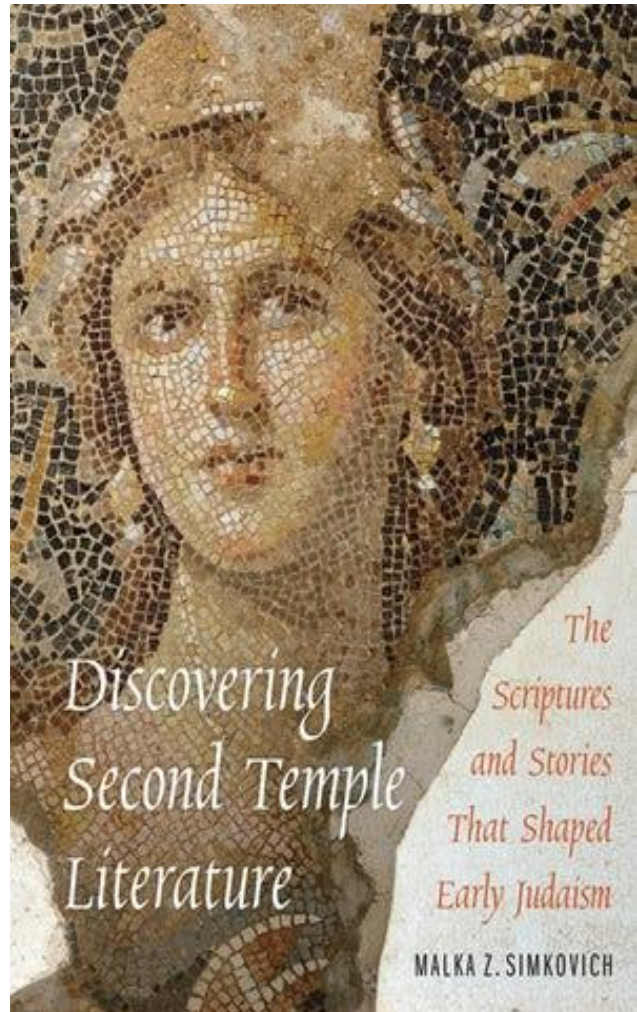


Rachel Slutsky

JPS Teacher's Guide

Malka Simkovich's *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Scriptures and Stories That Shaped Early Judaism*

This curriculum is intended to be used by educators in conjunction with other materials for a robust course on Second Temple scriptures. In order to make the curriculum most user-friendly, I have envisioned the intended audience to range from that of college freshman to adult education students. Therefore, this syllabus is designed for a rigorous course focused on Second Temple texts, with both an historical as well as literary focus. Each chapter, therefore, includes primary source material excerpted from *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture* (ed. By Louis Feldman, James Kugel, and Lawrence Schiffman), as well as a number of secondary texts that elucidate both the material, as well as the state of scholarship on the given topic. Teachers can adjust according to their given audience accordingly. The syllabus below, however, is designed for a semester-long, 13-session course. I have often provided more material than can be reasonably covered in a single class session, and so I ask that educators using this curriculum approach it with a selective eye, using some but not other materials, and choosing which questions to assign for homework, discussion, or mere consideration.



Introduction: *Discovering Second Temple Literature* is intended to educate readers about the vast writings produced in the Second Temple period (530 BCE-70 CE) by Jews in Israel, Egypt, and (ancient) Syria. While many of these writings are not included in the contemporary Jewish canon, Malka Simkovich makes clear that their status as “Scripture,” or holy works, was accepted at the time of composition. Understanding the texts these prolific Jews produced is crucial for those

who seek to understand Jewish history and literature, as these texts provide multiple windows into ancient Jewish society and the issues that were relevant to it. Modern readers can also gain an appreciation for an array of Jewish writings that are little known among contemporary Jews.

## Session 1

### Chapter 1: The Cairo Genizah

Overview: This chapter tells the exciting story of Solomon Schechter's unlikely rediscovery of the Cairo Genizah. Simkovich describes the various findings in the genizah, as well as their importance to Schechter. Special attention is given to Ben Sira.

Readings:

Simkovich, pp.3-20

Cyrus Adler, "Solomon Schechter: A Biographical Sketch" (<http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/pdf/23600944.pdf?refreqid=search%3Acfa1d4b262d6f202fb92e363c3dbb59a>) (1917), pp. 25-32, 40-42.

