

Talmud, Midrash, and Prayer: The Tripod of Rabbinic Judaism

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.....**Overview**.....

In the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple two millennia ago, a group of people we now call "the Rabbis" compiled the Talmud to structure our lives with law, the Midrash to enhance our lives with fantasy, and Prayer to surround our lives with God. We'll study this tripod of Judaism that has become our heritage, learning what it contains and how its various parts continue to impact our lives today.

.....**Content**.....

Over the course of our ten weeks together, we will explore typical passages from the Talmud, from the Midrash, and from the prayerbook. We will focus on three aspects of these Jewish sources: (1) their basic nature and what we learn from them; (2) how they form part of the rabbinic mindset; and (3) how they continue to impact us today.

By the end of the ten weeks, you will understand these three central kinds of Jewish sources as well as how they contribute to Judaism today. You will also have a deeper understanding of the texts that we study.

.....**Format**.....

The texts we discuss will be handed out in class in both Hebrew and translation. You do not have to know any Hebrew to keep up. (Knowing English is a good idea.)

.....**Contact**.....

I can be reached most easily by e-mail: Joel@Exc.Com. I can also be reached during normal waking hours by phone: 718/834-1080.

.....**Selected Bibliography**.....

You do not need to read anything between classes. But the following are used to greater or lesser degrees during the course, either to supplement or to reinforce the material presented in class.

On the list, the books most worth having on your bookshelf are marked with an asterisk (*). Those most relevant to the course are marked with a plus symbol (+).

Cohen, Norman. 2000. *The Way into Torah*. Jewish Lights Publishing. /1580230288/ (+)

Freeman, H. and Maurice Simon, eds. 1983. *Midrash Rabba*. Soncino Press. /0900689382/ (+*)

Gilbert, Martin. 2003. *The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History*. Routledge. /0415281504/ (*)

Herczeg, Yisrael, ed. 1999. *Rashi: Sapirstein Edition*. Mesorah Publications. /1578193303/ (+*)

Hoffman, Lawrence A. 1986. *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*. University of Notre Dame Press. /026800756X/ (+)

Hoffman, Lawrence A., ed. 1997–2005. *My People's Prayerbook*. Nine volumes. Jewish Lights Publishing. /1879045796, 187904580X, 1879045818, 1879045826, 1879045834, 1879045842, 1879045850, 1580231217, 1580232620/ (+*)

Rubenstein, Jeffrey. *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. /0801882656/ (+)

Schottenstein Edition of the Talmud. 73 volumes. Mesorah Publications. /1578190673/ (+*)