

In conjunction with the



The Judaism of the Talmud and Midrash

Instructor: Eliezer Segal



Eliezer Segal holds a Ph.D in Talmud from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and serves as Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary. He has published over one dozen books, has over 300 published articles, and over 50 scholarly articles published. He is committed to bringing the fruits of academic research to wider audiences through his popular newspaper columns in the Calgary Jewish newspapers.

Textbooks:

- Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*.
- G. Stemmer, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*

Course Description:

The religious institutions produced by the Jewish Rabbis from the first to the seventh centuries C.E. played a decisive role in determining the shape of Judaism for subsequent generations. This course will explore the principal areas of rabbinic activity, including:

1. **Aggadah:** The distinctive religious ideas and values formulated during that period including concepts of God, the Torah, sin, repentance Jewish peoplehood and Messianism, etc.
2. **Halakhah:** The main institutions of Jewish law as derived from the Written and Oral Torahs; the major works of halakhic literature; the religious dimensions of the Halakhah; the model of the scholar as judge and communal leader.

The teachings of the Rabbis have been preserved in a variety of different literary compendia, including the Mishnah, Talmuds and a diverse assortment of collections belonging to the genre of "Midrash"; i.e., works that focus on the interpretation of Hebrew Bible as a source of ideas, values or religious law.

This course will provide an introduction to the aspects of Judaism that are embodied in this literature.

Core Competencies:

While learning about Rabbinic Judaism, students will be trained in research skills, which include: learning how to find and collect data (primarily through library research) and how to draw historical conclusions from the evidence, as well as how to evaluate the plausibility of claims and theories proposed by scholars.

Central to this joint objective is the recognition that all reconstructions of ancient religion are based on original documents, or other evidence, that have survived from antiquity. In the case of Rabbinic traditions they have undergone complex processes of redaction, reinterpretation and transmission in oral and, later, in manuscript form.

Students will also be developing the ability to present the results of their research in a logical and coherent manner.

Course Requirements:

There will be a final examination in this course.

Some recommended books:

1. Alon, G. (1980). *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age*. Jerusalem, The Magnes Press.
2. Aschkenasy, Y. and N. Stichting *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*. Assen, Netherlands, Philadelphia, Van Gorcum ; Fortress Press.
3. Baron, S. W. (1962). *A Social and Religious History of the Jews, Vol, 2*. New York and London, Columbia University Press.
4. Cohen, S. J. D. (1987). *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia, Westminster.
5. Elon, M. (1975). *The Principles of Jewish Law*. Jerusalem, Encyclopaedia Judaica.
6. Ginzberg, L. (1909-39). *The Legends of the Jews*. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America.
7. Hartmann, G. and S. Budick, Eds. (1986). *Midrash and Literature*.
8. Heinemann, J., J. J. Petuchowski, et al. (1975). *Literature of the Synagogue*. New York, Behrman House.
9. Kadushin, M. (1952). *The Rabbinic Mind*. New York, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America.
10. Schiffman, L. H. (1991). *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. Hoboken, N.J., Ktav.

11. Steinsaltz, A. (1976). *The Essential Talmud*. New York, BasicBooks.

Judaism of the Talmud and Midrash

Index

- **Bibliographies and Guides to Research:**

Bibliography for Research in Rabbinic Judaism:

Primary Sources and General Reference:

1. Primary Sources:

More and more rabbinic texts are becoming available in English translations, though not all of them are of equal quality. Many of these translations can be found on the internet by searching by name, i.e. “Mishnah” or by searching “Jewish historical religious documents” (or in some cases use “ancient” instead of “historical”). Therefore, before purchasing any text, reference work, or journal check its availability on-line first.

J. Neusner himself has translated almost all the major works. Use his versions only as a last resort, if no other editions are available. They are very inaccurate, and poorly annotated.

Among the important translations by others are:

The Mishnah:

- Danby, H. *The Mishnah*. [London].
- Goldin, J. (1957). *The Living Talmud : the wisdom of the Fathers and its classical commentaries*. New York, New American Library.
- Krauss, S. *The Mishnah treatise Sanhedrin*. Leiden.
- Neusner, J. (1988). *The Mishnah : a new translation*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.

Tosefta:

- Neusner, J. and R. S. Sarason (1977). *The Tosefta : translated from the Hebrew*. Hoboken, N.J., Ktav

Avot de-Rabbi Nathan:

- J. Goldin (1955). *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.

Halakhic (Tannaitic) midrash:

- Hammer, R. (1986). *Sifre : a Tannaitic commentary on the book of Deuteronomy*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.
- Lauterbach, J. Z. (1976). *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America.

Jerusalem Talmud:

- Bokser, B. M., L. H. Schiffman, et al. (1994). *Yerushalmi Pesahim*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Rabbinowitz, J. *The Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) Bikkurim*. London.
- Neusner, J. (1982). *The Talmud of the land of Israel*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Babylonian Talmud:

- Epstein, I. *The Babylonian Talmud*.
- Epstein, I. (1967). *Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud*. London, Soncino (same as the above, but with the original Hebrew-Aramaic on facing pages)
- Steinsaltz, A. and I. V. Berman (1989). *The Talmud : the Steinsaltz edition*. New York, Random House.
- Ehrman, A. (1965). *Tractate Qiddushin*. Jerusalem, El-'Am.
- Ehrman, A. (1965). *Tractate Berakhot = Masekhet Berakhot*. Jerusalem, El-'Am.
- Ehrman, A. (1968). *Tractate Bava mezia*. Jerusalem, El-'Am.

The "Minor Tractates" of the Talmud:

- Cohen, A. (1965). *The Minor tractates of the Talmud : Massektoth Ketannoth*. London, Soncino Press.
- Zlotnick, D. (1966). *The tractate "Mourning" (Semahot) : regulations relating to death, burial and mourning*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.

Aggadic Midrash:

- Midrash rabbah. London.
- Braude, W. G. and I. J. Kapstein *Tanna debe Eliyyahu : = The lore of the school of Elijah*. Philadelphia. [Soncino "Midrash" consisting of the "Midrash Rabbah" to the Pentateuch and the "Five Scrolls" (Ruth, Esther, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs).]
- Braude, W. G. (1959). *The Midrash on Psalms*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.
- Braude, W. G. (1968). *Pesikta Rabbati : discourses for feasts, fasts and special Sabbaths*. New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.

- Braude, W. G., I. J. Kapstein, et al. (1975). *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana : R. Kahana's compilation of discourses for Sabbaths and festal days*. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America.
 - Enelow, H. G. (1933). *The mishnah of Rabbi Eliezer, or, The midrash of thirty-two hermeneutic rules*. New York, Bloch.
 - Mandelbaum, B. (1987). *Pesikta de Rav Kahana : al pi ketav yad Oksford : ve-shinuye nusha-ot mi-kol kitve ha-yad u-seride ha-Genizah : im perush u-mavo*. Nuyork, beit midrash lerabbanim be-amerika
-

2. Reference Works:

- *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. New York, Macmillan. (1971). Note that most entries on Biblical personalities also contain a section on their depiction in rabbinic literature. It has a full volume index.
 - The older *Jewish Encyclopedia* also contains some useful material.
 - Jastrow, M. (1967). *A dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic literature*. New York, Shalom. A Hebrew-English dictionary. If you have a smattering of Hebrew, this could be helpful, mostly because of the many sample texts it cites in most entries.
 - Kolatch, A. J. (1981). *Who's who in the Talmud*. Middle Village, N.Y., Jonathan David Publishers. Not the most scientifically sound of its kind, but it contains basic biographical information about the leading rabbis, and our library has it.
 - Neubauer, A. *La géographie du Talmud*. Hildesheim. It is what it sounds like: An introduction to the places mentioned in the Talmud (mostly in Israel and Babylonia).
 - Hermann Strack's *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* provides a useful one-volume reference handbook for all matters related to (surprise!) Talmud and Midrash; e.g., the names, abbreviations and orders of tractates; chronology of rabbis, etc. For up-to-date information, of course, you will be using the new revision by G. Stemberger.
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3. Scholarly Journals:

The important journals in this field are:

- Jewish Quarterly Review (JQR)
- Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods (JSJ)
- Journal of Jewish Studies (JJS)
- Hebrew Union College Annual (HUCA)
- *Tarbiz* (It's in Hebrew, but has useful English summaries)
- *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*. Jerusalem, World Union of Jewish Studies.
- AJS Review
- Rabbinical Council of America (1958). *Tradition : a journal of orthodox Jewish thought*. New York, Rabbinical Council of America.

Other general Religious Studies journals often contain relevant material (e.g., *Religious Studies*, *Sciences Religieuses*, *Harvard Theological Review*).

Many classic old articles have been reprinted in a helpful collection by J. Neusner called *The Literature of Formative Judaism*. (Garland Press).

4. Collections and Festschriften:

- Aschkenasy, Y. and N. Stichting Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum (Amsterdam (1984). *Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*. Assen, Netherlands
Philadelphia, Van Gorcum ;
Fortress Press.
 - Corré, A. D. *Understanding the Talmud*. New York.
 - Daube, D. and B. S. Jackson (1974). *Studies in Jewish legal history : essays in honour of David Daube*. London, Jewish Chronicle Pub.
 - Dimitrovsky, H. Z. *Exploring the Talmud*. New York.
 - Goldin, H. E. *Hebrew criminal law and procedure : Mishnah*.
 - Ginzberg, L. (1955). *On Jewish law and lore*. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America.
 - Lauterbach, J. Z. (1951). *Rabbinic essays*. Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College Press.
 - Neusner, J. (1990). *The Literature of formative Judaism, the Mishnah and the Tosefta*. New York, Garland.
 - Neusner, J. (1990). *The Literature of formative Judaism, the Talmuds*. New York, Garland.
 - Neusner, J. (1990). *History of the Jews in the second through seventh centuries of the Common Era*. New York, Garland.
 - Neusner, J. (1990). *History of the Jews in the second century of the Common Era*. New York, Garland.
 - Neusner, J. (1990). *The Literature of formative Judaism, controversies on the literature of formative Judaism*. New York, Garland.
 - Neusner, J. (1990). *The Literature of formative Judaism, the Targumim and other Jewish writings in late antiquity*. New York, Garland.
-

5. History:

- Alon, G. *Jews, Judaism, and the classical world : studies in Jewish history in the times of the Second Temple and Talmud*. Jerusalem.
- Alon, G. and G. Levi (1980). *The Jews in their land in the Talmudic age, 70-640 C.E.* Jerusalem, Magnes Press.

- Baron, S. W., *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Volume 2, has some fine material on the rabbinic period, with extensive notes.
 - Cohen, S. J. D. (1987). *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia, Westminster.
 - Miller, S. S. (1984). *Studies in the history and traditions of Sepphoris*. Leiden, the Netherlands, Brill.
 - Moore, G. F. (1997). *Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian era : the age of tannaim*. Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers.
 - Sperber, D. (1978). *Roman Palestine, 200-400, the land : crisis and change in agrarian society as reflected in rabbinic sources*. Ramat-Gan, Israel, Bar-Ilan University Press.
 - Sperber, D. (1991). *Roman Palestine, 200-400 : money and prices*. Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press.
 - Schiffman, L. H. (1991). *From text to tradition : a history of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. Hoboken, N.J., Ktav.
-

6. Works about the Talmuds:

- Adler, M. *The world of the Talmud*. New York.
 - Cohen, A. *Everyman's Talmud*. New York.
 - Kraemer, D. C. (1990). *The mind of the Talmud : an intellectual history of the Bavli*. New York, Oxford University Press.
 - Mielziner, M. (1968). *Introduction to the Talmud*. New York, Bloch.
 - Unterman, I. *The Talmud : an analytical guide to its history and teachings*. New York.
 - Strack, H. L., G. Stemberger, et al. (1991). *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark.
 - Steinsaltz, A. (1976). *The Essential Talmud*. New York, BasicBooks.
 - Rodkinson, M. L. *The history of the Talmud : from the time of its formation, about 200 B.C., up to the present time*. New York.
-

7. Literary Studies of Rabbinic Texts:

- Halivni, D. (1986). *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara : the Jewish predilection for justified law*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.
- Halivni, D. (1991). *Peshat and derash : plain and applied meaning in Rabbinic exegesis*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Jacobs, L. *Teyku : the unsolved problem in the Babylonian Talmud : a study in the literary analysis and form of the Talmudic argument*. New York.
- Jacobs, L. (1991). *Structure and form in the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press.
- Kalmin, R. L. (1989). *The redaction of the Babylonian Talmud : Amoraic or Saboraic?* Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College Press.
- Goodblatt, D. M. (1975). *Rabbinic instruction in Sasanian Babylonia*. Leiden, the Netherlands, Brill.
- Neusner, J. (1970). *The formation of the Babylonian Talmud : studies in the achievements of late nineteenth and twentieth century historical and literary-critical research*. Leiden, the Netherlands, Brill.

