

The Emergence of Judaism

Syllabus

[Note to Instructors:

For a variety of resources you may wish to consult

(1) **Internet Jewish History Sourcebook** (site maintained and edited by Paul Halsall) at **<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishbook.html>**

This site provides links to secondary research articles, reviews, discussions, and pictures (2ND) as well as to megasites of web resources (MEGA) and websites focused on specific issues (WEB). The site focuses on providing access to full-text primary historical documents. The contents, listed by topic, are divided into four historical periods: The People of Israel; The Emergence of Judaism; The Jewish Middle Ages; and Jewish Life since the Enlightenment.

(2) **Jewish History.com (Center for Online Judaic Studies).**

Internet (Public Access): <http://jewishhistory.com/>

The site provides materials to support teachers and for individual learning on a range of topics covering the span of Jewish History. For each section overview information is provided as well as primary and secondary sources, bibliographies, newspaper articles, videos, images, maps, artifacts and websites. Topics include: Jews and Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period; The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000-1500; Jewish Mysticism And Esotericism; Jews in the Early Modern Period, 1450-1750 and more.]

Course Description:

This course will examine the religious traditions, practices, ideas, values and cultural expressions of the Jewish people as found in the Hebrew Bible and the classic texts of rabbinic Judaism. Starting with the religious and cultural revolution of the ancient Israelites whose radically new conception of the divine laid the foundation for equally radical conceptions of morality, history, and the purpose and meaning of human life, students will examine the ways in which Jews through the early 7th century C.E. not only survived but responded creatively to the challenges of history and encounters with neighboring cultures, producing the unique ethnic-religious culture from which contemporary forms of Judaism derive.

Required Books:

Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

Berlin, Adele; Brettler, Marc and Fishbane, Michael, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible featuring the Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. *This edition is required because several of the scholarly articles included in the volume will be assigned as supplemental readings.*

Course Requirements:

(a) Quizzes: Two tests and two quizzes will be administered in class.

[Note to Instructors: On this website you will find a sample syllabus for a single semester course utilizing the textbook, as well as quizzes covering chapters 1-3, chapter 4, chapters 5-

6, and chapter 7. These tests can be given in class time. On the assumption that most semesters run approximately 13 weeks and that the quizzes will occupy the equivalent of a week's sessions, the syllabus covers 12 full weeks of instruction.]

- (b) Study questions: Students will turn in 6 brief (1-2 double-spaced pages) written responses to study questions (students may choose in which 6 of the 12 weeks they will write a response).
- (c) There will be 2 tests and 2 quizzes during the semester. The first test will follow chapter 3 of the textbook; a brief quiz will follow chapter 4, a second test will follow chapter 6 and a second brief quiz will follow chapter 7.
- (d) A final research paper will be due _____. Students will trace the emergence of a ritual, practice, or religious concept from its earliest beginnings in biblical Israel to its articulation in rabbinic Judaism, accounting for elements of both continuity and change.

[**Note to Instructors:** You may wish to simply have students research a topic of interest to them. The research guide on this website assumes a fairly open ending final research paper project.]

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

Week 1 – Course Overview.

What is Judaism? What is religion? Is Judaism a religion? Establishing the chronological framework of the course and a narrative overview of Israelite and Jewish history from earliest times to the rise of Islam. The importance of history for an understanding of the emergence of Judaism by the early 7th century C.E.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, Preface and chapter 1. Study questions.

Week 2 – Biblical Israel: Many Voices I

Investigation of the nature and manner of composition of the Hebrew Bible reveals a document of compromise in which diverse views and strands of tradition may be discerned. Distinction between Israelite-Judean religion (similar to Canaanite religion in many respects) and biblical religion (strong tendency towards monotheism).

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 2, pp. 25-31. Study questions 1 and 2.

Supplemental Reading: Berlin, Adele and Marc Zvi Brettler, “Historical and Geographical Background to the Bible” in Berlin, Adele, Marc Brettler and Michael Fishbane, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible: Featuring the Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. 2048-2062. *Discussion of the historical value of biblical sources; detailed history of the biblical period; consideration of Israel’s geographical setting.*

Geller, Stephen A. “The Religion of the Bible” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 2021-2031.

The instructor should introduce additional readings of biblical texts and additional primary source materials to illuminate the biblical text. See the Study Guide for anthologies of relevant Ancient Near Eastern materials.

Week 3 -- Biblical Israel: Many Voices II

The primary themes of the Deuteronomistic tradition (the worship of one God in one central sanctuary, the bi-lateral Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant, the election of Israel to be a holy people set apart from other nations to God's service through obedience to his laws) and the Priestly cultic tradition (including the sacrificial cult and the symbol system of ritual and moral impurity).

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 2, pp. 31- 38. Study questions 3 and 4.

Supplemental Reading: Geller, Stephen A. "The Religion of the Bible" in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 2031-2035

Klawans, Jonathan. "Concepts of Purity in the Bible" in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 2041-2047.

The instructor should introduce additional readings of biblical texts and additional primary source materials to illuminate the biblical text. See the Study Guide for anthologies of relevant Ancient Near Eastern materials.

Week 4 – Themes of Biblical Literature I

Examines the way in which biblical authors and editors transformed a common Near Eastern literary heritage in order to express distinctive Israelite conceptions of the divine, the natural world and humankind. Considers the major themes of Genesis and Exodus.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 3, pp. 39-59. Study questions 1 and 2.

Supplemental Reading: The instructor should introduce additional readings of biblical texts and additional primary source materials to illuminate the biblical text. See the Study Guide for anthologies of relevant Ancient Near Eastern materials.

Week 5 – Themes of Biblical Literature II

Continued exploration of the Hebrew Bible includes the major themes of the Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy through 2 Kings), the literary prophets and the Wisdom books (Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes). Responses to the events of Israel's history and efforts to understand divine justice.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 3, pp. 59-70. Study questions 3-5.

Supplemental Reading: Geller, Stephen A. "The Religion of the Bible" in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 2035-2040

The instructor should introduce additional readings of biblical texts that highlight the themes discussed in the textbook.

Week 6 – From Biblical Israel to Second Temple Judaism I

The six centuries of dramatic political, social, cultural and religious changes that transformed biblical Israel into Second Temple Judaism (520 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.) include the period of the Restoration (in which Ezra and Nehemiah seek to organize Jewish life around the Torah of Moses) and the Hellenistic period (in which Jews negotiate the claims of Jewish identity and Greek culture in a variety of ways).

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 4, pp. 73-80. Study questions 1 and 2.

Supplemental Reading: Najman, Hindy. “Early Nonrabbinic Interpretation” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 1835-1844.

Cohen, Shaye, J.D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. 2nd edition. Philadelphia: Westminster, 2006. Pp. 1-37,

Week 7 -- From Biblical Israel to Second Temple Judaism II

The rise of apocalypticism. The formation of a number of distinct groups or sects – Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes in particular – as well as charismatic figures opposed to Roman rule. Second Temple period Judaism as a complex and variegated phenomenon that developed in active conversation with many different cultural influences.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 4, pp. 80-87. Study questions 3-5.

Supplemental Reading: Cohen, Shaye, J.D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. Pp. 119-156.

[Note to Instructors:

The instructor should introduce additional primary source materials to illuminate the biblical text. One collection of such sources is Schiffman, Lawrence H., *Texts and Traditions: A Source Reader for the Study of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. Hoboken: Ktav, 1997.]

Week 8 – From Second Temple Judaism to Rabbinic Judaism I

The emergence of Rabbinic Judaism from Second Temple Judaism over the course of the Talmudic period (from 70 to 640 C.E.). The role of scholars/sages in developing a small Torah-centered movement organized around teacher-disciple relationships and eventually gaining influence with the backing of the Patriarch. The consequences of the Christianization of the empire, the formation of local and religiously significant Jewish communities in Palestine, and the eventual emergence of the Babylonian Jewish community as the intellectual and spiritual center of rabbinic Judaism in the 5th-7th centuries C.E.. The rabbinic “myth of origins” describing the reconstruction of Jewish life around the Torah after the destruction of the Temple.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 5, pp. 89-101. Study questions 1-3.

Supplemental Reading: Cohen, Shaye, J.D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987. Pp. 205-224.

The instructor should introduce additional primary source materials from rabbinic literature. Collections of such sources are: Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., and Shaye J. D. Cohen. *Rabbinic Stories (Classics of Western Spirituality)*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002, and Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, ed. *The Book of Legends: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Translated by William G. Braude. New York: Schocken, 1992.

Week 9 -- From Second Temple Judaism to Rabbinic Judaism II

The rabbinic concept of “Torah” – both Written and Oral. The literary output of the rabbinic movement including the Mishnah, the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud and various works of midrash. The study and interpretation of Torah as an intense and deeply religious expression.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 5, pp. 102-123. Study questions 4 and 5.

Supplemental Reading: Elman, Yaakov. “Classical Rabbinic Interpretation” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 1844-1863.

Goldenberg, Robert. “Talmud” in Barry Holtz, ed. *Back to the Sources*, pp. 129-176.

Week 10 – Topics in Rabbinic Judaism I

Exploration of some themes in rabbinic writings, including the centrality of the commandments; the notion of the *shekinah*; rabbinic anthropology; views of sexuality, marriage, asceticism and celibacy; evil and the ethical life; the afterlife; suffering and death; and messianic redemption.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 6, pp. 125-133. Study questions 1-4.

Supplemental Reading: Bialik, H. N. “Halakhah and Aggadah.” 1917, as found in Nahum Glatzer, *Modern Jewish Thought: A Source Reader*. New York: Schocken, 1988.

The instructor should introduce additional primary source materials from rabbinic literature. Collections of such sources are: Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., and Shaye J. D. Cohen. *Rabbinic Stories (Classics of Western Spirituality)*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002, and Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, ed. *The Book of Legends: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Translated by William G. Braude. New York: Schocken, 1992.

Week 11 -- Topics in Rabbinic Judaism II

The rabbis’ role in Jewish society and their relationship to other groups including non-rabbinic Jews and Gentiles.

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 6, pp. 133-154. Study question 5.

Supplemental Reading: Urbach, E.E., *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press; 2nd enlarged edition, 1979. Reprinted 1987. *This work summarizes rabbinic views on a wide range of topics which can be introduced selectively by the instructor in accordance with student interest.*

The instructor should introduce additional primary source materials from rabbinic literature. Collections of such sources are: Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., and Shaye J. D. Cohen. *Rabbinic Stories (Classics of Western Spirituality)*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002, and Bialik, Hayyim Nahman, ed. *The Book of Legends: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Translated by William G. Braude. New York: Schocken, 1992.

Week 12 -- Judaism Through the Ages

A brief survey of the major manifestations and transformations of Judaism down to the modern period

Reading: *The Emergence of Judaism*, chapter 7. Study questions.