

**Hedgerow Seminars 2009-10**  
**New Questions Change Everything!**  
**Women's Critical & Creative Dialog with Scripture**

Is the bible hopelessly dated? Why study texts used to silence women, rationalize slavery, promote suffering, and discount people of other religions? On the other hand, why forget this source of two world faith traditions?

Like sacred stories in every culture the bible holds stories that open us to the mystery in which we live. Sacred texts originate in the human experience of the holy in our world. Time distances us from the originating experiences and their cultural context and expression. In the last 60 years scholars, especially women scholars, have engaged scripture with new questions that arise out of their experience, out of their social locations around the globe, and out of contemporary worldviews that include evolutionary cosmology, ecological sensitivity, gender equality, democratic governance.

New methods actively engage today's readers in critical and creative dialog with scripture. Ecofeminist, womanist, and other liberation theologies give voice to women, people of color, people in poverty, people once colonized, and all of us in the seminar.

**Required Reading**

Bible (Revised Standard Version, or New International English, or New American)

Barbara E. Bowe, *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality: Touching a Finger to the Flame*.

Lanham, MD: A Sheed and Ward Book, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003.

**Requirements**

1. Read and wrestle with the scripture assignment each week.
2. Read and prepare to discuss assigned reading from *Biblical Foundations*.
3. Read at least two scholar's interpretative work during the fall seminars.
4. Make a critical and creative response to a biblical text in writing, by taking part in a panel presentation, by doing art or creating music.

**Basic Reference Books (available in Wisdom Ways library, Carondelet Center)**

Newsome, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *Women's Bible Commentary*.

London: SPCK, 1992. Has pieces on each book of the bible.

**Instructor:** Joan Mitchell, CSJ, [jmcsj9@aol.com](mailto:jmcsj9@aol.com)

**I. Embracing Promise**

*What ancient insights into the meaning and purpose of human life arise and last in the ancient Middle East? What interpretations limit or liberate us today? What images and rituals persist in awakening us to mystery?*

**September 21, 2009**

**Primal Womb ( Read Genesis 2-9)**

***The images and landscape of ancient theological reflection—rivers, sea, dust, drought, storm, gods, goddesses***

- Ancestors: Tiamat (Sea, Rehab), El, Baal, Asherah, Anat, Cybele
- *Enuma Elish*; *Gilgamesh*; Canaanite myths of Baal, Anat;
- New year rituals (*hieros gamos*)
- **For discussion:** *Biblical Foundations*, “Introduction: Touching a Finger to the Flame,” pp. 1-7. What are the sacred texts in your life? How would you describe your social location?

**Presenter Background Resources:**

- Michael D. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.
- Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973, Chapter 3, “Yahweh and El”
- Riane Eisler. *The Chalice and the Blade*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2000.
- Hiebert, Theodore. “The Human Vocation: Origins and Transformations of Christian Traditions,” *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, Dieter R. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds. Cambridge: Harvard University Press,
- Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery*, “Be This Fish: Creation in Process.” Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008, 45-68.
- Newsome, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *Women’s Bible Commentary*. London: SPCK, 1992, 10-14.
- James B. Pritchard, ed. *The Ancient Near East, Volume I, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.

**September 28, 2009**

**Women of the Promise (Read Genesis 12-22)**

**Who do we see and identify with in a story and why? How does social location affect interpretation?**

- Sarah, Hagar, Abraham (Genesis 12, 15-18, 21-22)
- Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Zilpah, Bilhah: *Rent Tent Phenomenon*
- The Jewish tradition of creating in the seams and silences—midrash, pesher
- **For discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, “What Is Spirituality,” pp. 9-21. What is your definition of spirituality? What characterizes your struggle with the mystery of God?

**Resources:**

- Diamant, Anita. *The Red Tent, A Novel*. New York: Piccado, 1997.
- Exum, J. Cheryl. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993, 94-169. (Sarah)
- Hayes, Diana. *Hagar’s Daughters: Womanist Ways of Being in the World*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.
- Trible, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror, Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, pp. 9-36. (Hagar)
- Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Trible, Phyllis & Letty Russell. *Sarah, Hagar and Their Children*. Minneapolis:

- Fortress Press, 2006.
- Williams, Delores. *Voices in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context*, "The Public of Wisdom-Sophia, Reading the Bible in a Global Context." Boston: Beacon Press, 1998, 105-136.

### October 5, 2009

**Exodus: Way Where There Is No Way** (Read Exodus 3, 14-15, 19-20, 24; Numbers 12-14)

- Moses and Miriam
- I Am Who Am; She Who Is
- Covenant and rituals; feminist Haggadah today
- **For discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, "I Have Heard Their Cry," pp. 55-67. In what way is exodus a paradigm of every faith journey? Where is the holy ground in your life? Whose cries do you hear? How do you respond? How do you resist?

