 –Nov 4:** I will return your abstracts to you with feedback and suggestions
- **(Optional) Due Dec 1:** First drafts of your papers should be submitted to via email by 5pm. Comments will be returned to you by Dec 8.
- **Week of Dec 12:** Final presentation of your paper at the class conference. A final copy of your paper should be submitted to me via email before the start of the conference.

Participation in the Class Conference (10%)

All students are expected to attend and participate in the end of the semester course conference. Active participation includes each student asking at least one question of each presenter.

Required Books and Readings

All course readings will be available as PDFs in this google drive folder. Books for review are largely available online, or can be requested through the NYU library.

Other Notes and Policies

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend each seminar session. One unexcused absence will be permitted.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the guidelines for academic honesty found on the university website. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will be reported to the proper authorities including, but not limited to, the

department chair and the student's advisor. It will result in a grade of F on the assignment and, depending on the severity of the offense, failure of the entire course. NYU's academic integrity policy can be found here. (<https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html>)

Learning Disability or Difference

If you are a student with a documented disability at NYU, I will be happy to work with you to adapt the course material and assignments to your needs. Please provide me with documentation of your learning needs as soon as possible because accommodations cannot be provided retroactively. If you have any questions about documentation, please contact the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities online or at (212)-998-4980.

Forms of Address

You are welcome to share your pronouns at any point in the semester. We will address you respectfully in accordance with your preference.

Course Schedule

Thursday, September 1, 2022 **Introduction; overview; assignment of book presentations**

Unit 1: Defining Priests and "Priestly" Issues

Thursday, September 8, 2022 : Priesthood, Politics, and Position

- "First Temple" Period
 - Exod 28–29; Lev 8
 - Rooke: "[Priests and Priesthood](#)" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Theology*
 - Haran: The Priesthood and the Tribe of Levi (Ch 4) & "The Aaronites and the Rest of the Levitical Tribe" (Ch 5) from *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*
- "Second Temple" Period
 - 2 Chr 13:9–23; 15:4; Neh 12:30–13:31
 - Himmelfarb, Martha. "'Found Written in the Book of Moses': Priests in the Era of Torah," Pages 93–110 in *Between Temple and Torah: Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and Beyond*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.
 - Fraade, Stephen. "'They Shall Teach Your Statutes to Jacob': Priests, Scribes, and Sages in Second Temple Times." (unpublished).

- Knoppers, Gary N. "Hierodules, Priests, or Janitors? The Levites in Chronicles and the History of the Israelite Priesthood,." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118 (1999): 49–72.
- Optional:
 - Himmelfarb, Martha. "Priest and Scribe: Ancestry and Professional Skill in the Book of the Watchers, the Wisdom of Ben Sira, and Aramaic Levi." 2006.

Thursday, September 15, 2022: Temples and Sacred Space

- Hundley, Michael B. "Divine Presence in Ancient Near Eastern Temples." *Religion Compass* 9 (2015): 203–215.
- Bedford, Peter R. "The Economic Role of the Jerusalem Temple in Achaemenid Judah: Comparative Perspectives." Pages 3*–20* in *Shai le-Sara Japhet: Studies in the Bible, Its Exegesis and Language*. Edited by Mosheh Bar-Anbar, Dalit Rom-Shiloni, Emanuel Tov, and Nili Wazana. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2007.
- Bloch-Smith, Elizabeth. "Solomon's Temple: The Politics of Ritual Space," Pages 83–94 in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*. Edited by B. Gittlen. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002.
- Hensel, Benedikt. "Cult Centralization in the Persian Period: Biblical and Historical Perspectives." *Semitica* 60 (2018): 221–272.
- Book Presentations:
 - Gorman Jr., Frank H. *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.
 - Klawans, Jonathan. *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Thursday, September 22, 2022: Sacrifice

