

**Judaism in the Graeco-Roman World**  
Professor Laurence H. Kant

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York University  
1995-96

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WC103 on Mondays from 1:00-2:30; AS036 on Tuesdays from 1:00-2:30

OFFICE HOURS: Tu. 3:00-5:00 in Vanier 219, or by appointment. Telephone Numbers: 736-5158 (humanities); ext. 66987 (office); 650-2326 (York home)

PURPOSE: The course will approach this material from the point of view of the academic study of religion. There are no prerequisites, nor are there any presumptions as to religious background or commitment.

In general, we will examine early Judaism as one of the religions of the Mediterranean world, in some ways continuous, and in some ways discontinuous, with the religion and culture of the Graeco-Roman/Near Eastern world. Although we will focus on textual evidence, there will be considerable emphasis on archaeological materials as well (including inscriptions). While the area of ancient Israel will occupy much of our attention, diaspora Judaism from Babylonia to Italy will constitute a very important segment of the course. At the same time, we will investigate the development of Judaism from a religion that centered around the Temple in Jerusalem to one that sought sacrality in other places. In the first portion of the course, we will survey the history of Judaism, beginning with the return from the exile in the late sixth century B.C.E. and the building of the second Temple in the fifth century B.C.E., and ending with the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E. After considering the Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman contexts of Judaism and the history of Judaism through the Babylonian exile, we will pay particular attention to the significance of the Temple in Judaism, notions of self-definition, syncretism, wisdom literature, apocalyptic, the Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean history, Pharisees and Saducees, Qumran and the Essenes, Herod, Judaism under Roman rule, nationalist movements, early Christianity, and the Jewish War. For the remainder of the course, we will focus on diaspora Judaism and will give considerable attention to rabbinic Judaism and rabbinic texts (both midrash and mishnah/talmud). By the end of the course, students should have a basic knowledge of texts, events, persons, groups, and dates, as well as an understanding of the essential characteristics of early Judaism in different periods and geographical areas. Students should also acquire skills in reading and analyzing many different kinds of early Jewish texts.

BASIC READING OUTLINE: As a narrative outline, students will read L. Schiffman, From Text to Tradition. For a less traditional and more social-historical approach, we will consult S. Cohen, From the Maccabees to the Mishnah. The reading in these books may be supplemented at any time by more detailed reading in E. Schürer, History of the Jewish People (3 vols. including 3.2), L. L. Grabbe, Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian (2 vols), and H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, which are all on reserve at Scott Library. For history of Judaism prior to the rabbinic period, students should feel free to consult relevant sections of Josephus, Jewish Antiquities (Whiston translation). In addition, every week there will be examination of primary texts and/or archaeological data. Please bring to class those primary texts (books and photocopies) that we are discussing. Books for purchase (all of which should also be on reserve at Scott Library) are the following:

Charlesworth, James H. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Vol. 2.  
Cohen, Shaye J. D. From the Maccabees to the Mishnah.  
Josephus, Flavius. The Jewish War. G. A. Williamson (trans.). Revised edition.  
Meeks, Wayne A. (gen. ed.). The HarperCollins Study Bible.  
Schiffman, Lawrence H. From Text to Tradition.  
Soncino Hebrew-English Talmud, Abodah Zarah.  
Vermes, Geza. The Dead Sea Scrolls in English. 3rd ed..  
Whiston, William (trans.). The Works of Josephus Complete and Unabridged. New ed.  
Yonge, C. D. (trans.). The Works of Philo Complete and Unabridged. New ed.

REQUIREMENTS: two in-class exams (the first worth 20% percent and the second worth 20%), two papers (the first worth 20% and the second worth 20%), leadership in two class discussions (10%), class participation (10%). An extra weighting will be given to the best exam or paper grade. The tests (November 14 and March 19) will be primarily ID exams, where students will be expected to provide short descriptions of important persons, events, movements, geographical locations, terms, and dates. There will be a choice of ID's, and, prior to the tests, students will be given a guide explaining how to write an ID. There may also be a very brief essay on a small topic. Papers (due December 11 and April 15) will involve analysis of primary texts, and (with clearance from the instructor) students will be able to choose their topics. Paper length will probably be somewhere within the range of ten to twelve pages, though somewhat shorter papers are certainly possible. If students so desire, they will be able to work in teams, in which case a somewhat more extensive presentation will be expected. It will also be feasible to combine the first and second papers into a larger project. All students are encouraged to give the instructor outlines and rough drafts for perusal well before the due date. In regard to class participation, students will be expected to attend classes regularly and to participate in class discussion. Finally, each student (or team of two or three students) will help the instructor to lead a class discussion. In doing this, students will need to meet with me prior to the class, where we will go over strategies and outlines. Improvement during the year will be a major factor in determining grades. Attendance and active participation in class will be considered part of the class grade.

