



## Schools of Aggadah

Fall 2022, Yeshiva University, Yeshiva College  
Professor: Ari Bergmann

### Description of the Course

The Babylonian Talmud, known simply as the *Bavli*, is the collaborative effort of generations of sages and it is the foundational legal and ethical document of rabbinic Judaism. Part of the magnetic pull of the Talmud is the fact that it not only contains legal discussions and rulings but rather it also encompasses theology, magic, rabbinic stories, medicine, and history. These non-legal narratives are an essential part of the Talmud, and their interpretation was always as varied as the schools of interpreters. It evolved creatively throughout the generations. This course will examine in-depth several demonstrative Talmudic narratives (Aggadah) through the lens of the evolution of the major critical schools of the past century and contrast them with the interpretative approach of the various traditional schools throughout the ages. The course will start with an analysis of the definition of Aggadah and its distinction from the legal content of the Talmud, moving on to analyzing narratives and evaluating chronologically how the various interpretative schools dealt with the text. The course will further investigate how these various scholars dealt with the evolution of *sugyot* between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. All Texts will be read in the original, but translations will be provided. Basic knowledge or previous study of Talmud is required.

### Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify the various types of Talmudic narratives.
- Discern between the various approaches to understanding Aggadah.
- Understand and contextualize the diachronic development of the various interpretative models throughout the ages.
- Explore the social context of the rabbinic society in Babylonia during the Talmudic era.
- Evaluate and analyze the various interpretative approaches and their impact upon the understanding of the text and the development of *sugyot* between the *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*.
- Apply the various approaches to close readings of Talmudic narratives.
- Develop interpretive strategies for analyzing diverse literary texts.
- Appreciate the continuing significance of Talmudic narratives.

### Course Outline

Please note that these reading assignments are tentative. They may be adjusted and refined throughout the semester.

#### Week I: August 24th

Introduction  
Talmudic Narrative and Its Meaning

#### **Primary Texts:**

Maimonides, *Teshuvot Harambam* (Blau) II:769 (458)  
Maimonides, *Moreh Hanevukhim* “Introduction to the First Part,” p. 9-10  
Maimonides, *Moreh Hanevukhim* III:43 (p. 573)  
Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Wars and Kings* 12:2



b. Pesahim 50a

Lewin, *Otsar Hageonim Pesahim* 170 (p. 70/71)

b. Hagigah 4b

Lewin, *Otsar Hageonim Hagigah* 5 (p. 4)

b. Bava Qamma 60b

Levita, Elijah, *Tishbi* s.v. agd

R. Shelomo b. Aderet (Rashba), *Hiddushey Aggadot b. Berakhot 10b, 32b and 6a*

Required Readings:

Stephen G. Wald, "Talmud, Babylonian," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Second Edition*, ed. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007)

David Flatto, "Tradition and Modernity in the House of Study: Reconsidering the Relationship between the Conceptual and Critical Methods of Studying Talmud," *Tradition* 43:4 (Winter 2010): 1-20

Berachyahu Lifshitz, "Aggadah Versus Haggadah: Towards a More Precise Understanding of the Distinction," *Dine Israel* 24 (2007): 11-28

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Talmudic Stories and Their Rewards," in *Why Study Talmud in the Twenty-First Century?* ed. Paul Socken (Lanham, Boulder, New York et al.: Lexington Books, 2009), 177-94

Louis Jacobs, *A Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility and Creativity in Jewish Law* (Oxford & Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 3-24

Yakov Nagen, "Scholarship Needs Spirituality, Spirituality Needs Scholarship: Challenges for Emerging Talmudic Methodologies," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 16 (2012-2013): 101-133

Yaakov Elman, "Why Study Talmud: Wellsprings of Torah and the Individual Soul," in Paul Socken, ed., *Why Study Talmud in the Twenty-First Century: The Relevance of the Ancient Jewish Text to Our World* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 135-149

Shimon Gershon (Shagar) Rosenberg, *In His Torah He Meditates: The Study of Talmud as a Quest for God (Hebrew)* (Efrata: The Institute for the Advancement of Rav Shagar's Writings, 2009) 149-80

