

Approaches to Talmud: Traditional and Academic

Wednesdays 9am-12pm

Fall 2015

Instructor: Matthew Goldstone (msg444@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4-5pm

Course Description:

In this course we will examine several key legal passages (sugyot) in the Babylonian Talmud from both a traditional and an academic perspective. After identifying important tensions and inconsistencies in each text, we will consider the disparate solutions posed by the early medieval rabbis (*Rishonim*) and contemporary scholars, and compare their respective approaches. Through these in-depth readings we will highlight how modern assumptions and goals for Talmud study differ from earlier generations and how contemporary approaches allow us to uncover new structures and meanings in the text. Attention will be paid to the comprehension of Aramaic lexical and grammatical forms. Open to students with prior experience studying the Babylonian Talmud in the original.

Course Goals:

- Understanding the differing assumptions, goals, and methods of traditional and academic Talmud study
- Becoming familiar with the principle tools and resources of academic Talmud study
- Engaging with different types of scholars and scholarship to encounter the diversity of academic approaches
- Learning important aspects of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic grammar relevant for the study of the Babylonian Talmud

Assignments and Grades:

Please complete the readings listed for each session *before* that class meeting. Please prepare primary readings to the best of your ability using dictionary reference tools before turning to translations to check your understanding. Grades are based on preparation and class participation (40%), the midterm (25%) and the final exam (35%). The undergraduate midterm and final each consist of three sections: 1) Aramaic grammar, 2) a short answer section, and 3) a long answer section.

Useful Resources:

- Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan, Israel; Baltimore: Bar Ilan University Press ; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
- Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Pardes, 1950).
- Yitzhak Frank, *The Practical Talmud Dictionary* (Jerusalem, Israel: Feldheim Publishers [distributor], 1991).
- Yitzhak Frank, *Grammar for Gemara and Targum Onkelos: An Introduction to Aramaic* (Jerusalem, Israel: Feldheim Publishers [distributor], 2003).
- Elitzur Bar-Asher Siegal, *Introduction to the Grammar of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 2013.
- Shmuel Ashkenazi and Dov Jarden, *Ozar Rashe Tevot: Thesaurus of Hebrew Abbreviations* (Jerusalem: R. Mass, 1978).

Class Schedule:

1. Aug 26 – **Introduction**
 - Introduction and syllabus
 - Traditional & Academic Approaches
 - i. Resources – Dictionaries & Grammars
 - The Night Watches (BT Ber.3a)
 - Dipping Passover Vegetables (tPes. 10:10; BT Pes. 116a)
2. Sept 2 – **Differentiating Between Amoraic and Stammaitic Layers**
 - 14 Principles for separating Meimra & Stam
 - i. Medieval rabbis recognizing separate sources
 - Prayer at the Proper Time (BT Ber. 26a)
 - Lost Property (BT BM 25b (PT BM 2:3, 8c))
 - Aramaic – Verbal Forms & Suffixes

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - BT Berakhot 26a – Mishna + *שכר תפלה בזמנה לא יהבי ליה* +
 - PT BM 2:3, 8c; BT BM 25b (Mishna up to double dots)
 - Secondary Readings:
 - Rubenstein, Jeffrey. “Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in Aggada,” *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammim) to the Aggada*. Ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005), 417-440
 - Graduate Student Readings:
 - Friedman, Shamma. “Mavo Klali al Derech Heker HaSugya.” pg. 7-32
 - [This is a difficult read. Go through the Rubenstein reading first!]
3. Sept 9 – **Different Approaches & When was the Talmud “Finished”?**
 - Halivni vs. Friedman – Two Different Approaches
 - Changing from the Original Intent (BT Bava Metzia 78a-b; tMeg. 1:5)
 - Aramaic – The Aramaic infinitive and jussive

- When was the Talmud “finished”?

