

Method & Meaning – Herzog-Style Tanakh

Course Catalog Description

Herzog College lecturers, such as Rabbi Yoel Bin Nun, Rabbi Yaakov Meidan, Professor Jonathan Grossman, Professor Yael Ziegler and Rav Menachem Leibtag are known around the world for their unique approach to the study of Tanakh. In this course, we will unpack how and why these and other Herzog teachers do what they do. Through analyzing sections of Tanakh, we will zoom out to study their methodology, and learn how Jewish Studies teachers can apply those methods in their classrooms.

Course requirements:

- 1) **Internal unit assignments:** Each module includes multiple interactive exercises to reinforce the unit and check for understanding along the way. Students will receive a grade for completion of these assignments which will be integrated into the final course grade. **(15%)**
- 2) **Submitted exercises:** Several units include longer assignments. The goal of these assignments is to demonstrate ability to apply the methods, particularly with pedagogical considerations. The averaged grade of these assignments will comprise **25%** of the final course grade. **(25%)**
- 3) **Blog Reflections:** Most units will contain a blog reflection expectation. Over the entire course, students will explore and sharpen their understanding of Herzog methods and assumption in order to articulate their own outlook on the teaching of Tanakh. Consistent, considered blog entries will comprise 20% of the final grade. **(20%)**
- 4) **Final assignment:** This final assignment requires students to construct a lesson plan that demonstrates their application of the primary methods in a pedagogically sound way for a specific grade level. Moreover, they will clarify their assumptions and highlight how their use of these methods support the messages they want to convey. This assignment aims to reinforce all that has been learned in the course and will comprise **40%** of the final course grade. **(40%)**

Syllabus

Intro and Goals

How do we teach Tanakh? Why do we teach Tanakh?

These interconnected questions stand at the center of all Tanakh teaching. Yet, they are often ignored or at least not explicitly addressed. This course will address both questions as well as the interaction between them. As this is not a philosophy of education course, all discussion will be anchored in the content of the Tanakh.

In order to address the “how” question, we will analyze a series of content units with the explicit goal of demonstrating various applications of the three broadest and most prevalent methods used in Herzog Tanakh teaching. These three primary methods are:

1. Literary reading
2. Use of realia

3. Big-picture thinking

In demonstrating these methods, we will further attempt to both zoom in and zoom out.

Zooming in means addressing various techniques for implementing each method as well as practical, pedagogical application of these techniques in the classroom.

Zooming out means explaining some of the underlying assumptions of these methods and how teachers can build their own methodology for teaching Tanakh based on these methods and assumptions.

Moreover, we will directly address the types of messages or lessons that come from these methods. In other words, we will directly address how our approach to the “how” question can and should inform our approach to the “why” question.

We will also learn about digital tools that teachers can utilize in the Tanakh classroom.

Each Unit will include:

1. A study of a specific piece of content from Tanakh
2. Focus on a Herzog-based methodology
3. Pedagogical techniques: Applying the methodology in the classroom
4. Making this unit relevant for our students
5. Additional sources and teaching resources

Course Units

Unit 1 – Literary Reading: Reading a Story in the Tanakh in Context

Content

I Shmuel Chapter 1: The story of Chana

Main Idea

This unit will introduce the primary movement of this course from text to values /ideas. We will start with a basic literary technique of analyzing a Tanakh story based on the dialogue in the chapter. We will then introduce the curriculum approach of Understanding by Design and discuss the relationship between big ideas and teaching units. By placing content units into the framework of big ideas, teachers can clarify their own expectations for a unit. What kind of messages are they looking for? What type of material do they consider as the basis for these messages - the text, commentaries, outside sources, etc. What techniques do they consider valid for analyzing the material in order to find these messages? All of these questions relate to the context or perspective that they bring to a story. We will also introduce the particular Herzog big idea of “The Tanakh as our story” and discuss various interpretations of that idea and their implications.

Unit 2 – Literary Reading: Dividing a Unit to Build a Story

Content

Yehoshua Chapter 1: Yehoshua’s leadership

Main Idea

Too often reading the Tanakh focuses on words and sentences. In this unit we will demonstrate the basic method of dividing a chapter/unit of text to understand the relationship between the sections and how they guide us toward an understanding of the entire unit. We will demonstrate the literary basis for the division and discuss the implications of this division for understanding how Yehoshua can enter his role and fill the shoes of Moshe. We will wrap up these two initial units on literary reading and set up our transition to focus on realia.

