

CELEBRATING
Seven years

SKIRBALL

The Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning at Temple Emanu-El

Winter 2008 | Course Guide

Shmitah שמיטה

Restoring Purpose to the Sabbatical Year

What happens when a law designed to help poor people ends up hurting them? What happens when a law designed to give the land a bit of rest has the potential to destroy entire agricultural settlements? Do you follow the letter of the original law, trusting that it will all work out, or do you enact new laws to fix the old laws and maintain their spirit?

These are the kinds of questions that arose centuries ago in connection to *shmitah*, the sabbatical year, which is taking place during this Jewish year of 5768 and is the theme of our Fall 2007 and Winter 2008 Course Guides. We chose this theme, in part, because this is also the Skirball Center's seventh year. During *shmitah*, fields are left fallow, slaves are freed, and debts are forgiven. The Fall 2007 Course Guide explained the common values between these three freedoms and many modern-day concerns. (Please visit www.adultjewishlearning.org/shmitah if you missed it!) Our Winter Course Guide delves into how the Bible and the Rabbis tried to preempt or mitigate problems with letting the land lie fallow and forgiving loans.

The Bible itself anticipates that the Jewish people will lack faith that they will have enough to eat in the seventh and eight years if they neither harvest nor plant in the seventh year, as the *shmitah* laws ordain:

“And should you ask, ‘What are we to eat in the seventh year, if we may neither sow nor gather in our crops?’ I will ordain my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years. When you sow in the eighth year, you will still be eating old grain of that crop; you will be eating the old until the ninth year, until its crops come in.”

—Leviticus 25:20–22

The Bible promises that the sixth year's crops will produce a triple yield: enough to sustain an agricultural economy for the sixth, seventh, and eight years of the cycle.





The Bible also anticipates a potential societal problem that would have severe ramifications for the poor: people would refuse to loan money to poor people as *shmitah* approaches, due to the law that requires loans to be forgiven during *shmitah*. The solution? Once again, God promises to reward, with blessings, those who follow this law.











Beware lest you harbor the base thought, “The seventh year, the year of remission, is approaching,” so that you are mean to your needy kinsman and give him nothing. He will cry out to the Lord against you, and you will incur guilt. Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the Lord your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings.

—Deuteronomy 15:9–10

The Rabbis saw that despite the incentive of Divine blessing, the problems anticipated by the Torah had, in fact, arisen. Poor people were being denied essential loans in the years leading up to the *shmitah*, and the agricultural burden became increasingly difficult as small-scale local economies were transformed first by the Roman occupation of the Land of Israel and later by the development of a modern economy in Ottoman-era Land of Israel. In response, they developed two other solutions to these fears: *prozbul*, instituted by Hillel the Elder circa 30 BCE to 10 CE (see page 8 for definition), and *heter mechirah*, first introduced by several rabbis in the Ottoman-controlled Land of Israel in the 1888-1889 *shmitah* year (see page 17 for definition). The discourse that surrounds these rabbinic enactments provides a fascinating view of the competing forces within Jewish law.

In the following pages, learn about *prozbul* and *heter mechirah* as ways of thinking about the interplay between the letter and the spirit of the law, and between the biblical injunctions and how later generations contend with them. Use the development of *prozbul* and *heter mechirah* as a lens through which to view both the process and the objectives of *halakhah*, or Jewish law.

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 Advanced

 Beginners

 Arts and Literature

 Bible

 Contemporary Issues

 Hebrew

 Israel

 History

 Jewish Thought

 Rabbinic Texts

 Cooperative Learning Communities

 Jewish Holiday

The Skirball Center links liberal Jews to Jewish study that is relevant and meaningful. At Skirball, Jewish learning is infused with excitement and depth, complexity and diversity. Skirball enhances the search for what it means to be a human being and a Jew.

General Information

Contact Information

Phone 212.507.9580

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Email info@adultjewishlearning.org

www.adultjewishlearning.org

Getting There

Courses at the Skirball Center are held at 10 East 66th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues in Manhattan, unless otherwise noted.

By Bus:

M1, M2, M3, M4, M18, M66, M72

By Subway:

N/R/W 5th Ave./59th St.

4/5/6 59th St.

or 68th St./Hunter College

F Lexington Ave./63rd St.

Scholarship

Limited scholarships are available. Contact the Skirball Center to inquire. All inquiries remain strictly confidential. If you would like to contribute to our new scholarship fund, please indicate so when you register.

Refund Policy

A full refund may be requested after the first class meeting or if a course is cancelled due to insufficient enrollment. After the second class, a credit of 75% will be given that may be used towards any course and is good for one year. No credit will be given after the third class. The annual \$20 registration fee is non-refundable.

Missed Classes

Tuition cannot be pro-rated if you cannot attend all class sessions. The Skirball Center is unable to record class sessions that you miss. Please arrange to borrow notes or have a classmate record the class for you, instead. Hand-outs from missed classes will be provided in person or via mail, upon request and without charge.

Library Privileges

All students enrolled in a Skirball Center class have borrowing privileges at the Ivan M. Stettenheim Library, Congregation Emanu-El's own expansive collection. For library information, including hours and information about the collection, call 212.744.1400, ext. 361, or visit www.emanuelnyc.org/library.

The JBI Library

The Jewish Braille Institute can make it possible for any visually impaired or blind person to participate in courses at the Skirball Center. Given reasonable lead time, JBI can prepare relevant reading materials in the appropriate format. For more information or to volunteer in the JBI studios call

The JBI Library: 800.433.1531.

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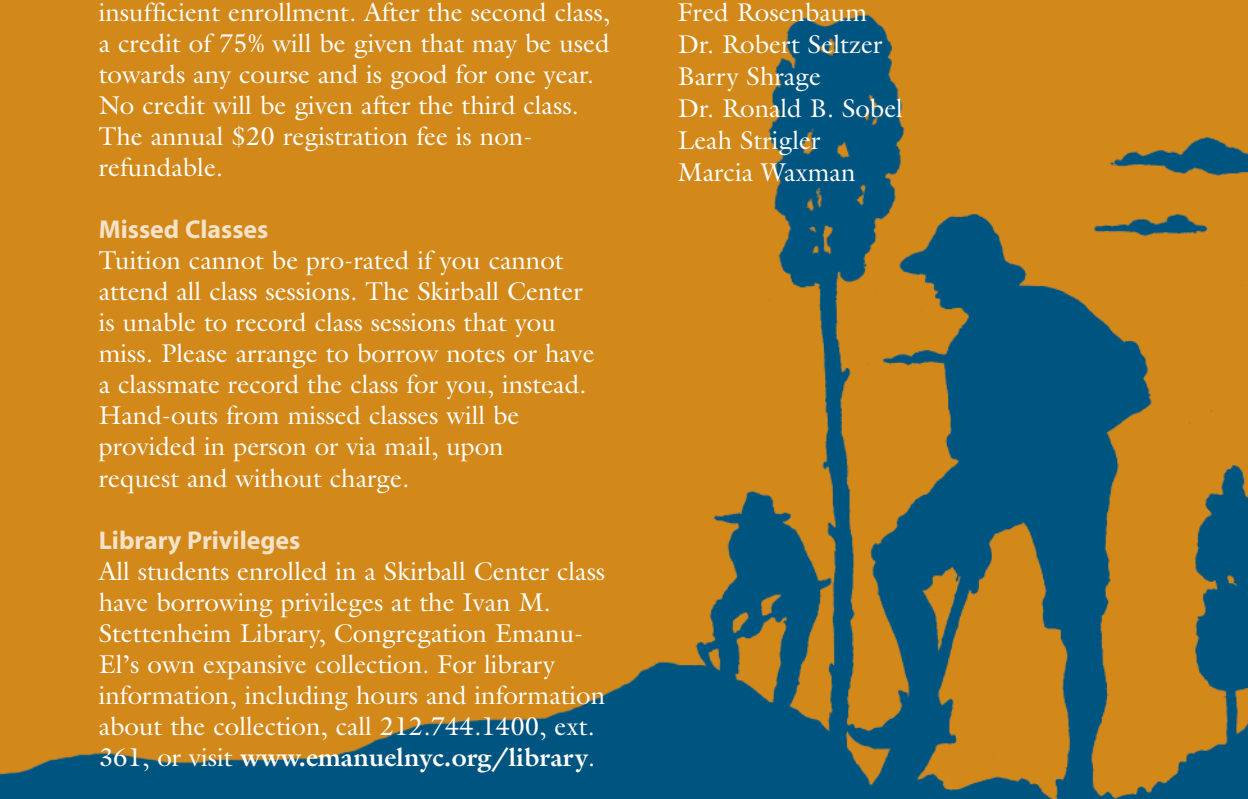
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In the Midrash *Leviticus Rabbah*, the Rabbis acknowledge how difficult it is to keep all of the laws of the *shmitah* year, and suggest that he who follows these laws is stronger than anyone else, because he sees his hard work destroyed day after day for an entire year, and still follows the law:

“The mighty in strength that fulfill His word” (Psalms 103:20). To whom does the Scripture refer? Rabbi Isaac said, “To those who are willing to observe the *shmitah* year. In the way of the world, a man may be willing to observe a commandment for a day, a week, a month, but is he likely to continue to do so through the remaining days of the year? But throughout that year this mighty man sees his field declared ownerless, his fences broken down, and his produce consumed by others, yet he continues to give up his produce without saying a word. Can you conceive a person mightier than such as he?”
—*Leviticus Rabbah*, 1:1



Sunday

DAYTIME CLASSES

Jewish Stories One Generation Tells Another

PENINNAH SCHRAM

10:00 AM–2:00 PM | Jan 27

For centuries, Jews have told stories filled with wit and wisdom, stories that celebrate our memories. In an interactive seminar with a master storyteller and teacher, explore the types of tales and themes that Jews, both Ashkenazi and Sephardi, have transmitted from one generation to another, as well as the reasons for these tales, their sources, and their transformations over time. Focus, too, on the inclusion of these stories in the home, the synagogue, and the classroom.


Theological Sundays

DR. NEIL GILLMAN

10:00 AM–2:00 PM

Suffering: February 3 | **The Afterlife:** March 9

Spend two Sundays discussing central issues in Jewish theology: suffering and the afterlife. Half of each session will comprise an overview of classical Jewish thinking on each issue presented by noted theologian Dr. Neil Gillman. The second half of each session will be an opportunity to craft a personal statement of theological belief and share it with fellow students. All participants will be required to participate in the writing half of the workshop, so come prepared to learn, think, create, and share!

 **NOTE:** Participants are encouraged to enroll for both sessions, but registration for individual sessions is permitted.

Outsider/Insider: Jewish Angst, Jewish Genius, and American Popular Culture

LISA KOGEN

10:00 AM–2:00 PM | Feb 10

From Tin Pan Alley to *The Hungry I* in San Francisco, Jewish immigrants and their children were at the vanguard of popular music, theater, cinema, television, and comedy. What accounts for this? In looking at the works of such disparate personalities as Al Jolson and George Gershwin, *The Three Stooges*, Leonard Bernstein, Harvey Kurtzman of *Mad Magazine*, and Woody Allen, focus on the complex intersections of ethnicity and identity.

American Rabbis Respond to the Challenges of the New World

RABBI ADAM MINTZ

10:00 AM–2:00 PM | Feb 24

Come explore the history of American Judaism through a study of how American rabbis addressed the complexities of Jewish life in America. May a Jewish soldier pray in a chapel decorated with a Christmas tree? Did the Reform movement accept the traditional Bar Mitzvah celebration? Might a survivor of the Holocaust remarry without proof of the demise of her husband? Examine the responses of three leading American rabbis of the twentieth century: Rabbi Solomon Freehof (Reform); Rabbi Louis Ginzberg (Conservative);

and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Orthodox). Discuss how their responsa both reflected and created a particularly American Jewish legal system for each of these denominations.

Purim: It's Not Just for Kids Anymore

RABBI JAN UHRBACH

10:00 AM–2:00 PM | Mar 2

Costumes, noisemakers, and playful parody: What kind of holy day is that? Is Purim only a children's holiday—a lighthearted stop-gap during the long winter between Hanukkah and Passover—or is it something more? In fact, Purim is the last holiday in the liturgical year, and, as such, marks the culmination of all our spiritual strivings. Explore the theology and spirituality of laughter. In a combination of group discussion and *hevruta*-style (paired) facilitated study, discover how Purim is simultaneously the silliest and most seriously adult holiday of the year.

A Passion for Waiting: The Messianic Idea in Judaism

RABBI CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER

10:00 AM–2:00 PM | Mar 16

The Jewish community is experiencing an explosion of messianic fever, some of it orchestrated by the Brooklyn-based Chabad Hasidic sect, while another manifestation is found among religious Zionists in Israel. What is the Jewish messianic doctrine? How is it transformed and envisioned by the medieval philosopher, Maimonides? Will there be a personal messiah or a messianic era? Will only Jews be redeemed or will all of humanity? Come delve into these far-reaching theological and eschatological questions.

The Abnormal Relationship: Israel, the Jewish People, and Germany After the Holocaust

FRED ROSENBAUM

10:00 AM–2:00 PM | Mar 30

What have been the Jewish ethical, political, and pragmatic considerations in coming to terms with post-war Germany? Discover or rediscover the furious debate in Israel (among David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, and others) over reparations and diplomatic relations with West Germany, as well as the painful question of restitution for individual victims. Examine the abduction and trial of Adolf Eichmann and Israel's strong ties in recent decades with Germany. Finally, consider the relationship of world Jewry to the current Germany, host to the fastest-growing Jewish community in the world.

From Athens to Jerusalem

DR. WILLIAM KOLBRENER

10:00 AM–2:00 PM | Apr 6

Investigate the divergent conceptions of truth and difference in Western philosophical and Jewish traditions. Starting with notions of truth, relativism, and pluralism developed in Western traditions, learn about parallel concepts in the Jewish tradition. Ask: Is there an equivalence between the *Emet* (lit., truth) of the Jewish tradition, and the Truth heralded in Western philosophy, science, and politics? Is Judaism merely another fundamentalism? Or does Judaism provide models of pluralism and difference that may be relevant to the 21st century world?