- Neusner, J. (1973). *The Modern study of the Mishnah*. Leiden, the Netherlands, Brill.
- Segal, E. (1990). *Case citation in the Babylonian Talmud : the evidence of Tractate Neziqin*. Atlanta, Scholars Press.

Bibliographical Guide: Halakhah

For general reference works, encyclopedias and translations of rabbinic sources, etc., see the previous hand-out on Aggadah.

The Library of Congress designation for Jewish Law is 520. Note that some items are found in the Faculty of Law library as well. I am told that there are some useful titles on bio-medical questions in the Faculty of Medicine.

For overviews of the different areas covered by Rabbinic law see A. Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*.

Specific topics in Jewish Law

Note that many of these works are not concerned especially, or even primarily, with the talmudic era. You have to filter the relevant information. The following list deals primarily with topics that are "legal" in the modern sense (civil, family, etc.). There is a lot of material on liturgical and festival laws.

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Wegner, Judith Romney

- **TITLE(S):**

Chattel or person? the status of women in the Mishnah / Judith Romney Wegner

- **PUB/DATE:**

Oxford University Press : New York , 1988

- **CLASS NO.:**

BM 509 W7 W43 1988

[Brings a lot of material].

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Amram, David Werner, 1866-1939

TITLE(S):

The Jewish law of divorce: according to Bible and Talmud with some reference to its development in post - Talmud times / by David Werner Amram

PUB/DATE:

1975

CLASS NO.:

BM 520 A68r

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Goldin, Hyman E

TITLE(S):

Hebrew criminal law and procedure: Mishnah / Sanhedrin-Makkot

PUB/DATE:

1952

CLASS NO.:

BM 520 G64 1952

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Avery-Peck, Alan J.

TITLE(S):

The Priestly gift in Mishnah : a study of tractate Terumot

PUB/DATE:

1981

CLASS NO.:

Bm506 .t63 p42 1981

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Bokser, B. M

TITLE(S):

The Origins of the Seder : the Passover rite and early Rabbinic Judaism

PUB/DATE:

1984

CLASS NO.:

Bm695 .p35 b64 1984

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Braude, W. G.

TITLE(S):

Jewish proselyting in the first five centuries of the common era : the age of the Tannaim and Amoraim

PUB/DATE:

CLASS NO.:

Bm565 .b73 1940

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Bleich, J. David, 1936-

TITLE(S):

Contemporary halakhic problems by J. David Bleich

PUB/DATE:

KTAV : New York , 1977-

TITLE SERIES:

Library of Jewish law and ethics ; v.4

CLASS NO.:

BM 520.3 B42 1977

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Freid, Jacob

TITLE(S):

Jews and divorce edited by Jacob Freid

PUB/DATE:

1968

CLASS NO.:

BM 520 J48 1968

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Brooks, R.

TITLE(S):

Support for the poor in the Mishnaic law of agriculture : Tractate Peah

PUB/DATE:

1983

CLASS NO.:

Bm506 .p7 b76 1983

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Flesher, P. V. M..

TITLE(S):

Oxen, women or citizens? : slaves in the system of the Mishnah

PUB/DATE:

1988

CLASS NO.:

Ht921 .f53 1988

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Goldman, Alex J.

TITLE(S):

Judaism confronts contemporary issues by Alex J. Goldman

PUB/DATE:

Shengold Publishers : New York , 1978

CLASS NO.:

BM 520.3 G64 1978

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Heinemann, J.

TITLE(S):

Prayer in the Talmud, forms and patterns

PUB/DATE:

Berlin

CLASS NO.:

Bm660 .h461 1977

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Herzog, Isaac, 1888-1959

TITLE(S):

The Main institutions of Jewish law by Isaac Herzog ; foreword by M. Silberg

PUB/DATE:

Soncino Press : London , 1980

CLASS NO.:

KK 381 H67 1980

[Deals with Court system and civil law].

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Jaffee, M. S.

TITLE(S):

The Main institutions of Jewish law by Isaac Herzog ; foreword by M. Silberg

PUB/DATE:

Chico, Calif., Scholars Press., 1981

CLASS NO.:

Bm506 .m19 j33 1981

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Biale, Rachel

TITLE(S):

Women and Jewish law: an exploration of women's issues in Halakhic sources / Rachel Biale

PUB/DATE:

Schocken : New York , 1984

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Herring, Basil

TITLE(S):

Jewish ethics and Halakhah for our time: sources and commentary / by Basil F. Herring

PUB/DATE: KTAV :

New York , 1984

TITLE SERIES:

Library of Jewish law and ethics ; v.11

CLASS NO.:

BJ 1285 H37 1984

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Levine, Aaron

TITLE(S):

Free enterprise and Jewish law: aspects of Jewish business ethics / by Aaron Levine

PUB/DATE:

1980

collatn: xii, 224 p.

general: LAW RECON 1984.

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Falk, Zeev Wilhelm, 1923-

TITLE(S):

Introduction to Jewish law of the Second Commonwealth

PUB/DATE:

1972-

CLASS NO.:

BM 520.5 F331 1972 V 1

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Newman, L. E.

TITLE(S):

The Sanctity of the seventh year : a study of Mishnah Tractate Shebiit

PUB/DATE:

Chico, Calif., Scholars Press. 1983

CLASS NO.:

Bm506 .s33 n48 1983

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Novak, David, 1941-

TITLE(S):

Halakhah in a theological dimension

PUB/DATE:

Scholars Press : Chico, Calif. , 1985

CLASS NO.:

BM 520.6 N68 1985

[See also his series: Law and Theology in Judaism]

collatn: xi, 174 p. ; 24 cm.

general: Includes bibliographical references and index.

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Novak, David, 1941-

TITLE(S):

The Image of the non-Jew in Judaism : an historical and constructive study of the Noahide laws

PUB/DATE:

. Lewiston, N.Y., E. Mellen Press, 1983

CLASS NO.:

Bm520.73 .n68 1983

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Sanders, E. P. -

TITLE(S):

Jewish law from Jesus to the Mishnah : five studies.

PUB/DATE:

London, SCM Press, 1990

CLASS NO.:

Bm520.5 .s36 1990

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Urbach, E. E.

TITLE(S):

The Laws regarding slavery : as a source for social history of the period of the Second Temple, the Mishnah and Talmud.

PUB/DATE:

Scholars Press : Chico, Calif. , New York, Arno Press.1979

CLASS NO.:

Kk381 .u72 1979

• **Journal**

○ **TITLE:**

The Jewish law annual

- **AUTHOR:**

International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists

V.1-4,1978-1981; V.5,1985.

- **A Useful Anthology of Out-of-Print Articles**

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Neusner, Jacob, 1932-

TITLE(S):

The Literature of formative Judaism, the Talmuds edited with a preface by Jacob Neusner

PUB/DATE:

Garland : New York , 1990

TITLE SERIES:

Origins of Judaism ; v.10

CLASS NO.:

BM 500.2 L575 1990

collatn: xvi, 462 p. ; 24 cm.

- **AUTHOR(S):**

Neusner, Jacob, 1932-

TITLE(S):

The Literature of formative Judaism, the Mishnah and the Tosefta edited with a preface by Jacob Neusner

PUB/DATE:

Garland : New York , 1990

TITLE SERIES:

Origins of Judaism ; v.9

CLASS NO.:

BM 497.8 L57 1990

On the Structure and Literature of Jewish Law

Apart from dealing with specific topics of rabbinic law, you can deal with the methodology (e.g., talmudic argumentation, midrashic hermeneutics) and institutional structures. Elon provides a good overview.

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Elon, Menachem

TITLE(S):

The Principles of Jewish law / edited by Menachem Elon

PUB/DATE:

Encyclopaedia Judaica : Jerusalem , 1975

TITLE SERIES:

Publication (Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Institute for Research in Jewish Law) ; no.6

CLASS NO.:

X 381 P67 1975

collatn: 866 columns ; 28 cm.

• **AUTHOR(S):**

Mulder, M. J. (Martin Jan) / Stone, Michael E. (Michael Edward), 1938- / Safrai, Shemuel, 1919-

TITLE(S):

The Literature of the Jewish people in the period of the Second Temple and the Talmud / Mikra / Jewish writing of the Second Temple period / The Literature of the sages / Oral Tora, Halakha,

Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, external tractates / Midrash, Aggadah, Midrash collections, Targum, prayer

PUB/DATE:

Van Gorcum : Assen, Netherlands , 1984-1988

TITLE SERIES:

Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum ; section 2

Several important topics in Halakhah are dealt with in historical studies; e.g., as responses of Jewish law to historical events.

Research Guidelines--Rabbinic Aggadah (beliefs, exegesis, homiletics)

A: Definition of Topic:

Aggadah can be defined very broadly. Some of the general areas that can be researched include:

- Biblical exegesis: How the rabbis interpreted events and personalities of the Bible (Can be approached comparatively with Church Fathers, etc.).
- Religious ideas: God, the Torah, Jewish peoplehood, Messianism, Afterlife, etc.
- E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Doctrines and Beliefs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) provides a good model of the sorts of topics that fit into this category. If you find a subject that interests you, try following up on his end-notes and bibliography. You must of course make sure that you can formulate your paper in such a way that it does not merely repeat Urbach's presentation. It would also help to coordinate with me so I don't end up "stealing" your topic for my class lectures [I might however conscript your services as a guest lecturer...]
- The rationales for religious commandments.
- Attitudes to contemporary circumstances: The Roman and Persian empires, Christianity, converts, etc.
- The literature of the Aggadah: There are some very interesting developments in current scholarship, attempting to trace the origins and rationales of the peculiar literary forms preferred by midrashic works. Some of the more fruitful approaches see their origins in oral sermons that were delivered in synagogues in connection with scriptural readings. The different theories about the literary setting affect our evaluation of the contents, the hermeneutics, etc.

Note: Often the same topic can be dealt with as an aggadic and a halakhic issue. You must be aware of which you are doing. It is possible to submit two separate papers dealing with the aggadic and halakhic aspects of a single topic.