### Resources:

- Broner, E. M. with Naomi Nimrod. *The Women's Haggadah*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993.
- Frankel, Ellen. *The Five Books of Miriam: A Woman's Commentary on the Torah*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996
- Johnson, Elizabeth. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, "One God: She Who Is." New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992, 224-245.
- Plaskow, Judith, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990.

### October 12, 2009

**Women Warriors, Victims, Concubines, Survivors (Judges 4-5, 11, 19; Leviticus 19; Book of Ruth)**

- Deborah), Jephthah's daughter, concubine
- Holiness Code: From the ban (kill all) to treating the alien as oneself
- Friends and Survivors, Ruth and Naomi, *Reading Ruth, Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*
- **For discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, "God Beyond All Names," pp. 23-31. What are your images of God and how have they changed?

Ilan, Tal. *Integrating Women into Second Temple History*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, 127-154.

Kates, Judith A. and Gail Twersky Reimer, eds. *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.

Masenya, Madipoane. "Proverbs 31.10-31 in a South African Context: A Feeding for the

- Liberation of African (Northern Sotho) Women,*” *Semeia: Reading the Bible as Women, Perspectives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997, 55-68.
- Mbuwayesango, Dora Rudo. “Childlessness and Woman-to-Woman Relationships in Genesis and in African Patriarchal Society: Sarah and Hagar from a Zimbabwean Woman’s Perspective (Genesis 16.1-16; 21:8-21). *Semeia: Reading the Bible as Women, Perspectives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997, 27-36.
- Ostriker, Alicia. “Jephthah’s Daughter, A Lament,” *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs, eds. New York: Continuum, 2007, 230-249.
- Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror, Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Yee, Gale. “She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn’: Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority,” *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology*, Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kin, Kвок Pui-Lan, Seung Ai Yang, eds. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007, pp. 45-68.
- Yoo, Yani. “Han-Laden Women: Korean ‘Comfort Women’ and Women in Judges 19-21,” *Semeia: Reading the Bible as Women, Perspectives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997, 37-46.

## II. Royals, Priests, and Prophets

*The institutions of kingdom, priesthood, and prophet arise among the people of Israel and locate Mystery at their heart in the Jerusalem Temple. The Spirit awakens dreams of peace in the midst of war and visions of Spirit-filled leaders under faithless kings.*

**October 19, 2009**

**The Royals and the Prophets That Threaten Them (2 Samuel 11-12; 1 Kings 17-20; Isaiah 2, 9, 11)**

- David, Bathsheba, Nathan, and the fate of ewe lambs (2 Samuel 11-12)
- Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah: the silence of God, interiority (1 Kings 17-20)
- Ahaz and Isaiah: lasting imagery of peace, Isaiah (Isaiah 2, 9,11)
- **For discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, “Royal Power and the Covenant Dream, pp. 69-81. What are the important covenant and promises in your life? What obligations do these give you? How does the bible help you reflect on the right use and wrong abuse of power?
- **For discussion:** “*Theology as Conversation,*” *Women & Theology.* Mary Ann Hinsdale and Phyllis H. Kiaminski, eds. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995, pp. ix-xiii.

## Resources

Exum, J. Cheryl. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives.* Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993, 16-60 (Michal)

**October 26, 2009**

**Rhetoric of Intimacy and Blame, Israel as Bride and Prostitute (Hosea 1-3, 6, 11; Ezekiel 16, Song of Songs)**

- The imagery of the Song of Songs imagines Israel as bride
- Who is prostituted in the imagery of Hosea 1-2 and Ezekiel?
- Women's persistent worship of Asherah in their homes
- Rhetoric that reeks, wrecks, and rivets; *riv* (prophetic indictment)
- **For discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, "Prophetic Spirituality," pp. 82-95." Who are the prophets of our time? How do we recognize them? What are our dominant religious images or the dominant standards to which prophets call us? How do these differ from the biblical images?

**Resources**

Bird, Phyllis. "'To Play the Harlot,' An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor," *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, Peggy L. Day, ed. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1989, 75-94.

O'Connor, Kathleen. Lamentations.

Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

Winn Leith, Mary Joan. "Verse and Reverse: The Transformation of the Woman, Israel, in Hosea 1-3," *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, Peggy L. Day, ed. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1989, 95-108.

**November 2, 2009**

**Eating Bitter Melon, Strangers in Any Land**

- The prophetess Huldah and the finding of Deuteronomy (2 Kings 22)
- Jeremiah, loyal opposition—(Jeremiah 7, 19, 26, 31)
- Apocalypse of Isaiah: City of Chaos, Feast of the Peoples (Isaiah 24-25.10)
- The ruined city as desolate mother (Lamentations 1-3), rituals of Lament
- Exile and Ezekiel experiencing God out of the box (Ezekiel 1, 34)
- *Off the Menu*, Asia American theologians critique persistent colonizing
- **For discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, "Prophetic Spirituality," pp. 95-107." What relationship do you see between religion and politics? Where do you look for prophetic voices of hope in the midst of crisis and despair?