One solution to the problem of loan forgiveness is for people to voluntarily repay their debts, despite their cancellation. This is the advice given by Abbaye to Rav Abba in the following Talmudic passage:

"Abba bar Marta, who owed Rabbah money, brought it to Rabbah's house in the seventh year. Rabbah said: 'I cancel the debt.' So Abba bar Marta took his money and went away. Subsequently, Abbaye, seeing that Rabbah looked sad, asked him, 'So, why are you sad?' Rabbah told him what had happened. So Abbaye went to Abba bar Marta and asked him, 'Did you offer money to Rabbah?' Rav Abba replied, 'Yes.' Abbaye: 'And what did he say to you?' Rav Abba: 'I cancel the debt.' Abbaye: 'And did you say to him, "Nevertheless, take it?"' Rav Abba: 'No.' Abbaye said to him, 'If you had said to him, "Nevertheless, take it, he would have taken it. At any rate, go now, and offer it to him." Rav Abba went and offered it to Rabbah, saying, "Nevertheless, take it." Rabbah took it from him and said, 'Until now, this disciple of the wise did not know what to do!'"
—Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gittin, 37b

Even though Rav Abba was the disciple of the wise, he did not understand that if one has the money, one should voluntarily repay even a cancelled loan. Abbaye understood this delicate social and financial balancing act, and gave good counsel to Rav Abba.



This voluntary repayment of loans was not, however, ultimately enough. To understand why it was necessary for loans *not* to be forgiven during *shmitah*, it is helpful to read Deuteronomy 23:20: “You shall not deduct interest from loans to your countrymen, whether in money or food or anything else that can be deducted as interest.”

Because no interest was allowed, loans existed mainly as a short-term way to aid the poor between the periods of planting and harvesting crops. Most loans were given to poor people the lenders personally knew.

Drawing from the Texts

THE EDUCATIONAL
ALLIANCE

An exciting new partnership between the Educational Alliance and the Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning!

Facilitators: David Wander and Rabbi Leon A. Morris
11 AM–3 PM | Sunday, February 3 and 17
\$100 for both sessions; materials will be supplied

As an expansion of the Skirball Center’s Artists’ Beit Midrash, join with other artists downtown in two intensive Sunday workshops, as you explore Jewish sources and create new visual commentaries on the ancient texts of our tradition. The texts will serve as a jumping-off point for imagination and creativity. This unusual experience will be co-facilitated by a rabbi and an artist.



Barbara Freedman
Old Texts #2

TO REGISTER, please contact the Educational Alliance at 212.780.2300 x463 or e-mail artschool@edalliance.org
www.edalliance.org/artschool

Monday

DAYTIME CLASS

Before There Were Jews: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah

BASMAT HAZAN ARNOFF

12:30–2:00 PM | **Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24**

In the beginning, there were no Jews. Three complicated figures—Adam, Cain, and Noah—set the stage for the covenant of Abraham to take shape. The Bible crafts the basic landscape of human endeavor through the sins and survival of these people. Understand their journeys as never before.

EVENING CLASSES

In the Original: Level 1

MICHAL NACHMANY

6:00–7:30 PM | **Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24**

“In the Original” is designed for those who want to read the Bible and other Hebrew texts in the original. This course is for those who do not yet know the alphabet or how to read phonetically. Aided by a dynamic, patient, and masterful teacher, you will learn both of those skills in this class, and even begin to understand a bit of the Bible, prayer book, and more—in the original, Hebrew!

Politics in the Talmud


DR. MOTTI ARAD


6:30–8:00 PM | **Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24**

The Talmud is about both *machloket* (disagreement) and the ultimate acceptance of the majority opinion. Although all parties involved in *machloket* claim that it is “for the sake of heaven,” the



Talmud discusses less-heavenly power struggles between political and religious leaders, the concept of *herem* (excommunication), and coups within the Rabbinic movement. The Talmud also covers violence between competing groups and what happens when you mix religious convictions with international politics. All of these issues existed long before modern political events brought them to the fore of our minds.

 **NOTE:** This is an upper-level course. The prerequisite for registering is completion of the Skirball Center's three-year IYUN certificate program or basic familiarity with Rabbinic literature. Call 212.507.9580 with questions or concerns.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see *"Early Morning Talmud: Rabbis and Non-Rabbis,"* page 15.

History as Catharsis: Medieval Jewish Chronicles as Responses to Crisis

DR. ARNOLD FRANKLIN

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24

Among the amazing literary treasures that have come down from the Middle Ages are works that attempt to offer a narrative of post-biblical Jewish history. These chronicles contain a wealth of information about life in the Middle Ages, but perhaps more significantly, also provide a fascinating view of the way medieval men and women reflected upon the significance of the Jewish past and related its lessons to their own lived experiences. Through readings from Abraham Ibn Daud's *Book of Tradition*, chronicles composed after the violence of the First Crusade, and histories of the expulsion from Spain, explore how such works looked to the past in order to find reassurance and affirmation in the present.

We Have a Better Idea! Jewish Responses to Modern Challenges

DR. REGINA STEIN

The Jane Moyse Gilder Course in Jewish History

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24

Jews from the 18th through the 20th centuries proposed a variety of responses to the modern challenges of secularism, emancipation, and anti-Semitism. Analyze Enlightenment, assimilation, conversion, religious innovation, Zionism, and socialism in their historical contexts and explore their viability for 21st-century Jews.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see *"Three Radical Jewish Thinkers,"* page 13.


Bearing Witness: Representations of the Holocaust in Art and Literature

DR. URI S. COHEN

The Harrison S. Kravis Course in Jewish Studies

7:00–8:30 PM | Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24

Examine the representation of the Holocaust by those who have survived it and by those observing them. Using diverse theoretical discussions of the witness (Agamben and Jean Amery), read works by authors such as Primo Levi, Aharon Appelfeld, Ida Fink, and Art Spiegelman, and poetry by authors such as Paul Celan and Dan Pagis. Visual arts and documentary films will provide another layer to the problem of reporting a return from a place where one was not or should not have been. Begin confronting interpretations of the Holocaust and the formation of its current meanings.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see *"The Bible in Modern Art and Music,"* page 15.

The combination of interest-free loans and loan forgiveness ended up hurting the very people it was designed to help; the law no longer fulfilled its stated purpose because the wealthy stopped lending their money out. In doing so, they violated an explicit prohibition in the Torah:

"Beware lest you harbor the base thought, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is approaching,' so that you are mean to your needy kinsman and give him nothing..."

—Deuteronomy 15:9

Hillel the Elder therefore opted for a change to the legal system itself, called a *prozbul*, rather than relying on voluntary repayment of cancelled loans.

The Mishnah in Tractate Shevi'it (10:3) reports:

"When [Hillel the Elder] saw that people refrained from giving loans one to another and transgressed what is written in the Law, 'Beware lest you harbor the base thought...' Hillel ordained the *prozbul*."



MONDAY *continued from page 7***Artists' Beit Midrash**

TOBI KAHN AND RABBI LEON A. MORRIS

7:00–9:00 PM | Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24

Apply your artistic talents to the theme of “Service and Sacrifice” (explained on p.17) as you explore Jewish sources, inspiring you to create new visual commentaries on the ancient texts of our tradition. Together with other artists, share previously created work and explore, individually and as a group, the imaginative and creative possibilities of Jewish teachings. Now in its sixth year, this unusual experience is co-facilitated by a rabbi and a renowned artist whose own work blends modern art with the life of the spirit.


www.adultjewishlearning.org/gallery for previous years' art

This course is made possible in part by a generous grant from Targum Shlishi, a Raquel and Aryeh Rubin Foundation.

