INTRODUCTION TO CLASSICAL HEBREW:

Hebrew 1106

An Independent Study Course

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Course Outline

Lesson 1

Idiomatic Translations

<u>Study Notes</u>
This is the third course in the Classical Hebrew sequence. Up to this point we have been concerned mainly with the morphology of the verb and noun and secondarily with the interpretation of the text. We now will place more emphasis on developing your ability to deal with text. Your goal will be to develop a certain degree of self-sufficiency in understanding and translating. Throughout this third course you should review and refer back to earlier sections of the textbook and of your assignments.
　　　Pay particular attention to the sample translations of the first verse for this lesson in section 39.6 of the textbook on pages 169-170. All the versions are correct and accurate. Reflect for a few moments on the alternatives and try to become more self-conscious of the artistry of translation. You may find that you have been too stilted and rigorous in the past in your renditions of verses from Hebrew to English. You now should achieve greater confidence in your skills. Accordingly you will be able to go beyond the deductive analysis of the components of a text. You will begin to allow a bit more right-brain-creativity into a more holistic process of translating. Work toward this in your exercises and assignments.

Read and study lesson 39 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 167, Textbook-Lesson 39.1
　　　　　fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 167, Textbook-Lesson 39.2A
　　　　　fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 168, Textbook-Lesson 39.2B
　　　　　fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 168, Textbook-Lesson 39.3B
　　　　　fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 169, Textbook-Lesson 39.5
　　　　　translate the verse

Assignment: P. 170, Textbook-Lesson 39.7A
　　　　　translate Deuteronomy 6:16-20
Assignment: P. 170, Textbook-Lesson 39.7B
　　　　　translate the 6 verses
　　　　　answer the review question at the bottom of page 170

The Infinitive Absolute; Emphatic Constructions
Forms of the verb YKL

<u>Study Notes</u>

There are aspects of Classical Hebrew that are part of the personality of the language. The "infinitive absolute + verb" construction is one of my favorite characteristics of the Hebrew Bible. You may want to make a list of those components of Hebrew you have found attractive and those that you find bothersome. By now you might be developing a mystical or even a romantic relationship with the language. After all, you have spent long times with it alone, perhaps at night, trying to fathom its complexities, enduring times of frustration and enjoying moments of discovery.

The verb charted in 40.5 looks like a Hof`al. Is it qal? Ask yourself about it and get to know this important verb.

Read and study lesson 40 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 171, Textbook-Lesson 40.2B
       fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 171, Textbook-Lesson 40.2C
       fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 172, Textbook-Lesson 40.4
       translate the verse

Assignment: P. 173, Textbook-Lesson 40.6A
       translate Deuteronomy 6:21-25
Assignment: P. 173, Textbook-Lesson 40.6B
       translate the 18 verses

Lesson 1: Send in the exercises and assignments from lessons 39 and 40 in the textbook.

Lesson 2

The Cohortative
Numbers 1-10
Qamets-heh endings

Study Notes
The cohortative is a subtle construction that has built-in ambiguities. It is a command but also a request. This reflects aspects of Israelite cultural interactions that persist in later Jewish culture and its etiquette. Let's try to keep track of these features. [That might mean: KEEP TRACK, OR ELSE.]
  If I were the author of your book I would have introduced numbers much earlier. They are essential and you must master them completely. [You may even peek ahead to lesson 54 in the textbook to see a bit more on the subject of numbers.]
  When doing the exercise in 41.5 you may use abbreviations or some shortcut system to indicate the functions. Just make clear the key to your substitutions.

Read and study lesson 41 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 174, Textbook-Lesson 41.1
   fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 175, Textbook-Lesson 41.3
   translate the verse
Exercise: P. 177, Textbook-Lesson 41.5
   identify the function in each word

Assignment: P. 178, Textbook-Lesson 41.6A
   learn vocabulary words 301-350
Assignment: P. 178, Textbook-Lesson 41.6B
   learn the numbers from 1-10
Assignment: P. 178, Textbook-Lesson 41.6C
   translate I Kings 17:1-5
Assignment: P. 178, Textbook-Lesson 41.6D
   translate the 18 verses

Lesson 2: Send in the exercises and assignments from lesson 41 in the textbook.

Lesson 3

The Jussive
The Qal Passive Participle

Study Notes
The jussive is one of those forms of speech that we identify with Biblical discourse: "Let them..."
or "May he...". These are formal and expected elements that derive mainly from context. In the
assignment at 42.6 make special note of the jussives and cohortatives in the verses. This will help
reinforce for you these new and nuanced forms.

Read and study lesson 42 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 179, Textbook-Lesson 42.1
        fill in the blank
Exercise: P. 179, Textbook-Lesson 42.4
        translate the sentence

Assignment: P. 180, Textbook-Lesson 42.6A
        translate I Kings 17:6-10
Assignment: P. 180, Textbook-Lesson 42.6B
        translate the 18 verses

The Frequentive Past
The Hishtaf`el

Study Notes
The expression of ongoing actions over time in the past is yet another element of grammar that
contributes to the distinctive style of the Biblical narrative. Once again pay attention to the subtle
difference recognizing the frequentive past makes. The subject "kept on" doing the action.
        The textbook notes that the verb for bowing uses an archaic verb stem. Bowing itself is an
archaic socially-conditioned-action that indicates subservience to the ruler and, by extension,
obeisance to the deity. [Or is it the other way around?] It is no surprise that the language preserves
the older form of expression for this cultural relic. In any event, the verb is easy to recognize, is
fairly common in Biblical narrative and you should master it. Note the shortened form in
assignment 43.6B, number 4.

Read and study lesson 43 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 182, Textbook-Lesson 43.2
        fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 183, Textbook-Lesson 43.4
        fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 183, Textbook-Lesson 43.5
        translate the verse

Assignment: P. 183, Textbook-Lesson 43.6A
        translate I Kings 17:11-17
Assignment: P. 183, Textbook-Lesson 43.6B
        translate the 13 verses

Lesson 3: Send in the exercises and assignments from lessons 42 and 43 in the textbook.

Lesson 4

The Hof`al Affix

<u>Study Notes</u>
Because the Hof'al is not frequent you might be tempted to gloss over it. Don't. Learning this new stem will help you reinforce your knowledge of the Hif`il. In the assignment at 44.8B make sure you are able to distinguish the Hof`al, Hif`il and Pi`el. Be sure to demonstrate that understanding in the sentence translations in 44.8C

Read and study lesson 44 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 185, Textbook-Lesson 44.1
    fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 185, Textbook-Lesson 44.2
    fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 185, Textbook-Lesson 44.7
    translate the sentence

Assignment: P. 185, Textbook-Lesson 44.8A
    translate I Kings 17:16-20
Assignment: P. 185, Textbook-Lesson 44.8B
    analyze the verbs
Assignment: P. 185, Textbook-Lesson 44.8C
    translate the 8 verses

The Pu`al

<u>Study Notes</u>
Learning this new stem will help you to review the features of the Pi`el. In the assignment at 45.6 B make special note of the Pi`el and Pu`al, the Hif`il and Hof`al.

Read and study lesson 45 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 188, Textbook-Lesson 45.1
    fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 188, Textbook-Lesson 45.3
    fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 188, Textbook-Lesson 45.4
    translate the verse

Assignment: P. 189, Textbook-Lesson 45.6A
    translate I Kings 17:21-24
Assignment: P. 189, Textbook-Lesson 45.6B
    analyze the verbs
Assignment: P. 189, Textbook-Lesson 45.6C
    translate the 10 verses

Lesson 4: Send in the exercises and assignments from lessons 44 and 45 in the textbook.

Lesson 5

The Nif`al Affix

Study Notes
Some gentle criticism of the textbook: Because the Nif`al is the passive stem related to the Qal, it might make more sense to present this stem before introducing the Hof`al and Hif`il. Furthermore the choice of the root *brk* in 46.7 is not a good one as it appears in the active in the Pi`el and not in the Qal.