The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha'aggadah, edited by Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, translated by William G. Braude, introduction by David Stern (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), xvii-xxii, 3-5

Yair Lorberbaum, "Changes in Maimonides' Approach to Aggadah (Hebrew)," *Tarbiz*, no. 78 (1) (2008): 81-122

Medan, Meir. "Levita, Elijah." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 730-732. Vol. 12. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007

**Week II: August 31<sup>st</sup>**

b. Ta'anit 23a

The Inter-relationship of Halakhah and Aggadah I

**Primary Texts:**



- m. Ta'anit 3:8
- y. Ta'anit 3:9-11 (66d-67a)
- b. Ta'anit 23a

Required Readings:

Suzanne Last Stone, "On the Interplay of Rules, 'Cases,' and Concepts in Rabbinic Legal Literature: Another Look at the Aggadot on Honi the Circle-Drawer," *Dine Israel* 24 (2007): 125–134

Robert M. Cover, "The Supreme Court, 1982 Term - Foreword: Nomos and Narrative," *Harvard Law Review* 97 (1983): 4–68

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Suzanne Last Stone, "On the Interplay of Rules, 'Cases,' and Concepts in Rabbinic Legal Literature: Another Look at the Aggadot on Honi the Circle-Drawer," *Dine Israel* 24 (2007): 134–55

Yonah Fraenkel, *Sippur Ha'aggadah: Ahdut Shel Tokhen Vetsurah (Hebrew)* (Tel Aviv: Ben Hayim, 2001), 220–35

Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhei Ha-Aggadah Ve Ha-Medrash (Hebrew)* (Tel Aviv: Yad Latalmud, 1996), 481–500

**Week III: September 7th**

b. Sanhedrin 75a  
The Inter-relationship of Halakhah and Aggadah II

**Primary Texts:**

- y. Shabbat 14:4 (14d)
- b. Sanhedrin 75a
- b. Megillah 7a

Required Readings:

Barry Scott Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 31–38

Yair Lorberbaum, "Reflections on the Halakhic Status of Aggadah," *Dine Israel* 24 (2007): 29–64

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Barry Scott Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 38–62

Daniel Boyarin, "Jesting Words and Dreadful Lessons: The Two Voices of the Babylonian Talmud," *Socrates & the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 133–91

**Week IV: September 14<sup>th</sup>**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Century Aggadah Renaissance  
The Literalist Approach

**Primary Texts:**



b. Bava Batra 25a-b

b. Gittin 56b

Azariah De’Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, Translated from the Hebrew with an introduction and annotations by Joanna Weinberg (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), 201-15, 296–304

Maharal, *Be’er Hagolah Be’er Shishi*

Required Readings:

Marjorie Lehman, *The En Yaaqov: Jacob Ibn Habib’s Search for Faith in the Talmudic Corpus* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012), 51–52, 58-60, 63-76, 80- 82

Azariah De’Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, Translated from the Hebrew with an introduction and annotations by Joanna Weinberg (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), xiii-xxxi

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Marjorie Lehman, *The En Yaaqov: Jacob Ibn Habib’s Search for Faith in the Talmudic Corpus* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012), 51–82

Azariah De’Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, Translated from the Hebrew with an introduction and annotations by Joanna Weinberg (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), xiii-xlv

Natan Slifkin, “The Sun’s Path at Night” (2010), 3–18, [www.RationalistJudaism.com](http://www.RationalistJudaism.com)

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, in *The Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies*; (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 55–75

Lester A. Segal, "Aggadic Exegesis: Between Azariah's Critical Analysis and Maharal's Denunciations," in *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de Rossi's Meor Einayim* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 133-152

Lester A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah de Rossi's Me'or 'Einayim* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 153–61

**Week V: September 21st**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Century Counter-Revolution  
The Maharal and the Mystical Approach

**Primary Texts:**

b. Gittin 56b-57a

Maharal, *Netsah Israel* 128-9, 149-50, 158-9

Originalism in Rabbinic Interpretation: *Sources*



Required Readings:

Binyamin Gross, “Between Rationalism and Mysticism: Maharal’s Place in Jewish Thought,” in *Rabbinic Theology and Jewish Intellectual History: The Great Rabbi Loew of Prague*, edited by Meir Seidler (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2012), 33–43

Giuseppe Veltri, “Maharal Against Azariah De’ Rossi: The Other Side of Scepticism,” in *Rabbinic Theology and Jewish Intellectual History: The Great Rabbi Loew of Prague*, edited by Meir Seidler (London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2012), 65–76

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Chaim Eisen, “Maharal’s Be’er Ha-Golah and His Revolution in Aggadic Scholarship,” *Hakirah* 4 (2007): 137–94

R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History 1576–1612* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 196–242

Maharal of Prague, *Be’er Hagolah: The Classic Defense of Rabbinic Judaism Through the Profundity of the Aggadah*, adapt. Yitzchok Adlerstein (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications Ltd., 2000), 227–40

"Judah Loew (Liwa, Loeb) ben Bezalel." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 11. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 506-509. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 29 Mar. 2016

Joanna Weinberg, “The Maharal of Prague and the Republic of Letters,” *Tablet Magazine* (30 December 2016), available here (<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/219878/maharal-of-prague-joanna-weinberg>)

Antonin Scalia, *A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law: An Essay* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3–47

Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 73–106

**September 28<sup>th</sup> – October 19<sup>th</sup>**

*Hagim* Break: No Class

**Week VI: October 26<sup>th</sup>**

The Evolution of the Mystical Approach II  
17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

**Primary Texts:**

b. Pesahim 94b

b. Bava Batra 25a-b

Maharal, *Be’er Hagolah Be’er Shishi*

R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramhal), *Adir Bamarom*

R. Shmuel Melzen (Gr”a), *Even Shlema*

R. Moshe Shapiro, *letter*

Hazon Ish, *Yoreh De’ah Trefot* 5:3

Hazon Ish, *Kovets Igrot* 33



Required Readings:

R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (Ramhal), *Ma'amar al Ha'aggadot*

Natan Slifkin, "The Sun's Path at Night" (2010), 18-30, [www.RationalistJudaism.com](http://www.RationalistJudaism.com)

Andre Neher, *The Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution of the Sixteenth Century*, Translated from the French by David Maisel (Oxford, New York & Toronto: Oxford University Press - Published for The Littman Library, 1986), 205–11, 245–50

Shimon Cowen, "The Torah and the Worldly Sciences in the Teaching of the Maharal of Prague and Chabad Chassidism," in *Rabbinic Theology and Jewish Intellectual History: The Great Rabbi Loew of Prague*, edited by Meir Seidler (London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2013), 162–75

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Shaul Stampfer, "On the Creation and the Perpetuation of the Image of the Gaon of Vilna," in *The Vilna Gaon and His Disciples*, edited by Moshe Hallamish, Rivlin Yosef, and Raphael Shuchat (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 39–69

Eliyahu Stern, *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), 37–62

Immanuel Etkes, "Ha-Gaon He-Hasid: In His Own Time and For Succeeding Generations," in *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 10–36

Elijah J. Schochet, "The Nature of Lithuanian Jewry: The Legacy of the Gaon of Vilna," in *The Vilna Gaon and His Disciples*, edited by Moshe Hallamish, Rivlin Yosef, and Raphael Shuchat (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 72–90

Aharon Feldman, *The River, the Kettle and the Bird* (CSB Publications, 1987), 1–6

Maharal of Prague, *Be'er Hagolah: The Classic Defense of Rabbinic Judaism Through the Profundity of the Aggadah*, adapt. Yitzchok Adlerstein (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications Ltd., 2000), 208–26

Dan, Joseph, and Joelle Hansel. "Luzzatto, Moses Hayyim." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 13. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 281-286. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 29 Mar. 2016

Spyros Makridakis, Robin M. Hogarth, and Anil Gaba, *Dance with Chance* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2010), 1–15

**Week VII: November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

The Evolution of the Mystical Approach  
Messianic Zionism

**Primary Texts:**

b. Megillah 3a

Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *The Lamentation in Jerusalem: On the Death of Dr. Theodor Herzl* (1904), i-xii