Advanced Hebrew Literature

MICHAL NACHMANY

7:30–9:00 PM | Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24

Literature is a window to the soul of individuals and their societies. Reading and discussing short stories will help us reveal the layers of each soul and of Israeli society at different times. Join others in reading stories and poetry by Etgar Keret, Savion Livrect, Aharon Meged, and others. This class is a wonderful opportunity to brush up on your Hebrew or to regain long-abandoned skills in a small, intimate, supportive environment.



NOTE: This is an upper-level course. The prerequisite for registering is semifluency in conversational Hebrew and in reading Hebrew literature. Call 212.507.9580 with questions or concerns.

Prophets of Israel: Literary Characters and Contemporary Culture Heroes

REUBEN NAMDAR

The Robert S. and Kimberly R. Kravis Course in Jewish Studies

8:15–9:45 PM | Jan 28 Feb 4, 11, 25 Mar 3, 10, 17, 24

The medium of prophecy, once central to Jewish culture, today seems nothing more than an anecdote. Yet, the prophets of the Hebrew Bible are analogous to modern philosophers and artists: they evoked and verbalized the collective subconscious, the spiritual and moral structures of their people. Who were those mysterious characters? What was the nature of their prophecy? How are their messages still relevant and necessary for us today? Through stories from the Bible, Midrash, and Talmud, study the lives and words of some of the most intriguing prophetic characters. Regarding them not as a relic of the ancient past, but as contemporary Jewish culture heroes, acquaint yourself with the historic context of those characters and try to resurrect the spirit of their words and deeds.

What is a *prozbul*? The *prozbul* is a method by which people transfer their personal loans to the *beit din*, or Jewish legal court. The *beit din*, because of special powers granted to it to redistribute property, is then able to authorize people to collect their loans even during or after the *shmitah*, when loans are normally abrogated. This “legal fiction” provided a way around loan forgiveness and restored the Torah’s goal of helping, rather than hurting, the poor.



Tuesday

DAYTIME CLASSES

The Structure of the *Siddur* and Its Meaning for Contemporary Life

RABBI LEON A. MORRIS

12:30–2:00 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

A major challenge of communal prayer is making the inherited words of our tradition personally meaningful. While the *siddur* (prayer book) is the poetry of the Jewish people, it can be confusing and alienating to those unfamiliar with its structure. Study the building blocks that form the basis of the evening and morning services. With a particular focus on parts of the traditional liturgy that have been most frequently altered or deleted in modern prayer books, explore ways of understanding prayer in our post-Modern world.

The Passover Haggadah: Jewish Theology 101

DR. NEIL GILLMAN

4:30–6:00 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

Think of the Passover seder as a classroom and the Haggadah as a textbook. All of the central theological issues addressed by Judaism are discussed in this textbook: Does God intervene in history? Why do innocent people suffer? What do we mean by redemption? Does God have a special relationship with the Jewish people? Does God always save the Jewish people from their enemies? What purpose does ritual behavior serve? Prepare for Passover by studying the Haggadah through a theological lens.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see “*Fresh Readings for Engaging Seders*,” below.

EVENING CLASSES

In the Original: Level 2

MICHAL NACHMANY

6:00–7:30 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

“In the Original” is designed for those who want to read the Bible and other Hebrew texts in the original. This course is designed for those who have completed Level 1 and for anyone else who can read Hebrew and wants to begin to understand it. Aided by a dynamic, patient, and masterful teacher, you will begin to understand a bit of the Bible, prayer book, and more—in the original, Hebrew!

Fresh Readings for Engaging Seders

DR. DAVID ARNOW

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

Explore the Passover Haggadah from multiple perspectives: historical background; its major themes from the world of midrash; and how to make this fascinating, but often confusing, text come alive at your Seder. The class combines lecture, text-study, and workshop elements. Examine the ancient wisdom of the earliest architects of the Seder who carefully balanced ritual with creativity and learn how to restore that long-lost balance to our own Seders. Anyone who leads—or attends!—a Seder will learn how to create a more engaging evening.

 www.adultjewishlearning.org/arnow for excerpts from *David Arnow's Creating Lively Passover Seders*

 **Interested in this course?** Also see “*The Passover Haggadah*,” above.

While this may seem like a loophole designed to help wealthy people get their loans repaid, it was really a way to encourage people to continue offering interest-free loans to the poor. Thus, a Mishnah in Tractate Gittin (5:3) adds that the *prozbul* was established by Hillel the Elder “to repair the world.” In Hebrew, this is called *tikkun olam*. There are only a few instances of older laws being superseded by later laws in order to achieve *tikkun olam*. This is a phrase that speaks to the highest level of ethical and moral considerations.



TUESDAY *continued from page 9*

The Binding of Isaac

DR. NEIL GILLMAN

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

This narrative, called the *Akeida* or the Binding of Isaac, is arguably the most enigmatic in Torah. It has been subject to a wide range of explanations beginning with the Bible, through the Gospels, rabbinic tradition, medieval poetry, the liturgy, contemporary Israeli poetry, and psychoanalytic literature. The questions remain with us to this day: Why does God make this demand of Abraham? Why didn't Abraham protest? Where was Sarah? Where was Isaac at the end? Did God really intend to have Isaac sacrificed? Did Abraham?

What Is Midrash?

A Sophisticated Reintroduction

DR. DAVID KRAEMER

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

Discover the beauty and creativity of Midrash, a rabbinic form of interpretation that radically expands the meaning of the biblical text. In creative and elastic ways, the ancient Rabbis established new modes of understanding the text. Consider the variety of midrashic forms that were created and probe their particular characteristics and unique approaches to reading Scripture. By reading Midrash, learn how the concerns of the ancient Rabbis mirror our own.

In Search of Oral Torah: Interpretation, Adaptation, and Expansiveness in Judaism

RABBI LEON A. MORRIS

6:30–8:15 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

The early Rabbis claimed that God revealed two Torahs to Moses on Mount Sinai: one written and the other oral. Oral Torah explains, interprets, and elaborates upon the written Torah. It represents the expansive and imaginative transformation of Jewish life. What is the theological significance of claiming that a text and all of its future interpretations are twin aspects of revelation? How was the notion of Oral Torah at the very heart of the debate between rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity? Through an exploration of biblical and rabbinic texts, along with selected writings of modern and post-modern thinkers such as Sigmund Freud and Emmanuel Levinas, explore the relevance and meaning of Oral Torah for contemporary Jews of all theological perspectives.

 NOTE: This class is extended 15 min. for a small group discussion component.

Bible and Midrash Through a Psychoanalytic Lens

DR. TSVI BLANCHARD

7:00–8:30 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

With a rabbi, psychologist, and philosopher, seek a conception of psycho-spirituality based in the relationship between people and God, between one person and another, and between one person and him/herself, as expressed in the Bible and Midrash. Discuss King David's life through a psychoanalytic lens, while delving into what the Rabbis had to say about his complicated family ties, romantic liaisons, and political alliances. The only requirement is a positive attitude toward the contributions of Jewish text study to conversations about important life issues.

 NOTE: While open to all, this class is geared towards psychotherapists.

In addition to changes made to find ways around the *shmitah* loan forgiveness law, changes were made, throughout history, that affected the law about letting fields lie fallow so that the land could rest during the seventh year.

