

### **Josh Mangelson**

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

### **Karin Peter**

Welcome to Project Zion Podcast, we're introducing a new series for 2021 called He'Brew, a play on words that keeps us in the coffee vernacular, but introduces us to our topic, which is the Hebrew Scriptures or more commonly known as the Old Testament. The series will walk us through some of the main areas of focus in a way that hopefully reduces Old Testament bitterness, through explanation, exploration, and through experiencing the text. So I'm Karin Peter, and I'm happy to serve as host for the series, but the heavy lifting is going to be done by our guides through the Old Testament, Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith. So, Tony, some people really like the Old Testament, but others find it confusing, judgmental, and often violent. So what kinds of things will we be talking about in this new series?

### **Tony Chvala-Smith**

So we're familiar with some of those common reactions to the Old Testament because one of the things that Charmaine and I do is we teach an Old Testament intro to undergrads at Graceland and working through people's stuff about the Old Testament is one of the things we like to do. So in in this series, we want to make sure each time we talk about what scripture is and what it isn't. And then we'll especially want to focus on what is the Old Testament? What are we talking about when we talk about this particular collection of books? And also we we will want to, you know, reflect on why would we do a series on the Old Testament?

### **Karin Peter**

A lot of people are thinking that.

### **Tony Chvala-Smith**

I'm sure they are. I'm sure they are. And part of part of people's reaction to the Old Testament comes from the expectation that somehow scripture ought to speak immediately directly to us in language we're familiar with. In fact, the Old Testament is a large collection of ancient literature that speaks in the idiom of its time. And so we have to, we have to make some adjustments when we go to the Old Testament, and, and, and be ready to, it's like when you go to a different country, a different culture, you you, you can't expect everybody to be like you are back home, you need to make adjustments. And it's the same thing there. I mean, we're going to be dealing with pieces of literature, that talk about experiences that were formed in the Bronze Age, for goodness sakes, so and some in the Iron Age. And so when we reach difficult texts, and there's lots of them in the Hebrew Bible, we will we will constantly want to ask, ask what's going on in this context? That's one of the ways that we can especially come to appreciate how people in that very distant era from us encountered God and how they talked about their encounters with God and why some of their language is different from language we would use.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith**

And also, it's good to remember that there's humor in the Old Testament, believe it or not, and we usually just think of the judgment part, but there's humor, and there's provocativeness,

**Karin Peter**

My favorite part.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith**

So hopefully, will help to explore some of those as well.

**Karin Peter**

So, kind of along that line, Charmaine, what, what if we really hate some of the Scriptures? I mean, I find delight in some of them that are probably a bit racy, when you get into them a little bit. But, you know, for a lot of people, the scriptures have been used in ways that have wounded or diminish them. Are we going to try to sugarcoat this in the some of these difficult passages? Or are there ways to experience these texts? Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith**

We think that there are ways of appreciating these texts, without pretending that some of them are, aren't offensive. They are some for our understanding and our culture, and our time, do not speak, the kind of loving, forgiving God that we might want most for people to understand and see and experience, then so we need to look at what's really there in the text, and acknowledge that there's some things that that aren't, aren't translatable into our time in any positive way. And so that's part of what we're going to do is to acknowledge that many people have been harmed by the use of the Old Testament. And, and so we'll acknowledge that and say that there's some texts that won't be safe for people to go to. And that's okay. If you can't come with us on some of these, that's great. But if you can, we'll give you some new ways to read things, not to like you say sugarcoat, or just make it all shiny and new, but to let it be what it is, from its time from the the authors who wrote it, and with their limitations, but also with their richness of understanding. We'll keep trying to point to the fact that these are simply writers who are trying to tell us about their experience with God. And so it's what they're pointing to, that matters most here, which is God. And so we'll try and figure out what might be shaping them as they're pointing to this experience with God that they're wanting to share in some way. So that's how we're gonna approach it. Not that you have to take it all in or love at all, or find it applicable to your own life. But maybe to see whether or not it has some new aspects of understanding of humanity or of God, or of that relationship, that you might want to explore.

**Karin Peter**

Those are encouraging thoughts as we go forward. I'll be honest, I think about the Old Testament, okay, that that helps with the reducing the bitterness piece that we talked about earlier. So let's talk a little bit about the format for the episode. So people kind of know what to expect as we go forward.