Required Readings:



Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 417–31

Rafael B. Posen, "Targum 'Onkelos' From Sinai? - An Examination of the Sinaitic Origins of 'Targum Onkelos'," *Sidra* 15 (1999): 95–110

Abraham Isaac Kook, "The Unification of Halakha and Aggadah," in *The Lights of Penitence, the Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters and Poems* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), 196–8

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Yehudah Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 7–42

Yosef Salmon, *Religion and Zionism First Encounters* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2002), xiii-xxvii

Eliezer Segal, "Judaism: Contemporary Expressions," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Religion and Social Justice*, edited by Michael D. Palmer and Stanley M. Burgess (Malden & Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 192

Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, *Igrot Ha-Re'iyah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1961), I:122–4 (103)

Hananel Mack, "How is One to Regard the Aggadah," in *The Aggadic Midrash Literature* (Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989), 21–9

Jody Elizabeth Myers, "The Messianic Idea and Zionist Ideologies," in *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning*, edited by Jonathan Frankel (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3–13

Aviezer Ravitzky, "The Revealed End' Messianic Religious Zionism," in *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 79–144

Raphael B. Shuchat, "The Influence of the Vilna Gaon's Theory of Redemption on the Thinking of Rav Kook," in *A World Hidden in the Dimensions of Time* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2008), 295–315 (Hebrew).

Rabinowitz, Louis Isaac. "Onkelos and Aquila." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 433-434. Vol. 15. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007

Zinger, Zvi, and Benjamin Ish-Shalom. "Kook (Kuk), Abraham Isaac." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 12. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. 289-293. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 30 Mar. 2016

**Week VIII: November 9<sup>th</sup>**

The Academic Approach  
The Contribution of the *Stam* to Aggadah

**Primary Texts:**

- b. Ta'anit 21a
- y. Ketubot 6.10
- b. Ketubot 69b-70a



Required Readings:

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative, Art, Composition and Culture* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1–33

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, “Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in Aggada,” in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaitim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 417–420

DID THE POST-TALMUDIC STAMMAIM CONTRIBUTE TO TALMUDIC AGGADA?

<http://www.kotzkblog.com/2020/08/288-did-post-talmudic-stammaitim.html>

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, “Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in Aggada,” in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaitim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 417–440

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 158–62

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Stories of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 41–61

Isaiah Gafni, “Rethinking Talmudic History: The Challenge of Literary and Redaction Criticism,” *Jewish History*, no. 25 (2011): 355–75

Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhey Ha'aggadah Ve Hamedrash (Hebrew)* (Masada, Israel: Yad Lataalmud, 1991), 235–85

**Week IX: November 16<sup>th</sup>**

A Rabbinic Romance: R. Akiva and Rachel  
Shamma Friedman

**Primary Texts:**

b. Ketubbot 62b-63a

b. Nedarim 50a-b

Focal Point: <https://www.thegreatcourses.com/digital-library/course/view/id/2140/format/1/>

Required Readings:

Shamma Friedman, “A Good Story Deserves Retelling: The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend,” *Jewish Studies - An Internet Journal* 3 (2004): 55–62

Tal Ilan, “The Quest for the Historical Beruriah, Rachel and Imma Shalom,” *AJS Review* 22, no. 1 (1997): 8–11

<http://thetalmudblog.wordpress.com/2014/05/06/an-interview-with-shamma-friedman/>

Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:

Shamma Friedman, “A Good Story Deserves Retelling: The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend,” *Jewish Studies - An Internet Journal* 3 (2004): 62–93





<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/at-israeli-prize-tradition-meets-science/>

Daniel Boyarin, "Internal Opposition in Talmudic Literature: The Case of the Married Monk," *Representations*, no. 36 (1991): 87–113

Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), 134–66

Shamma Friedman, *Talmudic Studies: Investigating the Sugya, Variant Readings and Aggada (Hebrew)* (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2010), 3–61

Azzan Yadin, "Rabbi Akiva's Youth," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 100, no. 4 (2010): 573–97

