



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Sex and Sexuality in Talmudic Thought - 14167

Last update 07-08-2019

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Jewish Thought

Academic year: 0

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Yishai Kiel

Coordinator Email: yishai.kiel@huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Monday 9:30-11:00

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Yishai Kiel

Course/Module description:

We will investigate the various components/dimensions of sex—the sexual act, fertility, gratification, desire—and sexuality—identity, control, and socio-religious demarcation—as they unfold in the classical rabbinic tradition. We will grapple with legal, narrative, exegetical and mythical constructions of incest, menstruation, adultery, marriage, and prohibited seclusion of men and women. We will discuss the sexualization of the Evil Inclination and the role of sex in rabbinic mythmaking, in the study house and in the marketplace. We will explore the rabbinic subversion of gender expectations and their surprising views of homoeroticism. Finally, we will consider their attitudes towards sexual abstinence and virginity and their place in Jewish society.

Course/Module aims:

The course offers a window onto rabbinic perceptions of, and attitudes towards, sex and sexuality, as they unfold in the classical talmudic corpus. The rabbis' views on sex and sexuality are contextualized with Greco-Roman, Sasanian, Christian, and gnostic perceptions and examined against the foil of competing cultural assumptions and dispositions that pervaded the late ancient world. The rabbinic discussions of sex and sexuality are viewed in the light of broader insights drawn from the fields of body, gender, queer, and sexuality studies.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- Identify the various perceptions of sex and sexuality as reflected in the classical talmudic corpus.
- Apply broader insights drawn from the fields of body, gender, queer, and sexuality studies.
- Classify competing cultural assumptions about sex and sexuality that pervaded the Greco-Roman and Sasanian empires in late antiquity.

Attendance requirements(%):

85%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: lecture and class discussion

Course/Module Content:

1. Introduction
2. Mythologizing Sex

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3. *Sexual Desire and the Evil Inclination*
 4. *Love and Marriage*
 5. *Sex and Celibacy*
 6. *Sex and the Sages*
 7. *Sexual Etiquette: The Rabbis in the Bedroom*
 8. *Homosexuality and Homoeroticism*
 9. *Solitary Love*
 10. *Menstruation and Control*
 11. *Incest*
 12. *Sex and Humiliation: The Adulterer*
 13. *The Laws of Seclusion*

Required Reading:

Primary sources will be uploaded on a weekly basis.

- .דניאל בויארין, *הבשר שברוח: שיח המיניות בתלמוד* (תל-אביב: עם עובד, 1999).
- דניאל בויארין, "רבנים וחברים: האם יש יהודים ב'תולדות המיניות', " *זמנים* 52 (1995), עמ' 50-66.
- דוד ביאל, *ארוס והיהודים* (תל אביב: עם עובד, 1994), עמ' 21-81.
- שלמה נאה, "חרותא", בתוך: סוגיות במחקר התלמוד (ירושלים: האקדה הלאומית הישראלית למדעים, תשס"א), עמ' 10-27.
- ישי רוזן-צבי, "יצר הרע, מיניות ואיסורי ייחוד: פרק באנתרופולוגיה תלמודית", *תיאוריה וביקורת* 14 (1999), עמ' 55-84.
- ישי רוזן-צבי, *הטקס שלא היה: מקדש, מדרש ומגדר במסכת סוטה* (ירושלים: מאגנס, 2008), עמ' 241-226.
- ישי רוזן-צבי, "מסכת קינוי: פולמוס תנאי שכוח על נישואין, חופש תנועה ופיקוח מיני", *JSIJ* 5 (2006), עמ' 21-48.
- עדיאל שרמר, *זכר ונקבה בראם: הנישואים בשלהי ימי הבית השני ובתקופת המשנה והתלמוד* (ירושלים: שזר, תשס"ד), עמ' 33-69, 85-101, 299-320.
- Gary Anderson, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden," *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989): 121-148.
- Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 155-161.
- Yaakov Elman, "'He in his Cloak and she in her Cloak': Conflicting Images of Sexuality in Sasanian Mesopotamia," in *Discussing Cultural Influences: Text, Context, and Non-Text in Rabbinic Judaism*, ed. R. Ulmer (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), 129-163.
- Charlotte E. Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 103-127.
- Isaiah M. Gafni, "The Institution of Marriage in Rabbinic Times," in *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory*, ed. D. Kraemer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 19-30.
- Yishai Kiel, "Confessing Incest to a Rabbi: A Talmudic Story in Its Zoroastrian

Context," *Harvard Theological Review* 107, 4 (2014): 401-424.

