Module 1 - New American Israel

- **Frame**: Welcome to the first class! The goal of this course is to familiarize yourself with how Tanakh [the Hebrew Bible] has impacted the history and politics of the United States and consider ways to bring this impact into the classroom. At the intersection between *parshanut*, political science, history, literature, as well as some of contemporary society's most pressing social challenges, from antisemitism to the Israel-America relationship to Black-Jewish dynamics, this course will offer varied and (hopefully) rich material for you to utilize in your specific educational context. We will begin by asking you to read the opening pages of the book Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik and I, along with two colleagues, published through Yeshiva University's Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought. It will introduce you to how historically, and in what ways, socially and politically, Tanakh has shaped how the US was founded and formed.
- **Reading**: Intro to *Proclaim Liberty throughout the Land: The Hebrew Bible in the United States* (20 pages)

- **Discussion Questions**:

1. The introduction to *Proclaim Liberty* describes the Hebrew Bible as once possessing an "exalted" status in American public life, yet the majority of Americans today have never read the Hebrew Bible. Why do you think the Hebrew Bible has lost luster in the American public consciousness? What pedagogical purpose might there be in educating students about the impactful role Tanakh has played in American history? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

2. *Proclaim Liberty*, and this course more broadly, suggest an interdisciplinary approach to teaching the Tanakh's impact on America. Consider your field of education and your pedagogical background. Describe two ways you might choose to present material in the classroom that engages with Tanakh's impact on America. (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

Module 2 - The American Founding and Biblical Faith

- **Frame**: As you will see in the readings, the Pilgrims and Puritans, though of course themselves not Jewish, saw their story as reliving that of ancient Israel. Specifically, they focused on the story of Yetziyat Mitzrayim, the Exodus, as the framework for their own faith and survival. They also articulated the concept of covenant for their new Promised

Land. As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks has written, "In a covenant, two or more individuals, each respecting the dignity and integrity of the other, come together in a bond of love and trust, to share their interests, sometimes even to share their lives, by pledging their faithfulness to one another, to do together what neither can achieve alone. A contract is a transaction. A covenant is a relationship. Or to put it slightly differently: a contract is about interests. A covenant is about identity. It is about you and me coming together to form an 'Us'. That is why contracts benefit, but covenants transform. As you do the readings, consider the ways these early American thinkers saw themselves as bound by the Bible and how they perceived of the relationship between their nascent nation, themselves as individuals, and God.

- **Reading**: Puritans, Pilgrims, and founding a new Israel (PDF from *Proclaim Liberty* titled "Puritans and Pilgrims")
- "Puritan Purim," *The Lehrhaus*
- **Discussion Questions**:

1. Consider the various Hebraic Biblical figures invoked in the writings and speeches of the Puritans and the Pilgrims. If you were to build a lesson plan linking the themes of American covenant and nationhood to one of the Biblical figures explored in this module, which would it be, and why? (Please respond in 150-200 words.)

2. As American educators, we should strive to promote civic virtue and inculcate a sense of covenantal responsibility within our students. Imagine you are creating a poster that articulates **three core principles** of civic virtue in your classroom. Which three principles would you include to spark an understanding of America as a covenantal nation, and why? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

Module 3 - The Exodus: America's Unifying National Narrative

- **Frame**: As you saw in last week's reading, the Pesach story played a pivotal role in the ways America's first citizens viewed their project. Unfortunately, most Americans have forgotten this formative impact the Jewish story has had. As The New York Times' David Brooks noted in a 2017 op-ed, "One of the things we've lost in this country is our story. It is the narrative that unites us around a common multigenerational project, that gives an overarching sense of meaning and purpose to our history. For most of the past 400 years, Americans did have an overarching story. It was the Exodus story. The Puritans came to this continent and felt they were escaping the bondage of their Egypt and building a new Jerusalem. The Exodus story has six acts: first, a life of slavery and