But perhaps the justification for postponing the Nif`al a bit in the presentation is the complexity and frequency of the stem. The treatment goes on for several lessons. Learn now the Nif`al affix rules for the various verb roots.

Read and study lesson 46 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 190, Textbook-Lesson 46.1
  fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 190, Textbook-Lesson 46.4
  fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 190, Textbook-Lesson 46.6
  translate the verse
Exercise: P. 191, Textbook-Lesson 46.7
  fill in the blanks
  [46.7a, Correction: the verb in the verse in Lam. 3:41 is Qal prefix. There are other minor errors in the book. Nothing is perfect. We even get a bit silly at the bottom of page 193.]

Assignment: P. 192, Textbook-Lesson 46.8A
  learn Nif`al affix
Assignment: P. 192, Textbook-Lesson 46.8B
  translate I Kings 18:20-24
Assignment: P. 192, Textbook-Lesson 46.8C
  analyze the verbs [Look back at pages 80-81 when you come to the irregular root *ntn*.]
Assignment: P. 193, Textbook-Lesson 46.8D
  translate the 18 verses

Lesson 5: Send in the exercises and assignments from lesson 46 in the textbook.

Lesson 6

The Nif`al Participle
Meanings of the Nif`al Stem

Study Notes
In translating the mere recognition of a Nif`al and its Qal counterpart is not enough. This unit shows how the shift to the passive voice often changes the essential meaning of a verb. This process is more dramatic in Classical Hebrew than in English. Pay close attention and look out for such variations.

Read and study lesson 47 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 194, Textbook-Lesson 47.1
          fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 194, Textbook-Lesson 47.2
          fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 195, Textbook-Lesson 47.3
          translate the sentence

Assignment: P. 196, Textbook-Lesson 47.5
          translate I Kings 18:25-29
Assignment: P. 196, Textbook-Lesson 47.5
          translate the 10 verses

Nif`al Prefix Patterns

Study Notes
The Nif`al prefix is not difficult once you remember to account for the missing *nun* with a *dagesh*.

Read and study lesson 48 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 197, Textbook-Lesson 48.1
          fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 197, Textbook-Lesson 48.4
          fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 198, Textbook-Lesson 48.5
          fill in the blanks
Exercise: P. 198, Textbook-Lesson 48.5A
          fill in the blanks
Exercise: P. 198, Textbook-Lesson 48.6
          give the verbs in 3 m.pl. Nif`al

Assignment: P. 199, Textbook-Lesson 48.8A
          memorize the Nif`al prefix patterns
Assignment: P. 199, Textbook-Lesson 48.8B
          translate I Kings 18:30-34
Assignment: P. 199, Textbook-Lesson 48.8C
          translate the 14 verses

Lesson 6: Send in the exercises and assignments from lessons 47 and 48 in the textbook.

Lesson 7

Nif`al Imperative and Infinitive

<u>Study Notes</u>
The preformative feature that signifies the Nif`al imperative and infinitive is easy enough to learn. Still, the best clue that you have encountered a Nif`al is the context of your text. Keep paying close attention to the voice of a passage and note when it tends to shift to the passive.
   Lesson 50 presents a special verb combination that makes use in the example of the Nif`al. Study the synopses and comparison charts on page 205.

Read and study lesson 49 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 201, Textbook-Lesson 49.2
    fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 201, Textbook-Lesson 49.5
    translate the sentence

Assignment: P. 202, Textbook-Lesson 49.7A
    learn vocabulary words 350-415
Assignment: P. 202, Textbook-Lesson 49.7B
    translate I Kings 18:35-40
Assignment: P. 202, Textbook-Lesson 49.7C
    translate the 8 verses

Read and study lesson 50 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 203, Textbook-Lesson 50.1
    fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 203, Textbook-Lesson 50.2
    fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 204, Textbook-Lesson 50.5
    translate the sentence

Assignment: P. 204, Textbook-Lesson 50.5B
    translate I Kings 18:41-46
Assignment: P. 204, Textbook-Lesson 50.5C
    translate the 7 verses

Lesson 7: Send in the exercises and assignments from lessons 49 and 50 in the textbook.

Mid-course examination

Review & Drill 5: Pp. 206-7

1. Fill in the form and PGN in verb charts: Part III
2. Give the stem and form: Part IV
3. Identify each nun: Part V
4. Analyze the verbs in charts: Part VI
5. Write the Hebrew for the verbs: Part VII

Send in all the answers.

Lesson 8

Geminate Verbs
Pol`el and Pilp`el

Study Notes
With these last few lessons you will have completed the framework of verb and noun and basic syntactic work in your study of Classical Hebrew. The last units of this course introduce you to major exceptions to the rules you have mastered, to the last significant stem of the verb, suffixes, and then to some sample materials from the main Biblical texts and primary post-Biblical materials.

   The geminates are a common class of verb roots. You must learn their Qal patterns and their equivalents of the Pi`el stem. Probably the most important source of your ability to recognize the geminate is the list in 51.8 on page 210 of the textbook. If you memorize this list it will help trigger your recognition of the geminates when you encounter them in textual study.

Read and study lesson 51 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 208, Textbook-Lesson 51.1
     fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 208, Textbook-Lesson 51.3
     translate the verse
Exercise: P. 210, Textbook-Lesson 51.7
     analyze the verb forms

Assignment: P. 211, Textbook-Lesson 51.9B
     I Kings 19:1-5
Assignment: P. 211, Textbook-Lesson 51.9C
     translate the 21 verses.
     Indicate the stem and form of each geminate.

Hitpa`el Affix

Study Notes
The Hitpa`el is easy to recognize and to translate. The only problem you encounter in its analysis is when its meaning is not transparently reflexive. Watch for this.

Read and study lesson 52 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 212, Textbook-Lesson 52.2
     fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 212, Textbook-Lesson 52.3
     translate the sentence
Exercise: P. 212, Textbook-Lesson 52.4
     identify the stem

Assignment: P. 213, Textbook-Lesson 52.5A
     translate I Kings 19:6-10
Assignment: P. 213, Textbook-Lesson 52.5B
     translate the 9 verses
     indicate the root, form and PGN of each Hitpa`el.

Lesson 8: Send in the exercises and assignments from lessons 51 and 52 in the textbook.

Lesson 9

Hitpa`el Prefix and Participle
The Energic
Object Suffixes
Noun Possessive Suffixes

Study Notes
Be energetic and learn the energic!
These are fairly common features. Memorize the suffixes. There is no shortcut.

Read and study lesson 53 in the textbook.
Exercise: P. 214, Textbook-Lesson 53.1
                 fill in the chart
Exercise: P. 214, Textbook-Lesson 53.4
                 translate the sentence
Exercise: P. 217, Textbook-Lesson 53.6 (laugh at the joke)
                 translate each word and note the suffix

Assignment: P. 218, Textbook-Lesson 53.7A
                 translate I Kings 19:11-15
Assignment: P. 218, Textbook-Lesson 53.7B
                 translate the 18 verses

Numbers

Study Notes
Numbers follow their own logic and patterns. Become familiar with them and learn the rules for their use. There is no shortcut.

Read and study lesson 54 in the textbook.
Exercise: P.219, Textbook-Lesson 54.3
                 translate the verse

Assignment: P. 220, Textbook-Lesson 54.4B
                 translate I Kings 19:16-21
Assignment: P. 220, Textbook-Lesson 54.4C
                 translate the 7 verses

Lesson 9: Send in the exercises and assignments from lessons 53 and 54 in the textbook.

Lesson 10

Biblical Hebrew Poetry and its Parallelism

Study Notes
You now have the tools for studying classical Hebrew narrative. Your assignments in the selected texts have given you a fair amount of exercise in the translation of narrative story and its forms of description.