Ben Sira, chapter 2, [http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/pdf/ot/wisdom\\_of\\_sirach.pdf](http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/pdf/ot/wisdom_of_sirach.pdf), pp. 2-3.

Review/Discussion/Homework Questions:

- 1) Who was Solomon Schechter? What was his conviction about the writing of Ben Sira, and how did his Genizah discoveries confirm this conviction?
- 2) What difference did it make to Schechter that *Ben Sira* might be written in Hebrew, not Greek?
- 3) Simkovich tries to dispel the notion that Judaism of the Second Temple period is characterized by "obsessive legalism." What obsessive legalism might scholars be alluding to when discussing this? How does Simkovich attempt to prove them wrong?
- 4) What are palimpsests, and why are they important for researchers to know about?
- 5) What was Origen's *Hexapla*, and what does it teach us about the uniformity of Scripture in the Second Temple period?
- 6) What is the traditional use of a *genizah*, and how does the Cairo genizah both match, and deviate, from this traditional use? What does this tell us about the Cairo community's understanding of the genizah's function in the Middle Ages?
- 7) Today: The story of the Scottish sisters reflects a phenomenon that continues to this day: the trade in antiques among private collectors, sometimes without ever loaning such objects to museums, for deeper study and proper preservation. Do you think private ownership of such items is justifiable? Why or why not?

## Session 2

### Chapter 2: Manuscripts and Monasteries

Overview: This chapter discusses the preservation and continued copying of ancient manuscripts in the monasteries of the Mediterranean and Ethiopia. Simkovich explores the natures

of the texts that have been preserved, and discusses the reasons why these Jewish writings have been well preserved by Christians, and abandoned by Jews. Simkovich also raises the question of ethics in regards to owning, “borrowing,” or possibly stealing these manuscripts, as many have done.

Readings:

Simkovich, pp.21-40

<https://sites.google.com/site/toolsforstudyingthehebrewbible/other-critical-editions> (Take a look to see what critical editions include that traditional Bibles do not!)

*Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, “The Masoretic Text,” pp. 49-56

Ibid, p. 65.

Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2012), chapter 1, pp. 1-22.

Review Questions:

- 1) What is a critical edition of a text, and why are critical editions important?
- 2) Simkovich points out the invention of the *codex*, or the bound book, as crucial for the concept of a biblical *canon*. What is a “canon,” and how did the transition from scrolls to codices influence the development of biblical canons?
- 3) Monasteries, such as St. Catherine’s in the Mediterranean, are important sites of ancient Jewish manuscripts. Why is this? And, what does it mean that Jewish institutions (e.g., synagogues) have not housed these materials like Christian places have?
- 4) I Enoch discusses a mysterious figure called the Son of Man. Who might this refer to according to Jewish tradition? Who might this refer to according to Christian tradition? How does the latter explain I Enoch’s preservation among many Christian groups?
- 5) Simkovich discusses the discovery of *Codex Sinaiticus*. What is this codex’s significance for scholars of the Bible?
- 6) Today: What might be some of the problematic assumptions underlying claims of monasteries’ mistreatment of ancient documents? Can we ever justify taking ancient objects or manuscripts that are not our own? If so, how? If not, why?

## Session 3

### Chapter 3: The Dead Sea Scrolls

In this chapter, Simkovich retells the story of the Dead Sea Scrolls' discovery and arduous process of their publication. She discusses the contents of the scrolls and their value in understanding the Second Temple period.

