

Stories of the Hebrew Bible

Lesson 1: What is the Hebrew Bible?

1.24.2021

Objectives: Build class covenant and introduce key Hebrew Bible terms and concepts.

Materials: Teachers should download lesson plan and attachments onto their desktop.

Time allotment: Suggested for 60 minute online class.

1. Zoom Welcome (as youth arrive into the breakout classroom)

- Teachers and youth are expected to log on to zoom at 11:15am (15 min before class begins at 11:30am) so that everyone can be organized into correct breakout classrooms. We want to make sure there is an attentive adult in each breakout classroom with youth.
- Greet youth and ask everyone to correct their display name as needed. Ask everyone to select “gallery view” to see everyone else.
- Staff will take attendance.

2. Zoom Icebreaker: I Spy (5 minutes, begin while waiting for everyone to arrive)

Ask one youth to be the “spy.” The “spy” secretly picks an object in someone’s zoom background and says: “I spy...” and gives a hint (e.g. something blue). Everyone else tries to guess what the object is and in which zoom screen it is located. The person who guesses correctly becomes the “spy” and the game repeats as time allows.

Teachers can stage fun objects in their zoom background!

3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: *“We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”*

Teacher reads: (from Rachel Naomi Remen, author and teacher of integrative medicine.)

“The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention... A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.”

4. Brief Check-in (10 minutes)

Begin a simple ritual for weekly check-in so that everyone’s voice is heard (e.g. sharing a joy or sorrow so that everyone feels present in class).

5. Community Time: Getting to know each other (15 minutes)

Take the time to get to know one another. In the manner of the television show *Inside the Actors Studio*, each youth will be interviewed by a teacher and respond to as many questions as possible within 60 seconds. A second teacher will keep time. Teachers get interviewed, too!

Read aloud from lesson attachment 1a (Interview Questions). Don't screen share so youth can see everyone.

6. Important Agreements (15 minutes)

Extend community sharing to discuss what community practices/agreements will help "learning together." Because this class is not just about learning new information but learning about ourselves, how do we create a community where our best selves can emerge?

Screen share lesson attachment 1b (Class Agreements). Write down the agreements for everyone to see. **Save** the document to draw upon as needed in the future.

***Question to consider:** The agreement to "assume positive intentions" and goodwill is vital for the work of racial justice and multiculturalism. But does that mean what others say/do out of good intentions will never hurt us?

- Are positive intentions ("I didn't mean to...") protection from all harm?
- Can we apply the same principle of "assuming positive intentions" when honest, critical feedback is given? (I.e. assuming critical feedback is offered not to shame us but to request change in behavior or language; assuming best intent while honoring impact and accepting accountability as an invitation.)
- What do you think about Unity Church shifting from using the language of "safe space" to "brave space"? Does one help achieve the other? Which one?

***Important agreement for all Junior High youth:** youth (and teachers) are asked to attend Unity worship every Sunday morning at 10:00am, ideally with their families.

***Important agreement for virtual learning:** youth (and teachers) are asked to use as much interactive technology as possible to be fully present (e.g. have video on, unmute to speak, use the chat when prompted).

7. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (15 minutes)

Questions for Discussion (invite youth to share anything they may already know about the Hebrew Bible):

- What is the Hebrew Bible (or Hebrew Scriptures)?

The Hebrew Bible or Tanakh (tə-nach) is the canonical collection of Jewish texts, composed mainly in the language of Biblical Hebrew or some in Biblical Aramaic. This collection is known in the Christian tradition as the Old or Older Testament, consists of 24 books and was written at some time between 700 and 450 B.C.E. (Before Common Era). Many of these stories, mainly those pertaining to Adam, Abraham, and Moses along with the Psalms are found in the Qur'an as well.

- Who were the Hebrews and where did they live?

Screen share lesson attachment 1c (Maps of Israel), rotate map horizontally.

The Hebrews, also known as the Israelites or the Children of Israel, were the descendants of Jacob who was the grandson of Abraham. Both men's lives are chronicled in the Hebrew Bible. Today, the term can refer to anyone who follows the Jewish faith. The Hebrews lived in what is modern Israel and their borders stretched into modern Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

- What's the big deal about believing in one God?

*The concept of one God (**monotheism**) was revolutionary (!) and largely did not exist until put forward in the Hebrew Bible. Some popular beliefs at the time included **henotheism** – belief in one god while recognizing the existence of other gods – and **polytheism** – the belief in many gods.*

- Why learn about these stories from the Hebrew Scriptures?

- *Values and Ethics: These enduring stories often address very human problems and relationships, drawing people and communities again and again to reflect on our own perceptions, relationships, and values that shape our human journeys.*

- *Cultural Significance: Even with modern cultural diversity, our U.S. culture is still derived from a predominantly Judeo-Christian ethic. By becoming more familiar with these stories, we can better understand our heritage and worldview. In fact, popular culture is full of references to the Hebrew Bible. Next class we will play a trivia game that points this out!*

8. Announcement: Next Sunday, there is no RE class because of the second UU Families Covenanting Workshop.

9. Extinguish the chalice, saying together: “May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”

10. Leave zoom breakout classroom: wait until all youth have left, click “Leave” then “Leave Meeting.”