B. Bibliography:

- Chernus, I. *Mysticism in rabbinic Judaism : studies in the history of midrash*. Berlin.
- Cohen, A. *Everyman's Talmud*. New York.
- Ginzberg, L. and B. Cohen (1968). *The legends of the Jews*. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Goldin, J. (1957). *The Living Talmud : the wisdom of the Fathers and its classical commentaries*. New York, New American Library.
- Heinemann, J. *Prayer in the Talmud, forms and patterns*. Berlin.
- Herford, R. T. *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*. New York.
- Kadushin, M. *Worship and ethics : a study in rabbinic Judaism*. Westport, Conn.
- Kadushin, M. (1987). *A Conceptual commentary on Midrash Leviticus rabbah : value concepts in Jewish thought*. Atlanta, Scholars Press.
- Schechter, Solomon (1961). *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*. New York, Schocken.
- Segal, A. F. *Two powers in heaven : early rabbinic reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*. Leiden.
- Sperber, D. (1978). *Roman Palestine, 200-400, the land : crisis and change in agrarian society as reflected in rabbinic sources*. Ramat-Gan, Israel, Bar-Ilan University Press.
- Sperber, D. (1991). *Roman Palestine, 200-400 : money and prices*. Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan University Press.
- Stern, D. (1991). *Parables in Midrash : narrative and exegesis in rabbinic literature*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

A Guide to Hebrew Transliteration

Although scholarly academic writings generally follow a standardized system of rendering Hebrew sounds and letters into Latin letters (i.e., the alphabets used in English and other European languages), many of the works that you will be consulting do not reflect this system, especially in editions that are aimed at traditional Jewish audiences. The problem is the result of the different pronunciations that are in use among Jews. Thus, the first tractate of the Mishnah might be rendered "Berakoth" in an academic publication, "Berakhot" or "Berakhot" according to the "Sephardic" ("Spanish") tradition that forms the basis of modern Israeli Hebrew, and "Berochos" in the Central- or Eastern-European ("Ashkenazic") tradition that dominates most contemporary Orthodox seminaries. The complexity is further compounded by the inconsistent phonetic systems among the diverse European languages (e.g., the letter "s" might be pronounced in German as either an English "sh" or "z").

Following is an incomplete table indicating alternative possibilities that are worth trying if you have trouble identifying a Hebrew word or title.

a	in Ashkenazic pronunciation, long "a" is represented as: "o".
b	can appear in aspirated or unaspirated forms (depending on its phonetic context). The aspirated form (pronounced like a "v") can be represented as either a " <u>b</u> " (underlined) or as a "v"—

	sometimes even (in German-language works) as a "w".
c	can be used to represent a "k," a "sadi" (see below) or in a "ch") combination.
ch	<p>pronounced in the German manner ("ach"). It represents the aspirated version of the sound that, in other phonetic contexts, would be a "k".</p> <p>In Ashkenazic writings it is used to represent the aspirated "h" that is usually written in scientific writings as "h" with a dot underneath.</p> <p>In French, it represents the "sh" sound.</p>
d	has an aspirated form that is not usually pronounced (it would sound like the soft "th" in "the"), and can be rendered as "dh" or " <u>d</u> " (underlined).
e	<p>long "e" can sometimes be written as "ei" or "ey".</p> <p>The "i" is sometimes represented as "ee" (in modern American texts aimed at a religious audience).</p> <p>The "sheva nah," a half-vowel, is usually written as a superscript ^e, but may appear as an apostrophe (').</p>
f	The aspirated variant of "p" can be rendered as either "f", "ph" or " <u>p</u> " (underlined).
g	<p>has an aspirated form that is rarely represented, but could be "gh" or "<u>g</u>" (underlined).</p> <p>In Biblical names, the "g" is also used to represent the guttural "ghayin" (e.g., "Gaza"), a completely different letter. The "ghayin" is not represented in standard Hebrew notation, and merges with the "ayin".</p>
h	<p>represents several different Hebrew letters and sounds. These include:</p> <p>soft "h" (like the English), usually unpronounced at the ends of words. (When it is pronounced at the end of a word, it might be underlined).</p> <p>The strongly aspirated "h" that is rendered in scientific notation with a dot underneath. In Ashkenazic texts it</p>

	pronounced as a guttural, German-style "ch" is not distinguished from the aspirated "k"; both letters are written as either "ch" or "kh"
i	always the "short" English kind (like "kid", not "shine"), even when the Hebrew vowel is long (sounds like "mean"). The "i" is sometimes represented as "ee" (in modern American texts aimed at a religious audience).
j	originally sounded like a "y" and it often is used to render that letter (especially in German writings, but also in "Bible English"). Can also be used to render the aspirated "g" sound (see above).
k	represents several different letters:
kh	the "kaf" –sometimes represented as "c", which also has its aspirated variant, represented as " <u>k</u> " (underlined), "ch" or "kh" and pronounced. "kof" –usually written in scientific texts as "q", but sometimes as "k" with a dot underneath, and sometimes just as "k".
o	In Ashkenazic texts can sometimes be written as "oi" or "oy".
p	see on "f" above.
q	"kof" –usually written in scientific texts as "q", but sometimes as "k" with a dot underneath, and sometimes just as "k".
s	In addition to the simple "s" sound that is similar to the English, there are other letters that can be rendered as "s". These include: "sadi" –an emphatic sound, usually designated in scientific texts by placing a dot underneath. The same letter can be rendered as "z" (with or without a dot or line underneath), "c", "ts" or "tz". "shin" like the English. In some scientific texts this is represented by an "s" with a typographical sign above it, usually a carat or upside-down carat. "sin" evidently identical in pronunciation to the regular "s", but often distinguished in scientific writing by an additional

	<p>typographical symbol above the letter.</p> <p>In German, the "s" usually sounds like an English "z", and is sometimes used to indicate the Hebrew "z" letter.</p>
t	<p>represents two distinct Hebrew letters:</p> <p>"tet" is an emphatic sound, usually represented in scientific transliterations with a dot underneath.</p> <p>"tav" is a normal "t" sound but has an aspirated variant that was originally pronounced like an English "th." In scientific transliteration this can be represented as either a "<u>t</u>" (underlined) or "th". The "Sepharadic" modern Israeli pronunciation does not use the aspirated version, and hence will usually not indicate it in transliteration. The Ashkenazic tradition pronounces it as an "s" and transliterates it accordingly.</p>
u	<p>In scientific transliterations this always indicates an English "long" vowel (sounds like "woof" or "woo") and might be written as "ou" or "oo" in some popular works.</p> <p>You might occasionally find it used to represent an "a" sound (see above).</p>
v	<p>used to represent two different Hebrew letters:</p> <p>"vav"—a "v" or "w" sound; the latter is often used in German writings (but not only).</p> <p>Aspirated "b" (see above).</p>
w	See on "v"
x	<p>Sometimes used to represent an emphatic "h" (see above). Rarely, it can be the equivalent of an underdotted "h" (see above) or "kh".</p>
z	<p>Sometimes (especially in German writings) used to indicate the "sadi" consonant (see on "s" above).</p>

Notes on S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*

1. Introductory

Selected Topics from: S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*

Introductory:

Use of "Aspects" in the title:

Implies that rabbinic literature is not theological or systematic, and does not constitute a *full* theology.

Response to Christian stereotypes of rabbinic Judaism:

- Legalism
- Transcendentalism
- Self-righteousness

Use of Mishnah as paradigm of rabbinic "legalism"

Schechter's refutation:

- Mishnah is largely devoted to ethical questions (e.g., civil and criminal law)
- Contains moral and theological component (Tractate *Avot*)
- Aggadah was also produced by the same rabbis who appear in the Mishnah

Importance of Liturgy as expression of rabbinic values and beliefs

Text is controlled by community, "orthodox".

Talmudic discussion are often freer and non-normative.

Methodological problems with using rabbinic sources

Earlier traditions are filtered through later compilations, sometimes altering their original meanings.

Problematic status of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Not part of rabbinic corpus, though often given disproportionate weight by Christian theologians as evidence of rabbinic belief.

Examples of questions about which the rabbinic attitude is ambivalent:

- Miracles
- Debate over whether it would have been better if humans had or had not been created.

The Talmud cannot be equated with Jewish religion or with Judaism

The rabbis did not *consciously* formulate a theology.

The importance of the *homiletical* occasions of their statements.

Examples of Christian-like ideas on theological questions:

- Faith
- Original Sin

2. God and the World

God and the World:

Responding to erroneous stereotype of Jewish "transcendent" God.

- List of rabbinic epithets for God.

Cf. Urbach's discussions of:

- *Shekhinah* = God's presence in the world.
- "Place" (*Maqom*) = expression of God's omnipresence and nearness.
- "Heaven" = expresses transcendence, farness and withdrawal from humanity.
- "Might"

= expression of God's absolute power.

- Implications of "father" imagery.
- Significance of *logos* and *memra* terminology
Problem of evaluating Philo and Targums as records of rabbinic belief.
Are these metaphors and circumlocutions (to avoid speaking of God to concretely), or real theological concepts?
- God is known through his manifestations in Israelite history.
Intimate identification of rabbinic Judaism with the personalities and events of the Bible.
- Immanence of God throughout the world.
Epithets that speak of God in relation to the world:

Father
 Goodness
 Light
 Life
 Eye
of the world(s)
 Only one
 Ancient one
 Etc.

- Do these express a *pantheistic* view?
- Sources that emphasize God's transcendence-- above the world.
Especially in mystical and esoteric traditions: "The work of the Chariot [*Merkavah*]"
- The great paradox: God is both transcendent and immanent.
- God's personality traits:
 - e.g., greatness and humility
- God's distance from the world as a consequence of human sin.
- The different names of God as expressions of particular forms of God's interactions with the world.
They are not separate hypostases.
- Explaining passages in which the rabbis seem to deny God's immanence
These are overstated responses of "heretical" confusions of the divine and human realms (e.g., deification of humans by Roman emperors, Christians)..
- Philo's allegorical method of interpreting Scripture: opposed by rabbis as a threat to literal observance of the commandments.
- Insistence that prayers are always addressed directly to God, not to angels or other intermediaries.

3. God and Israel

God and Israel:

The Special Relationship between God and Israel

- Intimate
- Reciprocal / Mutual
- More beloved than angels
- God participates in Israel's suffering, exile and redemption.
- **Unconditional status of the relationship (Covenant):**
 - Not annulled by sin.
 - Analogy of parent-child relationship.
 - God inflicts punishment as indication of love, not a rejection to covenant.
- Rabbinic criticism of biblical prophets who condemned Israel.
 - Dissenting opinion of Rabbi Judah.

- Observance of Commandments viewed as a privilege , not a burden.

4. Election of Israel

Election of Israel:

Reasons Why God "Chose" Israel

- Not because of inherent superiority.
 - Traditions that speak of Israel being unworthy: an arbitrary choice by divine grace.
- Primordial, predestined: Decreed before the Creation.
- Merit of Abraham: The first righteous human in biblical history.
- Israel accepted God.
 - Legend of how Torah was offered to other nations, but they rejected it.
- Because Israel was oppressed, importance of humility.
- "Firstborn" concept:
 - Implies that relationship between God and Israel, though preferential, is not exclusive.

Points not raised by Schechter:

- Homiletical context: Need to console Jews in a state of defeat and oppression.
- There is no Hebrew equivalent of "chosen people" as adjective + noun.
 - In prayers: "Blessed are you, Lord God... who has chosen us...and sanctified us with your commandments and commanded us to..."
- Dualistic perception of humanity: Israel as only monotheistic people in pagan world.
 - Cf. Covenant of "Children of Noah."

5. The Kingdom of God: Invisible

The Kingdom of God--Invisible:

The *Shema'* as the Acceptance of the Kingdom of God

- "Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" are identical terms. "Heaven" is a name of God, **not** an afterlife destination.
- Kingdom = Kingship
 - Allegiance
 - Ideal (related to eschatological hopes)
- "Invisihble Kingdom of God" = religious devotion.

Love of God

- Should be complete and unconditional, for its own sake, with no extraneous motives.

The Yoke of Torah

- Viewed as source and condition for freedom
- Ultimate expression of love of God is martyrdom.
 - Example of Rabbi Akiva:
 - Recitation of *Shema'*.
 - Not motivated by expectation of reward in afterlife.
 - Martyrdom viewed as privilege: "Chastisements of love."
 - No reward for righteousness expected in this world.