NOTE: The Division of Humanities cannot afford to pay for photocopies of source materials and other handouts given to students. So, at the beginning of each term, I will request \$8.00 from each student to pay for photocopies--I can only give photocopies to those who have paid in advance. Of course, I will refund students for any photocopies not made.

September 11-12 Survey and Introduction; Survey of Near Eastern and Biblical History I

September 18 Survey of Near Eastern and Biblical History II

**READ:** Schiffman, Chapters 1-2

Ezekiel (skim by today, especially 8.1-11.25, but  
have it all read by Monday next week)

Isaiah 40-55 (= Second Isaiah)

September 19, October 2 The Building of the Second Temple: Ezra and Nehemiah; Priestly Religion and Temple Cult

**READ:** Schiffman, Chapter 3

Cohen, Chapter 1

Ezra and Nehemiah

Haggai and Zechariah 1-8

**Read by Oct. 2:** Leviticus

September 25-26 **NO CLASS** (York University classes are cancelled on Rosh ha-Shanah)

October 3, 10 Greek History and the Coming of Alexander the Great: The Place of Judaism in a New Oikoumene

**READ:** R. M. Grant, Augustus to Constantine, Chaps. 1-2 (Scott Library reserve)  
L. Kant, "Jewish Inscriptions in Greek and Latin" (Scott Library Reserve)

October 9 **NO CLASS** (York University classes are cancelled on Thanksgiving)

October 16-17 Judaism Between Alexander the Great and the Maccabean Revolt: The Rise of Hellenistic Cities in Palestine and the Beginnings of Jewish Hellenization

**READ:** Schiffman, Chapter 4  
Cohen, Chapter 2  
Bible-Apocrypha: Tobit  
Charlesworth, Vol. II: Letter of Aristeas (pp. 7-34);  
"Artapanus" (889-903); "Ezekiel the Tragedian" (pp. 803-19)  
Josephus, Antiquities 4.154-236: Whiston, pp. 318-22  
Papyri handout on the Toboids

October 23 Maintenance of Jewish Identity in a Hellenistic World

**READ:** Schiffman, pp. 120-130  
Cohen, Chapter 3  
Canonical Bible: Daniel 1-6  
Bible-Apocrypha: Susannah, Bel and the Dragon,  
Prayer of Azariah, Letter of Jeremiah

October 24 Scribal Religion, Wisdom Literature, Schools of Learning

**READ:** Cohen, Chapter 4  
Bible-Apocrypha: Sirach  
Charlesworth, Vol. 2: Ahiqar (pp. 490-507)

October 30-31 The Revolt of the Maccabees; Struggles Between Hellenists, Nationalists, and Pietists

**READ:** Bible-Apocrypha: 1 and 2 Maccabees  
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities: Book 12.237-434 (Whiston, pp. 322-35)

November 6 The Apocalyptic Response During and After the Maccabean Revolution

**READ:** Canonical Bible: Daniel 7-12  
Charlesworth, vol. 1: 1 Enoch 83-90 (Scott Library Reserve)

November 7, 13 Hasmonean History

**READ:** Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Book 13.228-14.33  
(Whiston, pp. 350-367)  
Charlesworth, vol. 2: Jubilees (pp. 35-142, especially 35-100)  
Josephus, Jewish War: Williamson, pp. 33-44

November 14 **EXAMINATION**

November 20-21 **NO CLASSES** (make sure to work on your papers)

November 27-28 Pharisees and Saducees

**READ:** Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 13.171-73, 13.288-98, 13.372-84, 13.398-404, 3.408-29, 17.41-45, 18.11-17  
(Whiston, pp. 346, 354-55, 360-61, 362-63, 363-65, 453-54, 477)  
Josephus, Jewish War: Williamson, pp. 42-43, 133, 137-38  
New Testament: Mark 7.1-23; Matthew 22.15-23.36;  
Acts 4.1-2; 23.6-10.  
Handout: Pliny and miscellaneous selections from  
the Mishnah and Abot de Rabbi Nathan