#### Readings:

Simkovich, pp.41-55

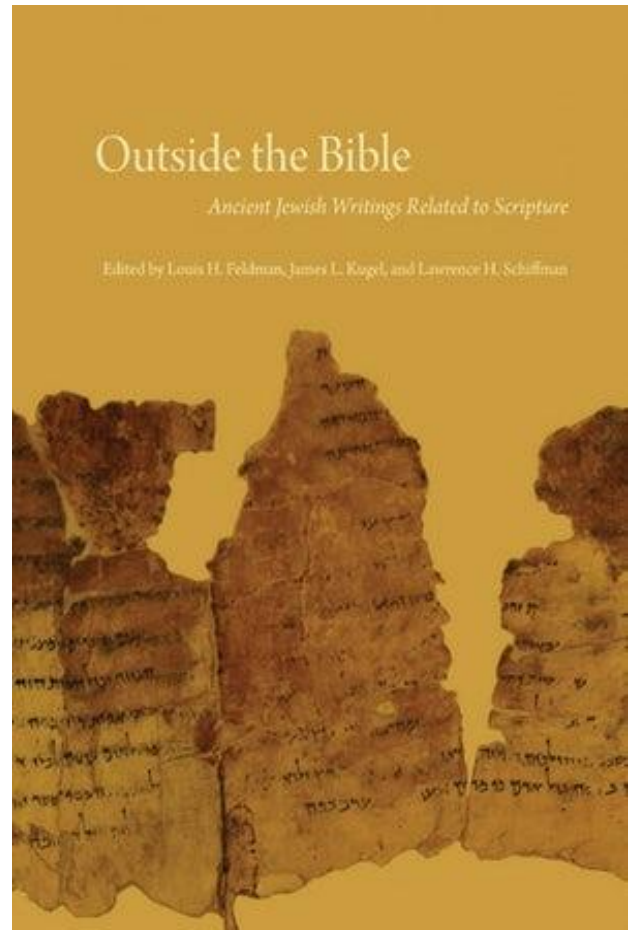
*OTB*, "The Dead Sea Scrolls," pp. 24-30

The different genres of text found at Qumran:

<http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/learn-about-the-scrolls/scrolls-content>.

#### Review Questions:

- 1) What might we imply about the authority Jews felt towards the scrolls found at Qumran, if ancient duplicates were not found anywhere else?
- 2) One of the most disconcerting things for Jews reading Second Temple texts are the occasional passages that clearly allude to Jesus. How does Simkovich explain the presence of such allusions?
- 3) Emmanuel Tov was enormously influential in bringing the Dead Sea Scrolls to publication. Why was it important for them to be published? In other words, what is the significance of the Scrolls for students of the Bible?
- 4) Today: One of the things Simkovich emphasizes is the bureaucracy and interpersonal problems that prevented a speedy publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This raises the notion that scholars owe something to a broader community; that, to know of a text and not allow others to gain access is somehow problematic. Do you believe this is problematic, and if so, how? If not, why?



## Session 4

### Chapter 4: Jerusalem: 333 BCE-135 CE

This chapter focuses on the historical context in which many Second Temple texts were composed. Focusing on Jerusalem in the time of Greek conquest through the Hasmonean period, Simkovich details what life was like in Jerusalem during this time of semi-autonomous rule.

Readings:

Simkovich, pp.59-89

*The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered*, “Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis,” pp. 1-22

“Early Christian Chiliasm,” <http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/pdf/1509423.pdf?refreqid=search%3A32894a3b32e3f85ee774368511e54571> (focus especially on pp. 305-307).

Review Questions:

- 1) This chapter tells an overview of ancient Jewish history from the time of David through the revolt of Bar Kochba. Please create a timeline of the main events, making sure that there is a logical progression from monarchy to exile to restoration of power in Jerusalem, and finally to the Temple’s destruction and the Bar Kochba revolt.
- 2) Why did many Jews, such as the Pharisees, oppose the Bar Kochba revolt? Why did Rabbi Akiva support it?
- 3) What do the names “bar Kochba” and “bar Kosiba” each mean, and which name would have been used by his supporters? Which by his detractors, and why?
- 4) What type of autonomy did the Jews have in Israel during the Hasmonean period? How might one describe the political situation?
- 5) Today: The notion of submitting to the enemy, as the Pharisees preferred during the Bar Kokhba revolt, seems foreign to the modern Jewish state. Thinking about those ancient circumstances in the modern era, is there any situation in which you might agree with the Pharisees and prefer to submit to the enemy? Why do you think they did so, and would that be a compelling reason for you today?

## Session 5

### Chapter 5: Alexandria: 200 BCE-118 CE

This chapter continues to provide crucial historical background for understanding the composition of Second Temple texts. However, Simkovich focuses here on the community living in Alexandria, a Hellenized Egyptian city during the height of the Greek Empire. Discussing the anomaly of the Temple at Elephantine, along with the composition of the Septuagint, Simkovich reveals an extraordinary Jewish community that unfortunately comes to a bad end.

Readings:

Simkovich, pp.91-113

*OTB*, “The Septuagint,” pp. 1-6; “1 Samuel 2,” pp. 51-54; “Additions to Esther,” pp. 97-110.

*Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, “Greek Septuagint,” pp. 66-74.