Fear of God as an expression of Love

Talmudic Mysticism

- Esoteric doctrine, little known about its content.
- Was apparently not a rebellion against rabbinic "legalism," but an outgrowth of it. Pursued by same rabbis who are active in "orthodox" religious areas.
- Avoidance of
 - Polytheism
 - Excessive concern with importance of individual

6. The Visible Kingdom (Universal)

The Visible Kingdom (Universal):

- Creation as an expression of God's glory.
- Kingship as relationship between God and humankind.
- The Torah as the blueprint for creation.
- The rivalry between humans and angels:
 - God prefers humans because they have the free will to choose God.
- The belief that the created world is fundamentally good.
- Sin causes God to distance himself from the world.
 - After the early sinful generations, Abraham restored the relationship between God and humanity, brought God closer to our world. Abraham and Sarah as prototype of missionaries, bringing knowledge of the one God to all of humanity (an old tradition not found in the Bible itself).
 - Metaphor of Patriarchs as "Throne of God" -- the means by which God can dwell in the world.
 - Israel's national mission to bring knowledge of God to the world.

- Major sins:
 - Rebellion against God.
 - Idolatry.
 - Belief that the world operates "autonomously" (without divine help).
 - Immorality.
- 1" And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will **we do, and we will hear.**" --i.e., they agreed to obey the commandments of the Torah before they had actually heard them. This attitude was considered very praiseworthy.
 - The acceptance of god's Kingship precedes acceptance of the commandments.
- Biblical history as a continuing pattern of sin and repentance.
- Israel as a nation devoted to the ideal of God's kingship.
- The world persists for the sake of a small remnant of righteous individuals.
- God's kingdom is not in a spiritual state or a far-off future. It is to be implemented on this earth.
- The Kingship of God is not a political concept: Not a justification for theocratic government.
 - This premise serves as a basis for the pursuit of ethical ideals.
- The universal scope of God's Kingship: Reflected in the *Malkhuyyot* prayers on the Jewish New Year, which describe how all the nations stand in judgment before God, and will one day acknowledge God's sovereignty. Israel acts as a vanguard for the universal acceptance of God.
- The declaration of God's unity in the *Shema'* viewed as the epitome and culmination of this universal mission.

7. The Kingdom of God: National

The Kingdom of God--National:

A. New Understanding of Biblical "Prophecy":

At the beginning of the Second Temple, the perception took root that prophecy [=God's communication to human agents] had ceased to operate.

In order to know God's teaching, it was necessary to study the inspired teachings of previous generations: The Bible.

If those teachings were to be relevant to later generations, then it was natural to assume that they had anticipated or predicted the events and situations of later times.

This evolved into the notion that prophets were predictors of the future. The word "prophet" comes from a Greek term designating the foretelling of the future. This is a religious approach that is associated with Oracles, and is more typical of Greek religion than of Jewish.

Nevertheless, many Jews in the Second Temple and Rabbinic eras came to regard the teachings of their ancient scriptures as predictions of event of the present or the immediate future.

This mode of thinking was vividly apparent in the extensive literature of Apocalypse that was composed at that time. In Apocalyptic works, the heroes (usually figures from the Bible) were allowed to see God's plans for the end of history: The cataclysmic destruction of the evil empire (usually: Rome); the ascent to power of God's faithful remnant (usually: the group who composed the Apocalypse; and the rejection of those who had falsified God's true teachings (usually: any Jewish movement other than that of the author). The events were described in graphic symbolism.

B. Biblical Prophecy and the Messianic Idea:

1. General Themes:

The prophets of Israel were concerned with upholding the religious faith and commitment in the present.

Their works did, however, contain statements about the future, in the form of threats and promises:

- If you do not obey God's commands, then terrible suffering will be imposed upon you: Drought, famine, conquest by cruel invaders, etc.
- If you do maintain your faith under adversity, then you will be rewarded: Your sovereignty will be restored; justice and peace will prevail; the entire world will acknowledge the God of Israel; etc.

Removed from their conditional context, they were understood as events that would inevitably occur.

Biblical Source (conditional)	As Understood by Later Generations (undconditional)
Threats of approaching catastrophe if Israel fails to obey God	Catastrophic future: Punishment of sinners.
Consolation: Obedience to God will lead to rewards, perfect world.	Utopian World
Revenge on Israel's Enemies.	Defeat of evil nations of the world.

2. Specific Themes:

Announcement by Elijah	<p>(Stated in Malachi 3:23 [4:5]):</p> <p>Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and</p>
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	<p>the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.</p>
<p>"The War of Gog and Magog"</p>	<p>:</p> <p>Described in Ezekiel 38-9:</p> <p>1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,</p> <p>2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,</p> <p>3 And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:</p> <p>4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:</p> <p>9 Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.</p> <p>15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army:</p> <p>16 And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.</p> <p>18 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face.</p> <p>19 For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;</p> <p>20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep</p>

	<p>upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.</p> <p>21 And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother.</p> <p>22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.</p> <p>23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.</p> <p>Chapter 39:</p> <p>6 And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord.</p> <p>9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years:</p> <p>10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God.</p> <p>11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamongog.</p> <p>12 And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land.</p>
<p>Restoration of the legitimate royal line from the descendants of King David, Legitimacy was expressed</p>	<p>e.g., 1 Samuel 16:13</p> <p>13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the</p>

<p>by anointing the king's head with oil</p> <p>An "anointed one" in Hebrew is a Mashiah, <i>Messiah</i>.</p>	<p>midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.</p>
<p>Resurrection of the Dead</p>	<p>Daniel 12</p> <p>1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.</p> <p>2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.</p> <p>3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.</p>
<p>Ingathering of the exiles</p>	<p>e.g., Isaiah 11:</p> <p>11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.</p> <p>12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.</p> <p>Isaiah 27:13</p> <p>And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.</p>
<p>The rebuilding of Jerusalem</p>	<p>Isaiah 33:20</p> <p>Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts! Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its</p>

	<p>cords be broken.</p> <p>Isaiah 40:2</p> <p>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.</p> <p>Ezekiel 20:40</p> <p>For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord God, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land</p> <p>Zechariah 1:17</p> <p>And the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.</p> <p>Zechariah 14:11</p> <p>And it shall be inhabited, for there shall be no more curse; Jerusalem shall dwell in security.</p>
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8. The "Law"

The "Law":

- Acceptance of God as King implies obligation to observe God's laws, as found in the Torah
- **Refutations of negative Christian stereotypes of Torah and Rabbinic Judaism as merely "legalistic"**
 - "Torah" is not the same as "Law."
 - The word means "teaching" or "Instruction."
 - The frequent juxtaposition of "Torah and commandments" implies that the two terms are not synonymous.
 - Torah as "an institution and a faith."
 - Different uses of the word "Torah":
 - Narrowest meaning: The Five Books of Moses (Pentateuch), contrasted to the Prophets and Hagiographa.
 - Broader meanings: To include the whole Hebrew Bible
 - Even more inclusive meaning: To refer to any religious teaching, even the individual conduct of a teacher, etc.

e.g., *Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 62a*:

Rav Kahana went in and lay down under Rav [i.e., Rabbi Abba] 's bed.

He heard him chatting and joking [with his wife] and doing what he required.

[Rav Kahana] said to him: It sounds as if Abba's mouth has never sipped a dish before!

He said to him: Kahana, are you here?! Get out, because this is not proper behaviour.

He replied: It is Torah, and I need to learn.

- Moses as greatest of the prophets --> Superiority of Torah over the rest of the Bible
- Schechter tries to minimize the claim that the rabbis held the Torah far above the other portions of the Hebrew Bible.
 - There is no antagonism between the Torah and Prophetic religion. The Prophets were believed to be a commentary on the Torah.
 - The Torah contains much non-legal material: Narratives, exhortations, moral teachings and values.
 - Even incidental or trivial-looking material in the Torah were believed by the Rabbis to contain valuable lessons.
 - The rabbis also revered the Prophets and Hagiographa.
 - The Rabbis had encyclopedic familiarity with the *entire* Bible, not only the Pentateuch.

9. The Torah in Its Aspect of Law ([Mizwoth](#))

The Torah in Its Aspect of Law (Mizwoth):

The Tradition about 613 Commandments:

TB Makkot 33b:

Rabbi Simlai expounded:

Six hundred and thirteen commandments were spoken to Moses.

Three hundred and sixty five negative commandments, corresponding to the number of days in the solar year;

and two hundred and forty-eight positive commandments, corresponding to the limbs in a human body.

Says Rav Hamnuna: What is the Biblical source?

"Moses commanded us a law [Torah], even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob"
(Deuteronomy 33:)--

The numerical value of the word "Torah" totals 611.

"*I am [the Lord thy God, etc.]*" (Exodus 20:2) and "*Thou shalt have no [other gods before me]*" (Exodus 20:3) we heard directly from the Almighty.

Schechter refutes the Christian accusation that obeying so many commandments is "burdensome" [cf. Paul: "the curse of the law"].

- Relatively few commandments can actually be observed by any individual, especially without the Jerusalem Temple.
 - Historically contingent precepts: e.g., building the Tabernacle; conquering the land.
 - Laws directed at defined groups: Priests (regular or High), nazirites, the community leadership, king, etc.
 - Laws governing special circumstances: e.g., divorce, levirate marriage, punishment for crimes and sins.
- In all, barely 100 commandments that are applicable to ordinary Jews
- The Torah as the source of all wisdom.
Through the commandments, Judaism integrates all aspects of life [unlike compartmentalizations of modern Western society].
No distinctions between:

"religious and "secular"

"spiritual" and "material"

soul and body

- The administration of civil and criminal justice perceived as an essential part of the Torah.
- The liturgy states that the giving of the Torah is the ultimate expression of God's love for Israel.
- The commandments turn every deed into an act of worship or devotion.

- The tradition about the prophets successively reducing the number of commandments implies an underlying spiritual or moral purpose to all the commandments.

Sample Texts

Sample passages from the [Mishnah](#):

Berakhot 1:1:

From what time can the *Shema*' (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) be read in the evening?

From the time when the priests enter to eat their heave-offering, until the end of the first watch. These are the words of Rabbi Eliezer.

And the Sages say: Until midnight.

Rabban Gamaliel says: Until dawn [literally: until the pillar of dawn rises].

It once happened that his children returned from a feast. They said to him: We have not recited the *Shema*'.

He said to them: If it is not yet dawn, you are obligated to recite it.

And not only this, but in all places where the Sages have said "until midnight," the commandment applies until dawn.

The burning of fats and limbs-- the commandment applies until dawn.

Anything that must be eaten within one day-- the commandment applies until dawn.

If that is so, then why did the Sages say: "Until midnight?"

In order to keep a person farther from transgression.

Berakhot 2:1:

Said Rabbi Joshua ben Qorhah:

Why does the *Shema*' come before the "*And it shall come to pass*" (Deuteronomy 11:13-21).

Rather, so that one should first accept upon oneself the yoke of the sovereignty of Heaven, and afterwards one should accept upon oneself the yoke of commandments.

And [why does] "*And it shall come to pass*" come before "*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying*" (Deuteronomy 37:41)?

Because "*And it shall come to pass*," applies by day and by night; while "*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying*" applies only in the day.

Some additional texts related to the recitation of the *Shema*'

Avot 1:

10. Shema'yah and Avtalyon received from them.

Shema'yah says: Love labour, hate power, and do not make yourself known to the authorities.

11. Avtalyon says: Sages, be cautious of what you say. Lest you incur upon yourself a penalty of exile and you are exiled to a place of bad waters, and the students who come after you will drink and die, and the name of Heaven will come to be profaned.

12. Hillel and Shammai received from them.

Hillel says: Be one of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving the creatures and bringing them close to the Torah.

13. He used to say: He who increases his name [=reputation], loses his name

And one who does not add, will perish.

And one who does not learn deserves death.

And one who makes use of the crown will perish.

14. He used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

And when I am for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?

15. Shammai says: Make your Torah fixed.
Say little and do much.
And receive every person with a pleasant countenance.

Bava Batra 2:

8. A permanent threshing-floor must be distanced from the town fifty cubits.
A person should not make a fixed threshing-floor within his own property unless there are fifty cubits in each direction.
And he must maintain a distance from his neighbour's plantings and his fallow field, in order to prevent damage.

