

## **Introduction to Jewish Art and Archaeology from the Hellenistic to the Rabbinic Period**

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Cornell University  
Fall, 1994  
Rockerfeller 121  
Tu., Th.: 2:55-4:10

Near Eastern Studies 247/  
Jewish Studies 247/  
Religious Studies 247/  
Archaeology 249/  
Classics 249

Office Hours: Tu., 12:20-1:20, and Th., 4:20-5:20, in Rockefeller 387; or by appointment. Telephone number: 5-6275 (NES dept.); (315) 428-1893 (home).

Purpose: The course will approach this material from the point of view of the academic study of religion and of archaeology. There are no prerequisites.

In this course, we will examine material evidence of Judaism from the fourth century B.C.E. to the fifth century C.E. Equal attention will be given to Israel and the diaspora. We will look at various kinds of structures, including tombs and cemeteries, prayer buildings and synagogues, houses, fortresses, palaces, and the Jerusalem Temple. All types of objects will come under consideration, such as paintings, mosaics, sarcophagi, jewelry and gemstones, coins, inscriptions, and papyri. In general, we will attempt to understand this material both in terms of its Near Eastern heritage and the powerful influence of the Graeco-Roman environment. We will focus particularly on the value of material evidence for assessing Jewish religious beliefs and practices, symbolism, socio-economic conditions and status, daily life, institutional organization, and political history. Some attention will also be given to early Christian art and archaeology and its relation to Jewish materials.

REQUIREMENTS: I anticipate that this class will be run as a seminar, where students are responsible for presentation of some of the material. Therefore, attendance and active participation are essential and will count for a portion of the final grade. The most important basis of evaluation will be a final paper. Around the middle of the term (by October 18), I will also expect an outline and a short excursus on one component of your final paper. In addition, each student will have the opportunity to make a brief oral report on their final paper topic which I will try to coordinate with the appropriate class topic.

### **BOOK REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE**

Schiffmann, Lawrence. From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism. Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1991. This textbook provides essential historical background.

READINGS: Most relevant readings will be found in the book mentioned above or on reserve at Uris Library. Handouts will be provided at appropriate times. For their papers, students will be expected to obtain relevant books in the Cornell libraries (especially Olin).

#### BOOKS FOR OPTIONAL PURCHASE

Barrett, C. K. The New Testament Background: Selected Documents. 2nd ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1989. This book is dated, and it is organized from a Christian theological perspective, but it is for the moment the only comprehensive sourcebook available that contains a wide variety of ancient Jewish literature. In general, it is best (as always) to read the texts themselves most closely, as opposed to the editor's explanations, which generally (especially in regard to rabbinic materials) are not very helpful, and often simply wrong.

Levine, Lee. Ancient Synagogues Revealed. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981. Students can use this volume as a resource for examination of synagogues that are of interest. In this class, we will use it chiefly as a resource for photographs.

Shanks, Hershel. Archaeology and the Bible: The Best of BAR. Volume 1. Archaeology in the World of Herod, Jesus and Paul. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1990. This collection of essays contains popular accounts of archaeological excavations that are often inadequate for scholarly purposes. Therefore, this book is primarily useful for its photographs.

#### THE FOLLOWING BOOKS ON RESERVE OR IN REFERENCE WILL BE FREQUENTLY USED:

Goodenough, Erwin Ramsdell. Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, 13 vols. (1953-68). Many of the interpretations are very controversial, and often dubious (as is his historical thesis of a rabbinic Judaism vs. a mystery religion Judaism), but this is still the most fundamental and groundbreaking work on the subject of ancient Jewish religious symbols. It also has by far the most complete collection of plates. When reading selections from one volume, you will note that there are references to plates in other volumes. Make sure to look at those plates; they are very useful. Always read his interpretations with some degree of skepticism, but always remember that opposing viewpoints are not necessarily more reliable. On reserve at Uris.

Hachlili, Rachel. Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel (1988). This is a useful summary of information for materials in Israel. Her opinions are often the opposite of Goodenough, and she tends to emphasize the uniqueness of Jewish art *vis-à-vis* pagan art. The latter is a questionable assumption, however, and contributes to making this book somewhat problematic. On reserve at Uris.