Lester Grabbe, “Sanhedrin, Sanhedriyyot, or Mere Invention” (2008), <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/content/journals/10.1163/156851507x193081>

### Review Questions:

- 1) What famous and important translation was produced in Alexandria, and why is it so very important for students of the Bible today?
- 2) How should one understand the temple Jews build at Elephantine: as a sign of rebellion and separation from Jerusalem and its temple, or as an indication that some Jews simply thought having more than one temple was an acceptable thing to have? Explain your reasoning.
- 3) Simkovich briefly mentions the Greek notion of a *gerousia*, and the fact that the Jewish *gerousia* was, essentially, the famous Sanhedrin. So what exactly is the *gerousia*, and how did the Sanhedrin function in this role?
- 4) Today: The Greek Septuagint was considered possibly holy by many ancient Jews; in fact, the Talmud says that one may only write a Torah in Hebrew *or* Greek! The current *lingua franca* of the West is now English; would you consider an English translation of the Hebrew Bible of special status, even “holy”? What are the consequences of considering Hebrew the exclusively holy tongue? What are the consequences of broadening that category to include other languages?

## Session 6

### Chapter 6: Antioch

Continuing to describe the historical context in which Second Temple texts were composed, Simkovich now turns to Antioch, a distinctly Greek city that was home to a thriving Jewish population. Simkovich discusses the question of Jewish citizenship, and argues for a more nuanced understanding of Jewish rights outside of that of citizenship.

### Readings:

Simkovich, pp.115-125

Aryeh Kasher, “The Rights of Jews in Antioch on the Orontes” (1982), <http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/pdf/3622557.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A28985a0fb15499e82e5013d66dd51968>.

### Review Questions:

- 1) What were some of the main tensions between the Jews and the Gentiles in Antioch?
- 2) What rights did Jews have at the time? Were Jews able to become citizens? Explain.
- 3) Today: The modern era, most famously beginning with the French revolution, allowed Jews to become citizens of France. Today, citizenship in a “foreign” (i.e., non-Jewish) country (at least in the West) is an assumed right of any native, regardless of religion. Why is citizenship so highly valued, from ancient times to the present? What is actually so important about it?

## Session 7

### Chapter 7: The Wisdom Seekers

Simkovich opens this chapter with a discussion of the relationship between Hellenism and Judaism in Alexandria, arguing that one could indeed remain a pious Jew while absorbing many things from Hellenistic culture. She then goes on to discuss the most famous Jewish commentator from Alexandria, Philo, as well as the Letter of Aristeas.

#### Readings:

Simkovich, pp.129-143

*OTB*, “The Letter of Aristeas,” pp. 2711-2768; “The Writings of Philo,” pp. 11-17; “On the Life of Moses,” pp. 959-988.

#### Review Questions:

- 1) This chapter brings up one of the most controversial subjects in Second Temple history: What was the relationship between Hellenism and Judaism. How does Simkovich reframe the discussion from one about mutually exclusive categories?
- 2) What is the Letter of Aristeas? Who wrote it and where, and what does its function seem to be?
- 3) Who was Philo? Where did he come from? Is it likely that he knew Hebrew? Why or why not?
- 4) What type of writing did Philo produce? What type of biblical commentary did he write?
- 5) Today: When thinking about the notion of being a Jew but also a part of Greek culture, what kind of analogy might we have today, e.g., between “American” and “Jewish”? What are the dynamics of this relationship or identity, and are they problematic? Why or why not?

## Session 8

### Chapter 8: The Sectarians

In this chapter, Simkovich reconsiders the notion of sectarianism in light of the fact that data indicates most Jews of the time did not belong to the main sects we now discuss: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Instead, Simkovich defines each of these groups but emphasizes the limits on our understanding of the majority of ancient Jewry.

#### Readings:

Simkovich, pp.145-172

*OTB*, “Rule of the Community,” pp. 2923-2974; “Damascus Document,” pp. 2975-3035.

Shaye Cohen, “The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism,”

<http://www.jstor.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/pdf/23507609.pdf?refreqid=search%3Ad4e2458877f89885b72362e600d48bb2>.