9. Carcasses and graves and tanneries must be kept fifty cubits away from the town.
A tannery may only be set up to the east of the town.
Rabbi Akiva says: One may set it up in any direction, except for the west.
And it must be kept at a distance of fifty cubits.

Sample Passages from Tosefta:

Berakhot 1:1:

From what time can the Shema' be recited in the evenings?
From the time when people enter to eat their bread on Sabbath nights. These are the words of Rabbi Meir.
And the Sages say: From the time when the priests are allowed to eat their heave-offering.
The sign for this is the appearance of the stars.
And even though there is no proof for this, there is an indication for it (Nehemiah 4:21):
"And half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared."
Rabbi Simeon says: There are times when a person recites it two times in one night, once before the rising of the dawn and once after the rising of the dawn; and it turns out that he fulfils his obligation for the day and the night.
Rabbi says: There are four watches in the night.
An 'Onah is one twenty-fourth part of an hour. An 'Et is one twenty-fourth part of an 'Onah. A rega' is one twenty-fourth part of an 'et.
Rabbi Nathan says: There are three watches in the night, as it says (Judges 7:19): "in the beginning of the middle watch." There can only be a middle where there is something before it and after it.

Bava Batra 1:

7. A dovecote must be placed at a distance of fifty cubits from the town.
If a person purchases a dovecote from his fellow and it collapsed, even if it is a *beit rova'* [=an area that can be planted with a quarter-*kav* of seed] in size, he must rebuild its space.
Young birds found between two dovecotes, fifty cubits from the one and fifty cubits from the other, belong to the person who finds them.

8. Rabbi Akiva says: He makes it on all sides, and keeps it at a distance of fifty cubits; except on the west, because it is common.

10. Rabbi Nathan says: A furnace must be placed at a distance of fifty cubits from the town; and a tree at a distance of twenty-five cubits from the town.

And just as one keeps such a distance from a town, so does one keep a distance from wells and from pits and caves.

And just as one keeps a distance from those, so does one keep a distance from graves.

Sample Passages from Sifré on Deuteronomy:

Section 43:

"And you shall teach them diligently unto your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7):

That they should be well honed in your mouth. When a person asks you something, you should not stammer about it. Instead, you should state it immediately.

In a similar vein it states (Proverbs 7:4): "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman."

And it states (7:3): "Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart."

And it states (Psalm 45:6): "Thine arrows are sharp [*sh^enunim*] in the heart of the king's enemies."

What reward is there for this? --"In the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the peoples fall under thee."

And it states (Psalms 127:5): "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth."

What does it say about them? (verse 6) "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."...

"Unto your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7)

These are your students.

And thus do you find in every place, that students are referred to as "children."

As it states (2 Kings 2:3): "And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha."

And were these really the *sons* of prophets? Were they not really their *disciples*? rather [this shows] that students are referred to as children.

And thus does it state (2:5): "And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha."
And were these really the *sons* of prophets? Were they not really their *disciples*?
rather [this shows] that students are referred to as children.

And thus do you find with Hezekiah King of Judah, who taught the entire Torah, and called them
"children."

As it states (2 Chronicles 29:11): "My sons, be not now negligent."

Furthermore, just as the students are called "children," so is the master called a "father."

As it states (2 Kings 2:12) "And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of
Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

And it states (13:14): "Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the
king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the
chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

"And shalt talk of them" (Deuteronomy 6:7)

Make them the most important thing, and do not make them a peripheral matter.

That your discourse should only be about them, and that you should not mix extraneous things
with them, as So-and-So did.

You should not say "I have learned the wisdom of Israel. I shall go and learn the wisdom of the
nations."

Hence [in order to avert such reasoning], it says (Leviticus 18:4): "[Ye shall do my judgments,
and keep mine ordinances] to walk therein" -- and not to become released from them.

And thus does it state (Proverbs 5:17): "Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with
thee."

And it states (6:22): "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee;
and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee."

"When thou goest, it shall lead thee" -- In this world.

"When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee" -- at the time of your death.

"And when thou awakest" -- in the days of the messiah.

"It shall talk with thee" -- in the world to come.

"And when thou liest down" (Deuteronomy 6:7):

You might have said: Even if he lay down in the middle of the day--
Therefore it states: "and when thou risest up."

You might have said: Even if he got up in the middle of the night--

Therefore it states: "when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way." The
Torah was speaking of a normal situation.

And it already happened that Rabbi Ishmael was lying down and expounding, while Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah was standing straight.
 The time for the recitation of the *Shema* arrived.
 Rabbi Ishmael stood up straight and Rabbi Eleazar lay down.
 Rabbi Ishmael said to him: What is this, Eleazar?
 He said to him: Ishmael my brother:
 They once said to a person: Why is your beard so long?
 He said to them: Let it be against the destroyers!
 He said to him: You lay down according to the view of the House of Shammai; while I stood up in accordance with the view of the House of Hillel.

Another version:
 Lest the matter be determined as obligatory,
 since the House of Shammai say: In the evening every person should lie down when reciting;
 and in the morning they should stand.

Notes on G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*

Talmudic Judaism: The Historical Framework

Year (C.E.)	Historical Events	Name of Rabbinic Era	Works of Rabbinic Literature
c. 50	Limited autonomy under Roman rule	Tannaitic	Mishnah Tosefta Halakhic Midrash etc.
70	Destruction of Second Temple	(Yabneh [Yavneh/Jamnia]: Restoration of Jewish Religious Life)	
135	Bar Kokhba Revolt	(Usha: Transfer of religious centre from Judea to Galilee)	
c. 220		Start of Amoraic Era	Palestinian ("Jerusalem") Talmud Aggadic Midrash
c. 380	Christianization of Roman Empire		
c. 400 ^[1]		End of Amoraic era in the Land of Israel	
c. 500 ^[2]		End of Amoraic Era in Babylonia	Babylonian Talmud

[1] The Transition from Second Temple to Rabbinic Judaism

- Second Temple Judaism had been distinguished by its factionalism: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots etc.
Of these only the **Pharisees** survived, most of its distinctive beliefs and institutions (e.g., physical resurrection, the Oral Torah) were now part of a religious consensus.
 - The Temple worship and associated aspects of religious life (purity laws, some tithing regulations, etc.) were no longer in effect. The focus of worship moved to other areas, such as the synagogue, home and religious scholarship.
-

[2] The Transition from Talmudic to Medieval Judaism

- The date 500 C.E. for the conclusion of the Amoraic era is the traditional date of the completion of the Babylonian Talmud. This date is in itself problematic, since the redactional process appears to have continued for several centuries afterwards.
- Furthermore, the "Amoraic" activity in the Land of Israel and other centres also continued for several centuries afterwards, especially in the area of Aggadic midrash.

Mishnah:

Meaning of word:

From root *ShNY*, implying memorization and repetition of oral tradition.

Distinct from: Midrash [=Scriptural exposition]; Halakhah [=legal exposition]; Aggadah [=non-legal discussions].

Technically: Mishnah can be seen as the *antithesis* of Midrash.

Generic use of Mishnah: Any rabbinic oral teaching from Tannaitic era [including baraita].

Specialized usage: *The* ["Our"] Mishnah.

For more information [click here](#):

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Mishnah.html#Desc> to go to the image-map page on the Mishnah

Structure and Contents:

Structure, division into Orders and Tractates, names of tractates are attested in ancient sources. Exact sequence of Orders and Tractates may have been flexible.

Six Orders [Seder; pl. S^edarim]; 60 Tractates [Massekhet].

Sequence is generally a logical, topical one. There are, however, many digressions. Many of the exceptions are collections of sources linked by a formal or stylistic similarity, probably taken from an earlier collection that was arranged by different criteria.

For more information [click here](#):

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Mishnah.html#Desc> to go to the image-map page on the Mishnah

Origin of the Mishnah:

Problem faced by traditional Jewish writers:

- Mishnah claims to be a collection of ancient oral traditions dating back to Moses.
- The rabbis who appear in the Mishnah are all from the two centuries before its completion.

Traditionalist solutions:

Mishnah reflects attempt to reconstruct earlier unified tradition that had become fragmented during the Second Temple era.

The later scholars were dealing more with the *literary form* than with the *contents* of the tradition.

Academic scholarship does not have to worry about these dogmatic claims.

Which came first: Midrash or Mishnah?

In other words: Were oral traditions derived primarily from Scripture or transmitted independently?

--Question not resolved. Most likely the two forms existed simultaneously.

Attempts to reconstruct the development of the Mishnah.

Attempts to identify the Mishnah's use of earlier materials.

Anecdotal traditions from Talmud are generally unreliable. Better to base conclusions on internal evidence.

Identification of earlier strata and collections: Tractates *Tamid* and *Middot*.

Mishnah does appear to stem from School of Rabbi Akiva; distinct from that of Rabbi Ishmael.

Scholarly assumption that authorship can be determined by identifying the opinions expressed in anonymous passages [J. N. Epstein].

Redaction of the Mishnah:

General consensus that the redactor was Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi [the Prince; Patriarch].

For more information [click here](#):

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Mishnah.html#Desc> to go to the image-map page on the Mishnah

The present version clearly contains some later additions.

What is implied by "redaction:?"

Different from authorship. The Mishnah does not reflect Rabbi Judah's personal opinions.

For more information [click here](#):

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Mishnah.html#Desc> to go to the image-map page on the Mishnah

What was the purpose of the Mishnah?

Various scholarly theories:

1. Collection of sources; teaching manual.
2. code of law; in disputed cases, normative position indicated by its anonymity.

Question not resolved.

Nature of publication process:

Remained oral work: published by memorization.

To what extent was the text considered "canonical" or unchangeable?

Tosefta:

Meaning of word:

From root *YSP*: Addition, Supplement -- to the **Mishnah**.

Term appears in Talmud-- Not clear that it refers to the same work, or to a particular work.

Perhaps it is a generic term for traditions that interpret the Mishnah.

Description of Tosefta:

Same as Mishnah:

- Six Orders
- Almost all the same tractates
- Some discrepancies in order of Tractates within Orders
- Composed in same Hebrew dialect as Mishnah.
- Same rabbis as in Mishnah, though the Tosefta contains more material from the last Tannaitic generation.

Redaction of Tosefta

- Talmudic associations with Rabbi Nehemiah, Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Hosha'yah cannot be verified by independent evidence.

Relationship to Mishnah

- Different phenomena:
 - Slight variations, or added explanations.
 - Different attributions of authors, or of unattributed statements
 - Related material not included in Mishnah (especially in Aggadah)
 - Comparative summaries of laws in the Mishnah.
 - Preserves older versions of material in the Mishnah.
- Purpose of Tosefta
Diverse theories, some farfetched:
 - Portions of the Mishnah that were later excluded
 - Attempt to challenge the authority of the Mishnah and its redactor by presenting alternative material.
 - Supplementary material to enhance study of Mishnah.

Relationship to Talmuds

- Basic facts:
 - Talmuds contain much material that is similar or identical to the Tosefta
 - Talmuds often seem to be unaware of material that is found in the Tosefta.
 - Jerusalem Talmud seems much more familiar with Tosefta than Babylonian.
- Proposed explanations
 - Tosefta was composed after the Talmudic era, from material found in Talmuds.
 - Individual Talmudic rabbis were familiar with Tosefta, but the redactors of the Babylonian Talmud were not.
 - Questions have not been resolved yet.

• Additional Materials

10. Chronological Table of the Talmudic-Rabbinic Era

Talmudic Judaism: Historical Outline

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- Second Temple Judaism had been distinguished by its factionalism: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots etc. Of these only the **Pharisees** survived, most of its distinctive beliefs and institutions (e.g., physical resurrection, the Oral Torah) were now part of a religious consensus.
 - The Temple worship and associated aspects of religious life (purity laws, some tithing regulations, etc.) were no longer in effect. The focus of worship moved to other areas, such as the synagogue, home and religious scholarship.
-

[2] The Transition from Talmudic to Medieval Judaism

- The date 500 C.E. for the conclusion of the Amoraic era is the traditional date of the completion of the Babylonian Talmud. This date is in itself problematic, since the redactional process appears to have continued for several centuries afterwards.
- Furthermore, the "Amoraic" activity in the Land of Israel and other centres also continued for several centuries afterwards, especially in the area of Aggadic midrash.

