

The Development of the Concept and Rules of Shabbat:
Shabbat in Jewish Law and Lore (Tal 1050)

Prof. Richard Kalmin, Fall 2015, Mon, Wed 2:40-3:55 p.m.
Office: 620 Brush; Office hours Tue 2-3 pm and by appointment;
Tel: 212 678 8018; rikalmin@jtsa.edu

Goals and Objectives

The main goal of this course is to introduce students to the key works of rabbinic literature, in particular the Babylonian Talmud, which is one of Judaism's great texts. Reading and analyzing the discussions of rabbis who lived between 1500 and 2000 years ago will deepen one's understanding of the rituals Jews practice today. The Torah provides the blueprints for the observance of Shabbat, holidays, dietary laws, and so on, but it is the rabbis of the Talmud who fill in the many details.

By tracing the theme of Shabbat through various genres of rabbinic literature, a student will come to appreciate the differences among the Sabbath rules of the Bible, the post-biblical Jewish writings, the Christian Bible, and the rabbinic writings. Most texts will be read aloud in class in the original language of composition, usually Hebrew and Aramaic.

Since the Talmud is printed today without vocalization or punctuation, but with frequent allusions to other ancient texts, students will learn how to make sense of the dense locutions. Attention will be paid to technical terms and to the unfolding line of logic of each passage. Special attention will be given to the generally neglected area of the relationship between halakhah and aggadah. An attempt will be made to see in what ways the two major genres are inter-dependent. To help students think about the Sabbath and its observances today, the required readings will focus on contemporary treatments of the Sabbath.

By the end of the semester, a student should be able to:

- demonstrate familiarity with a page of Talmud, its layers, layout and commentaries
- speak knowledgeably about the different rabbinic works, their contents and mode of presentation of material
- speak knowledgeably about the development of Sabbath observance over time
- cite materials learned this semester in essays and conversations

Course Guidelines

Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. Lateness will not be tolerated. Class sessions will begin and end on time.

Use of **cell phones or other electronic devices** during class is not allowed.

Computers are allowed in class but a student will be expected to read from a printed text.

To pass the course, a student must attend all sessions, participate actively in class, submit all written assignments, and take and pass all examinations.

Course materials: Selections from various rabbinic texts. Students may access these pages online, at <http://hebrewbooks.org/shas> or at www.e-daf.com. Some will be distributed in hard copy.

If you wish to purchase a volume of Bavli Shabbat, you may find it useful to buy either the Soncino or the Artscroll version (two volumes).

Students are expected to **prepare** assigned texts for class. Students will be asked in class to **read and explain** the assigned texts.

There will be a **midterm** (Tu Feb 28) and a **final examination**. The final will cover **all** texts assigned during the semester.

The **semester grade** will be based on classroom participation, written work, and results of examinations.

The JTS policy on **disabilities** may be found at:
www.jtsa.edu/About_JTS/Administration/Policies/Students_with_Disabilities.xml.

Students in this class are expected to maintain **academic integrity**; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. JTS Student Disciplinary Procedures can be found at:
http://www.jtsa.edu/About_JTS/Administration/Policies/Student_Disciplinary_Procedures.xml .
JTS students are expected to bear sole responsibility for their work, to learn the rules and definitions that underlie the practice of academic integrity and to uphold its ideals.

Detailed Syllabus

- I. Introduction--Shabbat in the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 20:8-11, 31:12-17; Amos 8:5; Isaiah 56:1-8; Jeremiah 17:19-27; Nehemiah 13:15-22), Apocrypha (Jubilees 2:16-33, 50:7-13; 1 Maccabees 2:38; 2 Maccabees 5:25-26), Dead Sea Scrolls (Damascus Covenant X, 14-XII. 5), Josephus (Antiquities 12.1.1, 12.6.2; Jewish War 2.17.10; 18.1), Christian Bible (Mark 2:23-28; Luke ch. 13:10-17 and 14:1-6; Matthew ch. 12:1-8).
- II. Shabbat in the Mishnah (mShab, Chapters 1 and 7), Tosefta (tShab 1:1-6), and Midrash Halakhah (Mekhilta d'R. Ishmael, Yitro 7)
- III. Preparing for Shabbat, bShab 119a
- IV. Reciting Kiddush and Havdalah, bPes 100b-101a
- V. Lighting Shabbat Lamps, bShab 31b-32a and Yerushalmi Shabbat 2:6
- VI. Attitudes to Shabbat, bBesah 15b-16a

Monday, October 19th **Midterm examination**--on all texts studied so far

- VII. When Shabbat Begins and Ends, bShab 34b
- VIII. Labors Forbidden on Shabbat and Labors of Tabernacle Construction, bShab 49b

bShab 74b, from *ve-ha-Lash ve-ha-Ofe* to *Sidura de-Pat Nakat*; with bBerakhot 58a, from *ha-Ro'eh Ukhlesi* to *Kol Elu Lefanai* (8 lines in the printed gemara).
- IX. Three Meals on Shabbat, bShab 117b-118a
- X. Women Wearing "Crowns" on Shabbat, bShab 58b-59a
- XI. When You Don't Know Which Day is Shabbat, bShab 69b
- XII. Shabbat in the Contemporary World; Discussion of Required Secondary Readings

Summary and Conclusions

Supplementary Texts:

- R. Simon bar Yohai and Son in the Cave, bShab 33b
- Keeping Drinks Cold on Shabbat, bShab 51a
- Threat to Life Overrides Shabbat, tShab 15:16
- Protesting the Sins of Others, bShab 54b-55a

Required Reading (the assigned sections appear on Blackboard e-readings)

Heschel, Abraham Joshua, *The Sabbath* (1951), part 1 (pp. 12-32)

Klagsbrun, Francine, *The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath* (2002), Chapter 1 (pp. 18-45)

Shulevitz, Judith, *The Sabbath World* (2010), part 1 (pp. 3-30)