Stern, Ephraim (ed.). The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (1993). 2nd ed. (1st ed., 1975-78). Four volumes. This is a fundamental work. In Uris reference.

## SYLLABUS

### I. INTRODUCTION

August 25. Survey of the Course: Symbols, Objects, and Sites. Methodology; Approaches to Readings; Discussion of Requirements.

August 30. History of Ancient Judaism I. Judaism and the Near East through the Exile, including Israelite Religions.

**Read:** L. Schiffman, Text to Tradition, pp. 1-32

Sept. 1. The Symbols of Ancient Judaism I. Trees.

**Read:** L. Yarden, Tree of Life (Uris reserve) 35-42  
E. R. Goodenough, Symbols, 7.87-134;  
12.136-38

Sept. 6: **No Class**, Rosh ha-Shanah

TBA. History of Ancient Judaism II. The Persian Period: Torah and the Establishment of the Second Temple. Iconographic and Epigraphic References to the Temple and the Priesthood.

**Read:** L. Schiffman, Text to Tradition, pp. 33-59  
Bible: Ezra, Nehemiah, Exodus 25,  
1 Kings 6-7 (if needed, use Bibles on  
reserve in Uris)

**Skim Over Next Week:** Bible: Leviticus

Sept. 8. The Symbols of Ancient Judaism II. Torah Ark and Torah Scrolls.

**Read:** R. Hachlili, Jewish Art, pp. 234-36; 272-80  
E. R. Goodenough, Symbols, 4.111-44;  
12.83-86; 4.99-111

Sept. 13. History of Ancient Judaism III. Alexander the Great, Maccabees, and Hasmoneans. Qumran.

**Read:** L. Schiffman, Text to Tradition, pp. 60-79  
Bible: 1 Maccabees 1-4; 2 Maccabees 6-7  
C. K. Barrett, New Testament Background,  
pp. 141-48

Sept. 15, **No class**, Yom Kippur

TBA, 20. Symbols of Ancient Judaism III. Menorah, Etrog, and Loulab.

**Read:** R. Hachlili, Jewish Art, pp. 236-72  
E. R. Goodenough, Symbols 4.65-98; 4.145-66;  
12.86-88  
M. Smith, "The Image of God" (on reserve)

Sept. 22. History of Ancient Judaism IV. Judaism and Rome: Jewish Sects, Jewish War, Bar Kochba Revolt. Qumran Continued.

**Read:** L. Schiffman, Text to Tradition, pp. 98-138;  
157-76  
C. K. Barrett, New Testament Background,  
pp. 148-172; 218-51

**Optional:** Josephus, The Jewish War, pp. 251-69  
(on Uris reserve)

Sept. 27. Symbols of Ancient Judaism IV: 1) Shofar; 2) Jewish Coins and the Role of Money.

**Read:** E. R. Goodenough, Symbols 4.167-94; 12.88-91  
Y. Meshorer, Ancient Jewish Coinage, 1.48-68,  
1.92-98 (on Uris reserve)

Sept. 29. History of Ancient Judaism V. The Position of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman oikoumene. The Iconography of the Jewish Catacomb in Vigna Randanini in Rome.

**Read:** L. Schiffman, Text to Tradition, pp. 80-97  
C. K. Barrett, New Testament Background,  
pp. 172-76  
F. E. Peters, The Harvest of Hellenism,  
pp. 54-65 (on Uris reserve)

Oct. 4. Symbols of Ancient Judaism IV. Animals and Zodiacs.

**Read:** R. Hachlili, Jewish Art, pp. 301-16  
E. R. Goodenough, Symbols 8.167-218; 12.152-56

Oct. 6. History of Ancient Judaism VI. Judaism from the Third to the Fifth Century C.E. Epigraphic References to Rabbis.

**Read:** L. Schiffman, Text to Tradition, pp. 177-265  
C. K. Barrett, New Testament Background,  
pp. 177-206

Oct. 11. FALL BREAK

Oct. 13, 18, 20. Death, Burial, and Afterlife: Ossuaries and Sarcophagi; Tombs in Beth She'arim; Catacombs in the City of Rome.

