

Survey of Jewish Interpretation (BSE530)

Dr. Golan Broshi

Day and time of course:

Wednesdays,
16:00-19:00 (ZOOM)

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School year: 2024-2025

Course Description:

It is written in the Talmud (Chagigah 14b), that "*four men entered the Pardes (Paradise), i.e., dealt with the loftiest secrets of the Torah... [but only] Rabbi Akiva came out safely*". The phrase Pardes (פרדס, in Hebrew) stands for four different ways in which traditional Judaism approaches Biblical exegesis: **1-** "Peshat" refers to the literal meaning; **2-** "Remez", means looking for hints of an allegorical or a hidden meaning; **3-** "Drash", means to "inquire" the text for the purpose of making an argument; **4-** "Sod" refers to the secret and mystical meaning of the text. This course will focus on Rabbinic exegesis of the Tanakh, especially as it interacts with the Messianic approach to scriptures. As we shall see, the traditional hermeneutics of the text was made, both to argue for the justification of the Oral-Law as the only valid Jewish interpretation of the Torah; and as an apologetic tute against Christian understanding of the Bible, especially concerning Messianic prophecies.

Course Objectives:

1. To study different Jewish approaches to Scriptures, from antiquity to the Middle Ages.
2. To learn the different levels of interpretation in Rabbinic Judaism and their objectives.
3. To compare the NT hermeneutics of the OT, to the Oral-law use of the Bible.

Learning Outcomes:

1. The students will know the differentiate between the main Jewish approaches to Scriptures.
2. The students will understand the four levels of interpretation in Traditional Judaism and its goal.
3. The students will see how the NT's understanding of the OT reflects the true meaning of the text.

Course Structure:

All lessons will be held through a Zoom format, consisting of lectures and interactive discussions between all participants. There will be 10 three-hour live zoom lectures (with breaks). Recordings will be available to registered students.

Requirements and Grading:

Active participation: students are required to participate during all lectures and fulfill any given assignments for the next lesson	10%
Reading Assignment: students are required to choose <i>one book</i> from the list below (under “Must Read”); or <i>two articles</i> from the “Dates, Topics and Reading” list, and submit <i>one written report</i> , consisting of the following: 1- write a short summary for the chosen book/articles; 200 words; 2- write a personal critique (i.e., feedback/reflection) for the book/articles; 200 words	35%
Final paper: students are required to choose a topic from the list below (under “Dates, Topics and Reading”) and present a paper consisting of the following: 1- exposition of the topic (introduction); 2- presentation of at least two opposing sides concerning the chosen subject; 3- conclusion: the student’s personal viewpoint on the chosen topic (in total: 700 words, using at least 4 bibliographical citations, apart from the Bible)	55%
Total Grade	100%

Main Texts

- The Bible
 - Must Read: in order to complete “Reading Assignment”, please choose *one book* from the list below (or *two articles* from the “Dates, Topics and Reading” list):
1. Bar-Asher Siegal, Michal. Jewish-Christian Dialogues on Scripture in Late Antiquity: Heretic Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud.
 2. Hedner Zetterholm, Karin. Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary.
 3. Maccoby, Hyam. Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages.
 4. Neusner, Jacob. Judaism and the Interpretation of Scripture: Introduction to the Rabbinic Midrash.
 5. Porton, Gary G. Understanding Rabbinic Midrash.
 6. Rojzman, Betty, Idel, Moslie & Randall, Steven. Black Fire on White Fire: An Essay on Jewish Hermeneutics, from Midrash to Kabbalah.
 7. Ronning, John. The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology.
 8. Safrai, Zeev. The Literature of the Sages, Midrash, and Targum.
 9. Young, Brad H. The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation.
 10. Yuval, Israel Jacob. Two nations in your womb.

Class Dates, Topics and Reading Assignments:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading (all articles are available on the courses' website)</i>
Sep 11, 2024	Introduction to course; syllabus; methodology; the beginning of interpretation; Philo and Hellenism	Hart, J. H. A. "Philo of Alexandria." <i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i> , vol. 17, no. 1, 1904, pp. 78–122
Sep 18, 2024	Josephus Flavius: history as interpretation; The Aramaic Targum as a Rabbinic response to the "Christian" use of the Septuagint	Churgin, Pinkhos. "The Targum and the Septuagint." <i>The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i> , vol. 50, no. 1, 1933, pp. 41–65
Sep 25, 2024	The Mishnah: a mere interpretation of the Torah or a New Torah/Testament; Akiva's revolutionary hermeneutics	Sperber, Alexander. "The Targum Onkelos in Its Relation to the Masoretic Hebrew Text." <i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i> , vol. 6, 1934, pp. 309–51
Oct 02, 2024	Jewish New Year No class	
Oct 09, 2024	Four methods of hermeneutics according to the Oral-Law, and 7 principles of interpreting the Torah	Zeitlin, Solomon. "The Need for a Jewish Translation and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible." <i>The Jewish Quarterly Review</i> , vol. 64, no. 4, 1974, pp. 269–88
Oct 16, 2024	Tabernacles No class	
Oct 23, 2024	Tabernacles No class	
Oct 30, 2024	Rabbinic traditions as Exegesis or Eisegesis: Law, Midrash and Aggadah (stories) and its relations to the NT	Fisch, Yael. "The Origins of Oral Torah: A New Pauline Perspective." <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i> , vol. 51, no. 1, 2020, pp. 43–66
Nov 06, 2024	Jesus in the Talmud: a mere response to Christianity or an identity builder	Gottstein, Alon Goshen. "Four Entered Paradise Revisited." <i>The Harvard Theological Review</i> , vol. 88, no. 1, 1995, pp. 69–133
Nov 13, 2024	The debate over Messianic prophecies through Jewish hermeneutics	Kinzer, Mark S. Mark S. <i>Scripture as Inspired, Canonical Tradition</i> . Delivered at the Third Hashivenu Forum, Pasadena, CA. 2001, pp. 1-26
Nov 20, 2024	ETS meeting No Class	

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading (all articles are available on the courses' website)</i>
Nov 27, 2024	Thanksgiving Break at DTS No class	
Dec 04, 2024	Rashi's revolutionary interpretation: its goals; its objectives; and its outcomes	Faur, José. "Basic Concepts in Rabbinic Hermeneutics." <i>Shofar</i> , vol. 16, no. 1, 1997, pp. 1–12
Dec 11, 2024	"Christian" interpretation of the Bible and the reason why Jewish people have a problem with it till today	Halivni, David Weiss. "The Breaking of the Tablets and the Begetting of the Oral Law: A History of 'Torah Shebe'al Peh.'" <i>Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought</i> , vol. 21, 2007, pp. 137-163
Dec 18, 2024	The goal of the Torah: will the true Logos please stand up?!; Conclusions	Boyarin, Daniel. "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John." <i>The Harvard Theological Review</i> , vol. 94, no. 3, 2001, pp. 243–84

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3. Becker, Maier. "Rabbi Akiva and Theodicy." *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2003, pp. 52–60.
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9. Bonchek, Avigdor. *What's Bothering Rashi?*. Philipp Feldheim, 1997.
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