

Spring 2009 Syllabus
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Introduction to Judaism: Jewish Ideas and Beliefs
Rabbi David Ariel-Joel

This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.

The transition from Israelite religion, as depicted in the Hebrew Bible, to Rabbinic Judaism, which unfolded from the 2nd Century Before the Common Era to the 6th Century of the Common Era, was revolutionary. This course will explore the dominant values and practices of what became traditional Judaism. This exploration will be conducted primarily through encounters with primary texts such as the Talmud, Jewish philosophy and Biblical commentary. After an examination of the innovations of Rabbinic Judaism as it developed through the Middle Ages, we will focus on contemporary expressions of Judaism.

Required Textbooks

David S. Ariel, *What Do Jews Believe? The Spiritual Foundations of Judaism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1995

Arthur A. Cohen/Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds.), *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought. Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs*, New York: Scribner, 1987 (abbr. CMF)

Kertzer, Morris N. *What is a Jew?* rev. ed. Revised by Lawrence A. Hoffman. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

Trepp, Leo. *Judaism: Development and Life*. 4th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth, 2000.

Israel Knohl, *The Divine Symphony, the Bible's Many Voices*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 2003

Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority*, Harvard University Press, 1997

A.J. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, Harper Collins, Canada 1979

Tanakh – the Hebrew Bible with the JPS (Jewish Publication Society) translation

Recommended web sites

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/index.htm?VI=481003041026>

<http://ccarnet.org/resp/>

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/index.jsp>

Semester projects

The semester project will consist of a written term paper and an oral presentation in class. Written work is due on the last day of classes. Oral presentations need to be scheduled to fit into the flow of the course. A satisfying written presentation is an essay of 5 pages, not including an annotated research bibliography (not exclusively relying on internet-sources), covering a relevant topic agreed upon in discussion with the instructor. You are strongly advised to submit a draft before the final due date of the paper (last day of classes).

Students need to schedule all additional media or handouts in advance.

You will also be required to write a 2-page paper describing the services you will visit at The Temple and at Adath Jeshurun synagogue.

COURSE OUTLINE

PLEASE BRING THE JEWISH BIBLE WITH YOU TO ALL THE CLASSES!

A. - What is Judaism?

Reading:

Trepp 1-9; Kertzer 7-9

Paul Stroble, *What Do Other Faiths Believe*, Nashville 2003, pp.21-32

B. Jewish Law and the Oral Torah

Judaism is a scripture-based religion. Our tradition teaches us that God's will is revealed in our sacred texts. We will study together the structure and nature of the Jewish Commentary to the Torah. We will try to understand what the Oral Torah includes and what the term means? What can we learn of the development of Jewish law? How did it evolve? What is its nature and structure? We will look at different ways to interpret the law and at what is called *the culture of argument* in Jewish life. We will also try to understand different views on the purpose of Mitzvot (laws and precepts).

B1. Halacha (Law) and Mitzvot (Commandments).

Readings:

David S. Ariel, pp. 159-185

Kertzer, 52-55, 71-75

Menachem Elon, *Jewish Law*, JPS, Philadelphia 1994, vol. 1, pp. 1-13

B2. Our Sacred Scriptures - The Jewish Bible & the emergence of the Oral Torah and Rabbinic Thought (The Mishna, The Midrash and The Talmud)

Readings:

The Torah, A Modern Commentary, W. Gunther Plaut, UAHC Press, New York, 1981, pp.xviii-xxv

Swimming in the Sea of Talmud, Michael Katz & Gershon Schwartz, The Jewish Publication Society, 1998, pp. 3-31

Searching for Meaning in Midrash, Michael Katz & Gershon Schwartz, The Jewish Publication Society, 2002, pp.3-13

Trepp 32-33, 260-263; Kertzer 19-20, 39-51

Trepp 267-275

Deut 11: 8-11 (including Rashi & Ramban), 30:11-16

Mishna:

Avoth, 1:1-8

Rosh Hashanah Chapter 2: 8-9

Makkot Chapter 3: 16

Shevihit Chapter 10:3-4

Talmud:

Baba Metsia 59a-b, 83a

Menahot 22b

Rosh Hashanah 29b

B3. Law and Narrative in the Jewish Sacred Scriptures – the narratives of forgiveness and Tsedakah.

Readings:

Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority*, Harvard University Press, 1997 pp. 27-31

Leviticus 16:29-34

Mishnah Yoma (The Day – i.e. Yom Kippur).