The analysis of poetry presents a variety of additional challenges. Scholars recognized this since they began the critical study of the Bible several centuries ago. In recent years there has been a revival of interest in the character of biblical poetry. Our next effort is to survey some of the features of poetic Hebrew. Notice well that we move most definitely from the study of grammar to the level of syntax (sentence structures) and style.

First work your way through Psalm 24 and the notes in your textbook, pages 223-228. Then read the chapters from Alter and Kugel. Finally return to Psalm 100, textbook pages 229-231. You have entered into the complex study of the poetry and liturgy of ancient Israel.

Read and study lesson 55 in the textbook.

Exercises:
Translate Ps. 24:1-10; Ps. 100:1-5
Identify the parallelism in each line as complete/incomplete;
synonymous/ antithetic/ synthetic.

Do the supplementary reading:
         Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, chapters 1-2
         James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, chapter 1

Assignment, Lesson 10: Send in your exercises.

Note:
The final examination in Hebrew 1106 consists of three questions to test your achievements and your ability to use what you have learned in a creative fashion. In units 10, 11 and 12 you will be given parts of the final examination. You should prepare an answer to each part and submit it with the exercises of that lesson.

That submission will be considered a "first draft" of your final examination question. It will be returned to you with indications of the further work that is needed. You will be asked to submit your final draft of the three questions as your final examination for this course.

Prepare answers to Final Examination Question 1 as follows:
         a. Compose your own Psalm (5-10 verses) in Hebrew employing the patterns of biblical poetry.
         b. Write a commentary like Alter's to interpret your Psalm.
         c. Use your Psalm as an example and explain the characteristics of biblical poetry.

Lesson 11

Middle Hebrew
The Dead Sea Scrolls
Mishnah and Tosefta

Study Notes
As background to the study of classical rabbinic texts we outline here the formative features of Judaism in the Mishnaic period.

JUDAISM, THE MISHNAIC PERIOD.

The early first through early third centuries of the Common Era are commonly referred to as the Mishnaic Period, a recognition of the centrality of the corpus of the Mishnah (a third-century Hebrew compilation of traditions, see below) within rabbinic Judaism, the dominant religious system of the Jews from the third century up to the modern period. These years are also known as the late Hellenistic, or the Roman, or the Early Christian period, depending on the context of the reference. In this complex and turbulent transitional era new systems replaced the Temple-centered Israelite religious and political structures that had endured during the previous millennium.

Continuity with Israelite religion. In many respects Judaism of this period perpetuates major elements of the myth and ritual of ancient Israel. The idea of the centrality and sacrality of the territory of Israel and of Jerusalem derive from Israelite antecedents. The period witnessed the canonization of biblical literature, under rabbinic sponsorship, and with it the acceptance of theological ideas and frameworks of Israelite origin within rabbinic communities.

One such focus was the emphasis on Torah and scribal ideals. Other influences included the use of the Hebrew language for sacred writing and prayer (though Aramaic was the common language of the marketplace and Greek was used in official communications) and the continued espousal of many symbols out of Israelite culture. The rabbinic calendar was built directly upon the Israelite model, with a few notable additions and modifications. Dietary regulations in rabbinism (rules of kashrut) drew heavily on antecedents from older Israelite practice and the cult, but the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. by Rome necessitated significant modifications.

Obviously, the forced cessation of the cult led to the abandonment of the rituals of sacrifice, though the details of past practices were subjects of much concern in rabbinic literature. The practice of the earlier Israelite system of purity and uncleanness also was suspended with the demise of the Temple, though rabbinic teachers maintained an active interest in debating and delineating the rules for cultic purity. Together, rules for sacrifice and purity occupy about one third of the Mishnaic corpus. The remainder deals with agricultural, festival, familial and civil matters.

Historical discontinuities and developments. Several key historical and social forces shaped Judaism in this period. The destruction of Temple and the subsequent Roman imperial domination of Israel deprived Jewish leaders of meaningful political power and forced them to turn inward for fresh expressions of Jewish identity. The failure of a messianic rebellion against Rome under the leadership of Simeon bar Kokhba with support from leading rabbis in 132-135 C.E. left little doubt of the futility of hope for the restoration of political independence under the Judaic leadership of that age. In this period the influence of quasi-governmental Jewish authorities, such as the patriarchate, declined and the authority of the rabbinate, internal to the Jewish communities of the near East (Israel and Babylonia), increased. The rise and spread of Christianity and other

serious competing religious systems in the area in this epoch demanded that Judaic religious leaders articulate new understandings of Israelite destiny.

The irrepressible hope for redemption from political subjugation led to complex speculation on the nature of the promise of messianic redemption, a subject of Israelite contemplation in earlier ages (cf. biblical depictions in Isaiah and Micah). Overall, the rabbinic emphasis on Torah overshadowed and even eclipsed many of the major themes of alternative theological world views inherent in the received Israelite heritage.

Religious systems. The amalgam constituting rabbinic Judaism which took shape in the Mishnaic period drew on the contributions of several immediate Jewish predecessor and contemporaneous groups and ignored or rejected others. The rabbis themselves claimed to be heirs of the Pharisees, a group of politically active Judean pietists of the first century. Mainly concerned with the Sabbath, agricultural taboos and rules of purity, this society established a model of table fellowship and religious literacy emulated within later rabbinic circles. By way of contrast, the authors of the New Testament Gospels adopted a caricatured and stylized view of the Pharisees and type-cast them as the opponents of Jesus.

The integration of an apocalyptic perspective is less apparent within the later rabbinic synthesis of Judean religious attitudes of the first century. Recent theories argue that apocalyptic speculation is a mode of expressing alienation from the corridors of political power and social resistance to external control. As rabbinic views evolved they tended to tacitly condone national powerlessness, dismissing it as irrelevant to the present and ultimate reality they envisioned, and in the process they thereby devalued apocalyptic expressions which loomed as threats to the stability of rabbinic society. Likewise they rejected miracle-working charismatic holy-men (cf. the story of Honi the Circle Drawer, M. Ta`anit 3:8).

Rabbinic synthesizers correspondingly down-played the major dimensions of other Judaic systems which did not express values and concerns sympathetic to their social condition and philosophical tendencies. The Sadducees, about whom we possess little systematic evidence, appear within rabbinic traditions as adversaries whose theological views were rejected. We also have incomplete data concerning early communities of mystics, though many scholars assume that merkabah and other forms of Jewish mysticism have their roots in the mishnaic period.

The Dead Sea community serves as an informative example of an intermediary system of Judaism of the early part of this era. The residents of the village of Qumran left ample evidence of their apocalyptic-messianic theology and social organization and ritual, locating this community on a historical continuum between Israelite and early Hellenistic forms of religion on the one hand, and early Christian communal patterns on the other. Although small in number and insignificant in cultural influence, the Qumran example illustrates a stage of Judaic development prior to the incipient rabbinic and early Christian alternatives.

Major communities of diaspora Judaism (i.e. outside the Land of Israel) in this age were located in Alexandria, Babylonia, and in Asia Minor. The writings of Philo illustrate the philosophical literacy achieved by the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria and, according to some interpretations, they demonstrate the emergence of a cosmic-mystical form of Judaic speculation. The Jewish community of Babylonia shows signs of growth in this time but takes a position of leadership only after the transition to Sassanian rule (226 C.E.) and the decline of the community in Israel in the third and fourth centuries. In Asia Minor, archaeological evidence substantiates the existence and influence of Jews within communities like Sardis and indicates they occupied central positions within the social structures of the towns of the area.

Clerical Leadership. In this era the axis of Judaic leadership shifted from national political figures associated with the Temple in Jerusalem, provincial princes and hereditary priests, to local authority vested in rabbinic scribal holy-men in villages and towns. Imperial Roman authorities encouraged similar transfers of prerogative throughout the near East to better facilitate the ultimate arrogation of dominance and control within the empire. These historical developments are echoed in the internal rabbinic traditions themselves. The narrative account for instance of the founding of the first rabbinic academy at Yavneh by Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai portrays the master emerging from a besieged Jerusalem, obtaining the sanction of Roman authority and establishing an authorized center of Torah study at the defenseless coastal town (The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, ch. 4).