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - BT Bava Metziah 78a-b; tMeg. 1:5
- Secondary Readings:
 - Rubenstein, Jeffrey. “Translator’s Introduction.” in *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*. David Weiss Halivni (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xvii-xxx
 - Weiner, David. “Shamma Friedman’s Methodological Principles.” *Semeia* 27 (1983), 47-51
 - Vidas, Moulie. *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, (2014), 23-25
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Brody, Robert. “On Dating The Anonymous Portions of the Babylonian Talmud,” in *Sidra 24-25* edited by David Henshke, 71-81. Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2010. [Hebrew with English summary at the end]
 - Hauptman, J. “Development of the Talmudic Sugya by Amoraic and *Post-Amoraic* Amplification of a Tannaitic Proto-Sugya” in *HUCA* 58.01: 227-250

4. Sept 16 – **Manuscripts & Attributions**

- Manuscripts
- Saving or Destroying a Life (mSan 4:5)
- Blessings for Study (BT Ber 11b)
- Rabbinic Attributions
- Telling the Passover Story (BT Pes 116a)
- Use of Manuscripts among traditional scholars

Readings

- Primary Sources:
 - Mishna San. 4:5
 - BT Berakhot 11b (אמר רב הונא... אף לתלמוד צריך להזורר) (להזורר ו) לברך)
 - BT Pesachim 116a (מאי בגנות... עבדים היינו)
- Secondary Readings:
 - W.S. Green. “What’s in a Name? The Problem of Rabbinic Biography,” *Approaches to Ancient Judaism I*, ed. W.S. Green (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 77-94.
 - Kraemer, David. “On the Reliability of Attributions in the Babylonian Talmud.” *Essential Papers on the Talmud*, ed. Michael Chernick (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 276-292.
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Steinmetz, Devora. “Inter-Agadic Characterization of Sages in the Bavli and Implications for Reading Agada,” *Creation and Composition*, ed. Jeffrey Rubenstein (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 293-337
 - Elman, Yaakov. “The Socioeconomics of Babylonian Heresy,” *Jewish Law Association Studies* 17 (2007), 122-127

Sept 23 – NO CLASS (Yom Kippur)

5. Sept 30 - Yerushalmi and Bavli

- Using PT to elucidate BT
- Non-Jewish Holidays (PT AZ 1:3 (39c), BT AZ 2a)
- Kosher Cheese (mAZ 2:5, mHul 8:5, PT AZ 2:5 (41c), BT AZ 35a-b)
- Aramaic - Differences between Babylonian and Galilean Aramaic

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - PT AZ 1:3 (39c), BT AZ 2a (until נקבצו יחדיו)
 - mAZ 2:5 (until עגלי ע"ז), mHul 8:5, PT AZ 2:5 (41c), BT AZ 35a-b (from א"ר חנינא until כאן קודם חזרה, וכאן לאחר חזרה, ומשנה, לא זזה ממקומה. Rashi s.v. זזה ממקומה)
- Secondary Readings:
 - Kalmin, "Palestinian Materials Preserved in the Bavli," in *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia*. (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994), 87-110
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Jaffee, Martin. "The Babylonian Appropriation of the Talmud Yerushalmi: Redactional Studies in the Horayot Tractates." in *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism V4*, ed. Alan Avery-Peck (New York: University Press of America, 1989), 3-24
 - Gray, Alyssa. *A Talmud in Exile: The Influence of Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah on the Formation of Bavli Avodah Zarah*. (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2005), 1-39.

6. Oct 7 - Talmud and History

- History in the Talmud
- Selling Weapons (tAZ 2:4, PT AZ 2:1 (40c), BT AZ 15b-16a)
- The Passover Afikoman (PT Pes. 10:4, BT Pes. 119b-120a)
- Aramaic – Hebrew/Aramaic Letter Exchanges