**Resources**

Aquino, Pilar. "Hearing One Another into Speech: Latin American Women," *Women Theology*. Mary Ann Hinsdale and Phyllis H. Kiaminski, eds. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995, pp. ix-xiii.

Ngan, Lai Lang Elizabeth. "Bitter Melon, Bitter Delight: Reading Jeremiah, Reading Me," *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kin, Kвок Pui-Lan, Seung Ai Yang, eds. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007, 163-182.

Brenner, Athalya. "Some Reflections on Violence Against Women and the Image of the Hebrew God, The Prophetic Books Revisited." *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs, eds. New York: Continuum International, 2007, 230-249

**November 9, 2009**

**A Way Blossoms in the Wilderness (Isaiah 40-42, 55; 60, 65-66; Genesis 1-3)**

- Second Isaiah (40-42, 55): people as suffering servant; second exodus
- Third Isaiah (60, 65-66): New Jerusalem, the city as bride
- Priestly Scrapbookers collect traditions to live by
- Priestly Tradition: What does the great creation hymn (Genesis 1) proclaim in its time? Who is the human person (Genesis 1.27)?
- Critiquing Genesis 1-3 today-*ruah*, *adam/adamah*
- **Read for discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, “The Riddle of the World,” 33-43. How do the creation stories speak or not speak to you in your life?

**Resources**

Baker Fletcher, Karen. *Dancing with God, The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006, 64-74.

Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

**III. Experiencing Mystery in Creation**

*Wisdom theology personifies wisdom as a woman, Lady Wisdom, who is with God from the beginning as artisan of creation, who is the spotless mirror of the activity of God.*

**November 16, 2009**

**Religious Identity as an Occupied People (Nehemiah 8, Ezra 9-10, Job 38, Zechariah 9-10)**

- Rebuilding the temple and households of faith (Nehemiah 8), celebrating Sukkott
- Women as source of handing on tradition, divorcing non Jews (Ezra 9-10)
- Theodicy (Deuteronomy 10.1-11) vs. Transcendence (Job 38)
- Zechariah (9-10), birth of apocalyptic
- **Read for discussion:** Read *Biblical Foundations*, “The God of Blessing and Salvation,” 45-54. Which do you experience most powerfully—blessing or saving? How do you life experiences shape your view?
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**Background**

Ilan, Tal. *Integrating Women into Second Temple History*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, 43-82.

Newsome, Carol A. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. See chapter 9.

**November 23**

**Lady Wisdom’s Abundant Household (Proverbs 1-9, 31; Song of Songs)**

- Wisdom Pedagogy and Worldview
- Esther and Judith as heroines

- The ideal wife
- **Read for Discussion:** *Biblical Foundations*, “Wisdom Has Built Herself a House,” 109-120. From whom have you learned wisdom? How have they taught you? What proverbs open you to the mystery of God? Contrast worldly wisdom and wisdom that challenges you to seek mystery?

### **Background**

Johnson, Elizabeth. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse, “Speaking About God from the World’s History.”* New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992, 124-190.

Levinson, Jon D. *Esther*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

Newsome, Carol A. “Woman and the Discourse on Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1-9,” *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, Peggy L. Day, ed. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1989, 142-160.

White, Sidnie Ann. “Esther: A Feminine Model for Jewish Diasporas,” *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, Peggy L. Day, ed. Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1989, 1612-177.

### **November 30**

#### **Wisdom, Making Friends of God and Prophets (Wisdom 7-8, Sirach 23, Maccabees)**

- Wisdom of Solomon 7-8; spotless mirror of the activity of God
- Sirach 24, the artisan, delighting in the world and its people
- Making friends of God and prophets
- Maccabees intimations of immortality in the hands of the Creator
- Israel’s Wisdom (*Hokmah*) and Plato’s Logos
- **Read for Discussion:** *Biblical Foundations*, “Wisdom Has Built Herself a House,” 120-126. How have you experienced God in nature?

### **December 7, 2009**

#### **Writing That Didn’t Make the Canon: Pseudoepigrapha**

- What’s on thinkers’ minds as the world goes Roman? Sibylline Oracles
- Apocalyptic writings: Counting on hope, Apocalypse of Adam
- On Genesis 1-3—Jubilees, Life of Adam and Eve,
- **Reread for Discussion:** *Biblical Foundations*, “God Beyond All Names,” 23-31. What are your 99 names for sacred mystery?

### **Background**

Charlesworth, James H. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments, Vol 1, II*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983.