The rapid rise of rabbinism may be associated in part with the sanctioned ascendence of local holy-men, ascetics, miracle-workers, dream-interpreters and magicians throughout the area. Consequently, factors including changes in patters of leadership, the greater literacy of the age, attributable to minor technological advances in writing, such as the adoption of the codex for publication and dissemination of knowledge, and the breakdown of priestly custody over the authorized canon, all contributed to the successful expansion of the influence of the rabbinic class.

As other forms of local authority lost influence, and rabbis increased their political engagement with governmental forces, they became adept at balancing their needs to hold sway within their communities and to refrain from challenging the external forces which governed their land and lives from without. The Judaic system they established, with adaptation and accretion along the way, provided for centuries a viable set of social, political and philosophical structures for the Jewish community in the subsequent historical settings under Roman, Babylonian, Islamic and medieval Christian European domination.

We know of the life and teachings of hundreds of rabbinic figures. The following mention of the activities of a few helps better illustrate the character of rabbinic leadership in this era.

At Yavneh. The period ensuing upon the destruction of the Temple and founding of the Yavnean center was a time of internal conflict, self-definition and transition. Influential leaders of the epoch included Rabbis Yohanan ben Zakkai and his disciples, Joshua, and Eliezer (M. Abot 2:8), and numerous others such as Aqiva, Ishmael, Gamaliel, and Eleazar ben Azariah.

Aqiva ben Joseph was among the best known sages of this time. His extensive ventures included engagement in rabbinic legislation, biblical exegesis, mystical speculation, and (ill-fated) political activism and martyrdom in support of the Bar Kokhba revolt.

His contemporary, Joshua ben Hananiah was rabbi in Jerusalem and later at Yavneh and Peki'in in Israel (first and second centuries C.E.). As a Levite, it is assumed that he sang in the Temple before it was destroyed. He then took up the trade of needle-maker or blacksmith.

With Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, Joshua is said to have carried Yohanan ben Zakkai out of Jerusalem in a coffin during the siege of the city (Talmud Babli Gittin 56a). During his later career he was the center of some contention within rabbinic circles. Several sources recount how he was humiliated by the Patriarch, Gamaliel (Talmud Babli Rosh Hashanah 25a). Joshua's dispute with Gamaliel over the requirement to recite the evening prayer brought about the events which lead to the deposition of Gamaliel and ascension of Eleazar ben Azariah to the Patriarchate (Talmud Babli Berakhot 28a). Eleazar exemplified the wealthy adherent of the rabbinic movement, a man of prominent ancestry who sought conciliation between the contending factions of the sages and those who supported the interests of the priestly and patriarchal followers.

Joshua is also associated with a dispute with Eliezer ben Hyrcanus over the ritual cleanness of the tiled ovens of Akhnai. Joshua ruled these ovens be deemed unclean. Eliezer said they were clean. Eliezer invoked a heavenly voice on his own behalf to prove his position correct. Joshua responded with the famous declaration: "The Law is not in heaven (a reference to Deut. 30:12)" i.e. the rabbis alone have the authority to decide matters of the law, not some supernatural voice, or even a direct revelation.

Many other legal disputes between Joshua and Eliezer ben Hyrcanus appear in rabbinic sources. According to tradition he engaged in discourses with political figures and various groups: the Roman emperor Hadrian; with the elders of Athens; with the Jews of Alexandria.

At Usha. The generation following in the aftermath of the failed revolt (132-135 C.E.) was a time of systematization and standardization within Judaic thought and practice. Judah, Meir, Simeon ben Gamaliel and Simeon bar Yohai are representative of this generation's central rabbinic authorities.

Judah bar Ilai was a Rabbi of the second century C.E. in Usha, in the lower Galilee in Israel. He was a student of Aqiba and Tarfon, was ordained by Judah ben Baba and survived the Hadrianic persecutions. Numerous traditions attributed to Judah and his contemporaries Meir, Simeon and Yose are preserved in rabbinic literature.

Judah's legal sayings illustrate some of the concerns and activities of the rabbis of his generation. Several of his rulings, for example, deal with the standardization of rabbinic liturgy (Mishnah Berakhot 4:1) and the regulation of prayer (Mishnah Berakhot 4:7, Tosefta Berakhot 1:9, Tosefta Berakhot 3:5) and daily liturgical blessings (Tosefta Berakhot 6:18). Other rules ascribed to Judah emphasize the importance of concentration and intention during the performance of rituals (Tosefta Berakhot 2:2), or with the importance of maintaining the proper frame of mind during recitation of prayers (Mishnah Berakhot 2:2). Judah also is associated with legislation concerning the recitation of blessings over foods (Mishnah Berakhot 6:4, Tosefta Berakhot 4:4-5), with blessings over natural wonders, both those for which one is permitted to recite blessings (Mishnah Berakhot 9:2) and those for which one is forbidden to recite because it would appear to be a form of idolatry (Tosefta Berakhot 6:6).

Judah's contemporary, Meir was a descendent of a family of proselytes which traced its line back to the Roman emperor Nero. He was a student of both Aqiva and Ishmael and is listed as one of the seven disciples of Aqiba who issued a famous edict concerning the calendar. He also was one of the five rabbis ordained by Judah ben Baba during the Hadrianic persecutions. He was married to Beruryah, one of the few learned women mentioned in the Talmud. Meir was thus involved in her tragic life (discussed below) and in the events of the Bar Kokhba war.

Meir was associated with the legendary Elisha ben Abuya, the well-known heretic of his time, known also as Aher, the "other". Some rabbinic sources depict Meir as Aher's would-be disciple and is also said to have been called after Elisha's death to extinguish the fire of his burning tomb.

Meir is prominently linked to the major rabbinic legislative and political activities of his generation. He is said to have served as *Hakham*, Sage, in the Ushan court. His technical ability to defend both sides of opposing legal viewpoints was greatly extolled. Ultimately, his opposition to the patriarch Simeon ben Gamaliel, is said to have been the basis for his exile from Israel.

Legal rulings ascribed to Meir comprise an important part of the earliest rabbinic compilations, Mishnah and Tosefta. His role in these works is so important that the Talmud stipulates that any

anonymous ruling in the Mishnah is to be attributed to Meir, hence the corpus of his traditions was one of the primary documents used in its redaction.

Meir's dicta deal with most of the central values of rabbinic Judaism in its period of systematization in the latter half of the second century. An illustration of a tradition attributed to him indicates his understanding of rabbinic ritual as a coherent system of practice:

> R. Meir used to say, "There is no man in Israel who does not perform one hundred commandments each day [and recite over them one hundred blessings] . . . And there is no man in Israel who is not surrounded by [reminders of the] commandments: [Every person wears] phylacteries on his head, phylacteries on his arm, has a mezuzah on his doorpost and four fringes on his garment around him . . . [Tosefta Berakhot 6:24-25]."

Simeon ben Gamaliel (II), another Rabbi of this period held the hereditary office of Patriarch or President. He studied Greek and supported a policy of peace with Rome. According to one Talmudic source, two of his rabbinic colleagues, Meir and Nathan sought to oust Simeon from his position as Patriarch during a struggle for power within the ranks of rabbinic leadership. In the talmudic account of the political tension, the two masters became angry when Simeon decreed that the students in the academy should not stand in their honor when they entered the college. They then conspired to test Simeon on an obscure tractate of the law in order to bring him to disgrace. One of Simeon's supporters prepared him in the laws of this tractate and he was able to pass the test. He then banished Meir and Nathan from the academy. Nonetheless they continued to send messages with legal problems to the college. The leaders of the academy then recognized that they should readmit the two, and did so (Talmud Babli Horayot 13b). The account demonstrates how one episode of internal strife was brought to resolution through compromise.