11. The Mishnah: *Berakhot* Chapter 1: Sources Related to the *Shema*

The Mishnah: *Berakhot* Chapter 1

Texts Related to the *Shema*

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD;

and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way,

* Recitation of morning and evening <i>Shema</i> '	and when you lie down, and when you rise.
* " Phylacteries " (<i>tefillin</i>) on arm and forehead	And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
* Mezuzah on doorposts	And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

(Deuteronomy 6).

And if you will obey my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be

full. Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, and the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the LORD gives you.

You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul;

* Phylacteries (<i>tefillin</i>) on arm and forehead	and you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
--	---

And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way,

Fragments from a Phylacteries (*Tefillin*) Case from Qumran



* Recitation of morning and evening <i>Shema'</i>	and when you lie down, and when you rise.
---	---

* <i>Mezuzah</i> on doorposts	And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates,
-------------------------------	--

that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

(Deuteronomy 11:1-32).

From the Mishnah, Berakhot:

1:1: From what time does one recite the Shema in the evening? From the time when the priests go in to eat of their heave-offering until the end of the first watch. ...

1:3: The House of Shammai say: In the evening everyone should recite it while reclining, and in the morning they should be standing, as it says: and when you lie down, and when you rise.

And the House of Hillel say: Every one should recite it in their normal manner, as it says: and when you walk by the way.

If this is so, then why does it say and when you lie down, and when you rise ? At the time when people lie down and at the time when people rise up.

Rabbi Tarfon said: I was once traveling on the road and lay down in order to recite, according to the view of the House of Shammai, and I placed myself in peril of robbers.

They said to him: You deserved to pay the penalty for disregarding the view of the House of Hillel.

2:2: Said Rabbi Joshua ben Qorhah: Why does the Shema' precede the And if you will obey... ?

Rather: In order that one should first of all accept upon oneself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven, and afterwards accept the yoke of commandments...

12. The "Oral Torah": History and Literature

The "Oral Torah": History and Literature

Earliest Records:

Josephus Flavius, Jewish Antiquities 13:297:

The Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by previous generations, but not written down in the Law of Moses. For this they were rejected by the Sadducee party.

Rabbinic Traditions about the earlier period:

Many laws were transmitted and derived, but only one dispute ("laying of hands").

Mishnah *Hagigah* 1:8:

Absolution of vows

hover in the air without any support.

Laws of the **Sabbath**,

Pilgrimage Offerings,

Sacrilege

are like mountains hanging by a hair. They have little Scriptural support, but many *halakhot*.

Civil laws,

Sacrificial worship,

purity and impurity and

prohibited marriages

have much support. They are the essentials of the Torah.

Hillel and Shammai (1st century B.C.E.):

Hillel the Elder, from Babylonia

- Seven hermeneutical rules.
- Enactments (e.g., *prosbul*).

Shammai

- Apparently a conservative. No discernible legal philosophy.

A handful of disputes recorded between Shammai and Hillel--No consistent pattern.

The "Houses" of Shammai and Hillel and the Proliferation of Disputes

Rabbinic sources record hundreds of disputes between the "Houses." The institutional character of these schools is unclear, as are their chronology and numbers.

In general, the House of Hillel is more lenient (but there are many exceptions to this rule).

Reasons suggested for proliferation of disputes at this time:

- Collapse of decision-making mechanism; multiple factions in the Sanhedrin.

- Confusion created by heretical and foreign influences.
- "The students did not attend their teachers sufficiently."
- Debate is a healthy phenomenon that enriches the process of scholarship.

Earliest strata in the Mishnah appear to have been redacted in the generation preceding the Destruction, especially material related to Temple worship (J. N. Epstein). Why?

In the Wake of the Destruction:

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai:

A respected Pharisee spokesman before fall of Jerusalem, he expressed views that deemphasized the importance of the Temple.

Talmudic legend states that before the fall of Jerusalem he defected to the Roman camp and established an academy (?) at Yavneh (Jamnia).

The discussions at Yavneh are described in considerable detail, including the citation of prooftexts and logical arguments.

Interplay or tension between received tradition and logical argumentation.

The Riddle of the Tractate Eduyyot ("Testimonies"):

Unique Tractate of Mishnah consists of "testimonies" of halakhic traditions cited by Yavnean Rabbis, arranged according to the names of the transmitters. Most of the material has parallels elsewhere in the Mishnah. Why include such a tractate?

Talmudic tradition (*Tosefta Eduyyot* 1:1) describes how the Rabbis of that generation, fearing that the [Oral] Torah would be forgotten, initiated a collection of the traditions, commencing with the traditions of Shammai and Hillel.

According to H. Albeck, this was the **first tractate** of the Mishnah. The rest of the Mishnah evolved as an expansion of the material in *Eduyyot*.

Note that the Rabbinic sources do not see the activities of the Yavnean Rabbis as a response to the historical events, but as an internal evolution in the history of religious scholarship.

The 2nd Century: The Schools of Rabbis Akiva and Ishmael:

The schools are better known for their respective systems of Midrash, ways of reading the written Torah in light of the oral tradition.

Rabbi Ishmael's method was more respectful of the literal meaning of the Biblical text, often making allowances for human quality of the language.

Rabbi Akiva attached significance to every detail of the text, including particles and extra letters. He was thereby able to produce an extremely flexible vehicle of linking oral traditions to the words of the Torah. Both teachers initiated schools which produced midrashic commentaries on the legal sections of the Pentateuch.

It appears that Rabbi Akiva was involved as well in the organization of traditions according to the "Mishnah" method: by topics, not following the order of the Bible. There is no evidence of such activity among the students of Rabbi Ishmael.

The major component of the Mishnah consists of teachings of the students of Rabbi Akiva, in the generation of "Usha" following the Bar Kokhba revolt and the resultant migrations to from Judea to the Galilee. There is a likelihood that the School of Rabbi Ishmael fled to Babylonia, where their views seem to have exerted an influence upon the traditions that developed there.

A Talmudic tradition identifies anonymous statements in the Mishnah with the teachings of Rabbi Akiva's student Rabbi Meir. This can be corroborated to some extent by internal evidence, though this is true (to a lesser extent apparently) of other students of Rabbi Akiva as well. This has been construed as implying that the Mishnah was based mainly on a preliminary redaction by Rabbi Meir, which was supplemented by material from several of his colleagues. Underlying all these hypothetical Mishnah compendia were the teachings of Rabbi Akiva himself, which are usually taught anonymously.

Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi (the Prince, the Patriarch) and the Redaction of the Mishnah:

Rabbi Judah ben Simeon (usually referred to as "Rabbi" or "our Holy Rabbi") served as *Nasi*, the political representative of Palestinian Jewry and head of the Jewish religious assembly, the "*Sanhedrin*."

All ancient traditions credit him with the redaction of the final version of the Mishnah.

Rabbi Judah had studied with all of the important teachers of the "Usha" generation (Rabbi Meir and the other disciples of Rabbi Akiva). and was able to collect their teachings in an authoritative form.

The collection immediately gained acceptance by the Rabbinic communities of Palestine and Babylonia.

Scholars disagree over several key issues regarding Rabbi's objectives in producing the Mishnah:

- Did he impose his personal views on the received text, or did he merely record the normative views (presumably decided by majority vote in the *Sanhedrin*)?
- Did he introduce changes into the received traditions? It is generally agreed that he combined the traditions very creatively.
- Was his intention to produce a usable codex of law, or merely an anthology of traditions?
- The previous question is closely linked to the explanation of why and how disputed opinions were incorporated into the Mishnah. Later generations devised rules for choosing among the various views; e.g., an anonymous view overrides a named one. Did Rabbi Judah have such rules

in mind in presenting the materials, or was he merely collecting the different opinions without intending to indicate a preference?

The widespread acceptance of the Mishnah is indicated by the fact that subsequent works of Tannaitic literature, including Midrashic compendia from the School of Rabbi Ishmael and the Tosefta, were edited so as to serve as supplements to the Mishnah.

13. "A Page of Talmud"--HTML image map guide to the Talmud

A Page from the Babylonian Talmud

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Go here for the interactive version: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/TalmudPage.html>

The standard printed Talmud page, as reproduced at the above web page, spans many centuries of Jewish religious scholarship, from the Bible to the beginning of the twentieth century.

In this Web page, a typical Talmud page will serve us as a port of departure on a voyage through the history of Jewish religious literature.

Instructions:

Click on any portion of the web page image, and you will be linked to a description of that element of the Talmud page.

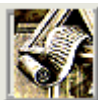
The description will tell you when and where the text was composed, its contents and purposes, and other interesting information.



Click [here](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Samples.html) <http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Samples.html> to see a hyperlinked selection of the texts in translation (requires a frames-capable browser).

You may also access the files through the following menus:

<input type="text" value="Choose an item from this menu"/>
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Texts

- [The Mishnah](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Mishnah.html>

Has its own Image-Map site!

- [The Gemara \(Talmud\)](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Gemara.html>

- [The Mikra'ot Gedolot \(Rabbinic Bible\) and its commentaries](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/MG.html>



Commentaries

- [Rashi](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Rashi.html>

- [Tosafot](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Tosafot.html>

Other Commentaries

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/OtherComs.html>

- [Glosses](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Glosses.html>



Codes of Law

- [Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Maimonides.html>

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- [Rabbi Moses of Coucy's *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/SeMaG.html>

- [Rabbi Jacob ben Asher's *Arba'ah Turim*](#)

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/Tur.html>

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- [Rabbi Joseph Caro's *Shulhan Arukh*](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/ShA.html)
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<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/ChapterName.html>
- [*Mesoret Ha-Sha" S*](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/MHS.html)
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/MHS.html>
- [*Ein Mishpat/Ner Mitzvah*](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/EMNM.html)
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/EMNM.html>
- [*Torah Or*](http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/TorahOr.html)
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Eelsegal/TalmudMap/TorahOr.html>

The page format of the Babylonian Talmud has remained almost unchanged since the early printings in Italy. Some twenty-five individual tractates were printed by Joshua and Gershom Soncino between 1484 and 1519, culminating in the complete edition of the Talmud produced by Daniel Bomberg (a Christian) in 1520-30. These editions established the familiar format of placing the original text in square formal letters the centre of the page, surrounded by the commentaries of [Rashi](#) and [Tosafot](#), which are printed in a semi-cursive typeface. The [page divisions](#) used in the Bomberg edition have been used by all subsequent editions of the Talmud until the present day.

Over the years several additions were introduced, including [identifications of Biblical quotes](#), [cross-references the Talmud and Rabbinic literature](#), and to the principal [codes of Jewish law](#).

Almost all Talmuds in current use are copies of the famous Vilna (Wilno, Vilnyus) Talmuds, published in several versions from 1880 by the "Widow and Brothers Romm" in that renowned Lithuanian centre of Jewish scholarship. While retaining the same format and pagination as the previous editions, the Vilna Talmud added several new commentaries, along the margins and in supplementary pages at the ends of the respective volumes.



The World of the Talmud

Instructor: Professor Samuel N. Hoenig

About the lecturer

[Professor Samuel N. Hoenig](#) was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1942. He holds a Ph.D. in Talmudic Studies from Yeshiva University, where he also obtained his B.A. in Hebrew Language and Literature and M.A. in Jewish History. He received his rabbinic ordination from Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1966.

His association with Touro College commenced in 1973, and he presently teaches in both its Liberal Arts and Graduate Schools.


Professor Hoenig has published in English and Hebrew on Talmudic thought, the Halakhic code, Responsa literature, and Jewish history and education.