### Review Questions:

- 1) Who are the Pharisees? Who might we say are their intellectual descendents in the post-Destruction period? Explain.
- 2) Who does Simkovich (among others) posit the Essenes to be?
- 3) What were some of the characteristics of the Essene community?
- 4) Many scholars see the abundance of Jewish groups, or “sects,” like the Pharisees, Sadducees, Sicarii, Zealots, Therapeutae, and Essenes as evidence for rampant “sectarianism” at the core of Second Temple Jewish society. How does Simkovich approach the question of sectarianism, and what alternative understanding does she propose?
- 5) Today: If perhaps the Jews of the Second Temple period did not view themselves, on the whole, as a group of exclusive sects, why did the notion of sectarianism become so popular in Jewish historiography on that period? What might that say about *us*, as contemporary people? As Jews? As non-Jew?

### Session 9

#### Chapter 9: Interpreters of Israelite History

Here, Simkovich discusses a number of biblical texts that retell Israelite history, including the book of Chronicles, Jubilees, and the Psalms of Solomon. She discusses the issues on which each book’s author focuses, and the perspectives that each text is guided by.

### Readings:

Simkovich, pp.173-187

*OTB*, “Jubilees,” pp. 272-465 (Focus on Kugel’s introduction and the first four chapters of *Jubilees*); “Psalms of Solomon,” pp. 1903-1923

### Review Questions:

- 1) The book of *Jubilees* retells most of Genesis and half of Exodus. What are some of the differences between *Jubilees* and the actual text of Genesis/Exodus?
- 2) Is *Jubilees* trying to supplant the Torah and replace Genesis and Exodus? If not, what is its objective?
- 3) Is *Jubilees* canonical for anyone today? If so, for whom?
- 4) The role of the scribe becomes increasingly important throughout the Jewish exile. After the book of *Chronicles* (chronologically speaking), who is the first Jewish scribe we encounter, and what does his role seem to be?
- 5) Why might the role of the scribe have become so important at this time?
- 6) What is the Book of Chronicles, and why is it an important text to Jews?
- 7) What are the Psalms of Solomon?



- 8) Today: The books Simkovich discusses in this chapter are still little known and certainly not popular reads in the Jewish, or for that matter, non-Jewish community. Is this a problem? Should these books have a larger, or more vibrant circulation? Why or why not? And if so, what do you envision such a phenomenon to look like?

### **Chapter 10: Josephus Flavius**

In this chapter, Simkovich discusses one of the most crucial sources of information we have on the Second Temple period: Josephus. Describing his controversial role among his fellow Jews and his questionable relationship with the Roman government, Simkovich also emphasizes the necessity of consulting Josephus if one wants to understand this historical period.

Readings:

Simkovich, pp.189-199

*OTB*, “Josephus and His Writings,” pp. 18-23; “Preface to Jewish Antiquities,” pp. 1137-1141.

Josephus, *Biblical Antiquities* Book II, ch. 9, 1-4.

Louis Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses,” 285-328.

Desmond Seward, *Jerusalem’s Traitor*, 1-18, 83-92.

Tessa Rajak, *Josephus*, 185-222.

Review Questions:

- 1) Who was Josephus? Why might one argue that he is extremely valuable to the Jewish people?
- 2) Why might one argue that Josephus was a terrible traitor of the Jewish people?
- 3) What was Josephus’ relationship to the Roman Empire? Describe with examples.
- 4) What are three major texts that Josephus composed, and what is each one about?
- 5) Describe the way Josephus “comments” or writes about the Bible in *Biblical Antiquities*. What strategies does he use?
- 6) Do you think, judging both by *The Jewish War* and *Biblical Antiquities*, that Josephus is correctly understood to be an historian? Is he something else? Give evidence to support your opinion.
- 7) Today: Josephus is a paradigmatic example of an historian (perhaps an exaggerated form): a subjective, biased human providing information on the past for future readers. Do you have different expectations for contemporary writers of history? What are your expectations for the writer of history? What level of “objectivity” can be expected?

### **Chapter 11: The Codified Bible**

In this chapter, Simkovich discusses some of the material requirements involved in creating a codified Bible, a discreet canon containing only particular texts. Explaining the revolutionary consequences of the codex, Simkovich argues that the pre-codex period of the Second Temple

could not have had the same discrete understanding of codification that we have today, but must rather have had a more fluid attitude toward the definition of “scripture.”

Readings:

Simkovich, pp.203-220

Van der Kooij, A. “The Canonization of Ancient Books Kept in the Temple of Jerusalem,” in *Canonization and Decanonization*, Boston: Brill, 1998) 17-40.