- Yishai Kiel, "Noahide Law and the Inclusiveness of Sexual Ethics: Between Roman Palestine and Sasanian Babylonia," *Jewish Law Annual* 21 (2015): 59-110.

- Naomi Koltun-Fromm, "Zippora's Complaint: Moses is Not Conscientious in the Deed! Exegetical Traditions of Moses' Celibacy," in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Annette Y. Reed and Adam H. Becker (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 283-306.

- Thomas W Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 13-24.

- Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "Sexualizing the Evil Inclination: Rabbinic Yetzer and Modern Scholarship," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 60, 2 (2009): 264-281.

- Michael Satlow, "'Wasted Seed': The History of a Rabbinic Idea," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 65 (1994): 137-169.

- Shai Secunda, "Talmudic Text and Iranian Context: On the Development of Two Talmudic Narratives," *AJS Review* 33, 1 (2009): 45-69.

Additional Reading Material:

- ג'רמי כהן, "מצוות פרייה ורבייה ומקומה בפולמוס הדתי," בתוך: ארוס אירוסין ואיסורים: מיניות ומשפחה בהיסטוריה, עורכים: ישראל ברטל וישעיהו גפני (ירושלים: שזר, תשנ"ח), עמ' 83-96.
- ניסן רובין, שמחת החיים: טקסי אירוסים ונישואים במקורות חז"ל (תל אביב: הקיבוץ המאוחד, תשס"ד).

- אהרן שמש, "איסורי עריות במגילות מדבר יהודה וחשיבותם לתולדות ההלכה," סידרא כד-כה (תש"ע), עמ' 457-441.

- Elizabeth S. Alexander, "Art, Argument, and Ambiguity in the Talmud: Conflicting Conceptions of the Evil Impulse in *b. Sukkah* 51b-52a," *HUCA* 73 (2002): 97-132.

- Gary Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press London, 2001), 43-74.

- Adam Becker, "The 'Evil Inclination' of the Jews: The Syriac Yatsra in Narsai's Metrical Homilies for Lent," *JQR* 106, 2 (2016): 179-207.

- Daniel Boyarin, "Friends Without Benefits; or, Academic Love," in *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*, ed. Mark Masterson et al. (London: Routledge, 2015), 517-535.

- Eliezer Diamond, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42-54.

- Steven Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 253-288.

- Shamma Friedman, "Sorting Out the Wages of Adultery: Execution, Ordeal or Divorce," in *Shoshanat Yaakov: Jewish and Iranian Studies in Honor of Yaakov Elman*, ed. Shai Secunda and Steven Fine (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 77-109.

- Galit Hasan-Rokem, "Erotic Eden: A Rabbinic Nostalgia for Paradise," in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*, eds. M. Bockmuehl and G. Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 156-165.

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- Yishai Kiel, "Creation by Emission: Recreating Adam in the Babylonian Talmud in Light of Zoroastrian and Manichean Literature," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 66, 2 (2015): 295-316.
 - Yishai Kiel, *Sexuality in the Babylonian Talmud: Christian and Sasanian Contexts in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
 - Naomi Koltun-Fromm, *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
 - Sergey Minov, "The Question of Sexuality in Paradise as Reflected in Late Antiquity Biblical Exegesis: Between the Sages and the Fathers of the Church," in *A Garden Eastward in Eden: Traditions of Paradise*, ed. R. Elijor (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2010), 158-172.
 - Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
 - Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "Hyper-Sexualization in the Bavli: An Initial Survey," in *Midrash and the Exegetical Mind*, eds. L. Teugels and R. Ulmer, *Judaism in Context* 10 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 181-205.
 - Michael Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality*, *Brown Judaic Studies* 303 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).
 - Michael Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
 - Michael L. Satlow, "'And on the Earth you Shall Sleep': Talmud Torah and Rabbinic Asceticism," *Journal of Religion* 83, 2 (2003): 204-222.
 - Shai Secunda, "The Construction, Composition, and Idealization of the Female Body in Rabbinic Literature and Parallel Iranian Texts: Three Excursuses," *Nashim* 23 (2012):60-86.

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 80 %
Presentation 0 %
Participation in Tutorials 20 %
Project work 0 %
Assignments 0 %
Reports 0 %
Research project 0 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 0 %

Additional information: