

JST 150A, Drunks, Donkeys, and the Devil Introduction to Midrash
Monday/Wednesday/Thursday
Time: 16:00 – 16:50

AJU Mission Statement

Learning and Scholarship: We believe in the principle of Torah – learning as an intellectual and inspirational endeavor – that embraces both academic scholarship and the efforts of all Jews to explore their shared heritage through the formal and informal study of Judaism and the other great civilizations of the world.

Culture: We acknowledge that Judaism is a flourishing civilization with a culture that is fundamental to modern Jewish identity. We strive to advance that culture by encouraging artistic endeavor in all of its many forms.

Ethics: We recognize that ethics is the language of Judaism and its most important link to the world at large.

Leadership: We understand that the future of Jewish life depends on the careful preparation of dedicated and impassioned individuals who are called to leadership.

Peoplehood: We are a pluralistic institution that embraces diversity within Judaism and values the contributions of all groups to the growth of Jewish Civilization.

Students with Disabilities

American Jewish University is committed to assisting our students with documented disabilities to have a successful career at AJU. Contact the Office of Student Affairs to request accommodations and begin the documentation process. (See Enhancing Accessibility and/or AJU website for complete policy.)

Standards of Academic Integrity

The Honor Code of American Jewish University was written by a committee of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and administrators. Under the Honor Code, students have a two-fold obligation: individually, they must not violate the code, and as a community, they are responsible to see that suspected violations are reported. Academic Dishonesty includes, but is not limited, to the following definitions:

A. Examination Behavior: Unless expressly permitted by the instructor, the use of external assistance during an exam shall be considered academically dishonest. Inappropriate exam behavior includes but is not limited to: (1) communicating with anyone in any way during an exam, (2) copying material from another student's exam, (3) allowing a student to copy from one's exam, (4) using unauthorized notes, calculators, or other sources of unauthorized assistance.

B. Fabrication: Any intentional falsification, invention of data, or citation in an academic exercise will be considered to be academic dishonesty. Fabrication involves but is not limited to: (1) inventing or altering data for a laboratory experiment or field project, (2) padding a bibliography of a term paper or research paper with

sources one did not utilize, (3) resubmitting returned and corrected academic work under the pretense of grader evaluation error when, in fact, the work has been altered from its original form.

C. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the appropriation and subsequent passing off of another's ideas or words as one's own. If the words or ideas of another are used, acknowledgement of the original source must be made through recognized referencing practices. Use of another's ideas or words must be properly acknowledged as follows:

- (1) Direct Quotation: Any use of direct quotation must be acknowledged by footnote citation and by either quotation marks or proper indentation and spacing.
- (2) Paraphrase: If another's ideas are borrowed in whole or in part and are merely recast in the student's own words, proper acknowledgement must, nonetheless, be made. A footnote or proper internal citation must follow the paraphrased material.

D. Other Types of Academic Dishonesty: Other forms of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Submitting a paper written by or obtained from another person.
- (2) Using a paper or essay in more than one class without the instructors' expressed permission.
- (3) Obtaining a copy of an examination in advance without the knowledge and consent of the instructor.
- (4) Altering academic records outside of official institutional procedures.
- (5) Using another person to complete academic assignments such as homework, take-home exams or using another person posing as oneself to take classroom examinations.

Course Description:

Readings and analysis of rabbinic Midrash composed in the period of the Talmud. Samples reflect the core features of midrashic literature: exegetical, homiletical, and narrative. Selected passages from Mekhilta, Sifra, Sifre, Genesis Rabbah, Pesiqta deReb Kahanna and Avot deRabbi Nathan in English translation.

Course Goals:

- A. To identify Midrash in the context of Rabbinic Judaism.
- B. To acquire the basic vocabulary for the study of, and written presentation in, the study of early midrashic literature and thought.
- C. To understand the challenges and issues involved in reading a midrashic text.
- D. To examine great ideas of the Midrash and how they shaped the development and meaning of Judaism through the ages.
- E. To evolve in a learning exchange: simple skills (knowledge, comprehension, application) to complex skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation).
- F. To experience the joy of learning the literary genre Midrash.

Course Requirements:

Each class can be a learning experience if you come prepared. Therefore, read all assigned readings carefully and reflect on the thoughts therein. The lecture will develop the subject matter beyond the readings. At the

end of each topic there will be ample time for questions and discussions. Regular class attendance will be required of all who are enrolled in the course.

Required Reading and Other Assignments:

Course Reader

Written Assignments: Three take-home written assignments. Details to follow.

Assessment/Grading:

All students will be graded on the basis of their written work and class participation. Analytical Essay, 25%; Readings Review, 20%; Cumulative Essay, 35%; attendance and class participation, 20%.

Attendance is mandatory for all class sessions. Should a student miss 20% or more of class sessions, he/she will be automatically withdrawn from the course and receive a W. To get an excused absence one must be ill and bring a doctor's note.

Course Schedule:

Topic 1: By Way of Introduction: Written and Oral Torah
Goldenberg in Holtz, pp. 129-175

Topic 2: What is Midrash – Reading Midrash
Holtz, pp. 177-211

Topic 3: Types of Midrash
Selected Readings to be announced

Topic 4: Mishnah as Halakha
Bavli Baba Met'sia 59b; Mishna Berakhot 1:5 (Sifre Deuteronomy 130, Mekhilta on 13:3)

Topic 5: Midrash as Haggadah
Haggadah Shel Pesach

Topic 6: Excursus: Eleh Ezkrah ("10 Martyrs") and "Ninety-Three Maidens"
Garber: "93 Martyrs"

Topic 7: Survey of Midrashic Literature

Topic 8: Tannaitic Midrashim
General Characterizations
Exodus and Mekhlita Attributed to R. Ishmael
Leviticus and Sifra
Numbers and Sifre to Numbers
Deuteronomy and Sifre to Deuteronomy

Topic 9: Mekhilta

Mekhilta Pisha 7 on Exodus 12:13; Mekhilta Pisha 14 on Exodus 12:40; Mekhilta Beshallah 3 on Exodus 14:13; Mekilta Sirata 4 on Exodus 15:3; Mekhilta Nezikin 18 on Exodus 22:21

Topic 10–11: Sifra and Sifre

Sifra Introduction 7 (on hermeneutic methodology)

Sifre Deuteronomy 26 on Deuteronomy 3:23

Topics 12: Genesis Rabbah

World View and Biblical Exegesis

Topic 13: Excursus: “Kiddush Hashem as ‘Olah”

Genesis Rabbah Chapter 55 on Genesis 22

Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 74a

Topic 14: Pesiqta De Rav Kahana

Topic 15: Midrash Tanhuma Telamedennu