Anonymous, *And Rachel Was His Wife*, researched and annotated by Ben Zion Sobel, revised and edited by Marsi Tabak (Jerusalem & New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1990)

Tova Hartman and Charlie Buckholtz, *Are You Not a Man of God?: Devotion, Betrayal, and Social Criticism in Jewish Tradition* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 161–73

Ruth Calderon, *A Bride for One Night: Talmud Tales*, translated by Ilana Kurshan (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2014), 75–83

### **Week X: November 23<sup>d</sup>**

### The Worlds of the Bavli and the Yerushalmi A Comparative Analysis

#### **Primary Texts:**

y. Berakhot 1:4 10b [1:4 11]

b. Berakhot 12a

Florence Manuscript

y. Avodah Zarah 2:9

b. Avodah Zarah 38a

#### **Required Readings:**

Leib Moscovitz, "The Formation and Character of the Jerusalem Talmud," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism Vol. 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 663–77

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 23-28

#### **Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:**

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 16-38

Shai Secunda, "Gaze and Counter-Gaze: Textuality and Contextuality in the Anecdote of Rav Asi and the Roman (b. Baba Metzi'a 28b)," in *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, eds. Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 149-171



Aaron Amit, “The Homilies on Mishnah and Talmud Study at the Close of Bavli Bava Metsia 2 and Yerushalmi Horayot 3: Their Origin and Development,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 102:2 (Spring 2012): 163-189

Yaakov Elman, “The Beginning of Tractate Pesahim in the Bavli and Yerushalmi: Questions of Redaction and Formation (Hebrew),” in *Melekheth Mahshevet: Studies in the Redaction and Development of Talmudic Literature*, ed. Aaron Amit and Aharon Shemesh (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2011), 9–25

Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 81-111

Yaakov Elman, “The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 80, no. 3/4 (1990): 315–39

Yaakov Elman, “Righteousness as Its Own Reward: An Inquiry Into the Theologies of the Stam,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 57 (1990–1901): 35–67

Menachem Katz, “Division Into Sugyot in the Yerushalmi: Redactional Trends and Their Significance (Hebrew),” in *Melekheth Mahshevet: Studies in the Redaction and Development of Talmudic Literature*, ed. Aaron Amit and Aharon Shemesh (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2011), 69–86

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/good-schools-arent-the-secret-to-israels-high-tech-boom-1490051053>

## **Week XI: November 30<sup>th</sup>**

## The Bavli in its Babylonian Context The Iranian Talmud

### **Primary Texts:**

b. Avodah Zarah 17a

b. Yevamot 97b

*Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*

b. Sotah 3b

*Videvdad and Hadoxt nask*

b. Sanhedrin 39a

b. Berakhot 9b

b. Berakhot 58a

### **Required Readings**

Geoffrey Herman, “In Honor of the House of Caesar: Attitudes to the Kingdom in the Aggadah of the Babylonian Talmud and Other Sasanian Sources,” in *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, eds. Geoffrey Herman and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), 103–23

Prods Oktor Skjaervo, *Introduction to Zoroastrianism* (2005), i-36

Prods Oktor Skjaervo, “Marriage – Next of Kin” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, available at

<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/marriage-next-of-kin>

Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 8-28

### **Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:**



Yishai Kiel, "Confessing Incest to a Rabbi: A Talmudic Story in Its Zoroastrian Context," *Harvard Theological Review* 107, no. 4 (2014): 401–24

Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 110–43

A. V. Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivayat Accompanying the Dadestan i Denig* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1990), (Chapter 8) 10–17, 126–37

Robert Brody, "Irano-Talmudica: The New Parallelomania," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 106:2 (Spring 2016): 209–232

Shai Secunda, "'This, but Also That': Historical, Methodological, and Theoretical Reflections on Irano-Talmudica," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 106:2 (Spring 2016): 233–241  
Richard Kalmin, "The Bavli, the Roman East, and Mesopotamian Christianity," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 106:2 (Spring 2016): 242–247

Simcha M. Gross, "Irano-Talmudica and Beyond: Next Steps in the Contextualization of the Babylonian Talmud," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 106:2 (Spring 2016): 248–255