Rabbi Judah the Prince, the editor of the Mishnah, began this process by limiting areas of the Land of Israel in which agricultural laws, including *shmitah* and tithing, had to be observed. The Jerusalem Talmud (D'mai 2:1) reports:

"Rabbi [Judah the Prince] permitted Beit She'an; Rabbi permitted Caesarea; Rabbi permitted Beit Guvrin; Rabbi permitted Kfar Zemah...."




Jews, Comics, and Graphic Novels

DANNY FINGEROTH

7:00–8:30 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

Not unlike their role in movies, Jews have been key players in all aspects of the comic book and graphic novel on both creative and business levels. Discuss the Jewish aspects of the content of the comics and graphic novels, as well as the influence the Jewish backgrounds of key creators of the comics had on their work and on American popular culture in general. Read significant works from the past one hundred years, including the work of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar. Touch on everything from the beginnings of comics during the days of radio drama to their modern incarnation in the graphic novel.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see “From the Marx Brothers to the Coen Brothers: Jews in American Cinema,” page 14.

Writers’ Beit Midrash: Creative Non-Fiction

SHELLY R. FREDMAN

7:00–9:00 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

Join a group of creative non-fiction and memoir writers to explore texts that inspire and amaze us, encourage us to wrestle with meaning, and stimulate the connections between our writing and our lives. The Writers’ Beit Midrash includes text study, in which we will delve into the theme of “Service and Sacrifice” (explained on p. 17), and a workshop, in which students will receive critique and support from a professional writer and fellow students. Engaging discussions will spur creativity and spark imaginative exchange. Interested applicants should submit a writing sample to sample@adulthoodlearning.org with their registration.

Israeli Politics and Culture: Answer All Your Questions While Improving Your Hebrew

MICHAL NACHMANY

7:30–9:00 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

Are you interested in Israeli politics but frustrated by your inability to read Israeli newspapers? Do you have a burning desire to understand what a coalition government is, and why Israeli elections seem to happen at random intervals? Working from words you already understand, broaden and deepen your knowledge of Israeli politics and culture. This class is appropriate both for students who can read and understand simple Hebrew and for those who are a bit more advanced and want to improve their comprehension. Texts will include *Shaar Lamatchil* and articles, depending on your proficiency, from *Yediot Acharonot* and *Ma’ariv*.

 **NOTE:** This course features all new material and is appropriate for students who have taken this course in previous semesters.

Interior Design and the Rabbis

BASMAT HAZAN ARNOFF

The Pincus Family Course in Jewish Studies

8:15–9:45 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

How does classic Rabbinic literature understand the intimacies of Jewish space—the roof, the bathroom, the kitchen, the gate—as a reflection of the deepest desires and limitations of being human? In each class, look at a different domestic space and through the lenses of biblical and Rabbinic texts, the law, art, and photography, begin to unfold its meanings and symbols.

Those around him were uncomfortable with his permitting what they felt that the Torah prohibited. In response, Rabbi Judah the Prince shared a parable about a verse from II Kings:

“Rabbi, thereupon, expounded to them the following verse: [‘Hezekiah] also broke into pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it.’ Now, is it at all likely that Asa did not destroy it? Or that Jehoshaphat did not destroy it? Surely Asa and Jehoshaphat destroyed every form of idolatry in the world! It must therefore be that his ancestors left something undone in order that [Hezekiah] might distinguish himself. So, too, in my case, my ancestors left something undone for me to distinguish myself.”
—Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Hulin 6b-7a



Still, how was Rabbi Judah the Prince able to say that Beit Shean was not part of the Land of Israel, in order that it be excluded from the agricultural laws of *shmitah* and tithing? The Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Hulin 7a) continues:

"To this, Judah, son of Rabbi Simeon the son of Pazzi, demurred: Is there anyone who holds the view that Beit Shean was not part of the Land of Israel? Is it not written: 'And Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beit Shean and its towns, nor of Taanach and its towns?' [Judges 1:27] [When he raised his objection] there must have escaped his attention the statement of Rabbi Simeon son of Eliakim who reported that Rabbi Eleazar son of Pedath in the name of Rabbi Eleazar son of Shammu'a [said as follows]: Many cities that were conquered by the Israelites who came up from Egypt were not reconquered by those who came up from Babylon.... They did not annex these cities in order that the poor might have sustenance from them during the *shmitah* year."



TUESDAY *continued from page 11*

Israel and the Sabbath:
A Relationship Throughout History
DR. DAVID KRAEMER

The Leon Finley Course in Jewish Studies
8:15–9:45 PM | Jan 29 Feb 5, 12, 19, 26 Mar 4, 11, 18

Ahad HaAm said: "As much as Israel has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept Israel." But what is the Sabbath? The Torah says little to answer this question, and later biblical texts add little more. As a consequence, Jews in each period have had the opportunity to inherit earlier Sabbaths and, on that foundation, reinterpret the day and its meaning for themselves. In this course, explore various interpretations of the Sabbath and ask if there is a core, an essence, to the day. Then, ask how we might reconstruct that essence in our own lives.


Wednesday

DAYTIME CLASS

Rediscovering the Weekly Torah Portion
ARLENE AGUS

12:30–2:00 PM | Jan 30 Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12, 19

Each week, in communities throughout the world, Jews read an identical section of the Torah in an annual cycle that is both study and ritual. This semester, track the journey of the Israelites as God and Moses attempt to teach these former slaves that labor can be noble, laws can be moral, and historic goals can be attained by establishing sacred distinctions in personal, societal, and ritual behavior. Delve deeply into the biblical text, probing key words, numbers, and images for their literal and symbolic meanings. Examine insights from 2500 years of biblical commentary in light of the disciplines of science, architecture, art, philosophy, and mysticism.

 NOTE: This course features all new material and is appropriate for students who have taken it in previous semesters.

EVENING CLASSES

Demons and Angels in the Bible
DR. FREEMA GOTTLIEB

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 30 Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12, 19

Kabbalah has traditionally peopled the cosmos with a teeming diversity of beings, gracious and supportive on the one hand, destructive and inimical on the other. When were angels and demons created? Who or what is their ultimate source? What rules, if any, do they abide by, and what is their real relationship to us? While referring to colorful medieval rabbinic meditations on the subject, focus primarily on the dramatically charged interventions of these supernatural entities in the Bible itself and the psychological implications of divine human interactions. Encounter: fallen angels and the Daughters of Men; Eve and the serpent; angels and birth stories; the Angel of the Lord and Balaam's donkey; Moses, the angel, and the golden calf; Saul and an "evil spirit of God"; Satan's "test"; and the angel of the Lord's last minute intervention to save Isaac from being slaughtered.


Three Radical Jewish Thinkers You Have Probably Never Heard Of

DR. DAVID GREENSTEIN

The Hans A. Vogelstein Course in Jewish Studies

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 30 Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12, 19

Over the centuries we have benefited from the spiritual and intellectual contributions of rabbis, kabbalists, poets, and philosophers. In modern times we have gained insights from rebels, reformers, and secular iconoclasts. Explore the writings of thinkers who combined a deep commitment to religious tradition with a need to question fundamental problems of that tradition. The anonymous author of *Sefer Ha-Qanah* (15th c.) struggled with justifying a legalistic, talmudic tradition that he found fraught with problems. Rabbi Yitzhaq Eisiq Yehudah Yehiel Safrin of Komarno (19th c.) struggled with the possibility of a legitimate sense of self in the context of a religious vision of an Infinite God. Rabbi Hayyim Hirschensohn struggled with how to welcome modernity without betraying tradition. These thinkers have not received the recognition they deserve, yet each fearlessly confronted issues of meaning, selfhood, and modernity that are relevant to this day.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see “We Have a Better Idea! Jewish Responses to Modern Challenges,” page 7.