oppression, then the revolt against tyranny, then the difficult flight through the howling wilderness, then the infighting and misbehavior amid the stresses of that ordeal, then the handing down of a new covenant, a new law, and then finally the arrival into a new promised land and the project of building a new Jerusalem. The Puritans could survive hardship because they knew what kind of cosmic drama they were involved in. Being a chosen people with a sacred mission didn't make them arrogant, it gave their task dignity and consequence. It made them self-critical. When John Winthrop used the phrase "city upon a hill" he didn't mean it as self-congratulation. He meant that the whole world was watching and by their selfishness and failings the colonists were screwing it up… During the revolution, the founding fathers had that fierce urgency too and drew just as heavily on the Exodus story. Some wanted to depict Moses on the Great Seal of the United States. Like Moses, America too was rebinding itself with a new covenant and a new law. Frederick Douglass embraced the Exodus too. African-Americans, he pointed out, have been part of this journey too. 'We came when it was a wilderness …. *We* leveled your forests; *our hands* removed the stumps from the field …. We have been with you … in adversity, and by the help of God will be with you in prosperity.' The successive immigrant groups saw themselves performing an exodus to a promised land. The waves of mobility — from east to west, from south to north — were also seen as Exodus journeys. These people could endure every hardship because they were serving in a spiritual drama and not just a financial one." This week's readings will highlight this throughline of the American story, from the colonial era to our own.

- Readings:
  - "The Exodus: America's Ever-Present Inspiration" (*The Lehrhaus*)
  - "The Promise of Liberty" (*Jewish Book Council*)
  - "Frederick Douglass' Passover" (American Bible Society)
  - "Harry Truman's Seder Message" (*Tablet*)
- Video: The Exodus in the Eyes of America (6 min) OpenDor Media and the Straus Center
- **Discussion Questions**

1. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks argues that the Exodus story is a unifying narrative of social justice, because "it wel-comes in each new group and gives it a tem-plate for how it fits into the com-mon move from oppres-sion to dig-ni-ty." What does Brooks mean by this? Do you find this argument compelling in 2024? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

2. In your opinion, which vignette, paradigm, or figure from the Exodus story is the most relevant and inspiring to teach young Americans in our current moment, and why? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

Module 4 - The Founding Fathers and the Jews

- **Frame**: We have focused these past few weeks on Tanach texts, themes, and heroes, like Moshe Rabbeinu. Yet we have seen very little about actual Jews and how they impacted America. That is understandable considering how few there were in the earliest decades of what would become the United States. Yet, as we will see this week, there were some influential Jews, whose advocacy for their religious rights ended up ensuring a better America for all its citizens. We will learn of one such Jew this week, along with letters two Founding Fathers exchanged about Jewish texts, and a humorous (and likely resonant) recap of a Jewish wedding attended by a signer of the Declaration of Independence.
- **Readings**:
    - Selection from *Proclaim Liberty* (PDF from *Proclaim Liberty* titled "Founding Fathers and the Jews")
    - "Blessed Unions" (Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, *Commentary*)
- **Discussion Questions**:

1. Despite the fact that they represented a tiny minority of early Americans, this module's readings illustrate a meaningful Jewish presence in colonial America. Imagine you are introducing this lesson to students. How would you describe the historical characteristics of Jewish life and the political status of Jews in the colonies? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

2. In this module, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l explores the distinction between the social-contract model and the covenantal model of the political society. What are practical ways in which Americans can cultivate a sense of national covenant? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

Module 5 - The Slavery Debate

- Frame: The Bible was unfortunately not always used for the betterment of America. As you will see in this week's readings, it was used to justify the terrible institution of

slavery. Surveying this sad history, and reading of a rabbinic exchange about the scriptural support (or denouncement) of slavery, consider what lessons can be drawn from the phenomenon that, as Abraham Lincoln put it in describing

- Readings:
  - Selection from *Scripturally Enslaved*, Shaindy Rudoff (PDF)
  - The Bible View of Slavery (Rabbi M. J. Raphall)
  - Response (Rabbi David Einhorn)
- Discussion Questions:

1. Imagine you are teaching this module to students, and your time for classroom discussion is limited. You assign the Raphall and Einhorn readings for homework, but you set aside some class time to do a limited close reading of the texts with your students. You have sufficient time to discuss **one** short excerpt from Raphall and **one** short excerpt from Einhorn. Which excerpts will you choose to read with your students? How do your chosen passages best capture the key ideas (and debates) explored in this module? (Please submit the two short excerpts, plus 150-200 words of reflection.)

2. *This question is for the portal "discussion forum"; students should post their answers publicly and engage with other answers:*

   As Jewish educators, it's challenging to read Jews (and non-Jews) make biblically-inspired arguments in defense of slavery in America. When framing this historical material for school-aged Jewish students, what do you think are the most important lessons or takeaways to highlight? (In 150-200 words, please share 2-3 takeaways of your own, and leave a comment on at least one other student's post.)