### **Charmaine Chvala-Smith**

Great. We're going with this with our three E's this time. And the first, about 15 minutes of our sessions will be "explain". So it'll be talking about the text, it might be a specific text, or it might be a little bit of background about the the Old Testament or the Hebrew Scriptures in general. And so that's the first part explaining it some informational pieces. Then the second part,

### **Tony Chvala-Smith**

Second part is "explore" and explore is where we step back. And we let all of our questions surface, the easy questions, the hard questions, the questions, we would never say out loud in Sunday school. We have to be able to question the text. Because we want to approach this literature honestly. And part of that's just, you know, saying, goodness, this passage we just read, this is really disturbing to me, or this has images, and I don't fully understand or where, where would the author be getting this stuff? Those are the kinds of questions we want to deal with. So that's the second part explore.

### **Charmaine Chvala-Smith**

And then the third part is "experience". And this is a way of engaging with a passage or, or a couple of passages, passages of scripture and seeing, you know, are there parts here that fit for us? Are there parts that will help our own discipleship. And this might be done in as a Bible study, it might be done as a spiritual practice. But it'll be a chance to go a little deeper with the passage itself or parts of a passage, and see if, if scripture can be one of the things that we always hope it can be, is a meeting place with God. Not that it's saying every word, you know, the words in it are not God's word spoken and written down. But scripture has been found to be a pretty reliable place to meet God to, to have encounter, to have an openness to God. So that's the experience part.

### **Tony Chvala-Smith**

One of the things that participants in this podcast might find helpful is a text to read. And so our standard undergraduate text is by Clyde Fant, and Donald Musser and Mitchell Reddish, and it's called "An Introduction to the Bible, Revised Edition". It's, this Revised Edition is approximately 20 years old, but it is still a wonderful, wonderful, straightforward, simple and fairly complete introduction to the whole Bible. Along the way. we'll recommend other books, other introductions to the Hebrew Bible, some of which are more recent than this. But we like this one. It's very accessible and easy, easy for people to read and use. Also, we will constantly use the New Revised Standard Version as the as our version of choice for this set of podcasts. So we'll say more about that in another another episode.

### **Karin Peter**

So just a quick FYI, for our listeners, if you're interested in the text that Tony mentioned, you can actually get a free PDF of it academia.edu. There's an app on that site that you can download, and the text appears at no cost. And also, there are multiple Bible apps, including the Olive Tree Bible app, where you can get a free download of the NRSV. So that might help some of our folks who listen, and or now watch this podcast and videocast on their cell phones, they'll have those resources available.

**Tony Chvala-Smith**

What you're saying here is like study the Old Testament and get free stuff.

**Karin Peter**

There you go get some bonus things here with this, we are all about having a good experience with the Old Testament, and we're gonna be in it for a year. So we might as well have some fun with it.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith**

And maybe that's something else demand mentioned is that we'll be doing four sessions on the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, and then we'll be doing four sessions on the prophets, which are the middle section of the Old Testament,

**Tony Chvala-Smith**

and then four sessions on the writings which are the miscellaneous of the Hebrew Bible.

**Karin Peter**

Okay, looking forward to this, as we go through it, any last thoughts you want to share with people as we invite them to go on this year long journey through the Old Testament with us?

**Tony Chvala-Smith**

One thing, yeah, the Old Testament has lots of difficult passages in it. But it has passages that are absolutely essential to a peace and justice movement today. Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King made copious use of the Hebrew Bible's, prophets, because the Old Testament prophets were the ones who clearly saw that the divine human encounter ought to issue in what we would call social justice. And so so there's, there's there's lots for us to learn in the Hebrew Bible that is directly applicable to our own time, especially when it comes to issues of justice, equality, and fighting racism in our in our world today.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith**

And that puts the other piece in that I would say, which is, it's easy sometimes for Christians to say, "Well, you know, the Old Testament was that mean God, and the New Testament is the friendly, happy God, in Jesus." And so we always try to help people say, actually, that's the same God that's all the way through and can we see that same God? So that will be one of our our hopes and challenges is to help to see the continuity of the God that that people have experienced today, the God of the New Testament, and the God of the Old Testament.

**Karin Peter**

Indeed relevant for our current context. So I want to thank you both for doing this little short PR PZP podcast and inviting people to tune in for 2021's exploration of the Old Testament called Hebrew. And I will be there with my drink of choice today it's decaf. And thanks again for spending a few minutes Tony and Charmaine to share with us about the new series. We hope all our listeners will tune in when we debut in January 2021, which is coming right up here at Project Zion Podcast. Thanks so much, everyone, for listening.

**Josh Mangelson**

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