



**CENTER FOR
HOLY LANDS STUDIES**

CHLS - STUDYING THE TEXT IN CONTEXT

BIBLE LANDS STUDY TRIP | ISRAEL

Program Instructor: Jeremy Stein, MA.

Date: May 11th to 23rd, 2026

COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An onsite field study in Israel exploring the spatial, historical, cultural, and spiritual realities of the Bible. Emphasis is placed on the physical settings of the Bible, stressing the geographical characteristics of the land as well as historical, archaeological, literary, and cultural features which shaped the world of the Bible, its events, and message.

OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce students to the geography of the biblical world and how that geography affected the events related in the Bible.
2. To introduce students through onsite experiences to relevant archaeological data and discoveries and how they relate to our understanding of the world of the Bible.
3. To understand the historical events of the biblical world and how they impacted ancient Israelite and Jewish culture as reflected in the Bible.
4. Through an onsite learning experience, to understand the impact of ancient Israelite and Jewish culture upon issues of biblical interpretation.
5. To introduce students, through onsite experiences, to the history, religions, and cultures that have shaped the modern Middle East, its conflicts, and challenges.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Flattery, Amy and Stein, Jeremy. *Experience Israel: Travel Guide with Site overviews and Reflections*. Springfield, MO: Salubris Resources, 2019.

(Provided beforehand by the Center for Holy Lands Studies)

Monson, James M. with Steven P. Lancaster. *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible*. Rockford, IL: Biblical Backgrounds, 2008. (Provided beforehand by the Center for Holy Lands Studies)

Notley, R. Steven. *In the Master's Steps: The Gospels in the Land*. Jerusalem, Israel: Carta, 2014. (Provided beforehand by the Center for Holy Lands Studies)

Rasmussen, Carl G. *Essential Atlas of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2013. (Provided beforehand by the Center for Holy Lands Studies)

VanderKam, James C. *An Introduction to Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2001. (Must be purchased by the student)

BASIC OUTLINE

Prior to arriving in Israel, students will read, *Essential Atlas of the Bible*, *In the Master's Steps: The Gospels in the Land*, and *An Introduction to Early Judaism* and complete the map-marking assignments in the Monson- Lancaster materials (*Geobasics in the Land of the Bible*). Once the students arrive in Israel, they will participate in daily site visits and field studies, lectures, and “hands-on” learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Students will gain a basic introduction to the geography, history, archaeology, and culture of the biblical world through the assigned pre-trip reading and map-marking assignments. Students will need to bring *Experience Israel*, *Essential Atlas of the Bible*, *In the Master's Steps: The Gospels in the Land*, and *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible* with them on the trip.

Once the students arrive in the Middle East, the backgrounds of biblical geography, history, archaeology, and culture will be uniquely reinforced through onsite field studies. These studies incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach utilizing the physical settings to place the biblical text and issues within the spatial, historical, cultural, and spiritual realities of the biblical world. As part of the students' in-land educational experience, they will participate in a series of lectures specifically designed to take advantage of their studying in the Middle East and having access to local experts, many of whom are world-renowned scholars in their respective fields. Students will also uniquely encounter the varied cultures of the modern Middle East through specific interactions with local residents reflective of the three monotheistic faiths.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Complete the map marking-marking assignments for *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible* and *Geobasics Study Guide: Map Studies in the Geography of the Land of the Bible* (Parts 1-3) **prior to the trip** (60 hours).
- ☐ Read *Essential Atlas of the Bible* **prior to the trip** (12 hours).
- ☐ Read *In the Master's Steps: The Gospels in the Land* **prior to the trip** (8 hours).
- ☐ Read *Experience Israel* **prior to the trip** (2 hours).

- ❑ Read *An Introduction to Early Judaism* **prior to the trip** (12 hours).
- ❑ Write a 4-5 page, double-spaced book review of *An Introduction to Early Judaism*. **Due prior to departure to Israel** (5 hours).
- ❑ Participate in daily field-studies and site visits (140 hours in land). See the itinerary.
- ❑ Participate in lectures and discussion group(s) throughout the course of the program (12 hours in land).
 - “Regional Study—Negev” (1 hour)
 - “Regional Study—Southern Judean Hills and Dead Sea” (1 hour)
 - “Regional Study—Galilee and Golan” (1 hour)
 - “Josephus, the man and historian, and the Great Revolt against Rome” (2 hours)
 - “The World of Jesus” (1 hour)
 - “Archaeology and the Galilee of Jesus” (2 hours)
 - “Archeology at Shiloh” (1 hour)
 - “The Bible, Archeology, and the Dead Sea Scrolls” (1 hour)
 - “The Archaeology of Jerusalem” (1 hour)
 - Concluding reflections with extended Question and Answer session (1 hour)
- ❑ Maintain a daily journal (digital or hard copy) throughout the trip in which you reflect upon the teaching and experiences of each day. **Due May 28th, 2026.** (9 hours)
- ❑ Write a 10-page, double-spaced paper selecting a biblical passage and analyzing the text through the four biblical viewpoints discussed on the trip: Culture, History, Land, Spirit. **Due June 25th, 2026.** (8 hours)

All completed work should be turned in to Jstein@ag.org unless instructed otherwise by the students’ respective university.