Among the other rules attributed to Simeon was his statement that not all who wish to recite God's name in the prayers may do so (Mishnah Berakhot 4:8), showing a restrictive view regarding the use of divine names for liturgical purposes. Simeon's legal views were almost always decisive. The Talmud declares that the law follows in accordance with Simeon Ben Gamaliel in all instances except for three (Talmud Babli Ketubot 77a).

Another prototype of rabbinic leadership was Simeon bar Yohai, a second century C.E. rabbinic leader, mystic and ascetic of the generation of rabbinic activity at Usha in the Galilee. Simeon was one of the two most prominent students of Aqiva (with Meir), another of the five rabbis ordained during the Hadrianic persecutions following the Bar Kokhba revolt. According to the version of the incident in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 28a), he was the student who provoked the deposition of Gamaliel from the position of Patriarch of Israel by bringing up in the academy the issue of whether the recitation of the Evening Prayer was obligatory or optional.

Simeon is the subject of many rabbinic legends. Best known is the story of his hiding in a cave with his son after having been sentenced to death by the Romans. According to some versions of the story when he emerged from the cave after twelve years and saw that people were not engaged solely in the study of Torah, his mystical gaze set the world afire with only a glance (Talmud Babli Shabbat 33b), and a heavenly voice reprimanded him and sent him back to the cave for another year.

Simeon's rulings cover most of the major topics taken up in rabbinic sources. On the importance of the study of the Torah for instance, he says, "If I had been at Mount Sinai at the time the Torah was given to Israel, I would have asked God to endow man with two mouths, one to talk of the Torah and one to attend to his other needs." On further reflection, he retracted this saying, "But

the world can barely withstand the slander of [persons with] one [mouth]. It would be all the worse if [each individual] had two [mouths] (Talmud Yerushalmi Berakhot, i, 3b)."

The Talmud uses Simeon as the paradigm of a scholar totally immersed in the study of the Torah. Accordingly a rabbi of his caliber would not be required to interrupt his study even for the important and timely daily recitation of the *Shema`* (ibid).

Medieval Jewish mystics identified him as (pseudonymous) author of the Zohar, one of the most important rabbinic mystical compilations. He was also associated with the day of Lag B'Omer, the eighteenth of Iyar, a mystical festival celebrated to this day at the traditional place of his burial in Meron in the Galilee in Israel.

One of the more famous messianic sayings attributed to him declares that if the Jews properly observed two consecutive Sabbaths, they would be redeemed (Talmud Babli Shabbat 118b). He is assigned authorship of the Midrashic compilations of Sifre Numbers and Deuteronomy (Talmud Babli Sanhedrin 86a) and of the Mekhilta of R. Simeon Bar Yohai to the book of Exodus. Several short apocalyptic mystical compilations are also linked with his name.

The Role of Women. Beruryah (second century C.E.) was one of the few famous women in rabbinic Judaism of late antiquity, a rare woman-scholar in that male-dominated culture. She was the daughter of Hananyah ben Teradyon, and wife of Meir. Rabbinic traditions portrayed Beruryah as a sensitive yet assertive figure. The Talmud recounted anecdotes illustrating Beruryah's piety, compassion and wit. In one source she admonished her husband Meir not to be angry at his enemies and not to pray for their death. She suggested that instead he pray that their sins cease and that they repent (b. Berakhot 10a).

When two of her sons died one Sabbath day, a story in the Midrash reported that she delayed telling her husband until Saturday night when he had finished observing the Sabbath in peace (Midrash to Proverbs 31:10). The Talmud also narrated anecdotes of Beruryah's sharp wit. When Yose the Galilean asked her for directions on the road, she derided him for speaking to much with a woman (b. `Eruvin 53b).

The folklore surrounding Beruryah was extensive and poignant. Accounts which weave together the rabbinic sources retold the tragic events of Beruryah's life and the life of her family. According to tradition, Beruryah's father was martyred in the Bar Kokhba rebellion, two of her sons died suddenly one Sabbath day, her sister was taken captive to Rome, and her brother became a brigand, possibly an anti-Roman terrorist, and was murdered.

The drama of her life climaxed in the so-called Beruryah Incident. She was said in an eleventh century tradition preserved by Rashi (commentary to Talmud Babli Avodah Zarah 18b) to have mocked a misogynistic rabbinic tradition which labelled women as flighty. Meir was said to have sent a student to tempt her to discredit her criticism. Tragically, she was thought to have committed suicide after submitting to the advances of her husband's disciple.

Beruryah's public involvement in rabbinic affairs and instruction was clearly an exception to the prevailing propensities and expectations of that society. Contemporary study reveals the ambivalence towards women within this era of rabbinism. Mishnah's framers regarded women alternatively in some circumstances as possessors of legal rights and duties, and in others as chattels subservient to men. Mainly in matters pertaining to sexual and reproductive function, Mishnah treated wives, levirate widows and minors as property. Divorcees and widows in Mishnaic law controlled their own sexuality and property. However, critical analysis of the

evidence confirms that women were deemed non-entities in almost all public social circumstances, and were denied access to most forms of intellectual and political pursuits and achievements.

Textual production and advances. The Mishnah, published after the turn of the third century, stood as the single most authoritative compilation of the early rabbinic estate. It was a composite of the religious statements of rabbis from prior to the destruction of the Temple to the time of its publication. Mishnah appears to be a legal code. More precisely it is a study book of legal statements, disputes, lists, and anecdotes detailing the views of hundreds of named rabbinic authorities, and containing accompanying anonymous statements, assumed by some to stem from Hellenistic or ancient Israelite times, on various practical and theoretical subjects of concern to the early rabbis. It is a unique compilation in style and content whose influence extends far beyond its time and place.

Recent critical analysis has delineated the specifics of Mishnaic literary form and diction, the contributions of rabbinic masters of each of four generations, and the theological assumptions and creative contributions of each tractate as coherent expressions of rabbinic world views. A rabbi of the Mishnaic period is called a Tanna (pl. Tanna'im, teacher), to distinguish him from a rabbi of the later Talmudic era, designated an Amora (pl. Amora'im).

Tosefta is the companion document and a systematic appendix to Mishnah. Though the date of its publication is not certain, analysis has shown it to be a composite, in part Mishnah-commentary, in part supplementary to Mishnah, and in part a repository of independent rabbinic teachings.

The collections of rabbinic scriptural interpretations, the books of Midrash, frequently cite the authorities of the Mishnaic age, thus ostensibly serving as a major source of data for the period. Current advances in the study of major works of rabbinic midrash have better described the composite nature of that literature and confirmed the post-mishnaic date of some of those collections. Contemporary research on Sifra (a midrash on the book of Leviticus), Sifre to Numbers and to Deuteronomy, Mekhilta to Exodus, Genesis Rabbah and Leviticus Rabbah has shown that early midrash compilations rest on distinctive conceptual foundations meant to articulate coherent theological postures and to justify social and political contexts to communities of Jews of late antiquity of the time of their redaction.

The post-mishnaic rabbinic collective literature in the Babylonian Talmud and the Talmud of the land of Israel are both dependent for their organizational structure, content and authority, on the development, publication and dominance of Mishnah in the prior age. The Talmuds contain a fair amount of baraita-traditions, thought to be from mishnaic times, often concerning or attributed to the rabbis of the mishnaic period.

Recent scholarship has tended to critically limit the value of discrete traditions within Mishnah and other early rabbinic texts as sources of evidence for the historical reconstruction of the period, emphasizing the distorting influence of the *tendenz* of the documents' editors and their complex redactional histories. Apart from highlighting these problems and pitfalls for using the early texts, great advances have been made in the past two decades in understanding the underlying rabbinic religious system the documents as a whole express. The previously prevailing view that treated the evidence of rabbinic literature as disconnected and anecdotal has been superseded by recent more critically integrative and analytically sophisticated assessment of the evidence within its cultural context, illustrated best by the work of Jacob Neusner and his students.