**Read:** R. Hachlili, Jewish Art, pp. 88-119  
E. Stern, New Encyclopedia 1.236-248  
B. Mazar, Beth She'arim 1.1-12 and plates  
(on Uris reserve)  
N. Avigad, Beth She'arim 3.1-17; 3.268-89;  
skim 3.259-67; and plates (on Uris reserve)  
H. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome, pp. 46-66;  
195-228; and plates (on Uris reserve)

Oct. 20, 25. Funerary Inscriptions.

**Read:** L. Kant, "Jewish Inscriptions in Greek and Latin," (on Uris reserve)

**Skim With:** The translations of inscriptions in M. Schwabe  
**Some Care** and B. Lifshitz, Beth She'arim 2  
The translations of inscriptions in H. Leon,  
The Jews of Ancient Rome, pp. 266-346

Oct. 25, 27. Herodian Buildings: Fortresses, Palaces, and Ritual Baths. Masada, Herodium, Jericho, Jerusalem, Caesarea Maritima.

**Read:** R. Hachlili, Jewish Art, pp. 9-64  
E. Stern, 1.270-91; 2.618-30; 3.973-79  
Selections from Josephus, Jewish War  
(on Uris reserve)

For color photographs of Caesarea and Masada, see K. G. Holum, et al., King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea (on Uris reserve); and Y. Yadin, Masada (on Uris reserve). If you have time, you may want to skim these books.

Nov. 1, 3. Temple and Temple Mount.

**Read:** H. Shanks, Archaeology and the Bible 2.21-77  
Bible: Exodus 25-31; 1 Kings 5-8  
Josephus, Jewish War, pp. 298-306 and 383-86  
of the translation by G. Williamson  
(on Uris reserve)

Nov. 3, 8, 10, 15. Synagogues: Architecture and Iconography. Second Temple synagogues?. Diaspora Synagogues, with Special Focus on Dura Europus. Palestinian Synagogues.

- Read:** R. Hachlili, Jewish Art, pp. 135-233  
S. Cohen, From the Maccabees to the Mishnah, pp. 110-16 (on Uris reserve)  
L. Levine, "The Second Temple Synagogue: The Formative Years," in L. Levine, The Synagogue in Late Antiquity, pp. 1-31 (on Uris reserve); and L. Levine, Ancient Synagogues Revealed, pp. 19-44 (these articles represent one side of the debate)  
A. T. Kraabel, "The Diaspora Synagogue: Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence Since Sukenik" (on Uris reserve)

**Optional:** G. Foester, "The Art and Architecture of the Synagogue in its Late Roman Setting in Palestine," in L. Levine, The Synagogue in Late Antiquity, pp. 139-46 (on Uris reserve)

**Use:** L. Levine, Ancient Synagogues Revealed, as a resource for consultation on particular synagogues that are of interest

**For Dura Europus:** E. R. Goodenough, Symbols, vol. 11 (**examine** plates)  
C. Hopkins, "The Excavations of the Dura Synagogue Paintings," in J. Gutmann, The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Reevaluation (on Uris reserve)  
J. Gutmann, "The Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings," in L. Levine, The Synagogue in Late Antiquity, pp. 61-72 (on Uris reserve)  
J. Gutmann, "Programmatic Painting in the Dura Synagogue," in J. Gutmann, The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Reevaluation (on Uris reserve)

**Optional:** B. Goldman, Bernard, "The Dura Synagogue Costumes and Parthian Art," in J. Gutmann, The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Reevaluation (on Uris reserve)

Nov. 17, 29. Magic, Syncretism, God-Fearers, and Early Christians.

**Read:** Handout  
S. Cohen, From the Maccabees to the Mishnah, pp. 27-59 (on Uris reserve)

Nov. 22. NO CLASS

Dec. 1. Egyptian papyri and daily life of Jews in Egypt.

**Read:** Selections from V. A. Tcherikover,  
Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum 2-3:  
TBA (on Uris reserve)

Make-Up Class: TBA