MAP-MARKING ASSIGNMENTS

Please follow the instructions located in each *Geobasics Study Guide* in connection with the hard-copy book, *Geobasics in the Land of the Bible*, upon being provided supplemental PDF by the Center for Holy Lands Studies.

BOOK REVIEW

Write a book review of *An Introduction to Early Judaism* by James C. VanderKam. Your paper should conform to the following guidelines:

1. The paper must be 4-5 pages in length not including the title page.
2. Use one-inch margins, double spacing, and a twelve point, Times New Roman font.
3. Enclose citations from the book in parentheses (p. 10); but, cite other sources as footnotes.
4. Provide an introduction, brief summary of the book, analysis of the author’s intent, your own analysis of the book including how this book impacts your faith, and a conclusion.
5. Paper should reflect the desired writing style of the respective students’ current academic institution. If no writing style is established, it is desired that the student submit their paper in Chicago or Turabian format.

DAILY JOURNAL

Maintain a daily journal (digital or hard copy) throughout the trip in which you reflect upon the teaching and experiences of each day. This assignment is intended to help you personally, and so please journal in a way that works best for you. Your pre-trip packet from the Center for Holy Lands Studies will include a hard-copy journal that you can use for this assignment, or you may also keep a digital journal, make daily blog entries, or record video reflections for each day. You will be required on the final day of the trip to show a tangible proof that you have fulfilled this assignment.

FINAL PAPER

Write a final paper selecting a biblical passage and analyzing the text through the four aspects discussed on the trip (culture, History Land (geography), and Spiritual nature of the time):

1. The paper must be 6 pages in length not including the title page.
2. Use one-inch margins, double spacing, and a twelve point, Times New Roman font.
3. Include biblical citations in parentheses (Matt 7:28); but, cite other sources as footnotes.
4. Provide an introduction with a thesis statement, background information for the text selected using each of the four lenses (spatial, historical, cultural, and spiritual), an integrative section with analysis of the text considering all four lenses together, a section discussing how understanding the text within its original context impacts how we apply its message in our modern context, and a conclusion.
5. The paper must include at least 8 sources in addition to the Bible. The required textbooks for this course are acceptable references as well as the sources listed in the selected bibliography provided at the end of this syllabus.
6. Paper should reflect the desired writing style of the respective students' current academic institution. If no writing style is established, it is desired that the student submit their paper in Chicago or Turabian format.

GRADING PROCEDURE

- Map-marking assignments (20%)
- *An Introduction to Early Judaism* book review (10%)
- Participation in field studies and lectures (40%)
- Daily journal (10%)
- Final paper (20%)
- **Total Percentage:** 100%

100-94 A

93-90 A-

89-87 B+

86-84 B

83-80 B-

79-77 C+

76-74 C

73-70 C-

69-67 D+

66-64 D

63-60 D-

59-0 F

REGARDING LATE WORK

All late work may be lowered one letter grade for every calendar day after the due date unless:

- a) The student has been ill for more than three days immediately prior to the due date and can provide documentation.
- b) There has been a death in the immediate family within a week prior to the due date of the assignment.
- c)

Notice must be given to the Center for Holy Lands Studies by email (jstein@ag.org) **prior to** due date.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bahat, Dan, *The Carta Jerusalem Atlas*. Jerusalem, Israel: Carta Publishing, 2011.

Collins, John J. and Daniel C. Harlow, ed. *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2010.

DeVries, LaMoine. *Cities of the Biblical World*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006.

Flusser, David. *The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2007.

Flusser, David. *The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*. Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989.

Magness, Jodi. *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002.

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Meyers, Eric and Mark A. Chancey. *Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Netzer, Ehud. *The Architecture of Herod the Great Builder*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: BakerAcademic, 2009.

Nickelsburg, George W. E. *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity, and Transformation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Nickelsburg, George W. E. *Jewish Literature between the Bible and Mishnah*. 2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Nickelsburg, George W. E. and Michael Stone. *Early Judaism: Texts and Documents on Faith and Piety*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

Rainey, Anson F. and R. Steven Notley. *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World*. Jerusalem: Carta, 2006.

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Reed, Jonathan. *The HarperCollins Visual Guide to the New Testament: What Archaeology Reveals about the First Christians*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2007.

Safrai, Shmuel and Menahem Stern, ed. *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*. 2 vols.; Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum [CRINT]; Assen: Van Gorgum, 1974, 1976.

Safrai, Shmuel, ed., *The Literature of the Sages. Part One: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates* (CRINT; Assen: Van Gorgum, 1987)

Safrai, Shmuel, Zeev Safrai, et. al, ed., *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part: Midrash, Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature* (CRINT; Assen: Van Gorgum, 2006)

Schiffman, Lawrence H., *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1991)

Schiffman, Lawrence H., *Texts and Traditions: A Source Reader for the Study of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1998)

Schürer, Emil, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (4 vols.; rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979)

Stern, Ephraim, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (5 vols.; Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1993-2008)

Stone, Michael, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2011)

Stone, Michael, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (CRINT; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984)

Turnage, Marc. *Windows into the Bible: Cultural and Historical Insights from the Bible for the Modern Readers*. Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2016.

VanderKam, James C., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2010)

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SPECIFIC DATA

This syllabus has been prepared by the Center for Holy Lands Studies on October 1st, 2025