McDonald, Lee Martin. Ch. 10, “Texts Reflecting an Emerging Biblical Canon,” in *The Formation of the Biblical Canon* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017) 341-371.

Review Questions:

- 1) What is a canon? What does this word mean (in Greek) and how might that meaning be applied to our understanding of the term?
- 2) What is “codification” and how does ancient material culture and scroll technology play a role in this phenomenon?
- 3) How might we identify the emergence of a biblical canon, according to McDonald? What evidence does he provide, and how convincing do you find it? Why
- 4) What is the relationship between codification and canonization?
- 5) How might we as modern readers conceive of a scripture-based Judaism at a time when “Scripture” was more fluid than it is today?
- 6) Today: Give an example of another “canon” you’ve encountered; this could be another collection of literary texts, but it could also be something else entirely. Is there a “canon” of certain household items? Of clothing? An educational canon?

**Session 12:**

### **Chapter 12: Rewriting the Bible**

In this chapter, Simkovich addresses the question of the genre of “rewritten Bible,” a modern category for an ancient phenomenon. She discusses the different forms that “rewritten” Bible stories took, including texts like Jubilees, or interpretive retellings like Josephus’ *Biblical Antiquities*.

Readings:

Simkovich, pp.221-250

*OTB*, “The Genesis Apocryphon,” pp.237-262; “Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife,” pp.1163-1168; “Jubilees,” pp.272-469.

Becker, Michael. “Abraham in the Genesis Apocryphon” in *Rewritten Biblical Figures* (ed. Erkki Koskenniemi and Pekka Lindqvist, Winnona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 89-108.

Koskenniemi, Erkki. “Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife (Gen 39:6b-20): A Retold Story Used in Early Jewish Ethical Instruction,” in *Rewritten Biblical Figures* (ed. Erkki Koskenniemi and Pekka Lindqvist, Winnona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 131-147.

### Review Questions:

- 1) How might we understand the motivation for expanding on the stories of great biblical figures, such as Abraham and Joseph? Why expand their narratives?
- 2) What sort of ethical teachings were derived from the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife?
- 3) What is the focus of Genesis Apocryphon and what does it add to our understanding of the biblical Abraham?
- 4) What is the range of meaning that "rewritten Bible" can take?
- 5) What might be the objectives of Josephus' *Biblical Antiquities*? Who is he writing this book for, and why?
- 6) Today: Consider that you are a "rewriter" of the Bible. What texts might you want to expand upon? What details or narratives might you change, and why? Write your own mini-expansion on a biblical text!

### Session 13:

#### Chapter 13: The Expanded Bible

In this chapter, Simkovich discusses the exciting stories that are not included in the Hebrew Bible, and which also fail to qualify as retelling of biblical stories. Instead, these stories, such as that of *Joseph and Aseneth*, develop new stories that grow out of biblical ones.

#### Readings:

Simkovich, pp.251-269

*OTB*, "Joseph and Aseneth," pp. 2525-2589; "1 Enoch," pp. 1359-1452.

Reed, Annette Yoshiko. Chapter 3, "Primeval History and the Problem of Evil: Genesis, the *Book of the Watchers*, and the Fallen Angels in Pre-Rabbinic Judaism," in *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84-121.

Bernstein, Moshe J. "Angels at the Aqedah: A Study in the Development of a Midrashic Motif," *DSD* 7:3 (2000) 263-291.

### Review Questions:

- 1) What is a "fallen angel" in ancient Jewish mythos?
- 2) How might we characterize the role of angels in the *Book of Jubilees*? How do they function in the narrative's religious rhetoric?
- 3) How might the role of *Jubilees*' angels differ from those of the Hebrew Bible?
- 4) How does Bernstein characterize the "accusing angel" of Job, and how does this figure relate to the *Aqedah*?
- 5) What makes Mastema unique in comparison to the angel/Satan of Job?

- 6) Give two examples of the ways in which angels figure into rabbinic midrash; how might these angels complement, and differ from, the angels of *Jubilees*?
- 7) What is the relationship between Judith and Hannukah?
- 8) What are the origins and inspirations for the character of Judith?
- 9) Today: Think about the possible *motivations* for these writers. What was it that they wanted to understand about the biblical figures? What aspects of their lives did they want to emphasize or minimize, and why? Pick your own biblical figure and try to similarly explore their characters, perhaps including angels and demons as part of their narratives!