

CONFRONTING GOD: STORIES OF RESISTANCE AND ACCEPTANCE IN THE BIBLE

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Summer II: 6/23/03-7/11/03: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:30 am- 1:00 pm

This course will explore biblical stories in which the protagonists (the main characters) respond to commands or requests of God. As we examine their responses, which range from disobedience to acceptance to argument, we will also study the various contexts, motivations, and rationales found in these accounts. In doing this, we will attempt to discern how we as interpreters can make sense of the biblical narratives and help us to make our own responses in today's world.

In the course of the class, we will pose several questions. How does God expect us to respond? Can a person answer in more than one way? Why do some heroic figures ask so many questions? Is resistance always wrong? Can God predict our responses? Given the often ambiguous character of language (especially Hebrew and Greek), how do we know the nature of the command or request in the first place? Since God sometimes alters course, apparently changing its mind, does God expect consistency out of the very human beings that God made in its image? What does God expect? How would you describe the give-and-take that often seems to characterize the relationship of humans and God?

Classes will follow a seminar format with substantial discussion. We will study one story at a time and then move on to the next. Class attendance and participation are essential. Students will each do two oral presentations on particular passages. Students will keep an interpretive journal in which they reflect on specific details of the passages we discuss: make comments on individual words, phrases, concepts, historical-critical issues, etc. Grades fall into the following quantities: oral presentations (33%), interpretive journal (33%), and class attendance and participation (33%).

The required text for this class is a study bible (e.g. HarperCollins or Oxford). Recommended is a Torah commentary (e.g. Gunther Plaut, The Torah: A Modern Commentary; Richard Elliot Friedman, Commentary on the Torah).

Class Schedule

June 23

June 25

June 27

June 30

July 2

July 3

July 7

July 9

There will be no class on July 11. We will try to have another class during the term.