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - tAZ 2:4, PT AZ 2:1 (40c), BT AZ 15b-16a (ועוד תניא אין מוכרין... דמגנו עילוין)
 - PT Pes. 10:4, BT Pes. 119b-120a (Mishna until the 2 dots), Rashi s.v. וגוזליא לאבא (של אחר אכילה); Rashbam s.v. (בשני מקומות) אמר רב שלא יעקרו מחבורה לחבורה
- Secondary Readings:
 - Kalmin, Richard. "Friends and Colleagues, or Barely Acquainted? Relationships between Fourth-Generation Teachers in the Babylonian Talmud," in *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia*. Pg 175-192
- Graduate Student Readings:

- Kalmin, Richard. "Non-Rabbinic Jews," in *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity*, pg 27-50
- Neusner, Jacob. "To the Israel Historical Society: Methodology in Talmudic History," in ed. Jacob Neusner, "*Contemporary Views of Ancient Judaism: Disputes and Debates*" (Binghamton University: Academic Studies in History of Judaism Global Publications, 2001), 1-33.

7. Oct 14 – **Growing Conceptualization & Midterm**

- Resignation of Ownership (יאוש) (BT Suk. 29b-30a; BT BQ 67a-b)
- Intention on Shabbat (BT Beṓa 23b)
- **Midterm** (Undergrads 1 – 1 ½ hours; Grads 2 hours)

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - BT Suk. 29b-30a (first line of Mishna + בשלמא יבש until but not including וא"ר (יוחנן), Rashi s.v. שנאמר והבאתם; BT BQ 67a-b (from אמר עולא until אחר יאוש)
 - BT Beṓa 23b – Mishna (עגלה) & Gemara

8. Oct 21 – **Orality**

- What is orality, how was material transmitted, when did it shift to written?
- Master of Abraham! (BT BB 134b, BT Shab. 22a, BT Ket. 2a)
- Prosbul (BT Git. 36a, BT MQ 2b)
- Aramaic – Syntax (Anticipatory Pronominal Suffix, Prefix ל and Prefix ד)
- The Agonistic Bavli

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - BT BB 134b (אמר רב יוסף... ובידו לגרשה), Rashi s.v. א"ר יוסף מריה דאברהם.
 - BT Git 36a-b (תנן התם פרוסבול אינו משמט... הפקר ב"ד היה הפקר), Rashi s.v. בשביעית בזמן הזה
 - BT MQ 2b (תנן משקינן בית השלחין... אבות אסר רחמנא)
- Secondary Readings:
 - Jaffee, Martin. "What Difference does the orality of Rabbinic Writing Make" in *How should Rabbinic Literature be Read in the Modern World?*, ed. Matthew Krauss, pp. 11-33.
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Elman, Yaakov. "Orality and the Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud." *Oral Tradition* 14/1 (1999), 52-99.
 - Jaffee, Martin. *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE 400 CE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, introduction & ch 7.

9. Oct 28 – **The Literary Turn**

- Nullification of Prohibited Foods (Hullin 98a-99a)
 - i. Sugya & Rashi

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - BT Hullin 98a-99a (א"ר חייא בר אבא א"ר יהושע בן לוי... והכא שרי), Rashi s.v. לטעם (פירוש בקונטרס... טעם כל דהו קאמר רבא אמר), Tosafot s.v. כעיקר
- Secondary Readings:
 - Tucker, Ethan M. *Literary Agendas and Legal Conclusions: The Contributions of Rabbinic Editors to the Laws of Forbidden Mixtures*. Dissertation Jewish Theological Seminary, 2006. (Introduction)
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Rubenstein, Jeffrey L. *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. 1-33.
 - Gafni, Isaiah. *Rethinking Talmudic History: the challenge of literary and redaction criticism*

10. Nov 4 – **The Literary Turn (Continued)**

- Nullification of Prohibited Foods (Hullin 98a-99a)
 - i. Tosafot and Academic Interpretations
- Aramaic – Apocoptation & Dropped Letters

11. Nov 11 – **Contextualizing the Bavli**

- Recent turn to Persian/Syriac Context
- Building on a Riverbank (BM 108a)
- A Borrowed Lulav (tSuk. 2:13; BT Suk 41b)
- Temporary Marriage (BT Yoma 18b)

