

Reading Genesis Again — For the First Time

Bill Zettinger and Bob Capettini

We want to take you on a journey. A journey you will not easily forget. It is a journey through the book of Genesis, experiencing it again for the first time and exploring what it says to us today. Genesis is one of the most important books in the Bible. In fact, it is the second longest book (compared to the Psalms). It also is found in part, in the Quran. These stories speak to us today about history, love, failure, aging, family, and yes God changing His mind.

A number of years ago, Bill Moyers presented his series: "Genesis A Living Conversation" on PBS. Each of its ten programs centered on a lively panel discussion of 7 people plus Bill Moyers. The panels included Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, Baptists, and Zenists. There are clergy, academics, artists, and writers/novelists discussing the selected stories in Genesis. It was "a living discussion" as the panel members related the biblical story to their own experiences of faith and work.

Each of Bill Moyer's sessions starts out with a reading from Genesis by either Mandy Patinkin or Alfre Woodard.

The American public has become increasingly illiterate about the Bible. Genesis, of course, is ideally suited for multicultural dialogue since it is honored by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is a tribute to the captivating character of Genesis that such interest continues. The rich complexity of the accounts in Genesis make for spirited conversation and emotional debate.

One of our goals for this series is to cull out a modern appropriation of the stories for today's personal and social concerns. Sprinkled throughout our series will be questions about what can be learned from Genesis and how one's faith is influenced or not. For example, the rejection of Esau speaks to the "marginalized peoples" of our times. Is the Sarah-Hagar tension a commentary on racism? Joseph's rise over obstacles is a message to young people today. Joseph, like immigrants today, learned how to live in a different cultural pattern, as he was both Hebrew and Egyptian. Another view in the Joseph story also will be considered about the treatment of Potiphar's wife through the ages because she tried to get Joseph to sleep with her. It is interesting that the Quran venerates both Joseph and Zulaykha (Potiphar's wife). What can we learn from these stories today?

We will also leave time for discussion in each class so your own personal views can be shared and experienced.

When: Wednesdays beginning at 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. We will send out the week's assignment on the Monday before Wednesday's class. Don't worry if you don't have time for the readings.

What: All of these sessions will be through Zoom. The first session will be a PowerPoint presentation followed by discussion. The 10 Bill Moyer sessions will be a 50 minute video followed by a discussion.

Notes and Handouts for every session are provided.

If Interested: Please contact Bob Capettini at rcapetti@mail.sdsu.edu to be added to the distribution list. You will be sent the emails which we send out on Mondays and Wednesdays with the invitation and link to the Wednesday Zoom meeting.

The dates:

- 1st Session: Wed. Sept. 7 - Background & Jewish History from the Old Testament --- A PowerPoint presentation
- 2nd Session: Wed. Sept. 14 - In God's Image (The creation stories);
Readings: Genesis chapters 1, 2; Psalm 104
- 3rd Session: Wed. Sept. 21 - Temptation (Eating from the Tree of Knowledge)
Readings: Genesis chapter 3; Milson's Paradise Lost;
other supplements
- 4th Session: Wed. Sept. 28 - The first murder (Cain and Abel)
Readings: Genesis chapter 4; Steinbeck's *East of Eden*
- 5th Session: Wed. Oct. 5 - Apocalypse (Noah and The Flood)
Readings: Genesis Chapters 6-9
- 6th Session: Wed. Oct. 12 - Call and Promise (The Covenant with Abraham)
Readings: Genesis chapters 11-15; other supplements
- 7th Session: Wed. Oct. 19 - A Family Affair (Sarah, Hagar, Isaac and Ismael)
Readings: Genesis chapters 16-18, 20, 21
- 8th Session: Wed. Oct. 26 - The Test (Abraham asked to sacrifice Isaac)
Readings: Genesis chapters 22-23; other supplements
- 9th Session: Wed. Nov. 2 - Blessed Deception (Jacob takes Esau's inheritance) Readings: Genesis chapters 25-28
- 10th Session: Wed. Nov. 9 - God Wrestling (Jacob becomes Israel)
Readings: Genesis chapters 28, 32, 33
- 11th Session: Wed. Nov. 16 - Exile (Joseph's story)
Readings: Genesis chapters 39-47; other supplements