

Overview of Rabbi Finley's Teachings for 6 Oct 2018 - Shabbat Breisheet

Morning Study Session

Avivah Zornberg begins her masterful study *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis*, with an introduction worth studying in its own right. There are many ways to study the Bible – for example as history (which rarely works well) or as literature (which usually works well). Some study the Bible only to debunk it; others study the Bible to defend it. Zornberg does none of these things.

Zornberg approaches the Bible through many lenses. First, the lens of the tradition. For one learned in Rabbinic literature, the Bible is received as a multilayered and multivalent text. The generations of commentators have created a territory of brilliance and darkness that we traverse as we study the Bible. Zornberg brings alive this Rabbinic lens, from the comments of Rashi to the insight of Hasidic masters.

Zornberg also studies the Bible with psychoanalytic literature and literary criticism in hand, revealing contours and depths hard to see otherwise.

Zornberg cares less to explain the Bible than to make the Bible strange – so strange that we must look within and be prepared to be astonished.

For the morning session, I want to teach Zornberg's introduction to her book on Genesis, in which she teaches us how to read the Bible.

Torah Service Study

For our study during the Torah service, I want to focus on the narrative of Earthman and Life Force and a bit about their progeny, Creation and Breath (more commonly known as Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel). This narrative provides us with a good example of how to and how not to read the Bible. The story of the Garden of Eden sets up the great narrative arc of this holy text.

Lunch then Learn

For our lunch then learn, we will go back to Zornberg's introduction, and read some sections together. If you have a copy of Zornberg's book, please bring it!