Socachevsky Brenda Bacon, "The Wisdom of Women: From Epstein to Agnon," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 15 (Spring 2008): 30–57

## **Week XII: December 7th**

## Beruriah Women's Voices in the Talmud

### **Primary Texts:**

- b. Sotah 20a
- b. Eruvin 53b-54a
- b. Berakhot 10a
- b. Pesachim 62b

Rashi on b. Avodah Zarah 18b s.v. *veika*  
*Torah Temimah* (Epstein) Genesis 24:1

### **Required Readings**

Tova Hartman and Charlie Buckholtz, *Are You Not a Man of God?: Devotion, Betrayal, and Social Criticism in Jewish Tradition* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 82–126

Ruth Calderon, *A Bride for One Night: Talmud Tales*, translated by Ilana Kurshan (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2014), 133–8

Tal Ilan, "The Quest for the Historical Beruriah, Rachel and Imma Shalom," *AJS Review* 22, no. 1 (1997): 1–8

### **Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:**

Ruth Calderon's Maiden Knesset Speech: <http://youtu.be/S8nNpTf7tNo>

Ruth Calderon, *A Bride for One Night: Talmud Tales*, translated by Ilana Kurshan (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2014), 31–8



Yeshiva University  
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER  
FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

Daniel Boyarin, "Studying Women: Resistance from Within the Male Discourse," in *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995), 167–96

Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Tal Ilan, "Feminist Interpretations of Rabbinic Literature: Two Views," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 4 (2001): 7–14

Tal Ilan, "The Quest for the Historical Beruriah, Rachel and Imma Shalom," *AJS Review* 22, no. 1 (1997): 11–17  
David Goodblatt "The Beruriah Traditions," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 26:1-2 (Spring-Autumn 1975): 68-85

Judith Hauptman, "A New View of Women and Torah Study in the Talmudic Period," *Jewish Studies Internet Journal* 9 (2010): 249-292.

**Week XIII: December 14<sup>th</sup>**

The Snake Oven – *Tanur shel akhnai*  
The Polyvocality of Aggadah

**Primary Texts:**

b. Bava Metzi'a 59a-b

Maharal, *Hiddushey Aggadot* BM 59b

Maharal, *Netivot Olam II Netiv Ahavat Hareya: 2*

**Required Readings**

Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, "When the Rabbi Weeps: On Reading Gender in Talmudic Aggadah," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender*, no. 4 (2001): 56–83

Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates & the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 194–230

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Torah, Shame, and 'The Oven of Akhnai' (Bava Metsia 59a-59b)," in *Talmudic Stories: Narrative, Art, Composition and Culture* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 34–63

**Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:**

David Weiss Halivni, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 107–8  
Louis Jacobs, *A Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility and Creativity in Jewish Law* (Oxford & Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 18–9

Menahem Elon, *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles*, translated by Bernard Auerbach and Melvin J. Sykes (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), 261–5

Yizhaq Heineman, *Darkhei Ha'aggadah (Hebrew)* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1970), 11

Jonathan Sacks, "Creativity and Innovation in Halakhah," in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy*, edited by M. Sokol (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992), 127–30

Tova Hartman and Charlie Buckholtz, *Are You Not a Man of God?: Devotion, Betrayal, and Social Criticism in Jewish Tradition* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 46–81

Hyam Maccoby, *The Philosophy of the Talmud* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 173–89

**Week XIV: December 21<sup>st</sup>**

Hanukkah:



**Primary Texts:**

b. Shabbat 21a

Vered Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit: Versions, Interpretation, History with a Critical Edition (Hebrew)* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2003), 103–7

Uriel Rappaport, *The First Book of Maccabees: Introduction, Hebrew Translation and Commentary (Hebrew)* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2004), 163–65

Daniel R. Schwartz, *The Second Book of Maccabees* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2004), 77, 82–83

Maharal, *Ner Mitzva*

R Shlomo Fischer, letter

Hararay Kedem

**Required Readings:**

Vered Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil: The Metamorphosis of a Legend," *Hebrew Union College Annual LXXIII* (2002): 191-205