Module 6 - Lincoln and the Torah

- Frame: Though not particularly religious (and of course not Jewish), President Lincoln's content and cadence often drew from the Bible, particularly the King James translation. In articulating God's role in the Civil War, and America's sense of covenantal destiny, Lincoln offers the richest opportunity for considering the biblical influences on American political rhetoric since the Founders, as the readers make clear. His assassination on Pesach only strengthened, in the minds of America's Jewish citizens, the analogy that many Americans of all backgrounds had already made - that Lincoln was a new American Moses.

- Readings:
  - "Lincoln's Almost Chosen People" (Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, *First Things*)
  - "What the Bible Taught Lincoln About America" (Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, *Wall Street Journal*)
  - "In the Valley of the Dry Bones" (Matt Holbreich, *History of Political Thought*)
  - "When Lincoln Died on Passover" (Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, *Washington Examiner*)
- Discussion Questions:

1. This module examines many of Abraham Lincoln's speeches and writings, and highlights the frequency with which Lincoln drew inspiration from the Hebrew Bible. Utilizing the biblically-inspired speeches and writings we examined this week, how might you use Lincoln's rhetoric to inform how your students think through today's fractured political times? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

2. Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik presents Lincoln as a "theologian of the American idea." What does he mean? How would you simplify this notion to present it in an accessible way to school-age students? (Please respond in 150 - 200 words.)

Module 7 When Presidents Quote the Torah

- Frame: Current and recent presidential candidates have cited divine providence in as diverse contexts as near-miss assassinations and post-debate deliberations. This is just the latest iteration of a consistent habit of presidents to evoke the divine, and divine texts, despite growing American secularization. As you will see from the readings, American leaders have seen in the Bible an endless wellspring of wisdom for the nation. Consider the ways in which ideas from Tanakh have served as useful themes for presidents throughout American history, and how this usage reflects the role of Hebraic ideas across both sides of the political aisle.
- Readings:
  - Dr. Tevi Troy (The Bible and US Presidents, from upcoming Straus Center volume)
  - "God at the Inauguration" (Wall Street Journal)
  - "Presidential Traditions of Hanukkah" (WSJ)
- Videos:

  - "The Bible and US Presidents" (6 min) OpenDor Media and the Straus Center
- Discussion Questions:

1. In his chapter "The Bible and the US Presidents," Dr. Tevi Troy illustrates the tension between personal religious beliefs and public persona in the context of presidents like Thomas Jefferson and Harry Truman. When presenting this material to school-aged students, how would you address these complexities in your class? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

2. In their article "The Presidential Traditions of Hanukkah," Rabbi Dr. Stu Halpern and Dr. Tevi Troy quote former President George W. Bush, who spoke at the White House Hanukkah Party just months after 9/11: "America and Israel have been through much together…We can see the heroic spirit of the Maccabees lives on in Israel today, and we trust that a better day is coming, when this Festival of Freedom will be celebrated in a world free from terror." In a post-October 7th world, how should we teach the Chanukah story to American-Jewish students? In what ways can we highlight the inspiration of the Maccabees as the relationship between America and Israel is tested? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

Module 8 The Hebrew Bible's Ancient Avengers - Part 1

- Frame: In addition to serving as a source of unifying political language for political leaders, Tanakh has provided models of heroism for a range of Americans fighting for a better, more free and morally improved republic. Before Jewish comic book creators gave the US Batman, Superman and Spider-Man, Tanankh's heroes were giving millions of Americans reason to cheer.
- Readings:
  - "The Shepherd of American Courage" (*Tablet*)
  - "America's Favorite Prophet" (*Tablet*)
  - "Why Everyone Loves Daniel" (*Tablet*)
  - "Joseph Sings the Blues" (*Tablet*)
  - "American Samson" (*Tablet*)

-Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of leadership qualities did these biblical heroes have in common? Why did these particular qualities resonate so deeply with American leaders, across generations? (Please respond in 150-200 words.)

2. In his article "American Samson," Rabbi Dr. Stu Halpern illustrates how African Americans have "long held Samson in high regard." Imagine you are teaching a class on the relationship between the figure of Samson and the history of American slavery. How would you introduce this topic to your students in a way that feels relevant to them? (Please respond in 200-250 words.)