Unit 3: Realia – Making the Tanakh “Real”

Content

I Melahim Chapter 1: Adoniyahu and Shlomo

Main Idea

While one benefit of Realia is that it can provide insights into specific stories in the Tanakh, the primary value of using Realia is that it can reframe our reading of the Tanakh from fantastical to actual. Often, our students are confused enough about the stories of the Tanakh that they don't question the logic or reality of the stories. Anything can happen in the Tanakh, which means nothing really happened. By anchoring the stories in time and place we can break out of that mode and encourage students to bring real expectations to their reading of the Tanakh. Those expectations are necessary to allow for surprise and understanding.

Using the maps function on tanakh.com alongside Google maps, we will demonstrate the proximity of עין רוגל and the גיחון, and how that helps us understand the story of this chapter.

Zoom Meeting

Unit 4: Realia – The Land of Israel in the Tanakh

Content:

Shoftim Chapters 4-5: Barak's Battle (and Devorah's Song)

Main Idea

Continuing our use of realia, this unit will focus on the use of maps to provide geographical context for the stories of the Tanakh. Moving beyond the local example from the previous unit, we will demonstrate how understanding the geography and topography of the land supplements our understanding of the stories and values in the Tanakh. We will also relate to the Zionist value of the study of Tanakh.

Unit 5: Big Picture – Understanding the Structure of a Book

Content

Shoftim 2: The cycle of the Shoftim

Main Point

Using the description of the cycle of the judges as described in chapter 2, we will demonstrate the idea of understanding a book of the Tanakh. How does each book explicitly and implicitly set up expectations for how the story of the book will unfold? How do we train our students to be surprised by noticing how expectations are broken? We will apply this technique on an entire book to unpack the larger method of big picture thinking and how it applies to our study of the Tanakh.

Unit 6: Big Picture – Understanding Patterns in a Book

Content

Yehoshua Ch. 22: Reuven and Gad

Main Point

Building off the previous unit, this unit will demonstrate a more complex unpacking of the bigger picture of a book in Tanakh. By examining the story of the 2 ½ tribes at the end of the book and connecting it to earlier mentions of these tribes, we will highlight how these stories shed light on the overall themes of the entire book. We will relate this example back to our discussion of Understanding by Design and attempt to clarify this aspect of big picture thinking.

Unit 7: Literary Reading – *Milah Manchah*

Content

II Shmuel Chapter 7: David and the mikdash

Main Point

Use of a *milah manchah* is a powerful but occasionally misapplied tool for analyzing the Tanakh. We will demonstrate a primary example of *milah manchah* and explain how it can be used to capture the main message of a section – namely, the chapter in which David asks to build the temple. We will also introduce some digital tools that support *milah manchah* analysis and relate briefly to the growing field of digital humanities and how it can be used in the classroom.

Zoom Meeting

Unit 8: Realia – Archaeology and Outside Sources

Content

II Melachim Chapters 18-19, II Divrei Hayamim 32: Sancherev's attack on Yehuda

Main Point

Archaeological artifacts (and other historical sources) can be used to supplement our understanding of the stories in the Tanakh. They also more directly convey the sense that the stories are real. In this unit we will relate to the conflict between Sancherev and Yehuda as described in the Tanakh in relation to how it is described in the archeological evidence. We will use this unit to relate to the nature of the Tanakh as a religious and historical document.

Unit 9: Big Picture – Intertextuality: Leadership/Monarchy from Devarim through Neviim Rishonim

Content

I Melachim Chapters 10-11: Shlomo's sins

Main Point

In this final unit we will demonstrate a comprehensive reading of the section that describes Shlomo's sins. We will place this section within the context of the book of Melachim. But we will also relate to a broader intertextual reading by relating to description of the king's responsibility from the book of

Devarim as well as a prophecy of Yishayahu. Moreover, we will use this unit to provide a bird's eye view of Neviim Rishonim and address how that broadest perspective gives us insight into primary issues that run through the Tanakh, in particular the challenges of religious and political leadership.

This section will directly relate back to the opening unit and the approach that views the Tanakh as the story of the Jewish people. It will serve as a capstone for the course by touching on many of the methods and ideas related to in earlier units.

Bibliography