- Feldman, Liane M. "The Idea and Study of Sacrifice in Ancient Israel." *Religion Compass* 14, no. 12 (2020): 1–14.
- Levine, Baruch. "Ritual as Symbol: Modes of Sacrifice in Israelite Religion," Pages 125-135. Edited by Barry M Gittlen. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002.
- Magness, Jodi. "Were Sacrifices Offered at Qumran? The Animal Bone Deposits Reconsidered." *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 7 (2016): 5–34.
- Klawans, Jonathan. "Pure Violence: Sacrifice and Defilement in Ancient Israel." *Harvard Theological Review* 94, no. 2 (2001): 135–157.
- Reed, Annette Yoshiko. "From Sacrifice to the Slaughterhouse: Ancient and Modern Approaches to Meat, Animals, and Civilization." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (2014): 111-158.
- Book Presentations:

- Balberg, Mira. *Blood for Thought: The Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.
- Gilders, William. *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Unit 2: The Pentateuchal Priestly Source

Thursday, September 29, 2022 Identifying P

- Kratz, Reinhard G. "The Pentateuch in Current Research: Consensus and Debate," Pages 31-62 in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*. Edited by Thomas Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Blum, Erhard. "Issues and Problems in the Contemporary Debate Regarding the Priestly Writings," Pages 31-44 in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*. Edited by Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009.
- Gaines, Jason M. H. "The Priestly Source in Scholarship," Pages 257–287 in *The Poetic Priestly Source*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2015.
- Feldman, Liane M. "Introduction" in *The Consuming Fire: The Complete Priestly Source, From Creation to the Promised Land*. World Literature in Translation. Berkeley; Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2023.
- Book Presentations:
 - Jenson, Philip Peter. *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
 - Meshel, Naphtali S. *The "Grammar" of Sacrifice: A Generativist Study of the Israelite Sacrificial System in the Priestly Writings with The "Grammar" of *Σ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Thursday, October 6, 2022: The Priestly Narrative

- Feldman, Liane M. Chs 1–7 + appendix in *The Consuming Fire: The Complete Priestly Source, From Creation to the Promised Land*. World Literature in Translation. Berkeley; Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2023.
 - Focus Texts (Hebrew): Lev 10:10–11; Lev 12; Lev 16
- Klawans, Jonathan. "Rethinking Leviticus and Rereading *Purity and Danger*." *AJS Review* 27(1) (2003): 89-102.
- Liss, Hanna. "Ritual Purity and the Construction of Identity: The Literary Function of the Laws of Purity in the Book of Leviticus," Pages 329–354 in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers*. Edited by Thomas Römer. Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2008.
- Book Presentations:

- Feldman, Liane M. *The Story of Sacrifice: Ritual and Narrative in the Priestly Source*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 141. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020.
- Knohl, Israel. *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007.

Unit 3: Reconsidering “Rewriting”

Thursday, October 13, 2022: Modes of Reading, Decentering the Pentateuch

- Reeves, John. "Problematizing the Bible: Then and Now." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100 (2010): 139–152.
- Mroczek, Eva. "The Hegemony of the Biblical in the Study of Second Temple Literature." *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 6 (2015): 2–35.
- Zahn, Molly M. "The Relevance of Moses Traditions in the Second Temple Period," Pages 78–94 in *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*. Edited by Joel S. Baden and Jeffrey Stackert. 2021.
- Optional; recommended if you are not familiar with innerbiblical exegesis:
 - Eslinger, Lyle. "Innerbiblical Exegesis and Inner Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category." *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992): 47-58.
 - Sommer, Benjamin. "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger." *Vetus Testamentum* 46 (1996): 479-489.
- Book Presentations:
 - Zahn, Molly M. *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism: Scribal Composition and Transmission*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
 - Choi, John H. *Traditions at Odds: the Reception of the Pentateuch in Biblical and Second Temple Period Literature*. New York: T & T Clark, 2010.