Revision of Theology. The most consequential advance for the history of Judaism during this era within rabbinism is the establishment of a Torah dominated theology. Rabbinic claims to authority rested on their asserted association with the revelation at Mount Sinai through the concept of the dual Torah. This ideology postulated that Moses received as divine revelation both the written Torah (i.e. the Pentateuch) and a concomitant oral Torah. The latter was memorized and passed from teacher to student for generations and constitutes the substance of the rabbinic teachings finally set down in writing in Mishnah. The rabbis did not specify all those elements of their teachings which go back to Sinai, nor did they claim to present the divinely revealed *ipsissima verba* of such traditions. The sages of the early age also did not adequately account for the nature of Mishnah, replete with its disputed rules and statements and direct attributions to late antique authorities, in light of their implicit claim that it represented the revealed instruction of a millennium earlier.

The theological underpinnings of the rabbinic system relied more for their potency on the authority of the personality of the rabbi who represented an embodiment of the Torah, and accordingly of divine revelation, than on a tight internal deductive philosophical logic.

The basic theological postulates and practices of the rabbinic system sustained the centrality of the concept and symbol of Torah. The rabbis asserted that the study of Torah was the central ritual act of Judaism, equivalent to all other obligatory actions combined. Accompanying doctrine urging restraint against the abuses of power was present within the system's assertions, for instance, that Torah had to be studied for its own sake, not as a tool for political or economic gain.

The rabbis began in this era to transform or "rabbinize" Israelite heritage based on their values and priorities. They re-examined Israelite myth affixing a rabbinic veneer to its narrative. In their complex recasting of traditions, the sages imputed rabbinic traits to the heroes of ancient Israel, from the patriarchs, to Moses (called *Rabbenu*, our rabbi) and David and other major figures, who, like the later masters, studied Torah and kept the commandments. Rabbinic literary expressions depicted God himself as supreme rabbi with personality traits closely akin to the sages.

The rabbinic Judaism of this period enunciated a stable religious system, defiant of the vicissitudes of historical change. Within rabbinic Torah-centric theology, apocalyptic attitudes played a peripheral role. Depiction of and retreat from evil as a main form of expressing a social basis of intensified passive-aggressive, retreat-engagement with political challenge was basically uncharacteristic to the mainstream of rabbinic conceptualization. Instead rabbis institutionalized a view of messianism promising salvation without emphasizing immediate deliverance. Rabbinic limitations on and utilizations of the messianic idea vary in later ages usually intensifying subsequent to periods of persecution.

Revision of Ritual. Within Judaism of the Mishnaic period the process of the "rabbinization" of Israelite festivals engendered revision of numerous rituals and restatement of the mythic basis for cyclical celebrations. Passover was formerly a Springtime festival of rebirth with connections to the biblical accounts of the exodus from Egypt and was centered around the ritual offering and consumption of the Paschal lamb. The rabbis established the Seder, a structured fellowship meal, as the primary festive ritual and mandated the recitation of a Haggadah, rabbinic expositions of scriptural passages combined with liturgical recitations and songs and the manipulation of special foods and objects. This mode of celebration down-played references to the preceding cultic forms of celebration, and focused instead on the Israelite narrative roots, as subjects for rabbinic exposition.

Shavuot (Pentecost) also took on new meaning as a celebration of the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai, in contrast to its prior central purpose as a feast of the first fruits brought to the

Temple in Jerusalem. In later times the revision of the pilgrimage festivals lead to such additional changes as the establishment of Simhat Torah (the festival of rejoicing for the Torah) on the last day of Sukkot (Tabernacles).

Rabbinic scribal values made Torah-study the central ritual, as noted. In the synagogue the scroll itself was utilized as a symbol and object in worship. It was housed in a prominent niche in synagogues and used for the periodic readings throughout the year. In this era the Jews employed a cycle for reading the Torah on Sabbaths in public on a triennial basis, as well as readings on Mondays and Thursdays, fast days and new moons and a special sequence of readings for the festivals.

Earliest inscriptions in synagogues, such as the Theodotus inscription (first century C.E.) refer to the "purposes of reciting the Law and studying the commandments." However, the equivocal implications of limited material evidence of synagogues from the first two centuries C.E. make it difficult to ascertain whether the rabbis as a group had significant influence in the institutions or even to what degree synagogues predominated as central religious structures. Evidence from subsequent periods in Israel and the Diaspora (4th to 6th centuries C.E.) suggests that later rabbis did not play a dominant role in the construction or administration of these assembly halls.

Whatever their role in public synagogues may have been, rabbis did undertake to institutionalize the rituals of prayer during the Mishnaic era. The two major liturgies were the *Shema`*, a litany of earlier scribal origins, and the Prayer of Eighteen Blessings (the *Amidah*), a priestly and patriarchal liturgy, incorporated into rabbinic ritual at Yavneh.

The *Shema`* consisted of biblical verses which emphasized the theological themes such as the unity of God, the need to love God, to keep the commandments, and references to reward and punishment, alongside of supporting rabbinic liturgy which made reference to the classical mythic themes of creation and redemption and emphasized the virtues of Torah-study.

By contrast, the Prayer of Eighteen Blessings made overt entreaty for the messianic redemption, the restoration of Davidic kingship, condemnation of the heretics, for independent legal authority and for the rebuilding of the Temple, and included the priestly benediction.

The ultimate regularization of these liturgies and their forms and the integration of the components of prayer into composite services resulted from historical and social processes of conflict between factions supporting patriarchal and priestly authority within the community and groups representing the ascent of rabbinic influence.

One perspective on the stages of conflict and compromise, resulting in the conflation of interests and texts is compressed and dramatically recounted in the narrative of the deposition of Gamaliel II (b. Ber. 27b-28a, y. Ber. 4:1), mentioned above. In that account the rabbis unseated the patriarch after a dispute over a liturgical issue, the obligation to recite the Prayer in the evening. Major shifts in the control of the academy ensued and the Patriarch ultimately was forced to accept a diminished role in the governance of the community.

Establishment of rabbinic culture and continuity with subsequent forms of Judaism. By the close of the Mishnaic period rabbinic myth, ritual and social patterns pervaded the Jewish populations of Israel and Babylonia and constituted a dominant cultural force. Subsequently, in the middle ages Jewish intellectuals developed a philosophical rabbinism under the influence of classical traditions, originally preserved within Islamic culture.

Other Jewish thinkers developed mystical forms of rabbinic expression which became widespread within the popular culture of the Jews. Although competing forms of non-rabbinic Judaism arose regularly (such as Karaism in the early middle ages), the Judaic system which took initial shape in the Mishnaic era dominated until the modern age. Modern Orthodox Judaism perpetuates forms of Torah-centered rabbinism. Even those new Judaic systems which developed after the enlightenment and reformation of Judaism in early nineteenth century Europe, maintained some continuities with the rabbinic heritage. Reform Judaism rejected rabbinism, but developed its own form of rabbinate. And modern Zionism, as complex as it was, drew heavily on previous Judaic symbolic expression. The flag of the state of Israel, for example, according to a principal interpretation, recalls in its design the stripes of the tallit, the sages' prayer shawl, of antecedent ages going back through the mishnaic period and the chief rabbinate of the State of Israel derives its authority from the Judaic world views of the dual Torah which took shape in the formative mishnaic era.

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Read and study:
>"Selected Qumran texts: the Community Rule"
>"The Dead Sea Scrolls"
>"Selected Mishnah texts: the Haggadah"
>"Mishnah"

Exercises:
Translate the Qumran and Mishnah texts.

Assignment, Lesson 11: Send in your exercises.

Prepare answers to Final Examination Question 2 as follows:
[See explanation in unit 10.]
>a. Compose your own chapter of Mishnah in Hebrew employing the patterns of mishnaic diction.
>b. Write a commentary to interpret your Mishnah.
>c. Use your Mishnah as an example and explain the characteristics of mishnaic style.