TB Yoma 87a

TB Ketobot 66a

B4. The Truth and ‘the culture of argument’

Readings:

Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority*, Harvard University Press, 1997 pp. 50-71

TY Sanhedrin 4:2

TB Kidushin 30b

TB Ketubot 16b-17a

TB Eruvin 13b

Ethics of our Fathers Chapter 5, Mishnah 17

TB Baba Metzia 86a

TB Berachut 64a

B5. Jewish *Responsa*: Abortion – From the Bible to Modern Jewish *Responsa*

B6. The place of the ethical in religious life.

*We will watch the movie **Tehorah (Pure)** about conflicts between Jewish ancient law and modernity.*

B7. God- In the Eyes of Talmudic and post-Talmudic Scripture

Readings:

Maimonides (Rambam), Introduction to Perek Helek – the 13 principals of faith.

BT Berakhot (Blessings), 3a

BT Babah Metzia 59a

BT Gittin (Divorce) 56b

BT Berakhot 31b-32a

C. - The Jewish Year

We will learn the history and practices of the Jewish calendar. By understanding these Jewish holidays, we will begin to see some parallels between them and holidays of other religions.

C1. Shabbat:

Reading:

Kertzer 209-213

A.J. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, Harper Collins, Canada 1979, pp. 13-14, 16, 18, 28.

Bible:

Gen. 2:1-3, Ex. 16:22-30, 20:8-12, 23:13, 31:16-17, 34:21, 35:2-3, Lev. 19:3,

Numbers 15:32-36, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, 12:16, Isaiah 56:2-7, 58:13-14, 66:23,
 Jeremiah 17:19-27, Ezekiel 20:10-12, Nehemiah 15-22
 Mishna, Hagiga Chapter 1 Mishna 8, Shabbat 7, Mishna 2
 Midrash, Genesis Rabba 11:8, Sefer Haagada 381:22
 Talmud, Shabbat, 119a, 49b
 Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Shabbat Laws, 30:2-5, 7-14

Rosh Hodesh – The Jewish Month

Reading:

Kertzer 205 -207,
 Bible, Numbers 10:10, Samuel I 20:5
 Mishna, Rosh Hashanah 1:7, 2:2-3, 20:6

C2. Other Holidays

Reading:

Trepp 350-377; Kertzer 205-208, 219-224, 227-230
 Bible: Lev. 23, Psalms 81: 4-5, Micah 7:19, Lev. 16:5-24
 Ex. 23: 14-17, 37: 5-8, 12: 3-11, 34:22, Deut. 16: 8-16, Num. 28: 26, Nehemiah 8: 14-15.
 Talmud, Pesachim 109a, Rosh Hashanah 16a, Suka 28b
 Mishna, Bikurim, Chapter 3 Mishna 1-9

The High Holy Days

Reading:

Kertzer 213-218

C3. Passover -We will experience a model Seder.

Reading:

Kertzer, 225-226
Passover Haggada – A Different Night, Noam Zion and David Dishon (ed.), Hartman Institute, Jerusalem, 1997.

Hanukkah

Reading:

(Trepp 15-23, 249-256)
 We will learn about two periods in Jewish history (from the Exile 586 B.C.E. to the Maccabees and Judah under the Romans to 70 C.E.).

Reading:

Trepp 23-32; Kertzer 18-19,
 Noam Zion & Barbra Spectre, *A Different Light – The Big Book of Hanukkah*, Devora Publishing, New York 2000, pp. 55-80

D. People – Land – G-d

D1. The connection between the people of Israel, G-d and the Promised Land - the land of Israel.

Why is this land different than any other land? What makes it holy?

Can Jews live outside of Israel – Diaspora Jews vs. Israelis? Israel Today.

Reading:

Trepp 285-291; Kertzer 117-127
 Trepp 158-159; Kertzer 179-180;
 Trepp 159-176; 155-171; Kertzer 25-32, 180-196;

Arthur A. Cohen/Paul Mendes-Flohr (eds.), s.v. "Zionism" (Ben Halpern), pp. 1069ff
s.v. "Culture" (Paul Mendes-Flohr), pp. 119ff

D2. Israeli Jews – Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews.

Readings:

Highlights from the Guttman Institute Report about Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews.

Yosi Klein Halevy and Netty C. Groos, "Religious Revival"

D3. The Israeli Palestinian Conflict – from early Zionism till today.

Reading:

Divisive History - The Israeli Palestinian Conflict in a nutshell.

*We will watch the movies **Kedmah** and **Promises**.*

E. Jewish Prayer

The structure of Jewish prayer and how it evolved. Spontaneous worship vs. structured worship.

Special traditions. The synagogue.

Reading:

David S. Ariel, 186-210

Kertzer 83-87, 172-173

My People's Prayer Book, Vol. II, ed. Hoffman

Different prayer books

Practical Experience: Styles of Jewish Worship

Students will visit two services representing different movements (Reform, Conservative).