This course was sponsored by:

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Samuel M. Rosenbaum, Secretary

Introduction and Historical Background

Lecture 1 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-1.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-1.ram>

- What exactly is the Talmud?
- Talmud as a blend of law, legend, and philosophy.
- Its impact on all of Jewish life throughout the ages.
- The historical setting in which the Talmud developed – Eretz Yisrael (Palestine) and Babylonia.
- The Chain of Tradition and the transmission of the Oral Law.
- The emergence of three philosophic sects: Essenes, Sadducees, Pharisees.
- The destruction of the Second Temple and the renewal of Jewish intellectual life at Yavne.
- Babylonian Jewry and its centers of learning.
- The innovation of the *Yarchei Kallah* – two months of intensive Talmudic study.

Suggested Reading

[Avi-Yonah, M. *The Jews of Palestine*](#). New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

[Baron, Salo W. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*](#). Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1952. v, 1, pp. 212-242, v. 2, pp. 215-292.

[Goldin, Judah. *The Period of the Talmud. The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion*](#). Ed. L. Finkelstein. New York: Schocken Books, 1974. v. 1, pp. 119-224.

[Neusner, Jacob. *There We Sat Down*](#). Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972.

[Zeitlin, Solomon. *The Struggle Between Secular and Religious Forces for Leadership. Understanding the Talmud*](#). Ed. Alan Corne. New York: Ktav, 1975. pp. 107-118.

Topics for Discussion

Required Reading


[Goldin, Judah. *The Period of the Talmud*](#). pp. 119-224.

1. Define the term *Talmud*.
2. Delineate the various periods in which the Talmud developed.
3. Discuss the main activities of the *Sofrim*.
4. Describe the views, outlooks, and political leanings of the *Essenes*, *Sadducees*, and *Pharisees*.
5. What role did Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai play in the post-70 period of revitalization and restoration?
6. Describe the overall structure of the Babylonian Jewish community in Talmudic times.
7. Discuss the significance of the *Yarchei Kallah*.

The sections entitled Topics for Discussion throughout this brochure are intended for the use of the Discussion Leader.

Helpful suggestions are also contained in the Discussion Guide on how to organize and lead a discussion group.

The Oral Law

Lecture 2 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoeworl-2.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoeworl-2.ram>

- The relationship between the Written Law (Pentateuch) and the Oral Law.
- The Oral Law as central in the revelational scheme.
- Laws of Sinaitic and non-Sinaitic origin.
- Methods of *drash* (the deriving of halakhah from the biblical texts themselves): proof-texts and creative-interpretive.
- Two types of Rabbinic legislation: *gezerot* (decrees) – laws established to safeguard the Torah; *takanot* (ordinances) – to improve compliance with religious law or cope with new situations.
- Minhag (custom) as a genuine expression of the Oral Law.
- The Talmudic injunction against the writing of the Oral Law.

Suggested Reading

[Hirsch, Samson Raphael. *The Pentateuch \(translated and explained by Samson Raphael Hirsch\)*.](#)

Gateshead, Eng.: Judaica Press, 1973. v. 2, pp. 287-289.

[Maimonides, Moses. *Introduction to the Commentary on the Mishna*.](#) New York: Judaica Press, 1975.

[Schimmel, Harry. *The Oral Law*.](#) Jerusalem: Feldheim Publications, 1973. pp. 19-119.

Topics for Discussion


Required Reading

[Schimmel, Harry. *The Oral Law*.](#) Jerusalem: Feldheim Publications, 1973. pp. 19-119.

1. Discuss the centrality of the Oral Law in Jewish tradition.
2. Show how a careful reading of the Pentateuch indicates that its author was working side by side with an oral tradition.
3. Delineate and discuss Maimonides' five-point classification of the Oral Law.
4. Discuss the two types of Rabbinic enactment or legislation.

5. Why aren't Rabbinic acts of legislation in violation of "You shall not add to the word which I command you"?
6. Discuss the injunction against the writing down of the Oral Law.

The Literature of the Tannaim

Lecture 3 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoeworl-3.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoeworl-3.ram>

- The teachings of the Oral Law have been preserved in two forms – the Midrashic and Mishnaic arrangements.
- Midrash Halakhah as a running commentary on the legal sections of the Pentateuch.
- The Midrashic schools of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yishmael and their respective approaches.
- Transition from Midrash to Mishna: Why and When?
- The Six Orders of the Mishna and their literary structure.
- Rabbi Akiva's role in the systematic organization of the Oral Law into clearly defined units.
- The arrangement and publication of the Mishna by Rabbi Judah the Prince.
- The close of the Mishna and the end of Tannaitic times.
- Additional compilations of the Oral Law – *Tosefta* and *Baraita*.

Suggested Reading

[Albeck, Hanoah. *Mevo Le-mishna \(Introduction to the Mishna\)*. Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1959. pp. 63-127.](#)

[Hoffmann, David. *The First Mishna and the Controversies of the Tannaim*. New York: Maurosho Publications, 1977.](#)

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*. New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 33-39.](#)

[Strack, Hermann. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1959. pp. 201-209.](#)

Topics for Discussion


Required Reading

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*. pp. 33-39.](#)

1. Discuss the origin of the Midrashic form.
2. Describe the exact style of Midrash Halakhah.
3. How do the schools of Rabbis Akiva and Yishmael differ in their approach to Midrashic interpretation?

4. Why did the Midrashic form give way to the Mishnaic style?
5. Describe the activities of Rabbi Judah the Prince and the final redaction of the Mishna.
6. Discuss the style and structure of the Mishna.
7. How does the Tosefta compare to the Mishna?

The Literature of the Amoraim and the Formation of the Talmud

Lecture 4 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-4.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-4.ram>

- The emergence of the Amoraim – the expounders and teachers of the Mishna.
- Four main objectives of the Gemara or Talmud as delineated by Maimonides.
- The vastness and structure of the Gemara.
- *Memra* and *Sugya*: two basic literary units in Amoraic literature.
- Logic and dialectics as employed by the Talmudic *Sugya*.
- When and how the Talmud was redacted.
- The Palestinian Talmud as compared with the Babylonian Talmud.
- The publication and printing of the Talmud.

Suggested Reading

[Ginzberg, Louis. *The Palestinian Talmud. Understanding the Talmud*. Ed. Alan Corne. New York: Ktav, 1975. pp. 33-54.](#)

[Kaplan, Julius. *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud*. New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1933.](#)

[Neusner, Jacob. *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970.](#)

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*. New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 56-63, 95-100.](#)

Topics for Discussion


Required Reading

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*. pp. 56-63.](#)

1. Discuss the four main objectives of the *Gemara*.
2. Describe the main features of a *Sugya*.
3. Discuss some of the outstanding characteristics of Talmudic logic and methodology.
4. Present two views concerning the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud.
5. How does the Jerusalem Talmud differ from its Babylonian counterpart?

6. Discuss the importance of the *nehutei*.
7. Describe the growth and spread of the Talmudic text in terms of its publication.

The Agada

Lecture 5 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-5.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-5.ram>

- Defining Agada: All the material contained in the Talmud that is not halakhic or legalistic is considered as agadic.
- The different genres of Agada: exegetical, dogmatical, historical and ethical.
- The relationship between the homiletical interpretation and the actual wording of the text.
- The development of allegory and its relationship to Midrash.
- Approaches to the understanding of difficult Agadot.
- The origin of the various Agadic collections and their impact.

Suggested Reading

[Chayes, Z. H. *The Student's Guide Through the Talmud*](#). New York: Feldheim Publications, 1960. pp. 139-153.

[Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *G-d in Search of Man*](#). Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1956. pp. 336-360.

[Saperstein, Marc. *Decoding the Rabbis*](#). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980. pp. 1-20.

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*](#). New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 253-260.

Topics for Discussion

Required Reading

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*](#). pp. 253-260.

1. Describe the outstanding features of *Agada*.
2. Do *Halakhah* and *Agada* co-exist or are they mutually exclusive?
3. Define *peshat* and *derash*.
4. What is the relationship between the homiletical interpretation and the actual wording of the text?
5. What place does allegory have in the *Midrashic* scheme?
6. Discuss the various approaches advanced in dealing with problematic *Agadic* texts.
7. Discuss the different genres of independent *Agadic* works.

Talmudic Jurisprudence

Lecture 6 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-6.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-6.ram>

- The two-fold categorization of Jewish law: laws between man and man and laws between man and G-d.
- Divisions of Talmudic law: *mammonot* (civil and monetary), *issurai* (ritual and ceremonial), *nefashot* (capital criminal law).
- Talmudic law is monistic in the sense that the same concepts, dialectics and precedents are applicable to all areas of the halakhah.
- In Talmudic law, the concept of "duty" rather than "right" is primary.
- The theocentricity of Talmudic law and the human element in the decision-making process.
- Capital offenses and the death penalty: the views of Rabbis Akiva, Tarfon, and Simon ben Gamliel.
- *Dina de-malchuta dina* (the law of the kingdom is the law) – a modus vivendi for Jews of all ages and countries.

Suggested Reading

[Blidstein, Gerald. "Capital Punishment – The Classic Jewish Discussion." *Understanding the Talmud*. Ed. Alan Corre. New York: Ktav, 1975. pp. 313-324.](#)

[Herzog, Isaac. *The Main institutions of Jewish Law*. London: Soncino Press, 1965.](#)

[Kahana, K. *The Case For Jewish Civil Law In The Jewish State*. London: Soncino Press, 1960.](#)

[Rakefet-Rothkoff, Aaron. "Dina D'malkhuta Dina – The Law of the Land in Halakhic Perspective." *Tradition*. 13 \(1972\): 5-23.](#)

[Silberg, Moshe. *Talmudic Law and the Modern State*. New York: The Burning Bush Press, 1973.](#)


Topics for Discussion

Required Reading

[Kahana, K. *The Case For Jewish Civil Law In The Jewish State*. pp. 21-73.](#)

1. Discuss the three main divisions of Talmudic law.
2. Discuss the concepts of duty-oriented and right-oriented in respect to Jewish jurisprudence.
3. Discuss the idea that the Torah is *from* heaven but not *in* heaven.
4. Describe the outstanding features of Talmudic criminal law.
5. What is the Talmudic position on the death penalty?
6. Analyze and discuss the scope and range of *Dina de-malchuta dina*.
7. In which ways does the Talmudic system of jurisprudence differ from other legal systems?

The Sages of the Talmud

Lecture 7 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-7.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-7.ram>

- The Sages of the Talmud molded the life of the Jewish people and greatly influenced the Jew's understanding of his past, present and future.
- An early account of the Sages as found in the Book of Ben Sira.
- The Sages were primarily engaged in judging, in scholarship and in religious-communal leadership.
- The Sage as a personification of the Torah.
- Two biographical studies: Hillel Hanasi, one of the greatest sages of the Second Temple period; Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, a third century Palestinian Amoraic teacher.

Suggested Reading

[Glatzer, Nahum N. *Hillel the Elder: The Emergence of Classical Judaism*. Washington: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1959.](#)

[Margalioth, Mordecai. *Encyclopedia of Talmudic and Geonic Literature*. Tel Aviv: Joshua Chachik Publishing House, n.d..](#)

[Neusner, Jacob. "Rabbis and Community in Third Century Babylonia." *Exploring the Talmud*. Ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky. New York: Ktav, 1976. v. 1, pp. 128-149.](#)

[Urbach, Ephraim E. "The Talmudic Sage – Character and Authority." *Jewish Society Through the Ages*. Ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson and Ed. S. Ettinger. New York: Schocken Books, 1973. pp. 116-147.](#)

Topics for Discussion


Required Reading

[Urbach, Ephraim E. "The Talmudic Sage – Character and Authority." *Jewish Society Through the Ages*. Ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson and Ed. S. Ettinger. New York: Schocken Books, 1973. pp. 116-147.](#)

1. Describe the three main areas of activity in which the Sages were engaged.
2. Discuss the views of Rabbis Yishmael and Simon Bar Yochai concerning exclusive devotion to Torah study.
3. Discuss the impact of the Sages on the Jewish people in Talmudic times.
4. How does Ben Sirah characterize the Sages of Israel?