Lesson 12

Pesher
Midrash

Study Notes
As background to the study of Midrash we outline here some of the major features of rabbinic biblical interpretation.

The text of the *Tanakh*, i.e., Torah, Nevi`im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings), for centuries has been subjected to critical scrutiny by Jewish scholars. Rabbinic authorities in late antiquity [called Tannaim and Amoraim] developed some of the best known and most influential forms of traditional interpretive theories of the text of the Bible. The contributions of these scholars has been preserved in the Talmud and in numerous volumes of midrash compilations.

During the middle ages Jewish scholars developed several types of biblical criticism. These derived from diverse sources: (1) the traditions of conventional rabbinic exegesis; (2) medieval mystical traditions within Judaism; (3) grammatical, syntactical and other critical advances of the middle ages. Many of the commentaries and expositions of that period are eclectic mixtures of these strands of interpretation.

Midrash
The Hebrew word "midrash" means interpretation. It most commonly refers to (1) classic compilations of Bible interpretation in early rabbinism (first to sixth centuries C.E.), (2) some of the major interpretive styles associated with those compilations, and (3) some types of contemporary interpretations of texts (of Scripture or of fiction) that bear resemblances to the classic rabbinic modes.

Classical rabbinic midrash is a complex and diverse sort of writing compiled and written over a period that spans several centuries and fills many discrete volumes. Midrash most frequently takes the form of a commentary to biblical verses. There are brief narrative segments embedded in midrash compilations. But even the most casual reader of midrash knows that this form of textual expression bears little sustained resemblance to the genres of fiction and poetry common to western literature.

Midrash harps on national themes, dwells on theological issues, and bears barely concealed political messages. In contrast to the biblical text it purports to illuminate, one rarely finds a hint of major themes of literature and verse. Midrash is hardly interested in human stories of love or hate, war or peace, loyalty or duplicity, or in the personal struggles of individuals in a society of open choices. Nearly all the messages of rabbinic midrash are rigorously controlled within structured religious schemata.

Accordingly scholars have yet to successfully apply the general methods of literary criticism to the corpus of midrash texts. Much more ground work needs to be done so that current literary theory may be used to illuminate the meanings of midrash.

Some critics view the methods of midrash as an early process of deconstructing a text and apply the term to describe more recent techniques of interpretation. The fact that midrash traditions "do not seem to involve the privileged pairing of a signifier with a specific set of signifieds... has rendered midrash so fascinating to some recent literary critics (Boyarin viii)." Nevertheless contemporary theorists mold the term midrash according to their own needs and rarely understand its diverse implications in late antique rabbinism.

The privilege of rabbinic authority is a given of the concept of midrash. Implied in the classical uses of the term is the notion that the results of interpretations of the sacred texts are themselves in some sense semi-sacred. The early rabbis voiced this by suggesting that their writings constituted an oral Torah tradition that had been given to Moses at the revelation at Mount Sinai along with the text of the Israelite written Torah. The dual-Torah-idea signifies that the authority of the text and of the interpretation are correlative.

Many works of classical rabbinic exegesis appear to share common strategies toward the texts of the Bible. Midrash tends to atomize a canonical text and to associate with each segment in order one or more interpretive remarks. These may be alternate or contradictory explanations, expansions or even entirely independent traditions.

In the early scholarship of the nineteenth century authors tended to search for the specific unifying features of the genre "midrash." They frequently assumed that they could identify and distill the exact rules of midrash and thereby describe a unified paradigm of rabbinic interpretive principles. These overly ingenuous efforts failed because the features and rules they cataloged were in fact either too general to be meaningful or incorrect and misleading. The study of midrash languished until the nineteen-eighties. Non-specialists should exercise appropriate caution when tempted to refer to the earlier work because its ostensible comprehensiveness conceals the shortcomings of this outdated research.

Accordingly it may be useful to provide some examples of the inadequacies of earlier scholarship. It was commonly asserted that midrash falls into two content specific categories: *halakhic* (legal) and *aggadic* (homiletical). To be sure since many of the texts of Tanakh can be categorized as legal or non-legal there appears to be some strong basis for this distinction. However the validity of this dichotomy derives from an allegorical-philosophical polemic frequently associated with Maimonides and his successors within medieval rabbinism. The differentiation reveals little about the nature of the hermeneutical moves or motives of the various rabbinic compilers who used midrash-techniques in their compositions.

A further insufficient differentiation frequently invoked to define the nature of midrash and its later derivatives in medieval rabbinic Bible commentaries is the distinction between styles of exegesis: *peshat*, i.e., plain meaning, and *derash*, i.e., fanciful interpretation. This division was first articulated by the rabbis themselves. Of course there are many midrash-moves that fall into the categories of literal or imaginative. Nevertheless this surface differentiation confines our focus to the micro-exegetical-moves of the processes and provides us no substantial window into the larger intent of exegete/compiler/author of midrash or of commentary.

Recent scholarship on the subject of midrash insists that because rabbinic Judaism was not a monolithic movement we err in searching for independent principles of Jewish hermeneutics. Instead we ought consider how each of its major works of interpretive textual study contributes its own substantive methods of text study. Each author or compiler, it is argued, responds in some way to his particular inner dynamic and to his social and historical circumstance.

Little is known of the lives of the authors and compilers of the midrash books. What can be retrieved inductively from the texts themselves demonstrates a diversity of both style and substance within the various works. The recent work of Jacob Neusner embodies various productive functional approaches to text found in the classic midrash compilations. I summarize here some of the basic points of Neusner's research.

Neusner identifies three trends in classical rabbinic Bible interpretation: exegetical, propositional, and narrative. In the classic work *Sifra*, the Tannaitic midrash to Leviticus, and in *Sifré to Numbers*,

Neusner finds the interpretation as a form of exegesis yielding propositions. The discourse of such texts is sustained by the anchoring of each of the brief excurses to a successive verse in the text of Torah.

The second form of midrash-interpretation starts with propositions and yields exegeses. From the texts of *Genesis Rabbah*, *Leviticus Rabbah*, and *Pesiqta derab Kahana* we can easily observe the "overriding themes and recurrent tensions that precipitated Bible interpretation among their authorships (Neusner viii)." *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* exemplifies a third trend, the narrative task of midrash that extends and rewrites the themes and stories of the canonical text.

The classic works of rabbinic midrash include the following. The *Tannaitic Midrashim*, those that cite the rabbis of the Mishnah, include *Mekhilta Attributed to Rabbi Ishmael* on Exodus 12:1-23:19, *Sifra* for Leviticus, *Sifré to Numbers*, *Sifré to Deuteronomy*. These are generally thought to have been completed by 400 C.E.. *Mekhilta* has been described as a scriptural encyclopedia joining together propositions engendered by the biblical text. By contrast, other early Midrash-compilations have been found to set forth an agendum of questions and proceed to answer them through its discourses.

Sifra sets its distinctive approach by adhering to a three pronged polemical inquiry. The compilers asserted that all taxonomy must derive from Scriptural classifications. They presented these discussions in a dialectical form of discourse. They also undertook to recast the rabbinic oral Torah in the context of the original written Torah. For this aim they utilized the citation-form of expression. They finally sought to revise the Torah itself and did so through their use of commentary-forms.

The earlier *rabbah* midrash compilations are thought to have been completed in the fourth and fifth centuries. *Genesis Rabbah* makes a coherent claim that the origins of the world and of the tribes of Israel reveal God's plan and portend for the future of Israel's salvation. Neusner argues that this midrash-book was issued as a response to historical trends, most likely to the conversion of Constantine and the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Accordingly narratives like that of Jacob's struggle with Esau are turned into accounts of the strife between Israel and Rome. Rabbinic commentators in this work use verses from the Torah to write about the history and destiny of Israel.

The later *rabbah* midrash compilations are said to derive from the sixth and seventh centuries. *Ruth Rabbah* makes clear through its comments that opposite entities may be united under God's will. The editors of this book dealt with the issues of Gentiles becoming Jews and the distinction between men and women. The proposition that from a Moabite woman comes the Israelite messiah is repeatedly conveyed by means of a symbolic vocabulary of verbal images embedded in the midrash-materials.