Unit 4: “Priestly” Writings from Judea

Thursday, October 20, 2022: Chronicles

- Read all of 1–2 Chronicles in English
 - Focus Texts: 1 Chr 21:18–22:1; 2 Chr 1:1–6; 2 Chr 29–30
- Nihan, Christophe. "Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles," Pages 253-288 in *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Rise of the Torah*. Edited by Peter Dubovský, Dominik Markl, and Jean-Pierre Sonnet. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016.
- Meyer, Esias E. "Sacrifices in Chronicles: How Priestly Are They?," Pages 173-196 in *Chronicles and the Priestly Literature of the Hebrew Bible*. 2021.
- Optional:

- Jeon, Jaeyoung. "The Priestly Tent of Meeting in Chronicles: Pro-Priestly or Anti-Priestly?". *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 18 (2018): 1–15.
- Rothstein, David. "Is the Chronicler's Tent of Meeting Really "Anti-Priestly"? Another Look." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 35, no. 1 (2021): 73-94.
- Book Presentations:
 - Japhet, Sara. *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009

Thursday, October 27, 2022: Aramaic Levi Document

- Read entire text in English (PDF drawn from Greenfield, Stone, & Eshel edition on course website)
 - Focus Text (Aramaic & Greek): Law of the Priesthood, lines 13–61
- Kugel, James. "How old is the "Aramaic Levi Document"?. *Dead Sea Discoveries* 14 (2007): 291–312.
- Drawnel, Henryk. *An Aramaic Wisdom Text from Qumran: A New Interpretation of the Levi Document*. Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 55–96 (section 1.5)
- Drawnel, Henryk. "Priestly Education in the Aramaic Levi Document (Visions of Levi) and Aramaic Astronomical Book (4Q208–211)." *Revue de Qumran* 88, no. 2 (2006): 547–574.
- Feldman, Liane M. "Sanitized Sacrifice in Aramaic Levi's Law of the Priesthood." *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 11, no. 3 (2020): 343–368.
- Book Presentations:
 - Himmelfarb, Martha. *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.

Thursday, November 3, 2022: Temple Scroll

- Read the entirety of the Temple Scroll in English
 - Focus Texts: If you can read Hebrew, select at least one column you find most interesting related to the theme of this course and prepare that.
- Crawford, Sidnie White. "The Temple Scroll" in *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*.
- Crawford, Sidnie White. "Where is Moses? The Temple Scroll's Claim to Authority." *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 11 (2022): 49–59.
- Fraade, Stephen. "The Temple Scroll as Rewritten Bible: When Genres Bend," Pages 136–154 in *Hā-ʾish Mōshe: Studies in Scriptural Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature in Honor of Moshe J. Bernstein*. Edited by Binyamin Y. Goldstein, Michael Segal, and George J. Brooke. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Otto, Eckart. "Temple Scroll and the Pentateuch: A Priestly Debate about the Interpretation of the Torah," Pages 59–74 in *The Qumran Legal Texts Between the Hebrew Bible and its Interpretation*. Edited by Kristin de Troyer and Armin Lange. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.
- Schiffman, Lawrence. "The Theology of the Temple Scroll." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 87 (2014): 79-101.

- Book Presentations:
 - Crawford, Sidnie White. *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls & Related Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.

Unit 5: Priestly Writings from (or situated in) the Diaspora

Thursday, November 10, 2022: Ezekiel

- Read Ezekiel in English
 - focus especially on chs. 40–48
 - Focus Texts: Ezek 43–44
- Smith, Jonathan Z. "To Put in Place," in *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Ganzel, Tova and Shalom E. Holtz. "Ezekiel's Temple in Babylonian Context." *Vetus Testamentum* 64, no. 2 (2014): 211-226.
- Rhyder, Julia. "Gates and Entrances in Ezekiel 40–48: The Social Utopia of the Temple Vision." *Vetus Testamentum* online view (2022): 1–14.
- Book Presentations:
 - Ganzel, Tova. *Ezekiel's Visionary Temple in Babylonian Context*. BZAW 539. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021.