Reformers, Radicals, and Rascals: At Home in America

LISA KOGEN

The William Rosenwald and Ruth Israels Rosenwald Course in Contemporary Jewish History

6:30–8:00 PM | Jan 30 Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12, 19

As the comfort level of “home in America” was realized, Jews quickly set about recreating their political, religious, and social environments. While Jews adapted to their newfound political and social emancipation, they sought change too, for both their internal and external worlds. Examine how America was a haven for such disparate personalities as religious reformers Isaac Mayer Wise and Mordecai Kaplan, political activist Emma Goldman, and Arnold Rothstein, czar of the underworld.

Food for Thought: Jews, Food, and Contemporary Life


NIGEL SAVAGE

The Hortense Jordan Course in Ethics

7:00–8:30 PM | Jan 30 Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12

On one side we have the laws of *kashrut*, food blessings, and three thousand years of Jewish food traditions. On the other side we have obesity, genetically modified foods, Michael Pollan, and *Fast Food Nation*. Explore the intersection between Jewish food traditions and the current discussion raging about food, the environment, and sustainable lifestyles. Discuss gratitude, mindfulness, and the practices of meditative eating and blessing food. Find out what bread has to do with civilization and what Judaism and contemporary psychology have to say about eating together.



 **NOTE:** This course is co-sponsored by Hazon and based on *Food For Thought*, Hazon's new curriculum about Jews, food, and contemporary life.

This was not the only thing that Rabbi Judah the Prince did to ease the burden of the *shmitah* laws on the poor. The Jerusalem Talmud (Ta'anit 3:1) reports that a man who was suspected of breaking the *shmitah* commandment was brought before Rabbi Judah. He said to them: “What should this poor man do? He works [his land] in order to keep himself alive,” thus suggesting tacit approval, or at least acceptance, of the man's decision to ignore the *shmitah* laws.

Some later commentaries, as well as the Talmud in other places, posit that the *shmitah* laws were no longer biblically ordained during this period, and that they were only rabbinic in nature. Thus, the Rabbis had the ability to modify them to help the poor.




WEDNESDAY *continued from page 13*

From the Marx Brothers to the Coen Brothers: Jews in American Cinema

ISAAC ZABLOCKI

7:00–9:30 PM | Jan 30 Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12, 19

The Jewish influence on mainstream American movies is an overwhelming phenomenon. Films by Billy Wilder, Woody Allen, Stanley Kubrick, Steven Spielberg, and many other greats have led the world film scene since the early days of cinema. View films and take an in-depth look into the careers of classic and contemporary Jewish filmmakers. Through analysis of the films, begin to understand the prevalence of Jews in Hollywood and the inspirations and techniques that brought these films to greatness.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see “Jews, Comics, and Graphic Novels,” page 11.

Friends and Lovers: A Journey Towards Married Life

DASEE BERKOWITZ AND DR. BARRY L. STERN

7:30–9:30 PM | Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12, 19

Are you getting married? Mazal tov! In planning a wedding that reflects who you are as a couple, the myriad symbols and rituals of Jewish tradition can seem baffling. This course for engaged couples will allow you to find your own path through the vast array of Jewish traditions. Explore the options that Judaism offers so that you can make choices that speak to you. Familiarize yourselves with the components of the wedding ceremony itself, including the *ketubah* (marriage contract), breaking the glass, the *huppah* (wedding canopy), and other rituals. Learn about the symbolic meaning of these customs and how these symbols teach us about married life, developing mutual commitments, dealing with conflict, and building a home. Prepare for the big day and for the years that follow!




The Seventh Year in the Jewish Imagination

DR. DAVID GREENSTEIN

8:15–9:45 PM | Jan 30 Feb 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar 5, 12, 19

This year in the Jewish calendar is the Sabbatical year, called *shmitah*, or the Year of Relinquishing. First discussed in the Torah, the concept of a seventh year of rest for the soil and for society has had a powerful resonance in the Jewish imagination over the centuries. Sometimes the idea has taken on cosmic, ecological, or socio-political significance. But, especially in modern-day Israel, it has also become a practical problem. Is it possible or desirable to observe the laws of *shmitah* in today's world? What is its value? What is its cost?

 **NOTE:** The theme of this course is related to the theme of the Skirball Center's Fall and Winter Course Guides.

Under another circumstance, Rabbi Yannai actively commanded farmers to sow the land during the *shmitah* year. This was during a time when the Land of Israel was under Roman occupation, and annual taxes were payable at harvest time. If there was no harvest, the taxes could not be paid and people's lives would be endangered. —Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 26a

Josephus tells us that the Israelites were exempt from paying taxes only during the *shmitah* year during the days of Caesar (Josephus, Ant. XIV, 10, 5-6). This exemption was abrogated in the year 261 CE, and the Jews had to start paying taxes every year, whether it was a *shmitah* year or not.

—Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 4, and M. Auerbach, *Jahrbuch der Jüdisch-Literarischen Gesellschaft* 5 (1907)



Thursday

DAYTIME CLASSES

Always wanted a taste of Talmud?
Looking for a new way to start your
day? Join a dedicated group of
early risers in this morning study
opportunity with a master teacher!

Early Morning Talmud: Rabbis and Non-Rabbis

DR. MOTTI ARAD

7:30–9:00 AM | Jan 31 Feb 7, 14, 21, 28 Mar 6, 13, 20

Before the destruction of the Second Temple, Josephus reports, the common people—the so-called *am ha'aretz*—liked the Pharisees (precursors to the Rabbis) and disliked the Sadducees (non-Rabbinic priestly order). Half a millennium later, the Talmud has Rabbi Akiva say, “When I was an *am ha'aretz* I used to say: give me a student of the Rabbis and I will bite him like a donkey” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Pesachim 49b). What caused such a dramatic change of heart? Examine the love/hate relationship between Rabbis and non-Rabbis in the Land of Israel and Babylonia as portrayed by the Talmud, and try to imagine what the *am ha'aretz* would have written about the Rabbis if they had compiled their own “Talmud.”


 **Interested in this course?** Also see “Politics in the Talmud,” page 6.

The Bible in Modern Art and Music

NOAM M. ELCOTT

2:30–4:00 PM | Jan 31 Feb 7, 14, 21, 28 Mar 6, 13, 20

Some of the greatest works of modern biblical interpretation cannot be read, because instead of being written, they were painted and composed. Study biblical texts alongside their 20th-century interpretation in art and music. Encounter the stories of Moses and Aaron through Schoenberg’s atonal opera. Discover the biblical account of creation through the eyes of Chagall. Consider the Psalms according to Minimalist composer Steve Reich and the prohibition against graven images as understood by the American Abstract Expressionists. Gain new insight into familiar (and unfamiliar) biblical texts while engaging the world of modern art and music.

 **Interested in this course?** Also see “Bearing Witness: Representations of the Holocaust in Art and Literature,” page 7.