Module 9 The Hebrew Bible's Ancient Avengers - Part 2

- Frame: The perception that America's heroes were shaped in a biblical mold was a prism for viewing both the present and the past. Americans drew strength from ancient tales of Israelite heroes, but they also saw their own, contemporary American leaders as matching those of biblical times. In the readings and video you will see how Hebraic themes shaped Jewishly-informed portrayals of American figures like Washington. You will also read of how American Jews struggled to navigate national battles while staying true to their biblical traditions.
- Readings:
  - "Washington's Saving Shield" (*Jewish Review of Books*)
  - "Jews in Blue" (*Jewish Review of Books*)
  - "Vashti Comes to America" (Tzvi Sinensky, PDF of chapter in *Esther in America*)
- Video: Heroes of the Hebrew Bible (10 min) OpenDor Media and the Straus Center
- Discussion Questions:

1. How do the roles and perceptions of Jews during the Revolutionary War, as discussed in "Washington's Saving Shield," compare to those of Jewish soldiers during the Civil War, as depicted in "Jews in Blue"? How can these complex historical examples help teach Jewish students today about their own (often evolving) Jewish-American identity? (Please respond in 200-250 words).

This question is for the portal "discussion forum"; students should post their answers publicly and engage with other answers:

2. At the conclusion of his essay on the American re-interpretation of the figure of Vashti, Tzvi Sinensky asks, "Will Modern Orthodox Jewish day schools continue portraying Vashti as a villain? Will she be celebrated instead?" Sinensky believes that the transformation of Vashti is already underway. Is this a positive development? How do you think Vashti should be taught in Modern Orthodox day schools? (Please respond in 150-200 words, and leave a comment on at least one other student's post.)

Module 10 Esther in America

- Frame: Persia's ancient Jewish queen has served as an unceasing source of spiritual and political inspiration for Americans throughout our history. This week, concentrating solely on Queen Esther, we will seek to gain a rich understanding of the diverse impact her Scroll has had on a spectrum of American thinkers, writers, politicians and freedom-fighters.
- Readings:
  - "American Purim" *Tablet* (chapter in *Esther in America*)
  - "The Enduring Power of Purim" *Tablet* (included in *Esther in America*)
- Videos:
  - Esther in America (6 min) OpenDor Media and the Straus Center
  - Lincoln and Esther (4.3 min) Straus Center
  - Esther and Uncle Tom's Cabin (4.3 min) Straus Center
  - Haman and the American Revolution (5 min) Straus Center
- Discussion questions:

1. The story of Mordecai Manuel Noah offers a fascinating Purim-prism for viewing the opportunities of Jews in America, as they struggle, like the Jews of Shushan, to assert political power amidst a non-Jewish government. How might you share the story with your class? What commonalities and differences between the Purim story and Noah's story would you highlight and why? (Please respond in 200-250 words).

2. This week's module examines many individuals, such as Catharine Beecher and Angelina Grimké, who utilized Esther's story for their advocacy. Which examples do you feel are particularly useful to teach in the classroom, and why? Do you think any uses of Esther's story are actually **misuses** or **misrepresentations** of the Book of Esther and its eponymous protagonist? (Please respond in 200-250 words).

Module 11 The Liberty Bell's Hebraic Origin

- Frame: Few Americans realize the Hebraic origins of the Liberty Bell. As you will see in the readings, this most American symbol of freedom has rung at some of the most seminal points in US history. It offers a fascinating case study in how one verse from Tanakh can be utilized over centuries as a clarion call for a diverse array of American causes.
- Readings:
    - "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land" (Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, *Commentary*)
    - "The Hebraically-Inspired Liberty Bell and Its Role in the American Story" (John R. Vile, chapter in McClay and Halpern co-edited volume)
- Discussion questions:

1. This module examines several key moments in American history where the Liberty Bell served as a highly symbolic touchstone. If you were teaching this material to school-aged students, which specific points in its history would you highlight and why? (Please respond in 200-250 words).

2. In his article "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land," Rabbi Meir Soloveichik writes of the heroic raid on Entebbe, where Israeli commandos rescued over 100 hostages. "The Israelis had, on the American bicentennial, proclaimed liberty throughout the land and fulfilled, for the hostages, the very same biblical verse: "Each man shall return to his heritage, each man to his family."" If you brought your class to Israel any time after October 7 and visited its Liberty Bell Park, what lesson would you want to offer your class? How would you discuss the symbolism the Bell has had in America and can have in contemporary Israel? (Please respond in 200-250 words).