December 4-5 Dead Sea Scrolls

**READ:** Cohen, Chapter 5  
Schiffman, pp. 130-38  
G. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 1-60, pp. 61-127 (“Community Rule”,  
“Damascus Rule,” “Messianic Rule,” and “War Rule”)

December 7 (York make-up day) Dead Sea Scrolls (cont.); Essenes and Therapeutae

**READ:** G. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls, pp. 128-58, 276-92 (“Temple Scroll,”  
commentaries  
Handout: Josephus, Jewish Antiquities:  
13.171-73 15.370-379, 17.339-44, 18.18-22 (Whiston, pp. 346,  
422, 474-75, 477)  
Josephus, Jewish War: Williamson, pp. 133-137  
Philo, Every Good Man is Free, 74-91 (Yonge, pp. 682-90)  
Philo, The Contemplative Life (Yonge, pp. 698-706)

January 8-9 The End of the Hasmonean Dynasty and the Coming of The Romans to Palestine; Pompey and the Client Kingdom of Herod; Rule of the Sons of Herod

**READ:** Schiffman, pp. 139-146  
Josephus, Jewish War: Williamson, pp. 43-132  
**OPTIONAL:** For those who want to explore this topic further, skim portions that  
interest to you in Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Books 14-17

January 9, 15 Roman Rule of Palestine from 6 C.E.-44 C.E. Nationalists and Terrorist Movements: Zealots, Sicarii, Bandit Kings, John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth

**READ:** Josephus, Jewish War: Williamson, Chapters 7-8 (pp. 133-63)  
Schiffman, pp. 146-149

January 16 Ancient Christianity: A Jewish Movement

**READ:** Gospel of Matthew  
Schiffman, pp. 149-56

January 22 Greek and Roman Views of Judaism

**READ:** Handout

January 23, 29 Roman Rule of Palestine Through the End of the Jewish War

**READ:** Schiffman, Chapter 9  
Josephus, Jewish War: Williamson, Chaps. 9-23 (pp. 164-408)  
There will be teams of students who will report on groups of  
chapters (9-11, 12-14, 15-17, 18-20, 21-23)

January 30, February 5 Jewish Archaeology in Rome, Egypt, and Israel  
**READ** the inscriptions in H. Leon, Jews of Ancient Rome (on Scott Library Reserve), pp. 264-346  
**READ** the inscriptions in W. Horbury/D. Noy, Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt, nos. 30-36

February 5 Dura Europus: The Synagogue Paintings  
**LOOK AT PICTURES** in E. R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols,  
**Start reading Philo for Feb. 13, 19-20**, as there are no real reading assignments for this class or the next class

February 6 Jewish Symbols

February 12 Syncretism in Judaism and Astrology  
**READ:** Handout  
M. Morgan, Sepher ha-Razim (on Scott Library reserve)

February 13, 19-20 Philo of Alexandria

February 13, 19  
**READ:** Yonge, pp. xi-xviii  
Philo, On The Life of Moses (Yonge, pp. 459-517)

February 19-20  
**READ:** Philo, On the Creation (Yonge, pp. 3-24), On Dreams 1 (Yonge, pp. 365-87) On Special Laws 2 (Yonge, pp. 568-93)

February 26-27 **NO CLASSES** (York Univ. classes are cancelled during Reading Week)

March 4-5, 11-12, 18: Readings in Midrash. **BRING YOUR BIBLES TO CLASS**

March 4 Introduction to Rabbinic Judaism  
**READ:** Schiffman, Chapter 10  
Pesikta de Rab Kahana, Piska 1 (Handout)

March 5  
**READ:** Schiffman, Chapter 11  
Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 5 (Handout)

March 11-12, 18  
**READ:** Genesis Rabbah, Chapter 1 (Handout) for March 11  
Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Chapter 1 (Handout) for March 11  
Leviticus Rabbah, Chapter 30 (Handout) for March 12  
Handouts on Moses for March 18

March 19 **EXAMINATION**

March 25-26 Jewish Mysticism: Hekhalot Literature  
**READ:** H. Odeberg, 3 Enoch (Scott Lib. res.), Chaps. 1-40 (pp. 1-127):  
Two groups of students will be responsible for each half of the material

March 26, April 1-2, 8-9 Mishnah and Talmud: Case Study Readings from Tractate  
Abodah Zarah

March 26, April 1

**READ:** Schiffman, Chapter 12

Mishnah, Abodah Zarah (handout)

April 2, 8-9

**READ:** Schiffman, Chapters 13-14

Talmud, Abodah Zarah: Chapter 1