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - BM 108a – אמר שמואל; Rashi s.v. והאידינא דכתבי הוי; והאידינא דנהרא; הציפא הוי; והאידינא דכתבי פרסאי; פרסאי
 - tSuk. 2:11; BT Suk 41b – Mishna through לא יצא החזירו לא יצא
 - BT Yoma 18b – רב כי מקלע – until the Mishna; Rashi s.v. מאן הויא ליומא; Tos s.v. יחודי ותו לא – from beginning until בעלמא הוו
- Secondary Readings:
 - Secunda, Shai. "Talmudic Text and Iranian Context: On the Development of Two Talmudic Narratives," *AJS Review* 33:1 (2009), 45-69.
 - Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1-7.
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Lieberman, Saul. "Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture," in *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, (New York: JTS, 1994), 47-82.
 - Richard Lee Kalmin, *Migrating Tales: The Talmud's Narratives and Their Historical Context* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2014), 1-23.

12. Nov 18 – **Halakha, Aggadah & Theory**

- The Rise of "Theory"
- Drinking on Purim (BT Meg. 7b)

- A Parody of NT Material (BT Pes. 57a-b)
- Feminist Theory Examples (BT Shab 140a, BT Shab 114b-115a)
- Aramaic - Negations

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - BT Meg 7b – מתרחיש ניסא ... אביי בר אבין; Rashi s.v. לאבסומי
 - BT Pes. 57a-b – מלכא ומלכתא... ופסקיה לימיניה
 - BT Shab 140a – אכלת לא אכלת... ואת לא אכלת (Skip from ... אכל לא ביד ... אלא אמר שמואל)
 - BT Shab 114b-115a – אמר רבי זירא אמר רב הונא... בקניבת ירק – אמר רבי חייה בר אבא... יוחנן דאסיר
- Secondary Readings:
 - Culler - *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (1. What is Theory?)
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Wimpfheimer, Barry. *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories*. Pg 13-24
 - Boyarin, Daniel. *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. pg 11-19 [Toward a New Theory of Midrash]
 - Boyarin, Daniel. *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*. Pg 227-245 [Concluding Forward: *Talmudic Study as Cultural Critique*]

Nov 25 – No Class (Fri Class Schedule)

13. Dec 2 – **Legal Theory**

- Legal Theory
- A Minor's Refusal to Marry (mYev. 13:1; PT Yev. 13:1; BT Yev. 107b)
- Don't Make Factions (Deut. 14:1; Sifre Deut. 96; PT Pes. 4:1 (30d); BT Yev. 13b-14a)
- Aramaic – Common and Irregular Roots

Readings:

- Primary Sources:
 - mYev. 13:1; BT Yev. 107b (תניא אמרו להן בית הלל... תרי קיטרי עבדו ביה); PT Yev. 13:1 (אמרו בית הלל... מיאויגיה מיאויגין)
 - Deut. 14:1; Sifre Deut. 96; PT Pes. 4:1 (30d) – רבי שמעון בן לקיש שאל... רבי סימון בשם – רבי יוחנן במתמיה תנן התם מגילה נקראת... דמודע ליה לשמעא – BT Yev. 13b-14a
- Secondary Readings:
 - Hayes, Christine, “‘In the west, they laughed at him:’ The mocking realists of the Babylonian Talmud,” *Journal of Law, Religion & State* 2 (2013) 137-167.
- Graduate Student Readings:
 - Hanina Ben-Menahem, *Judicial Deviation in Talmudic Law: Governed by Men, Not by Rules* (Chur [Switzerland]; New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), 1–18.

- Suzanne Last Stone, “On the Interplay of Rules, Cases, and Concepts in Rabbinic Legal Literature,” *Diné Israel* 24 (2007): 125-55.

14. Dec 9 – Readings - TBD

- Women and Birkat Hamazon (Ber. 20b)
- Fiery Tangents (BQ 60a-b)
- Review for Final

15. Fri Dec 18 – 9:00am-11:00am **Tentative Final Exam**