Module 12 The Hebraic Mortar of America

- Frame: Over the course of this semester we have seen countless examples of Americans turning to Tanakh for inspiration. We have also seen how Jewish Americans expressed their own communal aspirations within the country. Now we will turn to a remarkable address in which a US President reviews, and expresses appreciation for, both the American Jewish community and how "Hebraic mortar cemented the foundations of American democracy."
- Reading: "Jewish Contributions to American Democracy" (President Calvin Coolidge, chapter in McClay and Halpern co-edited volume).

- Discussion Questions:

1. In his 1925 address at the laying of the cornerstone of the Jewish Community Center Building in Washington, D.C., President Calvin Coolidge declared that "the Jewish faith is predominantly the faith of liberty." In your opinion, which of the Jewish-American figures, Hebraic texts, or historical moments we examined in this class best exemplify Coolidge's assertion? (Please respond in 200-250 words).

2. In the wake of October 7th, American Jews have witnessed an explosion of naked antisemitism across the country, leading many to question their place in American public life. As Jewish educators, how can we ensure that our students remain clear-eyed about these challenges yet invigorated and proud of their Jewish-American identity? How can we best utilize Coolodige's speech to achieve this?

Module 13

- Prepare final assignments

Module 14-15

- Final assignments

Azrieli students will produce two model lessons, each lesson respectively based on a module of their choice.

Each model lesson should include the following components:

1. A teacher's guide, which includes:
    a. The lessons' learning objectives (e.g. knowledge, historical context, narratives, themes, etc.)
    b. The targeted skills this lesson aims to develop or strengthen (e.g. close reading comprehension, textual analysis, writing, oral communication, etc.)
    a. Key questions that frame the lesson
    b. Overview of material being taught
2. A visual presentation to guide the lesson for students (e.g. Powerpoint, Canva, etc.)
3. A brief activity that is incorporated into the visual presentation and could occur within the lesson. This should be distinct from frontal instruction. (e.g a Kahoot, a "Chevruta"-

style, peer-to-peer instruction exercise, introductory exercise to activate prior knowledge, a brief written reflection, etc.)

In addition, Azrieli students will develop a cumulative assessment based on the combined material in the two lesson plans (see attached sample assignment).

This assessment should aim to not only gauge students' retention and understanding of the material but also their ability to critically analyze and creatively engage with the content (i.e. not just a test or an essay).

The cumulative assessment should assess the following:

- Knowledge Retention: Through the assessment, students should demonstrate mastery of the key facts, ideas, and themes presented in the lesson plans, ensuring they have a solid foundation of the material covered.
- Synthesis and Critical Thinking: Through the assessment, students should integrate and synthesize the material from both lessons, identifying connections and key questions.
- Creative Application: Through this assessment, students should be encouraged to creatively apply their knowledge in a way that goes beyond traditional testing.
- Effective Communication: Through this assessment, students should articulate their thoughts and arguments clearly and effectively through written, oral, or visual media.

Everything is on Canvas

- Upload materials and organize it into modules for each week, and within each module, you add assignments and files and attachments.
- Week 1 Assignments and attachments
- The registrar needs to add on the backend
- Do a portfolio assessment at the end of the semester
- Ask Ilana Turetsky about how to do it
- Post question
- Discussion questions
- students must reply to at least 2 colleagues, instructor can participate, visible to all, grade people on how they do
- Combine the intellectual class they're learning with the assignment they're making

- Have people develop questions that put texts in conversation with each other
- Final: Make a mission statement of what TuM means in the abstract and concretely. There should be cohesion and it shouldn't just be abstract ideas. Develop the intro and then questions that guide the whole unit, 3 lesson plans that incorporate the techniques taught in class (critical reading assignment, textual lens, etc)

Bonus

- Best link for tutorials to create an asynchronous Canvas course: Using Canvas to Prepare Asynchronous Content
- Two educators/professors that have very successfully done an asynchronous course on Canvas: Matthew Incantalupo (YU PoliSci class) and Rav Daniel Stein (4th Year Halacha L'Maaseh). RIETS is looking to implement more of these asynchronous classes