5. Discuss the life and time of Hillel.
6. Discuss some of Hillel's ethical teachings as reflected in the various Talmudic legends.

The Growth and Development of Talmudic Exegesis

Lecture 8 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoeworl-8.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoeworl-8.ram>

- So long as the Talmud remained without some form of elucidation and commentary, it was for many virtually a closed book.
- The earliest known Talmudic commentaries come from the Babylonian Geonim (the heads of the academies) and were written in the form of letters in response to specific questions.
- With the decline of Babylonian Jewry in the eleventh century, new centers of Jewish learning emerged in Spain, Italy, France, Germany, and North Africa.
- The "Legend of the Four Captives" and its implications.
- Talmudic writings of the North African School and the emergence of Sefardic (Spanish) and Ashkenazic (European) Talmudic commentaries.
- Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki) as Talmudic commentator par excellence.
- The dialectical and conceptual approach of the Tosafists.
- Rabbi Jacob Pollack: the father of Torah study in Poland and the "pilpulistic" approach.
- The Talmudic writings of Rabbis Meir of Lublin, Solomon Luria, and Samuel Edels.
- New horizons in the conceptual approach to Talmudic study: Rabbis Akiva Eger, Jacob of Lisa, and Aryeh Leib Hacoen.
- Lithuanian Talmudists of the analytical School: Rabbis Shimon Shkop and Hayyim Soloveitchik.
- The modern study of the Talmud and its emphasis on literary criticism.

Suggested Reading

[Agus, Irving. "Rabbinic Scholarship in Northern Europe." *The World History of the Jewish People: The Dark Ages*. Ed. C. Roth. Ramat Gan: Rutgers University Press, 1966. pp. 189-209.](#)

[Haut, Irwin H. *The Talmud as Law or Literature*. New York: Bet Sha'ar Press, 1982.](#)

[Shereshevsky, Ezra. *Rashi: The Man and His World*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1982.](#)

[Solomon, Norman. *Definition and Classification in the Works of the Lithuanian Halakhists. Dine Israel*. Ed. Z. Falk and Ed. A. Kirschenbaum. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1975. v. 6, pp. lxxiii-ciii.](#)

[Urbach, Ephraim E. *The Tosafists: Their History, Writings and Methods*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1955.](#)

[Waxman, Meyer. *A History of Jewish Literature*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960. v. 2, pp. 98-196.](#)


Topics for Discussion

Required Reading

[Waxman, Meyer. *A History of Jewish Literature*](#). New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960. v. 2, pp. 98-196.

1. Discuss the growth and spread of the Talmud and the rise of Talmudic commentaries.
2. How did the European centers of Talmudic learning become independent of Babylonian authority?
3. Characterize the Rabbinic scholarship of the communities of Northern Europe.
4. Discuss the importance of Rashi's commentary on the Talmud.
5. Describe the major contributions of the Tosafists.
6. Compare the styles of the Geonic, Spanish and Ashkenazic schools of Talmudic exegesis.
7. Trace the development of Talmudic exegesis from the 16th century to the present.

The Talmud on Trial

Lecture 9 [Listen](#)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-9.ram>

-
- Even before the Talmud was fully completed, numerous attempts were made to ban and censor it.
 - The earliest attack on the Talmud goes back to the sixth century, when Justinian attempted to strip Judaism of its legal rights.
 - The most celebrated attack on the Talmud was in France during the thirteenth century.
 - Subsequent attacks and condemnations of the Talmud took place throughout Europe in medieval and even fairly modern times.
 - Analysis and discussion of the debate of 1240 concerning the Church's charges against the Talmud.
 - Johannes Reuchlin, a sixteenth century Christian scholar and Hebraist, defended the Talmud against the accusations of the apostate Johannes Pfefferkorn.
 - The censorship of the Talmud.

Suggested Reading

[Marcus, Jacob R. *The Jew in the Medieval World*](#). New York: Atheneum, 1969. pp. 145-150,159-164.

[Parkes, James. *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*](#). New York: Meridian Books, 1964. pp. 392-393.

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*](#). New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 81-85.

[Temko, Allan. "The Burning of the Talmud in Paris." *Understanding the Talmud*](#). Ed. Alan Corre. New York: Ktav, 1975. pp. 124-140.


Topics for Discussion

Required Reading

[Marcus, Jacob R. *The Jew in the Medieval World*](#). New York: Atheneum, 1969. pp. 145-150,159-164.

1. Why has the Talmud been singled out as a target of anti-Semitic attack?
2. Discuss the various bans on the Talmud from earliest times to the present.
3. Describe the chain of events between 1240 and 1244 which finally resulted in the public burning of the Talmud.
4. Outline Donin's main attacks on the Talmud and their refutation by the Rabbis.
5. Discuss the Pfefferkorn – Reuchlin controversy.
6. Give examples of how the Talmudic text was censored.

Religious Ideas of Talmudic Judaism – I

Lecture 10 [Listen](#)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-10.ram>

- The Talmud as a source for Jewish philosophy and theology.
- Were the Talmudic Sages familiar and influenced by Greek philosophical thought?
- The Talmudic conception of G-d: transcendence and immanence.
- G-d's nearness to man emphasizes that He is not merely the G-d of creation but the G-d of history as well.
- "Everything is foreseen, but freedom of choice is given" – Free Will versus Divine Providence.
- Imitatio D-i - G-d's actions as the ideals of human conduct.
- Kedushah (holiness) – the highest spiritual achievement attainable by man.

Suggested Reading

[Guttman, Julius. "The Religious Ideas of Talmudic Judaism." *Understanding the Talmud*](#). Ed. Alan Corcoran. New York: Ktav, 1975. pp. 333-346.

[Shapiro, David. "The Doctrine of the Image of G-d and Imitatio D-i." *Contemporary Jewish Ethics*](#). Ed. M. Kellner. New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1979. pp. 127-151.

[Urbach, Ephraim E. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*](#). Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975. v. 1, pp. 37-79, 214-254.


Topics for Discussion

Required Reading

[Shapiro, David. "The Doctrine of the Image of G-d and Imitatio D-i." *Contemporary Jewish Ethics*](#). Ed. M. Kellner. New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1979. pp. 127-151.

1. Clarify the exact scope and nature of Rabbinic thought.
2. Discuss the Talmudic conception of G-d in terms of His transcendence and immanence.
3. Describe the Rabbinic view of G-d as the G-d of History.
4. How does the Talmud reconcile the principle of free will with that of Divine Providence?
5. Describe how *Imitatio D-i* forms the basis of Talmudic theology and ethics.
6. What is *kedushah* and how does it manifest itself?
7. Describe the Talmudic view concerning asceticism.

Religious Ideas of Talmudic Judaism – II

Lecture 11 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-11.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-11.ram>

- Ethical conduct as Divine imperatives: Ethical modes of behavior are not left-up to man's good sense.
- The legalistic character of Talmudic ethics.
- *Kavod ha-briyot* (human dignity) is rooted in the idea that man is created in the image of G-d.
- Extra credit morality – going beyond the requirements of the law.
- The *hasid* as one who aspires to higher spiritual standards.
- *Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) – a tractate of the Mishna devoted exclusively to moral maxims and homilies, values and ideals.

Suggested Reading

[Belkin, Samuel. *In His Image: The Jewish Philosophy of Man as Expressed in Rabbinic Tradition*. New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1960. pp. 60-185.](#)

[Liechtenstein, Aharon. "Does Jewish Tradition Recognize an Ethic Independent of Halakhah?" *Contemporary Jewish Ethics*. Ed. M. Kellner. New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1979. pp. 102-123.](#)

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*. New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 199-205.](#)

[Twersky, Isadore. "Some Aspects of the Jewish Attitude Toward the Welfare State." *Tradition*. 5 \(1963\): 137-158.](#)

Topics for Discussion


Required Reading

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*. New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 199-205.](#)

1. On what basis do the Rabbis posit that there exists a category of ethical behavior outside of the Sinaitic revelation?
2. Discuss the Talmudic position on social ethics.

3. Discuss the relevance of "human dignity".
4. What is *Lifnim mi-shurat ha-din*?
5. Analyze and discuss the following categories of Talmudic morality: *Mishnat Hasidim* (a teaching for the pious), and that which is exempt from human law but culpable according to Divine Law.
6. Discuss the importance of *Tractate Avot* as an ethical treatise.
7. What is the relationship between law and ethics in the Talmudic scheme?

Religious Ideas of Talmudic Judaism – III

Lecture 12 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-12.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-12.ram>

- The way of halakhah – the theology of Judaism is its halakhah (law).
- Halakhic Judaism rests upon three basic principles: existence of G-d as the absolute good; the Torah, both written and oral are of Divine origin and constitute the ultimate truth; man must be totally committed to the service of G-d.
- Halakhah deals with man as a human being in his mundane environment.
- The ideal life is not to be sought in the transcendental world, but is right here on earth.
- Halakhah and the role of the intellect.
- Two aims of Torah study – a prerequisite for leading a life according to halakhah; *Torah li-shemah*: study for its own sake.

Suggested Reading

[Shapiro, David. *Studies in Jewish Thought*. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1975. pp. 122-144.](#)

[Soloveitchik, Joseph B. "Catharsis." *Tradition*. 17 \(1978\): 38-54.](#)

[Warhaftig, Zerah. "The Relevance and Dynamics of Halakhah." *Contemporary Thinking in Israel*. Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1973. v. 1, pp. 90-120.](#)

Topics for Discussion

Required Reading

[Shapiro, David. *Studies in Jewish Thought*. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1975. pp. 122-144.](#)

1. What precisely is *Halakha*?
2. Describe the three basic principles upon which the halakhic way of life rests.
3. Explain – "*Halakha* serves as a master plan for human existence within the realities of the world".
4. What is the Talmudic conception of the *ideal world*?
5. Describe in conceptual terms the prohibition against working on the Sabbath.
6. Discuss the role of the intellect in the Halakhic scheme.
7. Describe the idea of *Study for its own sake*.

The Talmud Today – Its Impact and Influence

Lecture 13 [Listen](http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-13.ram)  <http://jpua.touro.edu/audio-refer/hoe-worl-13.ram>

- The Talmud as a living tradition and the East European Jew of pre-Holocaust times.
- The development and growth of the "modern" Talmudical academy (Yeshiva).
- Renewed interest in Talmudic studies and the Daf Yomi (daily page) program.
- Talmudic law and its relevance to modern times – the growth of the Responsa literature.
- Jewish survival and the Talmud – an unbroken link.
- Talmud as a source and pillar of Jewish culture.
- Talmudic skepticism and the search for truth.

Suggested Reading

[Alon, Gedalyahu. *The Lithuanian Yeshivas*](#). Ed. J. Goldin. New York: Bantam Books, 1970. pp. 448-464.

[Helmreich, William B. *The World of the Yeshiva*](#). New York: The Free Press, 1982.

[Heschel, Abraham J. *The Earth is the Lord's*](#). New York: Meridian Books, 1963.

[Neusner, Jacob. "In Praise of the Talmud." *Understanding the Talmud*](#). Ed. Alan Corre. New York: Ktav, 1975. pp. 403-420.

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*](#). New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 268-275.

Topics for Discussion

Required Reading

[Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*](#). New York: Bantam Books, 1977. pp. 268-275.

1. Describe the importance of the Talmud in East European Jewish life.
2. Trace the origins of the Yeshiva and discuss its importance as a citadel of Talmudic scholarship.
3. Discuss how the Talmud is a living tradition applicable to all times and facets of life.
4. Describe how the Talmud serves as an instrument of Jewish survival.
5. Describe the impact of Talmudic style and methodology on the Jewish way of thinking.