



Full Syllabus



Course Title	
Issues in Rabbinic Thought	
Lecturer	
Dr. Hallel Baitner	
Semester	
Spring	
Course requirements	
Active participation, reading and a final paper.	
Final grade components	
Assessment will be a written paper in English to be submitted within a week of the end of semester (76%), and 12 weekly multiple-choice quizzes at the start of each class based on the set reading worth 2% each (24%).	
Course schedule	
Class no. / Date	Subject and Requirements (assignments, reading materials, tasks, etc.)
1	Second Temple Judaism Introduction to the Judaism of the Second Temple Period (586 BCE – 70 CE). Key terms – Historical milestones; Exile and Return; Jews and others; Center and diaspora; Jewish languages; Consolidation of scripture; The Hellenistic challenge; Sects and philosophies; Temple; Messiah and redemption.
2	The Roots of the Rabbinic Culture The Rabbis present their origin – Mishnah Avot 1-2; Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, the Pharisees and the Sadducees – Mishnah Yaddayim 4:6-8. Schremer, Adiel. “‘Avot’ Reconsidered: Rethinking Rabbinic Judaism.” <i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i> 105, no. 3 (2015): 287–311.
3	The Origin of the Rabbinic Law The 'Oral Torah' and the 'Written Torah – BT Shabbat 31a, Leviticus Rabbah 30:15; The authority of the Rabbis – BT Bava Metzia 59b. Jaffee, Martin S., 'The Ideological Construction of Torah in the Mouth', <i>Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE</i> (New York, 2001; online edn, Oxford Academic, 1 Nov. 2003)
4	What is Midrash? Examples of Second Temple biblical exegesis – Chronicles, Jubilees, Peshar Habakkuk, Philo; Midrash in the eyes of the rabbis – Mishnah Sotah 5:2. Eye for an Eye = payment (Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Nezikin 8) . Fraade, Steven. "Rabbinic Midrash and Ancient Jewish Biblical Interpretation". In <i>Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarrians and Sages</i> (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 399–426.
5	Rabbis and Others



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	<p>Gentiles (Mishnah Avodah Zara 1); Heretics (Mishnah Megillah 4:8–9); Samaritans (Mishnah Niddah 4:1); Christians (Tosefta Hullin 2:24, BT Sotah 47a) Ophir, Adi, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'The Formation of the Binary Structure in Early Rabbinic Literature', <i>Goy: Israel's Multiple Others and the Birth of the Gentile</i>, Oxford Studies in the Abrahamic Religions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 179–213.</p>
6	<p>The Rabbinic God Divine names (Mishnah Sotah 7:6); Anthropomorphism (Leviticus Rabbah 34:4) Angels (Genesis Rabbah 8:4–10; His dwelling place (BT Rosh-Hashanah 31a). Weiss, Dov. "The Rabbinic God and Mediaeval Judaism." <i>Currents in Biblical Research</i> 15, no. 3 (2017): 369–390.</p>
7	<p>Revelation Prophecy and Bat Qol (Tosefta Sotah 13:3–8); Revelatory biblical verse (BT Hagigah 15a); Can one see God? (BT Berakhot 7a) Sommer, Benjamin D. "Did prophecy cease? Evaluating a reevaluation." <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> 115.1 (1996): 31–47.</p>
8	<p>Torah Study The most important obligation (Mishnah Pea 1:1); Day and night (Mishnah Avot 3:7; BT Shabbat 30a); Memorizing vs. acuteness (BT Berakhot 64a); Better dead than alone (BT Bava Metziah 84a); Torah study and poverty (Genesis Rabbah 42:1). Bar-Asher Siegal, Michal. "The Making of a Monk-Rabbi: The Stories of R. Shimon Bar Yoḥai in the Cave." <i>Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 133–169.</p>
9	<p>Notes on rabbinic law Measurements; Different degrees of prohibitions; deliberately and unconsciously; intention; from the outset and post factum. Shemesh, Aharon. <i>Halakhah in the Making: The Development of Jewish Law from Qumran to the Rabbis</i>, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009: 99–105.</p>
10	<p>The Land of Israel Boundaries (Sifre to Deuteronomy 51); Holiness (Mishnah Kelim 1:6–9); Laws dependent on the land of Israel (Mishnah Qiddushin 1:9, Mishnah Hallah 4:11); The priority of the land of Israel over Babylonia (BT Ketubot 102b). Ilan, Tal. "Patriarchy, the Land of Israel and the Legal Position of Jewish Women in Rabbinic Literature." <i>Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues</i>, no. 1, 1998, pp. 42–50.</p>
11	<p>Redemption The Messiah (PT Berakhot 2:4 5a, ibid. Taanit 4:5 68d, Mishnah Sotah 9:15); The days of the Messiah (BT Berakhot 34b); The new temple (Mishnah Middot 2:6, Pesikta de Rav Kahanah 18:5). Heinemann, Joseph. "The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim." <i>The Harvard Theological Review</i>, vol. 68, no. 1, 1975, pp. 1–15.</p>
12	<p>Afterlife Resurrection and Judgment (Mishnah Sanhedrin 10; Sifre Deuteronomy 306); Heaven and Hell (Mishnah Eduyot 2:10; Sifra Behukoty parshah 1, 111b) .</p>



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	Avery-Peck, Alan J. "Death and Afterlife in the Early Rabbinic Sources: The Mishnah, Tosefta, and Early Midrash Compilations". <i>Judaism in Late Antiquity 4. Death, Life-After-Death, Resurrection and The World-to-Come in the Judaisms of Antiquity</i> . Leiden: Brill, 2000: 241–266.
Required course reading	
See above for each class	
Optional course reading	
Urbach, Efraim Elimelech. <i>The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs</i> . Jerusalem: Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1987	
Comments	