

The Five Scrolls

Exploring five controversial books in the Hebrew Bible

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| Course # | 21SFS |
| Format: | Seminar |
| Moderator: | Gerald Goldman |
| Date and Time: | Tuesday, 1:30-3:30 PM 8 weeks, starting February 23 |
| Location: | ONLINE, via Zoom |
| Maximum number of participants: | 13 |
| Auditors accepted: | Yes, up to 2 |

Purpose: Moderator and participants will discuss the historical background, political significance, post-exilic narrative style, and poetical forms of these five unusual books.

Description: When the biblical canon was near completion by the rabbis of the second century, several scrolls were hotly debated. These scrolls fell outside the boundaries of the traditional biblical view; they seemed to be secular, even erotic. Two of the books, Song of Songs and Lamentations, are books of poetry, one romantic and the other elegiac. The books of Ruth and Esther tell stories from the countryside and the palace in which women are the heroines. Ecclesiastes, the fifth book, presents a short philosophical essay asking what we can know of life's purposes and how best to live our lives.

Role of participants: Participants will be required to read in advance each of these books with the aid of commentaries found online, and to actively participate in discussions led by the moderator. Discussion topics will include the various literary styles, forms, and social and political influences of the time. Reports will not be required of the participants.

Resources: Any edition of the Bible which includes the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) will do.

About the Moderator: The moderator is a retired rabbi who has taught this material over many years.