Glatzer, Nahum N. "Megillat Ta'anit." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 769. Vol. 13. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007

*The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, Translated by William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hedrickson Publishers, 2006), 328

**Suggested Readings/Additional Bibliography:**

Vered Noam, *Megillat Ta'anit: Versions, Interpretation, History with a Critical Edition (Hebrew)* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2003), 19–27

Vered Noam, "The Miracle of the Cruse of Oil: The Metamorphosis of a Legend," *Hebrew Union College Annual LXXIII* (2002): 205–226

Isaiah M. Gafni, *Jews and Judaism in the Rabbinic Era: Image and Reality* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 59–75

**Requirements of the Course**

**1. Attendance, Preparation and Participation (20% of grade):** Participation grades will be based on attendance, preparation of the course readings before class, and your performance during class. **Being prepared means that you have read all the week's required readings and that you have brought ideas and questions to**



**the class that are important to you.** Punctual attendance is required at all classes, if you cannot attend a class, please send me an email in advance. Class participation will be assessed based upon the degree to which you manifest genuine attention to, and interest in, the material being discussed, and the degree to which you succeed in advancing the discussion.

**2. Class Blog (25% of grade):** You are expected to actively participate and contribute to the class blog by discussing the assigned readings of the upcoming class, the previous class, and the postings. You should contribute a minimum of five postings discussing your thoughts, comments, and opinions and engaging in the conversation. Blog participation will be assessed based upon the degree to which you manifest genuine attention to, and interest in, the material being discussed, and the degree to which you succeed in advancing the discussion. They will be graded based upon quantity (five postings is the required minimum) and their insightfulness and quality.

**3. Mid Semester Assignments (15% of grade):** A weekly short posting (1 to 3 pages) discussing the *sugya* learned in class will be assigned to a different group of students every week to be posted on the discussion board. You are expected to post twice in the semester. These assignments they will represent 15% of the total grade of the semester.

In addition, you must come to office hours to discuss your final paper with me and to select an appropriate text by Week 8 of the semester.

**4. Final Paper (40%):** A final paper is due on the last day of class, December 21<sup>st</sup>. The paper should be around 12-5 pages in length. The assignment is to do a literary analysis of a Talmudic narrative (*Aggadah*) and to apply one or more of the theories that we have discussed over the course of the semester.

### Course Readings

All course readings are available on Canvas. No book purchases are required for this course.

### Web Resources

1. Jastrow Dictionary on line: [www.tyndalearchive.com/tabs/jastrow/](http://www.tyndalearchive.com/tabs/jastrow/)
2. Soncino English Translation of the Babylonian Talmud: [www.halakha.com/](http://www.halakha.com/)

### Contact Information and Office Hours

ari.bergmann@yu.edu

212 688 8800

Office Hours: (Mon 8-9PM) or by appointment via Zoom (please email to make an appointment).

Outside of class, I will be available to address any questions, concerns or suggestions you have by email and during office hours. If you cannot make office hours, or have class during that time, I will try to schedule a time to meet with you that works with both of our schedules.

### Course Policies

**1. Disability and Difficult Circumstances:** In compliance with Yeshiva University's policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Requests for academic accommodations need to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except under unusual circumstances, to arrange reasonable accommodations.



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2. **Laptops and Tablets:** You may use laptops or tablets in this class to consult online readings or to take notes. Laptops or tablets, however, are not allowed during the discussion portion of the class. In addition, any other use of these devices and the use of cell phones is strictly prohibited. Place your phone on mute before you come to class. Violating this policy will negatively impact your participation grade.
  
3. **Difficult Circumstances:** It is unfortunately inevitable that some students will face difficult circumstances in the course of their time in school. Please let me know if you are facing circumstances that may interfere with your coursework and I will make efforts to accommodate you.
  
4. **Academic Integrity:** The University Code of Academic Integrity is central to the ideals that under gird this course. Students are expected to be independently familiar with the Code and to recognize that their work in the course is to be their own original work that truthfully represents the time and effort applied. Violations of the Code are most serious and will be handled in a manner that fully represents the extent of the Code and that befits the seriousness of its violation.