Song of Songs Rabbah understands the biblical text as a metaphor for the love of God for Israel. The compilation furnishes us with list-like comments that systematically connect the poetry of the Song with the symbols of rabbinism. Thus this work forms for us a discourse not of narrative or of polemics or propositions, but rather of the symbolism that defines the religion. These latter two compilations make crucial theological claims in the distinct rhetoric of the rabbis.

Mishnah and Talmud
The supposition that methods of midrash analysis are largely replicated in the Talmud of the Land of Israel and in the Babylonian Talmud has largely been refined or refuted. Neusner found that Mishnah rarely engages in scriptural exegesis. The Talmud of the Land of Israel does engage in scriptural investigation mainly assuming that Mishnah needs support for the purposes of its authority and scriptural basis for its norms. Thus this links oral and written Torah in accord with

that the theological point of reference of the editors of that latter corpus. In contrast, extensive studies show that the Babylonian Talmud builds equally on the texts of the oral Torah, the Mishnah, and on verses of the written Torah, Scripture.

Medieval Bible Exegesis

It is not fruitful to describe the growth of Bible criticism in the middle ages in terms of the clash between the literal and homiletical interpretations of Scripture. Rather it is more productive to examine how medieval rabbis transformed and extended earlier rabbinic midrash into a commentary form of exegesis, how they melded it together with newer mystical speculations on the Torah, and how they integrated into their glosses and expositions the fruits of linguistic explorations and discoveries.

The pradigmatic master of medieval rabbinic commentary was Rashi (Rabbi Solomon b. Isaac, 1040-1105) a scholar from the north of France. While he is often credited with the move to "literal commentary" in medieval times, even a cursory study of his commentaries reveals how indebted he was to the rabbinic exegesis of the earlier classical compilations. With Rashi we witness the mature development of a new paradigm of interpretation. He delicately balances his interpretations between gloss and exposition. He picks at and edits the earlier midrash materials and weaves together with them into his commentary the results of new discoveries, such as philology and grammar. His main proposition is hardly radical within rabbinism. He accepts that there is one whole Torah of Moses consisting of the oral and written traditions and texts. In his commentaries he accomplished the nearly seamless integration of the basics of both bodies of tradition.

During the middle ages, especially in the tenth century, the new methods of the lower criticism of the Hebrew text make their way into medieval interpretation. These derived mainly from the authorities in Spain: Menahem b. Jacob ibn Saruq, Dunash b. Labrat, Judah b. Hayyuj, Jonah ibn Janah. The eclectic commentaries of Abraham Ibn Ezra (1090-1164) are sometimes depicted as indications of the beginnings of more independent and radical critical examinations of the canonical text. Ibn Ezra appears to move more freely away from the standard theological postulates of rabbinic interpretation and treat the text of the Torah as more of an independent entity. The so-called "synthetic commentaries" of David Kimhi (1160-1235) and Nahmanides (1195-1270) range farther from the received traditions of earlier midrash compilations. Nahmanides wrote a more expositional commentary and frequently interjected mystical references and allusions.

Non-rabbinic Bible interpretation

The early Hellenistic allegory of Philo of Alexandria (born c. 10 B.C.E.) is seen by some as a precursor of rabbinic midrash. Links between these corpora are tenuous at best. Each represents a distinctive cultural context dealing in its way with the same authoritative texts. Philo's allegory exemplifies the application of Hellenistic techniques to the Greek translation of the Torah. The Dead Sea Pesharim (first century B.C.E.) are examples of an apocalyptic group's interpretations of the Prophets out of their view of messianic eschatology. There is little to justify linking these materials with later Jewish bible interpretation.

Maimonides' (1135-1204) philosophical allegory in the *Guide for the Perplexed* is seen by some critics as an illustration of the process of cloaking semi-esoteric philosophical precepts in an interpretive garb to be passed on to the newly initiated disciple. In general philosophy was seen as inimical to the process of midrash. Maimonideans disparaged the fruits of the midrash and aggadah and lauded at its expense the processes of philosophical analysis.

Bibliography
Jacob Neusner, *The Midrash: An Introduction*, Northvale: Aronson, 1990

E.Z.Melamed, *Meparshe HaMiqra: Darkehem WeSetotehem*, Jerusalem, 1972
M.H. Segal, *Parsanut HaMiqra*, Jerusalem, 1952

Read and study:
      "Pesher Habakkuk"
      "Selected Midrash Texts: the Haggadah"
      "Midrash"

Exercises:
Translate Pesher Habakkuk.
Translate the Midrash texts.

Lesson 12: Send in your exercises.
Prepare answers to Final Examination Question 3 as follows:
[See explanation in unit 10.]
      a. Compose your own Midrash in Hebrew employing the patterns of the rabbinic or Qumran materials.
      b. Write a commentary to interpret your Midrash.
      c. Use your Midrash as an example and explain the characteristics of early Hebrew Bible interpretation.

Final Examination, Hebrew 1106

Send in the final draft of your answers to
Final Examination Questions 1, 2 and 3:

1.   a. Compose your own Psalm in Hebrew employing the patterns of biblical poetry.
        b. Write a commentary like Alter's to interpret your Psalm.
        c. Use your Psalm as an example and explain the characteristics of biblical poetry.

2.   a. Compose your own chapter of Mishnah in Hebrew employing the patterns of mishnaic diction.
        b. Write a commentary to interpret your Mishnah.
        c. Use your Mishnah as an example and explain the characteristics of mishnaic style.

3.   a. Compose your own Midrash in Hebrew employing the patterns of the rabbinic or Qumran materials.
        b. Write a commentary to interpret your Midrash.
        c. Use your Midrash as an example and explain the characteristics of early Hebrew Bible interpretation.

Additional Readings

Hebrew 1106

Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, chapters 1-2
James Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, chapter 1
"Selected Qumran texts: the Community Rule"
"The Dead Sea Scrolls"
"Selected Mishnah texts: the Haggadah"
"Mishnah"
"Pesher Habakkuk"
"Selected Midrash Texts: the Haggadah"
"Midrash"

SENTENCES
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 BHEB39A

Lesson 40:
 BHEB40
 BHEB40A

Lesson 41:
 BHEB41
 BHEB41A

Lesson 42:
 BHEB42
 BHEB42A

Lesson 43:
 BHEB43
 BHEB43A

Lesson 44:
 BHEB44
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Lesson 45:
 BHEB45
 BHEB45A

Lesson 46:
 BHEB46
 BHEB46A

Lesson 47:
 BHEB47
 BHEB47A
 BHEB47B

Lesson 48:
 BHEB48
 BHEB48A

Lesson 49:
      BHEB49

Lesson 50:
      BHEB50
      BHEB50A

Review & Drill 5:

Lesson 51:
      BHEB51

Lesson 52:
      BHEB52

Lesson 53:
      BHEB53
      BHEB53A

Lesson 54:
      BHEB54

Lesson 55:
      BHEB55

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Hebrew Vocabulary Drills
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These are computer program materials and optional drills for an IBM or compatible with an EGA or better monitor. They are available from Independent Study at your request.

You may complete these drills to assist you in mastering the vocabulary. The drills, words and textbook-lessons correspond as follows:

Lessons 1-8	words 1-50	drills 1-5
Lessons 9-12	words 51-75	drills 6-8
Lessons 13-17	words 76-100	drills 9-11
Lessons 18-22	words 101-150	drills 12-16
Lessons 23-27	words 151-200	drills 17-21
Lessons 28-32	words 201-250	drills 22-26
Lessons 33-40	words 251-300	drills 27-31
Lessons 41-48	words 301-350	drills 32-36
Lessons 49-55	words 351-415	drills 37-42
Middle Hebrew	words 416-450	drills 43-45

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