Between 70 CE and 1878 CE, Jews were not sowing and reaping in the Land of Israel at all. Although there were Jews living in the Land of Israel continuously during that period, they bought produce from the local Arabs. The first modern agricultural community in Israel, Petach Tikvah, was established in 1878, but it had failed by 1882, the next *shmitah* year.



Coming This Spring...

a special lecture

In Search of Heschel

by **RABBI MICHAEL MARMUR**

Thursday, May 1, 6:30 pm FREE

One hundred years after the birth of Abraham Joshua Heschel, his influence as a versatile scholar and highly original thinker continues to grow. Study different ways in which Heschel, a pioneer of interfaith and social activism, is understood and appreciated today. Pay particular attention to the importance of Heschel in two environments that have not always been hospitable to his thought: Reform Judaism and the State of Israel.

Thursday, May 8

Dr. Avivah Zornberg

will be speaking at the Skirball Center.
More details will be made available
at www.adultjewishlearning.org
and in our Spring Course Guide.



*Weekend Retreat
with Avivah Zornberg*

The Joseph Saga: Trauma and Healing

at the **Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center**

*Co-sponsored by the Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning
at Temple Emanu-El and Hebrew College*

May 26–29, 2008

Explore the intergenerational effects of traumatic experience in the narratives of Joseph and his brothers. Beginning with the relationship of Isaac and Jacob, discuss the effects of the *Akeida* (Binding of Isaac) on three generations. Use Midrashic and Hasidic sources, as well as material from psychoanalysis and literature, to aid in this exploration.

DR. AVIVAH GOTTLIEB ZORNBERG is the author of *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire*, for which she won the National Jewish Book Award, and *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus*.

TO REGISTER, please call 1.800.398.2630 x307
or visit www.elatchayyim.org

The first time there were successful agricultural communities in the Land of Israel during a *shmitah* year was 1889. These included Rishon L'Zion, Rosh Pinah, Zichron Yaakov, and a reestablished Petach Tikvah. The farmers were afraid that if they stopped working the land for a year, their communities would fail. The financier who backed these communities, Baron Rothschild, threatened to withdraw economic support if the farmers let the land lie fallow for the *shmitah* year, and suggested they get loans from Jerusalem to stay afloat. In desperation, they wrote to Rabbi Yitzhak Elchanan Spektor, the Chief Rabbi of Kovno, who was a member of the early Zionist organization, Hovevei Tzion, that had established the town of Rishon L'Zion.



cooperative learning communities

A unique approach to study and creative thought at the Skirball Center combines dialogue and small group discussion. Join communities of fellowship that will empower you to connect to the great texts and ideas of the Jewish past while engaging in an intellectual and experiential journey through Bible, Talmud, medieval commentaries, Kabbalah, Hasidic thought, modern literature, and more. Each year, these cooperative learning communities, or *batei midrash*, focus on a particular theme that is elucidated through text study and discussion and that ultimately finds expression in the creative work of its participants.

This year's theme is: **Service and Sacrifice**



ALICE FORMAN
Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself Study 1

p. 8 | **Artists' Beit Midrash**
p. 11 | **Writers' Beit Midrash:**
Creative Non-Fiction

In a creative encounter with a variety of Jewish texts, explore the meaning of service and sacrifice. What does it mean to give and to receive? What is an appropriate gift to God? Is sacrifice a sublimation of violence or a source of violence? What makes a place sacred? What motivates one to lead and to serve? Can such motivations become distorted? Through art and writing, create contemporary commentaries on this rich and textured material.

Rabbi Spektor permitted *heter mechirah*, literally "the permission of selling," by which the land that the young Jewish farming communities worked was temporarily sold to non-Jews for the *shmitah* year. Since the laws of *shmitah* only applied to land in Israel that was owned by Jews, the Jewish farmers could work this land. This controversial legal loophole was opposed by the rabbis in Jerusalem and by others. However, *heter mechirah* was later reaffirmed as permissible by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the Chief Rabbi in the British Mandate of Palestine.

Today, there is still much controversy over the acceptability of relying on *heter mechirah* in Israel. Some let their fields lie fallow and just take what grows naturally from the previous year's planting. Others rely on newer innovations of recent decades, such as hydroponic growing, permitted because the *shmitah* laws only apply to produce that is rooted in the land, not the water. On a similar principle, some farmers grow produce in beds that are raised above the ground during the *shmitah* year.

After Words:

New Perspectives on the
Weekly Torah Portion

Thursdays • beginning again January 10 • 7–8 PM

- \$10 per lecture or buy a book of 5 tickets for \$40 at the door, good for any lectures this year
- \$5 current Skirball students at the door
- free for university students with current ID

Ever since Ezra the Scribe instituted the public reading of Torah in the marketplace in the sixth century BCE, the imaginative and creative life of Jews has been informed by the weekly Torah portion (*parashat hashavua*). This exciting and unusual lecture series will present a diverse group of intellectuals, artists, writers, and communal leaders, as well as renowned scholars and master teachers, who will give stand-alone lectures that draw on one compelling idea from each week's Torah portion, tuned to their own particular interests and areas of expertise.

 www.adultjewishlearning.org/afterwords for a list of presenters



Faculty

CORE FACULTY



WENDY AMSELEM is a faculty member at the Drisha Institute and an adjunct faculty member at City College of New York. She is a doctoral candidate at New York University (NYU) in Rabbinic Literature. Wendy is an alumna of the Drisha Scholar's Circle and has a BA in History and Literature from Harvard University.



NOAM M. ELCOTT is a doctoral candidate in modern art history at Princeton University. He has taught and lectured across the tri-state area.



DR. NEIL GILLMAN is the Skirball Center's Scholar-in-Residence and Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). A world-renowned thinker and teacher, Neil is the author of several seminal books on Jewish theology, including *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew*.



DR. DAVID GREENSTEIN is Rosh Ha-Yeshivah/Rabbinic Dean of the Academy for Jewish Religion, where he teaches Rabbinics, Kabbalah, and Jewish Thought and offers rabbinic guidance. David has a doctorate in Rabbinics and Kabbalah. He has published articles on Jewish aesthetics, pluralism, and Talmud.



DR. DAVID KRAEMER is Professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at JTS where he is also Joseph J. and Dora Abbell Librarian, overseeing the greatest collection of Judaica in the Western world. Among his many publications is his recently published *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages*. He is a Senior Core Faculty Scholar at the Skirball Center.



RABBI LEON A. MORRIS is the Executive Director of the Skirball Center for Adult Jewish Learning. Ordained at Hebrew Union College, Leon has taught at Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues as well as at the Drisha Institute. His essays have appeared in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Jewish Week*, and beliefnet.com, and he has been featured on NPR's *Morning Edition*. He is currently a Mandel Jerusalem Fellow.



MICHAL NACHMANY is a graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Michal has taught liturgical, biblical, and modern Hebrew for more than twenty years at synagogues and other institutions throughout New York City.