Thursday, November 17, 2022: Elephantine

- TAD A 3.3; A 4.1; A 4.3; A 4.7; A 4.8; Papyrus Amherst 63
- Rosenberg, Stephen G. "The Jewish Temple at Elephantine." *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67, no. 1 (2004): 4–13.
- Honigman, Sylvie. "Jewish Communities in Hellenistic Egypt: Different Responses to Different Environments," Pages 117–135 in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*. Edited by Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.
- Kratz, Reinhard G. "Temple and Torah: Reflections on the Legal Status of the Pentateuch between Elephantine and Qumran," Pages 77–104 in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*. Edited by Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007.
- Holm, Tawny. "Papyrus Amherst 63 and the Arameans of Egypt: A Landscape of Cultural Nostalgia." Pp. 323-51 in *Elephantine in Context: Studies on the History, Religion and Literature of the Judeans in Persian Period Egypt*, ed. R. G. Kratz and B.U. Schipper. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 155. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022.
- Book Presentations:

- Granerød, Gard. *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period: Studies in the Religion and Society of the Judaean Community at Elephantine*. BZAW 488. Berlin; Boston: DeGruyter, 2016.

Thursday, December 1, 2022: Letter of Aristeas

- Read the entirety of the *Letter* in English
 - Focus Texts: §§51–120; §§ 128–171
- Angelini, Anna. "The Reception and Idealization of the Torah in the Letter of Aristeas: The Case of the Dietary Laws." *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 9, no. 4 (2020).
- Wright III, Benjamin G. "The Letter of Aristeas and the Question of Septuagint Origins Redux." *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2 (2011): 303–325.
- Borchardt, Francis. "What Do You Do When a Text is Failing? The Letter of Aristeas and the Need for a New Pentateuch." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 48, no. 1 (2017): 1-21.
- Book Presentations:
 - Honigman, Sylvie. *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the narrative of the Letter of Aristeas*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Thursday, December 8, 2022: Conclusions, Wrap Ups, Broader discussion

Books For Presentation

1. Balberg, Mira. *Blood for Thought: The Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.
2. Choi, John H. *Traditions at Odds: the Reception of the Pentateuch in Biblical and Second Temple Period Literature*. New York: T & T Clark, 2010.
3. Crawford, Sidnie White. *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls & Related Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.
4. Feldman, Liane M. *The Story of Sacrifice: Ritual and Narrative in the Priestly Source*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 141. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020.
5. Ganzel, Tova. *Ezekiel's Visionary Temple in Babylonian Context*. BZAW 539. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2021.
6. Gilders, William. *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
7. Gorman Jr., Frank H. *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.
8. Granerød, Gard. *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period: Studies in the Religion and Society of the Judaean Community at Elephantine*. BZAW 488. Berlin; Boston: DeGruyter, 2016.
9. Himmelfarb, Martha. *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
10. Honigman, Sylvie. *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the narrative of the Letter of Aristeas*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
11. Japhet, Sara. *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009.
12. Jenson, Philip Peter. *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
13. Klawans, Jonathan. *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
14. Knohl, Israel. *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007.
15. Meshel, Naphtali S. *The "Grammar" of Sacrifice: A Generativist Study of the Israelite Sacrificial System in the Priestly Writings with The "Grammar" of *Σ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
16. Zahn, Molly M. *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism: Scribal Composition and Transmission*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Extra books in case we need more:

- Feder, Yitzhaq. *Purity and Pollution in the Hebrew Bible: From Embodied Experience to Moral Metaphor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Trotter, Jonathan R. *The Jerusalem Temple in Diaspora Jewish Practice and Thought during the Second Temple Period*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 192. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019.
- Carr, David M. *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- McClymond, Kathryn T. *Ritual Gone Wrong: What we Learn from Ritual Disruption*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Paran, Meir. *Forms of the Priestly Style in the Pentateuch: Patterns, Linguistic Usages, Syntactic Structures*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989. [Hebrew]
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