DR. REGINA STEIN is the National Director of the Jewish Education Department at Hadassah and Director of the Hadassah Leadership Academy. She has an MA and doctorate in Jewish History from the Jewish Theological Seminary. Regina has taught for the Wexner Heritage Foundation and Bronfman Youth Fellowship in Israel, as well as JTS, Temple University, and the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

ADJUNCT FACULTY

ARLENE AGUS is an executive consultant to Jewish family foundations. She is a contributing author to *Beginning Anew: A Woman's Companion to the High Holidays* and *What Happens After I Die?*

DR. MOTTI ARAD, a visiting Assistant Professor in Talmud at JTS, holds a doctorate in Talmud from JTS. His main research interest is the attitude toward non-rabbis in rabbinic literature. He is the author of the forthcoming *Desecrators of the Sabbath with Parhessia*.

BASMAT HAZAN ARNOFF has taught at many institutions, including the Skirball Center, the Brandeis-Bardin Institute, and the Downtown Kehillah in the United States, and Kolot and Elul in Israel. She is the author of the Hebrew novel *Mayyim Hafoochim* (Kibbutz haMeuchad/Sifriat Poalim, 2006). Basmat also works as a theater director, winning the award for Best Ensemble for *LeShem Yichud*, at the Akko Theater Festival, and adapting David Grossman's "See Under: Love" to stage (Seminar HaKibbutzim, Tel Aviv, 2007).

DR. DAVID ARNOW is the author of *Creating Lively Passover Seders: A Sourcebook of Engaging Tales, Texts & Activities* (Jewish Lights, 2004) and is co-editor of and a contributor to *My People's Passover Haggadah* (Jewish Lights, 2008).

DASEE BERKOWITZ is an educational consultant and the founder of JLife Consulting, which works with couples and families in preparation for their life cycle events. Dasee has an MA in Jewish Education from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

DR. TSVI BLANCHARD, director of organizational development at CLAL, was ordained at the Yeshiva Gedola of St. Louis and holds doctorates in Psychology and Philosophy. He is a practicing clinical psychologist. His recent publications include *How to Think About Being Jewish in the Twenty-First Century*, and he is the co-author of *Embracing Life & Facing Death: A Jewish Guide to Palliative Care*.

DR. URI S. COHEN, who received his doctorate from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, specializes in Modern Hebrew literature and Israeli culture. In addition to teaching at Columbia University, Uri is working on the translation of Agamben's *Remnants of Auschwitz* into Hebrew, a book on Orly Castel Bloom's prose, and a documentary on poet and author Haim Guri.

DANNY FINGEROTH was the longtime Group Editor of Marvel Comics' Spider-Man line and has written many comics featuring Spider-Man and other characters. He is the author of *Disguised as Clark Kent: Jews, Comics, and the Creation of the Superhero*. Danny teaches comics writing and analysis at The New School, New York University, and the Media Bistro.

DR. ARNOLD FRANKLIN is an assistant professor in the department of Classical and Oriental Studies at Hunter College, where he teaches courses on medieval Hebrew literature and Jewish thought. Arnold holds a doctorate in Jewish History from Princeton University.

SHELLY R. FREDMAN teaches writing at Barnard College. She received an MFA from Washington University and has taught at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. Her work has appeared in *Best Jewish Writing 2002*, *First Harvest*, the *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, *Lilith*, and a number of anthologies and literary magazines.

DR. FREEMA GOTTLIEB, author of *The Lamp of God: A Jewish Book of Light*, *Jewish Folk Art*, and *Mystical Stonescapes of Prague Jewish Town and Village Graveyards*, is a freelance writer and teacher living in New York.

TOBI KAHN is an internationally acclaimed painter and sculptor whose work has been shown in over 40 solo exhibitions and over 60 museum and group shows. He is the co-founder of Avoda Arts and has taught at the School of Visual Arts in New York since 1985.

LISA KOGEN is a doctoral candidate in Jewish History at JTS and has lectured extensively in both formal and informal educational venues. She is the National Education Director at the Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

DR. WILLIAM KOLBRENER, educated at Columbia and Oxford Universities, teaches in the Department of English at Bar-Ilan University, focusing on Renaissance literature and philosophy. His works include *Milton's Warring Angels* (Cambridge, 1997) and a new collection on the eighteenth-century proto-feminist Mary Astell (Ashgate, 2007). William has also written extensively on Jewish philosophy and hermeneutics.

RABBI ADAM MINTZ is a visiting lecturer of Jewish History at Queens College and a doctoral candidate in Modern Jewish History at New York University. He is one of the founders of Kehilat Rayim Ahuvim, a Modern Orthodox synagogue on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

REUBEN NAMDAR was born and raised in Jerusalem. He completed his BA and MA at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His book *Havin*, a collection of short stories, was published in 2000 and won the Ministry of Culture's award for Best First Publication and the Jerusalem Fiction award.

FRED ROSENBAUM is the Founding Director of Lehrhaus Judaica, the West Coast's largest school for adult Jewish education. He is the author of four books and numerous articles on modern and contemporary Jewish history and has taught at

the University of San Francisco, San Francisco State University, and Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union. He spent a year in Goettingen, Germany, as a Fulbright Fellow researching the Christian resistance to Hitler.

NIGEL SAVAGE, originally from England, studied at Pardes, Yakar, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He has an MA in American Jewish History from Georgetown, and has taught and written in a wide variety of settings. He is the founder and director of Hazon, and most recently wrote *Food For Thought*, Hazon's textbook on Jews, food, and contemporary Issues.

PENINNAH SCHRAM, internationally known storyteller, teacher, author, and recording artist, is Associate Professor of Speech and Drama at Stern College of Yeshiva University. Peninnah is the author of nine books of Jewish folktales, including *Jewish Stories One Generation Tells Another* and *Stories Within Stories: From the Jewish Oral Tradition*. She received a Covenant Award for Outstanding Jewish Educator in 1995.

RABBI CHAIM SEIDLER-FELLER, ordained at Yeshiva University, is Director of the Yitzhak Rabin Hillel Center for Jewish Life at UCLA. He lectures in the departments of Sociology and Near Eastern Language and Cultures at UCLA, is a Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, and is the founder of the Streisand Center for Jewish Art at UCLA Hillel.

DR. DIANE M. SHARON is a member of the faculty in Bible at the Academy for Jewish Religion. She has taught at JTS, Fordham University, General Theological Seminary (Episcopal), and other institutions of higher learning. Her area of expertise is the Hebrew Bible in its context in the ancient Near East, comparative religion, and women's studies.

DR. BARRY L. STERN is Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He maintains a private psychotherapy and psychoanalytic practice in midtown Manhattan, and has a doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Missouri.

RABBI JAN UHRBACH is the rabbi of the East 55th Street Conservative Synagogue and the Conservative Synagogue of the Hamptons in a newly formed congregational affiliation. She is an adjunct Lecturer of Professional and Pastoral Skills at JTS Rabbinical School. Jan received her ordination from JTS, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow.

ISAAC ZABLOCKI is the Director of Film Programs at the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan. He served in the Israel Defense Forces as an educational filmmaker and, in addition to completing seven feature film scripts, has directed a feature film, *Reality Lost*, about a world in which fictional film no longer exists.

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The Skirball Center mourns the passing of Charles Grossman. A trustee of Temple Emanu-El, Charlie was a devoted and long-standing member of our Skirball Center Advisory Council since its inception. He was a trusted counselor and a supportive advocate for our program. His absence will be keenly felt and his memory will be a blessing.



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—Dr. Eliezer Berkovits, *Not in Heaven: The Nature and Function of Halacha*
(New York: Ktav, 1983)

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